



Proceedings of the Assam Legislative Council assembled under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1919.

The Council met in the Council Chamber, Shillong, on Friday, the 2nd March 1923, at 2 P.M.

P R E S E N T :

The Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Nalini Kanta Ray Dastidar, *President*, the Hon'ble two Members of Executive Council, the Hon'ble Minister of Education and 33 nominated and elected Members.

PANEL OF CHAIRMEN.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—The following Hon'ble Members are appointed to the Panel of Chairmen for the current session :—

- (1) Rai Bahadur Amarnath Ray.
- (2) Maulavi Rashid Ali Laskar.
- (3) Mr. E. S. Roffey.
- (4) Srijut Nilmoni Phukan.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

(STARRED QUESTIONS.)

BABU HIRALAL BOSE asked :—

*1. (a) Are the Government aware of the poor quality and condition of drinking water available in Mangaldai town ?

Drinking water in Mangaldai town.

(b) If so, will the Government be pleased to state what immediate steps they intend to take to improve the same ?

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA replied :—

*1. (a)—Government are advised that the water in Mangaldai is not as bad as it looks and that it is difficult to obtain a pleasing and palatable water in Mangaldai on account of the soil.

(b)—The matter is one which should be dealt with by the Mangaldai Union. The Assistant Director of Public Health during his visit in March 1922 gave the Union Authorities certain suggestions for improving the water-supply. It is not known whether they have been carried out. A copy of this question and answer will be supplied to the Commissioner, who will be asked to call the attention of the local authorities to the matter.

BABU HIRALAL BOSE asked :—

Headquarters station of Mangaldal.

* 2. Will the Government be pleased to state whether there is any truth in the strong and widely believed rumours current in the district, that the headquarters station of the Mangaldai subdivision will be shifted to some other place ?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID replied :—

*2.—The Government are not aware of the rumour for which there is no foundation.

(UNSTARRED QUESTIONS.)

DR. H. G. ROBERTS asked :—

Public Health Department.

1. Is it a fact that the reduction of the Public Health Department, and its amalgamation with the Medical Department is contemplated ?

If so, can all the papers relating to this matter be laid upon the table, and, in any event, will this proposal require the consent of the Council before it is referred to the Government of India ?

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA replied :—

1.—The question is under the consideration of Government, but no decision has yet been reached.

It is impossible to say at present what precise action would be necessary in the event of Government deciding to modify the existing arrangements.

SRIJUT BEPIN CHANDRA GHOSE asked :—

Rights in respect of certain forests in Habraghat pargana.

1. Is it a fact that the tenants of the Bijni Raj in the Habraghat pargana of the Goalpara subdivision have recently submitted resolutions to Government complaining of their long-enjoyed rights in respect of certain forests in the said pargana transferred to Government ?

If so, will the Government be pleased to consider their grievances ?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID replied :—

1.—Representations have been received from certain persons purporting to be tenants of the Bijni Estate, and have been sent for disposal to the Commissioner, Assam Valley Division.

SRIJUT BEPIN CHANDRA GHOSE asked :—

Increase grant for Municipalities and Local Boards.

2. Will the Government be pleased to make provision in the next year's budget to increase the existing Government grants to Municipalities and Local Boards of the province ?

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA replied :—

2.—In the present financial situation it is impossible for Government to increase the grants to local bodies.

RAI BAHADUR BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR asked :—

1. Will the Government be pleased to consider the desirability of revising the rules for the administration of Civil and Criminal Justice in the Hill tracts of Assam?

Civil and
Criminal
Justice in
Hill tracts.

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID replied :—

1.—Government have no present intention of taking up this question.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI asked :—

1. (a) Are the Government aware that, after the passing of the New Stamp Act, the non-existence, in many cases, of proper stamp papers (in single sheets) often puts the intending purchasers thereof to difficulty and compels them to buy those higher in value, to their loss?

Stamp
paper.

(b) Will Government please provide stamp papers (in single sheets) of different values as required by the amended Stamp Act?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID replied :—

1. (a) and (b)—The Government realised soon after the passing of the Assam Stamp Amendment Act, III of 1922, that some inconvenience was being caused to the public owing to stamped papers of certain denominations not being available. Steps were taken to obtain a supply from the Central Stores and it is hoped that it will soon be received. In the meantime the new Rule framed by the Government of India, a copy of which is annexed, protects intending purchasers against loss of the nature suggested.

“ 13A.—Notwithstanding anything contained in these rules whenever the stamp duty payable under the Act in respect of any instrument cannot be paid exactly by reason of the fact that the necessary stamps are not in circulation the amount by which the payment of duty shall on that account be in defect shall be made up by the affixing of one-anna and half-anna adhesive stamps. ”

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD asked :—

1. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state whether there is any foundation of the present rumour that Assam is going to be amalgamated with Bengal?

Amalgama-
tion of
Assam
with
Bengal.

(b) If so, will the Government be pleased to consult the public opinion before coming to a final decision in the matter?

MR. A. W. BOTHAM replied :—

1. (a)—As far as the Assam Government are aware there is no foundation for the rumour.

(b)—Does not arise

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD asked :—

Hall or
room for
witnesses
in Courts.

2. Are the Government aware of the great hardships felt by the respectable witnesses awaiting the hearing of cases in Court for want of halls or rooms set apart in some of the Court houses for their rest and recreation ?

If so, will the Government be pleased to consider the desirability of furnishing accommodation in such Court houses for the convenience of respectable witnesses ?

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID replied :—

2.—It is understood that the Hon'ble Member suggests accommodation for the better class of witnesses separate from, and superior to, that provided at many courts for witnesses in general. Government are afraid that for some years their resources will be strained to provide such additional office and court accommodation as is essentially necessary, and they cannot undertake to consider the provision of accommodation of this nature.

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD asked :—

Quarters in
Jorhat and
Barbheta
Agricultural
Farms.

3. (a) Are the Government aware that there are 3 quarters erected by Government at Jorhat, Barbheta Agricultural Farms ?

(b) If so, will the Government be pleased to state as to when they were erected by Government and at what cost ?

(c) Is it a fact that since the erection the said three quarters are lying unoccupied and vacant ?

Sericult-
tural farm
at Titabor.

4. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state when the sericult-
tural farm at Titabor of Jorhat was established and what the capital
expenditure was and the recurring expenditure is ?

(b) Is it a fact that mulberry silk worm seeds were distributed in the rural areas from this Farm ?

(c) If so, will the Government be pleased to state if they made any enquiry as to whether the silk worm seeds thus distributed were successfully reared by the villagers ?

(d) If so, with what result ?

Medical
School at
Sylhet.

5. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state if there is any likelihood of the establishment of a Medical School at Sylhet in the near future ?

(b) Are the Government aware that many students of the Berry-White Medical School at Dibrugarh have been compelled to stay outside for the insufficiency of Hostel accommodation for Hindu and Muhammadan students alike?

(c) If so, will the Government be pleased to consider the desirability of providing accommodation for them by erecting temporary boarding houses or in the alternative by hiring private houses so long as no separate Medical School is established at Sylhet?

3. (a) Will the Government be pleased to lay on the table a list of the names of the members constituting the Assam Valley Text-Book Committee at present?

Names of members of the Assam Valley Text-Book Committee.

(b) Will the Government be pleased to state as to when they were appointed to the Committee and how long their tenure of office lasts?

(c) If there is no specific time limit for such membership, will the Government be pleased to consider the desirability of defining such a time limit?

7. Are the Government aware that the inmates of the Hostels attached to the Jorhat Government High School are put to great inconvenience for want of convenient water-supply?

Hostels at Jorhat Government High School.

If so, will the Government be pleased to consider the desirability of providing water taps in the compounds of Hostels attached to the Jorhat Government High School as early as practicable?

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA
replied :—

3. (a), (b) and (c)—The Hon'ble Member is referred to the reply given to question No. 3 asked by Raj Kumar Chandra Narain Singh at the present session. The buildings were begun in 1920 and completed in 1921.

4. (a)—The Sericultural station at Titabar was established in the beginning of the year 1920. The non-recurring expenditure up-to date is Rs. 12,317 and the recurring expenditure is shown below :—

	Rs.
1919-20	307
1920-21	3,540
1921-22	3,772
1922-23 (up to 31st January 1923)	3,511

(b)—Yes, to a small extent.

(c)—Yes, enquiries were made.

(d)—The Pusa seeds gave satisfactory results during 1920-21. Since the stoppage of the supply from Pusa various races of the worm were reared at Titabar for seed purposes with very encouraging results at the beginning but subsequent broods showed signs of disease and degeneration on account of which the supply to rearers was stopped. This points to the necessity of hill-rearing in order to raise a stronger race.

5. (a)—The Hon'ble Member is referred to the debates on the resolution on this subject moved by Khan Sahib Alauddin Ahmad Chaudhuri at the last March session of this Council and to the statements made on behalf of Government then. The position remains unchanged.

(b)—The reply is in the affirmative.

(c)—A hcu'e has been hired at Rs. 45 per mensem for compounder students.

Government are not in a position to provide further hostel accommodation at present.

6. (a)—The following are the present members of the Assam Valley Text-Book Committee :—

1. Inspector of Schools, Assam Valley Circle, *ex-officio* President.
2. Assistant Inspector of Schools, Assam Valley Circle, *ex-officio* Secretary.
3. Srijut Ramani Kanta Barua, Headmaster, Goalpara High School.
4. Maulavi Muhammad Ali, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Dhubri.
5. Inspectress of Schools, Assam.
6. Srijut Haliram Das, Gauhati.
7. Rai Bahadur Radha Kanta Handiqui, Jorhat.
8. Mr. Devendra Nath Bezbarua, Jorhat.

(b) and (c)—The members other than *ex-officio* members were appointed in March 1920 and their tenure of office will last for three years, that is, up to March 1923.

7.—The answer is in the negative. The inmates use a hydrant which is not at an inconvenient distance. It is nevertheless desirable that the hostel should have its own pipe-supply. But this must wait until funds are more free than they are at present.

RAJ KUMAR CHANDRA NARAYAN SINGH asked :—

Opening of additional class at Jorhat Government High School.

1. Will the Government be pleased to consider to open an additional section to each of classes III and IV of the Jorhat Government High School to afford facilities to young boys for their education ?

Shillong Dairy farm.

2. Will the Government be pleased to state—
- (a) What benefit has been derived by the people of Assam from the Shillong Dairy Farm ?
- (b) How many bulls and cows have been sold up till now or distributed amongst the cultivators of Assam ? If so, with what results ?

(c) What is the total annual expenditure for the up-keep of this Farm? And what are the total annual receipts?

3. Will the Government be pleased to state—

(a) What total expenditure was incurred in building the three bungalows together with their attached houses for the Imperial Agricultural staff near the Jorhat Farm? Bungalows for Imperial Agricultural staff at Jorhat.

(b) Why are these bungalows kept vacant till now?

4. Will the Government be pleased to consider the desirability of carrying on at the Jorhat Farm along with the existing sugarcane trials, experiments with pulses, of which nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total consumption of the province is imported? Jorhat Farm.

5. Will the Government be pleased to state—

(a) The number and quantity of implements and seeds sold respectively to actual cultivators from the Jorhat Seed Depot since its establishment? Jorhat Seed Depot.

(b) As all the officers of the expert staff are concentrated at the Jorhat Farm, will the Government consider the advisability of attaching the seed depot to the same farm to be managed by the Farm Manager, dispensing with the post of the officer-in-charge of the Depot?

6. Will the Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether the proposed paddy farm at Titabor will be started this year? Starting of paddy farm at Titabor.

(b) Why a farm manager was appointed on the maximum pay of the Subordinate Agricultural Service?

(c) What are his academical and technical qualifications?

7. Will the Government be pleased to state—

(a) What benefit has been gained by the cultivators of Assam by having an Entomological Assistant for the province? Entomological Assistant.

(b) How many years he has been working in this province?

(c) Whether the Inspectors of Agriculture are trained in the Agricultural Colleges to combat with attacks of insect-pest?

(d) Will the Government consider the advisability of abolishing this extra post of the Entomological Assistant in view of the present financial stringency?

8. Will the Government be pleased to state—

(a) What benefit has been rendered to, to the people of Assam by the Economic Botanist, appointed for the province, in the Imperial Agricultural Service? Economic Botanist.

(b) What is the nature of his work?

(c) Will the Government be pleased to consider the advisability of abolishing this post in view of the present financial stringency?

Sericultural station at Titabor.

9. Will the Government be pleased to state—

- (a) What benefit has been rendered to, to the people of Assam, by the sericultural station at Titabor, established a few years ago?
- (b) Will the Government be pleased to consider the advisability of abolishing the posts of the Superintendent and his Assistant attached to the station in view of the present financial stringency?

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA replied :—

1.—The answer is in the negative. Two sections have already been enrolled in the classes referred to, and it is impossible in the interests of discipline and good management to increase the size of the classes further.

2. (a)—There is no dairy farm at Shillong under the management of Government. The Hon'ble Member probably refers to the Upper Shillong Farm which is an experimental station maintained mainly for the trial and introduction of new varieties of potato and the breeding of improved strains of milch cows and breeding bulls. The constant demand for seed potatoes and breeding bulls made both by the people of the plains and of the Khasi Hills, shows that the people of Assam are benefited by the farm.

(b)—About one hundred bulls and cows have been distributed and sold during the last five years. The fact that the demand for bulls far exceeds the supply proves that there is a popular demand for stock reared on the farm.

(c)—The total annual expenditure and receipts, taking the average of the last five years, are Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 4,000, respectively.

3. (a)—The total expenditure on the three bungalows amounted to Rs. 64,330.

(b)—The bungalows of the Deputy Director of Agriculture and Agricultural Chemist are vacant because the posts are not at present filled owing to financial stringency. The Economic Botanist will occupy his bungalow as soon as the construction of the botanical section of the laboratory is completed.

4.—Experiments on pulses are already being carried on at the Jorhat farm.

5. (a)—Complete information is not available. Sugar cane setts, sugarcane mills, *gur* boiling pans, pulses and other seeds were issued from the Depôt and the sale-proceeds up to December 1922 amounted to about Rs. 6,000.

(b)—There is no permanent officer solely in charge of the seed depôt which is ordinarily managed by a Superintendent of Agriculture in addition to his duties of organising and supervising demonstrations.

The Jorhat farm being situated in an out-of-the-way place is not suitable for the location of a seed depôt which should be in a place easily accessible to the public.

6. (a)—The reply is in the negative.

(b) and (c)—The farm manager was appointed to arrange preliminaries for the laying out of the farm and has been temporarily deputed to other work. At the time of his appointment it was hoped that the farm would shortly be opened. The farm manager worked for some years on higher pay as Assistant Manager of the Kamrup farm. Although he has no academical distinctions, he possesses excellent qualifications for farm management and was considered to be deserving of the maximum pay of his new post.

7. (a)—The Hon'ble Member is referred to the annual reports of the Agricultural Department where detailed accounts are given of the work of the Entomological Assistant.

(b)—For about eight years.

(c)—The reply is in the negative.

(d)—Government do not therefore propose to abolish the post of Entomological Assistant.

8. (a)—The Economic Botanist joined the province only in March 1921 and it is as yet too early to gauge the value of the work done by him.

(b)—The Botanist's work is chiefly devoted to the breeding of pure lines of rice by means of type selection, observation and comparison, and to type selection of potatoes grown from seed at the Upper Shillong Farm.

(c)—The experimental work of the Economic Botanist is likely to be of the greatest value to the cultivator, and Government do not propose to abolish the post.

9. (a)—The Hon'ble Member is referred to the reports of the Department of Industries for the last three years where detailed accounts of work done at the Sericultural Station have been given.

(b)—The matter is under consideration in connection with the general question of retrenchment.

HAJI MUHAMMAD ABDUL AHAD, CHAUDHURI asked :—

1. Is it true that the Government is inclined to abolish the Middle English Schools of this Province? If so, will the Government be pleased to state what steps will they take to make provision for the English education of village boys where there is no High School and for the teachers who will thus be deprived of their appointments?

Abolition
of Middle
English
Schools.

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THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA
replied :—

1.—The answer is in the negative.

SRIJUT BISHNU CHARAN BORAH asked :—

Assistant
Inspectress
of Schools.

1. Will the Government be please1 to consider the advisability of
abolishing the post of Assistant Inspectress of Schools with a view to
minimise expenditure ?

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA
replied :—

1.—Government are fully alive to the necessity for retrenchment.
The matter will receive due consideration.

RESOLUTIONS.

SILCHAR AND JORHAT NORMAL SCHOOLS.

RAI BAHADUR BIPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—Sir, the resolution that stands in my name runs thus :—

That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that the Silchar and Jorhat Normal Schools (including the Guru training classes) be abolished with effect from the 1st April next.

The Hon'ble Members are aware that the Jorhat and the Silchar Training Schools which have three model practising schools attached to each provide for the training of Middle and Primary school teachers. A normal school at Gauhati had been in existence from a long time before which it was transferred to Jorhat in the year 1906-07 and the Silchar Normal School was opened in 1906 with a Guru class attached. Therefore these institutions have been in existence for a pretty long time and there have been many changes as to the period of training, curriculum, staff, equipment, buildings, including the hostel accommodation, etc., to adapt them to the special needs of the Education Department. The initial expenditure for starting these institutions and the subsequent improvements and expansions made from time to time involved the Government to substantial outlay and they are not being run on economical lines. Though these institutions are fairly efficient and we are interested to see the excellent work that is being done there, the Local Boards and the Municipal institutions are practically in charge of Middle and Primary schools have been unable to appreciate the advantages of employing men who have been trained there, no doubt owing to want of funds, as they have to pay more for the services of trained teachers than for those of untrained teachers. There are many trained teachers or ex-students from these institutions who are without employment and the Education Department has not been able to solve the problem of giving employment to these people. Thus there are more candidates for employment than there are vacancies and the necessity for continuing these schools is no longer felt. The general feeling is that the Jorhat and the Silchar Normal Schools are expensive luxuries which the Education Department can do without in the present conditions. The Department itself and the Local Bodies are now faced with the difficulty of keeping the existing institutions to their present standard for want of funds, and the money saved by the abolition of these institutions can be better utilised in financing the Middle and Primary schools. We are now confronted with the difficulty of making attempts at combining parsimony with progress in every department and I think the Hon'ble Members and the Government will agree to give up the idea of training vernacular schoolmasters in these Normal schools pending the remodelling of the whole educational system in Assam.

As to the training of teachers we may revert to the old system of monitory training or special classes in certain High and Middle English schools which might be opened for the purpose. I think this will serve well the end in view pending the reorganisation of the educational system and these two training schools be abolished immediately having regard to the financial considerations.

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, the Hon'ble Members must be aware that the Normal schools train up vernacular teachers for vernacular schools. These schools have been a normal feature of the educational system of this province, as indeed, I believe, of every other province in this country. The Silchar and Jorhat Normal schools have been in existence for the last 40 or 50 years and have been providing teachers for the vernacular schools of various grades in this province. The number of the vernacular schools would be over 4,000 in this province and the number of teachers required for these schools would be about 5,000 to 6,000. For the training of teachers for these teachers we have got only two institutions, namely, the Jorhat Normal School and the Silchar Normal School. Whether these schools have outgrown their utility is a question which I submit is not very easy to answer. The Hon'ble Mover of the Resolution himself admits that there is a necessity for the training of teachers. If that is so I should like to know how that is to be effected. He has made certain suggestions of opening certain classes in connection with the Middle Vernacular and Middle English schools. Mr. Cunningham will probably be able to tell us how that system would work. But I think that some time ago this system was given a trial in this province, but it was not found to be successful. Government are however alive to the need for economy. I lately visited the Normal School at Silchar and it struck me whether the time had not come when we might consider whether under the present conditions these schools were fulfilling the purpose which they are intended to serve. At present the Government are considering the question of their continuance or abolition in connection with the recommendations of the Retrenchment Committee which sat in Bengal.

I would therefore suggest to the Hon'ble Member whether it would not be better for him to wait until the Government has considered the question and come to a decision, for the Hon'ble Members will realise that it is very difficult to dispose of a question of this kind off-hand in the course of a debate in Council.

In view of the suggestion which I have just made to the Hon'ble Mover, I do not propose to go into the grounds which he has advanced in favour of his resolution. I would simply take the liberty of remarking that teaching is an art which has to be learnt like any other art and that teachers are not born but made.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—Sir, as far as I was able to follow the Hon'ble Mover of the Resolution, I understand that he moves this resolution not on the ground that such institutions are not necessary but on the ground of sheer economy. But economy also has its limit. If it can be well said that poets are born, the same thing could not be said safely of teachers. Training is necessary for teachers if they are to educate properly the wards in their charge. So far as I have perused the last quinquennial report of the Director of Public Instruction, I find that the village schoolmaster is a very responsible man and that his training is a dire necessity at this stage of the society in our province. Our village Pandit undoubtedly requires training. In fact both the village Pandit and the teachers in the Education Department should have some sort of training. As was rightly said by the Hon'ble Minister for Education teaching is an art, and this art

must be practised by one who wants to be a good teacher. So, I for one, do not see any necessity for moving this resolution at all. The training schools are necessary and we want more Guru training classes if we want good village pandits. Unless we spend money on these needs we can have no educational atmosphere in our country and for the matter of that we can have no educational life. I am sorry, therefore, to oppose this resolution.

KHAN SAHIB ALAUDDIN AHMAD CHAUDHURI :—I think I should support this resolution as I fancy that the game is not worth the candle, regard being had to the hard times that we are passing through. But as I have heard from the Hon'ble Minister that the Government is going to consider the recommendations of the Retrenchment Committee of Bengal, which suggested the complete abolition of all training schools, I think it is better for us to wait and see what action our own Government will eventually take, and I would therefore suggest to the Hon'ble Mover to re-consider the matter if he pleases.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—I should like to know whether the Hon'ble Mover is willing to accept the suggestion of the Hon'ble the Education Minister.

RAI BAHADUR BIPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—The lower primary teachers may be trained in any higher or in the middle English schools. Any arrangement can be made. That is my opinion.

HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Does the Hon'ble Member withdraw his resolution ?

RAI SAHIB BIPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—For the present, yes.

The Resolution was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I beg, Sir, to move :—

That this Council recommends to the Government that the existing chaukidari system be re-organised with a view to making the same more efficient and useful by effecting necessary changes to the existing laws and rules, etc.

In moving this Resolution I beg to tell the House that the existing chaukidari system has remained in tact for a considerable length of time and that a stage has been reached when the re-organization cannot be postponed any longer. The present chaukidar is a veritable dullard. He is employed in the interests of the people for whom he exists, but renders very little work and is capable of no more improvement under the present state of things and a thorough overhauling of the machinery under which he exists is therefore called for. It has also been seriously questioned whether the 'sarpanches' and 'panchayats' are doing the work with which they are entrusted, properly or not. Well, Sir, I refrain from chalking out at present any line of re-organization and leave the matter to the Government to find out a remedy so that without further taxing the people it may be ascertained as to whether it is not possible to re-organize the system with a view to improving the same. By moving this resolution I want simply to draw the attention of the Government to the

dire necessity that exists for the re-organization of the system. It is with this object in view that I have brought forward this resolution. I remember once before, probably the year before last, I had put a question to the Council regarding the same question and in reply we were assured that the existing system was not working very badly. But, Sir, my experience and the experience of those with whom I have come in contact and who know the machinery thoroughly well, leads me to think that the system needs a thorough overhauling. In order to improve the chaukidari system other Provinces have already set themselves to further legislation, and I simply want to rouse the Government to this necessity, and more than this I mean nothing.

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID :—Sir, I hope the Hon'ble Mover, after he hears me, will feel convinced that Government has taken very great interest in this question. If I may say so, the existing system has been built up gradually, with great care and labour. The chaukidari system has been extended only to three districts in this Province, namely, Goalpara, Cachar and Sylhet, and not to the other districts. The Bengal Chaukidari Act of 1870 was extended to Goalpara in 1878, and for the districts of Sylhet and Cachar a separate Regulation was enacted in 1893. It was called the Sylhet and Cachar Rural Police Regulation. That Regulation of 1893 was found unsuitable and then the Bengal Chaukidari Act of 1870 was extended in 1897 to Sylhet and Cachar. Prior to the extension of the Act of 1870 to the districts of Sylhet and Cachar in 1897 the Rural Police were maintained by owners and occupiers of houses upon such terms and conditions that might be agreed upon by the owners and occupiers and the Police. It was afterwards found that it was a most unsatisfactory arrangement, that the chaukidar was only a village dependent who was neither paid regularly nor in full and that the Police did not receive proper assistance from them. It was therefore that the Bengal Chaukidari Act was introduced. The object of the introduction of the Bengal Chaukidari Act was to make the chaukidar a public servant as well as a village servant and to ensure that he received his pay regularly and in full.

Though the Act was extended in 1897 it was not actually brought into operation at once. It was first brought into operation in South Sylhet and in 1899 on the recommendation of the Deputy Commissioner it was brought into operation in all the subdivisions. But it was actually held in abeyance till after the census of 1901.

Then, in the course of his cold weather tour of 1903-04 Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the then Chief Commissioner, received a number of petitions complaining that under the new scheme the payment for the chaukidar had been greatly advanced. After consideration of all the facts of the case Sir Bampfylde Fuller laid down the principles on which the revised system was to be carried out. Government took so much interest in the question that an officer was placed on special duty for the reorganisation of the chaukidari system in the district of Sylhet and my humble self was appointed to be the officer on special duty. I was assisted by several officers and I now recall to mind with pleasure and gratitude the fact that I received very great assistance from my friend now present here, Mr. Lainé, who helped me in the reorganisation work in Karimganj and North Sylhet. I also paid a visit to Sunamganj—but I do not know whether my Hon'ble friend, the mover of the resolution, knew anything about it at that time. I think he was only a boy then.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I have heard of it.

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID :—He might then know what great interest was taken in it. I was, Sir, engaged in this work for four months and visited almost every important village in the district and submitted a report, a copy of which I have got here. I also framed and submitted certain draft rules and they were considered by Government. After careful consideration, Government adopted these rules in 1906 subject to certain modifications. They have been since then overhauled from time to time. The first set of rules was made in 1899 and came into force in the Surma Valley and in Goalpara. Then came the rules of 1906 for the Surma Valley. Then, in 1914 Sir Archdale Earle took up the question of the improvement of the chaukidari system and revised rules were issued in 1917 for Goalpara superseding the rules issued in 1899, and in 1919 for Sylhet and Cachar superseding those of 1906. In 1920 further rules were made with reference to certain audit objections. The rules for the chaukidari system prevailing in Goalpara and Surma Valley are those issued in 1921. It will thus appear, Sir, that the present rules have been framed after careful consideration, after Government had availed itself of the experience for years of District Officers and Commissioners. We cannot claim, Sir, that the existing system is perfect, but we do claim, Sir, that it has been built up slowly, gradually, laboriously and carefully and that it cannot be lightly set aside.

Then, Sir, my Hon'ble friend talked about the chaukidars being dullards. The Act provides that the monthly pay of a chaukidar shall be Rs. 2 to Rs. 6. They get practically a pay of Rs. 4 per mensem. On this modest pay, we cannot get a gifted man for the varied and responsible work he has got to do. Before concluding, Sir, I wish to assure the Hon'ble Mover and the House that if any practical suggestions are made they will receive our most careful consideration.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—Sir, in reply I should say, Sir, that my labours will be well remunerated if the Hon'ble Member assures the House that he will examine the present system and try to give effect to possible improvements.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—Do you want to withdraw the resolution ?

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I want to hear the Hon'ble Member in charge.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I suggest, Sir, that the Hon'ble Member has a right to say what he pleases but has no right to dictate what any one else is to do or to say in the matter. It is open to the Hon'ble Member either to ask that the resolution be put or to withdraw it.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I withdraw the resolution, because some of the members are of opinion that if this resolution is pressed per chance there may be a likelihood of increased taxation which we all abhor so much.

The resolution was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—The next resolution stands in the name of Babu Krishna Sundar Dam. It runs as follows :—

That having regard to the financial difficulties of the present administration and the political advantages of the people, this Council recommends to the Local Government to urge upon the Governor General in Council to move the Secretary of State for India to obtain sanction of the Crown for transferring the areas comprised within the districts of Cachar (excluding the North Cachar Hills), Sylhet, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and within the municipality and cantonment of Shillong from the province of Assam to the province of Bengal.

As the Mover is absent the resolution will be considered to have been withdrawn with the permission of the Council.

MUNSHI SAFIUR RAHMAN :—I move, Sir :—

That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that a Technical School be opened at the subdivisional headquarters of the Goalpara district.

I am quite sure this learned Council is fully aware of the fact that in number the Muhammadan population of the Goalpara district will be next to Sylhet and this Council may also be acquainted with the fact that the Muhammadans of the Goalpara district are comparatively backward in matters of education—general, professional or technical. I may here voice the general attitude and tendency of the community. I represent towards education, under the present state of things. The Muhammadans of this district are generally of very straitened circumstances and as such their ambitions are also of a low character. From my personal experience I lay here before this wise Council the bare fact that owing to poor circumstances even the best deserving and intelligent candidates desirous of getting higher education have been compelled to cut short their desire and take recourse to clerkships, petty shop-keeping or ploughing. This Council may wonder at the fact that even in the present century education could not produce more than 6 Muhammadan graduates in the whole district of Goalpara. This fact will no doubt bear testimony to my assertion that for their ragged condition the Muhammadans of the district could not so long derive any substantial benefit from the present system of general education. It is taken for granted that the Government cannot and should not suffer to see that one section of His Majesty's most loyal subjects will remain lagging behind for centuries because of their utter poverty in the matter of equipment for the struggle of their future livelihood.

The Muhammadans are much obliged and grateful to the benign Government for the many concessions given to them and I urge that further steps should be taken and facilities offered to the best interests of the

community. The Muhammadans under their present conditions are most anxious to take advantage of technical education, *viz.*, carpentry, basket-making, weaving, etc., along with their general education. The bread problem is becoming keener and keener. Pupils after passing their middle stages under the present system of education are not qualified for their future life. A little knowledge of technical education will lessen their difficulties and make the general system of vernacular education more and more attractive. It will make the primary education more attractive than the compulsory Primary Education Bill as drafted by the Hon'ble Minister himself can make itself. All that is wanted now is the addition of carpentry and weaving classes to a middle school situated at the subdivisional headquarters stations. To this effect a resolution was moved by me in this Council before but to no effect. I voice the desire of my community. I find it now imperative to press the matter further into the Council in order to secure that necessary enquiries and arrangements will be made to give effect to this resolution. The Hon'ble Minister in charge may reply that the technical education of the like asked for will not be successful and desirable citing the example of the Tipkai Technical School in the Dhubri subdivision. But I think the Hon'ble Minister may also kindly make a full enquiry as to the causes of the failure of the Tipkai School. The failure of the Tipkai School is long due to the unwise selection of its location to serve the need of the district. The place is most unhealthy and situated in the remotest corner of the district. It is also a fact that though the Tipkai School is existing for the last decade, it has become not too well-known even to the four corners of the district. The out-put of the school has not become attractive at all. I know personally that the school has even failed to attract the *Ravas* and *Kacharis* of the locality and owing to the fact that the instruction imparted is not sufficient to meet the needs of the time. The few deserving candidates find it more convenient and suitable to go to some other place for the purpose than the unhealthy place like Tipkai to receive an incomplete course of training. The provision of technical classes of the above description at the subdivisional headquarters stations will at once remove the difficulties of the deserving candidates both from the point of view of expenditure and remoteness of the place. It may be urged that under the present financial conditions Government is quite handicapped in the matter of offering any solution to the problem. In that case I may submit to this Council that if the Hon'ble Minister in charge finds it impossible to provide the money for the entire expenditure required for the purpose, he may still offer facilities by granting an aid for starting the classes with a clear understanding that the department will undertake the whole responsibility in better financial times to come. If my suggestion get the consent of the Council, an amount of Rs. 1,500 may be provided to give effect to the scheme as an experimental measure by meeting the initial cost of the establishment.

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, the Resolution as it is worded did not convey any definite idea, at least to my mind. He recommends that a Technical School be opened at the subdivisional headquarters of the Goalpara district. What sort of Technical School is wanted I could not make out from the resolution. But from the speech which the Hon'ble Mover has now made it is clear that he wants classes to be added to Middle Schools for the teaching of carpentry and weaving. This is certainly different from starting Technical School at a certain place. However, I am

in entire sympathy with the Hon'ble Mover so far as he wishes to give technical education. I mean teaching in carpentry and weaving to the people of his subdivision. The question arises whether it is possible for Government to find funds to provide instructions of that kind in every subdivision. The Hon'ble Members will remember that last year a resolution was moved by Maulavi Rukanuddin Ahmad for the establishment of a Technical School at Jorhat. Such demands for technical schools are coming from almost every district in the province and it would be impossible for Government to find money to meet them all. All that can be done is to provide for a number of central institutions for instruction in weaving and carpentry. In this province there is one institution at Gauhati where instruction in weaving is given and a school of handicrafts is going to be started in the district of Sylhet where carpentry of an advanced character will be taught. In view of the present financial stringency it is almost impossible for Government to provide every district or every subdivision with a Technical School even if only for the purposes of teaching carpentry and weaving. In this view of the matter I regret that I am unable to accept the resolution.

The resolution was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD :—The resolution that stands against my name is :—

This Council recommends that the Government may be pleased to take early steps to affiliate the Cotton College to B. A. Honours standard in Persian.

In support of my resolution I beg to submit, Sir, that it is a patent fact that Assam will not be blessed with a University of its own for sometime to come and to make it self-contained therefore it is deemed absolutely necessary that its colleges should be equipped as fully as possible. The Cotton College was affiliated to the Honours standard in almost all the subjects as far back as 1915. But it is a matter of great regret that Muhammadan students in this valley have not so far been offered any facility at the Cotton College of pursuing their studies in Honours course in any of the Islamic subjects, for example, Persian and Arabic. Muhammadan students with a genuine desire for specializing in Persian and Arabic are too poor to afford to incur the cost of studies in Honours course outside the valley and there are many such students of the valley, particularly of the Saiyid family, who have actually been debarred from pursuing the Honours courses in Persian and Arabic at the Cotton College. The cost of affiliation will not in my opinion be much. There is already one Professor of Islamic subjects at the Cotton College in the Provincial cadre. If the college is affiliated to the Honours standard in Persian, that means an addition of two hours per day on the aggregate of 12 hours per week to the work usually done by him. For this another Professor in the Provincial cadre will not be necessary. If a Lecturer, an M.A. in Persian, is appointed on Rs. 100 a month, he will be able to teach

the lower classes giving his senior an opportunity to teach the higher classes in Pass and Honours courses. The annual cost of maintaining such a Lecturer in the subordinate grade will not at any rate exceed Rs. 1,200 or Rs. 1,800. But, Sir, still there may be opposition from the other side on the ground that the number of Muhammadan students are very few. There is no doubt that the number of Muhammadan students are smaller in proportion to the number of non-Muhammadan students. But the Cotton College has been affiliated in Honours in English, in Mathematics, in History, in Physics, in Chemistry and in Sanskrit. Now, if we go to enquire of the number of students taking Honours in those affiliated subjects, we shall find that in comparison with the number of students in the Pass course the number of students taking Honours are very few. Owing to shortness of time I could not get the accurate figures but, if my information is correct, the number of students taking Honours in those affiliated subjects will not be more than, for example, as follows:—in English out of 100, 6; in Sanskrit out of 35, 5; in History out of 40, 4; in Chemistry out of 12, 3 and so forth. Exactly in the same way if in Persian out of 7 or 8 students 2 or 3 want to take up Honours in Persian the proportion is about the same. In the face of such circumstances, Sir, I beg to submit that that argument will be of no avail. I am of course alive to the financial stringency of the present. But considering the absolute necessity of the measure, I hope the Government will not hesitate to accept my resolution. At the same time I beg respectfully to bring to the notice of the House that there are no such words in my resolution that immediate steps are to be taken in giving effect to the resolution. With these arguments I commend my resolution to the House for its unanimous acceptance.

The Hon'ble RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, with the object of the Resolution I may say I am in perfect sympathy but I am afraid that the Hon'ble Mover has not chosen the right moment to put forward a proposal which would involve us in fresh financial obligations. As the Hon'ble Finance Member said yesterday we are passing through great financial difficulties and that in spite of all our efforts we have not been able to balance the budget. Would it be wise I ask to increase our commitments in this way when we are curtailing our activities in every direction? I regret therefore that I am unable to accept this resolution. Moreover, we are advised that the number of students who would be willing to take up Honours in Persian would be very small. I am told that the number of students in the Cotton College studying Persian is 30 or 40. But the number of Muhammadan students studying Persian in Sylhet is 80 to 100. Of them however only 3 or 4 have taken up Honours in Persian. Having regard to these facts can it be said that the number of such students in the Cotton College will be appreciable at all? Therefore even if we had the money we would not be justified in spending it for the purpose advocated in this resolution. Lastly, the Hon'ble Members will be pleased to remember that there are facilities already existing in the Murarichand College in this regard and any student of the Cotton College who wishes to go up for Honours in the subject may transfer himself to that College. The Hon'ble Mover has said that the average Muhammadan student of the Assam Valley is too poor to go outside the Valley, but if the cost of living in Gauhati is compared with the cost of living in Sylhet I am afraid Gauhati will be found more costly. It has been suggested that there are facilities for honours in English, History and certain other subjects but that the number of candidates who take up

honours in these subjects is also small. The Hon'ble Mover forgets that these subjects are taken up by more students than the Persian. The Hon'ble Mover has said that it is not likely that we shall have a University of our own for some time to come and that therefore our Colleges should be self-contained. I do not think that the question of the university need be raised in this connection, but having regard to our financial condition I think that it will be impossible for either of the two colleges of this province to be self-contained for some time and that it would be wise at least for some time to come to treat the two colleges as complimentary to each other. This being the circumstances I do not think that it would be wise on our part, especially having regard to the fact that there are demands which are more urgent and more insistent for which we cannot find any money now to go to the expense of having a professor to give instruction in Honours in Persian in the Cotton College.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—Would the Hon'ble Mover like to withdraw the resolution ?

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD :—No, Sir, I should like to see what my friends will say.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—The Hon'ble Mover has a right of reply, Sir. No one has shown any signs of speaking so far.

MAVLAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I regret, Sir, that the concluding words of the Hon'ble Mover were to the effect that he was not going to press that this resolution be given effect to immediately. I was rather disappointed at this statement. I was thinking that howsoever grave the situation might be, howsoever great the financial stringency might be, it was a resolution which could well be given effect to immediately. The demand was not one such as could in any serious manner be deprecated on the score of finances. At most this demand will involve an expenditure of about Rs. 2,000 and even under the peculiar circumstances in which we are I think if the Hon'ble Minister of Education wishes he can find such a modest amount without any great difficulty. Sir, the Hon'ble Mover has pointed out the necessity of a University. I think that circumstances are grouping round us which will compel us to think very seriously over the matter even if we were to borrow. It must be our persistent efforts therefore to leave no stone unturned to see that the two existing colleges tend gradually, nay, rather speedily towards being self-contained. I, therefore, think that the resolution might be passed and given immediate effect to. Sir, apprehensions have been expressed that probably students will not be forthcoming, but, Sir, it is a well known fact that most students are not attracted towards taking up honours as there exists no opportunity for it. But two to three students in my opinion, so far as the circumstances of this Valley, (I mean the Brahmaputra Valley) are known to me, would always be found desirous of taking honours in the subject. I think that our colleges should be self-contained and that persistent and definite efforts should be made towards it because the time is fast

approaching when we should have a University of our own, if Assam should at all have her separate existence. And this would add a stone to the super-structure of the future University. I therefore with my whole heart support this resolution.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—Sir, I also wish to speak a few words on this resolution. Of course at this moment we cannot dream of a University though we find around us everywhere in India Universities growing like mushrooms. But that is a question apart. But so far as the resolution is concerned I understand the Cotton College has already been affiliated in honours in all other subjects and only the Persian subject is omitted. As regards attendance, as my Hon'ble friend Maulavi Munawwarali has said we must not look to the number but to higher culture of the people. And considering the large amount of money that has already been spent on this culture, I think the Government might find some way to give effect to this resolution, though not this year but very soon. As to what the Hon'ble the Education Minister has already said that for the present the colleges of the province might be considered as complimentary to each other I can only say this much that even taking that to be granted it is not always convenient to send the young men of one Valley to the other or to a great distance for training. As this resolution will not mean much I think it might be usefully accepted by the Government.

KHAN SAHIB ALAUDDIN AHMAD CHAUDHURI :—Sir, I want to speak a few words. It is true indeed that the number of boys that would be likely to take up honours would not justify the affiliation of the college in honours in Persian at the present moment but as the mover of the resolution does not want to give effect to it immediately I do not see any objection to the resolution being accepted. Of course the Hon'ble Education Minister has raised one objection, and I to some extent agree with him, that the Gauhati boys wanting to take up honours in Persian might go to Sylhet, but there are some difficulties both in matters of finance and language. The people of the Assam Valley going to Sylhet must make themselves accustomed to the language or dialect to which the people of Sylhet are accustomed. So it would be well to accept the resolution, on the understanding that Government will give effect to it when funds are available.

KHAN BAHADUR KUTUBUDDIN AHMAD :—Sir, I beg to support this resolution. There is already a Persian pass standard and I submit that the one or two students out of that class who wish to take up honours in Persian should not be sent away (or deprived of that study) to seek admission in Sylhet or Calcutta or out of the province. It is desirable that when there is already a pass standard that it may be raised to the honours standard.

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—Sir, I want to speak just a few words. The resolution as it stands does not ask that immediate steps be taken. It says that early steps be taken. The question hinges on the phrase "early steps." If "immediate steps" be not taken to affiliate the Cotton College to the B. A. standard in Persian then there will be no necessity of any financial outlay for the present, and I do not see any reason why the resolution may not be accepted. But on the other hand I do not see any reason why it should be necessary to press this resolution just now when it leaves it to the choice of Government to put this resolution into effect at any time, even after 6 or 7 or 8 years.....

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD :—No, not 6, or 7 or 8 years ...

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—If the words “early steps” be taken to mean within one or two years, then, we see the difficulties in putting this resolution into effect if carried, within this period. But if the expression “early steps” be taken to mean that effect should be given to this resolution after a few years when funds are available, then I see no difficulty in accepting this resolution, but I do not see any benefit to be derived by the Hon’ble Mover by merely having this resolution carried in the House if the Cotton College is to be affiliated after six or seven years. I would rather advise, though we are all in favour of having the Cotton College affiliated to the B. A. class in Persian, that the Hon’ble Mover for the present at any rate to leave the matter alone and that he should bring it forward again after one or two years when the finances of the province are in proper equilibrium.

THE HON’BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, nothing is more painful to a Minister than to have to oppose a Resolution in favour of which there is a strong sense of opinion in the Council,—it does not matter whether it is carried or not. If the Hon’ble Mover and those who have supported him, will accept the suggestion which I have made I might probably see my way to accept it on behalf of Government. That is to say if the Hon’ble Mover will add the words “as soon as funds permit” to his resolution, Government will be glad to accept it in the amended form.

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD :—Sir, my friend the Rev. Mr. Nichols-Roy interprets the phrase “when funds permit” to mean that funds may not be available for another 7 or 8 years to come. If that interpretation is sought to be put on the phrase, I am afraid that I cannot see my way to accept that amendment. Of course it is possible that the phrase “when funds permit” may also mean that the funds would be available within the next year or two. If the latter interpretation is correct, then I have no hesitation in accepting the amendment. Government has not got to incur any very large sum; the sum is only something like Rs. 1,200 or Rs. 1,800.

THE HON’BLE MR. W. J. REID :—May I ask, Sir, how the Hon’ble Member proposes to give effect to the resolution if funds do not permit? (laughter).

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD :—Of course I do not mean that even if funds are not available, the resolution should be given effect to. I only meant to say that I would not accept the amendment if the resolution was not going to be given effect to for some years to come. At any rate even if funds do not permit the administration is none the less being carried on, and other things are also going on.

KHAN SAHIB ALAUDDIN AHMAD CHAUDHURI :—With the permission of the Chair I beg to advise the Hon’ble Member that nobody can foretell what will be the time when funds will permit or become available. It may be two years, three years, four years, or it may be even 8 years; nobody knows. Therefore there can be no definite undertaking on the part of the Government.

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD :—I think the Hon’ble Minister can have no objection to accepting the resolution with the addition of the words “as soon as funds are available.”

THE HON’BLE RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—I am willing to accept the Resolution in this form.

The resolution as amended was adopted.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—The next resolution stands in the name of Maulavi Akmal Hussein. It runs as follows :—

That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam to fix by rules that Honorary Magistrates should not hold office for more than 15 years in the same station.

The Hon'ble Member being absent, the resolution must be considered to have been withdrawn.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I beg, Sir, to move :—

That this Council recommends to the Government that a thorough investigation into the conditions of 'lending business' and 'Usury' practised in this province be undertaken, without delay.

In moving this Resolution, Sir, I think I voice the sentiments of all the Members present here in that we ought very soon to be acquainted with the conditions of lending business and usury that are practised in this province. This is a question on which the economic condition of the country so greatly hinges. Sir, the lending business has been, if I may be permitted to use the expression, an engine of oppression in various parts of the Province. I have myself, Sir, been acquainted with some instances of this veritable oppression. Appalling as this oppression is I have been goaded from consideration of humanity, to bring this matter before the Hon'ble House so that we may know at least where we are in the economic prosperity or adversity as the case may be of this country in this particular aspect. If I may be permitted to say so, Sir, I was wondering whether it is at all necessary for us to come to the Council to legislate when every question involving the prosperity of our country requires appropriation of money. What I was thinking of is whether it could be possible for us to send our proxies to vote on our behalf in the Council because there we are face to face with a very grave financial situation and have practically nothing useful to legislate upon. But, Sir, this is a question on which I am going to present a line of action to the Council—a line of action which involves practically no financial help. There are armies of officers scattered throughout the province who can collect materials on the spot to prepare a document so that a history may be compiled and after the compilation of that history we might deliberate upon it and try to legislate or request the India Government to legislate on this subject in order to save the peasants, the real children of the soil, the cultivators, from the grasp of the money-lenders. I do not mean that the money lending business in itself is a very bad business. I admit that it is a business which gives tone to the thriving industries of the country to keep them alive but what I complain of is that it is often carried on not in the spirit of business but in a manner which amounts to sucking the blood of the ignorant people. With a view to checking this evil, I would suggest to the Government that a scheme be prepared immediately in order to collect the necessary materials to show exactly where we stand in this respect.

Sub-Deputy Collectors going from village to village may be asked to gather materials, the Local Bodies may be asked to take steps to prepare and compile the documents; the Sarpanches also might be of help in preparation and compilation of this sort, and a responsible officer may be asked to supervise all these things—I do not mean a newly appointed officer, but the Government should in consideration of the importance of the matter engage one of the officers who might be available to give one or two hours a day in order to

supervise all these things. In such circumstances, Sir, I do not think that Government will have to spend any considerable sum of money. As the necessity is so great and as the question is of vital importance I think it is the duty of the Government to see where and how the usurious practice in this province stands. If a compilation is made it will be seen how many families are ruined and how many families are starved, because they were at a disadvantage, while the better placed people pile up fortunes. Taking advantage of the pecuniary situation in which these people were the other families rose and trod them under feet, as it were. Sir, this is a humanitarian question no less than it is a pressing question. After the compilation has been made it will be for the Government or for the Council to see how they can do good to the persons oppressed. It will of course be then and then only that we shall have to think and deliberate over the checks that might be suggested. In this view, Sir, I press this matter to the serious consideration of the House and I think that this problem is one which will be supported by all.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I must say, Sir, that when we received notice of this resolution we were not very sure as to what its scope and intentions were. In fact we thought first that the Hon'ble Member was taking exception to the present laws which govern usury and my Hon'ble Colleague intended to reply. It now appears that the Hon'ble Member is considering rather the economic position of the people, and I shall try to give him a brief reply on that point. Then I hope that my Hon'ble Colleague will tell the Council something of what the existing usury laws in force are.

Well, Sir, I listened very closely to the Hon'ble Mover in order to find out what sort of enquiry he had in mind and how he intended that this enquiry should be conducted. He is perfectly right in saying that there is no subject which more closely concerns the welfare of the people, no subject in which Government can take greater interest. But, if he will not mind my saying so, he seems to me to approach the subject in a very light-hearted manner. He may have read a little book which I have here, written by the late Major J. C. Jack who was Settlement Officer of the Faridpur district, and wrote on the conditions of the Faridpur district as he found them. The Settlement operations lasted for some five years, and Major Jack was assisted, as he said, by an exceptionally brilliant staff of Assistant Settlement Officers and Kanungoes. He said it consisted almost entirely of young and eager graduates of the Universities well fitted to supplement their task by such economic investigations. The result was a little work of extraordinary interest. There is a whole chapter which deals with the indebtedness of the people and we have most elaborate tables and statistics. Do the Council believe, as my Hon'ble friend suggested, that casual enquiries by officers who have other duties to perform, with the general assistance of an hour or two a day of the time of some indefinite officer would give us any results of value? I would not, Sir, have the Council think that we do not make such enquiries as things are. When resettlement operations are undertaken one of the matters to which the Settlement Officer devotes particular attention is the economic condition of the people and incidentally the amount of their indebtedness. This matter was gone into very carefully of recent years when the Cachar district and the Jaintia parganas were resettled. In addition, it having been suggested to us that in the Hilykandi subdivision there was more indebtedness than there ought to be, very detailed enquiries were made two or three years

ago. In fact for 28 or 29 villages regular lists were made following closely the lists which Major Jack compiled for the Faridpur district. The suggestion was then made that to improve matters a tenancy law of some kind was required. As the Council know, certain proposals to that effect were put forward. I am not at the moment in a position to say whether these proposals will go further or not.

I hope I have said enough to show that the matter is one which does not escape our notice. I suggest only, Sir, that it is difficult to see what would be gained. In fact I do not know what kind of thorough investigation is intended. If and when we undertake the re settlement of any other districts in the province I can assure the Council that this question will receive the very closest attention.

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID :—Sir, I am quite sure that the Hon'ble Mover must have found, as I have in course of my judicial experience, cases of hard unconscionable bargains in which exorbitant interests were charged. In view of such cases the Imperial Legislative Council passed in 1918 the Usurious Loans Act by which courts were given additional powers to deal with cases of usurious loans of money or in kind. So if there is any exorbitant charge of interest the aggrieved parties can apply to the proper court under this Act for such relief as the Court may deem proper.

We have no evidence that usurious loans are more rampant in our part of the country than in the other provinces. The Usurious Loans Act is a piece of all-India legislation. If anything more is to be done by way of legislation, the proper place would be the Indian Legislature, and I feel doubtful that any recommendation from an isolated province would be of much use. I am unable to agree that any substantial good will be gained by an enquiry such as has been proposed.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—Sir, the Hon'ble Finance Member said that when the re-settlement of the province will be taken up the question will again be seriously considered. I do not know when the re-settlement will take place. The financial situation will prevent it for a long time to come, I think. He also questioned what gain will be derived by such an enquiry. I think, Sir, the gain will be immense and it is a gain which is worth the having. A Government holding its sway over a province ought to know the condition of the people closely. It is the duty of the Government to know the condition of its people, the economic condition, and their gain will not be a small one.

The Hon'ble the Home Member has referred to the Usurious Loans Act, an all-India legislation. I too have submitted about an all-India legislation. But Sir, I do not know that if a provincial Government, after enquiry, is convinced that special legislation ought to be undertaken, whether that Government is debarred from undertaking it. I think the provincial Government will be justified in the light of the circumstances and in order to do good to the people to undertake a special legislation. I say, Sir, that the question of finance is a bugbear and it prevents us from taking any enlightened measure for the good of the people. With this object in view I suggest that the officers of the Government might be charged with definite duties wherever they go, from area to area, from place to place, to collect information in order to compile a history of the conditions of the people

in this particular respect. Is it not the paramount duty of the Government to know the economic condition of the people? The majority of the people, it will be found, are helpless. The cultivators and their finances are under the pressure of the money-lenders and I think it is the duty of the Government to know what amount of pressure there is and how these people are dragging on with their miserable existence. It is I say the paramount duty of the Government to investigate it and then to provide any legislation that may seem to be necessary.

It was charged against me, Sir, that this resolution was moved by me in a light-hearted manner. I do not know whether this charge would be borne out when every member will think within his heart how great the necessity is for such a measure considering the sufferings of the people in the hands of money-lenders: how serious the question is and what an immediate demand it has on the attention of the Government to investigate into this matter. I would like, Sir, to press this point to a division and see how the question has been thought out by the Hon'ble Members of the House. With these few words, Sir, I beg to stick to my point.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—My chief trouble, Sir, is that I am not quite sure what the Hon'ble Member's point is. Possibly other Members of the Council have been more fortunate. At all events he is rather skilful at begging the question. He said that it was the duty of Government to know the conditions of the people. I tried to make it clear to the Council that there was no duty more important imposed on the Government. He said that the question was a very serious one. I said I knew of none more serious. The begging of the question, it seems to me, lies in the assumption that we do not regard it as our duty to know the conditions of the people. My contention is that by the means we at present adopt, by the special enquiries which we make from time to time and still more by the information which we get regularly from our officers when they tour about, we do know a great deal of the conditions of the people. I frankly cannot see how we should acquire valuable knowledge by undertaking what I must still call the very vague investigation that the Hon'ble Member seems to have in mind. So much for this point. I call the House to witness that when replying to the Hon'ble Member I said not a word about the state of our finances. My only desire is that we should not be accused of any lack of sympathy with the object of the resolution. Our contention is that we do not see how by accepting this resolution we are likely to get to know more than we do at present.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—The question before the Council is this :—

That this Council recommends to the Government that a thorough investigation into the condition of "lending business" and "Usury" practised in this province be undertaken without delay.

The resolution was negatived.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I beg to move, Sir :—

That this Council recommends to the Government that a Committee consisting of two officials and three non-officials be appointed to examine and report, within three months, what recommendation, if any, of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee may properly be adopted by this Government.

We had long expected, Sir, to see what recommendations would be forthcoming from the Bengal Retrenchment Committee and they have at last recently been out. I think all of us have gone through them. The question now arises if we should not benefit by their labours. The Bengal Retrenchment Committee, consisted as it was of all non-officials, have put forward various recommendations which to my mind, Sir, do not all appear quite plausible. In some places they appear to be impracticable, and in others they are suggestions of practicable measures. And, Sir, it has been a question in the minds of almost all, who think about the country, and bother about the country whether or not we should accept the recommendations of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee *in toto*. The question therefore is as to what we should do. I have therefore recommended that it be thoroughly examined and a conclusion arrived at because those recommendations are the recommendations which touch all the departments of the Government and have not left a single one untouched. We have had a Retrenchment Committee whose recommendations are already before us, but that Committee was a "partial" Committee and did not examine the whole machinery of the Government. By 'partial' I mean 'part' and not the whole. Sir, I do not like to eliminate the Government element from the Committee because the Government officers, I must admit, are expected to know where the shoe really pinches, more than the non-officials. I have therefore included in that Committee two officials and three non-officials. I think, Sir, the country will come to a definite conclusion when the recommendations of this Committee will be placed before us after a thorough investigation into them by this Committee. I think, Sir, this is a thing which should be done without delay.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I am going, Sir, to begin by making a confession to the Council. The Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee has been in our hands for some weeks now. When it was received I was the first member of the Government to note on it and in my note I wrote this sentence :—

"One thing which I think is certain is that with this Report and the Report of our own Committee no one can seriously suggest that we require to appoint any other Committee."

When writing this, Sir, I must confess I reckoned without my learned friend. But leaving aside the rôle of prophet in which I have been such a failure (laughter), I should like to ask the Hon'ble Mover what exactly he wants us to do and why such investigation as may still be necessary should be conducted by a special Committee and not by this Council itself. I told Hon'ble Members yesterday in my speech introducing the budget that we

were examining most anxiously all the recommendations of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee ; that not all of them would be found applicable to this province but that we were taking the matter up most seriously. Each Member of the Government whether in the Executive Council or one of the Ministers is doing this.

Possibly the Hon'ble Member is serious to this extent that he wishes to press once more on the Government the need of economy. If Hon'ble Members believe what I said yesterday we do not require to have this impressed on us. We are keenly alive to it. It is suggested that the Committee should report within three months. Does any member of this Council believe this to be possible? If the Committee sat at Shillong or at some other central place and merely read the Report and wrote essays and suggestions on it possibly this could be done. But without going round the country which would take a much longer time I honestly do not see how information of value could be collected. I think I am right in saying that our own Committee which consisted of three members took nearly a year to frame their Report. Our own Committee cost practically nothing because the members served without remuneration. A Committee of the size and nature suggested by the Hon'ble Member could not be expected to devote so much time to a task of this kind without remuneration and we know when we come to the remuneration of Committees that the bill for travelling expenses alone is a heavy one. I know the Council will not think that I am against economy in opposing this resolution. I have tried to make it clear that to my mind at least there is nothing to be gained by the appointment of such a Committee.

SRIJUT DALIM CHANDRA BORAH:—Sir, I also do not see the necessity of appointing a committee to go through the report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee. I thought that the Hon'ble Mover would be satisfied with the explanation given by the Hon'ble Finance Member in his budget speech yesterday and I thought that he would withdraw his resolution. The appointment of such a committee means the expenditure of lots of money, which is not desirable at this time. The Bengal Retrenchment Committee's report is before us and it is possible for every Member of this Council to go through this report and to suggest possible economies, and over and above this what is the necessity of appointing a separate committee consisting of official and non-official members to suggest means of retrenchment as adopted by the Bengal Retrenchment Committee. In these circumstances I do not think that the resolution ought to receive any support from the Hon'ble Members of this Council.

SRIJUT BIPIN CHANDRA GHOSE:—Sir, I beg to add a few words. Two years ago this Council appointed a committee in order to report what retrenchments this Council will have to give effect to and it is for us to settle and to decide whether we shall be able to give effect to the reports made by the majority of the Retrenchment Committee. When we have got to do certain acts according to the report of the Retrenchment Committee what is the necessity of forming another committee in order to find out in which way we shall be able to give effect to the suggestions made by the Retrenchment Committee of Bengal. I do not find any necessity of appointing any committee at this stage. Let this Council first of all decide in which way we are able to give effect to the report submitted already by the Retrench-

ment Committee of this province. So, Sir, under the circumstances and also in view of the explanation submitted by the Hon'ble Finance Member I am of opinion that there is no necessity of appointing such a committee and I hope the Hon'ble Mover will be kind enough to withdraw his resolution.

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—Sir, we have heard that the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee has already been examined by the Hon'ble Finance Member and Members of the Executive Council and the Ministers and that Report I hope will also be available to all the members of the Council. Will it be, may I ask ?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—The book, Sir, is published at the cost of one rupee.

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—It will be very satisfactory I suppose if all the Members of the Council will get the Report of the Committee and they will then have the opportunity of examining the Report themselves and have the recommendations discussed during our budget discussion during April. And if that be the case I think that it will not be necessary at all for another committee to be formed for examining this report, for in that case it will be possible for all the Members to see for themselves what there is in the Report and what things are practicable and what are not practicable to be applied to this province, and if it be possible for all members to get the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee it will be very satisfactory.

MR. A. W. BOTHAM :—Sir, I am authorised by the Hon'ble Finance Member to say that the Government will supply to the Members of this Council the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee free of cost.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—In bringing forward this resolution, Sir, what I meant was that the recommendations of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee might be looked into thoroughly and notice of my resolution preceded the preliminary speech of the Hon'ble Finance Member which he made yesterday in which he said that he and other Hon'ble Members and the Hon'ble Ministers were looking into the recommendations and were trying their level best to see in what way they might give effect to them. To-day also he assured us of the same. It has been found convenient by some Members that the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee might be studied individually by each Member and during the budget discussions each Member might have an opportunity to give his opinion. If that be possible I think we shall get the opinions of a larger number of responsible persons than the opinions of four or five persons who might form the Committee. But if this is done I do not think that it will be possible for him to give his opinion in the time—the time limit is twenty minutes—and they will also have to refer to other matters in this time. This being so the time limit would have to be long enough to enable him to do so. I hope, Sir, therefore that when any individual Member wishes to speak on the recommendations you may be graciously pleased to allow him longer time than is permissible under the rules.....

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—May I ask, Sir, whose the suggestion was?

MAULAVI MUNAWWAR ALI :—I think my friend to the right made the suggestion.....

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—That each Member of the Council should during the budget discussions express an opinion on the recommendations of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee?

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—No, Sir. I ask only that the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee be circulated among Members of the Council but as to the time to be allowed for every Member to discuss it I said nothing.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—He suggested that each Member will have an opportunity of giving an opinion on the recommendations of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee, and it is I who request the Hon'ble the President in that case to consider if it will not be possible to extend the time limit.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—Have you withdrawn the resolution?

MAULAVI MUNAWWAR ALI :—I have withdrawn the resolution with the request.....

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—Is it a conditional withdrawal?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—May I be permitted, Sir, to make one observation. I think there was a misunderstanding. I had not heard the suggestion made that each Member of the Council should offer an opinion on the Report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee at the time of the budget discussions. We have agreed to give each Member a copy of the Report for study and we have given an undertaking that we shall consider very closely any advice, any opinions, that we receive on it, but there are other opportunities of giving opinions than in the course of the budget debates. I hope, Sir, that you will not at this stage commit yourself in advance to any undertaking about the time limit for speeches.

The resolution was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

RAI BAHADUR BIPIN CANDRA DEB LASKAR :—Sir, the resolution that stands in my name runs thus :—

That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that immediate effect be given to the recommendations of the Assam Retrenchment Committee in their entirety.

The Assam Retrenchment Committee was constituted in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Assam Legislative Council on the 22nd March 1921 to advise Government as to the economies possible in connection with certain appointments. It was not a Committee to advise on general retrenchment of expenditure in every Department of Government. The Committee's report was published as a supplement to the proceedings of the Assam Council in the *Assam Gazette* dated the 5th April 1922. In brief the Committee recommended the abolition of certain appointments, viz., Commissioners of Divisions, Assistant Inspectors of Schools, Deputy Superintendents of Police, the Superintending Engineer and one Conservator of Forests. The Committee

recommended further that the Inspectors of Schools be taken from the Assam Educational Service instead of the Indian Educational Service, that one post of Under-Secretary be given to a Member of the Assam Civil Service. They also suggested that if the Commissionerships were retained Heads of Departments be made Secretaries in their own Departments. But it is a matter of regret that though the Hon'ble the Finance Member realised, from the time the budget for 1922-23 was under preparation, that the policy to be pursued was one of retrenchment and in submitting the budget in the Legislative Council on the 6th February 1922 said that the recommendations of the Committee will receive the most careful consideration from the Government, yet nothing in the line of retrenchment is practically visible even now. Of course my remarks apply to the recommendations of the Retrenchment Committee. Hon'ble Members have no doubt read in the newspapers what the Governments of other provinces have been doing for their solvency. According to this statement the Inchcape Committee have applied their 'axe' to the expenditure of the Government of India while the Bengal Retrenchment Committee have applied their 'dao', but the Assam Committee did nothing like that, nor was the Committee constituted with extensive powers. The Government has now seen the report of the Bengal Retrenchment Committee and they are perhaps aware of the decision of the Bihar and Orissa Retrenchment Committee also. I think it unnecessary to give further reasons or to repeat those already known to us and both Hon'ble Members and Government will agree that effect should be given to the recommendations of the Assam Retrenchment Committee at once.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—The Resolution, Sir, as it stands is a very comprehensive one, a very uncompromising one. The Council have been told from time to time what we have already done in the way of giving effect to the recommendations of our Retrenchment Committee and I apologise for trespassing on their patience if I repeat this information again and bring it up-to-date. As far as Commissioners of Divisions are concerned it is not in our power to abolish the posts even if we wished to do so. I will not pretend that as a Government we are in favour of abolition, but the decision one way or another rests not with us but with the Secretary of State; and the decision will be taken for India as a whole and not merely, I imagine, for one Province. As regards Secretaries and Under-Secretaries to Government, we undertook when the opportunity arose to try a Member of the Assam Civil Service in the post of Under-Secretary. I can only say that possibly the opportunity will arise earlier than we thought it would, in which case we shall endeavour to fulfil our promise. One difficulty about the resolution is that I find myself replying for all my colleagues and sometimes on matters with which I am not fully cognisant, but I understand that no final decision has yet been come to about Assistant Inspectors of Schools. For the present one of the two Assistant Inspectorships remains vacant and the question of recruiting Inspectors, when opportunity affords, from the Assam Educational Service is I understand under consideration. Similarly as regards Deputy Superintendents of Police. My Hon'ble Colleague has already abolished one post and he is awaiting a scheme by which Inspectors may be employed instead of Deputy Superintendents. He clearly can come to no decision until the scheme is before him, which it is not at present. There will also be vacancies in the cadre of Deputy Superintendents and these will not be filled in a hurry if they are filled at all. For the Forest Department I can speak with more confidence being myself responsible. There are two posts of

Conservator, but one Conservator having gone on leave, we have left that appointment vacant and we do not propose to fill it. That is in effect a carrying out of the recommendation of the Committee. We have also got permission from the Government of India to cease recruiting for the Imperial Branch of the Forest Service for some years to come, and we have reduced our major Forest charges from nine to five. Then as regards the Superintending Engineer, the Council were informed before that we had abolished his separate office and that we had attached the Superintending Engineer to the office of the Chief Engineer. Since then we have decided, if the Government of India permit us to do so, to keep the post of Superintending Engineer vacant for the present. It is not in our power to abolish it forthwith.

I have tried to tell the Council how far we have gone in the direction of carrying out the Committee's recommendations. I hope that they will regard this as some advance, and will not accept so completely uncompromising a resolution as that which has been moved by my Hon'ble friend.

RAI BAHADUR BIPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :— Sir, in view of the explanation offered by the Hon'ble the Finance Member, I beg to withdraw my resolution.

The resolution was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

The following resolution which stood in the name of Munshi Safur Rahman was, by leave of the Council, withdrawn :—

That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that immediate steps be taken to improve the communication of Goalpara with Dhubri and Gauhati.

The Council was then adjourned to Monday, the 5th March 1923, at 11 A.M.

SHILLONG,

The 7th March 1923.

A. MELLOR,

Secretary, Legislative Council, Assam.

