

**Proceedings of the First 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 11 a.m. on **Monday the 1st April 1946.**

**P R E S E N T**

The Hon'ble Mr. Debeswar Sarmah, Speaker, in the Chair, six Hon'ble Ministers and 74 Members.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**STARRED QUESTIONS**

(To which oral answers were given)

**Nalbari Sanskrit College**

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR asked:

\*28. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have received a representation from the Secretary of the Managing Committee of the Nalbari Sanskrit College requesting the Government either to provincialise the said College or to increase its maintenance grant to Rs. 750 per mensem?

(b) Do Government propose to favourably consider this request of the Managing Committee?

(c) If so, how do they intend to help the institution?

†The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS replied:

28. (a)—Yes.

(b) & (c)—The question of increased maintenance grant will receive consideration of Government along with other colleges when funds are available.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Do Government realise that the College is in great financial difficulty?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Yes, Sir, the demand made in the Question implies that.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Will Government be pleased to try to relieve this difficulty?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: The answer is there that Government will consider this question very sympathetically, when funds are available, along with the claims of other colleges.

**UNSTARRED QUESTIONS**

(To which answers were laid on the table)

**Muria Haor in Karimganj Subdivision**

Maulavi M. IDRIS ALI asked:

104. Will Government be pleased to state whether they propose to take up the drainage of Muria Haor in the Karimganj Subdivision under Navigation, Embankment and Drainage Scheme of the Assam Public Works Department, this year?

† The questions were answered by the Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das in the absence of the Hon'ble Srijut Gopinath Bardoloi.

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

104.—Government have already carried out survey for this work and hope to put the scheme into execution during the cold weather of 1946-47.

### North Lakhimpur High School

Srijut HEM CHANDRA HAZARIKA asked:

105. (a) Is it a fact that His Excellency the Governor of Assam while visiting the North Lakhimpur High School on the 12th February, 1945 noted as follows:—

“The main matter requiring urgent attention here is the state of the buildings. Despite the Hon'ble Minister's observations of a year ago, they still display the effect of the earthquake and several of them are in a bad state of disrepair. For reasons that are obscure to me, the buildings are not in charge of the Public Works Department and the staff are expected to keep them in good repair with a grant which runs somewhat inadequate.”

(b) Do Government propose to place the buildings of the said school under the Public Works Department?

(c) Are Government aware that the North Lakhimpur High School building is in a bad state of disrepair and requires extension?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI replied:

105. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes, the matter has already engaged the attention of Government and is under consideration now.

(c)—A demand for repairs to the school buildings has been received and necessary grant has been sanctioned for the purpose.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Are Government aware that similar is the condition of many other school buildings?

†The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: It may be so, but Government cannot give a definite reply to this Question off-hand.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Will Government take into consideration their cases also?

†The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Government certainly will consider their cases if they are brought to their notice.

### Number of Tribal clerks in the offices of Subdivisional Officer, North Lakhimpur and Deputy Commissioners, Jorhat and Dibrugarh

Srijut KARKA CHANDRA DALAY asked:

106. Will Government be pleased to state:—

(a) The number of Tribal clerks in the court of Subdivisional Officer, North Lakhimpur and in the courts of Deputy Commissioners, Jorhat and Dibrugarh?

(b) The number of permanent and temporary posts in these courts?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied:

106. (a) & (b)—

		Total No. of Posts	Posts held by Tribal clerks
Dibrugarh Court	Permanent	55	5
	Temporary	48	12
North Lakhimpur Court.	Permanent	17	4
	Temporary	16	
Jorhat Court	Permanent	95	
	Temporary	13	1

† The questions were answered by the Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das in the absence of the Hon'ble Srijut Gopinath Bardoloi.

**Total income of each Local Board in the Province**

Maulavi MUHAMMAD ABUL KASHEM asked :

107. Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a statement showing the total income of each Local Board in the Province derived from—  
(i) Cart-tax, and (ii) Local rate during 1944-45 ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR replied :

107. (i)—Not available.

(ii)—A statement is given below :—

*Total income of each Local Board in the Province*

Names of Local Boards	Amount of Local Rates received during the year 1944-45
	Rs.
Silchar	49,748
Hailakandi	18,064
North Sylhet	65,272
Karimganj	81,532
South Sylhet	51,104
Habiganj	80,175
Sunamganj	54,936
Dhubri	73,226
Goalpara	55,964
Gauhati	1,42,544
Barpeta	51,848
Tezpur	64,108
Mangaldai	53,980
Nowgong	1,13,032
Sibsagar	39,500
Jorhat	54,014
Golaghat	31,268
Dibrugarh	1,25,456
North Lakhimpur	28,452

Srijut SIDDHI NATH SARMA: Will the Hon'ble Minister vouchsafe about the correctness of the figure given against the Gauhati Local Board ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: The figures that have been supplied are correct.

Srijut SIDDHI NATH SARMA: Will Government take it from me that the figure against the Gauhati Local Board is not correct? And will the Hon'ble Minister look into this, Sir?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: Yes, Sir, if the hon. Member desires so, Government will certainly look into this.

Maulvi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that the figure against the Sunamganj Local Board is also wrong?

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: I think, Sir, these figures are supplied by the Treasury and I fail to understand how the figures can be incorrect.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : There may be some confusion in regard to this matter, Sir. The position is, local rates of the previous year are added to those of the current year and by the time the figures of the present year are submitted, the figures of the previous year are sent to this office to incorporate in the Budget. This may be one of the reasons of this confusion.

Srijut SIDDHI NATH SARMA : Even then, Sir, it is not correct. The local rate has increased in 1943-44 and the rates supplied are the old rates.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : The increase will be realised only in 1944-45 and it will be shown for 1945-46.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I know from the Hon'ble Minister whether it is a fact that income under local rates is no longer recognised as income of Local Boards ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : May I reply to this Question, Sir ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Yes, please.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : Sir, the position is this. The Government of India by a Circular passed by them have made the local rates as Provincial income, but an Act has been passed by Provincial Government by which this amount has been treated as charged amount which is being repaid to the Local Boards as compensatory grant.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Yes, Sir, that is exactly so.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, all the figures under this head appear to be incorrect. From a comparative study of the figures of Habiganj and Sunamganj Local Boards it appears that though Sunamganj is bigger in area than Habiganj the local rate has been shown less than that of Habiganj. It cannot be so the local rate is realised on area basis. So, Sir, it appears that all the figures are wrong. May I request the Hon'ble Minister to see that correct figures are supplied ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR : The figures will be verified and supplied to the hon. Members.

Srijut SIDDHI NATH SARMA : Though the Hon'ble the Finance Minister has replied to this Question, may I enquire of him whether the average income of the Gauhati Local Board for the last ten years before the increment of the local rates, was near about Rs. 1,32,000 and after the increment of local rates by 4 pies in an anna, it should at least be increased by 1/3rd of the previous local rates ? Will he enquire into this and get correct figure from the Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : Sir, it is impossible to remember the figures of the last ten years and I cannot give a definite reply on this point. But as regards inaccuracy in the figures a letter has been issued to the Deputy Commissioner to give correct figures.

Srijut SIDDHI NATH SARMA : Is there any arrear in land revenue ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : There are arrears, of course.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Is it a fact that there have been various representations from Local Boards that the means of calculating the local rates is faulty and cumbrous and that they are quite in dark about the receipts of the next year ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : It may or may not be cumbrous, it is a question of opinion and I leave it to my hon. Friend to have his own opinion in the matter. The fact is that these arrears that are credited to the treasury are actually given back to the Local Boards as compensatory grant and sometimes advance is given for the management of the Local Boards, and this is deducted from the next year's collection.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Sir, will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that the method has been adopted from the current year only ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Not at all. The Act was passed in 1940, and since 1941 accounting in this procedure has been followed.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: It is not so, Sir.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I have looked into the files and I can say that the Act was passed in 1940, so that these collections may be treated as charged and may not be subject to voting by the Assembly, apprehending some dispute regarding the distribution of local rates at the time of voting, so that the entire amount of a particular Board can be given over to the very Local Board from which the local rate is realised and credited to the Provincial revenue as compensatory grant.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: There is a separate head in the Budget, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: From what the Hon'ble Minister has said may I take it that the figures supplied, though wrong, are the actual figures for 1943-44?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: That is the usual procedure. And as regards the figures that we have, it is difficult to agree that they are wrong. However in view of the statement of my hon. Friend steps have been taken to verify the figures.

#### Azad Hind Fauz (Indian National Army)

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR asked:

108. (a) Are Government aware that a number of persons belonging to this Province joined the Azad Hind Fauz (Indian National Army) formed by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose?

(b) Do Government propose to enquire into, ascertain and inform the public—

(i) The number of such persons who joined the Azad Hind Fauz (with their names and the names of their respective home districts and their ranks in the Indian Army)?

(ii) The names of those who are under detention and are awaiting trial (with names of jails where each of them is confined)?

(iii) The names of those, if any, who are undergoing trial?

(iv) The names of those, if any, who are undergoing sentences?

(v) The names of those, if any, who have been released?

(vi) The names of those, if any, who are dead (whether killed in action or executed after trial)?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS replied:

108. (a) & (b) (i)—This Government have been informed by the Central Government that there appear to have been twenty-two persons from Assam who were reported to have joined this organization. Five were found on scrutiny to be free from any such charge. Seven have been released (only one of whom was dismissed from the Indian Army) on the ground that they had done so but had been misled, and ten cases are being investigated. The names and districts of the first five above-mentioned are given as—

Names	District
(1) Harendra Chandra Das	Kamrup.
(2) Parmananda Koch	Kamrup.
(3) Sita Mohan Roy	Goalpara.
(4) Dimanata Sanghai	Sibsagar.
(5) Narsan Singh Momin	Goalpara.

No information is available as to the names and addresses of the other seventeen.

(ii)—The ten persons, whose names, etc., are not known here, are in detention at Bairset Holding and Enquiry Centre, and it is understood that they will probably be released in due course.

(iii)—(iv)—The Central Government state that there are none.

(v)—The names are not available, as already stated.

(vi)—No cases have come to the notice of either the Central or Provincial Government, of Indian National Army personnel who may have died or have been killed, and none from Assam is known to have been court-martialled.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Sir, the number of persons who joined the Indian National Army are given as 22, but the names of five persons only are given in the answer. Will Government be pleased to ascertain the names of all of them?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Sir, the position is this. These figures have been supplied by the Government of India, and whatever they have informed us we have placed before the House. Beyond that we cannot give any further information. As far as I consider, Sir, the answers are quite full; they give a clear idea of the number of the persons of this Province who joined the Indian National Army and the number of those persons released. It is very difficult to ascertain the names.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: With regard to Question No. 108 (b) (ii), Sir, the answer is that ten persons whose names, etc., are not known here, are in detention at Bairset Holding and Enquiry Centre. Will it not be possible to furnish the names and particulars of those persons, at least of those who are in this Centre?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: If I go to reply this Question, Sir, I will be doing so on behalf of the Government of India. Whether it was possible for them to ascertain the names, I cannot say. The answer is there that these persons will be released, and they will not be detained.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: My Question was that will the Hon'ble Minister try to ascertain the names of those persons still under detention for investigation?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Certainly Government will try to do so.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Will Government be pleased to see that if any of these persons are tried in Court Martial, whether proper arrangements will be made for their defence?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: That is a hypothetical Question, Sir. As I understand a reply is given by the Central Government that there is no Court Martial trial against any of these persons.

Srijut SARAT CHANDRA SINHA: What are the names of these persons?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I am not in a position to give reply to that Question, Sir.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: The point is that the answers given to my Question are insufficient and not comprehensive. Will Government be pleased to let this House know the names of those persons and their native districts which they come from, at least those persons whose cases are under investigation?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I have already given the answer that Government will try their best to ascertain the names, but by that time, I think they will be released.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Is it only because they are going to be released soon that no enquiry should be made? We want to know

the names of those persons and their native districts, who joined the Azad Hind Fauz. My Question was to let the people of Assam know the names of all those persons who joined this Force. Will Government please see that the information is given to the people of Assam ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I have answered that Question, Sir, already.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Probably the Hon'ble Minister may be pleased to repeat it for the satisfaction of the hon. Member.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I do not deny the right of the hon. Member to know the names of these persons. I have said, Sir, Government will try their best to secure the names from the Central Government.

#### Licensee of the Amingaon Restaurant

Srijut MAHENDRAMOHAN CHOUDHURY asked:

109. (a) Are Government aware that the license of the Amingaon Restaurant run by Messrs. Eastern Workers Syndicate has been cancelled by the District Traffic Superintendent, Lumding, Bengal and Assam Railway ?

(b) If so, do Government propose to take action against that order for cancellation of the license of the said Restaurant ?

(c) Do Government propose to move the Bengal and Assam Railway Administration or the Central Government that proper representations in business as well as in services of this Bengal and Assam Railway be made to Assamese people specially in Assam Area ?

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

109. (a)—(c)—The Questions relate to the administration of Railways which is a Federal subject over which the Provincial Government have no control. Government may however bring these to the notice of the Railway Authorities.

Srijut MAHENDRAMOHAN CHOUDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister bring this to the notice of the Railway Authorities ?

\* The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY: I have already stated that I have already ordered that this would be brought to the notice of the Railway Authorities.

#### Lower Assam Regional Transport Authority

Srijut HEM CHANDRA HAZARIKA asked:

110. (a) Are Government aware that of all Subdivisions, the Subdivision of North Lakhimpur remains un-represented in the Lower Assam Regional Transport Authority ?

(b) If so, do Government propose to take necessary steps for its proper and adequate representation in the said body in near future ?

(c) Are Government aware of the public feeling that for reasons stated in the Question No. 110(a) above, the rights and interests of both bus and lorry-owners as well as the travelling public of the North Lakhimpur Sub-division are not being properly safeguarded ?

(d) Do Government propose to replace the North Lakhimpur Sub-division under the control of the Upper Assam Regional Transport Authority ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE replied:

110. (a)—There are only three non-official members of the Authority, and North Lakhimpur is not the only Subdivision which is not represented

(b)—The Motor Vehicles Act is in course of amendment, and Government will consider such questions when the amendment of law is final.

(c)—Government have received no evidence to this effect, but recognize that there may be demand for expression of local opinion which may run counter to the need to avoid making the Authorities unwieldy.

(d)—No such proposition is at present before Government. The Sub-division was included in the Lower Assam Authority's jurisdiction because its land communications run with those of Lower Assam and not with the South Bank.

**Further discussion on the Motion re: supply and distribution of food-stuffs, coal, fuel, kerosene oil and cloth, etc.**

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now we shall resume the debate initiated by Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I feel, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not take part in this most important discussion and make a few suggestions.

Sir, at this hour of the day it is needless to argue that corruption has permeated almost all spheres of our body-politic and social life. But our interest is mostly centered round the question of food-stuffs, cloth and other essential articles. Therefore, the havoc caused by the corruption in the field of supply and distribution of these articles has drawn our particular and pointed attention and has led us to discuss and to find out some means for its eradication.

Sir, this corruption is the ugliest gift of the last war which war Capitalism used as the machinery for its expansion, existence and stability at the cost of immense tear and sorrow of the common people. Sir, as soon as the war commenced truth became the first casualty as has been illustrated by the unsigned Atlantic Charter, ushered by the Big Two as signed — with a view to hoodwink the ignorant world and to enlist its support and sacrifices to fulfil their Imperialistic design. When truth was thus laid lacerated and unable to raise its voice against falsehood, corruption, born of man's eternal lust for lucre raised its head and took possession of the field.

Sir, the healthy influence of law, social disapprobation, and sense of morality which generally checks this morbid thirst practically disappeared. The Government as it unfortunately happened to be not a popular one, anxious to further the cause of the war alone, did not care to check this moral breakdown. Rather most of the big officials at the helm, responsible for running the administration and keeping its moral tone high, themselves engaged in making fortunes overnight. With such officials at the head and such examples in front how could one expect to control and check the lower and middle order of Government servants engaged in grabbing money.

Sir, when the Controllers themselves had to be controlled who could check those placed under them? Sir, we have heard and it is a matter of common knowledge that a number of highly placed officials openly indulged in bribery and corruption almost in every sphere of their activities, even in matters like collection of collective fines. So, Sir, corruption commenced from the top and sank to the lowest level making the lot of the common people simply unbearable and creating a class of people both official and non-official exceptionally rich.

Sir, the suffering public could not raise their protest against this open practice of corruption by the officials and non-officials as they were practically gagged. The Press and Platform and all other facilities to criticise and condemn this monster of corruption were banned. And who could be so foolish as to speak against Government officials armed with the Defence of India Rules. Thus the society was in a condition of utter helplessness and the nefarious reign of corruption went on merrily and smoothly — till Mahatma Gandhi entered the field



and raised the banner of purity and truth in the social sky of India and not without good effect. He wanted to fast unto death and to die, so that the people of India might be rescued from the jaws of corruption and death. In other words, he wanted to rouse the moral consciousness of the numberless victims of greed. Fortunately, friends of India and of humanity succeeded in dissuading him from this grim resolve.

Sir, my object in tracing the origin and spread of this vice and Mahatmaji's contemplated fast, is to place before this hon. House one of the most effective methods of combating this evil of corruption. And it is this rousing of the dormant moral consciousness in the victim of the vice. A *hartal* leads us to enquire into its cause. Similarly, Mahatmaji's fast would have led people to search their hearts and to realise the depth of their moral degradation. Sir, unless we succeed in rousing the moral consciousness of our people, unless we get the full facilities of openly condemning and disapproving the conduct of the wrong doers, unless the society be in a mood not to tolerate the black-sheeps, we cannot expect to derive the full measure of success in our struggle against corruption.

So, Sir, we the representatives of the people in this hon. House and the leaders of the public opinion outside have a heavy responsibility to discharge. We must rouse the moral consciousness of our people and fully co-operate with the Government so that they may suppress this evil. We must keep vigilance and detect unscrupulous dealers and dishonest officials and bring them to the notice of the Government. We should also help the Government with our constructive suggestions regarding supply and distribution. The Press and the Platform and as a matter of fact the entire public must join in this struggle of purification of the body politic.

Sir, this Government have, as we have already seen, undertaken a drive against corruption in right earnest. They have promised to seek full co-operation from the public. Sir, if things are done openly and with full co-operation of the public, I hope the work of supply and distribution will not go wrong any more. Sir, we are told that the Government of India are going to make some demands upon this Province for a contribution of rice for the people of the deficit Provinces. And we must concede to this demand. But before doing so, I hope our Government should ascertain the actual food situation of the Province and make sure if there be any surplus of rice to spare. As regards price of paddy, I think, a minimum rate per maund should be fixed commensurate with the cost of production so that needy cultivators may not be compelled to sell their paddy to unscrupulous traders at nominal prices.

As regards supply of cloth, I would request the Government to try to get the existing quota raised as much as possible. But we must make demands for a much bigger quota of yarn at any rate. We are a race of weavers and if we get yarns in good quantity we can ourselves solve the problem of cloth scarcity to a great extent. In the matter of distribution of yarn the number of looms run in a family should be the criterion and no yarn should be allowed to be sold to persons who have no looms to run.

As regards distribution of kerosene oil, I think the demands of students and teachers should receive special consideration and they should be provided with special quota of this indispensable commodity. In the matter of distribution of sugar, I think, more attention ought to be paid to the demands of patients and infants in villages.

One word about the Grow-More-Food Campaign. Sir, the activities of this campaign have not earned a good reputation in the past. Some people have renamed it as a Grow-More-Cheat Campaign. That may be an exaggeration but there seems to be some truth in it. Government should immediately put it in the right channel and see that it serves the people and not the persons who run the Campaign.

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

Babu JATINDRANATH BHADRA: Sir, the sufferings of our people know no bounds. They suffer from want of foodstuffs, cloth and kerosene and everything. They suffer because they have to buy their requirements at a higher price. They suffer because they have to sell what they have at a low price. They have rice and paddy and these they had to sell at a very low price. They have been deceived—nay they have been cheated. Sir, the people are suffering much for defects in Government policy of procurement and supply. Of course, they are suffering for other reasons as well.

Sir, as regards procurement of rice and paddy I would like to suggest that a minimum reasonable price be fixed for these commodities, and the procurement policy be such as the growers may not find difficulties in selling their produce and they may sell them from their own places.

As regards procurement of cloth, Sir, I would like to suggest that failing direct Government procurement a federation of cloth syndicates in each valley may be entrusted with the task of making procurement for the respective valleys. Of course, these syndicates should be organised on co-operative principles and composed of the largest number of *bonafide* dealers. This will reduce transport and other incidental handling charges; specially as far as Surma Valley is concerned, as unlike the present arrangement of getting her cloth supplies through Gauhati. She should receive them direct. If considered advantageous each of these federations may be further subdivided to ensure better procurement. Process of distribution would be from federation to the subdivisional syndicates and thence to the retailers. The retailers should be given a higher margin of profit than what was so long being given, so that they can meet the disproportionately high cost of transporting materials from subdivisional headquarters to interior villages and the retailers' labour also may be fairly compensated; and unlike what has been the practice hitherto they may not of necessity feel compelled to sell above the fixed prices. The syndicate also should be given reasonable handling charges so that they may not have any reasonable grounds for resorting to unfair means.

With a view to controlling and enforcing proper procurement and distribution a special enforcement branch may be created with specially picked up police officers of character and ability. This branch may be granted some special power to deal with the situation easily and quickly and to deal with crimes committed previously and those that may be committed at present. If the crimes previously committed can be detected and the offenders brought to book, committing of new crimes will be greatly discouraged. In this connection, the advisability of recalling the present Textile Officer in charge of Procurement, posted at Bombay and placing in a freshman there may as well be considered.

To advise and assist in the matter of local distribution, subdivisional, thana, circle and village committees composed of local public men should be set up. The personnel of these committees may in general be composed of Members of the Legislative Assembly, Local Board members, teachers of Lower Primary Schools and other representative public men of the localities concerned. Local Congress Committees and other organised bodies if there be any, may be requested to organise or help in organising these committees wherever possible. This association of public opinion will help the distribution and will be a safeguard against corruption. With these words, I take my seat.

Maulavi NASIR-UD-DIN AHMED: Mr. Speaker, Sir, many hon. Members of this House have already placed their valuable observations for the consideration of this House, and I am afraid, Sir, they have left very little for us to deal and I am also afraid that there may be some repetition still. As the Government have not yet decided their policy regarding foodstuffs and other essential commodities, I like to place my humble observations with the expectation that Government will give due consideration to these suggestions.

Now, Sir, as many hon. Members very reasonably suggested, I also agree that our food problem should be above all party matters and I press upon the Government that as the food problem is the problem of all, not of this or that organisation, we all should approach this problem from a non-party standpoint and I assure our whole-hearted co-operation to any programme formulated by the Government which, we believe, will be for the good of the people.

Next, Sir, coming to India's food position, what we generally find is that in a poor country like India where large sections of the people cannot have their two full meals in spite of their hard toil the condition cannot be called anything but a famine condition. But, Sir, we are practically accustomed to this state of affairs and we have agreed to accept that situation as our lot. But in the precarious situation with which we are faced to-day, when lakhs and crores of people are going to die for want of food, we call it a food famine and we cannot remain oblivious to the danger which faces us in the near future. We have been told by the highest Indian authorities that India is facing a serious shortage of foodstuff, and an Indian Food Delegation has already gone to England and America to persuade the authorities there to help us in this calamity. Of course up till now we did not get any news that they have got any prospect of success.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: They have returned, and only 60 per cent. of their demand has been conceded.

Maulavi NASIR-UD-DIN AHMED: Thank you, Sir.

Therefore, Sir, when a state of panic and consternation is prevailing all over the country, we the people of Assam cannot remain indifferent. Assam cannot escape from the ravages of the famine if it sweeps over other parts of India. And in such a background of India's food position it is only reasonable that we, the representatives of the people of Assam, will have a discussion, will take stock of our food position. What is the position now, Sir? It would have been better for us if by this time Government could supply us with the information whether our Province is a surplus or a deficit Province. But I am sorry up till now no such thing has been done. However, what we are to do first of all is to make a survey of our food position; we should ascertain the possible available foodstuffs, particularly rice and paddy in the Province. In the second place we should try to find out our immediate requirement. In making this estimate, I think we should not lose sight of one important factor, namely, that though we may try very hard it will be difficult for us to stop altogether the illicit export of rice and paddy by the bordering areas of the Province. So, when we go to ascertain whether this Province is a surplus or a deficit one, we should take this factor also into consideration because it will not be possible for Government to stop illegal export altogether. Keeping all these things in view if we find that our Province is really a surplus Province then while other parts of India will be starving it will not be befitting for us to detain our stock, and we should be ready to export our surplus. If on the contrary we find that our Province is a deficit Province then the business of the Government will be to approach higher authorities for importing foodstuffs. In the meantime, before we have definitely ascertained our position, all export of rice and paddy must be stopped immediately.

Then, Sir, it is the responsibility of Government to feed the people of the Province, particularly at the time of stress and strain. So, Sir, the question arises, what should be the procurement policy of the Government. In this connection, Sir, I would like to suggest that we should try to benefit by our blunders of the past. In the Surma Valley we have tried the Agency system, and the Agent's mishandling of the situation is still vivid in our memory. I therefore hope that the present Government will not resort to that system again and will not repeat the same mistake. I suggest that Government should themselves procure all the surplus rice and paddy direct from the producers. They should

start purchasing centres in all important localities and they should have their own procurement officers. These procurement officers should preferably be drawn from the Education Department, as up till now we have not found very much against the officers of the Education Department (Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury: To make them corrupt!). If the Government is very alert, if the Members of this House are conscious of their duties and discharge the same properly, if they watch the activities of the officers, I am sure that the officers cannot do the same amount of mischief as others have done in the past. So, Sir, Government should make direct purchases from the producers, and once Government have ascertained the surplus and deficit areas, district-wise or subdivision-wise, they should transfer foodstuffs from the surplus to the deficit areas. As the war is over I think transport difficulties will not be very much felt as in the past.

In the matter of direct procurement by officers, Sir, as my hon. Friend has said, we are again going to encourage corruption, I suggest that there should be one set of procurement officers who will only take delivery of the food-stuff produced by the villagers and they will only issue receipts to the persons selling the rice or paddy. And there should be another set of superior grade officers who will make payment to the seller. These two sets of officers should work in their own sphere.

Then, Sir, as regards stopping of unauthorised export of rice I want to say a few words. If we are serious to stop export of rice we should prevent movement of rice and paddy to the bordering areas. At present there are various kinds of licenses, *viz.*, A.B.C. licenses, and on the authority of these licenses if the licensees are allowed to carry the food-stuff to the extreme border, then I believe we only help in the export of rice. Because when the rice is taken to this extreme border there is every possibility of it being exported. But if we are to prevent movement of rice to such extreme border we shall have to make some provision. In such cases we shall have to issue ration cards on weekly or monthly basis for the consumers of those localities so that they can get the necessary supply of and may be able to purchase sufficient rice or paddy for their own consumption from Government stores.

Sir, many hon. Members of this House have impressed the Government for fixing immediately minimum price of paddy and rice. As we have seen in the past, if the Government take up purchasing in their own hand, Government become the monopoly purchaser in the market and if there is the minimum price fixed by the Government the producer will get the minimum price. As there is a rising tendency of the market I suggest that the maximum price should also be fixed. At present the price of rice in the bordering areas is about Rs. 20 per maund. So if the Government fix maximum and minimum prices it will be better for all concerned.

In the procurement matter I want to draw the attention of the Government to one particular aspect. From the very beginning of the war we are finding a new class of profiteers in the field. Finding that rice business is a very profitable business these profiteers are very anxious to make profit at the cost of the consumers in the Province. So my earnest request to Government is that in the procurement matter this class of profiteers and black-marketeers should not be given any handle and Government should strictly avoid this class of people and Government should cancel all licenses.

As things stand now, we are apprehending a bad situation. If the Government is determined to avert this situation, they must tackle this food position with determination and promptness, with full co-operation from the public. I am sure the Government will be in a position to save the Province from the ravages of a food famine

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

Maulavi MD. MAFIZ CHOWDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is with a good deal of hesitation that I have ventured to take part at the far end of this debate. My hon. Friends who preceded me have traversed almost all the grounds. So I shall try to confine my remarks to one or two aspects of the whole question.

The present food situation of the Province is really very very critical. The Amon crop all over the country was not satisfactory. Every body looked with a wistful eye to the early prospect of the Boro crop. But tornado and hailstorm have dashed all our hopes to the ground. This has been the case in all Boro-growing areas of the Sylhet District. Even before this mishap, famine conditions were being reported from various parts of the Surma Valley. Hunger Marchers were seen to parade the streets of the towns. We can well imagine what their condition will be with all their future hopes thus destroyed.

Hungry siarks in the shape of hoarders and profiteers are not sitting idle. They have already tasted blood. They are licking their lips at the prospect of a fresh opportunity. They have already begun hoarding with impunity under official connivance and helping to soar the market. The peasantry are in great despair. I submit, Sir, that the situation is too grave and too critical to brook any delay. There is no time for self-complacency. Immediate steps should be taken to bring the situation under control.

All sections of the House are united in their condemnation of the policy that had been pursued in the past. The worst indictment has come from most unexpected quarters. I admit that I am not here to justify that policy. But with a devastating famine staring us in the face, should we spend all our energy over a *post-mortem* dissection? Is it not fair that we should concentrate all our energy to evolve out a well-planned policy for the procurement of the future? We are waiting with all eagerness to hear what the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge has got to say in the matter. We only hope that he will adopt a new policy a bold policy to meet this dire situation.

In this connection, I will venture to repeat what has been demanded by a good number of hon. Members that a minimum price of paddy and rice must be fixed and that without delay. I am conscious, Sir, that with the procuring agents, this minimum is likely to be the maximum. But still it will provide a much needed brake and the cultivators will not be compelled to sell their articles at any price to the agents.

One point, Sir, as regards export policy of the Government. It is learnt that Government have in their hand lakhs of maunds of paddy purchased through their Agents. But instead of exporting this paddy Government, it is said, are allowing export of fresh paddy, purchasing the same through their licensees. It is a common knowledge, Sir, that every kind of paddy has got a duration of life, and beyond that it does not remain in good condition for consumption. I want to know why the Government are not exporting paddy in their hand, and who will be responsible for deterioration in godowns which were mostly requisitioned from private persons and almost all of those godowns are *katcha* buildings.

It has already been stressed on the floor of this House about the acute cloth shortage in the Province. Our personal experience in this respect is very bitter and unhappy. While license-holders were indulging in black-marketing on a very wide scale, we could not procure cloth for shrouds of the Muslim dead bodies. Not to speak of villages, even in towns we had the greatest difficulty to procure cloth for this most obligatory charge. I endorse every word of what my hon. Friend Moulana Ibrahim Ali voiced the other day over this very important question. I would crave the immediate attention of the Government over this matter:

Sir, while we were suffering acutely for shortage of cloth, Government thought it fit to stop our standard cloth supply. This was surely not a move in the right direction. The other day there was a considerable breeze on the floor of the House when the Hon'ble Minister was going to reply on a Question about the cloth supply in the Province. Evidently, the Hon'ble Minister was replying with his tongue within his cheeks. We do not doubt the sincerity of the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge and as such we expected a straightforward answer from him. There is no justification why we should protect an offending officer. An enormous sum of over twenty lakhs of rupees were involved in purchasing a huge quantity of unsaleable handloom cloth from Bombay. It is not possible that the Assam Provincial Textile Society will agree to sustain this loss lying down. So, ultimately the loss shall have to be compensated by the Provincial Government. The business was shady from start to finish. It demands a thorough enquiry. Under what circumstances this cloth was purchased and what part our big officers played in it must be looked into.

Sir, it always has been an enigma to us that while the villages are suffering most acutely for want of kerosene, thousands of tins of kerosene are available in the black-market. Where does this stock come from? The kerosene question has been the most burning problem during the last few years. Is it not time to improve our supply and if possible, to raise the control over this important commodity?

Sir, I shall conclude my remarks by referring to the acute situation in the interior of the Sunamganj Subdivision. Already there was acute shortage of food in many parts of the Subdivision. The horrible tornado and hailstorm have not only destroyed the entire Buro crop, it has also demolished thousands of houses. Telegrams are pouring in to all hon. Members coming from Sunamganj. All of them bear horrible tales of the havoc wrought by nature. May I hope that the Government would take immediate steps to give immediate relief to the suffering and distressed? With these remarks, Sir, I support the Motion.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, from what we have heard from the different hon. Members who have participated in this debate and also from the speeches of the hon. Members delivered in course of the Budget discussion, I think Sir, that there is no denying the fact that the procurement and distribution of articles of foodstuff and other articles referred to in the Motion under discussion are anything but satisfactory. I think, Sir, from the speeches it is further clear that the grievances are almost universal and are of a like nature. So, Sir, I do not propose to take the valuable time of this hon. House by narrating the state of things that exists in my Subdivision. I think, it will suffice, if I say that the same story is told everywhere and the same complaints are received from almost all quarters of the Province. Sir, if we analyse all the speeches, we find that with regard to articles of foodstuff that are imported by Government, the complaints can be divided under four major heads. Firstly, Sir, procurement is unsatisfactory and extremely inadequate. I think, Sir, that the supply of most of the articles that are indented by the Government of Assam is less than 50 per cent. of the pre-war requirement of the Province. I do not know, Sir, whether the Government have any statistics to determine the normal demand of these articles in the Province, and without any reliable statistics it is no doubt very difficult to ascertain the correct figure. If there is no such statistics I don't know, Sir, how Government have determined the pre-war requirement of the people of the Province with regard to articles that are imported by them. From our personal experience and from a calculation of what we consumed before the war, I feel Sir, that we don't now get even 50 per cent. of what we used before the war. From that

experience, Sir, I say that in most of the articles that are indented by Government the supply is not even 50 per cent. of our normal demand. Besides that, Sir, the goods that are procured are very often of bad quality. The second complaint is that the supply of these articles from place of origin to different distributing centres is not equitable and regular. I don't know, Sir, the basis on which the goods procured are distributed to different centres. I shall be obliged to the Hon'ble Minister of Supply if he let us know the basis on which distribution is made, and I hope also that he will inform this hon. House whether the normal demand of the Province in pre-war days has been ascertained and if so what is that demand and what percentage of that demand do we get as our quota. Any way, Sir, I feel that the present supply of these articles is not only inequitable but also not unoften irregular and I hope it is known to the hon. Members of this House also. The third complaint is that the distribution is most unmethodical; and in places where there is no rationing, the supply is very uncertain with the result that the scanty supply at the origin becomes scantier when it reaches the consumers. If the total quota is 50 per cent. of our normal demand I am sure, Sir, that the individuals do not get even that 50 per cent. of the supply. To cite an instance I refer to our cloth position. Only the other day the Hon'ble Minister of Supply was telling us that Assam's quota was fixed on a calculation of 11 yards of cloth per capita. But, Sir, even in towns half of 11 yards has not been received by individuals. The scheme is in operation for more than one year and if a survey is made, I think, Sir, it will be found that the people in towns did not get more than four or five yards of cloth per head while those in villages get much less. That is why I said that the scanty supply at the origin becomes scantier when it reaches the consumers' hand.

Sir, with regard to places where there is no rationing, particularly with regard to villages, as all hon. Members have already stated, the situation is far more acute. Sir, even if the total quota is 50 per cent. of our normal demand, I do not think any individual in villages gets even 25 per cent. of his pre-war requirement. With regard to sugar, *atta* and flour, it is well known to the hon. Members that these articles are seldom available in villages at controlled price.

Then, Sir, the fourth complaint is that corruption reigns supreme in every branch of procurement, supply and distribution. Sir, I do not like to take much time of the hon. House in dilating on this point, as this subject has been very elaborately dealt with by various hon. Members. Now as regards the articles that are not indented by the Government, that is, with regard to the articles that are produced within the Province, *e. g.* rice and paddy, we have heard enough from different hon. Members. Our main difficulty is that the figures that are supplied by the Agricultural Department are hardly reliable and we are not yet sure whether our Province is a surplus or a deficit one. We do not know whether our present stock position will allow us to export anything for the purpose of meeting the crying needs of other Provinces where there is likely to be an acute shortage of food-stuffs. Besides this, another difficulty is how to guarantee minimum price to the cultivators. If we find that our stock position is sufficient to allow us to export something for the needs of other parts of India, I do not think anybody here will object to that but before that we must be sure of our stock position and we should also find out some means to guarantee a fair price to our poor cultivators. So, Sir, this is the present position with regard to articles of food-stuffs, cloth, kerosene and other articles that are imported and also with regard to articles that are produced in the Province. I do not think, Sir, there is any difference of opinion as regards the present state of things between the Government and the Opposition or anybody else. If that be so, Sir, then our only concern seems to be to find out means

to remedy the defects. Many hon. Members have made valuable suggestions; of course, Sir, it is very difficult to make helpful suggestions without knowing the actual figures, without having reliable data before us and if I may be permitted to make any suggestion, I would venture to suggest that with regard to articles that are produced in the Province, *viz.*, rice and paddy, I think, Sir, if Government is to procure those commodities they must procure by calling tenders every two months or earlier. The system of procurement through the agencies hopelessly failed and, I am afraid, Sir, the system of procurement through Government agencies will fare no better. So, I think the only safe course would be to call for tenders so that there may be some competition between the tenderers with the result that our poor producers may not be let down by monopoly purchasers. With regard to articles imported by Government, I think, Sir, rationing is the only remedy. But, Sir, I do not think it is possible to make much helpful suggestions without getting reliable data. So, Sir, I would most earnestly suggest that Government would do well to prepare well thought-out and comprehensive plans with regard to the procurement, supply and distribution of articles of food-stuffs that are indented by them and also for articles of food-stuffs that are produced in the country and after they have prepared such a scheme, they should place their scheme before a Committee consisting of Members from the different groups of this House and also of some prominent non-official members. Unless they evolve such a scheme, I do not think mere change of officers or mere constitution of vigilance committees will remove corruption; unless a system is evolved whereby it may be possible for every individual to get his quota in time and without any difficulty, I do not think it will be possible to remove corruption. I think, Sir, it is the system that is mainly responsible for corruption; it is the system that corrupts a man. Employees or the traders are not inherently corrupt, but it is the system that makes them such.

Sir, my hon. Friend, Maulavi Nasir-ud-Din Ahmed has suggested that some employees of the Education Department should be brought in the Supply Department, only because there is hardly any corruption in the Education Department. I think hon. Members will agree with me that in the Postal or Education Department there is hardly any corruption and why, Sir? Can it be said that the employees of the Education Department or Postal Department are of high moral level or they have better prospects in their services? I think not. On the other hand, I think, many of the Officers of those Departments get lesser salaries and are much less educated than Officers of the Supply Department. If in these Departments there is no corruption, I submit, Sir, it is only because there is less scope for corruption in the system prevailing in those Departments. So, Sir, if the whole system of procurement supply and distribution can be changed, I think, corruption will be a thing of the past. Mere transfer of officers or setting up of committees will not possibly remove corruption and I would therefore urgently urge upon Government to prepare a well thought-out and comprehensive scheme for equitable supply and distribution of these articles and have it approved by an all-party committee. The Hon'ble Minister-in-charge told us the other day that the Government propose to form some Subdivisional and Thana Committees. I welcome these committees but Government should see that right type of men are appointed and they have powers to execute the plan approved by the Central Committee.

Sir, these are my humble suggestions and I hope in a matter like this Government will take all parties of this House into their confidence and try their level best to meet this difficult problem without any further delay.

Maulavi MD. ALI HAIDAR KHAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I have your permission to add a few words in support of the Motion under discussion? Sir, I am really at a loss to find that the Department of Procurement and Supply is still



under heavy criticism though the war is long over. I have heard of attacks after attacks being directed against them from all sides but it is really wonderful how they have maintained their position and not surrendered. They are still groping in the dark for want of proper organisation and guidance, and knocking here and there for a way out.

Sir, I have heard many hon. Members speak on this subject. One of the Friends on the opposite side came up with a suggestion in the garb of good old Congress which does not ease the situation or show a way out from the present difficulties but suggests a weapon to destroy the country's present social structure in order to build it anew with Russian materials in the future. It looks to me like a straw being thrown at a drowning man.

Sir, this Department was started during the war in order to adjust the needs and wants of the civil population in conjunction with the military authorities in days when war exigencies demanded such arrangements and to find out supplies for the civil population and distribute the same to the people in an equitable manner but they have practically failed in their duties. The reason is that they have not up till now been able to formulate their line of action. They are still beating about the bushes. Lack of management of proper handling has given rise to bribery, corruption, nepotism, black-marketing and profiteering. Those clever enough have utilized the opportunity to their advantage. Here, Sir, I can cite an example of how things were done in the past which came to my notice about a month and a half back. A responsible officer in course of conversation told me that in his subdivision no record was being kept of those cloths or textile goods that were received and distributed by the office there. Can you, Sir, imagine such a thing in a Government's Department? It seems things were being done on the whims of the officers in charge.

Sir, those countries who actually fought the war and suffered terribly in men, money and materials are building up their losses and are looking forward to the establishment of normal life shortly, but it is a pity that those who saw war only on the screen should still suffer. Thank God, war did not come to our country. Had it, our plight would have been worst.

To be brief, Sir, I would suggest, in the best interest of the public, to do away with this Department altogether and revert to the old policy which prevailed in pre-war days. Let procurement be done by the people themselves as they did in the past and also let there be no restriction on movements of articles used or consumed except on paddy and rice until such time when fear of famine is over. Of course the prices should be fixed by Government for such things and kept under the control of a Department which may be named as "Civil Supply Intelligence and Vigilance Department". I am sure free import and export will do away with monopolies and black-marketeers and create competition which will go to the benefit of the buying public.

But, Sir, if it is found absolutely necessary or unavoidable to apply a quota system on certain things then it should be done for such period as is found absolutely necessary but there should be no procurement agencies for those things also. Every one should have the right of procurement as they had in pre-war days.

I hope the Government will consider my suggestions and if found useful would move in the matter early.

With these few words I resume my seat.

Srijut SANTOSH KUMAR BARUA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank my hon. Friend, Mr. Abdul Bari, for initiating a discussion on the food procurement policy of the Government. This afforded an opportunity to the Members of the House to express their views on this important matter which undoubtedly constitutes the vital problem of the day for the Province.

Administration of the Supply Department has so far been a history of failures and from the manner in which this department has been carrying out their duties, one is led to believe that their failures are the result of nothing but deliberate neglect on the part of the Government. Corruption is running rampant in the official circle from top to bottom. It is surprising to note that even if instances of corruption are detected and brought to the notice of the authorities concerned, their attitude is one of indifference, it would not be an exaggeration if I say, one of sympathy for the crime.

Contract has been given to Messrs. Steel Brothers for procurement of paddy from the Assam Valley. Through the manipulation of this agency and other mushroom agencies and profiteers, paddy in huge quantities is flowing out of the Province by rail and river every day unrestricted through the subtle protection of Paddy Preventing Staff set up by the Government for controlling food-grain movement and the funny part of the whole thing is that we do not know till now, whether the Province is surplus or deficit, so far as food-grain is concerned. We do not know yet whether we are heading towards danger for shortage of food.

Grow-More-Food Campaign was undertaken by the Government. Lots of money were also spent for carrying on propaganda on a vigorous scale for the purpose. But no measures were taken by the Government to stop plough cattle being freely exported to feed the military people from the existing depleted stock of cattle in the Province. It sounds paradoxical to ask people to grow more food when there is no cattle to plough the fields with.

So, Sir, this is the situation and undoubtedly the situation is a grave one and I feel constrained to say that the last Government was evidently not interested at all to turn their mind to the woes of the half naked and half starving multitudes of the country. So it is up to the Congress Government now, which in fact is the Peoples' Government to take bold step to purge the guilt at the root and initiate measures of co-ordinated character to tackle the problem of rural economy in all different fronts in order to give the masses relief from their soul killing struggle for bare existence.

Mumtazul Muhaddisin Moulana MUHAMMAD MUFAZZAL HUSSAIN :  
(The hon. Member spoke in Urdu and an English translation of his speech as furnished by him is given below) :—

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in supporting the Motion moved by my hon. Friend, Maulvi Abdul Bari Chaudhury, I wish to say a few words. Sir, the question of food and clothing is the most vital question for human beings and it is incumbent upon the Government to find out ways and means for the solution of this most acute problem. At the very outset let me draw the pointed attention of the Government to the fact that they should not forget for a moment that the Government is the custodian of the people and as such they are to look to the betterment and well-being of all sections of people. They will be lacking in their duties if they fail to safeguard properly the elementary rights of the people. In my opinion Government should spare no pains to ameliorate the grievances of the people inhabiting this eastern zone of Pakistan. I am confident that Government will take up this question with right earnest and solve the problem vitally concerned to all classes of people without the least possible delay.

Sir, we know that the Government are the most powerful machinery to give redress to the people provided they have the will to do so. When the question of food and clothing is undertaken by Government I must emphatically say that the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Supply should be a better person to augment the supply position of these vital things in consultation with the expert advice of his Secretary in charge of Supply. We see that the Government Exchequer is being replenished by constant realisation of different taxes, both direct and indirect from the people of this Province. No single individual is exempted from payment

of taxes. And as such there is no reason why Government should be lagging behind to render services to the people. I do hope that Government will make necessary arrangements promptly for the supply of essential commodities so that every individual of both towns and villages gets his quota of food and clothings timely and regularly.

Sir, I quite agree that in the past there was some mismanagement in the supply position of this Province, but that should not be a plea for the present Government to shake off their responsibility. I regret to express that I cannot agree with my hon. Friend, Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen, though both of us hail from the same constituency. He said that the sufferings and miseries of peoples of all places are equal in the Province. I submit, Sir, that the sufferings of the village people are far more worse than those living in the towns. Again the sufferings of those village people who are deprived of all kinds of facilities, communication and transport, etc., as in my side, are more than those of those village people who are in more advantageous position as in Mr. Sen's side. I think Mr. Sen cannot even dream the miserable plight of the people of my side. The people living there do not get their every day necessities of life at controlled price and as such they make their purchases from black-markets. They cannot put forward their claims to the proper authority for want of communication and education.

Now coming to the food question let me point out that the Agriculture Department of this Province is practically useless. I cannot understand, Sir, the reason for what it stands. I think that this Department is meant to teach the people how to grow food scientifically. But in reality it is not. Now Government are apt in sending money for relief measures in times of scarcity of food, but I must say that they do not take proper steps for the prevention of the menace beforehand. I think if the Government take precautionary measures timely, the problem can be solved easily and with minimum troubles. In this connection I sent a letter to the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Agriculture on the 20th February last. I am not aware whether he has received it and if it be in the affirmative I don't know the action taken by him. The letter reads as follows:—

“Sir, the alarming news of food crisis throughout India demands us all to think over the situation ahead and to find out a solution of the problem, if possible.

May I therefore request you to take up the matter in right earnest and to consider and give effect to the following suggestions forwarded to you at an early date:—

According to the opinion of this humble self ‘Grow-More-Food’ in the present circumstances, is the only means to face the problem.

In view of the fact that the time for cultivating ‘Aman’ and ‘Murali’ paddy is going to be over and want of rainfall rendered it impossible for the peasants to cultivate their fields, I should like to suggest that the fields that yet remained uncultivated should be forthwith brought under cultivation by applying an easy scientific method. Let me further suggest you in this connection that there is a rumour that many Motor Pumps of Military are left unused, so you may very kindly make necessary arrangements with the Military authorities to utilise their Motor Pumps, etc., for watering the fields that are awaiting the rainfall to be cultivated.

It is said that an unused Military Motor Pump of 4' to 6' (inches) diameter can easily drench about 5 (five) *hals* of land in an hour.

The suggested policy if accepted can easily bring under cultivation a vast tract of lands that will remain otherwise uncultivated.

My further suggestion is to provide the cultivators of big areas with “Motor plough” and with Jeeps and Lorries furnished with necessary appliances to utilise them in ploughing purpose.

Let the needy cultivators be helped with bullocks and buffaloes and in cases of emergencies with *tacabi* loans and seeds as well.

The Government waste lands should at once be granted settlement and brought under cultivation.

The potatoes and *Methaalus* (sweet potatoes) should be planted immediately in hillocks and *tillas* where these food-stuffs can be easily grown.

Let the Government come forward only with a few lakhs of rupees so that by applying the means suggested above, we may obtain an early crop of about fifty lakhs maunds of Murali crop which will save us from the impending danger and so that we may help the people of neighbouring Provinces with our surplus.

Hope, these will be appreciated by you."

Sir, the Agriculture Department should try to find out ways and means by which we may get more food-stuffs with less land, labour and capital. They should also try to prevent crops by all means from being spoiled by floods and droughts. It is a known fact that Sylhet is the most low lying district in the world and it is quite natural that the crops of this district is likely to be destroyed by flood year by year. In Bengal, I heard, that there are some kind of paddy which grow luxuriantly in the low land which, in rainy season, remains under 14 to 15 cubits of water. If that kind of paddy is brought here for experiment, I think it will prove a success. I must say with regret that the Agriculture Department is not taking any step towards this direction. It may easily be understood that the Department is created entirely to make provisions of some high salaried persons. I therefore say that if the Department fails in their duties to do good to the cultivators, it should at once be abolished.

If the present Ministry fails to impress upon them the necessity of making them conscious of their duties, I must say with due emphasis that they should make room for others who are more capable and enlightened in this respect. I submit, Sir, that the party politics of the Congress and the Muslim League should not end in this House alone. They should go a little further and prove the truth of their statements to the masses of whom they are the representatives. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad while delivering his speech in a meeting in the Albert Hall, Calcutta in 1932 said "Let British Government hand over the administration of any portion of India in my hand and if I cannot manage things better than them, I will never utter the word 'Independence.'"

Sir, to say something is easier than to put it into practice. Only the actions are counted and not the words. If the Congress Government cannot tackle the problem facing the country, I request them to vacate the Ministerial *gaddi* so that people may not suffer for no fault of their own.

With these few words, Sir, I support the Motion and resume my seat.

Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the 30th March last the Hindusthan Standard of Calcutta published a news from Tezpur, saying that the Military people were exporting rice from Khoirabari Railway Station of the Bengal and Assam Railway. I submit, Sir, that this is a very alarming news. I fail to understand how the Military people could come to export without any reference to the Provincial Government. So far as we know, Messrs. Steel Brothers are exporting rice under contract, and I am extremely unable to realise how the Military people could come to this Province to export rice. They are, it is reported, exporting rice to Panagar cantonment. I hope Government will take immediate notice of this information supplied by the Press and take measures to stop this sort of export by the Military without any reference to the Provincial Government. So far as we have been able to gather from the Hon'ble the Premier, and it has also been said by the Hon'ble Supply Minister, the Provincial Government has acceded to the necessity of continuing the supply that the previous Government was making to Bengal, on the assumption that this Province may well be in a position to supply some rice and paddy because the

Province was able to do so in the previous years. The Hon'ble the Prime Minister was pleased to say that he did not rely on the statistics supplied by the Government officers about the surplus figure. But we are going to supply on the assumption that as we could supply in previous years and so now also we will be able to supply. My submission to Government is that it will be a very risky proposition. We do not know what the actual position is about rice, nor does the Government do. It is not enough to say that our people did not actually die of starvation. It is not enough to say that our people did not die of actual starvation, we have also got to see that the vitality of the people is also maintained. The question arises in this way: In 1943 during the Bengal famine, we had no death from actual starvation in this Province, but the Province knows that there was a havoc in Baniyachong due to malaria. Thousands of people died of Malaria in Baniyachong and the medical opinion is emphatic that the mortality figure rose so high only because people had already lost their vitality their power of resistance. My Friends in the Assam Valley will bear me out when I say that *Kala-azar* is taking a heavy toll there. My information is that in the Sylhet District also malaria is prevailing in some areas and there is every danger that if we make the supply in this way people may have to live on scanty diet, not sufficient to keep their vitality intact. The result will be that the epidemic of malaria, *Kala-azar* and typhoid may take a heavy toll. It is not sufficient to say that people did not die of actual starvation. But we are also to see that people have got their vitality kept intact. My submission is and other hon. Members have also submitted, that the Provincial Government must insist on our getting as much as possible from the Grow-More-Food Campaign. That campaign has a very sad story so far as this Province is concerned. Even then we must give all emphasis on the Grow-More-Food Campaign but before we launch the Grow-More-Food Campaign we have also got to see that the cultivator gets sufficient incentive to grow-more-food. We have got assurance from the Hon'ble Prime Minister that the cultivators will get proper price for their production. I would like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Ministers of Supply and Agriculture to one fact. In his note of dissent to the Famine Commission Report, Professor Afzal Hussain laid much stress on the need for cultivating tubers. He had also in his presidential speech over the All-India Science Congress held at Bangalore in January last laid great stress on the fact that steps should be taken to encourage cultivation of tubers, meaning potato, sweet potato, etc. These have great food value. Professor Afzal Hussain cited instances of other countries also in this respect. These articles can be grown in larger quantities in smaller areas and their food value also is greater.

Then as regards the knotty problem of distribution, we have heard from the Hon'ble the Supply Minister that there will be committees in every thana to deal with distribution. My only suggestion is that we must have at least one committee for each circle. People must get this assurance from the Government that their suggestions will not be flouted by the officers. The Ministry should see that the bureaucracy do not ignore public opinion. They have been in the habit of ignoring public opinion. They have them to discard that habit all at once just now. It is here that the cabinet will have to make its voice felt. It is in these people's committees in which we hope to have the nucleus of future Swaraj Panchayats. We are soon going to have powers from the British Government. We shall have to decentralise all that power into the hands of the people. We shall have to decentralise their own affairs in the near future. We hope to see the people form such committees with people on whom our people have reliance—I mean with people who have the power of initiative and who will do the work in the right manner in right time.

With these words, Sir, I hope the Hon'ble Minister for Supply will give his utmost attention to this matter. People are expecting much from us. The result of the election has shown that all sections of the people expect much from the Congress Government. Even some of those people who voted for the League Members expected the Congress to come to power and further that some change would come thereby in the whole atmosphere. That is why I say, Sir, that people are expecting much from us. I would therefore most earnestly appeal to the Cabinet to give their utmost attention to this serious matter and find out some solution for the problem.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Sir, could you give us any idea when the Hon'ble Minister will reply?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: My desire is that I shall begin at 2 p. m.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI: There are other Members who would also like to speak on this subject and if the Hon'ble Minister takes one hour (which would be sufficient, I think), he may begin at 3 p.m., Sir.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I beg to submit, Sir, perhaps the hon. Members are not realising the true position with regard to this debate. The Hon'ble Minister in charge has not as yet given his first reply. If he begins his speech at 2 p.m. and takes one hour that will take us up to 3 p.m. After that other hon. Members have got the right to speak and the hon. Mover of the Motion will also give his last reply. After all these the Hon'ble Minister will give his final reply. So, I think, the whole day is going to be taken up by this debate even if the Hon'ble Minister begins his first reply at 2 p.m.

Mr. A WHITTAKER: A great deal of repetition is taking place which, I am quite sure, could be checked by the Hon'ble Minister making a statement at an early stage in the debate. If he can make a statement quickly a lot of the repetition will be quite unnecessary; the time of the House at present is being wasted by too much repetition.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, I at first thought that I would give my first reply after hearing two or three hon. Members, but so many hon. Members were willing to speak that I did not like to intervene, as it might have been interpreted that I was not giving them an opportunity of speaking. It is up to you to say when I should give my reply. I was prepared yesterday, and am ready now.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI: The Hon'ble Minister may be given half an hour for his preliminary reply.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I may be given at least one hour's time, Sir. I have taken full notes of what the hon. Members said and I want to touch on all the points. Moreover, Sir, I am not a fluent speaker and suffer sometimes from poverty of expression. So, it will take me a little more time if I am to touch on all the points raised in this debate. I would of course assure you, Sir, that I shall try to be as brief as possible and to the point.

Maulavi MD. ABDUL LATIF: Mr. Speaker, Sir, much has been said on the floor of this House about the difficulties of our vast population, whom we represent, with regard to the supply and distribution of rationed articles and we have been given sufficient assurance by the Government that new schemes are going to be adopted by this Government for fair and equitable distribution of cloth, kerosene oil, sugar, etc. In this connection I beg to submit here that the people of the rural areas with whom we are now chiefly concerned are undergoing unaccountable

sufferings due to the inadequate supply of these commodities and the prevalent corruption. The black-marketeers and profiteers are growing in number and the profession of black-marketing is carried on in such a way that the whole affair proves that as if there is no other way to get these commodities fairly without adopting the practice of black-marketing or any foul means.

Sir, in the villages, as I say from my experience gathered from the constituency I represent, a kerosene oil licensee often goes with the excuse that kerosene oil is received late in the respective month and that is received either in half quantity or short of one or two tins and on being questioned in the succeeding month, he puts the same excuse, which is not at all a fact. The licensee, receiving the full quota, disposes of a quantity in the black market, profiting a good deal and in doing so he takes special care to win the village influential men, giving them their share and thus depriving the poor and simple villagers from their legitimate shares.

Sir, a cloth licensee is no less expert in such a sort of practice. A similar practice is going on in the supply of cloth. A poor villager with a salt card goes to the dealer who unfortunately is unwilling to admit the receipt of the quota and thus the poor man is sent back to wait for some time more. Unfortunately, being questioned on any subsequent date, he goes on saying that the supply has already been almost finished or half-finished on the plea that it was a very small supply. This is surely an excuse to deprive the poor and helpless villagers. There is practically no supply of mill-cloth to the rural areas and those are as if meant for privileged class.

Sir, in the villages the monthly supply of sugar is 1 to 2 maunds for a Chowkidari circle having 200 families or more. A supply of one powa of sugar and a like quantity of mustard oil is absolutely a poor one. The children and patients are suffering most for want of proper food and diet, and the villagers are compelled to buy those commodities in black markets at an exorbitant price for the sake of their existence and on necessity. So it is seen that the more we make attempts to legislate for ameliorating the condition of our mass people, the more the corruption increases, against the discontent and grumble from all quarters and I urge upon the Government to take immediate steps to prevent it and put forward the new schemes for equitable and proper distribution of these commodities without further delay.

Sir to add a few words in connection with the supply of rice and paddy outside the Province of Assam, I should submit that we are not yet fully hopeful of the present Buro crops and the next Aus one, and when a world-wide famine is impending, the Government should at once stop the export until such time as we are in a position to spare the surplus. The price of rice has in the meantime gone high and going higher day to day and the famine has practically made its appearance and immediate steps are required to be taken to save the people from falling victims to its horrors.

With these words, I support the Motion moved by hon. Maulavi Abdul Bari Choudhury.

#### **Announcement of the result of Elections to the Public Accounts Committee**

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I am now announcing the result of the elections to the Public Accounts Committee which were held on the 29th March 1946. The following hon. Members are declared elected to the said Committee:—

(1) Maulavi Abdul Hai, (2) Maulavi Syed Abdur Rouf, (3) Srijut Lakshesvar Borooah, (4) Maulavi Abdul Hamid, (5) Babu Kamini Kumar Sen, (6) Shri Satiendra Mohon Dev and (7) Srijut Kameswar Das.

**Re: Election to the Assam Text Book Committee.**

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I think I would request the respective Leaders of the Parties to try to take up the subject of election of members to the Assam Text Book Committee and to see if they could not come to an agreement so that the election may be avoided and names agreed upon by the various Parties may be straightaway declared elected. Because, even if the Amendment for introducing the single-transferable voting system is accepted, I do not think we shall get any time to hold the election if we are to finish the business of the Assembly tomorrow. Therefore, I would request that if they can spare just three or four minutes to come over to the Speaker's Room to discuss and settle the matter amicably we may be able to obviate the difficulties.

**Adjournment**

The Assembly was then adjourned for Lunch till 2 P. M.

**After Lunch****Motion re Supply and distribution of foodstuffs, coal, etc.**

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must thank at the outset the hon. Members who have taken part in this debate and have given good suggestions for the assistance of Government. Sir, the hon. Mover of this Motion said that he expected that some Motion should have been moved by the Government to let the hon. Members of this House have the opportunity of saying their say in this matter. Sir, it is at least known to you that this Motion came to your office at a very early date and when the Motion was sent to me for my consent, I took some time because at that time I thought whether it would not be better on the part of Government to bring a similar Motion and therefore requested the Assembly Secretary to resubmit the file after a few days. In the meantime I thought over the matter and finally gave my consent for which I think the hon. Mover instead of blaming me ought to have thanked me that I have given him this opportunity of moving this Motion in which almost all the hon. Members of the House have taken part and thanked him for having initiated this debate.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The Hon'ble Minister also shares the thanks.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Now, Sir, I shall first take up the question of rice and paddy, which are our staple food.

Sir, it is well-known to the hon. House that there is no reliable data on the basis of which any Government in Assam can arrive at a right decision ; but the saddest part of the thing is that the present Government has been blamed for that. When this Government have taken up the matter, they will find out some ways and means to collect reliable data as far as possible for the future and we have already taken action in this respect. Sir, the figures that were available to this Government when they took over charge were as follows so far as autumn crop is concerned. It was 3,92,545 tons, winter crop, 15,14,180 tons, spring crop, 1,09,050 tons, total being 20,15,775 tons (all final forecast in terms of rice). On the basis of this forecast the last Government kept 18,65,000 tons for the consumption of the people of the Province. A certain percentage say about 5 per cent. was kept for wastage, 5 per cent. for seeds and a certain percentage even for smuggling (*Laughter*). It is well known, Sir, that in spite of the best efforts of the Government there will be some sort of smuggling and so a small margin was calculated for this. It was not wise to keep our eyes shut to this aspect of the affair. Sir, to prevent smuggling this Government has increased the number of checkers, but



so far the result showed that our increased staff was not yet equal to the task as the border areas were so vast. So, we readily increased the number of checkers.

Now, Sir, the relevant point regarding export of rice is this. During this year 5,043 tons of rice have been exported from the Surma Valley and 6,515 tons and 25,663 tons from the Assam Valley—in total 37,221 tons of rice have been exported. In this connection, Sir, I think it would be proper if I explain to my hon. Friends who have enquired whether any paddy was exported from this Province or not. I have figures in tons; the relation of paddy to rice is 10 maunds of paddy equal to 6 maunds of rice and according to that basis these figures have been calculated.

Now, Sir, over and above this 37,221 tons of rice exported for the current Kharif year, 13,215 tons all from the Assam Valley have been exported in this year against the arrear of last year, making a total export in this year, by the end of March, at 50,436 tons. Our programme for April is for another 7,300 tons (all from the Assam Valley) making a total of 57,736 tons. Sir, it may be asked why I have mentioned about export only up to April. I would say that it would be wise on the part of Government to know the exact position. We wanted to know from our office what would be the quantity that will have to be exported during the month of April in pursuance of the desire of the Central Government to whom the previous Ministry were committed. The total commitment for the Kharif year is 151,000 tons in terms of rice. So, I have given that figure. What we shall do from May is not yet known because it will depend on the surplus stocks that will be in our hand. Sir, I am at one with those of my hon. Friends who say that it is our duty to see that we get sufficient quantities for feeding our people and this Government are quite alert on this point. But at the same time it is our duty to see after keeping sufficient quantities for our people whether we can help our countrymen elsewhere who are in great need of it.

Now, Sir, for collecting reliable data some suggestions were made that the Subdivisional Officers and the Deputy Commissioners concerned should be informed and that they should be instructed to supply the figures as accurately as possible. Sir, I am glad to inform the hon. Members that I have already done that and not only I have asked the Deputy Commissioners and Subdivisional Officers but also I have set up another agency and requested the Director of Agriculture to find out figures through separate machinery so that I can get an opportunity to compare the figures obtained from both the sources and to arrive at a correct decision.

Sir, as regards the Grow-More-Food Campaign, hon. Members have suggested that we must go on vigorously with this campaign and also at the same time a note of warning has been given to this Government to see that the poor cultivators get their due share in the shape of price for their commodities. Sir, this is the reason why we have not as yet been able to fix the minimum price. There are certain difficulties, for example, some of the hon. Members have suggested that the minimum price should be fixed at the cultivator's house. Now, Sir, along with this the transport cost to a place either by railway or by steamer should also be calculated. Now, this transport cost will not be same for all these different places, I mean the different villages. In fixing the bottom price as also the maximum price this difficulty arises. Transport cost for a village just by the side of a railway station or good motorable road will be very little in comparison with the cost from a place where there are no such facilities. It is the decided opinion of this Government that the minimum price should be fixed but all these difficulties are coming in our way. For all these we are taking some time but I can assure the hon. Members that it is only a question of time, not of months but of days, and we shall be able to come to a decision in this respect. (*Hear, hear.*)

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI: May I know from the Hon'ble Minister whether he has thought that bottom price once fixed would have a tendency of becoming the maximum price ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, that was the opinion of the last Government and the hon. Members who have experience of the last Assembly will bear me out that the opinion of the last Assembly was different.

Now, Sir, if these considerations stand in our way and we fail to decide the bottom price, it will surely be a very sad day for our poor cultivators. For arguments sake I am ready to accept the suggestion of my hon. Friend that the bottom price will be the maximum price, but still I shall have one satisfaction that they are getting an assured price (*laughter from the Opposition Benches*) which I consider would be the fair price. We cannot allow our peasants to be exploited by my contractor friends. If we can give them some thing more, well and good. But because the minimum price may be the maximum price and therefore nothing should be done—at least that is not the policy of this Government.

Sir, while fixing the minimum price it has been suggested that the prices of other commodities which are used for our daily necessities also should be taken into consideration. Sir, this point also has been taken into consideration and this is the reason—one of the reasons—which is delaying matters in fixing the bottom price. This question of fixing the minimum price is more or less dependent on the prices fixed by other provinces as well; because under the direction of the Central Government, Provincial Governments are bound to keep a parity of prices. Sir, if I may be permitted to say so, without divulging any secret, this Government will fight tooth and nail to raise even the maximum price where ever necessary. Sir, the first duty of this Government, as I have already stated, would be to fix the minimum price considering their cost as well as the prices of other commodities and necessaries of life.

Sir, I was surprised to hear—of course I cannot blame my hon. Friends—suggestions like this that the deficit areas should be served by the surplus areas. There is nothing to be surprised, after all, because it might be the experience of some of my hon. Friends that in the past even this was not done. But this is a most common sense affair, Sir, and I am surprised for this reason only that the hon. Members perhaps thought that this present Government lacked in this much of common sense. Sir, we are already transferring the surplus quota of a particular area to a deficit area, and I can assure my hon. Friends that this will be done for a long time to come and for this, the present Government are keeping reserves. They will soon begin purchasing and already they have got some stock in hand and they want to keep godowns filled with rice and paddy and whenever there will be any demand from any quarter the supply will be made from these godowns.

(At this stage there was interruption from the Opposition Benches.)

I did not disturb anybody in course of his speech. I request my hon. Friends if they have any question to ask, they may do so after I finish. I will try to answer their questions not only inside this House but even outside. As I want the co-operation of all my hon. Friends so they too can legitimately expect all sorts of co-operation from me.

Maulavi MAYEEN-UD-DIN AHMED CHOWDRY: It was not my intention to disturb the Hon'ble Minister, Sir.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Then what it was, Sir? If I miss any point, I might be misunderstood. I may be blamed that the Hon'ble Minister did not care to answer some points, Sir. I do not like to be blamed for that because I want to make it clear that I have taken all the suggestions in the right spirit and it is my earnest desire to answer to all the queries of my hon. Friends and to explain to the best of my knowledge, which may be poor, to the hon. Members of this House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister has already taken 25 minutes on only one point. He has not dealt with any other item of the Motion, *viz.*, cloth and kerosene.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I shall go through everything and I will make the position perfectly clear. There may be some mis-understanding in the minds of my hon. Friends and this Government will be blamed for this poor person and I do not want that for my sake the Government should be blamed, Sir. So I hope I will be given sufficient time so that I can explain the position as best as possible under the circumstances.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister should be brief.

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

Then, Sir, suggestions were given that food purchase should be done through men of business experience and some hon. Members gave suggestions that Government should purchase direct. There are different kinds of suggestions. Of course, Government will take into their serious consideration all these suggestions and they will take some such course which will meet the legitimate demands of the hon. Members and which will be to the best interest of the people of this Province.

One hon. Member remarked that the prices of rice and paddy in the South Sylhet Subdivision is higher than the controlled price. When the hon. Member has stated this I am ready to accept it, but it is a pity that the hon. Member did not bring it to the notice of the local authorities to stop this kind of profiteering. Sir, if any such matter is brought before the Subdivisional or District authorities I am sure, they are bound to take note of this kind of profiteering and it is their duty to stop it. I hope the hon. Member will bring it to the notice of the local authorities who will take steps, and if they do not, I request the hon. Member to write to me and I shall see how they could not manage to take note of such cases of profit-ering.

Sir, so far as the question of immigration and opening up of more lands in the Assam Valley and opening of *hoars* in the Sylhet Subdivision is concerned, this matter was discussed on the floor of this House on different occasions by various Members and I do not like to take the time of this hon. House on this point. Government will consider this also and will consider whether intensive cultivation will meet the demands of this Province. Intensive cultivation is less costly.

Sir, some hon. Members charged Government of supplying deteriorated rice and paddy to other Provinces. This very point I explained a few days back and then I said that it was not unfit for human consumption, but because the people of this Province lived in abundance so far as rice and paddy are concerned, they did not like this old stock when fresh stock was available. And that is the reason why this stock was exported outside the Province and I can assure the hon. Members of this House that it was found quite fit for human consumption.

Now, Sir, I shall take up pulses. In the year 1945, *i. e.*, in the Kharif year which begins in November and ends in October, the allotment of Mug was 5,000 tons from the Central Provinces, but the amount actually supplied was 3,710 tons. From Orissa the allotment was 1,905 tons but nothing has been imported up till now. Now, Sir, we have got another allotment of 3,200 tons of Mug from Rajputana, but as far as I can see it will not be possible for this Province to import it. So this Government have taken up the question with the Central Government whether this quota can be allotted to a Province which is nearer Rajputana. But the latest information is that Orissa will supply us 20,000 maunds of Mug Dal.

So far as Arhar, Masur and gram are concerned, in the Kharif year our quota from the United Provinces was 12,500 tons of Arhar, whereas we have received so far 2,995 tons. We had an allotment of 5,000 tons of Masur from United

Provinces whereas we got only 2,775 tons. The allotment from Bihar was 6,000 tons but we have got only 2,755 tons of Masur. No allotment has yet been made so far as the current year is concerned, which begins from today. So I am not in a position to say what will happen in the near future, but so far as the past is concerned, the Assam Government were at first asked to select their own traders and when this Government issued permits to certain traders, letters came from the Central Government stating that it was for the exporting Provinces to select their traders and they were to issue permits and not the importing Provinces. So when the exporting Province selected traders, our traders were at the mercy of those traders and they wanted to squeeze out something from our traders by foul means. So far as the current year is concerned, I do not want to allow such thing to occur. We shall see that the quota allotted for this province does come in time and also that we get our full quota.

Now, Sir, regarding wheat, on the 1st of March our stock was 32,681 maunds of Atta, flour 6,243 maunds and Sujee 936 maunds. The total quota for 1945-46 was 18,000 tons but subsequently we got another allotment of 5,000 tons, making the total at 22,000 tons. This additional allotment was made for the months of February to April, because the year so far as wheat is concerned, will begin from May. Out of this, arrival during February was 1,995 tons of wheat but as regards the future we have been given the warning that as there is shortage of cereals our quota for next year will be very little. We have, of course, lodged our protest and we shall see that we get our due share, but as a note of warning I want to say to the hon. Members that wheat quota will not be the same for the current year as it was in the previous year.

As regards mustard oil, from April 1945 to the end of February, 1946 1,09,595, maunds of mu tard oil came from the United Provinces to Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company, *i. e.*, roughly about 10,000 maunds per month, against our monthly target movement figure of 13,500 maunds and this is one of the reasons for scarcity. I can tell the hon. House that we have taken up this question and we are trying our best so that our quota may be increased and that we do not get less than our minimum requirement. Our additional quota from the Punjab was 1,247 tons, but only 100 tons could move due to blackmarketing tendency of the traders of that Province. We have taken up this question also.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister has said about the quota allotted to this Province and the quota received. He should explain why the allotted quota could not be had in full.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I shall explain that, Sir. This was mainly due to bad arrangement. It was sometime due to the Central Government's procedure that once we were asked to select our men for importing and then we were told that it was not the importing Province but the exporting Province who were to select their own traders. This is the reason of the delay in import. We are trying our best to increase the quota of mustard oil.

Now, Sir, I shall take up the question of salt. On the 1st March, 1946 the stock of salt was 3,26,881 maunds which was roughly meant for 2 months' consumption. This is one-seventh of the Bengal arrival, *i. e.*, one-seventh of the total arrival of salt in the Bengal coast. So long the salt used to come *via* Calcutta which made our salt a little more costly, but we have been informed that henceforward we shall get salt, of course, not the entire quantity but a portion of it, from Chittagong Port which will be less costly and thus the price of salt will slightly come down.

As regards Sugar, on the 1st March, 1946, 78,856 maunds—about seven weeks' consumption—was in our stock. An increased grant was made for 1945-46, the grant being 2,700 tons. But after that a general reduction has been made to the extent of 13 per cent. This is not only for this Province but throughout India and for that reason practically the extra allotment that was made

for this Province has been taken away. Still I can say for the enlightenment of this hon. House that we have got an increase of 230 tons in addition to 16,300 tons which is our present quota. Even if there is a general cut of 13 per cent, still the excess quota of 230 tons will be left for us.

As regards Gur, our first allotment was 9,000 tons and we were given the hope that we shall get another 5,000 tons. When the permits were in the process of being issued, we got a letter from the Central Government that as the sugarcane crop was very bad in the Provinces which were to supply us, nothing should be given to this Province. We imported some quantity last year, but we could not use it as it was unfit for our consumption. They drew the conclusion that when we could afford not to use this rotten quantity, there was no necessity of Gur here. Therefore we will not get anything. This Government was not satisfied with this decision of the Central Government. They protested against this and were corresponding. Luckily we have received a reply to-day that for the time being we shall get 5,000 tons of Gur.

Now, Sir, I shall take up coal. Coal being a controlled commodity under the Colliery Control Order, 1945, the Regional Coal Controller at Margherita arranged supply and distribution to Assam. He is an officer under the Government of India. So we have got no hand over him. We cannot persuade the officer to supply us according to our demand. It is a well-known fact that with the cessation of hostilities the Military consumption will be less and that the people of the Province should get more coal and coke for their consumption. Government have taken up this matter and I can assure that this Government will try to find out some extra coal for the people of this Province.

As regards fuel, the hon. Mover said that there are difficulties. He did not say how these difficulties could be removed. Of course, I cannot compel him, but it would have helped me a good deal if I got his suggestions. So far as sub-divisional towns and district headquarters are concerned it may be possible for the Government to have some stock in order to supply the inhabitants on a rationed basis. But so far as the whole Province is concerned, it will be very difficult for the Government to give any assurance. But if there be any suggestion, certainly this Government will consider that and try to do their best to act according to that suggestion.

Now, Sir, coming to kerosene oil, up to June 1945, our quota was 50 per cent. of the off-take of 1941, that is the quantity consumed in 1941 was taken to be the basic consumption. Fifty per cent. of that was allotted for us and that remained in force up to June, 1945. It was raised to 55 per cent. of the off-take of 1941 in July. Then there was some correspondence and the quota was raised in September to 65 per cent. which is still being given to us. Now, Sir, many of the hon. Members have suggested: Why now should we not get our full requirement? For the enlightenment of this hon. House I may say that only 8.39 per cent. of India's consumption during the first half of 1945 could be met from the produce of this country; the rest comes from outside. How can this Government increase the quota when the question of Kerosene supply is beyond the hands of not only this Government but even the Central Government as well. The question of policy is there. Some correspondence is going on between the Central Government and this Government, but there is very little chance of increasing the quota so far as kerosene oil is concerned. There was a time when I used to think that we have got sufficient kerosene oil in our country and so why we should not get for our use the full quantity? But when I learnt that only 8.39 per cent. of our demand could be met from the production of this country when the quota was 50 per cent. of the 1941 off-take, I was rather surprised, and I hope in these circumstances so far as kerosene oil is concerned the hon. Members will realise that this Government have no hand in the matter. They can press the Central Government; they are pressing and they will go on pressing.

Now, Sir, I shall take up cloth.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The Hon'ble Minister has got only 10 minutes more.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : I shall try my utmost to finish as early as possible. I have to deliver extempore and I know my deficiency too. Had their been written speech before me I could have finished much earlier. You will therefore please excuse me, Sir, but I assure you that I shall sincerely try to finish as early as possible, but I desire to satisfy my Friends.

Now, Sir, I shall first take up the quota position of mill cloth, then Standard Cloth and then yarn. Sir, the monthly cloth quota of Assam till September 1945 used to be 6,073 bales. Now, Sir, I should say how much a bale contains ; it contains 1,500 yards. So our quota up till September was 6,073 bales, out of which 1,582 bales were deducted against the supply of 1,390 bales of yarn, leaving a balance of 4,491 bales of cloth. This again was subject to deduction against the supply of Standard Cloth and so in actual practice the quota of non-standard cloth used to vary between three to four thousand bales per month. From the 1st of October 1945, the gross quota was raised to 6,680 bales which after the deduction of 1,582 bales against yarn supply left 5,098 bales of cloth subject to Standard Cloth deduction. From the 1st of January 1946 the gross quota was raised to 7,200 bales with 5,618 bales net for cloth due to calculation of population at a higher rate. From the 1st of March 1946 a further relief has been obtained as the deduction against yarn has been reduced from 1,582 bales to 1,381 bales, leaving a cloth quota of 5,819 bales. As soon as the adjustment against the last allotment of Standard Cloth is made we shall get this quota entirely in the shape of mill cloth.

Now, Sir, why the present position of cloth is so bad was explained by me and I don't want to take much time of the House by repetition, but just to be fair and to give a little idea to my hon. Friends I shall mention one or two things. Firstly, Sir, it was due to the bad procurement system, because those who were given the work of procurement were under no obligation to Government and it was their sweet will either to continue the procurement or leave it at any time they liked. That was the reason why our quota could not be moved in time and lapsed. The present Government have taken note of this and the Government will bind down the movers, whoever they may be to indent our full quota so that there may not be any repetition of such tragedy.

Then, Sir, as regards yarn, it will suffice to say that we got our quota quite all right. Practically there was no lapse. But so far as distribution is concerned, I admit that the present system of distribution of both cloth and yarn should be revised and something new should be done. Without trying to find out the defects of the last system I think it would be better on my part if I place before the hon. Members the salient points of the procedure that will be adopted by this Government and if any further suggestions come forward certainly this Government will consider them seriously. Some of my hon. Friends blamed this Government that it was not prudent on their part to stop supply of Standard Cloth. But, Sir, it was due to *bona fide* ignorance of my hon. Friends that they remarked like that. It is not in the hands of this Government ; the Central Government are going to stop the supply of Standard Cloth, but thereby we are not going to lose because we would get our full quota of cloth. From our total cloth quota the quota for Standard Cloth used to be deducted and we got the balance in the shape of mill-made cloth. When there will be no supply of Standard Cloth, we shall get our entire supply in the shape of mill-made cloth.

Then, Sir, some of my hon. Friends wanted to know the figures about Standard Cloth supply. I shall give the figures in brief.

Allotment Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 together—The allotment was 2,16,47,999 and the receipt was 2,16,47,999.

Allotment No. 5 was 1,27,98,133 and the receipt was the same.

Allotment No. 6 was 2,88,58,507 and the receipt was 2,83,32,719, leaving a balance of 5,25,788.

Allotment No. 7 was 1,72,58,280 out of which we got 1,62,60,319, leaving a balance of 9,97,961.

Allotment No. 8 (the last allotment) was 2,18,74,312 out of which we got 1,53,57,897, leaving a balance of 65,16,415. Our total balance due is 81,40,164.

But, Sir, there is no chance of not getting it. Some of it is on the way, and we are assured that we shall get our full quota. I am sure, Sir, I won't be misunderstood if I repeat that even if we do not get Standard Cloth we shall get a replacement by the non-standard cloth.

Now, Sir, some hon. Members said that the present arrangement for distribution of mill cloth is whimsical. There is no fixed basis or plan. But, Sir, I can say that the quota for each subdivision has already been allotted in the shape of percentage of bales and the quotas for urban and rural areas have been fixed separately. If any hon. Member wants to know the total allotment of a particular subdivision or area I shall certainly be in a position to give him the figures. But if I am to give them subdivision by subdivision I shall have to take more time.

As regards distribution of cloth, Sir, I say that the present method is defective, *i.e.*, it is the whole-seller or the subdivisional co-operative societies who take over charge of a quota for a particular district or subdivision and then they sell it to the retailers. But there is no record by which one can really find out that cloth and what quantity of it is meant for what place or centre. That is why, Sir, the other day I told the House that committees will be formed in subdivisions as well as in different circles, each thana being taken as a unit and in one thana there might be 3, 4 or 5 vigilance committees, as the situation will demand. It will be then up to the members of those committees to carry out the policy of the Government. That policy will be that all people of this Province can get some cloth so that they can any how carry on until more supply or allotment of cloth is available. To be more clear the distribution will be on a population basis. But some differentiation might have to be made in distribution in the rural and urban areas, as I have said the other day. The urban areas might get a little more than the rural areas and the reason for this must be best known to the hon. Members of this House. Sir, one hon. Member has said that it has been a matter of great regret that even for burial purpose cloth was not available. I have taken note of this fact and I will enquire why the officer concerned did not take any step for such an urgent requirement. I do not know if any provision was made by the last Government for such a purpose. But I must see that provision is made for allotting a piece of cloth for the purpose of burial of dead body. I am sorry for those departed souls.

Sir, my time is over, but I wanted to speak about hoarding, profiteering and black-marketing. I require only few minutes more.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister will get some more time when he will have to reply to the hon. Mover, as is the rule.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Very well, Sir.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have heard with attention the speech delivered by my hon. Friend, Mr. Mookerjee, in reply to food debate. I have got my doubts about the fixing of minimum price. He has said that the Government have decided to fix the minimum price as soon as possible. But I wish to place before the House my misgivings and may say, Sir, that even if the minimum price is fixed

our cultivators will remain as they have been in the past. It is an admitted fact that there has been a world wide shortage of rice and paddy. It is also an admitted fact that other parts of India are also likely to be affected by the imminent famine. And the tendency would be that the price of rice and paddy will run up higher and higher. In this state of things if the minimum price is fixed and if the trade or business in rice and paddy is allowed to go on in the way it has been done then all the profits due to a rise in price will go to the middlemen and not to the cultivators. Cultivators will have to sell their rice and paddy at the minimum price fixed and the minimum price will be the minimum for our producers and thus the entire profits will go to the middlemen which we want to avoid. The fact is that we have got stockists in our midst. Government is not the only purchaser of rice and paddy. We have other middlemen in the form of licensees of A, B and C classes. A class licensees can accumulate any amount of rice and paddy and through them Government also make their purchases. So at the harvest time these middlemen will purchase from the cultivators at the minimum price fixed and sell them in the market when the highest price is fetched, depriving the producers of the profits due to rise in prices for shortage and scarcity. Before a minimum price is fixed we should seriously consider whether trade or business in the proper sense should be allowed in rice and paddy—the main staple food of our people—except so far as it is required for internal distribution, *i.e.*, from surplus to deficit areas. In view of what I have said the Government should think hundred times over the matter before they go for fixing the minimum price for rice and paddy, especially at a time when there has been a world-wide shortage and our producers are likely to get a good profit due to rise in prices.

Sir, it has been said that our quota with regard to pulses, grams, *gur* and mustard oil have been fixed by the Centre. These are the articles which we import to our Province from other provinces. The quotas so fixed by Government of India are much short of our actual requirement. It has also been said that our receipt is always short of the quota fixed by the Government of India. Why it is so, Sir? Is it not due to the fact that the procurement of these articles has altogether been left to private trade? The position is that our Government have appointed a few licensees of their own for importing the articles to our Province. But I do not know whether Governments of the exporting provinces have likewise appointed their own licensees to sell those articles to our licensees. But I am told, Sir, that our licensees regularly purchase the articles from those licensees. But difficulties arise in the matter of transport. They do not get easy transport and in time. The result is that we do not get our quota. So, my suggestion is that instead of leaving this business to the procurement agents of these articles and the traders, the Government should go forward and arrange for delivery to be made from Government to Government and not from trade to trade. As it is in the case of atta and flour, sugar and salt, the procurement of these articles should not be left to the traders. If this is done, I think, much of our worries would be minimised.

Then, Sir, with regard to kerosene and coal, I have heard the Hon'ble Supply Minister's reply but I am sorry, I am not at all satisfied with it. Nature has been very kind on us. We have our oil field and coal field in our midst. We should at least have received a preferential treatment at the hands of the Government of India, on account of Assam being a producer Province of kerosene and coal. Had we been independent in the matter we would have allowed export only after meeting our demands. Why should not the Government of India be told straightway that we demand a preferential treatment in respect of kerosene and coal. (*Hear, hear*). Kerosene is not for big people, but it is a poor man's daily necessity without which he can't light his house at night.



During the war time I know, Sir, that thousands of families took their night meal in day time, for they could not get kerosene to light their houses at night (A voice—why not the previous Ministry did it?) I am not concerned with the past or what did the previous Ministry do. I am concerned with only what the Government of the day should do. The last Ministry worked under a very difficult condition during the war. Now the war is over, but the supply position has not improved. If a bold policy with foresight is adopted, then I am sure our supply position will improve in future.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time is up.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI: So, Sir, I think this point ought to be brought to the notice of the Central Government in order that our quota of kerosene may be increased in future. With these remarks, I support the Motion.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the matter has been discussed threadbare in this House. So, I do not want to take much time. I extend my fullest co operation to the Congress Government to improve the position of the supply of food-stuffs, cloth and other commodities. I also assure them that any measure that they might take, so far as removal of corruption from the Province of Assam is concerned, will also receive our whole-hearted co-operation. The war has done the greatest mischief so far as honesty is concerned. Our whole future is to be visualised. The last few years were dark and dismal. Sir, the famine is practically in front of us and there is dearth of all kinds of commodities. Therefore, intensive drive is being called for for growing more food. I shall again appeal to the hon. Members opposite and say that it is certainly not the time for eviction, it is certainly not the time for destruction of crops and it is certainly not the time to scatter away the accumulated crops.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I would request the hon. Member not to repeat what has already been said.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: I hope, Sir, the whole policy of eviction should be given up immediately.

Then, Sir, the popular feeling in the country, if I have been able to correctly see, is that corruption is not confined to officers who work in the Department. It starts from the top (*Hear, hear*). So, without any regard to the position—high or low—Government should proceed to carry out their policy of removing corruption. If this is done, I am sure the whole of Assam will be thankful to the present Ministry.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will try to be as brief as possible. First of all, I think, I will be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratefulness to the hon. Members who have accorded their generous support to my Motion. As a matter of fact, there has been a full-dress debate and the hon. Members who took part in this House have voiced the general feeling of the country at large. They have stated that corruption, black marketing and profiteering are rampant in every part of the country. Sir, I had been waiting with great expectation to hear what the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge had got to say in the matter but I admit that I have not been satisfied with his speech. He has not given us any indication as to their future policy. Sir, we do not as yet know what line of action he is going to adopt to stamp out corruption from this Province. He has only said that as a preliminary measure he is going to appoint some checkers. May I ask the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge whether the increase in number of checkers will be sufficient to meet the situation? Is he not conscious that the checkers themselves are indulging in corruption in the widest possible way?

Sir, he has been very sketchy in his remarks regarding the Grow More Food Campaign. He did not say why the Grow More Food Campaign should not be pursued with all the more vigour. A sort of controversy has been raised on the floor of the House as regards the advisability of fixing the minimum price. I am glad that the Hon'ble Minister has assured us that the minimum price will be fixed not within months but within the course of days. Really, Sir, by fixing such a price the Hon'ble Minister will only remove the long felt deficiency in our procurement system. Sir, when my hon. Friend, Khan Sahib Maulavi Mudabbir Hussain Chaudhuri was saying that such a fixation of minimum price would not be to the best advantage of the people, I think he was only voicing the opinion of a selected few. This opinion which my hon. Friend has expressed will not find favour amongst the vast electorates. Sir, as a matter of course, under the stress of control orders the minimum price is apt to become the maximum but still we shall have this consolation that people will not get below this minimum price. For the information of the hon. Members I can say that though the maximum price was fixed at Rs.12-8-0 per maund for rice, the poor cultivators could not get more than Rs.7 per maund. This could only happen in the absence of a statutory minimum.

Sir, the Hon'ble Minister has assured that Government has got enough reserves of paddy and rice with which they will be in a position to meet the requirements of the deficit areas. I do not know whether by these reserves he was referring to the unexposed godowns belonging to the Syndicate which now consist of decomposed paddy. Sir, I would request the Hon'ble Minister to outline his programme of work, his scheme of action. In this connection, we all endorse what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has stated that we will accord our whole-hearted co-operation to any benevolent scheme that will be adopted by the Government.

Sir, finally I would like to refer him to the very acute and serious position at present prevailing in the Sunamganj Subdivision. You have already heard, Sir, that hailstorm and tornado have totally destroyed the *boro* crop of Sunamganj Subdivision and that the people in the interior are on the verge of starvation. I would request Government again to come to their immediate rescue.

Sir, only to-day I have got a telegram and if you would kindly permit me to read it out, I would feel obliged.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member can read it but that will hardly get any place in the reply by the Hon'ble Minister.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: The telegram reads as follows:—

“ 12,000 houses of sixteen villages circles Nos. 1 and 2 Deraithana crop covering 3,000 *hals* smashed completely by tornado hailstorms twenty-third march five hundred people affected saw Subdivisional Officer Sunamganj represent saw Deputy Commissioner prays immediate gratuitous relief both expressed inability before enquiry 18,000 people in horribly starving condition please direct immediate gratuitous relief in paddy and money.

From—Subal Kulachand Kalikumar  
Moulvi Abdul Kayum”

Sir, for this very serious situation I would appeal to Government to take immediate measure to give relief to these people.

With these words, Sir, I resume my seat.

Srijut MAHENDRAMOHAN CHOUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have heard with due attention the speech of the Hon'ble Minister of Supply, but I failed to see in his speech any assurance for supply of sugar, fine cloth, more kerosene and more yarn to our village people. Will the Hon'ble Minister please elucidate whether these things will be provided even affecting some cut in the ration for town people?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister of Supply to standing Rule 44 and to say that he will get only 15 minutes for his reply.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: As anticipated, I have been blamed, Sir. I told you at the very beginning that yesterday I did not like to disturb the hon. Members and even to day I gave them full scope to speak. Sir, the hon. Members spoke on the subject for one full day and half of to-day; now if I am to reply to all the points raised by them, I think, I will require at least three hours. Any way, Sir, before I conclude, I think, I shall be given the opportunity of explaining the decision of Government with regard to the various points raised in the debate.

Now, Sir, first of all I shall deal with the points that have been raised after my first speech and if time permits, I shall then take up other points which I could not touch in my previous speech. One point has been raised that nothing has been said by me about anti-corruption move. Sir, so long I was giving the figures just to draw up the true picture so that it would be convenient for me to explain the situation which this Government are going to tackle. I can assure the hon. Members that this Government will do all that is humanly possible for them to drive out corruption from this Province. The question of dealing with profiteers and hoarders has been taken up by this Government in right earnest and we are doing the best that we can under the circumstances. It was pointed out that by appointing a few checkers, smuggling will not be stopped. Who on earth gave this idea in the mind of my hon Friend? Did I say that Sir, that by doing this smuggling will be stopped? It was far from my mind and if I remember aright, I was very particular on this point and I said that that was the only step which Government could adopt at the very first stage. Sir, I wish I could have a magic wand in my hand. I wish I could bring light merely by saying "let there be light", but unfortunately, Sir, I have not got those powers in my hand. Sir, I cannot say that let there be a committee and at once a committee will be formed, the policy and programme of this Government will be there and the members of the committee will begin their work. Do the hon. Members expect this from us? I am sorry for that, Sir. We cannot do that. We have not got Alauddin's Lamp. We are getting advice gratis that at the time of distress it is the duty of this Government to help the people who are really in distress. It is not only the duty of this popular Government to help the people, but to serve the people. This Government will not only help the people while in distress but always and in all circumstances. So long as this Government will hold the charge of the administration, they will serve the people to their best interest. I may express on behalf of this Government that it is the desire of this Government to serve the people and to extend their helping hand to one and all and to show sympathy and co-operation. We were blamed that we were not doing this, and we were not doing that. But when was the opportunity given to us? I hope, Sir, you will give me enough time so that, to save the prestige of the Government. I may explain the situation. I do not care for my personal prestige but I care for the prestige of our Organisation and the Cabinet (*laughter from the Opposition*). Sir, my hon. Friends opposite are laughing. But I am serious (*more laughter*). I pity them. I feel and feel from the core of my heart for the poor people of my Province. I think during the next session I shall be in a position to laugh, because he who laughs last laughs best. (*A voice: let us hope so*).

Sir, I have already admitted that both the procurement and distribution systems which are being followed to-day, are defective. I have admitted this not only to-day but on various occasions. But we are trying to improve the

procurement scheme. So far as the indigenous food-stuffs and imported food stuffs are concerned, these are bad ; we know it and we have taken steps.

Sir, the present system of rice and paddy procurement in the Assam Valley will expire on the 30th June next. We require some time to adopt some such programme so that we might not commit any mistake in future. Is it not the duty of the hon. Members to give us that much time so that we may think over the matter and we can find out some means, taking into consideration all the aspects of the question so that as far as possible there might not be any defect in future ? Now, whom am I going to substitute in place of Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company overnight ? Let any of the hon. Members suggest. I shall give him the charge. Let the Hon'ble House put him in charge; I pause for a reply. Let me see what is the scheme that can be adopted overnight. So far as the procurement of rice and paddy in the Assam Valley is concerned, I have stated that we are going to make changes. So far as the other Valley is concerned it is the opinion of some hon. Members that procurement should be done by Government but there is difference of opinion whether through a middle-man having business experience or by Government officers direct. Various kinds of suggestions have been put forth. Now am I to choose one suggestion arbitrarily ? Is that the desire of the House or shall we get opportunity of taking into consideration all these suggestions and then find out some means ? Are we not entitled to get some time to think over the matter ? (A voice : Come to the point). I am coming to the point. You are out of the point and I want to bring you to the point first and then I shall come to the point. (Laughter).

Sir, the policy of this Government will be that there should be equitable, efficient and sufficient distribution both for the rural and urban people. Is there any doubt in the mind of any hon. Member that this Government will think of only a favoured selected class like the last Government and will forget the poor people of this Province ? (Voices from the Government Benches : *Hear, hear,*) Certainly not. Rich people can look after themselves, they have got their money, they can go to black market. But what about the poor people ? It is really a pity that my hon. Friends can think in such a way that a man who advocated the cause of the poor people while sitting in the Opposition will forget about these poor people while sitting in this Bench. It is not a covetable job and I am not holding it for money or for anything else, but it is simply because of the desire to serve the poor people of this Province that I am here to-day and I shall see that poor people of this province do get their proper quota of things in every respect. (Voices from the Government Benches : *Hear, hear*). Sir, some of my hon. Friends have given me suggestions that things should be purchased and distributed through Co-operative Societies. This aspect of the question also will be very seriously considered.

Sir, I am in the horns of a dilemma. One hon. Member is suggesting this, another hon. Member is suggesting that. After hearing all sections of the Hon'ble House the Government will take into consideration all the suggestions and they will chalk out a programme. There is no arbitrary programme, there is nothing of the kind in the mind of this Government. But how can the hon. Members expect anything definite from me to-day ? What I can say is this that the suggestions of all the hon. Members will be taken into consideration and then the policy will be chalked out.

Sir, I was not given time, otherwise I could have said everything—all these things are simple matters of common sense. Everybody knows that there was some such idea in the minds of my hon. Friends specially those Friends who worked with me for the last nine years on the floor of this House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Hon'ble Minister will get only six minutes more.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Now, Sir, there was a very good suggestion from one of the hon. Members that this Government should try to see that this Province becomes self-sufficient in all the necessary commodities. Sir, this Government have taken that matter also in right earnest. It is the desire of this Government to see that this Province becomes self-sufficient as far as possible, but there are some difficulties which cannot be removed overnight. It requires sufficient time to have sugar mills. I cannot say, let there be a sugar mill and there will be a sugar mill. Government are thinking whether some of the industries should be nationalised or not—whether some of the industries should be by private capital and some of the industries by both capital of private persons and Government. These matters are under the serious consideration of the Government.

So far as agricultural produces of different commodities are concerned, I am glad that I have this opportunity to say that I have taken steps a month before. I don't know whether my Hon'ble Friend—the Minister-in-charge of Agriculture knows it even, but I have directly had discussion with the Director of Agriculture and asked him to furnish me a scheme how we can grow pulses upto our requirements and he is looking into this matter. Whether we can grow sufficient sugarcane so that our demand of sugar and *gur* can be met by sufficient produce in our Province is being looked into. I have already attended to this also and asked the Head of the Department to go through this and submit a report to me. Sir, it is very easy to say, why we are not growing pulses in our Province but we must see whether we have sufficient land for growing pulses, such as, *Arhar*, *Mug* and *Masur*. There is no scheme, no statistics, no data, which every hon. Member admits but still they want that everything should be done at a time. Let us collect data, let us stand on a sound footing. Let us know what the actual position is. Then we shall proceed properly otherwise we shall slip as there might be some holes.

Now, Sir, as I have already said, regarding many matters we are dependent on the India Government. Many hon. Members have given suggestions why should we not try to increase our quota? Quite so, but I may tell the hon. Members in confidence that not only this Government but the previous Government also tried to increase this but as you know it is the Central Government which is a hard nut to crack. I am trying even now. Sir, it is after hearing hon. Khan Sahib Maulavi Mudabbir Hussain Chaudhuri that Government should press the Central Government—other hon. Members could say like that, but I cannot understand why he does not know—I feel like asking him whether he does not know that the previous Government tried their best to increase the quota.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI : Why should not the present Government put pressure ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : He was a Member of the last Cabinet and it was his duty to know, but, Sir, in suggesting to put pressure he did not say what sort of pressure ? If it is physical pressure (*Laughter*) in that case I shall go to Delhi for that but I shall have to get time.

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUDABBIR HUSSAIN CHAUDHURI : Will the Hon'ble Minister go to Delhi and bring the matter personally to the notice of the Central Government ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : That I will do, provided it is the desire of the House but after assuming Office I was busy and in the midst of a Session I have been asked to go to Delhi to put pressure ! I am here to accept all the reasonable suggestions. Now, they want me to put physical pressure (*Loud laughter.*) All right, I shall consider this also.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The time is short, I am sorry I cannot extend more time to the Hon'ble Minister.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, I may kindly be allowed to reply to another point and I will finish.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I am sorry, I cannot.

Now, there is another Motion in the name of Srijut Siddhi Nath Sarma.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Very well, Sir, I finish with my thanks to the hon. Members who have given their suggestions and my appeal for co-operation from one and all.

### Motion re abolition of the excise duty on betel-nuts in the Province

Srijut SIDDHI NATH SARMA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do move the Government of India to do away with the excise duty on betel-nut in the Province of Assam.

Sir, this was a new taxation measure introduced in the Finance Act, 1944 in the Central Assembly by the Finance Member. The effect of this taxation measure is to amend the Central Excises and Salt Act of 1944. For the information of the hon. Members I shall read out the important amendments made in the Indian Finance Act, 1944 in this connection.

Amendments at paragraph 2 of the first Schedule—Part I reads: "After item No. 11, the following items shall be added, namely:—

Betel-nuts, cured—

'Betel-nut' means the fruit of the areca-palm (*areca catechu*), whether with or without husk, whether cured or uncured, but does not include the fruit while still attached to the tree..... 'Two annas per lb.'"

Then in part II—Amendment of Second Schedule—it says: "In part A after Item No. 1 (Tobacco) the following shall be added, namely:—

'2. Betel-nuts when supplied by a curer to a wholesale dealer, whether directly or through a broker or commission agent.'

Sir, the effect of this Act is to tax the producers, the poor agriculturists, the poorest of the poor villagers. The agriculturists of this Province are generally poor cultivators of the villages who are assessed for the land on which this crop is grown. Generally the land is classified mainly into two divisions in this Province, one is homestead land and another for cultivation of paddy and other things. Homestead land is again subdivided into three classes. Land yielding betel-nut is classified as first class land and the rate of assessment is the highest for it. So, Sir, the agriculturist is paying a tax in the shape of land revenue for this betel-nut. The cultivator pays this when this is attached to the tree. By this Amendment of the Finance Act another tax is imposed on betel-nut when it is removed from the trees. So, Sir, they are to pay a double tax, one in the shape of land revenue and another as excise duty. This is very oppressive for the poor cultivators, and the manner of realising this tax is offensive and outrageous. Generally the Excise Inspector will enter into the homestead land or *bari* of the illiterate cultivator and count the trees, assess tax on the basis of an average yield, without considering the actual yield of trees. Trees not yielding fruits are also counted. Now, Sir, I find from the paper report that this tax has been reduced from annas two to one anna per pound this year. Even then it is very hard and oppressive for these poor cultivators to pay. The agriculturists should not be taxed twice for the same produce. This betel-nut is used by all the villagers—even the poorest of the poor—on ceremonial occasions, e.g., on occasions of marriage

and death. It is also used every day. It has some medicinal properties as well. I am not a medical man, so I would refer the hon. Members to experts on this matter. Sir, so far as I know it contains some valuable vitamins conducive to health. This has some digestive value also. After every meal the villagers are generally accustomed to chew it. It is not an article of luxury or intoxication. So, Sir, this product of agriculture should not be taxed twice. In Assam the tax should be abolished and abolished immediately. With these words, Sir, I commend my Motion for the acceptance of the House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Motion moved :

“That this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do move the Government of India to do away with the excise duty on betel-nut in the Province of Assam.”

There is one Amendment by Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury. I am sorry to say that much as I should have liked tobacco also to be included, it offends against rule 45(1). Taxes on different items are self-contained units and Amendments shall be within the scope of the Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I want to put the question now. Of course hon. Members have a right to speak.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : I want to deal with the legality of the question further. Objection has been raised by Srijiit Siddhi Nath Sarma that this is a double taxation. I agree that this is so but, Sir, I further submit that the Central Government has no right to tax betel-nut. I urge upon Government that it should consult their legal advisers and then move the matter in the Federal Court. Sir, betel-nut is an agricultural produce and any income on betel-nut is an agricultural income. It is included in the Provincial list. Now, agricultural income has been defined in the Government of India Act, but.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : It is defined in the Act.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN : Not fully defined. Sub-section (2) of 311 of the Constitution Act reads thus :

“ ‘agricultural income’ means agricultural income as defined for the purposes of the enactments relating to Indian income-tax ; ”

Now, I am reading section 2 of the Indian Income-tax Act which runs thus :

“ (1) ‘agricultural income’ means—

(a) any rent or revenue derived from land which is used for agricultural purposes, and is either assessed to land revenue in British India or subject to a local rate assessed and collected by officers of Government as such ;

(b) any income derived from such land by—

(i) agriculture or

(ii) the performance by a cultivator or receiver of rent-in-kind of any process ordinarily employed by a cultivator or receiver of rent-in-kind to render the produce raised or received by him fit to be taken to market, or

(iii) the sale by a cultivator or receiver of rent-in-kind of the produce raised or received by him; in respect of which no process has been performed other than a process of the nature described in sub-clause (ii) ”.

So, my submission is that even if betel-nut is cured or dried or used without husk it still remains agricultural income. Sub-section (3) of section 100 of the Government of India Act of 1935 says that it is only the Provincial Legislature that can legislate in a matter like this, and not the Central Government. The section runs thus : “ The Provincial Legislature has, and the Federal Legislature has not, power to make laws for a Province or any part thereof with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List II in the said Schedule (hereinafter called the Provincial Legislative List.) ”

This item occurs in the Provincial List and the Provincial Legislature only has the right to impose such a tax. The Central Legislature has not got such a right. Of course provision of section 102 lays down that the Central Government may legislate on Provincial matters if any emergency is proclaimed.

Section 102(1) reads thus: "Notwithstanding anything in the preceding sections of this chapter, the Federal Legislature shall, if the Governor-General has in his discretion declared by Proclamation (in this Act referred to as a 'Proclamation of Emergency') that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened, whether by war or internal disturbance, have power to make laws for a Province or any part thereof with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the Provincial Legislative List."

So, the Central Legislature has got right to legislate only in the case of an emergency, but I don't think that this Amendment has been made on the basis of the power conferred by section 102. My submission therefore is that besides the question of double taxation, which has already been pointed out by my hon. Friend Srijut Siddhi Nath Sarma, the Central Government have no authority to impose a tax of this nature which hits mostly the poorer sections of the people. This tax, besides being a tax on the poor, is also illegal. So, I would urge upon the Government to consult their legal advisers about the legality of the question, and after satisfying themselves about the validity of my contention the Government should refer the matter to the Federal Court through the Governor-General of India under section 213 of the Government of India Act, 1935.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, that this tax is a very unpopular tax needs no argument in this House. Every one of us, who visited his constituency, could feel that this is a very oppressive tax, which hits the poorer section of the people. Sir, the poor people by selling a few betel-nuts purchase their salt, mustard oil and other necessities of their life. It is surprising that the Central Government have gone to the length of taxing the poor people against the principle for which we, the Congressmen, stand. That is why we say that we oppose this tax not only here but also outside. Our attitude therefore is that the whole debate in this House will be forwarded to the Central Government with the recommendation that they should reconsider the position and see their way to abolish this taxation. (*A voice—What about reference to the Federal Court?*) We do not like to go to the Federal Court before approaching the Central Government first, because there are some difficulties in the way. The Central Government have levied this taxation under item No. 45 of the Federal Legislative List, *viz.*, "Duties of excise on tobacco and other goods manufactured or produced in India, etc." It is clear that if there is no manufacturing process no agricultural produce can be taxed by the Central Government. So, I quite agree with my hon. Friend Mr. Sen that this is beyond the jurisdiction of the Central Government, specially as far as Assam is concerned, as no process of manufacture is done to the betel-nuts, which are simply plucked from the tree and sold, except of course the processing required to bring the commodity to the market. In that case rice, which is husked and boiled before marketing, could also be taxed! So, I think that after the establishment of a responsible Government in the Centre, the Central Government will see the force of the arguments that have been advanced on the floor of this House and will see their way to withdraw the tax on betel-nut.

Sir, this tax also affects the Provincial Exchequer to some extent. The poor people by selling their betel-nut not only purchase salt and mustard oil, as I said before, they also used to pay a part of land revenue when there was a partial failure of crop. So, this tax has affected the Provincial Exchequer to some extent. The Central Government at first saw the force of argument advanced by people outside and exempted this tax in the case of actual growers who sold betel-nuts to



actual consumers. But that concession has now been withdrawn. In Assam we have been practically taxed doubly. In other parts of the country the kernel of betel-nut is dried and about 92 dry kernels weigh half a pound, but in our case 40 kernels weigh a pound. So, we are taxed two and a half times in Assam.

I can therefore say, Sir, that this Government will draw the attention of the Central Government to all these factors and urge upon them to repeal this tax, which mostly hits the poorer sections of the people, more particularly of our Province.

With these words, Sir, I whole-heartedly support the Motion moved by my hon. Friend Srijut Siddhi Nath Sarma.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I request the Hon'ble Finance Minister to take note of one very important aspect of the wrong done by this tax on betel-nut, *i.e.*, its effect on our religious ceremonies. Sir, as we all know no Hindu can perform a religious ceremony without offering betel-nut along with the offerings made to the deities. Similarly no Hindu can extend an invitation to friends and relations for religious ceremonies in orthodox manner without betel-nut. Then again no orthodox Hindu can perform "মুখ শুদ্ধি" (purification of the mouth) which he is bound to do after each principal meal. Moreover it is the poor man's luxury and it can rightly be called a substitute for a lip-stick for the young women of our Province. This tax is illegal and unfair and it seriously interferes with our religious ceremonies. So, this Government should see that it is withdrawn.

Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this tax is inequitable, unjustifiable and legally untenable, and our Party lends its whole-hearted support to the Motion (*hear, hear*). Betel-nut is poor man's food, so to speak. Our people cannot do without it—chewing betel-nut. Mixed up with lime, it serves as a mild stimulant putting in some vigour to our cultivators and working classes. It is a stimulant not in the sense that a liquor is one, but it is one in the sense that it provides an incentive to the poor man's work. Sir, this, the unjust and iniquitous tax, is also bitter for us and for the Government of India who by such taxation are becoming unpopular day by day. We stress our strong protest on this taxation and we give our whole-hearted support to the Motion that has been put forward before this House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do move the Government of India to do away with the excise duty on betel-nut in the Province of Assam."

The question was adopted.

### Election of members to the Assam Text Book Committee

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now we have another business, *i.e.*, item No. 2, election of members to the Assam Text Book Committee, which has been standing over since yesterday. May I know the sense of the House as to whether we shall leave it for to-morrow or should we take up item No. 6?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Let us, Sir, dispose of item No. 2 first.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: May I know from the Hon'ble Deputy Leader of the Opposition how the position stands?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: May I request through you, Sir, my hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury to withdraw his †Amendment? We offer this as a gesture, Sir, that out of five members to be elected to the Committee, let the Opposition Party take two seats and we the Government

\* Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY to move:—

"That after the word 'committee' the words 'by single transferable vote' be added".

Party take three. Further I want to point out to the hon. Members that hitherto the practice of the House has been to adopt the principle of proportional representation of single-transferable vote in cases of committees which are formed exclusively with the Members of this House. Now, this Text Book Committee, to which this House is to elect only five members, consists of twenty-five members with the Director of Public Instruction as its *ex-officio* Chairman. Seven official members are nominated by Government on the recommendation of the Director of Public Instruction and eight non-officials are also nominated in consultation with the Director. So, in a committee like this when this Hon'ble House is to be represented only by five members, what advantage will the Opposition gain by having the election held by following the principle of proportional representation by single-transferable vote? Sir, I, therefore, beg to submit that we should not make too much of that principle in regard to election to such mixed committees. To the Public Accounts Committee, election is held by single-transferable vote. But for election of members to Select Committees of Bills we do not follow the method of proportional representation by single-transferable vote. Should it then be urged, Sir, that this method be followed in regard to these committees also? So let us decide to make the election of the five members for the Central Text Book Committee by an agreement amongst ourselves. Let the Opposition take two seats and this side three. I therefore urge that my hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury should see his way to withdraw his Amendment. I further request the Hon'ble House to consider if it will not be better to keep the question of election by single-transferable vote open for the future and come to an agreement with regard to the present election for the Central Text Book Committee in the way I have suggested.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I cannot accept the proposition advanced by the Hon'ble Minister opposite. The single-transferable vote is meant for giving chance to every Party in the House to have an effective voice and not of the majority Party alone. Sir, the whole matter was discussed in our Party meeting to take a decisive course as a result of certain amount of feeling arisen in our Party for the stand taken by the Congress Party. Because the Congress Party declared that in the Advisory Committee of the Communications Board they would leave three seats uncontested, but they did not act on that promise. For the other committee also they have taken all the four seats. So, it was decided in our meeting when the Leader of our Party was also present, not to contest any seat. So, all the Members of our Party will stand by that decision, though I myself think that the present offer that is coming from the Government Bench is quite reasonable.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: Sir, may I offer a suggestion to the Hon'ble Minister for his acceptance? As the question of the constitution of the Assam Text Book Committee is not so urgent and immediate this matter may be allowed to be taken up in the next July Session of the Assembly. By that time, I think, a decision or agreement might be arrived at between the Members of the Government Benches and the Opposition Party.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I think, Sir, it is urgent. The Committee should come into existence from now, because the term of the previous Committee already expired on the 31st March last.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister may then move the Motion formally.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I beg to move, Sir, that this Assembly do elect five members to the Assam Text Book Committee.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That this Assembly do elect five members to the Assam Text Book Committee".

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Sir, I want to clarify one point. It is not a fact that the Congress Party did not stand by the assurance it gave to the Opposition, *i.e.*, not to contest the three seats on the three Advisory Boards of which the Hon'ble Deputy Leader of the Opposition has just now made mention. As a matter of fact the question was first raised by Mr. Whittaker as to what policy the Government should adopt in regard to the election of Members to Committees from minority parties. He wrote a letter to the Hon'ble Leader of the House to this effect and copies of that letter were sent to the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition and to the Chief Whip of the Government Party. We waited to get the reaction of the Opposition Parties to that letter. But they did not care to give any reply. Our Leader, in his own initiative, informed Mr. Whittaker that we were prepared to concede some seats to the minority parties, and accordingly in some of the Committees, *viz.*, the Public Accounts Committee, the Advisory Committees and the Communications Board, we from our side were not contesting some of the seats. Now if the Opposition Party could not secure seats in the Advisory Boards, the fault is not ours. We left three seats uncontested, but the difficulty was that they did not consult us as to particular valley from which we left the seat or seats—the rule is that there should be two representatives from each valley. But without ascertaining the seats left vacant by us the Opposition set up their own candidates who could not therefore be returned. So, it is unfair on the part of the Hon'ble Deputy Leader of the Opposition to cast a reflection on the Congress Party that they did not stand by the assurance they gave. We are still ready to resign those seats.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: There has been some misunderstanding, Sir. About one Committee what my hon. Friend has said is perfectly right. But as regards another Committee no Member from our side has contested.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: In the Agricultural section of the Advisory Board one seat reserved for the minority parties was taken by the European Group and two other seats in the two other Committees were reserved for the Members of the minority groups.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: But in another Committee no Member was taken.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in view of the importance which my hon. Friends Mr. Abdul Bari Chaudhury and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, attach to this matter of single-transferable vote, could the question of principle in the application of the single-transferable vote be referred to the Privileges Committee and could we now dispose of this Text Book Committee on the basis of three to two? All that is required, in practice, is for the Congress Party to abstain from putting forward more than three candidates and for the Opposition to put forward two. Then the matter is closed leaving the important question of principle of the extent to which the single transferable vote can be used for the Committee to examine rather more leisurely. The Privileges Committee is the appropriate place where these representation grievances can be discussed without the acrimony which is always liable to occur when the subject is raised on the floor of the House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think hon. Mr. Whittaker's suggestion is a very good one.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: It is very good.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: I also agree, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: In view of what has been stated just now, I am not moving my Amendment.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I should ask the Parties to give their names tomorrow.

†Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: I can immediately give the names, Sir, from our Party.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now, the question is:

“That this Assembly do elect five members to the Assam Text Book Committee.”

The question was adopted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Leaders of the Parties will please submit the names of candidates by 2 P.M. tomorrow.

Now, there is another business before the House regarding hon. Members' accommodation in Shillong during the Session of the Legislatures. The Motion stands in the name of the Hon'ble the Deputy Speaker—Mrs. Bonily Khongmen. Now I call upon her to move the Motion.

### **Motion re Hostel accommodation for the Members of the Legislature**

Mrs. BONILY KHONGMEN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that in consideration of the great inconvenience caused to the hon. Members of the Legislature for want of sufficient accommodation in the existing Members' Hostels and dearth of accommodation elsewhere in the town of Shillong, this House is of opinion that immediate steps be taken by the Government of Assam to provide more accommodation to the hon. Members during their stay at Shillong as set forth below for the time being:—

1. That another Hostel building on the western side of the old Inglesby Bungalow should be constructed and that every effort should be made to complete the construction before 1st July, 1946. That the building should be big enough to accommodate not less than 40 Members in single seated rooms with sanitary bath and lavatory attached to each room. The building should also have necessary dining rooms, common rooms and prayer rooms attached to it. This will necessitate the construction of more cook rooms, pantries and servant sheds for the use of the increased number of Members staying in the Hostel buildings.

2. That in the existing New Hostel building each bed room should have an independent bath room and lavatory with sanitary fittings attached and that this work should be completed before the 31st March, 1947.

3. That if the construction of the proposed New Hostel be not completed before the commencement of the next Assembly Session, alternative temporary suitable accommodation be arranged for Members elsewhere.

4. That the Government should see that at least a Public Works Department Mohurrir should be deputed to be in charge of the Hostel premises and do necessary repairs, etc. during the sessions of the Assembly when the Hostels are in occupation of the Members.

Sir, a short history of the Hostel accommodation for hon. Members will be found at pages 130-131 of the Report of the Working of the Assam Legislative Assembly. Hon. Members will find therefrom that there were originally only 26 seats,—10 in the old Inglesby Bungalow and 16 in the New Hostel building—available for Members of both the Houses of the Legislature. In view of the dearth of accommodation in the town felt during the last few years owing to war condition and consequent inconvenience caused to the Members during their stay at Shillong in connection with any business of the Legislature the number of seats in the Hostels has since been temporarily increased from 26 to 45 converting some

single-seated rooms into double-seated ones and by converting the Common Room of the New Hostel building into bed rooms by putting temporary partition walls. This temporary arrangement, which has caused great congestion and consequent inconvenience to the hon. Members and could not meet the ever increasing demand for accommodation, cannot continue any longer. Something must be done to relieve the situation and that without delay. Hon. Members must have noticed that several big office buildings in the Public Works Department Secretariat Hill were constructed within a very short time. There should be no difficulty, therefore, to complete the work of constructing another Hostel building for providing additional accommodation for 40 Members, as proposed in item No. 1 of my Motion, before the 1st of July, 1946. The scheme in item No. 2 should be completed before the 31st March, 1947. If the Hon'ble Finance Minister would agree to sanction the necessary funds for these works as an urgent matter and if the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Public Works Department would take immediate steps in the matter of construction there should be no difficulty to have the works completed within the specified time. With these few words, Sir, I commend my Motion for the acceptance of the House. (*Applause.*)

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Motion moved :

"That in consideration of the great inconvenience caused to the hon. Members of the Legislature for want of sufficient accommodation in the existing Members' Hostels and dearth of accommodation elsewhere in the town of Shillong, this House is of opinion that immediate steps be taken by the Government of Assam to provide more accommodation to the hon. Members during their stay at Shillong as set forth below for the time being :—

1. That another Hostel building on the western side of the old Inglesby Bungalow should be constructed and that every effort should be made to complete the construction before 1st July, 1946. That the building should be big enough to accommodate not less than 40 Members in single-seated rooms with sanitary bath and lavatory attached to each room. The building should also have necessary dining rooms, common rooms and prayer rooms attached to it. This will necessitate the construction of more cook rooms, pantries and servant sheds for the use of the increased number of Members staying in the Hostel buildings.
2. That in the existing New Hostel building each bed room should have an independent bath room and lavatory with sanitary fittings attached and that this work should be completed before the 31st March, 1947.
3. That if the construction of the proposed New Hostel be not completed before the commencement of the next Assembly Session, alternative temporary suitable accommodation be arranged for Members elsewhere.
4. That the Government should see that at least a Public Works Department Mohurrir should be deputed to be in charge of the Hostel premises and do necessary repairs, etc., during the sessions of the Assembly when the Hostels are in occupation of the Members."

Srijut MAHENDRAMOHAN CHOUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in supporting the Motion I want to draw the attention of the Government to a matter of great public importance. The late lamented Mr. B. Borooah, left a princely property to the people of the Province and outside of all classes and communities, *viz.*, the Earle Sanitarium; but unfortunately two of the houses constituting the Sanitarium are said to be requisitioned—one is in the occupation of a Government Officer, and another in the occupation of a Burma evacuee, for several years. It is now known that the latter party is running some sort of a hotel and receiving paying guests there, depriving the public of the use of the house. It was never the wish of the donor that these houses should be used by quasi-permanent occupants in the way these are being done for a long time. It is high time that the houses should be immediately derequisitioned and the occupants directed to vacate and find out their lodgings elsewhere. It is

expected that this will be done before the end of May next, so that if the proposed Hostel building for the hon. Members be not completed before the next Assembly Session, these two houses may be made available to the hon. Members for their stay during the Session.

I think it will not be out of place to mention here that the wishes of many deceased donors who created trust properties have not been properly respected and carried in the present day administration of such properties by the respective trustees. It is high time that the popular Government exercise some healthy supervision or control over the trust properties for adequate carrying out of the wishes of the deceased donors and the public interest also. The mal-administration of the Earle Sanitarium in Shillong may be cited as an instance. If Government are not armed with the necessary powers to do the right thing by the Trust properties in Assam, they will, this Hon'ble House hope, bring a suitable Bill for this purpose in the next Session of the Assembly. With these words, I support Motion for the acceptance of the House.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Motion that has been moved is really the Motion of the House Committee and it has been placed before the House by the Hon'ble the Deputy Speaker. Now, I may straightway inform the Hon'ble House that Government accept this Motion, but I am to point out that the time that has been fixed for completing the construction of the building in item I of the Motion, *viz.*, the 1st July 1946, will be too short for the purpose.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Efforts should be made.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: Certainly, Sir, efforts will be made but as the terms of the Motion stand the intention appears to be that the efforts to be made should be such as would enable Government to have the building completed by the 1st of July 1946. What I wish to point out is that though Government will try their level best to finish the construction of the building before that time, there are so many preliminaries to go through that it may not be possible for Government to finish the building before that date. Some time will be taken for the preparation of the plans and estimates and for collection of materials. But I can assure the hon. Members of the House that even if Government cannot complete the construction of the building before that date, Government will see that houses are hired for accommodation of the Members when they will come here in connection with the business of the Assembly.

I welcome the suggestion made by Srijut Mahendramohan Choudhury that a part of B. Barooah House buildings which constitute the Earle Sanitarium which has been requisitioned for Military purposes be made available for use of the hon. Members. Government will see whether the requisitioned buildings of the Sanitarium can be derequisitioned by the time the next Session of the Assembly commences. If Government succeed in getting the house derequisitioned it will solve a part of the problem that confronts us. Sir, the fact that the Motion has been moved by the Hon'ble the Deputy Speaker, who is a lady, gives added value to the Motion. Government will do their best to implement the decision of the House on such a matter concerning the comforts and accommodation of the hon. Members of the House during their stay in Shillong in connection with their responsible duties as Members of the House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That in consideration of the great inconvenience caused to the hon. Members of the Legislature for want of sufficient accommodation in the existing Members' Hostels and dearth of accommodation elsewhere in the town of Shillong, this House is of opinion that immediate steps be taken by the Government of Assam

to provide more accommodation to the hon. Members during their stay at Shillong as set forth below for the time being :—

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2. That in the existing New Hostel building each bed room should have an independent bath room and lavatory with sanitary fittings attached and that this work should be completed before the 31st March, 1947.

3. That if the construction of the proposed New Hostel be not completed before the commencement of the next Assembly Session, alternative temporary suitable accommodation be arranged for Members elsewhere.

4. That the Government should see that at least a Public Works Department Mohurrir should be deputed to be in charge of the Hostel premises and do necessary repairs, etc., during the sessions of the Assembly when the Hostels are in occupation of the Members."

The question was adopted.