

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

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 10 A.M. on Thursday, the 15th September, 1949.

PRESENT

The Hon'ble Srijut Lakshesvar Borooah, Speaker, in the Chair, the eight Hon'ble Ministers and fifty-two Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

Subvention for Post-War Development Schemes

Mr. J. S. HARDMAN asked :

*2. Will Government be pleased to state what subvention has been sanctioned or promised for Post-War Development Schemes under Budget Head "L-I.—Extraordinary Receipts", for the current financial year ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

2.—Government of India have promised a Post-War Development grant of Rs.160 lakhs including grant for Grow-More-Food Schemes for the current year and the Provincial Government is pressing to raise the amount to Rs.250 lakhs.

†**Srijut BELIRAM DAS** : Sir, are we to understand that nothing has come out regarding the increase of Post-War grants from the Government of India ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : Sir, these are very impracticable questions. It is only for our efforts, I think, the original grant which was only Rs.1.25 crores was raised to Rs.1.60 crores.

Abolition of nominations to the Municipal Boards

Prof. P. M. SARWAN asked :

*3. (a) Are Government aware that in the new set-up of the country time has arrived for them to take action under the proviso to sub-section (3) of section 10 of the Assam Municipal Act directing that henceforth all members of the Municipal Boards of Assam shall be elected ?

(b) Are Government aware that the device of nomination was so long meant to provide by the back door for communal representation to the Municipal Boards otherwise elected on a common electorate ?

(c) Do Government propose to take necessary steps to abolish nominations to such of the Municipal Boards where elections are due in the near future ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR replied :

3. (a)—This is a question of opinion.

(b)—Government take into consideration the claims of those castes, communities and interests which are not adequately represented by the elected members.

†Speech not corrected.

(c)—This will be considered when the question of amending the Assam Municipal Act to suit the present political situation is taken up after the new Constitution of India is brought into force.

Prof. P. M. SARWAN: Sir, the answer to Question No.3(a) is very unsatisfactory, if it is a question of opinion. This is not the kind of answer we expect from the great Congress Party. They have been always very pressing.....

Sir, pressing for removal of nomination from the representative bodies. This is a very poor answer.

(Voices No).

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: Sir, the question is whether the time has come for amending the Municipal Act—Section 10, Sub-section (3). Sir, the question is whether the time has actually come and whether we should wait for some time before the Constitution is brought into force. This is really a matter of opinion.

Prof. P. M. SARWAN: Sir, this is not the question of amending the Bill. This is not the direct answer.

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: Sir, it is very difficult to say whether the procedure for nomination to the Municipal Board should be amended.

Prof. P. M. SARWAN: Sir, there is no question of amendment.

Srijut DANDESWAR HAZARIKA: Sir, without amendment how can we do away with the provision for nomination to Municipal Board ?

Prof. P. M. SARWAN: Sir, has not Government the powers to nominate members to the Municipal Board ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: Yes, Sir, the Government have powers to do so.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(To which answers were laid on the table)

Stenographers and Confidential Assistants

Prof. NIBARAN CHANDRA LASKAR asked :

10. Will Government be pleased to state—
- (a) If there was any condition laid down by Government on Stenographers and Confidential Assistants, who are already in service, that they would have to pass a Shorthand speed test of certain speed in order to retain their services ?
 - (b) If not, why such conditions are imposed on them now ?
 - (c) Whether it is a fact that all Government servants were allowed to draw their pay on the scales of pay recommended by the Pay Commission without any test of their qualification ?

- (d) If so, why in the cases of Stenographers only such a test of special qualification is demanded ?
- (e) Whether Government are aware that the "Pass Speed" according to all big Shorthand Training Institutions like George Telegraphy, Calcutta, Gregg Commercial College, Dacca and many others in India is 80 words per minute ?
- (f) If it is a fact that higher initial pay for Stenographers was recommended by Government in January, 1948 before the announcement of Pay Commission's recommendation and Stenographers were asked to appear in a speed test at 100 words per minute ?
- (g) If it is a fact that in January 1949 this order was cancelled and they were asked to appear in a speed test at 120 words per minute ?
- (h) If so, why ?
- (i) Whether it is a fact that Ministerial Officers, who are graduates, have been allowed to draw Rs.5 more than that of under-graduates according to revised pay scale ?
- (j) If so, why the Confidential Assistants and Stenographers who have got to discharge double function as Stenographers and Clerks and are graduates are not given that extra pay of Rs.5 ?
- (k) Whether it is a fact that 80 per cent. of the Stenographers under Assam Government come from Surma Valley ?
- (l) Whether Government propose to give a sympathetic consideration into the case of Stenographers and Confidential Assistants who are already in service ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

10. (a) & (b)—The hon. Member's information is not correct and there is no separate category of Confidential Assistants. A speed test was however prescribed to raise the efficiency of the unqualified Stenographers and to enable them to enjoy the revised higher scale of pay recommended by the Pay Committee.

(c)—Yes, except in such cases where a minimum qualification has been laid down as a condition for admissibility of a scale of pay.

(d)—Does not arise in view of the reply to (c) above.

(e)—Government have no information. Even if it were so, the employer has the right to insist on a higher speed to suit his requirements and the emoluments offered.

(f)—Yes, in January 1948 before the Pay Committee's report was out, Government as an interim measure allowed a higher initial pay of Rs.100 in the scale of Rs.70—150 to all Stenographers possessing a minimum speed of 100 words per minute. The concession was allowed subject to revision of the scale by the Pay Committee.

(g)—Yes, the test was cancelled in October 1948 in view of the Pay Committee's recommendations prescribing a higher speed of 120 words per minute.

(h)—Does not arise in view of the reply to question (g).

(i)—Yes, in Heads of Departments offices where the minimum educational qualification for a lower division post is an Intermediate Certificate, Graduate Lower Division Assistants are given an initial pay of Rs.70 in the revised scale of Rs.65—150. This concession has been allowed with a view to attract better type of recruits.

(j)—Unlike ministerial service, the efficiency of a Stenographer does not so much depend on higher educational qualifications but on speed and hence Government do not consider that any discrimination in pay should be maintained between Graduate and under-Graduate Stenographers.

(k)—The information is not readily available.

(l)—Without sacrificing efficiency Government are always prepared to consider sympathetically not only the cases of Stenographers but also of all other services and in fact Government are already considering the question of giving a 2nd chance to the unqualified Stenographers.

Pay Committee's Recommendation.

Prof. NIBARAN CHANDRA LASKAR asked :

11. Will Government be pleased to state—
- When the recommendations of the Pay Committee came into effect in regard to the Provincial Government Servants ?
 - Whether the Pay Committee recommended in their report to convert 25 per cent. of the posts of office Assistants into Upper Division posts and whether Government have accepted the same ?
 - If so, whether effect has been given to this in the district offices ?
 - If not, whether Government propose to give benefit of retrospective effect to the incumbents from 1st April, 1948 ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

11. (a)—With effect from 1st April 1948.
 (b)—Yes.
 (c)—The details are being worked out in the Finance Department.
 (d)—No, effect is being given from 1st April 1949.

Motor Vehicle Cashier clerk

Prof. NIBARAN CHANDRA LASKAR asked :

12. (a) Is it a fact that a Motor Vehicle Cashier clerk with a cash security of Rs 2,000 deposited with the Government has been placed on the same scale of pay of an Upper Division Assistant or Accountant of the District Police Office ?
 (b) Are Government aware that this post involves enough responsibility ?
 (c) If so, do Government propose to reconsider the case of these Cashier clerks ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

12. (a)—Yes.
 (b)—Because it involves higher responsibilities than that of a Lower Division Assistant in a District Office, the same scale of Rs.100—150 as sanctioned for Accountants and Upper Division Assistants of district offices has been allowed for the post.
 (c)—No.

Self-Help Fund

Raja AJIT NARAYAN DEB of SIDLI asked :

13. Will Government be pleased to state—
- Whether the "Self-Help" Fund is abolished ?
 - Whether it is a fact that no more provision will be made to help the half-finished projects which were financed by this Fund ?
 - Whether Government are aware that there are thousands of petitions from backward villagers for grants from this Fund ?

Srijut BIMALAPROSAD CHALIHA (Parliamentary Secretary) replied :

13. (a) & (b)—No.

(c)—Government are not aware of the exact number of such petitions, but many have been received in Development Offices as well as in the Rural Development Directorate.

Next General Election of the Assam Legislative Assembly

Maulavi MD. NAZMAL HAQUE asked :

14. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether Government has now got in view the holding of the next general election of the Assam Legislative Assembly ?
- (b) The manner in which the delimitation of the Constituencies is being made and the Electoral Rolls prepared with a view to make them free and fair ?
- (c) What steps are being taken on these behalf to create public confidence that all their interests are being properly safe guarded ?
- (d) How many miles the voters will have to travel generally to cast their votes to the nearest polling booth ?
- (e) The approximate number of voters expected to cast their votes in a single polling booth ?
- (f) Whether it is a fact that the Electoral Rolls are being prepared under the direction of the Election Officers and that the public are kept absolutely ignorant of it ?
- (g) Whether any secrecy is being maintained in the act of the preparation of Electoral Rolls ?
- (h) If so, what are the reasons for such secrecy ?
- (i) Whether Government sought to have the co-operation of the peoples' representatives in the preparation of the Electoral Rolls ?
- (j) If so, whether such a co operation is being actually utilised ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

14. (a)—Government are not in a position to say the exact date when the general election will be held.

(b)—Government are awaiting instructions from the Constituent Assembly in the matter of delimitation of Constituencies.

Electoral Rolls are being prepared in accordance with the instructions received from the Constituent Assembly.

(c)—The question is not generally understood ; but anyone who is qualified will have his name entered in the Electoral Rolls. Moreover, Article 289 of the Constitution as adopted by the Constituent Assembly provides for setting up appropriate and independent machinery for superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the Electoral Rolls.

(d) & (e)—The points raised in these questions are premature and no definite replies can be given on these points at this stage but all possible efforts will be made to give all facility for casting votes with as little inconvenience as possible.

(f)—Materials for draft electoral rolls are being prepared by Election officers under the direct supervision of the respective District and Subdivisional officers.

(g)—No.

(h)—Does not arise.

(i)—Yes.

(j)—Yes, whenever received.

Conference of Finance Ministers at Delhi

Raja AJIT NARAYAN DEB of Sidli asked :

15. Will Government be pleased to state :

(a) If the Conference of the Finance Ministers held recently in Delhi has agreed to increase the financial aid to Assam ?

(b) If so, what is the increased amount of such grant ?

(c) If not, what are the grounds on which such increased grant was refused ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

15. (a)—The Conference was convened by the members of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly to discuss financial provisions of the Draft Constitution and not to consider immediate increase of financial aid to provinces.

The question of increase of such aid will be considered on the recommendations of an *Ad Hoc* Committee proposed to be constituted by the Government of India.

(b)—Does not arise.

(c)—Does not arise.

Travelling expenses of the Hon'ble Ministers

Raja AJIT NARAYAN DEB of Sidli asked :

16. Will Government be pleased to state :—

(a) The amount provided in the current Budget for the travelling expenses of the Hon'ble Ministers ?

(b) The amount spent as travelling expenses for 12 months before the introduction of airplane in Assam-Calcutta route ?

(c) The amount spent per month in average after the airplane was introduced in Assam routes ?

(d) The cost maintaining the airplane purchased by the Government of Assam per month ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

16. (a)—Current year's Budget provides Rs.8,000 for Travelling Allowance of Hon'ble Prime Minister and Rs.32,000 for other Hon'ble Ministers.

(b)—A sum of Rs.23,000 was incurred as travelling expenses of Hon'ble Ministers for 12 months before the introduction of airplane in Assam-Calcutta route.

(c)—Rupees 2,926 on average was spent monthly as travelling expenses of Hon'ble Ministers during the 12 months after the establishment of scheduled air service in Assam.

(d)—Rupees 7,500.

Resumption of Tea Garden lands lying fallow

Prof. P. M. SARWAN asked :

17. (a) Do Government propose to resume all grant lands of tea estates not already under tea cultivation ?

(b) Do Government propose to issue a directive to all tea estates in Assam that the original under-tenants occupying grant lands and producing paddy and other food crops are not to be ejected under any circumstances ?

(c) Do Government propose to promulgate an Ordinance on the above line ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

17. (a)—The hon. Member is referred to the reply to Unstarred Question No.4 (b) asked by Srijut Dalbir Singh Lohar, M.L.A., in the current Session of the Assembly.

(b)—Government do not at present possess necessary powers to issue such a directive.

(c)—No.

Prof. P. M. SARWAN : Sir, the answer to my Question No.17 (c) is 'No'. Why no ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : Sir, the Ordinance is an extraordinary legislation, as I have already stated before the House yesterday. The Ordinance is not to be taken recourse to unless there is an emergency.

Prof P. M. SARWAN : Sir, do not Government realise that there is such an emergency ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI : Sir, Government do not consider that there is such an emergency so that the Ordinance should be promulgated. If the hon. Member desires to consider the situation as an emergent one he is at liberty to introduce a Bill.

Manufacture of Goat Tissue Vaccine

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR asked :

18. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The date from which the manufacture of Goat Tissue Vaccine has been started at the Gauhati Veterinary Hospital ?

(b) The quantity of vaccine prepared upto the end of June, 1949 ?

(c) The number of cattle vaccinated by the vaccine prepared at Gauhati up to the end of June, 1949 giving the names of the Subdivisions where vaccinations were given ?

(d) Whether Government propose to start compulsory mass inoculation of cattle in the Province as contemplated by section 15 of the Assam Cattle Diseases Act, 1948 ?

(e) If so, in which Subdivisions ?

(f) Having regard to the fact that the cattle population in the villages within the jurisdiction of the Nalbari Veterinary Dispensary is considerable, whether Government propose to select this area for compulsory mass vaccination in the near future ?

(g) If not, why not ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR replied :

18. (a) --From the 13th March 1949.

(b)—2,984 Ampoules.

(c)—Information is being called for.

(d)—Yes.

(e)—In all Subdivisions of the Province.

(f)—In view of reply to Question (e) this does not arise.

(g)—Does not arise.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Sir, will the Hon'ble Minister in-charge be pleased to give us some idea as to the time when they propose to introduce compulsory mass inoculation?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: Sir, the mass inoculation has already begun. We have asked the Director of Veterinary to prepare a programme regarding compulsory mass inoculation. As soon as the programme is received mass inoculation in very near future will commence.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Sir, has the programme been prepared?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: Yes Sir, we have asked the Director of Veterinary to submit his programme. As soon as it is received orders will be passed for mass inoculation.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Sir, do Government propose to begin mass inoculation simultaneously?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MRZUMDAR: Government's contemplation is to begin mass inoculation in those subdivisions which are prone to rinderpest more than others, but if possible simultaneous action will be taken in all the subdivisions.

***Srijut DANDESWAR HAZARIKA:** May I request the hon. Member to enlighten the house as regards the cattle population of Nalbari.

Srijut GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR: Sir, this is one of the areas in the province where cattle population is very considerable. Roughly speaking it may be more than a lakh.

Condolence Motion on the death of Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: Before you take up the agenda of the House I desire to mention a very melancholy event namely the passing away of our dear old Friend Karuna Sindhu Roy. There are many Members in this House who must remember him. He was a Member of the Assembly when Assam was in Undivided India. His perseverance in the performance of his duties, his simple and unostentatious ways were so appealing to us that those who have been working with him must dearly remember him. I came to know about his death some time ago and with your permission, Sir, I want to move a condolence resolution for this House to adopt. The resolution I propose to move is as follows:

"This Assembly records its sense of grief on the untimely death of Shri Karuna Sindhu Roy formerly a member of the Undivided Assam and conveys its deep condolence to the members of the bereaved family."

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wholeheartedly support the message of sympathy and the resolution of our grief that is being proposed by the Hon'ble Leader of the House. I have known the late Shri Karuna Sindhu Roy for the last 10 years or more. Although our politics differ I always respected the sincerity he showed in his activities which were mainly concerned with the amelioration of the conditions of life of the common man.

It is a sad thing that this young man has been snatched away by the cruel hand of death. I would pray for the peace of his departed soul.

With these words I associate myself with the sentiments expressed.

Mr. J. S. HARDMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we on this side of the House desire to associate ourselves with the resolution which the Hon'ble Prime Minister has moved and which has been supported by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. As has been very aptly said, he was a very whole hearted worker in the many cause which he supported, and his loss is a serious blow to the Province; at this time when sincere and devoted workers are so urgently needed. Sir, we support the resolution which had been moved.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I wholeheartedly associate myself with what has been said by the Hon'ble Leader of the House as well as by the Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Hardman. Mr. Karuna Sindhu Roy was elected to the Assam Assembly in 1937, and in the Assembly he tried his level best to ameliorate the condition of the poor peasants and the labouring classes. As has been said by the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition he moved constantly in the villages and contacted villagers and labourers and tried his utmost to render every possible help they needed and I think this is why he was called "দীনবন্ধু কৰুণাসিন্ধু"। With these words I support the resolution moved by the Hon'ble the Leader of the House and request the House to pass the resolution all standing for one minute in memory of the departed soul.

(The House stood in silence for one minute in memory of the departed soul.)

Motion regarding Textile Policy of the Government of Assam

Srijut BELI RAM DAS: I beg, Sir, to move that this Assembly do now take into consideration the textile policy of the Government of Assam.

Sir, the textile policy of the Government of Assam has been the burning topic of the day and there is criticism of the policy in every lip of the people of Assam. For collection of proper materials for discussions of this policy I put in a large number of questions which have not been replied to as yet. And as such I am very much handicapped. My intention is not to criticise Government unnecessarily but to give the true picture of the working of the textile policy as far as I have understood, so that our Government can mend their textile business accordingly.

It is known to the hon. Members and the public at large that Assam is a poor province with a little income of its own and almost every project in Assam cannot be properly executed without any aid from the Centre. Considering this aspect of the question the Government of Assam, I should say, should not have undertaken a gigantic project like the textile business involving crores of rupees. If the project bears fruit as expected, it is well and good, but if it is to fail, God forbid, in the long run it will affect the economic position of the Province as well as our co-operative movement. Mr. T. T. S. Hayley is the head of the Textile and Co-operative Departments; in order to put the co-operative in a sound financial position he has tagged, as he says, the same to the Textile business. Mr. Hayley is the author of the Panchayat chakra—a round wheel and I think he has not set our Government rolling like his chakra to an unknown destination; and God knows whether for good or for worse. Because he is simply an I.C.S., and not a Textile and Co-operative expert.

My first question to the Government is to the appointment of the purchasing agent M/S. Shivabaxrai Narayandad at Bombay on $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent commission. M/S. Shaw Wallace and Company of Calcutta at Rs. 8/14 and 6/6 per bale of cloth brought by train and steamer respectively, New India Insurance Company, Managing Director of the Apex Bank and the like,

So I should like to ask Government as to why they have paid so high commission to the purchasing agent at Bombay while such purchasing agents were available even at $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. commission? The Government have to pay over 5 lakhs of rupees for the purchase of their cloth worth Rs. 3½ crores. Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company have been given a commission of Rs. 8-14-0 and Rs. 6-6-0 which is exceedingly a high rate of commission. All these commissions will be added to the prices of the cloth and as such the rate-payers will have to bear this burden also. So my question to the Government will be whether these appointments were made after proper notification or whether they tried to find out agents at a cheaper rate of commission. The Managing Director of the Apex Bank has been granted a fat salary of Rs. 1,800 with Rs. 250 as house allowance for an infant organisation like the Apex Bank while the Government could have recruited such an officer at a considerably low salary within the Province. As far as I am aware this gentleman has not been able to discharge his duties efficiently or up to the mark. Goods worth crores of rupees are coming to Assam every month and as such instead of paying high premium to the New India Insurance Company, Government should have approached different Insurance Companies whether any one of them was able to accept the insurance against loss at a low premium. All these I have got to ask our Government is for the purpose of ascertaining whether they tried to observe strict economy in this business involving crores of rupees.

Sir, in a recent broadcast Mr. Hayley has said that owing to the "reckless racketing" the Trading Co-operatives were conceived in Assam as a part of its Rural Development Plan and to which was assigned the monopoly of textile distribution so as to set them on sound financial basis. But from our experience we have seen that the sky rocketing price is still continuing and the price of cloth has been still a prohibited one to the poor rate payers. For months together due to the inability of the Government to supply cloth and yarn to these Co-operative Societies, large capitals have been consumed in paying house rents, salaries of Secretaries, etc. During the war period large number of Co-operative Societies went on liquidation and in most cases office bearers were being prosecuted for defalcation. It was a Herculean feat for the Government and the public to form new Co-operatives by asking people to subscribe to them. People have joined these Co-operatives not out of love for them but for fear of being deprived of their legitimate share of textiles unless they became members. Such being the case the Co-operatives will receive a great set-back as non-members will be entitled to get cloth and yarn from these Co-operatives. I do not blame Government for this concession rather I thank them very much for the same. I have received complaints from the Secretaries of the Co-operative Societies that their stay in their position has been very difficult as they recruited the members of the Co-operative Societies by saying that non-members will not be entitled to get any cloth and yarn. So this sudden change of the textile policy of the Government will give a great set-back to the Co-operative Movement in Assam.

In my opinion it was a very unwise step to make the textile as the first and only commodity to be procured and distributed through the Trading Co-operatives on account of the unstable policy of the Government of India in regard to textiles. To make this Co-operative Movement a success Government should have taken up paddy, C.I. sheet, wheat products, etc. for making it available to the Co-operative Societies for distribution.

Hon. Members have seen in the newspapers that the Mills have been allowed to sell their accumulated stocks by the Government of India to their own agents. To this end Mills are giving extra commission in the

shape of rebate to their agents. To make larger profits in this way it might be that Government appointed Bombay agent to procure huge quantities of cloth found here unsaleable and unsuitable in Assam. To my information the stock of unsaleable and unsuited varieties of cloth will be about 10 per cent. and the price of these will be about 35 lakhs of rupees. In my opinion the procuring agent should be held responsible for these unwanted goods. Besides this there is chance of loss in the godown on account of leakage, white ants, rats—both 4 leggeds and 2 leggeds. This head alone will account for at least 5 per cent. of the stock held by Government. I am afraid Government will find it a very difficult problem to dispose of this stock at a low rate or even by auction. So my point is whether Government have made any provision for future loss on account of these factors. We have sad experience about standard cloth and as such we remind our Government to the English proverb "Once bitten twice shy".

According to the statement of Mr. Hayley the Government have been able to sell up to this date cloth and yarn worth about Rs.1 crore and there remains about 2½ crores to be sold. The Government have paid Rs.3,88,000 as interest on loan to the Imperial Bank and Rs.1,44,000 as demurrage. The price of cloth and yarn has gone down considerably and if Government cannot sell their stock immediately there will be a chance of further loss and more interests will be added to the loss account.

Sir, I have already mentioned that we have recruited one fat salaried gentleman as the Managing Director of the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank. According to my information he has not been able to sell shares worth more than Rs.50 to 60 thousand in spite of Government patronages. Besides this Bank has to encroach upon the capital for its maintenance of various Branches as will be evident from the shares sold and banking done by the Apex Bank. My suggestion to Government will be to do away with the Bank and entrust their banking to some Scheduled Banks existing in Assam or try to improve the position of the Bank.

It has been admitted by Mr. Hayley that only 37 per cent. of the population of the Province has been included in the Co-operative Societies and 63 per cent. are outside the societies. But surprisingly enough he did not make any provision for this 63 per cent. of the population as regards cloth and yarn so long.

Besides this the normal trade channel was very much hard hit by this policy of the Government as they could not procure or distribute cloth and yarn. The trade was the worst sufferer as their adhoc, time-barred and direct quotas from the Textile Commissioner of India were not allowed to be disposed of, these stocks being seized and frozen, to the advantage of the Central Co-operative. The price of such cloth and yarn has gone down considerably. Consequently the parties will suffer loss. Side by side, the banks that financed the traders were affected as their money was blocked owing to the freezing and seizing order of the Government.

It has been seen that since January 1949 the Government have failed to procure any cloth and yarn out of their general quota owing to lack of funds and faulty scheme of distribution, depriving thereby the Government of Assam a huge sum of money to the tune of 30 lakhs in the shape of sales tax and people deprived of their quota.

It has also been seen that during reimposition of control period the *ex-mill* price of cloth and yarn has been increased by 60 per cent. and as such the black marketing price prevailing during the decontrol period is ruling the market now owing to the high *ex-mill* prices. So the poorer section of the people have not been

truly benefited. I request our Government to take necessary steps to bring down the price of textiles so that poorer section of the population can purchase them.

Lastly I heartily thank my Government for revising their textile policy by way of relaxing the rigidity of the scheme and it would have been much better and to the good of the people, had this relaxation been in line with the relaxation announced by the Government of India from time to time.

For the benefit of the Government, the people and the trade I make the following suggestions for adoption by the Government and hope the Government will give due consideration to these suggestions.

1. The Government should give up this textile monopoly exclusively through the Trading Co-operatives.

A. Co-operative staffs should go round the interiors and other places to explain the Co-operative gospel among the masses and imbibe the spirit of co-operation and its usefulness.

B. Let people form Co-operative Societies out of their own zeal and not under pressure of Government.

C. Government should encourage co-operative movement and preference to be given to the co-operative organizations.

2. Government should go back to Mr. Hadi Hussain's scheme of procurement and distribution which proved to be practical and beneficial and found successful during previous control. In Hussain's scheme the traders were not eliminated, but subdivisinal co-operatives were formed for distributing textiles and provincial co-operative society was formed out of subdivisinal co-operatives which functioned as procuring agents.

3. Government should reconsider their state trading scheme in the light of the following difficulties:

A. Lack of experience in this line of business.

B. Want of real zeal among the paid servants.

C. Complicated manners of maintenance of accounts.

D. Lesser demand and abundance of textiles in the market.

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

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That this Assembly do now take into consideration the Textile policy of the Government of Assam".

There is an Amendment standing in the name of Maulavi Md. Nazmal Haque. I think it will be better if he moves his Amendment now.

Maulavi MD. NAZMAL HAQUE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the 'full-stop' after the word 'Assam' be deleted and the following words be added thereafter—

"and that all restrictions regarding the procurement, distribution and movement of Textile goods be withdrawn forthwith".

Sir, by this Amendment I want to go a step further and say that all restrictions regarding procurement, distribution and movement of textile goods should be withdrawn completely, because from what we have heard from my hon. Friend Mr. Beliram Das, we find that the textile policy of the Government has failed, if not completely, at least partially. From time to time Government have taken new policies but they could not stick to them for long. Sir, I do not

blame the Provincial Government because they have no control over production, and therefore they cannot make their scheme successful however much they try. When there is scarcity of cloth we do not get supplies, whatever we get is what we do not require, and when the supply is plentiful the Government cannot keep their policy of control; they have to relax their policy.

Sir, the co-operative movement was mainly introduced for the distribution of cloth. The movement was a bit successful in the beginning, but later when the policy of distribution was a bit relaxed this movement has got a set-back. Sir, I know that the aim of the co-operative movement is not merely the distribution of cloth. I know that this movement has a great part to play in the future for the development of our society. But the common people do not understand so much. They simply understand that if they want cloth they are to purchase shares. So, as soon as the distribution scheme was relaxed people stopped purchasing shares, and I doubt however much we may try, we will be able to induce them to buy shares.

Now, Sir, as regards the price of cloth, it will be higher in the case of Government-procured cloth, when compared with the price of cloth to be brought by the traders because the Government take 12 per cent. over *ex-mill* price, the Central Co-operative 2 per cent. and the retailers, *i.e.*, the primary trading co-operative societies 6 per cent. When the traders will bring the cloths, they will certainly reduce these charges and will, I think, sell at 6 per cent. higher than the *ex-mill* prices.

Sir, control generates black-marketing. If we remove control on cloth we shall find the market flooded with cloth and the price will consequently come down. But if we keep these restrictions over procurement and distribution, black-marketing cannot be stopped. Control is the root of black-marketing and if we eradicate this evil there will be no black-marketing.

With these few words, I commend my Amendment to the acceptance of the House.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That the 'full-stop' after the word 'Assam' be deleted and the following words be added thereafter.

"and that all restrictions regarding the procurement, distribution and movement of Textile goods be withdrawn forthwith."

I think the Government should give a preliminary reply.

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will not be in a position to reply to the detailed criticisms of my hon. Friend Srijut Beliram Das, who has moved this Motion before the House. But I want to give a preliminary reply with regard to what has been said in the Motion, *viz.*, the Textile policy of the Government of Assam.

I want to point out, as an initial observation, that the Government of Assam or for the matter of that, any Provincial Government, cannot have any textile policy of its own, apart from the policy pursued by the Government of India. The Provincial Governments might be left with what may be called the policy of distribution, but so far as the main question of production of cloth, the allotment of quota to the provinces, the method of procurement, and all those are concerned, it is the Government of India which controls the policy. Hon. Members very well know that this Government was at one with this House in the matter of complete decontrol in this province. We not only accepted the decision of the House, we also conveyed the same to the Government of India so that the latter might accept that as a general policy. It may be recollected that at that

time Mahatma Gandhi was advocating the same opinion, *viz.*, that decontrol of all commodities. He thought that this might lead to better administration of the country than what prevailed at that time. The House very well knows that there was decontrol, at least in so far as textile was concerned. I do not like to detail the circumstances under which the Government of India had to revise their policy; but it was a fact that soon after decontrol the prices of cloth everywhere went up by 100 per cent. to 200 per cent. It may be a story, but it was given out that the mill-owners effaced the price marks on cloths and overnight made a profit of 100 crores of rupees. I do not know whether the story is true; but what we all actually felt here was that the prices immediately went up. Instead of lowering of prices, the prices went up by leaps and bounds everywhere. It was only after this situation that the Government of India thought of reimposing control over cloth. They imposed this in many ways. They wanted to increase production and to give encouragement to the millowners to produce more and as a matter of fact, if I remember aright, there was an increase in production by 13 or 14 per cent. of the produce last year over that of the previous year. Secondly in order that there may be more cloth in the provinces and that cheapness might prevail they also imported 1.5 per cent. of foreign cloth on the requirement of consumers in India. Then the third reason was that in order to encourage production, they encouraged the handloom industry in the provinces. It may be well known to all hon. Members that Madras went very much forward in this direction than any other province. In this way production was actually increased, but in the meantime something has come between, which may possibly be known to hon. Members, for the reason of which all the cloth they have been able to produce in the meanwhile, could not be disposed of by these mills. It is that Pakistan which is a large consumer of finished piece goods products from Indian mills had ceased to import cloth from India to Pakistan. The result as I hear now, is that there is a glut of cloth in the mills; and the mills have been pressing the Government of India for early and immediate disposal of their products. The situation that prevails today is that there is a month and a half to two months production of cloth lying undisposed of in the godown of the mills. Some mills have already closed down and some others are threatening to do. Therefore the Government of India have been very anxious to see that these cloths are taken over by the different provinces.

This is the situation that is prevailing in India today, and we have to adapt our own policy according to the overall policy laid down by the Government of India. There is no alternative but to follow it although we might wish otherwise. We might desire to have our own way, but in a matter in which the Government of India have laid down a particular policy we have no alternative but to follow that policy.

I don't know how far it will be relevant, but I would like to mention here that under the new Constitution very wide powers have been taken over by the Centre in all All-India matters and the provinces cannot have policies of their own in regard to matters which concern the Centre. All that is left for the Government of Assam, or for that matter, any provincial Government to do, is to adjust its own policy according to the policy laid down by the Government of India. In view of the changed circumstances the Government of India wanted the provinces to adjust themselves accordingly in the matter of textile policy also; you must however agree that it is very difficult for any province to adjust it self immediately according to the changed circumstances.

It must be admitted, Sir, that when the Government of Assam was pursuing its own policy of distribution through co-operative basis at the earlier stages they did actually supply cloth at a much cheaper rate than what was done by the bazars in spite of the fact that on account of some bungling in transport, huge quantity of our piece goods, I mean our textiles, had to accumulate in Calcutta. For two or three months, five month's quota was accumulating there in Calcutta and no transport was available. For the information of the House I have to say that I had myself to go from door to door in the Delhi Offices—I had to approach the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Industries and Textiles and also the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Transport there in order that Transport of these textile bales may be expedited. As a result of this, textiles began to move all at the same time, and about 27,000 bales of cloth, and I suppose some more bales of yarn were transported in the course of two months. As is well known to the hon. Members, Government of Assam advanced this money obtained from the Imperial Bank of India on loan. As I said earlier, distributed through co-operative societies cloth were available at very much cheaper rates than what was supplied in the ordinary markets, obtained at the period of decontrol. But on account of large accumulation of cloth in the mills, the Government of India has to change their policy; and they asked all provincial Governments to take as much of this cloth as possible through their agents and if they fail to appoint their own agents, agents appointed by the mills to be entrusted with the function. This puts Assam in a very difficult position for the plain reason that we have already a very large accumulation of dumps of cloth. In the meantime some foreign cloth also came to the market which I think was selling at cheaper rate than ordinary mill cloths. These foreign cloths are not under any control whatsoever, as it was thought by the Government of India that the import of 1.5 per cent. of cloth would not bring any substantial change in the consumption of milled cloth by the people while it might have brought down the prices. All these matters were the subject of a Conference which was held only the other day in which we all pressed that since there is such dumps of cloth in the mills it is not absolutely necessary to import any more cloth. The Government of India agree to that. It is known to the hon. Members that from December till May our quota could be fully obtained by our agents only in very limited quantity, and therefore we are now being pressed by the Government of India to get more quantity of cloth if we can do so by sending agents for procurement, or otherwise the mills would do so by their own agents. We had to agree to slightly modify our scheme according to which, we have to agree to receive from the mills some consignments of cloth to satisfy the needs of our consumers. While doing so it is also our policy to allow our co-operative societies fullest scope of activity, so that they may repay the loan obtained by them from the Government. In view of the fact that Puja is before us, a large quantity of cloth has to be distributed to the consumers. But this distribution would be done not merely among the members of the co-operative societies but also among the non-members. We are also proposing some quantity of cloth procured through other agents to be distributed through the co-operative societies as well. We have already sold out nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total quantity bought.

I therefore feel that there is no apprehension that there would be any loss on the part of Government. It has been possible that the monopoly business which had been started by the Trading Co-operative Societies shall be modified to an extent to allow also other traders to function. But at the same time it will be noticed also that the function of distribution which has been

entrusted to the co-operative societies for cloth, will be better done today ; because according to the arrangements made by the Provincial Government, the first option of refusal of any kind of cloth brought by other people is given to the Central Co-operative Societies, which, as you know, are responsible for distribution to the trading co-operative societies. This is the present position of the textile policy of the Government of Assam.

In view of Control orders yet priority I consider the Motion of hon. Maulavi Nazmal Haque to be entirely out of order. The imposition of control and the restrictions with regard to procurement and distribution Provincial Government have no hand. It is the Government of India who have done it. So far as this Government is concerned, as I have told already, that as early as in March 1947 we recommended that there should be complete de-control. Today, however, we want to say that there should be no relaxation of controls. The arrangements that we have made now for distribution through Co-operative Societies have and could lead to better distribution of cloth than any distribution hitherto made. I feel also that this has also to a large extent stamped out corruption, black-marketing and such other evils.

With these words, Sir, I have tried to explain the general policy of Textile of this Government and Government of India as well. With regard to the other points raised I hope Mr. Chaliha will give an explanation.

I oppose also the Amendment of Maulavi Nazmal Haque.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: Sir, I rise to oppose the Amendment of the Motion. Mr. Beliram Das's speech has revealed to the House a number of important matters into the details of which unfortunately the Hon'ble Leader of the House could not enter for obvious reasons. Any way, Sir, what I would like to say is that in the course of Mr. Beliram Das's speech the impression we gathered is that there is something wrong somewhere. It is because that and of some other factors that the Trading Co-operatives have not been very successful. There are obvious reasons for the lack of co-operation from the trading class. One noticeable difficulty is that competition has been going on between the Marwaries on the one hand and the Trading Co-operatives on the other. There could not be competition between the rich traders and poor trading co-operatives. On account of the efficiency of the managers, secretaries and other office bearers this co-operative organisation may not have been successful. In spite of the failure of the Trading Co-operatives at some places the control of commodities is very necessary.

The Government introduced controls on account of the situation brought about by the war. Soon after the outbreak of hostilities the shortage of many commodities was felt throughout the war. That shortage at times amounted to virtual scarcity or famine. That forced up the prices sky high, sometimes higher than the heavens. There was hardly any country which was not affected by the war and which did not run short of food stuff, goods and services. The hoarders, stockists, speculators and black marketers were not quiet. They did their utmost to make profits. Whatever they may be, the control of commodities in our country is absolutely necessary. Government introduced controls in view of the situation in the whole world. We have seen what happened in our country when following the advice of certain leading industrialists and with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi, decontrol was introduced soon after the achievement of the Swaraj as a result of which mill owners and the mercantile classes made high profits. Better sense prevailed upon the Government owing to the agitations from one end of the country to the other as a result of which control was reintroduced much to the relief of the poor masses of our country. In July 1948, for some reason or other, the

Supply Minister of the Government of Assam thought it wise and proper to lift the control on rice and paddy. The consequence of it is known to all. The prices of these commodities shot up very high, higher than the skies, and it has been well realised by all how our poor people had to suffer from the Government steps. Any way, the Government of Assam have reintroduced control and that has greatly relieved the poor people like us. Therefore, Sir, I cannot subscribe to the views expressed by the hon. Member of the party I belong to, viz., that controls should be abolished. Sir, controls will be necessary for at least a decade to come. You cannot say when there will be enough cloth for our people. Controls exist in almost all countries of the world. One of the factors of there being huge stocks of textiles in the mills is that the Pakistan Government has not taken its quota from India. I am very glad to learn that the Central Government has taken upon itself large powers as regards the textile policy, as has been revealed by the recent debates in the Consambley. One of the reasons for the assumption of power by the Centre is that the provinces may not act unwisely in this regard. Their different policies will create a deadlock. On account of the bungling of the West Bengal Government certain places in that province were flooded with textiles. Thousands of bales remained in the mills and began to deteriorate. Consequently they became unsaleable. So the Centre has done it wise and proper in assuming powers necessary for the improvement of distribution and also production of commodities, specially cloth, in the country.

With these words, Sir, I verbally oppose the Amendment moved by Mr. N. Haque. He should not have been allowed to move the dangerous amendment seeking to abolish controls. I felt very angry at that and in heated moments, hot words are exchanged and swords rattled. I do not propose to emulate the example recently set by some Deputies in Bogota, Colombo when they exchanged about a hundred shots and killed one member. It would be inadvisable and undesirable to do so with another Member of the Party I belong to.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD ABUL KASHEM: As my hon. Friend, Mr. Nazmal Haque's Motion is out of order, I will speak on the original Motion moved by my hon. Friend, Srijut Beliram Das.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I have not as yet declared, Mr. Nazamal Haque's Motion as out of order.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD ABUL KASHEM: Then can I speak on both ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: You can speak on the Motion first.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD ABUL KASHEM: As for the Amendment moved by my Friend, Mr. Nazamal Haque, I want to say only a few words because as already pointed out by the Hon'ble Premier that it is a matter in which the Centre is concerned and we have nothing to do. But, in my opinion, this House has got something to do, that is, this House by a Resolution can move the Central Government to give effect to the Resolution. If we support Mr. Nazamal Haque's amendment for withdrawing forthwith control etc., on textile goods, we would simply undo what we did in the past. In the last Sessions of the Assembly there was a discussion and with the consent of this House this present system for procurement and distribution through co-operative societies was introduced and my Friend at that time did not oppose against Trading Co-operative and in fact, I opposed the question of establishment of an Apex Bank while I supported the distribution and procurement of cloth by Trading Co-operatives because this method teaches our people

the ways to live in a sufficiently autonomous unit and with the view that the people have not to depend on outside agencies and to procure and distribute their cloths amongst themselves. It was decided to introduce this policy for giving facilities to the Trading Co-operatives to do this business. In my opinion, they should be allowed to continue unhampered. I have not found that price in the Trading Co-operative of cloth is higher than in the ordinary market, although there were rumours. Many people reported to me that cloth in the ordinary market was cheaper than cloth available in the Trading Co-operatives. In fact, I made personal enquiry and in three or four cases found that actually the quality of cloth sold in the ordinary market was inferior in quality to the cloth sold in Trading Co-operatives. The Trading Co-operative is responsible for not allowing the traders, I mean, the Marwaries, of earning 100 per cent. profit as was done at the time of decontrol when the Trading Co-operatives did not exist. When the Trading Co-operatives were started it was known to them that there was a rival in the market so the prices had to be fixed keeping this competitive price in the ordinary market in view. Knowing it fully well that this subject required detailed discussion in this House, I gave notice of a Motion for raising discussion on this, and you were kind enough to mention that Mr. Beliram Das would move a similar Motion. I thank you, Sir, for giving this House an opportunity of discussing this very important matter. My request is that we should not go by the Bazar rumours and should continue to allow the Trading Co-operative to maintain control, procurement and distribution of cloth.

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: Sir, Mr. Chaliha wants to give certain informations regarding certain points raised by Mr. Beliram Das.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: What's about the Amendment ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: Regarding the Amendment, I do not want to speak anything more than what I have already said. I already said, Sir, that I opposed the Amendment.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Then I put the amendment.

The Motion moved :

"That the 'full-stop' after the word 'Assam' be deleted and the following words be added thereafter—

'and that all restrictions regarding the procurement, distribution and movement of Textile Goods be withdrawn forthwith'."

The Motion was lost.

Srijut BIMALA PROSAD CHALIHA (Parliamentary Secretary): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government is grateful to the hon. Mover of the Motion for giving an opportunity to explain the position of the textile policy of this Government. But, I cannot agree with the hon. Mover of the Motion in what he said. Before coming to the points raised by him, I regret for the inconveniences caused to the hon. Member on account of the delay in receipt of replies from Government. You may remember, Sir, I represented to you some days back that Government received questions very late and as a matter of fact, it was yesterday or day before yesterday all the departments had to work very hard to reply to the questions of hon. Members. I would hope, Sir, that you would kindly request all the hon. Members of the House to submit their questions in time. It becomes very helpful for the Government and also for the hon. Members if the questions are submitted in time.

Srijut Beliram Das says that Assam being a poor province the Government should not have launched the Co-operative cloth procurement and distribution scheme. But, Sir, I differ from him. If Assam is poor we should do something to ameliorate the condition of her people. If we do not do anything she will remain poor for ever. So we must do something—somewhere and at some time so that the conditions of the mass people of Assam may be ameliorated and their *per Capita* income is increased and thus the poor province of Assam may become rich. We must do something. I therefore cannot agree with him that this Government with the approval of this august House did something wrong by launching the Co-operative cloth procurement and distribution scheme. Various rumours by interested parties were spread and reached Government. Sometimes the rumours were of such characters as if something very dangerous has been done by the Government as if the sky will fall on them. But, Sir, so far as I am concerned, these false rumours could create very little reaction on me and so is the case with the Government. We know that this is a very great undertaking and there are various difficulties which the Government would have to face. In every business there are certain risks which are called business risks.

Sir, Srijut Beliram Das has also pointed out certain defects about the Standard Cloth. I am happy, Sir, to inform the House that so far as Standard Cloth Scheme is concerned, there will be a surplus instead of any loss because the Government of India have recently contributed from the Equalisation Fund a sum of Rs. 23 lakhs to compensate for the probable losses against the Standard Cloth Scheme. As there are losses there are also commercial ways by which those losses can be compensated or at least minimised to a considerable degree.

Sir, Srijut Beliram Das has thought fit to ridicule a Government officer for a diagram he prepared explaining the Rural Development Scheme. But, Sir, I do not know, how far we will be justified in ridiculing a Government Servant—particularly in his absence.

So far the questions of the appointment of Purchasing Agents at Bombay is concerned, I would say that we appointed this Agent on a commission of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Some letters were published in the press by some persons who do not like our policy against the appointment of the Purchasing Agents at $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. commission. It was stated in the Press that Commission Agents were available even at $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. rate as against the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. given by Government. Sir, for the information of the House, I would like to say that Commission Agents may be available even at one-fourth per cent. commission. In some cases it may even be less than one-fourth per cent. But, Sir, the rate of commission depends on the amount of work a certain Commission Agent has to do. The Commission Agent whom we call the Lifting Agent has a lot of work to do. He has to obtain permits from the Textile Commissioner of Bombay and then to select the cloth from different Mills and then make payment to the Mills and bring the cloths to his own godown insure and then to subdivide them according to different subdivisinal quotas and mark and book them and produce the documents before the Banks and obtain his payment. We did not appoint these Commission Agents without any selection. When the Government decided to take up this Scheme of Cloth Procurement and Distribution—we actually advertised in the newspapers of Assam and also of Bombay inviting tenders from these Lifting Agents. Sir, I do not exactly remember the number of applications we received, but I know that we received sufficient number of applications in response to the advertisement. But not a single party had quoted $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Commission. The minimum quotation we got, I think, was Rs. 1-6-0 and that was from a party whom we did not consider suitable, nor the Textile Commissioner did consider them to be so to take up the work of

this Government. Then on receipt of those applications we selected 3 parties and then we consulted the Textile Commissioner of India who gave his own views about the various Lifting Agents and then we selected finally the lifting agent for this Government.

Sir, with regard to the insurance with the New India Assurance Company Limited various criticisms had been made against the Government. There were some rumours that I have certain relation in the said Company and therefore I had favoured this Company with the insurance business of the Government. But I can tell the House that I have none in the New India Assurance Company Limited. Besides that, Sir, I may be anything but never mean. Many insurance companies took interests in this transit insurance and ultimately two companies came forward—*viz.*, (1) the New India Assurance Company Limited, (2) the British India Insurance Company Limited and remained keen to have the business. The New India Assurance Company Limited submitted their quotations. In the meantime the Branch Manager of the British India General Insurance Company came to me and I spoke to him that the Government would like to obtain a transit insurance cover for textile from a respectable company at the cheapest rate and if they like they may submit their quotations. He enquired if we are interested in having any agent. Then I consulted the Hon'ble the Premier about this. And the Hon'ble Premier agreed with me that we want the cheapest rate and are not interested in any agent to it. Then I told the New India Assurance Company Limited that we are not interested in any Agent and they should in view of this see if they could reduce their rates. I asked both the Companies to submit their rates in sealed covers. At first the New India Assurance Company Limited gave higher rates. When the Secretary, Textiles opened the tenders, the rates of both the companies were found to be similar. Then we had to go by the balance sheet of the Company, and we found the New India's Balance Sheet to be more substantial and gave this to them.

Another criticism which appeared in the Press was against the conditions imposed on the Procuring Agents. There were three conditions which we put on the Procuring Agents, namely to insure things with the New India Assurance Company Limited. We insisted that the textiles should be purchased through the Government Lifting Agent. We also asked the Procuring Agents to get the textiles handled through Messrs Shaw Wallace. Sir, we entered into an agreement with the Lifting Agent that he would work for us for one year and unless this was done Government would be liable to pay compensation. That is why we are obliged to put the condition of purchasing through the Government Lifting Agent. With regard to handling of the textiles in Calcutta the hon. Members of the House may be aware that this Company is doing business with the Government since a very long time and they have been doing it very well also. Government consider them to be a reliable party. There may be parties who may be willing to do the work at a much cheaper rate, but we may not consider such a party to be a reliable and a capable one. In any case, because Messrs. Shaw Wallace has been handling goods for a long time and on account of their business connection Government gave them to handle textile goods.

Then the question is asked: Why did we impose this condition of handling through Messrs. Shaw Wallace on the Procuring Agent? We had to impose this condition because when we first negotiated with Messrs. Shaw Wallace we gave them the understanding that they will have to handle our textile goods for a period of one year and in view of that understanding we had to impose that condition.

Then comes the New India Assurance Company Limited. When we asked the Insurance Company to quote their rates they put a question enquiring as to the period for which we may give them the business. I said that for the

present they could take it to be for a year. As Parliamentary Secretary on behalf of the Government I thought it proper that the understanding which I gave should not be broken off without due notice and therefore we had to ask the procuring agent to insure through the said Company. These are the reasons why we had to put these conditions. But subsequently according to the terms of the contract we have served notice on the Lifting Agent at Bombay that his services will no longer be required. Similarly we have also informed Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company and New India Assurance Company Limited, that on account of modification of the procurement policy we cannot stick to the previous understanding.

Now, Sir, we have certain fundamental differences with the hon. Mover of the Motion. I do not know whether he believes that the co-operative movement may be a useful movement for ameliorating the condition of the masses of the country. It may be that the history of the co-operative movement of this Province is very dark, but yet I believe that the co-operative movement can actually do a lot to the mass people of our country.

Sir, the improvement of the condition of the labour in comparison with the condition of the Agriculturist is an easy task. The House may enact a legislation and compel the industries to enhance the wages and improve the living condition, etc. Besides, the percentage of labour population as compared with the percentage of agricultural population is very small. It may be about 10 per cent. We may ask the industries to increase wages and raise other amenities of life. But when we come to agriculturist actually we have to remain mum there. It may be that on account of the magnitude of the problem and on account of the want of the resources or suitable personnel we have been able to do very little for our agriculturist population. Shall we not do anything for them? If we believe that this co-operative movement is a good thing and it can do good to the agriculturist people, shall we stand on its way? If there be any defect as has been said by Maulavi Abul Kashem, let us try to remove those, make the movement successful. I have my sympathy with the traders. I consider them to be useful members of the society. It is far from my intention to injure them, but in an economic programme like this it is very difficult to do a thing without affecting the interest of any class of society. When Government adopted this scheme of this Trading Co-operative a deputation of textile merchants waited on me. I asked them whether they considered this co-operative movement to be one which should be established in the country, for the benefit of the people. They said that the co-operative movement could do good to the people. Then I said, "why do you object to our giving this textile business to the co-operatives?" They said, "why do you not try paddy and other things?" Then I said that if I give the co-operative do they not think that I will have to face another deputation of paddy merchants? I fully appreciate that on account of the co-operatives coming in, the business of the textile merchants have been affected. I have my sympathy with them. At the same time I feel helpless because in an economic programme like this one cannot do a thing without affecting the interests of any party as I said before. Why did we go to these co-operatives? The first reason is that the distribution of cloth and yarn through the normal trade channels during the control-period was far from satisfactory. Government received lots of complaints about black-marketing, corruption and unfair distribution. Then Government thought, "why do we not take people into our confidence and give them a machinery through which they can play their part for equitable and better distribution of controlled commodities?" That is one reason. The other reason is, as I said, that we must do something for the bulk of our population and for that we must begin somewhere, sometime and in some way, and we thought that this co-operative movement was the best way of organisation through which

gradually we could take up various works of development. While there is a very minority section of the people who do not like to look at these co-operatives, I am confident, Sir, that the bulk of the mass people want these co-operatives. And if in spite of this, obstacles are put on their path, they will take their own course ; the things will proceed and the obstacles shall go.

Srijut Das has asked us to give the co-operatives the business of paddy, but not the textiles. I do not understand his logic. If he is sympathetic towards the cloth traders today he may be sympathetic towards the paddy traders also tomorrow. (Srijut Beliram Das:—My intention was that textiles should not be the only commodity to be handled by the co-operatives). Sir, the same argument may be advanced against giving of paddy business to the co-operatives to-morrow. Why should not the same logic apply in this case also? He said that he heard that we had recruited a useless person as the Managing Director of the Apex Bank. Sir, Government in making selection has to go by a certain procedure, and the procedure is that selections are made by the Assam Public Service Commission. The Assam Public Service Commission, in selecting the Managing Director for the Apex Bank, took the advice of many experts. I do not know their designations, but I know that in interviewing the candidates they took the help of the General Manager of the Imperial Bank of India. The interview was held in Calcutta and this gentleman was recommended by the Assam Public Service Commission for appointment to this post. His scale of pay (he is on contract for a period of five years) is Rs.800—1800. His initial pay has been fixed at Rs 1,200 per month *plus* a house allowance of Rs 150. The hon. Member should not have made such a remark about him. It may be that some disgruntled officer or some chucked-off person of the Apex Bank or some person discharged by the Managing Director must have given this information to the hon. Member and he considered it fair to level this criticism against him on the floor of this august House. The hon. Member has asked us to abolish the Apex Bank. Sir, he cannot expect this from us. It will be for him to do it, if he wishes, some day, but he cannot expect this from us. We will not only not abolish the Apex Bank, we will make it greater and greater every day and make it one of the best Banks of India.

Then, Sir, I come to the question of *ad hoc* cloth. When there was surplus of cloth in the mills the Textile Commissioner of India permitted those mills to sell some cloth to the nominees of the mills and thus some cloth was purchased by some traders in this Province. But, Sir, this august House will not expect this Government to act in such a way as to endanger the public money that has been invested in our textile scheme. I want to make no secret of the fact that I do not want that this cloth gets priority in sale over the cloth procured by the Government. That is why, Sir, in deciding the method of disposal of this *ad hoc* cloth we had to make many references to the Textile Commissioner of India explaining to him our scheme of distribution and how the present modification of the Government of India's policy would affect our present scheme and would lead Government to certain loss. In making these references sometime was necessary and that is why we were late in issuing the disposal orders of the *ad hoc* cloth. I am sorry for that ; at the same time, I plead my helplessness also. We cannot do a thing which may seriously affect the Government's scheme of textile distribution. Therefore while we want to adjust ourselves to the modified textile policy of the Government of India we have to be very careful to see that our scheme is not adversely affected and the money we have invested in textile is not lost, and so on and so forth.

Then, Sir, it is said that we have not purchased the cloth and yarn that were allotted to this Province for the months of January to May. It

is a fact that we have not purchased our quota of cloth from January to May, but it is not a fact that we have not purchased yarn. We have continued our purchases of yarn. But on account of the arrival of all our previous quotas of cloth, which is sufficient for 4 or 5 months' consumption, all the godowns available in the different subdivisions were packed to the full. Under the circumstances it was impossible to bring more cloth till the present stock was disposed of. We communicated this to the Textile Commissioner of India and requested him that the quotas which we had not been able to purchase should not lapse, and that we should be allowed to make the purchases in instalments along with the quotas of cloth for the future months. To that he has agreed and accordingly we are now proposing to purchase this arrear quotas of cloth in small instalments along with the regular quota.

Srijut Das has suggested to Government to revert to Hadi Hussain's Scheme of Cloth Procurement. Sir, Mr. Hadi Hussain after I have examined his various schemes and plans I have no doubt about his good intentions to do good to the people of the province. I have very high opinion about him and his good intentions to the people. Sir, what I want to say is that our present scheme of reorganisation of the co-operative movement is based on the lessons of the past. It may be that tomorrow somebody will be able to find out something better than what we are thinking today. Srijut Das asked why not Government revert to that scheme of procurement. My question is how is the common man going to be benefited by that form of co-operative society. If he can explain and satisfy me about that I am quite prepared to accept his suggestion. But, Sir, whatever may be the defects of the last co-operative movement, I am not going to blame anybody because it is by a process of devolution we can perfect our scheme. May I enquire from Mr. Das what is the necessity of registering those types of Societies as Co-operatives? Those Societies are as good as Joint Stock Companies?

I hope, Sir, I have been able to explain the position and to reply to the various points raised by Srijut Beliram Das in introducing his Motion and therefore with these few words I would like to resume my seat.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD ABUL KASHEM: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to my hon. friend Mr. Beliram Das for giving us an opportunity to discuss this matter on the floor of this House. The first thing that strikes me is that his Ministry has got no responsibility and the responsibility is of the officers. If so, then the Ministers and the Parliamentary Secretaries are not necessary. Either of the two alternatives he must accept. The second thing is that he knows for certain that this proposal was thrashed in this House and he and his party were unanimous regarding the introduction of this scheme which afterwards was put into operation. But he said that up till now only 37 per cent. of the population has been enrolled as members of the Trading Co-operatives. It shows, Sir, that the Congress Government which is in power now, does not enjoy the confidence of 63 per cent. of the population of Assam, but they represent only 37 per cent. It is clear that their scheme is a failure and I can say that the real root of the failure of this movement is the non-co-operation of the M. L. As most of whom are not in favour of this movement. They could have submitted it frankly on the floor of this House and we could have adopted some different method for asking the people to co-operate with the Government for the success of the scheme. Sir, I would also simply say that this failure will not bring credit to my hon. Friend, Mr. Das, or to any member of his party. I would advise him now to try and move in his constituency by asking the people in the rural areas to enrol themselves in these Trading Co-operative Societies.

Sir, practically speaking our sympathy is with these Trading Co-operative Societies because one capitalist should enjoy while others suffer cannot be tolerated by the people and we cannot indeed have crores of rupees distributed amongst the poor population, but we want that our people with their meagre resources can purchase their own needs and have their own business through mutual co-operation. This movement must not be allowed to die out. Sir, he has of course pointed out some difficulties which may be faced by the Government and also by the people at large, the difficulty regarding procurement through our agents who are appointed on commission basis. As for that commission I cannot say whether it is too high or too low because I have not consulted anybody, but I can say only this whether Government can also add in their terms that in case the cloths that are procured through these procuring agents remain unsold here in the Province they will be held responsible for any loss thereof because they are made procuring agents by the Government to purchase cloth on behalf of the Government who will distribute this cloth to the people and if the people are not willing to purchase this or the quality of the cloth is such that the people do not like to purchase, the Government would not be loser and these agents will be held responsible for it. This term will be preferable.

As for the insurance rate neither can I say whether this is too high or too low but insurance risk should be covered by some insurance company. If the hon. Members of this House can make some reliable insurance company available at low rate, I think, that can be considered at the time of appointing any agent after the expiry of one year and that will surely save something. One thing, Sir, is that due to this decontrol by the Centre the difficulty is that we will not be able to compete with the traders because they know how to compete with us. So, Sir, we should move a Resolution in this Assembly asking the Government of India at least to grant monopoly for procurement of whole quota of cloth for this Province to the Government of Assam so that no outsiders can bring any cloth to this country. In that case it will be possible that persons who are not members of the Trading Co-operatives shall still get cloth and there will be no difficulty whatsoever to do this. This would not in any way affect our co-operative movement. Much difficulties we are experiencing here when the Centre is not in a position to cope with the difficulties created by the merchants of this Dominion. There is a huge congestion of cloth from our quota and which could not be lifted by the Province. It is not only for the control as propagated by merchants. But persons who are actually acquainted with the real affairs say that it is due to the co-operation of the merchants and millowners that cloths are made in such a way that the people of the Province do not want them. Sir, the cloth that is made after the reintroduction of control is not suiting the needs of the Province and as such there has been congestion in the mills. This co-operation of the traders and millowners must be defeated only with the close co-operation of the public at large and to this extent we must seek the help of the Centre. I am not sure whether that amount of favour will be shown by the Centre. But I request the Hon'ble Premier to see whether it is possible to get at least procurement monopoly and thus to allow our Trading Co-operatives to lift our quota. There should be provision that the whole Provincial quota will not be lifted either from Ahmedabad or Bombay by anyone except the Government agent. If this is done, the present attempt of the merchants somehow could be frustrated. Otherwise it would be very difficult for the movement of the cloth.

The present method of distribution of cloth has done much good to the people at large who get the cloth at cheaper rate. Had there been

no such method the price of cloth would have been higher. It is known to everyone that the Trading Co-operatives are in a position to supply cloth to everyone for his personal consumption of course, but not for trading purposes. So, I think this has created no difficulty.

As for Apex Bank, I am afraid whether the hon. Parliamentary Secretary would be successful in his attempt. But without this Apex Bank we could also procure cloth through our Scheduled Banks, if they are reliable. If there is even little chance of being failure it should rather be stopped at any stage without much money being spent. I therefore request again that this Assembly would adopt a Resolution asking the Centre to grant monopoly to procure cloth for the Province of Assam and also for keeping the trading co-operative movement alive and making it a success. I may inform the House that many of the Trading Co-operative Societies have taken up business in other decontrolled food stuffs, like mustard oil, molasses, salt, pulses, etc.

With these words, Sir, I ask for the co-operation of all concerned.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY. Sir, in his speech Mr. Beliram Das made certain unkind remarks against Mr. Hayley. I am not defending the latter because he is a friend of mine. I am defending him for the reason that he has devoted much of his time to the framing of the Co-operative Bill and has given much of his energy and labour for the success of the Trading Co-operatives in Assam.....(Mr. Beliram Das: He has been paid for that, but not paid for making mistakes.) He has not surely been paid for making mistakes. Any way, it is up to this House to judge whether these mistakes are corrigible or not. Mr. Hayley has given much of his time to the success of the co-operative movement in Assam. It is through this movement in the country that the ignorant masses have learnt to ameliorate their conditions. The Trading Co-operatives have been just started and it is too early to judge its success or failure. Mistakes may have been committed. They ought to be rectified whenever and wherever they are made. It is no use concentrating all criticisms upon the mistakes made by one man or one officer. To err is human, to forgive is Divine. But for a mistake here and there Mr. Hayley should not have been made a target of attack. The co-operative movement in the country has been a failure largely because of the fault and indifference of the managers, secretaries and other office bearers. The failure is also attributable to nepotism, favouritism, dishonesty, unpunctual payments, over due loans, etc., etc. If there have been failures of these Trading Co-operatives at some centres it is because, among other reasons, of mismanagement, inexperienced office bearers, incapable managers and for some similar reasons. Otherwise the poorer sections of the people have been much benefited.

Mr. Chaliha's speech has enlightened the House with regard to certain details. But from his speech it appeared to me that he has misunderstood Mr. Das regarding the extension of the Trading Co-operative to certain other commodities.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Dr. Chaudhury will continue his speech after lunch.

(Adjournment.)

The Assembly was then adjourned for lunch till 1 P.M.

(After Lunch)

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY (contd.): Sir, I was speaking about error into which my hon. Friend, Mr. Bimalaprosad Chaliha, fell when he misunderstood Mr. Beliram Das. As a matter of fact, Mr. Beliram Das wanted the Trading Co-operatives to deal in other goods as well. The difficulty faced by the Trading Co-operatives is that Marwaris with their business instincts and experience have brought textiles into Assam of finer and superior quality which they were selling not at unsatisfactory rates.

Secondly, the textiles brought are mostly Dhuties and Sarees which do not suit the tastes of the Hill people, namely, Khasis, Nagas, Garos and the Lushais. They are forced to take recourse to other merchants in preference to Trading Co-operatives. Moreover, they are coarse cloths. Now-a-days everybody would want cloth of fine qualities unless they are extremely poor.

In my opinion, Sir, if things are better managed and better people are appointed to important offices, I see no reason why the Trading Co-operatives should not prove a success.

One important matter to which I want to draw the attention of the House is that there is a strong rumour to the effect that on account of the disciplinary action proposed to be taken by the Congress Party against Mr. Beliram Das for the Motion he has moved, he (Mr. Das) may have to leave the party. In that case I, on behalf of this side, would like to welcome him into our midst. (*Laughter.*)

Srijut BELIRAM DAS Never, never (*Laughter.*)

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Can the hon. Member base his argument on the basis of rumours?

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: Sometimes statements are made on the basis of rumours. If it is a fact and if Mr. Beliram Das faces such a situation, we welcome him and we will embrace him as a colleague in the Opposition should he have to leave his Party.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS: May I make a preliminary reply, Sir?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: No.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS: I may be allowed to speak on some of the allegations made against me.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: You will be able to speak by way of personal explanation.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS: I want to say something by way of personal explanation, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Let Prof. P.M. Sarwan speak now.

Prof. P.M. SARWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, people sometimes think that I am always opposed to everything proposed by Government. But, Sir, in this particular matter of Trading Co-operative, I am at one with the Government policy. The people of the province of Assam in rural areas require Co-operative Societies very badly and this is a correct move on the part of the Government of Assam to try to ameliorate the conditions of the peasants of Assam. If only Members of this House visited the rural areas, they will find in what hardship the rural population are living on account of the cloth scarcity which has been prevailing for very many years and it has not been possible for these people to obtain cloth from the trade channels which are in vogue at present unless they are prepared to pay an exorbitant price in town areas. The difficulty had been that the Government had found it not very easy for movement to this Province of cloth. This good policy of giving the Co-operative movement a consolidated place along with other movements that are going on and if all the M.L. As. were desirous of helping the Government in this policy of allowing Co-operative Societies established in all the rural areas and if the hon. Members were to get away from the town and stay for some time in rural areas, the Government would have had no difficulty in making this Co-operative movement very successful. In most cases, we find that M.L.As are gradually living out of touch with the rural areas. So far I can see that this is the best policy Government have adopted in the circumstances and that all the complaints that are being levelled

against the Trading Co-operative are due to the fact that the Government had found it difficult to implement this policy and therefore the only suggestion that I will make in this regard is that Government besides depending on its supporters for maintaining this policy it should try and find by some other device whether it could implement this policy, which is excellent for the amelioration of the masses living in rural areas.

Mr. J. S. HARDMAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, a year ago the question of distribution of textiles through Co-operative Societies was discussed on the floor of this House, and turning back to what was said on that occasion, I am sure, that there are only two hon. Members, who can regard the statements, which they made on that occasion with any degree of complacency. Government on that occasion suggested that the Co-operative movement was likely to make very large profits by taking up the textile business, and those, who ventured to suggest that this was unlikely to occur were regarded as being unduly timid and lacking in sympathy for the co-operative movement—a movement which everybody recognises is of great value. It is, however, necessary to point out that there is a very great difference between co-operation in Assam and co-operation as practised in other parts of the world. Co-operation elsewhere means the voluntary association of individuals to promote their mutual good, whereas in Assam it appears to be an extreme form of State Socialism whereby monopolies are to be handed over to the Co-operative Societies. There would, I am certain, be a storm of protest which would endanger the Government in England if Government there decided that distribution of rationed commodities for example tea, sugar, etc., was to be handed over to the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which admittedly has a fine organization, tremendous financial reserves and a wide net work of distributing centres. It would, however, be regarded as a political issue of the greatest magnitude.

We, Sir, in the tea industry have fortunately been spared the benefits of the co-operative movement and we have not been affected by the co-operative distribution of textiles. We can therefore review its achievements dispassionately and our main criticism is that it has displayed little ability in discharging its primary function which is the sale of cloth. The test of any organization is not the intention with which it is founded but the extent to which it attains its objectives. We have been disturbed at a state of affairs which permits of so much cloth lying locked up in godowns steadily deteriorating, the heavy liability incurred for demurrage, interest charges, etc., at a time when Assam is admittedly very short of cloth. We can see from the figures of the past few years that insufficient quantities of cloth have been imported into Assam and those who like our Friend, the hon. Mr. Sarwan, visit the rural areas and live there realize how short the supply of cloth is. We therefore have a situation of millions in Assam anxious to buy cloth, and Government in possession of large quantities of cloth anxious to sell and yet somehow business cannot be concluded. The financial burden of the co-operative movement must fall on general revenues and we hear rather alarming accounts of the financial state of the Province. It is being suggested that no new scheme however urgent can be taken up. It is therefore important that the leakage of large sums of money on a scheme which fails to achieve its objective should be checked. We would like to know what the financial position of the textile distribution scheme is, whether it is making loss. Admittedly Government have discontinued purchase of cloth for a period of 6 months. That by itself should have created a natural scarcity and incidentally must have relieved Government of very large financial liabilities. Even so the quantities that Government were entitled to indent could not be imported into the Province. If I understood the hon. Mr. Chaliha correctly, it is Government's intention that the quota which has not been taken up should

be earmarked for Assam thereby recognising that the Province has not absorbed the quantity of cloth which ought to have been taken. It is necessary for every hon. Member to consider the co-operative movement dispassionately. We are not enemies of the co-operative movement; we welcome every sign of real co-operation, but it is dangerous to use words which have a high sounding meaning. Co-operation is one of these and I am afraid that many schemes labelled as co-operation would otherwise meet with a very stern reception from the Finance Department. We would welcome a statement from the Hon'ble Finance Minister on the financial position of this co-operative venture because the province can ill afford to lose lakhs of rupees.

Turning then to another side of this proposition we have the statement that in order to keep the co-operative movement's textile distribution scheme going, Government propose to impose severe restrictions on the import of cloth. That in short means that the public who would otherwise get a plentiful supply of cloth are compelled to purchase a restricted quantity through certain channels, which apparently are found inconvenient. Moreover there will be additional expense to Government by keeping a scheme, which cannot on past performance be expected to show a profit, to existence for an unlimited length of time.

Then, Sir, there is a serious danger that this principle of distribution of cloth which may well be extended to other commodities. Government have a responsibility, when commodities are rationed, for seeing that the arrangements made are not merely fair and equitable to all concerned but also that the arrangements are businesslike; that they do not involve additional trouble to the public nor place additional burdens on the public exchequer. It will, Sir, place a very heavy responsibility on the organization of the co-operative movement if it is to be given the charge of distribution of a large number of commodities over which Government exercise a monopoly. We would earnestly request Government to examine the whole question of co-operative distribution and to see that it does not conflict in any way with public interest, whether it is in the financial interest of the Province or whether it interferes unduly with the ordinary channels of trade. I am not making any appeal for private enterprise. I realize that private enterprise has on occasions abused its power, that I think is beyond dispute. Controls are undoubtedly necessary and must be retained, but it must be remembered that in the private trader there is a wealth of experience in handling goods. For example, a few months ago we were offered consignments of cloth which had incurred demurrage for 3 months or so. It was expected that these would be taken over and the purchaser would pay the demurrage. No private trader would have left cloth incurring demurrage for such a length of time in the first instance, nor would pay private trader expect a purchaser to pay 3 months demurrage on a bale of cloth. As I was saying private traders require a little consideration. They may have abused their opportunities for certain occasions, but Government derive considerable income from the operation of private trade and I feel certain that if all trade were to be canalised into the co-operative organisation Government revenue would be seriously affected. At the same time the co-operative organisation seems to be unable to compete without a subsidy. We have witnessed a situation during a period of monopoly, when Government were able to prevent other supplies of cloth coming into the Province, and during this period the co-operative movement for the distribution of textiles has admittedly fared badly. Whatever steps may be taken by the Government of Assam, the Government of India will insist on production of Indian Mills being marketed in the Province and even if embargoes are imposed I feel there will be methods by which cloth will find its way into Assam. The co-operative movement can visualise that for the next six months it will have to make its way against competition, but it will not be

an easy task when it will have to fight against private enterprise. It is evident that in many countries the co-operative movement has been able to compete successfully with private enterprise. The Co-operative Movement in the United Kingdom has all along been competing on level terms with private enterprise, and if we could feel certain that a comparable achievement could be allowed in Assam I would welcome distribution by a co-operative organisation. In conclusion I would request all Members of this House to examine this question dispassionately without attaching undue reverence to a term like 'Co-operation' and to consider any scheme in the light of the financial state of the Province, when money is extremely scarce and substantial losses must be avoided if other important schemes are not to be placed in jeopardy.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, just after completion of one year's working of the textile scheme, I thought that the Hon'ble Parliamentary Secretary would give us some idea as to how far he has succeeded in the co-operative cloth procurement and distribution scheme, but in his speech he has only blamed Mr. Beliram Das and the traders of the Province for its failure. All my hon. Friends will agree with me as to how far the traders have suffered due to the scheme. Sir, after the decontrol of cloth our traders went to Bombay and Ahmedabad to bring goods to the Province and they were to pay high prices for the goods and when the goods arrived here in Assam the control was imposed on the cloths and the cloths amounting to 14,000 bales were seized and the traders were paid reduced prices and also 5 per cent. stamping fees had to be paid by them. So, Sir, you will see how they were put to a great loss.....

Srijut BIMALAPROSAD CHALIHA (Parliamentary Secretary): Sir, I did not say in my speech that the traders are trying to bring the scheme a failure.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Thank you for this. But, Sir, Mr. Hayley on the radio talk also stated that the traders were out to make the scheme a failure and that was also published in the *Assam Tribune*. The traders being ousted from millmade textiles, took the business of selling handloom cloths, foreign goods and power loom cloths and that was also prohibited by Government and they were not allowed to bring them here again. So, Sir, you will see how our Government is trying gradually to deprive the traders from the cloth business and trying to drive them out from the markets and to bring ruin to them. Sir, such policies are also followed in the Central Provinces and Bihar. But these Provinces are not treating the traders as has been treated by the Government of Assam. Just after the de-control when the Government of India has modified the scheme and partially de-controlled cloth, as soon as our traders and merchants brought cloth into the Province from outside, cloths had been seized by the Deputy Commissioners under order of the Government without any distinction whether it is millmade cloth or handloom cloth. It is said that the same is to be offered first to the Central Co-operative Trading Society and it is released after their refusal to take the same. Why such favour to be shown to the Trading Societies? Let the Societies go to Bombay and procure their own cloth. Healthy competition should be encouraged and it is desirable for the good of the common people.

Sir, the intention of the Government by the scheme was to do good to the common people. Have they succeeded in doing so by it? Let them go to the villages and see how far it has been successful. Sir, Government could not bring cloths for five months from January to May. When this scheme was discussed a year ago I suggested on the floor of this House that instead of giving monopoly to the Co-operative Society some percentage may be given to the traders as well. In

the case of the Central Provinces they allow 25 per cent. to the traders and 75 per cent. to the Co-operative Societies, but unfortunately that system is not introduced here. I think by this scheme the Government is going to sustain a loss of about 50 lakhs of rupees on account of interest damages, demurrages. The Government by its policy did not release the goods lying in the godown. From Dhubri to Dibrugarh cloths are lying and are not released even to the Co-operative Societies and as a result many bales of cloths are rotten and eaten by insects and rats. The reasons for not releasing the cloths to the Co-operative Societies are not known to us. Sir, now and then we hear that the policy of the Government was to supply these textiles goods to common people at a low rate. But that also could not be done as Government are charging administrative charges at 2·8 per cent. They are charging interest on central trading societies at 8 per cent. and the total charges sometimes exceed 20 per cent. over *Ex-mill* price. So they have not given a low margin to the common people. Therefore if we examine the scheme, in all respect it is a failure. Mr. Das has said that the scheme has been a failure and has criticised a certain big officer for the same. I think it is due to him that such scheme was formulated in Assam and he must be held responsible for the same and the Parliamentary Secretary must be held responsible for all these losses, if any. Outside the House whenever I talk with any hon. Member they are all against the scheme. I do not know why they fear to explain their ideas to the Hon. House. So I think Government will think over the matter fully and calmly and allow the societies as well as the traders to do their textile business wherever they like to do. Please do not show any privilege to Trading Society. You are not thereby going to benefit them, but doing harm to the common people. Please do not give preference to them at the cost of others.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS : On a point of personal explanation, Sir. However pious the intention of my hon. Friend, Sri Chaliha, might be the fact remains that the textile policy has practically failed.

The Hon'ble Maulana MD. TAYYEBULLA : It is not a personal explanation, Sir.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS : Sir, he has attacked me. He has made bold to say that the co-operative movement has succeeded. I say that the co-operative movement did not succeed. The fact remains that we know the co-operative movement in Momary and in Misamari has not succeeded. He cannot say that the textile business will give profit to Government. I challenge him. He should give an undertaking that he will make good the loss from his own pocket. As regards Mr. Hayley, I had not the intention to ridicule him in any way. He was responsible for all the problems, I mean, the co-operative movement and trading societies. But there is an apprehension of failure of the scheme. So I have put the burden of responsibility on this gentleman. I have not ridiculed him. It is but natural that he will support his officers, the Director of the Textile Department because his rise and fall depends upon the working of the scheme. I would like to remind him of an Assamese saying. “মাকে বখানে জী গুৱালে বখানে ধি”—mother praises her daughter and the milkman praises his Ghee. So I do not wonder that Mr. Chaliha has praised his officers. Mr. Chaliha should not claim monopoly of wisdom. There are other people also who are entitled to think of better things like him. For his future guidance I would remind him of a Sanskrit saying—

জানানিবে সপ ! তব প্রতাপং , কণ্ঠস্থিতো গজর্জনি শঙ্কবস্য ।

স্থানং প্রবাণং নবলং প্রধানং, স্থানস্থিতঃ কাপুব্ৰহ্মোহপি সিংহঃ ॥

Oh serpent, I know your valour.

Having occupied a seat in the neck of Sankara, you are making a fus of hissing sounds.

Your strength is derived from the position you occupy and not your actual valour.

Even a coward becomes a lionlike, if he can occupy a position in life.

Srijut NILMANI PHOOKAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am a believer in co-operative movement and as such I will carry this conviction, if possible, beyond the grave. At the present moment I am not thinking in terms of Co-operative Trading Societies for the particular purpose of textile business, neither am I thinking with my Friend, Mr. Kedarmal Brahmin, that possibly commerce and trade have stood in the way of co-operative movements. At the same time I have no misgiving about this that co-operative movement and mercantile trading business do not go together. If they go together they go together like co-wives. I have no misgiving about it. For the time being co-operative trading has been introduced by our Government with the best of intentions to help the people in the supply of cloth and thereby free people from the clutches of unscrupulous black marketers. If this has not succeeded to the extent to which it was contemplated, it is not due to the failure of the policy of the Government, nor is it due to the mercantile policy. But it is a fact which we should take into account that big mill owners are telling Government at the Centre to take away their bundles from their godowns. Otherwise they would stop their mills. We have found that before the co-operative trading restrictions had been introduced by the Government there were bundles of cloth lying idle in Bombay. There are bundles which has been now lying idle in their godowns. We can from the outside only conclude that there must be something rotten in the State of Denmark. And for this state of rottenness it will have to be seen who is responsible. From the speech made by the Hon'ble the Premier and the Parliamentary Secretary it is found that if any body is responsible for this, possibly it is the Centre, because the Provincial Government has no hand over the policy which the Centre enunciates from time to time regarding this controlled business. As such if our Trading Co-operatives have not been able to cope with the situation to the extent expected, I do not think the fault will come absolutely to our Provincial Government.

There must be something wrong at the very source. Whether we can go to the source and dig out all the obstruction is a different matter, but co-operative movement should go on in spite of the obstacles that are to be met on its way, because the very notion of co-operation is at the bottom of the upliftment of the poor masses, the cultivators of our country. We can have no other ideology and no other way of uplifting our masses. I am sure that my hon. Friend, Mr. Kedarmal Brahmin, also will agree with me that these mass people in their upliftment work will never be assisted by trade and commerce, whether they are Marwaris, Baruas or Phookans. Traders are always for getting as much out of the poor people as possible and the poor people are always in the cobweb of the traders. They cannot come out of it. I have personally seen one example of this at a village. A youngman opened a small shop with a capital of hundred or two hundred rupees. Even his uncle could not buy things from his shop because if he does not buy from the shop of original trader, the latter will at once demand payment of the arrears and sue him for it and then sell his land and cattle. These people are always indebted to the traders. So, I say that he could not buy things from the shop of his nephew. Therefore, Sir, we must think of co-operation only. In spite of the capitalist ideas and the powerful trade interests we must think of the mass people and there is no other way of uplifting them except through the co-operative movement. And if there be something in the Government policy which needs correction certainly Government should do

policy of production of textiles by the mills should be taken up. It was perfectly clear to every one who heard his speech that he wanted the House as well as the Government to reconsider the policy this House adopted some twelve months ago. The question therefore raised by this Motion which is of great importance to a poor province like Assam should be examined in the narrow context, that is, whether the policy is working successfully and whether there is any prospect of this policy being continued further with benefit to the people of Assam. The question the Trading Co-operative Societies forms part of co-operative movement in the Province, that co-operation is panacea of all our evils, that it is the saviour of our economic downfall, does not come to the forefront at all.

Now, let us see how the policy of the Government of Assam as regards procurement and distribution of textiles from the producing centres is working in Assam, whether there can be exceptions, whether there are shortcomings. Every one here whether sitting on the Government Benches or behind them or whether sitting in the Opposition, are imbued with only one idea, that is how to serve the best interest of the Province and how best to ameliorate the condition of our poor masses. The present textile policy has been started on a monopoly procurement basis by the Government of Assam through the agency of the Apex Bank which has been started recently. The Apex Bank has been started as every hon. Member knows, on a loan from the Imperial Bank of India at 3 per cent. interest. Sir, it need not take us long to find out that this loan carries with it the liability of payment of interest charges to the tune of 75 thousand rupees per month. Every Bank, Commercial concern, and every trading institution must have first consideration how it could keep up its credit in the open market and before the public in general. Therefore, the capital of 2½ crores with which the Apex Bank starts has to conserve sufficient sums to meet its interest liabilities per month. The capital, therefore—I refer to the working capital—is reduced to a sum much below 2 crores of rupees. What does it mean will be apparent if I just place the figures before the House. The Hon'ble Premier stated that for 5 months 27 thousand bales of cloth were locked at Calcutta and would not be moved to Assam. I had dealt with textiles in my time and therefore I can say without fear of any contradiction that on the average, cost of the cloth in a bale goes upto a thousand rupees and a sum greater than the capital of the Apex Bank, *i.e.*, 2 crores 70 lakhs was blocked by these bales in Calcutta without doing any good to anybody in Assam. Therefore it is apparent that unless more capital can be inducted to this Apex Bank, its trading facilities will be practically nil if there is any bottle-neck in transport. Now, there is another very important pointer to this matter. When the Assam Government started procuring cloth for the Province, the price was high; since then the price is coming down gradually. The cloth that has been introduced into Assam has got to be sold at higher price than such commodity could be sold by the common trader. What does it represent? In the first place the poor people of Assam, the tax payers of the Province, have to shoulder interest charges. Then we have got to pay to the various intermediaries commissions which in the ultimate end becomes a big sum. There is a lifting agent at Bombay, there is a shifting agent at Calcutta and a banking agent here! Then again, it has just been told by many hon. Members who are eye witnesses to this matter that in various places they found wagons of cloth remaining undelivered because it has not been able by the consignees to produce cash to take delivery of it. If I remember a right, Sriman Beliram Das quoted figures of over a lakh that has been paid under this textile policy of Assam in the shape of demurrage only. Many people came to me ever since the start of this scheme. This scheme originally started with very good intentions, but the subordinate officials of the Government staff converted it into an engine of oppression. People of the Department went round to the villages and actually threatened the people that unless "you pay your 5 rupees

as member's fee to become member of this Co-operative Society, you cannot get your cloth and your children will remain naked". Such complaints were carried to me by various people and they thought that I will be able to catch the ears of the Government. But the Government was adamant all the time with the result that the people who had any guts—I admire those people—refused to join and become members under such threats. They should have been persuaded and not coerced to join the movement. Trading Co-operative Societies in the villages or in the rural areas did not command the capital that is required to lift or take delivery of the consignment that is sent to them.

It may be in the remembrance of many hon. Members that a particular Deputy Commissioner in one district, being unable to see any solution, took, on his own responsibility, delivery of the consignments that were paying demurrage when the Trading Co-operative concerned could not take delivery of those consignments, and he had to pay that demurrage as in the case of ordinary business people. He allowed the cloths to ordinary trade of the locality for sale. For his public spiritedness or for his thriftiness he was reprimanded rather on the allegation that he went against the Government policy.

Sir, I was surprised that an astute businessman like Mr. Kedarmal Brahmin was enquiring whether the Government of Assam is making a profit on this textile scheme. He asked the Finance Minister to produce a balance sheet. Need he be told that under the conditions prevailing, Assam Government—I do not mean the Assam Government but this textile scheme of theirs—cannot make any profit. Whatever profit they could have made shall have to be paid into the bankers coffer as interest charges, and as cost of establishment. So, Sir, it is very relevant to pause and ponder whether the scheme which was so enthusiastically supported by all at its initiation has fulfilled our expectation. It is time, it is full one year, that we take stock of the position. If we find that this scheme is costing the tax-payers much and under the prevailing conditions, I am perfectly sure that the tax-payers will lose more if they continue the scheme. It is time that we cry a halt not with the idea of discrediting the Government, not with the idea of flouting their laudable co-operative scheme but in order to safeguard our own skin, the skin of the poor tax-payers of Assam.

I was really amused to hear from the hon. Parliamentary Secretary that the Government have not been able to procure the quota of cloth that is due to the Assam Government for want of godown space. I think it would have been more correct if he had said that it was for want of capital. He has said that he is going to procure the arrear quantity in instalments subsequently. It is very easy to find out the real position. In the morning I had noticed the official who is in-charge of carrying out the scheme, although it was originated by Mr. Hayley—with all credit to him. But I think the actual operation is in the hands of Mr. St. John Perry. I do not see him now. If he were here now I would have asked the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to get from him just three figures for the information of the House: first how much quantity of cloth has been procured by the textile scheme since its initiation, say upto the end of 31st August, how much Government have paid, how much of this quantity has been sold up till now and what are the proceeds. There will be clear profit and loss account immediately for guidance of the hon. Members of the House for shaping their opinion in this debate. I hope the hon. Parliamentary Secretary has got those figures and he will be pleased to place them before us. I say this for bringing financial improvement to the Province and for its credit.

We were told at least in the Budget Session that the Province is faced with a deficit of 70 lakhs. on the years working. The Hon'ble Prime Minister, on the floor of the Constituent Assembly at Delhi said that after certain adjustments it has been found that the deficit will be to the tune of a crore and that in another 2 or

3 years, the deficit will be 3 or 4 crores. I am perfectly sure, Sir, that the deficit will be more, I mean the revenue deficit, the deficit over the revenue income and revenue expenditure, though the deficit may be shown as loss on account of the stoppage of the development schemes at the instance of the Centre.

Now with these perspectives in view we should judge whether it will be prudent for any ordinary or common householder, not to speak of a big concern like the Government, to continue in this trading business for the sake of prestige. I appeal to all patriots sitting opposite—we may be called reactionaries, but we will call ourselves economic revolutionaries (*laughter*) on the score of the uplift of the common masses, to see whether the scheme is worthwhile proceeding on. There ought to be no question of prestige. There is hardly any Member in this House who in his heart of hearts does not want the co-operative movement to thrive. I was a Minister of the Co-operative Department for 5 years from 1924-1929 and I made a deep study of the subject and even now I remember everything of the co-operative movement of the Province and some literature which I had read. "Salvation of the common and the poor masses lies in co-operation". But inspite of the fact that the Co-operative Trading Societies are not in a position to carry out the official scheme even by producing the capital, they cannot sell, I will not call it "distribute", the goods at a profit so that they can pay interest charges for the capital they borrowed and show a profit for themselves without milching the people. So, I request the Government Bench to give deep thought to this question that has been raised by the Motion of Sriman Beliram Das and to give exact figures from the Department concerned incurred up till now and what has been done: whether there is any profit or whether there is any loss and if the loss is of a very significant amount then they should stop operation immediately to curtail the loss. If, on the other hand, they find that it is not suffering loss but it is somehow carrying on, I would request Government not to curtail their expenditure on their scheme but to push on their scheme for another year. But first they should have a real tradesman's balance-sheet so that everyone can know the figures at a glance and say whether to support the scheme or whether the Government should be requested to stop it, so that the poor tax-payers of Assam should not be victimised any further.

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is well that this debate should have taken place. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary, as a matter of fact, had consultation with the hon. Mover of this Motion before this Motion was brought before the House in order that the House can have full opportunity of discussing all shades and aspects of this question. We have, therefore, welcomed this debate very much; but after hearing the debate we have come to the conclusion, Sir, that there is hardly any great reason for changing the policy which the Government of Assam have adopted excepting in so far as it will depend on, or will be modified by the overall policy of the Government of India. Sir, the shades of opinion that have found expression in this House can be analysed into certain categories—one of which is the opinion of persons like the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and, possibly along with him, my Friend over there, Mr. Kedarmal Brahmin, who in spite of all that they have said in support of the co-operative ideal, does not believe in real co-operation. I am constrained to make that remark on account of the various expressions that they made in the course of the debate. It is surely not by finding defects in procurement which was there equally in the trade, that the policy of co-operation whether in the matter of procurement from the textile mills, or distribution through the Co-operative Societies, can be condemned. But the initial defects between procurement and distribution by traders and those under control were so patent that I did not think it necessary to dilate on the point. We well know that when the textiles were decontrolled, the immediate result of

it was that there was sudden rise in the price of textiles by 100 to 200 per cent. over the original price ; and therefore if the Government of India adopted a policy of control, I think, Sir, they did not do anything wrong. Now the hon. Leader of the Opposition has stated that on account of procurement by Government more burden is falling on the consumers than normally. I must point out to him as well as to the other hon. Members of this House, however, that this is not a fact, and that the total percentage which was fixed for ultimate distribution through Government procurement is at least 1 to 1½ per cent. less than what was given to traders. Therefore, the ultimate cost that has fallen on the consumers is surely lesser than what was paid when the traders dealt with it.

Then, Sir, there is a second shade of opinion which showed apparent interests and have expressed good wishes for the success of distribution by Co-operative methods but and have virtually condemned it by pointing out inherent mistakes of the policy. Certain defects have also been pointed out and the first that was pointed out by Mr. Hardman is that it was wrong to make a monopolistic business of the State and to shut out all channels of trades altogether from this line of business. I, however, feel Sir, that if we are really sincere that co-operation should succeed, we must render it all possible help at the initial stage of its activity so that it finds a good field for work. And it must be quite clear that this would not be possible unless Government or some party come to help the Co-operative Societies, financially and otherwise. The idea has always been that an Apex Bank should take up that function ; but till the Apex Bank could acquire the full scope of activity, some help, some patronage, or some guarantee was necessary to be given in order that this Co-operative trading can come into existence. And that is what was exactly done by Government. I desire to point out that this is a policy which has been pursued by other provinces also. In some, the business of the Apex Bank has been guaranteed ; in some they guaranteed investments of money received by the Apex Bank by offering to pay fixed dividends. But what this Government did was to secure a loan of 2½ crores from the Imperial Bank and allow the Co-operatives to carry on their business with it. Government felt that was the best way Government could help the Co-operatives venture at this stage. There has undoubtedly been risk and there has been criticism on this account. We have to accept those criticism and as well as risk. If Co-operative movement is to start and succeed one has to assume also that it must be done with the help and assistance of the Government of the people for whose benefit the movement would work. And this was actually done.

Now, Sir, as to the idea that it will be completely monopolistic in the future, I have informed the House that in the initial stage the Co-operative movement must start with the help and assistance of the Government in power. But as soon as the Apex Bank comes to proper functioning, the function of Government will be taken over by the Apex Bank. And the business run by the Bank will be just like any other business.

Sir, for the information of the House and in particular reference to the query by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition I desire to point out the volume of business by co-operation done in the meanwhile. Actually they have had a sale-proceed of Rs.10,273,158-8 in the last two months' sale out of the total investment of Rs.3,03,42,822. The bales of cloth in all purchased are 36,764. Sir, I venture to submit that this is not a bad account of the business done during the course of three months after the arrival of the consignments. Then, Sir, the Co-operative Societies have proposed to pay off the Government advance that has been secured by Government from the Imperial Bank of India. In the meantime the trading Co-operatives have made good profits. There is no doubt that it would be a paying business and will give great impetus to the movement if things go on as now.

Then, Sir, a question was raised by Hon'ble Shri Kedarmal Brahmin about the attitude of the trading community, about the activities of the Co-operative movement sponsored by Government. I feel, Sir, if they are socially minded they should give the fullest support to it. But I have been very sorry to note their apathy. While opening the Apex Bank I appealed to them for the fullest co-operation. The rules of Central Co-operative Society would allow dividend up to 12½ per cent. per annum. That in my opinion is not bad return for any honest business.

Mr. KEDARMAL BRAHMIN: Sir, is 12½ per cent. guaranteed by Government ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: Sir, the guarantee lies in ones business capacity. When individual business men strive for a 100 per cent. profit, do any body give them any guarantee ? On the other hand, collection efforts of intelligent business men should always bring better profits, and that should be adequate guarantee. I would like to point out that the dividends that Central Co-operatives are proposing to give is not restricted and may be more than 12½ per cent. But the Hon. Friends over there would not co-operate with the Government and would run after profits which only black market would give. We have not received the co-operation that is being expected from them. It is surely not correct to say it is not a paying concern, because of which they are withholding co-operation. Something else is there. But we have yet been seeking their co-operation and I once more appeal to the traders and the businessmen of the Province to cast their lot in the formation of a wholesome society which should try to get rid of all mean and selfish profit motives and which seem to eat to the vitals of our society to-day. If they could shake that off I am quite certain that the little difference that prevails between the traders and business men in one side and the Co-operative Society on the otherside will go away. Sir, it is wholly incorrect to say that the Co-operative Societies are going to interfere in the matters of business or trade ; hundreds of such business or trade are left to go as it is. But what is the policy of the Government in respect of co-operative trading ? It is only trade in essential controlled commodities pertaining to elementary needs of life, that they may be given facilities. Other vast fields of trade has been and will remain with trade. If therefore co-operation of businessmen which we seek is given, there can be no difficulty or loss to them, while they would earn the good will of society. But it is for the businessmen and the traders to see.

I however appeal to the House to look at the whole social order of to-day from a detached stand-point. We have to agree that we have to meet the onslaught of parties, who are basing their activities on hatred and violence. If therefore we are to face the anti-social elements, we have to consider what are the fertile grounds for the reason of which, propogation of the doctrine of hatred and violence has been possible. We have to take stock of the reality of the situation and to decide how to face the menace even in reference to the problems of the Province. I think we would have to think more deeply, more socially in order that we might have found some solution. While we would be thinking about individual profits justifiable or unjustifiable, the propaganda of anti-social elements is daily assuming ugly dimensions. We have got to face them and we have got to meet them. If there is one method in which we can meet by action, this propaganda of evil, it is the co-operative movement. It would bring down and regulate such profit motives as lead to basic evils. It would also bring about a unity in society of people with various outlook. Then alone could we combat the evil elements which are out to root out the society. Therefore, I would request all the Members of the House to give us their unstinted support to

this Co-operative movement. I agree that there has been difficulties in making the proper progress and that we have not been able to fulfil the desired object in right time. But we should agree to the principle of co-operation and should adopt all possible means to make it successful so that evils now prevailing in us can be done away with. I again request that all Members of the House do co-operate with Government in their performance of their larger duty to society.

I have said already that to the extent Centre will impose the modification upon the activity of the Provincial Government, to that extent the policy of the Co-operative Movement will have to be modified. I have to tell you that we have already proposed certain modifications. We are proposing that it is not merely the Co-operative Society members alone who will be entitled to the benefit of purchase from Co-operative Society, but others will be equally entitled. The original idea was that we should have as many members as possible on the Co-operative Trading Society; but it is now found that for a large stock that we have in hand, the larger the quantity that may be disposed of the better for us. To that extent the policy has been modified.

Then regarding procurement, the time has come, (if business co-operates with us), when the procurers and individual businessman would be allowed to bring cloth without interfering with the business of the Co operative Societies.

Maulavi MD. ABUL KASHEM: Procurement monopoly will remain with Government ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: As I said if procurement has got to be done by private parties Government will see that Co-operatives get full benefit here also. Goods thus brought will have to be presented to the Co-operative Societies first. Then they will be given the right to select them. To that extent modification is to be made, but as I have said the fundamental principles of co-operative activity will remain.

I am very glad to note that two members of the Opposition have given better support to the Government plan than the Mover of the Motion. I thought, Sir, he had greater faith. As I said there will be always defects in actual execution of any plan. No body is perfect. But I expect a greater faith in the co-operative movement than the hon. Mover has shown. I have nothing more to add to the debate. I hope Government attitude will be appreciated, and that we shall all put our hands together for the success of the scheme.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The debate on the Motion is closed.
Next motion.

(At this stage the Hon'ble Speaker vacated the Chair and the Deputy Speaker occupied it)

Motion regarding Food Policy of the Government of Assam

✓ **Maulavi MD. ABUL KASHEM:** Madam, I beg to move that the Food policy of the Government of Assam be taken into consideration.

Madam, I feel that the food problem is very acute and it is very difficult to discuss the problem within this space of few minutes. But here I want to discuss the food policy adopted by the Government of Assam and the difficulties that are being faced by the people at large in the Province. In moving this Motion I would point out to you and other hon. Members that due to the present policy of the Government of Assam the people in deficit areas are suffering to a great extent, as the people in the deficit areas can not stock sufficient quantities of rice for consumption during emergency. Although in the past there were assurances from Government that they

would make provision for emergency by raising adequate stock at Government godowns and some other suitable centres, but to our utter disappointment we are having difficulty every year. Last year in Dhubri Subdivision people of two Thanas—South Salmara and Mankachar has been faced with difficulty. Government gave relief to that area to the tune of Rupees four and half lakhs, but the paddy did not reach the people in actual field in time. That reached in November and by that time the harvesting season started. I want to know whether there should be control or no control at all. If we want to retain the control we must see that control is successful. But this half hearted move cannot do any good. The first thing is that if in an area paddy and rice cannot be had at the controlled rates people are to hunt for it at the black market. They are to purchase at such a high rate that people cannot continue to do it for long. You will be surprised to hear that at the time of my departure from my home rice was selling at Rs.35 per maund in black market. It was not available from any stock anywhere in open market. Government were approached, but they could not release more than 2500 maunds from Tamarhat Godown. The price control if strictly enforced would rather take many people to grave. At this stage especially whatever small quantity is available in black market is saving the lives of the people. What is the need for having this control? Are we maintaining our Procurement Department for supplying food to the outside? If so, I would say that this is a mistaken policy of the Government. So Government should not say that this is a surplus Province. Due to heavy rains or flood or any un-natural calamity as experienced in the past we find that the control over the movement and price is unsuccessful. I would ask you to see that control is withdrawn on movement and price. Only control should remain over export outside the Province of paddy and rice. The border areas should be protected so that no quantity should go outside. There should be no control over internal movement. This internal movement creates barrier. Regarding export control there is also the difficulty because of what is being done. For example, I shall speak of Dhubri. Any boat or craft going from Dhubri downwards is generally seized if it contains paddy or rice. But Dhubri is not the border of the Province; the stoppage should actually take place at the border. The guards from Dhubri should be removed to the border and free internal transport should be allowed. In case my suggestion is not found acceptable or if it contravenes any of the principles laid down by the Centre, I would suggest that the difficulties which we are experiencing due to the Assam Foodgrains Control Order, 1947, should be removed.

Madam, in section 17 of the Assam Foodgrains Control Order, 1947, we find, "No producer shall move any foodgrains of his produce to any place more than thirty miles from his normal place of cultivation or residence except under a permit issued by the Director". That means that a cultivator will be entitled to remove his produce from his field of cultivation to his residence only if the latter is within 30 miles from the former. But there are also contrary provisions. Section 3(a) says, "... the Provincial Government may, by notified order, proclaim any area to be a notified area. On such notification, no person shall within such area, move from one place to another place any quantity of foodgrains exceeding two maunds in any one craft or vehicle or any mode of transport whatsoever unless authorised by the Director". That means that the agriculturists in such cases cannot move his entire produce from the paddy field to his home unless authorised by the Director. I have felt this difficulty myself last year. It was difficult to obtain the necessary permit from the Director, Deputy Director or the Assistant Director at Dhubri. As such, I had to request the Deputy Commissioner to make some interim arrangement and to allow the staff posted in the Mufassil areas to issue such permits to genuine cultivators so that they might

remove their produce, at least during the harvesting period, without any sort of hindrance.

Again, Madam, there are other difficulties. Section 31 states, "No prohibition or restriction in part A of this Order except the provisions of section 8, when notified shall apply to the storage or sale by any landlord of foodgrains collected by him from his tenants as rent in kind and stored in his own premises". So, this section exempts a landlord from restriction laid down in part A where it is stated that no person shall move from one place to another place any quantity of foodgrains exceeding two maunds. So what is denied to the cultivators is granted to the landlords. The provisions themselves are also contradictory to each other. This should be rectified, so that only one interpretation can be made. Clause 8 says, "The Provincial Government or the Director may by notified order require any licensee, producer or landlord holding stock of rice or paddy to sell the whole or a specified part of the stock at such prices and to such persons or class of persons as may be specified in this Order". But section 3(a) is vital, and landlords are exempted from it. This is unfair.

Then, Madam, another difficulty that we experience is that everyone in a deficit area has not got his own boat and cannot therefore carry rice and paddy for his family's consumption from the *hats*. They cannot also bring it in other people's boats as the latter cannot carry more than two maunds in a single boat or craft. So, unless he can find out a person who can lend a boat, he cannot bring anything for his consumption. The provision should be relaxed and it should be made permissible for 4 or 5 people to carry their foodgrains in one boat upto a limit of two maunds for each person. I fully realise that this may give chance to some unscrupulous smugglers, who may collect people and ask them to say that the paddy carried was their paddy. But this cannot be helped. For the sake of apprehending a few smugglers, the genuine cultivators should not be made to suffer.

Then, Madam, we seem to be hypocrites in so far as we speak about the upliftment of the masses because we never care for the welfare of the people in the villages in the truest sense of the term. On the contrary what we do? We try to keep the people of the towns contented because they can wield a strong pen, can agitate and expose the Government to nakedness. We do not at all care for the people in the villages. Rationing is meant for feeding the towns at the cost of the villages. Here in Shillong people who are not accustomed to take rice are forced to do it, though they are mainly potato-eaters. We are forcing them to eat rice while the villagers are not getting it.

There is sufficient quantity of paddy and rice at Dhubri. Due to rationing system the people in the town are getting enough paddy and rice while the villagers are not getting sufficient food. I can tell the Hon'ble House that village people living near Dhubri are practically fasting for not getting rice while the town people of Dhubri are getting sufficiently because of this rationing system. I personally know that these are facts and not fiction. If you like you may inquire confidentially from your officers whether the statement made by me is true or not. I am not exaggerating because I am myself a sufferer and I know better than any hon. Member here. So I say this town rationing system will mean sufferings of the poor villagers because it only gives something to the town people. If the town people will not get their food they will agitate against the Government. Madam, this Government of course may have some excuse for supplying food to the town people and I know that I will not get any support in this Assembly because many of the hon. Members hail from towns. But I say that until and unless this system is removed, the Government will not be able to meet equitably the needs of the people of the province as a whole. I think Government should be prepared to face any criticism from towns people who are enlightened enough.

Another thing, Madam, which I might forget and which I want to bring to the notice of this House is that recently even 'china' is controlled. You may not understand it, but still we are compelled to take 'china' as food. So long this was excluded from the operation of the Foodgrains Control Order and people used to get it abundantly from the open market. But as a result of a fresh Control Order over it the poor people of the villages had to run to the town to get permits for purchasing it from the town or the areas nearabout. I see no justification for having this foodstuff in the list of controlled foodgrains. This should be excluded from controls and only export control should be imposed so that it may not go outside the Province without permit from the Government. In normal years we do not need 'china' for our own consumption, but due to continuous, floods and other trouble we have been compelled to take it as food. Another thing is that unless this 'china' is mixed with rice people taking it are attacked with dysentery or cholera—these are of course the attendant trouble, but still people must have something to eat when food is scarce. So, Madam, I say that this commodity should be excluded from the operation of controls.

These are the main difficulties which I want to point out to the Government. I maintain that the procurement policy of the Government has altogether failed and their control policy is also a total failure. This is amply, rather clearly, exhibited by the Government's policy for distribution of Corrugated Iron Sheets. All growers of paddy were given one bundle of Corrugated Iron Sheets in exchange for 25 maunds of paddy at controlled rate. This is something like giving a cake to a crying child, because when the child cries and when he gets a cake he stops crying. Madam, this policy will lead to corruptions. The people who are really in need of Corrugated Iron Sheets will be deprived of getting it while people who do not require it will get with the result that they will sell it at the black-market to compensate for their loss in the price of paddy which they had to exchange for the Corrugated Iron Sheets. By this way, the Government are practically encouraging black-marketing in selling of Corrugated Iron Sheets. So instead of encouraging one crime by another we should do away with this control altogether.

With these words, Madam, I resume my seat.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Any other hon. Member is taking part ?

(Voices—We can continue this to-morrow, Madam.)

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 1-30 P.M., on Friday, the 16th September 1949.

SHILLONG :

The 22nd October, 1949.

R. N. BARUA,

Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.