

**Proceedings of the Second Session of the Second Assam Legislative
Assembly assembled under the Provisions of the Government
of India Act, 1935**

THE ASSEMBLY met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong at 11 A.M., on Monday,
the 16th September, 1946.

PRESENT:

The Hon'ble Mr. Debeswar Sarmah, Speaker, in the Chair, the seven
Hon'ble Ministers and eighty-one Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

**Compensation to the people of requisitioned areas of Ramnagar and
Udharband Landing Grounds of Silchar**

Maulavi MAKABBIR ALI MAZUMDAR asked :

*47 Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The amounts still remaining unpaid to the people of the requisitioned areas of Ramnagar and Udharband landing grounds of Silchar?
- (b) Why all their dues are not yet paid ?
- (c) Whether Government are aware of the distress of these people caused by the recent devastating flood ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

47. (a)—Twenty per cent. of the original compensation assessed has not yet been paid.

(b)—Sanction has not yet been given by the Lands and Hirings Service to waive recovery of part of the value of trees and houses (for which full value was paid to the evictees) which remained standing when the original owners came to reoccupy their land.

(c)—Yes, and for that reason they have asked the Lands and Hirings Service to agree to waive recovery, so that final payment may be made.

Maulavi MAKABBIR ALI MAZUMDAR: May I know, Sir, when these landing grounds were de-requisitioned ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: It was about 1943 or 1944 probably (looking through the file). I don't find the definite year on record here. If the hon. Member wants this information I can find out and supply him later,

Number of requisition and acquisition cases involving land and buildings

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH asked :

*48. Will the Hon'ble the Revenue Minister be pleased to state—

(a) The number of requisition and acquisition cases involving land and buildings, undertaken by the District Magistrate, Lakhimpur under the Defence of India Act ?

(b) The number of cases in which compensations have been paid and disposed of ?

(c) The number of cases that are still pending with (i) dates of their initiation of proceedings (ii) reasons for the delay in their disposal ?

(d) Number of cases in which claimants are untraced owing to their removal to other places ?

49. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether requisition and acquisition of land and houses were undertaken by the District Magistrate, Lakhimpur for "private persons" at Tinsukia and Digboi for Air-Raid Precautions ?

(b) If so, under what provision of the Defence of India Act such properties were requisitioned or acquisitioned ?

(c) Whether Air-Raid Precaution (Civil Defence) Department has been abolished by Government of Assam ?

(d) If so, whether Government propose to take steps to release the properties held in occupation by the "Private Persons" at Digboi and Tinsukia ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

48. (a)—943.

(b)—282.

(c)—Six hundred and sixty-one cases are still pending the earliest dating from 11th December 1942. Delay in disposal of cases is due to various reasons such as assessment of initial recurring and terminal compensation, execution of agreements, reference to arbitration, etc.

(d)—There are no such cases in which all the claimants are not traceable but there are a few cases in which some of claimants could not be traced.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Is it because of the fact that the claimants were disgusted coming to the Court repeatedly and not getting payment in spite they went away in disgust and disappointment ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I have no information. If that was the case, I would have received applications, like other places, from the persons who got disgusted on account of delay.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Have not applications been filed before the Deputy Commissioner that they were disgusted in coming to the Court ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I do not know. If any applications were filed before the Deputy Commissioner stating these facts, the attention of Government was not specifically drawn to these applications by either the hon. Member or any persons.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Is this Department short of staff for which they cannot dispose of these cases?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Of course in some cases officers are over-worked, but as far as possible we have provided additional officers consistent with the number of officers available.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that there is an army of clerks in this Department and they are not deliberately disposing of these cases unless they are satisfied by illegal gratification?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: That I do not know. I shall be very glad if the hon. Member brings to my notice specific instances of corruption among the clerks. But I may inform him that the clerks cannot dispose of cases; orders have to be passed by some responsible officer—an Extra Assistant Commissioner or Sub-Deputy Collector in charge of requisition.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: In view of the fact that more than two-thirds of the number of cases have not been disposed of, and have been pending for more than 3 years, is it not natural to infer that there is something wrong with the administration of this Department?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I do not know the exact proportion of cases now pending. The fact is that as soon as any specific instance of any area is brought to my notice, I immediately pass orders and send it for sanction of the Lands and Hirings Service, and it is the delay in according sanction which is principally responsible for payment being delayed.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: From the reply given, we find that out of 943 cases only 282 have been disposed of, i.e., about 700 cases still remain pending. In view of the fact that such a large number of cases have been kept pending for more than 3 years, should not Government take special steps for early disposal of these cases?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: As soon as I got this Question I immediately passed orders to expedite the matter and urgent reminders were sent to the officers concerned.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Am I to understand, Sir, that Government will depute some Special Officers to dispose of these cases?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Yes, Sir, when a large number of cases are accumulated, sometimes officers are deputed for this purpose.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Sir, in view of the fact that a large number of cases are pending in Dibrugarh, will the Hon'ble Minister take steps to send some Special Officers there?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I understand my hon. Friend means the Superintendent.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Yes, Sir.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Of course, I will look into this matter.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: May I request the Hon'ble Minister to depute such officers for the districts of Sylhet and Cachar also?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: As soon as grievances were brought to the notice of Government I sent the Superintendent immediately to make enquiries in Sylhet and Cachar regarding the grievances of the people of the requisitioned areas.

Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSH SHAMS: Will Government please issue instruction to the District Authorities so that requisition and acquisition cases may be expedited?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I have already issued orders to this effect that the Defence of India Rules having come to an end immediate steps should be taken to de-requisition the lands and buildings and make them over to the original owners.

†**Maulavi ABDUL KHALEQUE AHMED:** Will Government make an attempt to find out untraced claimants?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: If any constructive suggestions to find out untraced claimants are brought to our notice we shall try.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied:

49. (a)—No, some land at Tinsukia has only been requisitioned for A. R. P. purposes and not for any private person.

(b)—Does not arise.

(c)—Yes, from 1st October 1945.

(d)—Steps are being taken to release the property requisitioned for the A. R. P. at an early date.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Sir, I have definite information that for the Assam Oil Company installation at Tinsukia, houses of some gentlemen were acquired for A.R.P. purposes but although that Department has been abolished the Company has not released the properties.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I have no definite information about it.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Will the Hon'ble Minister please enquire into this and issue orders for the release of those properties?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Sir, the hon. Questioner talked to me over the phone about this matter this morning and I have asked him to write a letter to me so that I can take action on the matter.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Sir, in view of the importance of Question No.50 will the Hon'ble Minister please reply to this Question though the hon. Questioner is not present in this House ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to seek your permission to reply to this question.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Yes, you can reply.

Food-stuffs and clothes to Tea garden labourers

†**Mr. BINODE KUMAR J. SARWAN** asked :

†50. Will the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether the food-stuffs and clothes are still supplied to the labourers in tea gardens in Assam at concession rates ?
- (b) If so, whether the labourers get their supply in proportion to their needs ?
- (c) If not, whether the Minister-in-charge propose to see that all the tea garden labourers in Assam are supplied adequately with the same ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS replied :

50. (a)—There is no change in the position which has obtained for several years. It is not the invariable practice to supply cloth at concession rates and the practice in this respect has always varied according to area.

(b)—Yes, broadly speaking. As the hon. Member knows, in the case of commodities in short supply, which are controlled, all classes sometimes have to go short, when difficulties arise in procurement or transport.

(c)—It is the constant aim of Government to achieve this end. All cases of grievance are and will be examined.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Will the Hon'ble Minister please state what is the principle underlying granting of concessions to the labourers ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS: Because of rise of cost of living, Sir.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Why clothes are not given at concession rate, Sir ?

(†The Question was replied to under Assembly rule 38 although the Questioner Mr. Binode Kumar J. Sarwan was absent).

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: In the Surma Valley clothes are given at a concession rate but in the Assam Valley in some gardens clothes are supplied at the cost price and in some gardens they are supplied at a concession rate.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Will Government take it from me that clothes are not supplied at a concession rate in the Surma Valley?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: I have not received any specific instances from the Surma Valley to this effect, Sir.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS: Sir, are Government aware that in some tea gardens the labourers do not know the price of food-stuffs supplied to them before deduction is made from their monthly earning?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: It is not known to Government, Sir.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS: Will Government enquire into this matter?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: If the hon. Member so desires, Government will enquire into it.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Are Government aware that for absentees in the tea gardens not only concessions but even the controlled commodities are denied.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: Yes, Sir, in Amu garden in Surma Valley for absence for two days only, a labourer is refused ration for the whole week. This fact has been brought to our notice very recently and we are considering the matter, Sir.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: This is not the only instance, Sir. These things are going on in many gardens. I would request the Hon'ble Minister to give their serious consideration to this matter and inform the garden managers concerned so that rations may not be cut for other absentees.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS: Yes, Sir. Government will do so.

Srijut DANDESWAR HAZARIKA: May I know, Sir, why this distinction is made between the Assam Valley and the Surma Valley?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: I do not know the reason, Sir, but it has been going on for a long time. These points will be discussed threadbare in the proposed Advisory Committee.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Sir, in view of the fact that wages have not been increased in the gardens and that only a limited number of commodities are supplied to the labourers at a concession rate, is it not a fact that the labourers are compelled to go to the black-market to procure their daily necessities.....?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. I cannot allow a discussion or a debate on a Question. I shall draw the attention of the hon. Members to Rule 40 'Prohibition of discussion'. It runs as follows:

"No discussion shall be permitted in respect of any question or of any answer given to a question.

Provided that on notice given to the Speaker at question time, the Speaker may, in his discretion, allow half an hour after 4 p. m. or after the conclusion of the business of the day, whichever is earlier, to enable a Member to raise a debate on any matter of urgent importance which has been the subject of a question on that day. No division shall be taken on such debate, and such time shall not be available for the transaction of any other business."

I invite the attention of the hon. Member to Rule 40. If he wants he can have a debate under the proviso to Rule 40 after the day's business is finished, i.e., after 4 p. m.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Sir, if the supplies are not given at a concession rate, will Government see that the difference between the concession rate and the controlled rate may be paid to the labourers in cash?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: That point will also be considered in the proposed Advisory Committee.

Srijut DANDESWAR HAZARIKA: May I know, Sir, when the proposed Advisory Committee will be held?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: Some time in November next.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, may we have your permission to have a debate after 4 p. m. to-day regarding the issue of clothes and food-stuffs to the labourers at concession rates?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I have no objection to allow a debate under Rule 40.

Mr. E. W. B. KENNEY: Is it a fact, Sir, that there are two classes of cloth, one class is for the towns people and the other class for the country people? If so, why?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Has the question any reference to the original question?

Mr. E. W. B. KENNEY: Yes, Sir. It has reference to question (a).....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: This question is far away from the main issue. However, when a debate is allowed after to-day's business is over any further questions can be raised then.

Rogue elephants in Barpathar Mauza

Srijut RAJENDRA NATH BARUA asked:

*51. (a) Are Government aware that wild elephants in Dhondasam colonisation area in the Barpathar Mauza of Golaghat have killed a few persons recently?

(b) If so, will Government be pleased to state what steps they are taking to kill these rogue elephants ?

(c) Do Government propose to issue gun licence on application to the new settlers for self-protection ?

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

51. (a)—Yes, Government have learnt on enquiry of three deaths reported as caused by elephant.

(b)—So far the methods of destruction by control license holders and *mela shikar* have been tried and two elephants have been destroyed. Government are now considering further possible measures here and elsewhere in Assam.

(c)—Application must be made under the Indian Arms Act and Rules to the District Magistrates who will no doubt give due consideration to the needs of new settlers.

Maulavi ABDUL KHALEQUE AHMED : Will the Hon'ble Minister please say how many persons have been killed ?

The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY : I have already stated that 3 persons have been killed.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(to which answers were laid on the tables)

(Further Supplementaries to †Unstarred Question No. 149)

Maulavi MAHAMMAD ROUFIQUE : Sir, the reply in (c) is that "Government believe that the Company is prepared to make replacements

Motor Service between Shillong and Gauhati

Maulavi MAHAMMAD ROUFIQUE asked :

†149. (a) Are Government aware that the present timing arrangement in the Motor Service between Shillong and Gauhati is causing great inconvenience to the travellers ?

(b) Are Government aware that the period of haltage at Nongpoh is unnecessarily long ?

(c) If so, do Government propose to take immediate steps to see that timings are revised for the convenience of the travellers ?

(d) Are Government aware that the cars and buses employed by the Commercial Carrying Company are very old and unserviceable ?

(e) If so, do Government propose to insist on the Company to replace all such old vehicles by new ones ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE replied :

149. (a)—Government have had no specific complaints to that effect.

(b)—Experience does not show that the period is unnecessarily long, but it may be noted that the actual time halted is largely dependent on the wish of the traveller. Service Vehicles only half an hour.

(c)—Government will be prepared to re-examine the matter when conditions such as the train ferry timings, which determine the main timing on the road, make this possible ; but at present there are many vehicles (including those of private owners) which are not at such a pitch of efficiency as to make a shorter interval possible without causing still more inconvenience.

(d)—Yes.

(e)—Government believe that the Company is prepared to make replacements when the supply position makes this possible.

when the supply position makes this possible". May I know from the Hon'ble Minister if he has ascertained from the Company if they are really going to make replacements ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : The meaning given is quite clear, Sir. The Company applied for new cars and we are trying to satisfy them as far as possible. That is why that word has been used. They are trying to get new cars, but the necessary number could not be supplied, as we are to meet similar demands from other quarters as well.

Maulavi MAHAMMAD ROUFIQUE : I think the permits are issued by Government. Will the Hon'ble Minister help the Company in securing permits for buying new cars and buses to replace the old ones ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Yes, we ourselves are issuing permits according to the quota fixed for this Province. When we get the indent of cars we distribute them among many applicants. When there is a question of public service, preference is given to it. We cannot give the entire quota of the cars received at a time to the Company, as we have got to meet other demands as well.

Licences of dealers in rice and paddy

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY asked :

150. (a) Is it a fact that the licences of petty dealers in rice and paddy in this Province have now been cancelled whereas those under Classes A, B and C have not been cancelled ?

(b) If so, why ?

(c) What provision or provisions do Government propose to make regarding the thousands of petty dealers who have hitherto been dealing in rice and paddy business in their localities but who have been adversely affected by the Government measure ?

(d) Are Government aware that the sudden cancellation by Government of petty dealers' licences has caused much inconvenience to the common public regarding the procuring of rice and paddy in small quantities ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE replied :

150. (a)—Only the Deputy Commissioners of Sibsagar and the Garo Hills considered it necessary to issue petty dealers licences. The Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar recently considered such licences unnecessary and so they were cancelled but the matter is under consideration. The question, however, becomes quite academic as Government very soon intend to do away with the necessity of even taking out C Class licences. This will mean that any one including petty dealers will be able to deal in paddy and rice upto 500 maunds.

(b), (c) & (d)—In view of the above, do not arise.

***Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY :** Sir, with reference to the answer given by the Hon'ble Minister to my Question may I point out to Government that much hardship has been caused to the petty dealers ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, that is why in the reply I have said that this will mean that any one including petty dealers will be able to deal in paddy and rice upto 500 maunds. As a matter of fact we are going to withdraw issuing permits for C class license. Thereby all the difficulties which have been experienced so long will not be there.

***Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY:** May I know from the Hon'ble Minister on what grounds the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar District considered it unnecessary to issue licenses to the petty dealers?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: That I cannot say off-hand. We are going to grant similar facilities not only in that particular area but throughout the Province so that there will be no more necessity for issuing permit for dealing in rice and paddy upto 500 maunds. Government has come to this decision after realising the difficulties experienced by many dealers. This will be published soon.

Assam Oil Company at Digboi

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY asked:

151. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether they have any information as to the number of persons employed under the Assam Oil Company at Digboi?
- (b) If so, how many of them are Indians and how many of them are Muslims?
- (c) Are Government aware that the Muslim employees of the Assam Oil Company, Digboi are not given any facilities to offer Friday prayers?
- (d) Do Government propose to bring immediate pressure to bear upon the said Company to extend necessary facilities for prayers to the Muslim employees?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS replied:

151. (a)—Yes.

(b)—There were 7,999 Indian employees on the 30th June 1946, of whom 2,440 were Muslims.

(c)—Government understand from the Company that Muslim employees take time off for prayers without any objection being raised.

(d)—Does not arise.

***Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSSHAMS:** Will Government be pleased to issue instructions so that specific rules may be framed by the Digboi Oil Company for allowing their Muslim employees to say their prayers instead of allowing them to do it on sufferance?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS: May I know the meaning of the word 'sufferance'?

***Maulavi ABUAL MAJIDZIAOSH SHAMS:** I thought the Hon'ble Minister knew the meaning of it. If he consults the dictionary he will find the meaning, but I may explain to him that sufferance means not allowing a thing to be done willingly.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: The Muslim employees should approach the Company to frame rules to that effect, that is, to give facilities to the Muslim employees to say their prayers. In case the authority of the Company refuses, Government will consider about it.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: With reference to Question (c), Sir, are Government aware that the Muslims are not paid by the Company for the duration of the time they absent themselves from work for saying their Friday prayers?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: I am not aware of the fact, Sir.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: Will the Hon'ble Minister take it from me that they are not paid for the time they absent themselves from work for Friday prayers.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: I can take the statement of the hon. Member, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUL HAI: Will Government make an enquiry at an early date?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: Yes, Sir.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: Will Government take steps to direct the Company to grant leave with pay to the Muslim employees to say their Friday prayers, to avoid troubles since a new Trade Union has recently been formed whose function is to declare strikes when legitimate demands are not met?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: May I invite the attention of the hon. Member to rule 29. Any question that is put must relate to matters concerning the Provincial Government. Is this Government directly concerned with the Digboi Oil Company?

Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSHSHAMS: That the Government has answered the Question shows that Government has got responsibility.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: In view of the fact that the Digboi Trade Union has been recently reformed and is yet to receive recognition at the hands of the Assam Government, will Government be pleased to put pressure upon the Digboi Oil Company to grant leave with pay to the Muslim employees, and to allow them to absent themselves from work for Friday prayers in order to avoid further troubles?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS: That is a matter primarily concerned with the Company, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUL HAMID: Is the Company under the administrative jurisdiction of the Assam Government?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: No, Sir. Government interfere when disputes arise.

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: It was to avoid disputes that I raised the Question.

The Hon'ble Minister complained of my long question and I put the question again requesting him to put pressure upon the Assam Oil Company to grant leave with pay to Muslim employees on Fridays to offer Friday prayers.

The reply of the Minister was "Yes, Sir". I asked "In order to avoid troubles and in view of the recent reformation of the Digboi Union one of whose functions is to declare strikes if legitimate demands are not met, will Government be pleased to put pressure upon the Company to grant leave with pay....."

Panchgaon Dispensary under South Sylhet Local Board

Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH asked :

152. (a) Is the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Medical and Public Health aware that Panchgaon Dispensary under South Sylhet Local Board is the only dispensary of its kind in the locality with a maternity ward attached to it ?

(b) Does the Hon'ble Minister propose to sanction a special grant for the proper upkeep of the said maternity ward ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS replied :

152. (a)—Yes.

(b)—The South Sylhet Local Board is primarily responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the maternity ward. However, if the Board applies to Government through proper channel for a special grant for this maternity ward, the request will be considered on its merits.

***Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH**: Are Government aware that the resources of the Local Board are limited and they cannot pay sufficiently for the maintenance of this maternity ward ?

***The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS**: That is why my reply to (b) is so.

***Maulavi DEWAN ABDUL BASITH**: Is it a fact that an application has been sent through proper channel to Government praying for a special grant ?

***The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS**: That is not a fact, Sir.

***Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH**: I sent an advance copy of the petition with a personal letter to the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge, three month back, and I have got with me a reply from the Hon'ble Minister. (*Laughter*).

***The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS**: May I know the contents of the reply ?

***Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH**: I am sorry, I have not got it here, any way, I shall pass it on to the Hon'ble Minister later: it is in my file.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: When an hon. Member wants to contradict Government or an Hon'ble Minister, he should have facts ready with him. When the Hon'ble Minister said "I am not aware of it", the hon. Member says "I got a reply with me". When a contradiction is made he ought to be prepared and ready to produce the document before the House.

***Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA**: The hon. Member is prepared to substantiate his contradiction and he has said that he will pass it on to the Hon'ble Minister.

***The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS**: May I know the contents of the letter ?

***Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH**: I represented that the dispensary is unique of its kind, and special grants from the Government should be given to maintain this maternity ward, and I requested Government to consider the case as a special one.

***Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN**: Is not the Local Board entitled to half the recurring cost from the discretionary fund for the maintenance of the maternity ward?

***The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS**: I want notice of that Question, Sir.

* * * * *

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: What is the question?

***Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH**: Will Government take immediate steps for considering the case of this maternity ward as a special case?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I shall not allow this question.

Under Rule 31(7), it shall not be a request for action. I shall expunge both the question and the answer. Hon. Members must have studied this rule, and hon. Members should know whether this question is admissible or not.

Revenue derived from Agricultural Income-Tax during the years 1940-46 from Tea Estates

Mr. P. M. SARWAN asked:

153. (a) Will Government be pleased to state the amount of revenue derived from Agricultural Income-Tax during the years 1940-46 from the tea estates in Assam?

(b) What part of this has been spent annually for the welfare of labourers in tea estates of Assam during the above period?

(c) Do Government propose to spend any money out of the above revenue for the education of the tea garden labour population?

(d) Has the Hon'ble Prime Minister lately received any letter from the Questioner on the above subject?

(e) Has the Hon'ble Prime Minister replied to the above letter?

(f) If not, why not?

(g) Has the Hon'ble Prime Minister any scheme or plan for the welfare of the tea garden labour population?

(h) If so, what is that?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied:

		Rs.
153. (a)—1940-41	...	38,17,450
1941-42	...	24,89,033
1942-43	...	35,55,059
1943-44	...	54,91,113
1944-45	...	55,86,369
1945-46	...	45,81,119

(b) & (c)—It is contrary to financial principles to earmark the receipts from any item of provincial revenues for specific purposes. Government insisted in 1939 on the establishment of schools in tea estates and their inspection. A grant was also made to the Labour Welfare at Boroma which continues to deal with educational welfare.

Government are contemplating a Conference of Labour Members of Legislative Assembly and other social service workers with a view to determining what steps may be taken for the welfare of the labourers, apart from the benefit which the general schemes of Government give them.

(d)—Yes.

(e) & (f)—The letter was taken as a representation on the subject and was being considered by Government, hence no reply was sent.

(g) & (h)—The hon. Member will see from the second part of the reply to Questions (b) and (c) above that the schemes to be adopted by the Government will depend on the results of the proposed Conference.

***Mr. HARENDRA NATH SARMA:** Do Government propose to have representations from the labourers and the employers in the proposed conference for the welfare of the labourers and the employers?

***The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI:** I could not follow the question.

***Mr. HARENDRA NATH SARMA:** It is stated in reply to (b) and (c) that the subject will be discussed in the conference that will be held.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. This question is not permissible. Hon. Members must go through the rules of procedure. If the hon. Members of the Legislature do not follow the rules which they themselves have made, then I think the Legislature will not stand at a very great premium.

***Mr. HARENDRA NATH SARMA:** On a point of personal explanation Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: No question of personal explanation arises. I have felt that few of the hon. Members have read the rules—Chapter III, from rules 22 to 32. The most important rule is 31. For the benefit of the hon. Members I shall read it. Rule 31 at page 10. It runs as follows—Form and contents of questions—In order that a question may be admissible it shall satisfy the following conditions, viz:—

(1) It shall not bring in any name or make any statement not strictly necessary to make the question intelligible;

(2) If it contains a statement by the Member himself, the Member asking it shall make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement;

(3) It shall not contain arguments, inferences, ironical expressions or defamatory statements;

(4) It shall not ask for any expression of opinion or the solution of a hypothetical proposition;

(5) It shall not relate to the character or conduct of any person except in his official or public capacity; and

(6) It shall not be of excessive length;

(7) It shall not be a request for action;

(8) It shall be precisely and definitely expressed; and

(9) It shall be asked with the object of eliciting information pure and simple.

If the hon. Members want to change these rules they are at liberty to change them, but so long as these rules are there, I think, it is expected that the hon. Members will respect these rules by obeying them.

Mr. HARENDRA NATH SARMA: I shall ask a new question, Sir. Do Government propose to include the labourers and the employers in that conference?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : That is not allowed.

***Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN :** Will Government consider the desirability of taking steps ? I think that would be in order, Sir ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : No, that is also not in order.

***Maulavi ABDUL HAMID :** Do Government propose to take steps in this matter ?

***The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI :** What steps, Sir ?

***Maulavi ABDUL HAMID :** As regards the question put by the hon. questioner (*Laughter*), asking for taking steps, do Government propose to take steps.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Order, Order. The question should be self-contained. Will the hon. Member repeat the question. ?

*** Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH :** Do Government propose to take proper action in the matter?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : In what matter?

*** Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH :** In the matter under discussion. (*Laughter*).

*** Mr HARENDRA NATH SARMA :** Do Government propose to take a representative of the employers in the Conference?

*** The Hon'ble Mr BASANTA KUMAR DAS :** This question is also not admissible, Sir. It is asking the Government about their policy. The Hon'ble Minister will not be able to give an answer off-hand.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : It certainly forms part of the question, 'do Government propose to take action on such and such matter'. Such questions are put in the House of Commons, in the Central Legislative Assembly and also here. The hon. Member really seeks information as to the intention of the Government in the matter and does not ask for action, although indirectly they mean the same thing.

*** The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS :** I was saying this because the Chair was giving emphasis on the rule that no question should be asked for action.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The Chair was laying emphasis on certain standing rules which his illustrious predecessor also followed.

*** Maulavi ABDUL HAMID :** The hon. Questioner is merely trying to get information.

*** The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI :** I can answer that.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Order, Order. Next question.

Personnel in the Army, Navy and Air Force during the War

Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH asked :

154. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The number of inhabitants of this Province who joined the Army, Navy and Air Force during the war ?
- (b) How many of them have been demobilised upto the 15th of June 1946?
- (c) Of the demobilised personnel how many have been provided with jobs by the Assam Government ?
- (d) What is the plan of Government regarding giving of land to demobilised soldiers ?
- (e) What are the other plans in contemplation of the Government regarding giving employment to demobilised soldiers ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS replied :

154. (a)—12,780.

(b)—Approximately 3,500. Exact figures are not available

(c)—169 have found employment through the assistance of the Employment Exchanges.

(d)—Government have no plan for land settlement at present, but a scheme for co operative colonies is being worked out.

(e)—None in particular.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I submit, Sir, that so long rule 7 was not strictly followed ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I do maintain that it does not lie in the mouth of the hon. Members of this House to say that there is a rule but it should not be followed.

* **Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSH SHAMS** : May I know, Sir, where is the office of the Employment Exchange situated?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : The office is in Shillong, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I know from the Hon'ble Minister under whom the Employment Exchange functions? Is it under the Government of India or the Provincial Government?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : It is really under the Government of India, but this Government also has certain voice.

Maulavi MAYEENUD-DIN AHMED CHOWDRY : How long the Government will take to formulate the co-operative colonies for the demobilised army men?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : I am not in a position to answer this question now, Sir.

* **Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSHAMS** : Does this office of the Employment Exchange of Shillong deexclusively with procurement of services for the disbanded army officers?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : Yes, to a great extent.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I know from the Hon'ble Minister how long it will take to absorb all the army personnel? I want the approximate time.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : Sir, it is difficult for me to say how long it will take and whether all the disbanded army personnel will be absorbed.

Daily Allowance to 3rd and 4th Grade Government Servants

Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH asked :

155. Do Government propose to amend the Fundamental and Subsidiary Rules in regard to the daily allowances of the 3rd and 4th grade Government servants who are drawing Rs.60 per month and below by a considerable increase of the allowances as they were getting now ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

155.—The daily allowances of the 3rd and 4th grade Government servants have already been increased by 40 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively. Government do not propose to amend the rules further until economic conditions have stabilised themselves.

Tezpur-Balipara Railway

Srijut BIJOY CHANDRA BHAGAVATI asked :

156. (a) Will Government be pleased to enquire and state whether there are any lavatory and lighting arrangements in the carriages of the Tezpur-Balipara Railway and whether carriages are open and unprotected ?

(b) Will Government enquire and state if the Railway Inspector recently found some of the Engines of the Tezpur-Balipara Railway in a very bad condition and dangerous for use ?

(c) Do Government propose to publish that report ?

(d) Are Government aware that the Tezpur-Balipara Railway is out-dated and it cannot meet the growing needs of the day ?

(e) Are Government aware that representations have been made from time to time by the public of Tezpur for abolition of the Tezpur-Balipara Railway and to replace it by extending the Bengal-Assam Railway from Rangapara North to Tezpur ?

(f) Are Government aware that much of the time of the travelling public can be saved and very many difficulties removed if the Bengal-Assam Railway is extended from Rangapara-North to Tezpur town in place of the Tezpur-Balipara Railway ?

(g) Do Government propose to move the Railway Board and the Central Government and to take such other steps as may be necessary to extend the Bengal-Assam Railway from Rangapara-North to the Tezpur town by abolishing the Tezpur-Balipara Railway at an early date ?

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

156. (a) & (b)—Government have no definite information but will enquire of the Railway authorities in the matter.

- (c)—Does not arise.
 (d)—Government have no definite data to come to a definite conclusion.
 (e)—Government have received only one representation from the hon. Questioner for the purpose.
 (f)—Apparently so.
 (g)—Government have already moved the Railway Board in the matter.

Ban on the Radical Institute, Gauhati and the Assam Labour and Peasant Party

Maulavi ABDUL HAI asked :

157. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether the ban on the (i) Radical Institute, Gauhati ; and (ii) the Assam Labour and Peasant Party has been removed ?
 (b) If not, why not ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS replied :

157. (a)—(i) and (ii)—Yes.
 (b)—Does not arise.

Maulavi ABDUL HAI : May I know from what date the ban on the Radical Institute, Gauhati was removed?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : It may be after this Government assumed office ; I am not definite of the date.

Maulavi ABDUL HAI : Can we get the date on which the ban on the Assam Labour and Peasant Party was removed?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : Of course, the hon. Member is quite at liberty to put any question he likes, but I don't think the date is material. The ban is not there, that is all.

Maulavi ABDUL HAI : I think the date is relevant. Government may not be prepared to give the exact date, but they should not say that there is no necessity of the date.

Proscription of the Book entitled "Biplavi Khetiyak"

Maulavi ABDUL HAI asked :

158. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether the book by the name of Biplavi Khetiyak has been proscribed ?
 (b) If so, why ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS replied :

158. (a)—The proscription order has been withdrawn.
 (b)—Does not arise.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I know from the Hon'ble Minister who is the author of the Biplavi Khetiyak?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : Sir, I did not think it necessary to come with this information. and I cannot supply the name of the author

of the Book. The proscription on it has been withdrawn. That is quite sufficient, I think.

Maulavi Dewan ABDUL BASITH: What was the reason for proscription of the book?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: The proscription was not imposed by this Government, but it was imposed when a different Government was in power.

Number of Garos in the Assam Civil Service and Assam Junior Service

Mr. MANIRAM MARAK asked :

159. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether there is any Garo in the Assam Civil Service or in the Assam Junior Service ?
- (b) If not, has there been no candidate so far from the Garos ?
- (c) Whether Government propose to give preference to qualified Garos in matters of appointment in the above named services in the next recruitment ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI replied :

159. (a)—No.

(b)—There has been one only, since 1940.

(c)—Government's policy is to endeavour to give fair representation to all communities but there is no provision on the strength of which they can undertake to give preference to Garos in particular, against other candidates of the Hill Tribes.

***Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY:** May I know what has happened to the particular Garo candidate as replied in (b) ?

*** The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI:** I am not in a position to say that. I cannot give the reply off-hand.

Garos serving in the Bengal Civil Pioneer Corps

Mr. MANIRAM MARAK asked :

160. (a) Are Government aware that some of the Garos who were formerly officers of this Government entered as commissioned officers in the Bengal Civil Pioneer Corps ?

(b) Do Government propose to consider their cases for promotion in consideration of their war services ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI replied :

160. (a)—Government have no information to that effect.

(b)—Does not arise.

* **Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSH SHAMS**: With regard to (a) did Government make any enquiry before giving the answer that 'Government have no information to that effect'?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI: It is not necessary to institute any enquiry. However I take the hon. Member's suggestion and I can just enquire into it.

Functions of the Garo Nokmas

Mr. MANIRAM MARAK asked :

161. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The powers and functions of the Garo Nokmas in the Garo Hills and to what extent they can exercise them within their respective circles called Akhings?
- (b) The powers and functions of the Garo Laskars in the Garo Hills?
- (c) Whether Government are aware that the Garo Laskars are applying Garo Laws in those cases which are tried by them?

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS replied :

161. (a) & (b)—The Nokmas and Laskars exercise powers and functions conferred on them by the Rules for the Administration of Justice and Police in the Garo Hills District, 1937. Besides these a Nokma distributes or allots sites for jhuming to the villagers in his Akhing area and the Laskars collect house tax within their respective *elakas*.

(c)—They apply Garo Laws in those cases only in which both the parties are Garos. They are not entitled to try any other cases.

Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate

Maulavi MD. ABDULLAH asked :

162. (a) Are Government aware that the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate owes thousands of rupees to persons from whom they made purchases of rice and paddy through their agents and sub-agents?

(b) Are Government aware that the Syndicate is not making any payment to such persons?

(c) Will Government be pleased to state what steps, if any, Government have taken to ensure payment to such persons?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE replied :

162. (a)—No ; Government have, however, had a number of notices of suits in which some persons have made such allegations against the Syndicates and they have made or want to make the Government parties defendants in such suits.

(b)—Government have no information regarding this allegation and can express no opinion as to the merits of such claims to payments.

(c)—Government have no objection in such disputes and ought not to take any steps as suggested in view of the pending litigation in which the rights

and liabilities of all parties will be finally settled according to law. Government take the view that Government having put the Syndicates in sufficient funds for paying the price of all purchases in cash according to the terms of the contract, no party was required or expected to sell to the Syndicates on credit. If any one did so and cannot now realise the price, it is up to him to seek his remedy in the Courts.

***Mr. HARENDRA NATH SARMA :** Do Government propose to withdraw their reply to question (c) as the reply implies a contempt of court?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Government is not going to withdraw.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Did not the Shome Committee state that large sums of money have been lying with the Syndicate ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : I am not going to divulge anything about the Shome Committee's report at this stage.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : The Committee was publicly functioning. It took evidence.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : I am not in a position to say either way.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Is it not a fact that the sum outstanding at the credit of this Syndicate amounts to 9 lakhs of rupees against the Government of Assam ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : I am not willing to add anything more to the reply. It is quite well known to the hon. Members of the House that the matter is under investigation and audit is going on and cases are pending before the Courts. Government is doing all that is necessary to do justice to all concerned. Over and above this I cannot give any further reply, Sir.

*** Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA :** May I point out that the word 'objection' in the first line of the reply against (c) is wrong, it should be 'connection' ?

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

Charitable Dispensaries in Bahubal and Chunarighat Police Stations

Maulavi MD. ABDULLAH asked :

163. (a) Are Government aware that there is dearth of charitable dispensaries in the Bahubal and Chunarighat Police Stations ?

(b) Do Government propose to start two charitable dispensaries in the two Thanas one at Mirpur Bazar and the other at Rajarbazar in Bahubal and Chunarighat Police Stations respectively ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS replied :

163. (a)—There are two dispensaries one in each of the Police Stations mentioned. Government are aware that medical aid is not quite adequate.

(b)—Government do not propose to do so, this being at present a responsibility of the Local Board.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Is it not the responsibility of the Government to maintain this and to see to the public health and rural sanitation of the villages ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: In the interest of public health we have got our own dispensaries in different areas.

Babu PURNENDU KISHORE SEN GUPTA: Is this with regard to public health dispensaries ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: It is with regard to charitable dispensaries and not with regard to public health dispensaries.

Number of Zaminders in the Province under the Court of Wards or otherwise

Maulavi MD. NAZMAL HAQUE asked :

164. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The total number of Zaminders in the Province of Assam under the Court of Wards Estate or otherwise (to be shown District by District) ?
- (b) The total amount of local rates paid to the Government for the last three years by the Zaminders of the district of Goalpara (to be shown Subdivision by Subdivision) ?
- (c) The total amount of local rates paid by the Government to the Local Bodies of the district of Goalpara (to be shown Subdivision by Subdivision) during the said years ?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI replied :

164. (a)—The numbers of permanently-settled estates in the province are:—

Sylhet	49,574	(17 under Court of Wards).
Goalpara... ..	19	(1 under Court of Wards).
Garohills	1	
Total	49,594	

(b)—The total amount of local rates realised by Government in the district of Goalpara for the last three years are:—

Dhubri Subdivision			Goalpara Subdivision		
Rs.			Rs.		
1943-44	...	1,55,667	...	56,102	
1944-45	...	1,39,631	...	56,214	
1945-46	...	1,61,824	...	89,139	

(c)—Government pay contributions to the Local Bodies in lieu of the local rates realised by them. The amounts paid are adjusted according to receipts of the previous year and were as follows:—

Dhubri			Goalpara		
Rs.			Rs.		
1943-44	...	1,41,908	...	56,340	
1944-45	...	1,72,840	...	55,964	
1945-46	...	1,43,596	...	74,328	

Srijut SARAT CHANDRA SINHA: With regard to (b), do the Zamindars realise more local rates than they pay to the Government?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: Government have no information in this matter.

***Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSH SHAMS:** Was the full demand of the local rates realised in the years concerned?

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: I want notice of it because I know what amount was actually paid to Government, but as regards arrears a separate question should be put.

Srijut SARAT CHANDRA SINHA: Do Government propose to ensure that the amount realised by the Zamindars is not less than the amount paid to the Government.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNURAM MEDHI: There is specific rule for assessment. According to that Zamindars are liable to pay to Government. If the Zamindars realise more than the amount due from the tenants and if any specific instances are brought to my notice, Government will certainly take action.

**Laboratory for manufacturing anti Rinderpest vaccine
(solution) at Shillong**

Babu JATINDRANATH BHADRA asked :

165. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have any information about the cattle mortality in the last winter and at present in the Circle No.25 of the Sunamganj Police Station?

(b) Do Government propose to consider the advisability of opening a laboratory for manufacturing anti Rinderpest vaccine (solution) at Shillong immediately?

(c) Do Government propose to increase the number of veterinary dispensaries and post of Veterinary Inspectors in every district?

(d) Have Government considered the desirability of amalgamating the Live-Stock Department with the Veterinary Department by giving the Veterinary Assistant Surgeons special training about live-stock?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR replied :

165. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes, at Gauhati.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Yes, an Animal Husbandry Commissioner's post combining Live-Stock and Veterinary has been proposed to be created. The matter is being further examined.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: With regard to (c), may I know from the Government when they propose to implement the scheme?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR: At present Government is very much short of staff; when we will have sufficient staff and when

our students sent outside for training return, there will be staff and the question of opening additional dispensaries will be taken into consideration. At present there are representations from various quarters to open additional dispensaries, but Government have not got the staff necessary, to post in those dispensaries. So Government is not taking up this question now.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I point out to the Hon'ble Minister that, the question was: Do Government propose to increase the number of veterinary dispensaries and post of Veterinary Inspectors in every district? So the question refers to distinct schemes and not to any particular dispensaries. May I know from Government when this elaborate scheme is going to function?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The answer is 'yes'. The question of a scheme does not arise. There is a certain number already and certain other numbers will be added.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : There is a scheme under the post-war.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The question is: Do Government propose to increase the number of veterinary dispensaries? The answer is 'yes'. The question of scheme does not come in.

* **Maulavi MAHAMMAD ROUFIQUE :** May I know, how many dispensaries are attached to a Veterinary Inspector for the purpose of inspection?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : That is a different matter. The question does not arise.

* **Maulavi ABDUL KHALEQUE AHMED :** How long will Government take to increase the number of dispensaries?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATLIB MAZUMDAR : Our students have been sent out for training, and as they will be coming on, dispensaries will be started and increased.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : With regard to (d), is it not a fact that the Live-stock Department is not confined to the Department of Veterinary but it covers the Department of Agriculture as well?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Order, order. This will stand over till the next day.

The Sylhet Non-Agricultural Urban Areas Tenancy Bill, 1946

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : May I take that it is the sense of the House that the Sylhet Non-Agricultural Urban Areas Tenancy Bill, 1946 be passed in this Session? (*Voices : Yes, Sir.*) If that be so, the House must agree to take up all the subsequent stages of the Bill on the 21st September. In that case, the Amendments, if any, to the Bill as it has emerged from the Select Committee should be submitted before 3 P.M. on the 17th, that is, to-morrow. Hon. Members, I think, have got copies of the Bill a couple of days ago.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : May I also request you, Sir, to give this Bill precedence over other Bills; otherwise, there is no chance of this Bill being passed.

* Speech not corrected.

Discussion *re* business of the day

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : We shall consider that.

As the hon. Members are aware, this is the last day for Private Members' Business and that the important debate on food situation has been continuing since the other day, and as a matter of fact, this will be the third day of the debate. There are some Bills also and the convention is that the Bills are given preference but I shall act according to the desire of the House. If the precedence is to be given to the food debate what should be done with the Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill and the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill, 1946 ?

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Sir, the Bills must come first.

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI : I do not think, Sir, that the Bills will take long time. As regards the Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, I think, all should agree to it.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : That of course will not take much time, but what about the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill ?

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI : Even that I don't think will take a long time. I have no objection to take up that also but we are prepared to abide by the wishes of the Opposition.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : May I enquire how many more Members will take part in the food debate ?

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Sir, I mentioned the other day that five more Members will take part but I have been requested by my Party to participate in the debate. So, including myself the number on this side will be six.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Then how many from Government Benches ?

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Five, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : No body from the European Group ?

Mr. W. R. FAULL : None, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Then we have eleven hon. Members to speak from both sides. The Supply Minister shall also have to give his reply. Does this five on the Government side include the Hon'ble Prime Minister ? I suppose, he is also making a statement.

The Hon'ble Srijut GOPINATH BARDOLOI : As some references have been made with regard to myself I shall make a brief statement and that will not take more than 5 minutes

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Let us then take eleven Members—they will require about 3 hours taking 15 minutes for each and the Hon'ble Minister in-charge will require about an hour. So we require 4 hours. Can we expedite matters and finish all these items of business ? Can the Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition suggest anything ? We have got Bills and we have got the food debate and altogether we are left with hardly three hours more.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, I will seek a little indulgence from you as the Leader of the Opposition. The other day during your absence, although my hon. Friend the Hon'ble Minister for Supply said that he would take 45 minutes, he took full 75 minutes and had elaborately dwelt on the subject. I suggest that you may limit the speeches to 10 minutes, giving the Hon'ble Minister for Supply about half an hour and the same time to me.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: In that case, how many hours do we take ?

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: A little less than 3 hours.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: But then we have got only 3 hours.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: If we do not take much time in the Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill and the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill, I think, we can finish.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: But supposing we do not finish by 4, what is to be done then ?

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: In that case we have to curtail our speeches according to time. I will request some of my hon. Members to cut short their speeches.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Eight Members of the Opposition have already spoken. Of course, I do not want to restrict the number. But is it possible to cut down one or two names ?

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, the matter was considered but more hon. Members wanted to speak because every hon. Member has got some local grievances to ventilate and we have reduced to the minimum. If there be no time, Sir, I will not take part in the debate.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I take it that we shall have to finish it to-day.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Otherwise, there will be no time as this is the last day for non-official business.

The Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1946

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now I pass on to item No.2—The Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1946.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: With your permission, Sir, may I bring one fact to your notice ? You wanted, Sir, to say something about Supplementary Questions.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: But the time is short. I will take about 15 minutes. I do not want to take up the time of the House to-day as we are already short of time. I can take it on some other day or I can achieve the same result by a circular letter. The hon. Members have already got some indication as to what I would say.

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as there is no Amendment to this Bill, I beg to move that the Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1946 be passed. Sir, the other day.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: But the matter was discussed. Can we go to the next stage?

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: I will merely read out the opinions of the Women Organisations and I will not take more than 5 minutes, Sir. It is meet and proper that they should be read.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I will allow you only two minutes.

The Hon'ble Srijut BISHNU RAM MEDHI: Sir, the hon. Member must have received a large number of congratulatory messages from different Associations. (*Laughter.*)

Srijut LAKSHESVAR BOROOAH: Not necessarily, Sir. I shall simply state the opinions of the Assam Mahila Samity, and the Surma Valley Mahila Samity. If time is permitted I will state the opinions of other District Organisations such as Gauhati, Tezpur, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Golaghat and Tinsukia.

This is the resolution, Sir, of the Assam Mahila Samity :

“যেহেতু বৰ্তমান প্রচলিত অসম স্বায়ত্বশাসন আইনৰ বিধান অনুযায়ী কোনো তিবোতাই লাকেল বৰ্ডৰ সভাপদৰ বাবে নিবৰ্বাচনৰ প্ৰাৰ্থী হ'ব নোৱাৰে, সেই আইন তিবোতা সমাজৰ পক্ষে অনিষ্টকৰণ ও অপমানজনক বুলি এই সভাই বিবেচনা কৰে। উক্ত আইনৰ সংশোধনী আইন প্ৰণয়ন কৰিবলৈ অহা জুলাইত বহিব লগা অসম ব্যবস্থাপক সভাত শ্ৰীযুত লক্ষেশ্বৰ বৰুৱা, এম্., এল্., এ ডাক্তৰীয়াক অনুৰোধ জনোৱা হওক।”

Then, Sir, this is a letter received from the Secretary, the Surma Valley Mahila Samity ; relevant portions are as follows :—

“মহাশয়, মহিলাদের নাগরিক অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য সরকারীও স্বায়ত্বশাসন বিভাগে ভোটদানের অধিকার সম্পর্কে মহিলাদের পক্ষে আপনি যে আইন সংশোধনের চেষ্টা করিতেছেন সেজন্য আপনাকে শ্রীহটবাসী মহিলাদের পক্ষ হইতে বিশেষভাবে শ্রীহট মহিলা সমিতির পক্ষ হইতে আপনাকে আমাদের আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ জ্ঞাপন করিতেছি।

আপনার সংশোধনী প্রস্তাব আমরা সম্পূর্ণ সমর্থন করি।”

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. Motion moved :
“That the Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1946, be passed.”

(*After a pause*)

The question is :

“That the Assam Local Self-Government (Amendment) Bill, 1946, be passed.”

The question was adopted.

The Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill, 1946

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Now, we pass on to item No. 3, *i.e.*, further discussion on Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury's Motion that the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill, 1946, be taken into consideration.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think I should make it clear at the outset that I am in full sympathy with the object of the Bill that has been moved by my hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury. In fact, I agree with him that the pay, prospect and the conditions of service of the shop assistants are anything but satisfactory. It is no doubt true, Sir, that they have no fixed hours of work, no fixed holidays and no security of service which are essential for getting efficient service from them. It is therefore highly desirable that some legislation should be enacted for the amelioration of their condition. But, Sir, I think in a matter like this where the question of adjustment of the rights of the employers and employees is involved, Government should come forward with a legislation. Sir, particularly this is so in this case when we remember that in our Province most of the shops are petty shops and the number of shops run by the owners themselves is not small. So, Sir, if any legislation is to be useful to both the parties, if any legislation is to safeguard the interests of both the employers and the employed, I think, it is the Government who are best suited to consider the question in all its aspects. Besides that, Sir, I think in all other Provinces where similar legislation has been undertaken, it has been done at the initiative of Government. Moreover, Sir, I think it is obvious to all that there are difficulties and disadvantages in carrying through such a legislation by a Private Member's Bill. At any rate, I feel, Sir, that for speedy enactment of such legislation Government should take up this matter.

I would, therefore, urge upon Government to take up this matter in their own hands, and bring forward a comprehensive legislation at the next Session of the House. But, Sir, even if Government introduce such a Bill I do not think this Bill should be thrown out at this stage. I think, the Bill has served a very useful purpose; the hon. Mover has drawn the pointed attention of the House to this important matter by way of this Bill, and I think it would be more useful for us as well as for Government if the Bill is circulated for eliciting public opinion. Sir, it might be argued that a similar Bill was introduced a few years ago in this House by Maulavi Badaruddin Ahmed, the then Member of the Legislative Assembly, and that Bill was also circulated for eliciting public opinions. But, if I remember aright, that Bill was more drastic in some of its provisions and the opinions received were mostly from the general public, and not from the employers and the employees who are vitally affected by this legislation. I would therefore suggest that this Bill be circulated for eliciting public opinion, and after receipt of those opinions Government would be pleased to draft a comprehensive Bill and bring it forward at the next Session of the Assembly. I therefore formally move, Sir, that this Bill be circulated for eliciting public opinion by the 31st December, 1946.

Now, Sir, coming to the provisions of the Bill, I do not want to enter into details, but I would like to make a few general observations. Regarding clause 3, 'Definitions,' I think the petty shops and the shops managed by the proprietor or the members of his family should be exempted. Sir, even under the present conditions the petty shops are hardly remunerative, and if these shops are affected by all the provisions of this Bill, I am afraid, the very persons for whom we are going to legislate would be hard-hit. With regard to shops managed by owners, I think they should have some option in observing holidays and other things. With regard to holidays, Sir, I have no objection to one and a half days' holidays in a week, but I do not think that Sunday should be a holiday for the shops,

because Sunday is the day on which all the offices, Courts and schools are closed and that is the day on which the general public get most opportunity to do shopping. If the shops are closed on Sunday, I am afraid, that will not only cause inconvenience to the general public but the businessmen will also lose some of the business. With regard to other holidays, I am afraid, the list seems a bit too long. I have calculated that if the provisions of the Bill are given effect to, about five months will be enjoyed as holidays; that would be rather too liberal and business will suffer. With regard to the hours of work, the Bill provides for 44 hours in a week. But in other provinces it is 54 hours, and under the Indian Factory Act I think, it is more than 44 hours. I, therefore, think that the hours of work should be at par with those obtaining in other provinces.

Then, Sir, with regard to discharge of employees, it has been provided that if a shop-keeper has to discharge one of his employees, he will have to prove his guilt before the Subdivisional or District Shop-Employees Association. I do not think that such an Association exists at all. If this is so, I do not know how this Association will be formed, who will form such Associations and whether Government will have any control over them. I do not think it will be fair that an Association composed solely of the employees should have the final say. Moreover, Sir, I think if these things are referred to such Associations it will cause unnecessary delay. Even if the House think that some such body should determine the matter I think it would be wise to give this right to a small body consisting of independent persons, neither the employers nor the employees.

Then, Sir, with regard to clause 10, it is provided that on completion of his service of eleven months, a shop assistant shall be entitled to two months' salary. If we agree to give him casual leave for 12 days, privilege leave for 15 days, sick leave with full pay for one month and on half pay for the second and third months, I do not see why he should be given two months' salary after 11 months of service. This seems to be more liberal than what is enjoyed even by the Government servants.

Then, Sir, I come to clause 16, sub-clause (2), wherein it is stated "In no case shall a Police Officer, or an officer of the Excise or Forest Department be entrusted with the investigation of any case of contravention of the provisions of this Act and any Rules made thereunder". I think, this sub-clause should be omitted altogether; otherwise this would unnecessarily and unjustly cast a slur on the officers of the Police, Excise and Forest Departments. Therefore, this provision should not find a place in the Bill.

These are all the criticisms I should like to make at this stage, as I do not want to go into details now. If the Bill is circulated we shall be able to get all shades of opinion to consider the provision, more fully and thoroughly. I, therefore, hope that the hon. Mover of the Bill, as well as the Government Member-in-charge of the Bill, will accept my Amendment as well as my suggestion for introduction of a Government Bill on this subject.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill, 1946, be circulated for eliciting public opinion thereon by the 31st December, 1946."

Mr. J. S. R. TELFER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my Group opposed a similar Bill in 1941 on the grounds that it was not workable. As this new Bill shows little improvement over that Bill we regret that we must again oppose it and support the Amendment for circulating the Bill for eliciting public opinion thereon.

The hon. Mover stressed two major issues—holidays and hours of work.

Taking these points separately and holidays firstly, I would submit, Sir, that with 48 full days, 48 half days, 12 days casual leave, 15 days privilege leave and leave on Public Holidays totalling 19 days *plus* half a day's leave on all other holidays and, with a year of only 11 months, the employer would find that in the year, by his count, his assistants would be absent on 172 days out of 365—all on full pay and 28, 30 or 31 of them on double pay.

It has been the avowed intention of the hon. Mover to remove the drudgery. Sir, provisions for leave as above will remove the business and not the drudgery. We cannot see how any shopkeeper could meet his overheads, compete against the small trader, the bazar and the street hawker and still pay an assistant full and double pay for his services on what would work out as alternate days. Further we feel that this lack of service would reflect on the public and the shopkeeper would find clients transferring their trade to small traders with no assistants.

With regard to hours of work, Sir, the hon. Mover did not compare or draw the attention of the House to Acts of other Provinces. For Assam it is suggested that 44 hours should be the figures but I find that in other provinces the provisions are different. The Punjab Act, 1940, provides for 54 hours per week, exclusive of any interval for rest or meals, Bengal, 1940, 56 hours per week and Sind, 1940, 54 hours per week. All these have a daily spread-over of 12 or 14 hours.

Even in Calcutta, Sir, the general public are inconvenienced and the pavement stall and hawker thrive at the expense of the shopkeeper. How much more vulnerable would the shopkeepers of Assam, therefore, become with even shorter hours for trade.

However, Sir, we have pleasure in supporting the Amendment for circulation of the Bill for eliciting public opinion thereon and we trust that Government should consider carrying out their undertaking to introduce a Bill of their own drafting from the information thus received.

Srijut MOTIRAM BORA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have carefully gone through the provisions of this Bill and I have also considered them with some amount of care and attention. But, Sir, I cannot see my way to give an unqualified support to this Bill. Sir, this is a new measure, a new enactment, which is sought to be introduced in a backward province like Assam where trade and commerce are not in a first class state. That being so, Sir, instead of helping the people, which this Bill aims at, it may create unnecessary complications in normal channels of trade and commerce. It is therefore, Sir, only desirable that public opinion should be consulted before this measure is adopted by this House. For, after all most of us in this House are unconnected with trade and commerce. It is only fair that in this matter we should be guided by the opinion of the people who are connected with trade and commerce. We have several Associations in the country; we have also got some Chambers of Commerce. By this measure, Sir, it is those people who are likely to be hit first—the people connected with trade and commerce—who should be given the opportunity to express their opinion and give their suggestion in regard to this Bill. Therefore, Sir, I think it is in the fitness of things that this Bill should be circulated for eliciting public opinion thereon. After all, Sir, there is no hurry in the matter and also there is no urgency in it. When we could have waited so long, we can safely wait a few months more. That is the reason why, Sir, I would request the hon. Mover of this Bill to agree to circulate the same for public opinion.

Going through the provisions of the Bill, Sir, we find that the Bill is not free from defects.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I will interrupt the hon. Member for a moment.

Does the hon. Mover of this Bill accept the Amendment.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: No, Sir.

Srijut MOTIRAM BORA: Now, Sir, if you look into the provisions of the Bill, you will find that this Bill is not free from defects. There are a lot of defects in it. Of course, I will not take time of the House by dilating on all these defects but, Sir I will just cite one instance, *viz.*, penal provisions of the Bill. Sir, provisions have been made to award punishment to persons who violate the provisions of this Bill. In making these provisions the hon. Mover of the Bill has not considered the cases of Joint and Partnership concerns. In this Province there are a lot of Marwari Firms and most of the hon. Members know that these firms are run by their Gomasthas. The actual owners live in distant places like Rajputana and other far off places. It is sometimes very difficult to ascertain the names of these persons and there will be difficulties in awarding punishment to such persons if violations are made by persons connected with these firms. Then, Sir, there are a lot of Joint Stock and partnership Firms and in awarding punishment the same difficulties will crop up. So it seems, Sir, that this Bill requires redrafting to make it free from numerous defects. There are many Bar Associations in the Province and as they are well versed and qualified to give opinions, their opinions ought to have been taken by the Mover. While we will be discussing the Bill later on we will be very much benefited by the suggestions and advice of the Bar Associations and people who are in the trade, provided we can afford to wait a little further.

With these words, Sir, I submit that the Bill be sent for circulation and I support Mr. Sen for his Amendment that the Bill be sent for eliciting public opinion.

Maulavi NASIR-UD-DIN AHMED: Sir, I rise to support the consideration Motion of the Bill brought by my hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Choudhury and at the same time I oppose the Amendment for sending the Bill for circulation. Three hon. Members have supported the Amendment for sending the Bill for circulation and their argument is that by this measure the public will get a chance to be consulted and to give their opinions. Hon. Mr. Sen is an old Member of this House. He knows that Maulavi Badaruddin Ahmed, who was a Member of the last Assembly, brought a Shop Assistants' Relief Bill and the Bill was sent for circulation for eliciting public opinions. Many traders and merchant associations gave opinions thereon and, as far as my information goes, majority of them were in favour of that Bill. So, Sir, I find that if there was any necessity for sending the Bill for circulation it was already done. One hon. Member admits that this measure is long over due. In view of this consideration, I think, we should not waste any more time on this matter. My hon. Friend Mr. Sen has pointed out some defects in this Bill. But I am definite that these defects may be removed if they are to be removed at all, by bringing in Amendments on the floor of the House, and not by sending the Bill for circulation for eliciting public opinion. As the shop assistants are in a helpless condition they require some immediate measure for their protection and security in their service. If we accept the Amendment for sending the Bill for circulation it will mean a device to shelve this all important Bill for an indefinite period.

With these few words, Sir, I oppose the Amendment for sending the Bill for circulation and support the original Motion.

Maulavi M. IDRIS ALI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to support the Motion that has been moved by hon. Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury. The condition of

the shop-employees in our Province is very miserable. They work from sun-rise to late in the night at a very meagre salary which is not sufficient even for the maintenance of a single person, not to speak of a family. They are mostly over-worked and scarcely enjoy any rest. Thus they ruin their health to satisfy the owners. What is worse there is practically no security of their service. We know of instances where after faithful service over twelve years, employees have been discharged at a moment's notice by the *malik*. We have seen instances where the owners have carried on with their extensive trade in black-marketing and profiteering through the shop assistants. It is these unfortunate persons who have been molested and sent to jail while the Bank balance of the owners has ever increased. Yet on a slight protest the shop assistants have been chucked out of their job. This has been their sad lot everywhere.

I submit, Sir, that the time has come when we should realise that the shop assistants form an important part of the society, and as such the prosperity of the country at large depends to a great extent to the improvement of the lot of these employees. Should we not allow them the bare rights of living as human beings? The present Bill is a modest endeavour in this direction.

The hon. Members are already aware that in the neighbouring Province of Bengal, a similar Bill has already been passed and to a large measure the standard of living has improved in that Province. The shop assistants are better off there at present than they were a few years ago. The Bill under discussion has followed the same line and we should have no hesitation in passing this Bill. It will surely remove a very long-felt want and give adequate relief to a stricken section of the people.

The present communal tension and mutual distrust prevailing in the country is an additional ground for passing this Bill as quickly as possible. Reports are already pouring in that the Muslim employees of Hindu shops and *vice-versa* are daily being discharged though they rendered meritorious service in the past. Thus they are being thrown out of employment with no fault of theirs. The present Bill, if passed, will give sufficient security to these employees.

With these words, Sir, I beg to support the Bill.

Maulavi Dewan TAIMUR RAZA CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to speak a few words on the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill introduced by Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury. It has already been mentioned on the floor of this hon. House that the Province of Bengal has got the necessary legislation on the subject and as a matter of fact it has been in operation there for the last four years. The condition of shop assistants in the Province is no better than that of Bengal and in some of our towns it is even worse. In the circumstances no more time can be lost in enacting the necessary legislation.

Sir, at the present moment the shop assistants are living in a most deplorable condition. They are the lowest paid of all employees in the country. Their average pay does not exceed more than a few rupees. Yet they live in a most uncertain state. They are daily being dismissed at a moment's notice by the owner of the shop though they are the main source of the prosperity of the shop. We have heard of instances where they have been removed at the option of the employers without any fault on their part. We have heard of cases where the shop assistants have been removed because they declined to carry on with black-marketing and the illegal tactics of the owners. It is they who have suffered for Hajat and courted jail. And all the while the business of the owner has prospered. During the boom days of the war, they have helped to earn thousands, but their pay and prospects of life have remained the same. They are still pinning in poverty and living in an atmosphere of insecurity.

Sir, at the present moment there is no regulation for regulating the working hours of these employees. As a matter of fact they are required to work almost for the whole day and also late in the night. Thus by over-work they are ruining their health and fast losing their vitality. Clause 6(2) of the Bill seeks to limit the working hours to 44 per week. This no doubt will give a much needed relief to these over-worked employees. By clause 7 the Bill intends to confer on them some kind of security of their services.

I submit, Sir, it is a very beneficial measure intended for the relief of the poor. A Government which claims to be the Government of the poor ought to support it. With these words, Sir, I beg to support the Bill.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAMNATH DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am in agreement both with the Mover of the previous Motion as well as the Mover of the present Amendment, to say that the shop assistants of Assam do require certain relief and for that an Act is necessary and that it should also be done as early as possible. But, Sir, this Bill goes far beyond the provisions of similar enactments in some other Provinces of India and also contains certain principles for which it cannot be accepted by us. So, Sir, I cannot accept the previous Motion which has been moved. But, I feel that if public opinion is sought for on the Bill, it may help us for our own Bill. So I am in favour of the present Amendment, that is, the Bill be circulated for eliciting public opinion.

Hon. Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen has pointed out that this Bill has gone beyond the provisions of any other Bills in India. We are aware of similar Bills in Bombay, Sind, and in Bengal, but nowhere the hours of work have been so reduced as we find in the present Bill. In Sind and Bombay the period of work is 9½ hours a day, and 52 hours a week. In Bengal also we find that the period of work is 10 hours a day and 56 hours a week. But in this Bill we find 8 hours a day and 44 hours a week. The hon. Mover of this Bill at the time of moving his Motion said that no body should argue the consideration of this Bill, because, he brought this Bill in the line of Bengal Act. Sir, I will presently show that there are certain provisions in the Bill which are not obtainable in the Bengal Act, and these provisions contain certain principles which we cannot accept, and therefore, Sir, I am against the Mover of the original Motion and in favour of the present Amendment for circulation of the Bill for eliciting public opinion.

Sir, I think, I would be doing well to show in what way he has gone beyond the provisions of the Bengal Act. I am grateful to say that to some extent my burden has been relieved by my hon. Friend, Mr. Sen and also by my hon. European Friend, Mr. Telfer who have brought out the defects in the provisions of this Bill. In the first place I would point out to the hon. Mover of the original Motion that he was not right to say that this Bill was similar to the Act of Bengal. I will point out those provisions added by him in this Bill in support of my argument. He has brought in a new provision in clause 7(1). This clause, is a new one—which is not to be found in the Bengal Act. I fully agree with the points raised against this provision by my Friend hon. Mr. Sen.

Secondly, Sir, he has brought in this Bill, a new provision in clause 8(3) for sick leave. This is also not found in the Act of Bengal. I need not narrate the details, because these provisions were dealt with by Mr. Sen, and also by Mr. Telfer in the House.

Thirdly, Sir, there is another provision in clause 10. This clause 10 says "The year of the service of a shop assistant shall be counted by 11 months." This is also not found in the Act of Bengal, and defects of which also have already been narrated by my Friend hon. Mr. Sen,

Then again, Sir, under clause 16 the investigation is left to the hon. Members of the Legislature or the members of the Local Bodies. Whether that will be a practicable proposition or whether that will be a burden fitting to the dignity of the hon. Members of this House, is known to the hon. Members of the House very well.

The hon. Mover of the original Motion should have also defined what does he mean by 'shop owner' in clause 7(1). Perhaps it is known to the hon. Members of this House that there are many shops in Assam the owners of which do not remain in their shops; most of the Marwari Firms are managed by managers or by men who remain in charge and as such to give effect to the intention of this provision, the Mover should have defined the words 'shop owner'.

He has added these provisions and these provisions cannot be accepted by us as they stand at present. So, I am opposed to the Motion for consideration. At the same time when I have admitted that some relief should be given to the shop assistants and an enactment is necessary for this purpose, I shall try to bring in a Bill of our own if possible in the next Session of the Assembly.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: I have got a right of reply, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: If the hon. Member wants to exercise his right, he can do so. But I was thinking of economising the time.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: I will take only five minutes, Sir. The Hon'ble Minister has taken 20 minutes already.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I frankly admit that I am shocked by the attitude taken by the hon. Members behind the Treasury Benches. They have given sufficient indication of the Government policy and the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge has expressed his opinion that he cannot accept my Motion for consideration of the Bill in this Session of the Assembly. It is unfortunate, Sir, that a Government which styles itself as the Government of the people should take this attitude towards a Bill which seeks to ameliorate the condition of the hard-stricken shop assistants.

Sir, I do also admit that I have been shocked but I am not surprised. This is what we expected. Can they deny in their heart of hearts that they are the representatives of the vested interests? Can they deny that many of them are directly or indirectly connected with the exploitation which this Bill seeks to redeem? How many of them have sunk their capital in the business—a common man in the street may ask? They have appeared in their true colour and bare nakedness. I am not going to be deceived by their lip sympathy with the poor shop assistants. I am already acquainted with their hypocritical outburst. I know the real aim underlying the Amendment for circulation. They want to retard the progress of the Bill so that the much needed relief may be delayed as far as possible. They consider this Bill as detrimental to their own interest.

The Hon'ble Minister has not given us any exact time when he will be able to come with his Bill—

(A voice: in the next Session)

(A counter voice: if possible).

The Party in power is in a mad state of intoxication and they do not care how they trample under foot the public opinion in Assam. I want to sound a note of warning that the day of reckoning will not be long to come.

(Hear, hear). Sir, it has been whispered into my ears that the Congress Party have chosen to oppose this Bill as it has been sponsored by a Member of the Muslim League Party. We know of the Muslim League-phobia of the Congress Government. But we did not know that it extended to the sphere where the welfare of the poor and the down-trodden was concerned. If it be so we do not know what value we should assign to the statement of their Hon. Leader wherein he made a fervent appeal to the Opposition to extend their hand of co-operation on the floor of this House. This is no doubt an example how they want to co-operate.

As for the Amendment for circulation, is there any necessity at all? Was not the self-same Bill circulated once before? Is it not a fact that the public expressed their opinion over-whelmingly in its favour? Then, why this strategy?

For arguments' sake, let me concede that there are minor defects in the Bill. Could not those be rectified by referring the Bill to a Select Committee? The real thing is that they do not want this legislation on the subject should be enacted as this will vitally affect the vested interests that they represent. The hon. Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen has come forward with an Amendment for circulation. But he has also admitted that the Bill was circulated three years back.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: Sir, the Bill that was introduced three years back is not the same as the present one. That was a Bill moved by Maulavi Badaruddin Ahmed.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: For the information of hon. Mr. Sen I may say that the Bill of Maulavi Badaruddin Ahmed was not exactly similar. That was more stringent than the present Bill. Is it not a fact that the public expressed over-whelmingly their opinion in favour of that Bill? Sir, if the owners of the shops choose to refuse to express their opinion, it was not our fault. They hesitated what course they were to follow. They were conscious of their own responsibility. In these circumstances, we do not understand the strategy of the Congress Benches. If my hon. Friends were sincere, they could come forward with an Amendment that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee. But this they did not do. The real thing is that they do not want the legislation on the subject, as it will vitally affect their own interest.

Sir, my hon. Friend Mr. Kamini Kumar Sen made a mistake when he said that at the instance of the Bengal Government such a Bill was introduced in the Bengal Assembly. It is not a fact. That Bill was introduced in the Upper Chamber at the instance of Mr. Humayun Kabir and ultimately it came into law.

Sir, for the information of my hon. Friends in the European Group, I may say that Mr. Whittaker raised objection to the previous Bill as the definition of "shop" was not included in the body of the Bill, but in the present case that objection has been removed.

As regards the hours of work, much has been said and it is no doubt a controversial point. It has been admitted internationally that no labourer should work for more than 8 hours per day and this has been accepted by all the civilised nations of the world. So, I do not commit any new crime by reducing the hours to 44 hours per week. Sir, some hon. Members have been surprised that an employee after 11 months' service will get 12 months' pay. What is intended is one month's bonus should be paid to the poor employee after the expiry of one year. The Hon'ble Minister-in-charge has pointed out that the definition of the word "shop-owner" is not included in the Bill.

But I do contend that it is not necessary in a Bill of this type. I am sorry, Sir, I cannot accept the Amendment for circulation and I stick to my original Motion that the Bill be taken into consideration.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS: Have I got a right of reply, Sir ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister has got a right to reply.

The Hon'ble Srijut RAM NATH DAS: Sir, my hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury has insinuated that we have not accepted his Motion simply because the Bill has been brought by a Member of the Muslim League Party. May I inform him that when a Bill of this nature was brought by our Friend Maulavi Badaruddin Ahmed, in 1941, who was a Member of the then Assembly and also a Member of the Muslim League Party, was it not opposed by the then Government—a League Government ? When that Government could oppose such a Bill, is it proper to cast such insinuation that this Government opposes this Bill simply because it has been brought by a Member of the Muslim League Party ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The time is up. I can put the question.

The question is :

“That the Assam Shop Assistants' Relief Bill, 1946, be circulated for eliciting public opinion by 31st December, 1946.”

(A division was claimed at first but it was not pressed).

The question was adopted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think the other Motion falls through.

Adjournment

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

(After lunch).

Discussion *Re* : raising a Debate under Assembly Rule 40.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I am glad to be able to inform the hon. Members of the House that hon. Babu Purnendu Kishore Sen Gupta informed me a minute ago that he waives that debate proposed to be held at 4-0' clock because we are in the midst of the food debate which includes the subject on which he wanted to raise his debate under rule 40 of the Assembly Rules. Therefore, we shall have time after 4 o'clock also. What I propose to do is to allow the hon. Members to speak till 3-45 P.M. At 3-45 sharp I propose to call upon the Leader of the Opposition to make a statement, if he wants to and at 4 sharp, I shall call upon the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Supply to give the reply. Therefore, I shall request the hon. Members' co-operation to finish their speeches by 3-45 P.M. Allowing 15 minutes to each we can have seven speakers taking part in this debate (*Voices* :—But there are eleven speakers,

Sir). But the time is insufficient. (At this stage the Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition came in). Perhaps the Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition did not hear what I said.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Babu Purnendu Kishore Sen Gupta has waived his right to raise a discussion under Assembly rule 40. So what I propose to do is that all the hon. Members will finish their speeches by 3-45 P.M. and at 3-45 I will request the Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition to make a statement, if he wants to and at 4 o'clock I propose to call upon the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Supply to make his final reply.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, 15 minutes for me will be too short. We allowed enormous latitude to the Hon'ble Minister for Supply. He spoke for 75 minutes the other day.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: How long will you take ?

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I think, I will require half an hour.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Then I shall call upon the Hon'ble Minister for Supply at 4-15 and we shall sit till 5.

(At this stage Maulavi Nasir-ud-Din Ahmed stood up).

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I think, it will be convenient if I can have the names of the Members of the respective parties who wish to take part in the debate.

Motion *Re*: the Food situation in the Province

Maulavi NASIR-UD-DIN AHMED: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the 12th probably we had the privilege of listening to the lengthy speech of the Hon'ble Supply Minister in which he genuinely tried to depict a picture of the present food position of our Province and I should admit that he did it with a considerable amount of success. In any food debate, Sir, the rice and paddy, particularly rice being the staple food of our people and secondly it being the main source of income of our cultivators, play an important part in the economic life of the Province. I agree with the Hon'ble Supply Minister that it should have our first consideration. We may approach this rice and paddy question from procurement and supply view point. In the matter of procurement, Sir, if I remember aright, the Hon'ble Minister for Supply did not throw much light with regard to Surma Valley. He simply said that the question of the Surma Valley was quite different, thereby probably meaning that the Surma Valley is a deficit area. It may be, Sir, that the Surma Valley, as a whole, is a deficit area but in some places in the Surma Valley there are surplus areas, for instance, I may say that in our Habiganj Subdivision Chunarughat thana area is a surplus area. If there is a surplus area, the question of procurement becomes necessary. In this respect, Sir, in the last Budget Session on the food debate, I definitely suggested that the Government should try to procure paddy direct from the producers through their officers, preferably through the officers of the Education Department. Now, Sir, I learn that the Government has decided to recall all the Education Department officers perhaps on the ground that Education in the Province is suffering

due to their absence. Here, Sir, I see that by this action of Government, first of all we shall be deprived of the services of some officers who acquired some experience in the line of procurement and enforcement and secondly this procurement and supply of paddy and rice will be entrusted to a set of war quality temporary officers with no experience of the work of the Department in the past. So they will surely take some time to gather experience in this branch of work and with the spirit of now or never and to that extent the public will suffer. Here I am not unmindful of the questionable advantage of putting some of our own people in this Department. But that we are going to do at the risk of jeopardising the whole system of procurement and enforcement.

Then, Sir, as regards the Rice Control Department, many other hon. Members pointedly have drawn the attention of the Government that this Rice Control Department is creating much difficulties in the way of *bonafide* consumers. In the boarder areas, Sir, the black-marketers and the profiteers, as I could gather, are in understanding with this Department and if I cite an instance. I think, I shall be able to convince the hon. Members the truth of my contention. A checker drawing a monthly pay of Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per month can afford to spend Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 in tea stalls, cigarettes and other expenses. How does it become possible unless this Department has a good truck with black-marketers and profiteers in the boarder areas? And only to maintain a show of their activity and existence they unnecessarily harass innocent consumers.

Then, Sir, as regards the position of the Habiganj Subdivision, I can definitely say—although I have stated that Chunarughat is a surplus area—that the whole low-lying area of the Habiganj Subdivision, particularly the Madhabpur and Lakhai thanas are deficit areas, and I can say with great amount of certainty that for the full month of Aswin and up to 15th of Kartick 90 to 95 per cent. of the population in these areas will have to depend on outside supply for their daily consumption of rice. Here I would earnestly request the Hon'ble Supply Minister to stock sufficient rice and paddy so that he can sufficiently meet the demand of these localities in their critical days.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: May I know which particular area the hon. Member is referring to?

Maulavi NASIR-UD-DIN AHMED: I refer generally to the whole low-lying area of the Habiganj Subdivision, particularly the Madhabpur and Lakhai thanas, Sir.

Then, Sir, regarding cloth much has been said and the Hon'ble Supply Minister admitted that there is scarcity. I would point out only one anomaly in the distribution. Government has allotted 15 yards of cloth per adult for every six months in the urban areas, whereas the rural population has been given 5 yards for every adult for every six months. I think, that is a very inequitable distribution. Of course, I admit that there is some originality and novelty of thinking in making three rural people equal to one urban adult, but we hold that this is a great injustice to the rural people. Here also I expect the Hon'ble Minister will take some early steps, so that this inequity and injustice may be removed without further delay.

As regards *atta* and flour, generally the Government ration-getters, be he a peon, a chaprasi or an orderly, get fixed quantities of *atta* whereas the *bonafide* consumers in the mofussil towns and villages who take at least one meal at night with *atta* do not get any supply. I draw the attention of the Hon'ble Supply Minister to this and request him to see if some stock from the *atta* ration of the subordinate officers who are not habitually *atta* eaters can be taken to meet the necessities of the public. Then, again, in the matter of sugar, the rule probably

is that Government officials in rural areas get three *powas* of sugar per head per month, but no sugar has been allotted for any adult in the rural areas; that is entirely inequitable. I would draw the attention of the Hon'ble Supply Minister to this also to make suitable arrangement for supply of sugar to rural people.

Then, Sir, before I resume my seat I should say that the Hon'ble Supply Minister while he was a Member of the Opposition was a regular champion of popular grievances, and at times he was very uncharitable towards the previous Government. Now while he is in Office for a pretty long time, I should remind him that public grievances are there where they were at that time, and I hope he will earnestly try to remove these grievances which are best known to him. If he is able to do so, he will earn the gratitude of the suffering public.

With these few words, Sir, I support the Motion.

Babu PURNENDU KISORE SEN GUPTA: মাননীয় মুখপাত্র

মহোদয়, আজকে যেজন্য আমাকে কিছু বলতে হচ্ছে তা প্রথমতঃ মাননীয় মৌলবী খালেক সাহেব আমার সম্পর্কে যা বলেছেন, তার উত্তরে এবং দ্বিতীয়তঃ চা বাগান মজুরদের খাদ্য সমস্যা সম্পর্কে বাহার জন্য ৪টার পরে আলোচনা হওয়ার কথা ছিল। প্রথমতঃ আমার ইহাই বক্তব্য যে আমি সুনামগঞ্জ গিয়েছি সত্য কিন্তু সেখানে গবর্ণমেন্ট আমাকে পাঠান নাই এবং গবর্ণমেন্টের তরফ থেকে এখন পর্যন্ত কোন কিছু পাই ও নাই। আমাদের Premier অথবা Leader ঘূর্ণীবাত্যার পরে আমাকে সেখানে যেয়ে চরকা প্রচলনের দ্বারা কংগ্রেসের গঠনমূলক কার্যকে সার্থক করিয়া তুলিবার জন্য আদেশ দেন। তাঁহার আদেশে সেখানে গিয়ে আমি Relief এর কাজ আরম্ভ করি এবং সে কাজে Public donation দ্বারা গঠিত private fund থেকে আমি প্রায় দুই হাজার টাকা খরচ করেছি। দ্বিতীয়তঃ সেখানে যাওয়ার পর আমাকে ধানভানা, জালবুনা ইত্যাদি কাজও আরম্ভ করিতে হইয়াছে। ঐ কাজ আমি সুনামগঞ্জ কংগ্রেস রিলিফ কমিটির মারফতে করিতেছি। আমার সময়ের অভাব হেতু লৌকিকতার জন্য স্থানীয় ভদ্রলোকদের সহিত দেখা করতে পারিনি বলে আমার ক্রটি স্বীকার করছি। সুনামগঞ্জ গিয়ে খালেক সাহেব প্রভৃতি আমার এখানকার সহযোগীদের সহিত দেখা সাক্ষাৎ করিয়া সৌজন্য প্রকাশ করতে পারিনি বলে যদি কোন দোষ হয়ে থাকে সে দোষকে মানিয়া নিতেছি ও ক্রটি স্বীকার করছি। এই কৈফিয়ত ছাড়া আর কিছু দিবার নাই। আমি এ পর্যন্ত ৪১৫ বার সুনামগঞ্জের গ্রামাঞ্চলে যেয়ে রিলিফের কাজ করে এসেছি এবং খালেক সাহেবের constituency গাংলাজুর প্রভৃতি অঞ্চলে গিয়েও সেখানকার অবস্থা দেখে তার প্রতিকারের যথাসাধ্য ব্যবস্থা করে এসেছি। Relief Committee সকলের জন্যই খোলা আছে বলেই জানি, আমিও তাতে যোগ দিয়েছি এবং খালেক সাহেব ও তাতে যোগ দান করে Relief এর কাজ করতে পারেন। ইহাতে বাধা পাইবার কোন কারণ দেখি না।

এছাড়া general food debate সম্বন্ধে আমার বক্তব্য এই—আমাদের প্রদেশে আমদানী হয় বিভিন্ন বিদেশ থেকে—বিশেষতঃ United Province, Central Province এবং Bihar থেকে। সেসব স্থান হইতে জিনিষ আনার জন্য আমাদের Government এর তরফ থেকে dealers নিযুক্ত করেছেন কিন্তু তাদের অনেক অসুবিধা ভোগ করতে হয়, যার ফলে আমদানী কাজ ঠিক মত হচ্ছে না। এই যে আমদানী অথাৎ বাহিরের জিনিষ যা আসে তা ঠিক ঠিক মত পাইবার জন্য বোম্বাইয়ের ন্যায় সে সমস্ত স্থানে আমাদের প্রদেশের পক্ষ থেকে Government এর কর্মচারী থাকা প্রয়োজন। বোম্বাইএ আমাদের তরফের কর্মচারী আছেন এবং অনেক

অসুবিধা দূর করতে চেষ্টা করছেন। তাই আমার suggestion এই যে অন্যান্য জায়গায়ও আমাদের Government এর প্রতিনিধি রাখলে যে সমস্ত অসুবিধার ফলে জিনিষটা তাড়াতাড়ী আসতে পারেনা সেটা দূর করতে পারবেন এবং আমাদের আমদানীর কাজও ভাল হবে।

আর একটা জিনিষ এই যে সুনামগঞ্জ বোর প্রধান স্থান। সেখান থেকে বর্তমানে অনেক ধান বিদেশে চলে যাচ্ছে এবং Black Market এ বিক্রী হচ্ছে। আমাদের এখানে বোর ধানের দর ৪১১০ মণ। বাংলার সব জায়গার খবর আমি জানি না তবে সেদিনও আমি খবর পেলাম ঢাকায় নাকি চাউল ২৭ টাকা মণ বিক্রী হচ্ছে। তাই এখানে চাউলের দাম যদি ৯ হয় তাহলে বাহিরে যে অনেক ধান রপ্তানী হবে তাতে সন্দেহ থাকতে পারেনা। এবং প্রকৃতপক্ষে প্রচুর ধান সুনামগঞ্জ এলাকা হইতে বাহির হইয়া যাইতেছে। কারণ মণ প্রতি ১০৯ খরচ করিয়াও যদি বাংলাতে চাউল বা ধান যায় তবুও লাভ থাকে। Government Officer যারা সেখানে আছেন তারাও ইহার সঙ্গে জড়িত আছেন তবে তাদের তরফ থেকেও বলবার আছে যে তাহাদের তগিদ দেওয়া সম্ভবও নাকি কোনরূপ অস্ত্রশস্ত্র বা দ্রুতগামী যান বাহন অর্থাৎ লঞ্চ দেওয়া হয় নাই। তাই এই সমস্ত officer বাতে অত্যাধিক সজ্জিত থাকে এবং দ্রুতগামী যান বাহন পায় সেদিকে আমি গবর্ণমেন্টের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করছি। সুনামগঞ্জ থেকে প্রচুর ধান চলে যাচ্ছে সেটাকে check করতে হবে। আমি আজও সুনামগঞ্জ থেকে চিঠি পেয়েছি যে গ্রামের লোক মরিয়া হইয়া দিন যাপন করিতেছে। বিধবস্ত অঞ্চলের লোকদের খায় খাবার নাই, অথচ তাদের চোখের সামনে প্রচুর ধান চলে যেতে দেখে তারা অস্থির হয়ে উঠছে। অবিলম্বে ইহার প্রতিকার করে ক্ষুধিত জনসাধারণের প্রয়োজন মিটাতে না পারলে ব্যাপক লুটতরাজ ও খুন ইত্যাদি হওয়ার যথেষ্ট সম্ভাবনা আছে। সরকারের এদিকে বিশেষ দৃষ্টি আবশ্যিক।

General food discussion সম্বন্ধে আর একটা বিষয়ে আমি সমস্ত Member এর দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করছি। Food distribution problem solve করার জন্য Vigilance Committee গুলির কতকগুলি সুবিধা করে দেওয়া নিতান্ত প্রয়োজন। তাদের কাজ এত বেশী যে তারা সমস্ত দিক কুলিয়ে উঠতে পারছে না। তাদের নিজ নিজ এলাকার লোক সংখ্যার হিসাব রাখতে হয়, রেজেষ্টারী করে কোন মাসে কে কত কাপড় নিল তার হিসাব রাখতে হয় এবং সকলের অভাব অভিযোগের বিষয় শুনতে হয়। এজন্য তাদের অনেক খরচ আছে। সে সকল ব্যবস্থা সরকারকে করেদিতে হবে। দ্বিতীয়তঃ Liaison Committee কে Government Supply দিয়ে সব সময় সন্তুষ্ট রাখতে হবে। কারণ ইহা ছাড়া এই সব Liaison Committee গুলি Vigilance Committee গুলির চাহিদা মিটিয়ে তাদের সহিত সংযোগ রাখতে পারবে না। বর্তমানে Liaison Committee এর যে Non-Official Joint Secretary আছেন তার উপর গুরু দায়িত্ব ভার দেওয়া হইয়াছে। মহকুমার সমস্ত Vigilance Committee র সহিত যোগাযোগ তাকে রাখতে হবে। এজন্য তাকে বিভিন্ন সার্কেলে পরিভ্রমণও করতে হবে; এতে অনেক খরচ আছে এবং Joint Secretary কে অনেক খাটতে হবে। তাই আমার মনে হয় Liaison Committee এর Joint Secretary Non-official ত থাকিবেনই। তাহার whole-time worker হওয়া আবশ্যিক এবং তাহার জন্য উপযুক্ত ভাতা বা Travelling allowance দেবার বন্দোবস্ত করতে হবে। ইহা না হইলে গবর্ণমেন্টের বর্তমান সরবরাহে যে ত্রুটি হচ্ছে সেটা থেকে যাবে এর ফলে Government এর সরবরাহ নীতি fail করবে। এদিকেও আমি Government এর বিশেষ দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করছি।

চাবাগানের কাপড়ের অভাব সম্বন্ধে অন্ততঃ আমাদের মহকুমাতে কোন কথা উঠতে পারে না কারণ সেখানে চাবাগানগুলি মোট quota ১৮ per cent. এর স্থলে ২১ per cent. নিয়েছে।

এরপর food question সম্বন্ধে যে debate হওয়ার কথা সেটা হচ্ছে চাবাগানের বিষয় নিয়ে। Indian Tea Association এর চাবাগানের মজুরদের সমস্ত প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিষ concession rate এ সরবরাহ করবার কথা সত্ত্বেও চাবাগানের মজুরদের মজুরী না বাড়িয়ে যুদ্ধের পূর্বের প্রচলিত মজুরীই বহাল রাখা হয়েছে। কিন্তু কার্যতঃ দেখা যাচ্ছে তা ঠিক ঠিক সমস্ত বাগানে পালন হচ্ছে না। নিত্য প্রয়োজনীয় অনেক কিছু তাদের concession rate এ দেওয়া হচ্ছে না। চাউল, ডাইল, লবণ, তেল মাত্র দেওয়া হয়। মাঝে মাঝে আটা ও গুড় পায় কিন্তু তরকারি, মাছ, মসলা ইত্যাদি খাদ্য এবং কাপড় ইত্যাদি দেওয়া হয় না। তাই তারা এই সমস্ত জিনিষ market rate এ বা black market থেকে কিনছে। কিন্তু মজুরদের যে মজুরী দেওয়া হয় তাতে তারা black market rate এ সমস্ত জিনিষ কিনতে না পেয়ে সেসব ছাড়াই কালাতিপাত করছে। মজুররা তাদের pre-war rate এ সমস্ত প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিষ দিবার জন্য দাবী করে আসছে।

দ্বিতীয়তঃ Government population basis এ বাগান গুলিকে সমস্ত জিনিষ supply করে থাকেন কাজেই মজুররা যাতে সেই অনুপাতে সমস্ত জিনিষ পায়, তার ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে। চা বাগান গুলিতে Ration প্রথা ভাল নয় এবং distribution equitable হচ্ছে না। তার পর সবচেয়ে বড় কথা হল Ration কাটার বিষয়। কাজে একদিন গড় হাজির হলে সাধারণতঃ কিছু করা হয়না। কিন্তু দুদিন absent থাকলে ২ দিনের Ration বন্ধ করে দেওয়াই হয় এবং মাঝে মাঝে ২ দিন absent থাকলে সম্পূর্ণ সপ্তাহের Ration ই বন্ধ করে দেওয়া হয়। এর বেশী absent থাকলে সমস্ত family র Ration বন্ধ করে দেওয়া হয়। যারা বাগানে থাকে অথচ সেখানে কাজ করে না বা করিতে পারে না তাদের রসদও দেওয়া হয় না। এটা কেবল অনুমানের কথা নয়। ইদানিং Assistant Labour Commissioner ভাড়াউরা ও আম্র বাগানে এসব অভিযোগের তদন্ত করতে যান। সে সময় আমি এবং শ্রী যুক্ত জীবন সাওতাল, এম-এল-এ ও উপস্থিত ছিলাম। South Sylhet এর Subdivisional Officer ও তদন্ত কালে উপস্থিত ছিলেন। সেখানে এসমস্ত বিষয়ের প্রমাণ পাওয়া গেছে এবং ঐ সার্কেলের Chairman Mr. R. Leask একথা স্বীকারও করেছেন। এই প্রকারের রেশন কাটার প্রথা সর্বত্রই প্রচলিত। এখন প্রশ্ন হল, বাগান গুলি, তাদের লোকসংখ্যার অনুপাতে Government এর নিকট হতে রসদ আদায় করেন এবং বাগানের লোক যদি বাগানে তাদের রসদ না পায় তবে তা পাবে কোথায়? গ্রামাঞ্চলে যে সমস্ত জিনিষ দেওয়া হয় তা সার্কেলের অধিবাসীদের লোক সংখ্যার অনুপাতেই যায় এবং ঐ সার্কেলের Vigilance কমিটি বাগানের লোককে কোন Ration দিতে পারে না। এর ফলে বাগানের অধিবাসী বাগানে তাদের রসদ না পেয়ে উপবাসী থাকছে। বিশেষ করে যারা বৃদ্ধ ও রুগ্ন কোন কাজ করতে পারে না তাদের বিপদই সবচেয়ে বেশী। এর ফলে চা বাগান গুলিতে mortality বেড়ে যাচ্ছে কারণ সেখানে mal nutrition হচ্ছে। চা বাগান গুলিতে যে mal nutrition হচ্ছে তা Dr. Terrell, M. L. A. ও Dr. Anderson প্রভৃতি Medical Officer গণ ও স্বীকার করেছেন। তারা

যথোপযুক্তভাবে খাদ্যদ্রব্য বিলি ব্যবস্থা করার জন্য অনুরোধ করেছেন। ইদানিং Surma Valley এর Indian Tea Association এর ১৯৪৪ সনের এপ্রিল মাসের general committee এর meeting সম্পর্কে একটি সার্কুলার দেখার সুযোগ হয়েছিল। তাতে Dr. Terrell প্রভৃতির সুপারিশের কথা জানতে পাই। তারা মজুরদের জন্য খাদ্য দ্রব্যের যে scale করেছেন এবং Indian Tea Association যাহা সর্ব সন্মতি ক্রমে স্বীকার করে নিয়েছেন কার্য্যতঃ দেখা যায় সমস্ত বাগানে তাদের scale অনুযায়ী Ration দেওয়া হচ্ছে না। সেখানে প্রতি সপ্তাহে ডাল ৩ পোয়া এবং সরিসার তৈল এক পোয়া দিবার কথা কিন্তু কার্য্যতঃ দেখা গেল ডাল ১ পোয়া এবং সরিসার তৈল আধ পোয়ার বেশী কোনো বাগানেই দেওয়া হচ্ছে না। গুড় প্রায়ই দেওয়া হচ্ছে না এবং আটাও মাঝে মাঝে খুসি মত দেওয়া হয়েছে। তাই এই mal nutrition এবং starvation. These people are actually starving. তাই আমি সেদিকে সকলের বিশেষ করে গবর্নমেন্টের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করছি। এমন যদি দেখা যায় যে সরকার সমস্ত রকম খাদ্য দ্রব্য ঠিকমত সরবরাহ করতে পারেন না বলিয়া বাগান গুলি মজুরদের তাদের প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিষ দিতে অক্ষম, সে ক্ষেত্রে, মজুরেরা বাহাতে বাজার থেকে ঐ সমস্ত জিনিষ সংগ্রহ করিয়া আনিতে পারে সে জন্য মজুরদিগকে ঐ সমস্ত জিনিষের concession rate এবং market rate এর difference টা নগদ দিয়া দিতে হইবে।

চা বাগানের মজুরদের সম্পর্কে আমার আরও অনেক কথা বলবার ছিল। এখন কেবল খাদ্য সমস্যার আলোচনা হচ্ছে বলেই সে সকল কথা ভবিষ্যতে সুযোগমতে বলব। সমস্ত Labourer কেই যাতে সমস্ত প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিষ concession rate এ সরবরাহ করা হয় সেদিকে দৃষ্টি দিবার জন্য অনুরোধ করছি এই বলে আমি আমার বক্তব্য শেষ করলাম।

[The hon. Member spoke in Bengali about the problems of food and specially of the Tea Garden areas and urged upon the Government to see that Tea Garden labourers get all their foodstuffs at concessional rates.]

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the very outset I should like to express my thanks to Hon'ble Mr. Mookerjee regarding the assurance he has given as to what he has done so far to satisfy the needs of the people of Assam in the matter of food and clothing. From his statement it appears that he has done everything under him to lessen the grievances of the people of Assam. He has further sought co-operation and constructive suggestions in order to improve the food position in which we find ourselves to-day. As for food it has become a world wide problem crying aloud for solution. It has been causing headache to the ablest politicians of every country in the world. Some months ago Ex-President Herbert Hoover toured the world and published his impressions about the impending famine which was likely to overtake almost half the population of the world. Ever since the publication of his impressions and experiences, a sort of international conference has been going on in the United States of America. We in India were very anxious as the remarks the Ex-President of the United States of America had to make about India.

Sir, at present the Food Association Organisation Committee is sitting at Copenhagen and we have seen as to what Sir J. P. Srivastava, the Leader of the Indian Delegation, has said regarding the acute food shortage in our land. While Mr. Pillai the Indian delegate has been pressing the case of India especially in regard to rice at the Conference at Copenhagen, Miss Buck, the Author and Chairman of the Famine Emergency Commission in America has been showing great concern regarding the acute food shortage in our country. In her recent letter to the New

York Times, she said " Greatly increased loadings of foodgrains for India in the next few weeks are of the most desperate urgency ". In the letter she painfully admitted that about 224,000 tons were scheduled to come from the United States to India but shipments planned from other sources were substantially less. For September alone there was a deficit of some 225,000 tons in our country. It is a well-known fact that our country has never been a surplus country in the matter of food-stuffs and we find millions of people suffering from terrible shortage of food. In these days facts are not believed unless they are accompanied by figures. For the information of the hon. Members of this House I should like to give a few figures to show that India has never been a surplus country in the matter of food. To maintain the teeming millions of our country India requires 80-90 million tons of food-grains annually. India produces some 60-70 million tons over 203 million acres of land. Making an allowance for what little is exported, what is used for feeding cattle and for sowing-seeds, the balance that remains is 50 million tons. So in a country deemed to be predominantly agricultural we have shortage of 40 million tons of food-grains annually. So India is always in a helpless condition in this respect. We know what happens to the helpless beggars in our country even in peace time and the picking up by beggars of food from dust bins in big cities like Calcutta is not an unusual sight even in peace time. It is a matter for gratification that our Province was never so short of food until 1943. We can live on what we produce. But the steady rise of prices of all commodities, specially rice and paddy leaves little room to doubt that things are not quite as they ought to be. Our anxiety became all the sharper as a result of the great damage caused by the recent terrible flood in Assam. Sir, when you adjourned the House in the last Session in order to enable the hon. Members to be present in the flood affected areas, we of the Sibsagar District went, as others did, to our respective constituencies. I proceeded straight to Sibsagar because that Subdivision was much more affected than Jorhat and Golaghat. Accompanied by the District Muslim League Secretary and two other gentlemen I visited some of the flood-affected areas between the town and the Khaura mauza, and found that there were universal complaints about the loss of *Kathia*. Apart from the loss of *Kathia* I learnt any number of cattle were washed away in villages Riria and the Kardaiguri and some other villages. Besides the loss of property in the villages comprising Khaura mauza almost all the granaries were destroyed by the flood. For want of conveyance I could not go to Disangmukh. I was very happy to learn that Government despatched immediate relief to the flood-stricken people. But, if what I heard at the time that 10 thousand rupees had been sanctioned by Government for the immediate needs of the people of those areas is true I should like to record my emphatic protest that it was too small an amount for their requirements. In these days when reports of scarcity of food in many and famine conditions in some countries are daily reaching us, when as a direct result of shortage of food-grains, prices are soaring, I would request Government to concentrate all their attention on this all important problem. During these days, Sir, calamities never come singly. As soon as the flood subsided epidemics of various diseases appeared. I understand some Health Inspectors were appointed by Government to check the progress of the epidemics. I want Government to increase the number to do work more efficiently. What I have so far stated about the Sibsagar Subdivision holds good, though partially, in respect of Jorhat and Golaghat as well. Although these subdivisions were partially affected by the flood yet some measure of relief work was necessary. At Jorhat the Muslim League party offered their hearty co-operation with the Congress party in giving relief to the flooded areas, specially at Namati and Janji. Unfortunately there was some mismanagement, and there was also misappropriation of about 200 maunds of paddy. As a result a committee was appointed-

and I understand, the Deputy Commissioner is investigating into the alleged loss of that 200 maunds of paddy.

Now, Sir, I listened with rapt attention to what my Hon'ble Friend Mr. Mookerjee said regarding the efforts that were made to increase the quota of kerosene oil, mustard oil, sugar, flour, sujee, etc. Complaints are daily coming to me regarding these essential commodities specially cloth. The Hon'ble Minister-in-charge admitted that mustard oil, like other food-stuffs, is adulterated. But I do not know what steps Government are taking to see that this be no more adulterated. Even in Shillong mustard oil is awfully adulterated and as such unfit for consumption.

Srijut HARINARAYAN BARUA : On a point of information, Sir. বানানীয় মহোদয়ে যোৰহাটত যে mis-appropriation হৈছে বুলি কৈছে সেই information তেখেতে কত পাইছে ? তেখেতৰ information টো সত্য নহয়।

Dr. EMRAN HUSAIN CHAUDHURY : Sir. The hon. Member who raised the point of order knows that at Jorhat certain people of the Congress Party as also of the Muslim League Party co-operated with one another in giving relief to the people affected by the flood, and relief was given in the shape of rice and paddy. A report of mis-appropriation to the extent of 200 maunds of paddy came to my ears, and I may point out that one Mr. Bharali, who I think, is the Secretary or Chairman of the Famine Relief Committee appointed by the Deputy Commissioner, was involved in the matter. Of course, I cannot substantiate it here, but I am just telling you what came to my ears.

Before the Id festival we did our best to move Government to grant special quota, I mean, of sugar, cloth, etc., to the people before the Id festival. But the cloth that came, came rather too late, just one or two days before the Muslim festival actually came off; the people were deprived of the cloth at a time when they required it most. I am, however, glad that Hon'ble Mr. Mookerjee has assured us that he will do everything possible to lessen public grievances in future. At present I understand that some of the officers who were in the Education Department were deputed to the Textile and Supply Departments, but now their services are being recalled. They were appointed as Supply or Textile Officers. They gathered some experience in their services and I do not know why Government want to deprive these Departments of the experience gained by these Officers. If there were any allegations against any of them, then of course they ought to be reverted to their former posts or if possible they may be hanged.

Sir, in the course of his speech Hon'ble Mr. Mookerjee expressed concern that if things went wrong, he might be hanged either inside or outside the House. We are here not to hang him but to offer our co-operation in the solution of problems that face him.

***The Hon'ble SRIJUT BISHNU RAM MEDHI :** As regards the allegation, Sir, it does not relate to the food debate. However, I request my hon. Friend, Dr. Emran Husain Chaudhury, to give me definite information so that we can make enquiry.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Order, order, I may explain as this matter is within my personal knowledge and is also a matter of almost public knowledge at Jorhat. About 50 maunds of rice meant for flood relief distribution in one mouza of Jorhat was distributed in the other an adjoining mouza, which was also affected

equally by the flood. The matter was investigated into by a Committee appointed by the Deputy Commissioner without delay and the mistake of fact was found out. There was nothing wrong. Mr. J. N. Bharali was the Secretary of the Flood Relief Committee. He was not involved in the mistake, which was found out through his efforts. Now the hon. Member simply gives an information he got. We need not go into details.

Srijut HARESWAR DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully the speeches of my hon. Friends on the other side, and find that there are some mis-statements which I feel it my duty to point out. One hon. Friend made a statement that there is an acute shortage of cloth, particularly among the Muslims. This is not correct. Shortage of cloth there is, both acute and chronic, but certainly not among the Muslims as evident from the dresses of the hon. Members sitting opposite. They are the best dressed in the whole House. (*Voices from the Government Benches: Hear, hear.*) (*Voices from the Opposition: We are not habituated to wear khaddar.*) Another hon. Friend, I mean, Khan Bahadur of Dhubri (*voices: No, no*), here I owe an apology to my Friend. He has got a long name difficult to spell and difficult to pronounce but as he used to carry a long tail, so long we referred him by that tail. Now that he himself has cut off that tail, I can neither add it nor pronounce his name. So he will please excuse me if I occasionally refer him by his old tail. My Friend is a sort of research scholar and has made a suggestion, and if that suggestion is carried into effect by the Hon'ble Supply Minister, it will still more complicate an already complicated situation (*laughter*), i.e., that immigrants should be imported and land should be thrown open to them. Now, Sir, immigrants are not surplus growers of paddy. What paddy they grow are consumed before the harvest is finished (*laughter*). For the rest of the year they go on selling jute and purchase paddy. Perhaps my hon. Friend Maulavi Abul Kashem will bear me out. He comes from an area where 95 per cent. of the population are immigrants, and still according to his own admission it is a deficit area.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD ABUL KASHEM: No, Sir, it is not a fact.

Srijut HARESWAR DAS: If I remember aright, he made a statement that 95 per cent. of the population are Muslims and 95 per cent. of those people are immigrants. (Maulavi Muhammad Abul Kashem: There are 95 per cent. Muslims). Same thing, Sir, there are no local Muslims.

Another suggestion has been made by my Friend the Khan Bahadur of Dhubri, and I request the Hon'ble Supply Minister to remember it. He said that the entire quantity of pulses required for the Subdivision of Dhubri is grown by immigrants.

Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSH SHAMS: I have not said that. (*laughter*).

Srijut HARESWAR DAS: Not only he said that but to prove the prowess of the immigrants he laid great stress on the words "the entire quantity of pulses". (*Laughter*). So I request the Hon'ble Supply Minister to remember this and not to allot any quota to Dhubri in the next distribution of Dal.

Maulavi ABUAL MAJID ZIAOSH SHAMS: Will he kindly go through my statement, Sir?

Srijut HARESWAR DAS: Another suggestion was made by another Friend of the Opposition about the stoppage of corruption and black market. Now, Sir, this 'quality', the 'quality' of giving illegal gratification, in the words of Shakespeare, is not strained. It is twice blessed. It blesses him that gives and him that takes. It blesses the trade that gives and the office that takes. Now, the trade forms part of the public. Hence public and office combine to keep it running. It cannot be stopped by an order from Shillong. It can be stopped if all communities, be he Hindu or Muslim, co operate. It can be stopped if they all combine and make a determination to stop it. In this connection, I draw the notice of the Government to the fact that they want to eradicate corruption by officers who are corrupt and stop black marketing by traders who are engaged in it but this cannot be done. Present policy of Government is not to disturb the existing trade channels. But Sir, in some cases this should be disturbed. The Liaison and Vigilance Committees are not functioning properly in some cases, because of (1) official opposition and (2) some duties are given to them but no necessary power or money. So, my suggestion is that these Liaison and Vigilance Committees through which corruption can be stopped should be given the necessary power and provided with money and if the people of all communities—Hindus and Muslims, Congress and Muslim League co-operate in those committees, then corruption and black marketing can be removed. With these words, Sir, I resume my seat.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Hon. Maulavi Md. Abdullah to speak.

Maulavi MD. ABDULLAH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I heard with rapt attention the lengthy reply made by the Hon'ble Minister of Supply on the floor of this House the other day. It was no doubt an oration for the Gods to hear. To us ordinary mortals, it appears to be a museum piece for all students of political economy. It is a master piece of evasion, duplicity and false platitudes. This he dared to do as he thought that his critics were steeped in colossal ignorance of the actual state of affairs. From the speeches that followed, it appears, that we know a good deal more than the Hon'ble Minister suspected. Naturally the mental equilibrium of the Party in power was disturbed. And there was a good deal of demonstration on the floor of the Assembly.

I am sorry that the Hon'ble Minister took so much time and so much trouble to deliver this lengthy speech. Ask a school boy, he will summarise the speech in a few sentences. Apart from the ideological bombast he indulged in, there is nothing in the speech except a few figures on which he has gloated in, extra-ordinary length. Why could he not ask his Secretary, and he could supply the same for distribution to the hon. Members? This would have saved him the trouble and the Assembly the valuable time extending to one hour and fifteen minutes.

The Hon'ble Minister started by vouchsafing his sincerity and declared again and again that he was not going to bluff. But I would ask the hon. Members to compare his present speech with his dramatic performance in March last and they will judge for themselves whether the Hon'ble Minister has not bluffed, not only the Members of this Assembly, but the people of Assam at large; like an innocent lamb, he has asked for constructive suggestions. But did he act upon the suggestions that were offered on the last occasion—may we ask?

The hon. Mover of the Motion as well as some other Members on this side made definite charges—charges of favouritism, nepotism and corruption against the Government. Did he attempt even to reply to the allegations made? He took a pretty long time but why did he keep mum over these vital matters?

The other day, my hon. Friend Mr. Mayecnud-Din Ahmed Chowdry made certain allegations about the participation directly or indirectly of some hon. Members of this House in the Government contracts. A stout denial forthwith ensued from the Treasury Benches. They staged a demonstration of outraged innocence. The people of Shillong, no doubt, laughed within their sleeves at this remarkable performance. But ask a man in the street and he will tell you that the charges are well founded. Turn the pages of the Congress Newspapers of Sylhet and you will be convinced that the allegations are more than justified. I have seen no contradiction to these serious charges even by a statement or a Press Communique. The practice of holding Press Conferences has been discontinued only to gag a discussion over this matter. My hon. Friends made those charges with full responsibility and similar charges will be made by any decent man who is acquainted with facts. No doubt it worked like a hypodermic syringe and set in motion a long train of protestations and nervous shrieks. Why did not the hon. Members search their own conscience and therein they would have got the substantiation of those allegations.

Sir, I do make bold to reiterate the self same charges. I charge the Government of Assam with jobbery, nepotism and favouritism. I assert that a good number of Congress Members of Legislative Assembly have actively participated in the distribution of Government contracts of food stuffs.

(A voice :—Never.)

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. The hon. Member will please take his seat. I expected that the hon. Member would not revert to that unhappy and unseemly episode. It was clearly stated that if there were charges, they should be specifically made, because it is unfair to make vague charges for the simple reason that those who have to reply cannot fight against shadows. Hon. Members should substantiate their charges so that they can be met. Therefore, it will be keeping with the dignity of this Hon'ble House if hon. Members restrain themselves from making wild charges.

Maulavi MD. ABDULLAH: I am only bringing before the Hon'ble House that it is strongly rumoured that some of the Hon'ble Ministers have not only patronised the Congress Members of the Legislative Assembly but they have interested themselves directly or indirectly in those contracts. I do hold that the Government of Assam are criminally guilty as they have chosen to play with the destiny of 10 millions of people of the Province. I stand on the solid ground. I am prepared to substantiate these charges, if need be.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member will get one minute more.

Maulavi MD. ABDULLAH: With these few words, Sir, I beg to resume my seat.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Hon. Srijut Motiram Bora will now speak.

Srijut MOTIRAM BORA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thought that I would not participate in the food debate in this Session, but some of the caustic remarks and unwarranted vilification of the Government by some hon. Members opposite have made me change my view.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It is hoped that the hon. Member will not aggravate the situation.

Srijut MOTIRAM BORA: No, Sir. It is for that reason that I take up my stand to make my observations. Sir, a food debate if conducted on proper lines is always useful and it is always welcome by the Government because it is the Government that will be profited by such a debate. It is for this reason I was expecting all along practical suggestions and constructive criticisms from the Members Opposite, but, Sir, I must frankly confess that I am very sadly disappointed in my expectations. Instead of practical suggestions, instead of practical criticisms, what do we find? What do we see? We see that some of the Members have resorted to criticisms, abuses and vilifications of the Government for the sake of criticisms and abuses. They have no substance in these allegations. Their allegations are most improper. Give justice where justice is due. Some of the hon. Members are not prepared to do the bare act of justice where it is due. Sir, this reminds me of a spectacle which we sometimes see in Law Courts, I mean the spectacle of an advocate vilifying his opponent, abusing witnesses where he has no case to support or defend. The position is same of my hon. Friends here. (*Voices.* Never, never). Sir, my hon. Friends, at any rate, have suffered under misconception of ideas and confusion of thoughts (*Voices:* May be yourself). This confusion is probably due to the fact—why, probably, it is quite clear—that most of the Members are not well posted with necessary informations about the Supply Department and are forgetting a very small thing that this Government is not a free agent. This Provincial Government—why this Provincial Government—all Provincial Governments are under constant control of the Government of India in matters of food and supply. Food and supply are Central Subjects and Provincial Governments are under constant control and direction from that Government. You cannot have a thing done at your sweet will. If they had borne that fact in mind most of the wrong inferences and most of the mis statements could have been easily avoided. Sir, this Government is in Office for a period of eight months. The period of eight months is not a very long period and during this short period, if you take all things into consideration, you will find in several matters this Government have been able to achieve much. Sir, the position of food and supply in many respects at least has become much easier and better than what it was before. Such things as non-importation of three months' quota and consequent lapse of quota and importation of unwanted handloom cloths have not occurred during the present regime and such mistakes have not occurred during the time of the present Ministry. It is due to the fact that constant watch and constant vigilance have been exercised by this Government. Some credit must be given to them on this score. If you look to the distribution of things, what do we find? This Government is at least adopting a bold policy. A bold measure has been initiated by this Government. They have sought co-operation of all people and public irrespective of caste considerations and party politics in matters of supply. They have asked them to lend co-operation in the matter of checking corruption. This is why Vigilance Committees and Liaison Committees had been formed and to ensure co-operation of all parties, a general appeal has been made to all to be members of these committees with a view to check corruption. Ample powers have been given to these committees. With a view to ensure that things are brought within easy reach of the people, number of dealers has been increased and directions have been given that dishonest dealers do not find distribution works. Ample powers have been given to these committees to supervise the operations of all kinds of dealers. Sir, instead of holding aloof if hon. Members lend their co-operation to these committees, much can be done. As a matter of fact, black-market has been brought under control to some extent. I do not mean to say by these

observations of mine that the present Government have been able to remove all the grievances and hardships of the people. What I want to lay stress is that there is no lack of sincerity or seriousness on the part of this Government. They have endeavoured to do good to the people as best as they could. They have taken all care to serve the people within this short time with their limited means and resources. Within this short time you cannot have plenty of sugar; you cannot have Masur dal as much as you like. These are things in which you have also no complete control. Government have spared no efforts to do what is possible to be done in these matters also. At least my Friends ought to be generous enough to give credit to this Government where it is due. One of my hon. Friends from Dhubri went to the length of charging the Hon'ble Minister for Supply that he is an extremely communal man. I come from the District of Nowgong and what is my experience there? During the occasion of the last Id festival, 25 more bales of cloth, more than what is due to the Muslim people, were given at the direction of this Government in Nowgong. While the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge was last in Nowgong he gave particular emphasis in the matter of choosing dealers so that Muslims get their proper share in this matter. If the Hon'ble Minister can give such direction, in one district how can the same Hon'ble Minister give a contrary direction in Dhubri? I think, he is not correct and this is also apparent from the fact that another Member of the same Subdivision, I mean Maulavi Ziaosh Shams did not lay such charge of communalism against the same Hon'ble Minister. I submit therefore, that my hon. Friend's allegation that the Hon'ble Minister for Supply is actuated by communal considerations is not a fact. As a matter of fact it cannot be true. Is it humanly possible that a Minister holding the most responsible port-folio of Supply which is a matter of life and death can discriminate between man and man—can discriminate between Hindus and Muslims? I for myself cannot believe that it is possible at least in the distribution of food. It is not possible to discriminate there.

Sir, my submission to you, and through you, to all the Members of the House, is that what is wanted is co-operation. Instead of holding aloof they should extend their helping hand. What did I see in Nowgong? I found Muslim League members holding aloof from the Liaison Committee; they do not come to give their advice—they do not come to give their guidance. The fault lies with them. We want their co-operation, but they do not come forward extending their helping hand.

With these few words, I would appeal to the hon. Members opposite that instead of taking up this recalcitrant attitude, they should extend their co-operation to this Government, so that we can tackle the food problem to the satisfaction of all. With these observations, Sir, I beg to resume my seat.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would not have liked to participate in the debate at this fag end of the day, but for the unwanted heat that was generated on the floor of the Assembly, the other day. Then again, there is a second Motion standing in my name and it is only meet that I speak a few words on the matter under discussion. Nevertheless, I promise to be very brief and will not take much time of the Hon'ble House.

During the last Session of the Assembly, when I mooted a similar Motion, I made it abundantly clear that it was not our intention to make any political capital by initiating these debates. We were actuated with the best of motives and our sole intention was to ensure a regular supply and distribution of our food-stuffs and other essential commodities.

Sir, I am sorry to note that the Government of the day did practically nothing to improve the deplorable state of things in Assam. As a matter of fact, things have further deteriorated. Corruption is as rampant as ever. The racketers and black-marketers have gathered additional strength in the Military contractors, and are busking in the sunshine of official patronage.

Sir, since the last Budget Session of the Assembly, six long months have elapsed. High hopes were entertained of this Ministry by at least their own supporters but all these hopes have been shattered to the ground. What have they done to check this all pervading corruption in the Province—may I ask? Is not the Hon'ble Minister convinced that it has increased all the more? The people are definitely groaning under the shackles of corruption and black-marketing. What definite steps has he taken to stamp out corruption—Public enemy No. 1—from the four "corners of the Province? Sir, during his preliminary reply the Hon'ble Minister covered a good deal of ground but he had not a single word to say about this disease—I mean, corruption.

Sir, the other day a good deal of bustle ensued in the floor of this Hon'ble House on certain allegations made by one hon. Member from this side. The calm atmosphere of Shillong was raised to the boiling heat. In this connection I would refer to a statement made by Srijut Brojendra Narayan Chaudhury of Sylhet. In his statement entitled "Stocktaking of Assam Ministry's Work" he asserts:—

"The spectacles of profiteers in company of M. L. A.'s and Congress-wallas visiting Ministers morning, noon and night is not edifying at all. Some plead that they go under the guise of deputation on behalf of executive of the party. These deputations are unseemingly turned into debating societies. I would implore Congress Ministers to be careful about their dignity. Their opponent, Sir Saadulla, whatever be his faults, at least maintained the dignity of manners befitting the ruler of a Province. The fate of Louis XVI was fore-doomed in the day, the populace dared to jeer before the Palace."

I would ask in all humility to the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge what were the insinuations underlying the statement made by a very prominent and respected Congress Leader.

Sir, so much has been said about the distribution of all Government contracts. I crave your indulgence to dilate a little on the back-ground that preceded these contracts. Sir, on the eve of granting of some of these contracts I happened to be in Shillong. I was confronted with a bee-line of outsiders in the Assembly Hostels in the train of some of the Congress M.L.A's. On enquiry, I could gather that they were tenderers for the distribution of cloth in the Province of Assam. Taxis were coming every five minutes in the Hostel parlour and carrying the Members with the persons they supported to the residences of the Hon'ble Ministers. Sir, it was reported to me that things about the Surma Valley came to such a pass that neither the Hon'ble Supply Minister nor the Hon'ble Prime Minister could come to a decision and the Hon'ble Home Minister and two other Members had to arbitrate in the matter of distribution of cloth contracts for the Surma Valley. If the hon. Members refer to the terms of advertisements calling for the tenders, they will find how the terms of the tenders were undermined and contracts were distributed to persons most of whom had no connection whatsoever with business. Most of them had neither experience nor financial backing. No wonder that some of them have already transferred their interest in these contracts to Marwari dealers.

Sir, what do all these things show ? Why these Members of the Legislative Assembly took so much interest in the distribution of the contracts ? Why did they interfere with the normal activities of the Government ? Do not all these factors go a long way to justify the allegation ?

Sir, there is still another fact to be considered. Some of the most genuine dealers offered a commission of 7% but their superior claims were turned down by Government and Government allowed the contracts at a commission of 11% to the five newly created cloth syndicates. The Government of the day should have taken lesson from past experience, and such interference in the distribution of contracts should not have been tolerated. In the hands of inexperienced persons the supply operation is bound to suffer and it will entail much hardships to the consumers.

Sir, I am conscious that after the March Session Liaison Committees and Vigilance Committees have been organised but the manner in which these Committees have been organised does not afford us any hope of redress. The Muslim League as a party is considering seriously whether they should co-operate in these committees. The Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Supply may gloat over the fact that the minimum price has been fixed. But, Sir, the minimum price has been fixed in such a way that it cannot secure the cultivators a fair price for his commodity in comparison with other necessities of life. Then again Government did nothing to enforce their statutory maximum.

Sir, during the last session of the Assembly, I mean the March session, the Hon'ble Supply Minister was pleased to say that he had appointed a good number of Checkers to check smuggling of food-grain outside the border of the Province. This statement of the Hon'ble Minister was not based on facts. As a matter of fact, these Checkers could not be appointed before May and they were placed in the stations only in June and before that time a good deal of our paddy was smuggled out of the Province. In his preliminary speech the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Supply has said that there was no export from the Surma Valley.

This, Sir, is also not based on fact.

***The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** I did not say that. I said it was for a particular period. The statement of the hon. Member is anything but true.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister will get a chance of reply.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: Sir, I had seen at Chhatak and Inathganj the agents of the Government of Mysore collecting paddy.

Sir, the cloth position in the Province is very serious. As a matter of fact cloth has disappeared from the rural areas, and I am sorry to state here that in many places the Subdivisional Officers acted in league with the black-marketers. Sir, on the last occasion when a similar Motion was under discussion, I had the privilege of giving some suggestions to the Hon'ble Minister. I would ask him in all humility to examine those suggestions and, if possible, to act upon them.

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

Srijut SARAT CHANDRA SINHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that many other hon. Members will take part in the debate I shall not take more than three or four minutes. We have heard the speeches of the hon. Friends over there about the problems of food and cloth, but they did not give

any practical suggestion. Sir, food is the main problem no doubt and the cloth crisis has been added to it. The Government has been severely criticised and I think the Opposition has not done full justice to Government. I have a long list of my own suggestions, but I do not propose to submit the list now. It seems that the hon. Friends over there are much disappointed at the policy of the Government with regard to food and cloth. But they have forgotten that when this Government ushered in there was an atmosphere of corruption and the machinery that was handed over to this Government was rusty, spoilt and corrupt. Certainly, Sir, it will take time to correct this machinery. Sir, in some of the speeches the state of affairs in the district of Goalpara has been referred to. My hon. Friend, Srijut Motiram Bora, has already spoken about this and I need not repeat it. I would only say that the state of affairs in that district is not what has been alleged by many of the hon. Members over there. The food and cloth problem has certainly improved all over Assam, and same is the case with Goalpara. Though the Opposition has not given any concrete or practical suggestions, I would say that the main solution really lies in the independence of United India. We have come to understand from the speeches delivered on the floor of the House that we are dependent on other provinces and other provinces are also dependent on us so far as foodstuffs are concerned. It is now easy to realise what a United India is not only from the geographical point of view....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order, the hon. Member is not relevant. It is a debate on food and not a political issue.

Srijut SARAT CHANDRA SINHA: But food is of all-India concern, Sir. All right, Sir. I am coming to the point.

My hon. Friend Srijut Motiram Bora has already suggested that we have come here not for the solution of problems, but for quarrel. We oppose each other, that is the main trouble, we do not find any solution. I shall just conclude by referring to a note of Homa in the "Hindusthan Standard". Homa has noted that M. L. A. is certainly not an abbreviation for Murder, Loot and Arson. Here, Sir, Members of Legislative Assembly fail to point out the practical solution of the problems. The difficulty is that we are not very keen to solve them, instead we quarrel and bring false allegation. Certainly, Sir, in reference to us, M. L. A. is not in the eye of Homa of the "Hindusthan Standard" an abbreviation for "Maker of Lying Allegations".

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with these words, Jai Hind.

Maulavi NURUL HOSSAIN KHAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, so far as supply is concerned, I must say at the very beginning that we have been sadly disappointed. During the Budget Session the Hon'ble Supply Minister gave out hopes that the position of supply would improve and we really expected that some sort of advancement would be made in this matter. But, Sir, we find that we are where we had been seven months before, rather things have deteriorated. Black-marketing and smuggling are going on at an increased rate. The supply of sugar, kerosene oil and mustard oil is anything but satisfactory. So far as cloth is concerned, the less said the better. The people in the rural areas seldom get their supply of cloth. The supply of yarn is entirely out of question and we find that this has become a very difficult question. The fishermen, Hindus and Muslims, are not getting their supply of yarn, whereas we find that some persons managed to procure huge quantities of yarn which they disposed of in the black-market. This is the month of September and the fishing season will begin soon. It is high time that fishermen should be supplied with yarn, so that they may prepare their nets. So far as Habiganj is concerned, I can say that the supply

of yarn to fishermen is not at all satisfactory. Whichever direction we may turn to, we do not find any light but darkness. If these things are allowed to go on we do not know where we shall land to. Coming to some particular instances, Sir, I beg to submit that during the last Ramzan the Muslims suffered badly for want of kerosene oil. Formerly during this month Muslims were given an extra supply of kerosene oil, but this time we did not have that privilege in the Habiganj subdivision, except that in the Habiganj town the quantity of kerosene oil was doubled. We brought this to the notice of the Subdivisional Officer but he simply pleaded his inability. I do not like to say anything against the Subdivisional Officer who is quite new to this Subdivision and who appears to be well-intentioned, as he is trying his best to manage things as best as he can. The difficulty lies in the insufficient supply.

Sir, it was arranged that half a seer of sugar would be supplied to each family irrespective of the number of members in a family—whether it be ten, twenty or more and according to that arrangement people from the interior were to come to the Subdivisional Headquarters to get this half a seer of sugar. Now, Sir, I leave it to the House to consider how it can be possible for a person to come from a distance of 10 or 20 miles in order to get only half a seer of sugar incurring a lot of expenses.

Then Sir, on previous occasions we were allowed to get additional quota of cloth on the occasion of the Id, but last time we were deprived of this privilege; even normal quota of cloth did not reach the people in time. As a matter of fact, most of the people could not purchase new cloths during the last Id. Such arrangements, Sir, we cannot surely support.

Sir, the most important question is that of paddy and rice. In my Subdivision the price of rice has risen greatly. At the time I left Habiganj it was selling at Rs.21 per maund. Coarse rice supplied by Government at controlled rate is of very inferior quality and it can hardly be taken by people and consequently they have to purchase rice at a much higher price. Sir, I have seen with my own eyes while going to Kadinganj by boat that a large number of boats full of paddy and rice were going to Bengal. It is reported, Sir, that from Baniachong side a huge quantity of paddy is being sent to Bengal. We have brought this fact to the notice of Government but in vain. The rice checkers and the Police staff appear to be useless so far as this smuggling of paddy is concerned. They appear to be in collusion with the smugglers and we are told that they get reward on a regular commission basis. I personally mentioned about this matter in my Budget Speech in March last but I do not know if the Government took note of it and made any attempt to improve things. From all these, it appears that Government is callously indifferent to this matter. It appears that they have not the resources in their hands or they have not the willingness to bring things under control so that the poor people may be saved. I again bring this fact to the notice of the Hon'ble Minister.

Now, Sir, we have got some good assurances from the Hon'ble Supply Minister this time as we had in March last. But, Sir, mere verbal assurances cannot possibly satisfy the suffering public. We want action and we want relief. Sir, mere assurances and assertions on the floor of this House will be of no use.

Then, Sir, there is another matter to which I beg to refer with your kind permission. I really do not know if we are at liberty in this House to speak out our minds. Sir, this august House is the only place where the chosen representatives of the people can ventilate their grievances freely and fearlessly. But from

the incident that took place the other day regarding a statement made by my hon. Friend Maulavi Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry regarding grant of contracts and permits by this Government in which some Congress Members of the Legislative Assembly and some Hon'ble Ministers were alleged to be directly or indirectly interested, I am led to think that probably we have not got this privilege in this House. Maulavi Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry made some assertions regarding the Congress Members of the Legislative Assembly and Ministers and he said again and again that he was prepared to disclose the names of the persons concerned but unfortunately under very peculiar circumstance, he was not allowed to do so.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : By whom ?

Maulavi NURUL HOSSAIN KHAN : He was ready to make the statement, Sir, but there was interference from the Government Benches, when a ruling was given.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I am sorry, here the hon. Member is definitely incorrect. The fact was that, hon. Member Maulavi Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry was given an opportunity by me to make a statement for substantiating the vague charges he made, but the statement did not come forth from him within the time given. The Chair cannot be concerned with what knowledge an hon. Member possesses or what documents about facts an hon. Member may carry in his pocket. What the chair was concerned with in this connection was that the hon. Member was afforded an opportunity but he did not avail of it. The hon. Member will not be allowed to make any reference to that incident. He can go on if he has anything to say on the food debate.

Maulavi NURUL HOSSAIN KHAN : In that case I maintain, Sir, that my liberty of speech has been curtailed and I refuse to speak anything more.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The hon. Members should utilise the privilege of the House ; they should not misuse it. They must know this once and for all.

The next hon. Member to speak is hon. Srijut Beliram Das and he will have only 7 minutes' time, because at 3.45 sharp I will request the hon. Leader of the Opposition to speak on the debate.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I shall be very brief. Sir, some of the hon. Members before they came to this Assembly, were servants under the Supply Department and I very much expected from them that they would give their valuable suggestions to the Government. But, on the contrary they are abusing our Government for corruption, nepotism and jobbery and what not. Particularly, Mr. Abdulla, who was a Textile Sub-Inspector and he.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : What is the relevancy of that point ?

Srijut BELIRAM DAS : I am coming to that, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The hon. Member will first explain the relevancy and then speak.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS : I expected, Sir, that they had actual experience of the working of that Department and as such they were in a better position to

give valuable suggestions to Government for the improvement of the Supply Department. Instead they have been vilifying the Government. This we did not expect from them. Mr. Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry, who was a military contractor, would know how military contractors made money, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. What have we got to do whether one was a military contractor or not? I should like that the hon. Member does not refer to this again.

Srijut BELIRAM DAS: Then, Sir, this gentleman charged Government for corruption, but, Sir, this gentleman was also a part and parcel of the Supply Department and I think it does not befit him to make such charges, rather he should oil his own machine. Sir, there has been a general complaint among the fishermen community in the Province that they have not been able to get the required quota of yarn for preparation of fishing nets. Fishing season has been fast approaching and they have been put to great difficulties. If in the meantime they do not get the required quota of yarn, not only they will suffer a great deal, but they will be ruined and as a result there will be no supply of fish for which both the people and the Government will suffer.

I would like to point out to the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge that in the villages in almost every house there is a loom and to solve the acute shortage of cloth people could weave their own cloth if they were supplied with yarn. But I may inform him that unless there is sufficient supply of yarn how can they weave? So I suggest to the Hon'ble Minister to manage to supply as much yarn as possible even by curtailing the cloth quota for the weavers of the Province.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I now request the Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition to make his statement.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: There are 5 minutes more for me to begin. In the meantime I ask my young Friend, Maulavi Nazmul Haque, to finish his speech. He may be given only 5 minutes time.

Maulavi MD. NAZMUL HAQUE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I like to speak a few words on the subject. As much discussion has been made, I shall confine myself mostly to the grievances of the District I come from. I will try to show how the present Congress Government is careless and full of favouritism, nepotism and corruption, even in the matter of procurement and distribution of articles which are of vital importance to the people of the Province. Now it is no use to lay the blame upon the shoulder of another. The Congress Government was bold enough to lay the blame upon the previous Government for the maladministration of the Supply Department, but what we see now is that, the Congress Government is a complete failure in supplying barely necessary food-stuffs, cloth and other commodities, to the people of Assam.

Regarding the supply of sugar in my District, Sir, I may say that during the last Id festival this was not supplied at all. The quantity that is supplied to the villagers is so meagre that it amounts to nothing.

As regards wheat product, I may bring to the notice of Government that it is not made available to the people in the rural areas.

Four hundred tons of Gur is said to have been imported to the Goalpara Subdivision which if properly distributed would have been sufficient for the

Subdivision for the time being. But what has been done? Permits were issued to the people who were mostly non-Muslims and not at all businessmen. Some Congressmen were picked up from here and there and permits were given to them. Most of them sold their permits to the Marwaries for want of fund and business experience. As a result, Gur was not found in the market, though it is available in the black market. There were the existence of Liaison Committees and Vigilance Committees, but Gur was not distributed in consultation of those Committees.

Now, Sir, as regards supply of cloth and yarn, I should like to say that the supply is quite inadequate for the daily use of the people of the District of Goalpara. For every 100 persons only one pair of Sari or Dhuti and 2½ yards other cloths are being distributed. Under the pretext of abnormal situation and difficulty of transport, we cannot see our brothers and sisters remaining naked. During the last Id festival crowds of Muslims rushed to the town for cloth, but they were driven out, some with a piece of cloth and many without, like cats and dogs with as, lice of loaf. This, we the representatives of poor people cannot tolerate. The Hon'ble Minister may not feel it from the top of the Hills. The hon. Members of the House know that the poor villagers fish for themselves and sew their clothes and garments, but there is no provision for supplying yarn to them. If the condition of supply is such and the Government cannot improve the condition of supply the formation of Liaison Committees and Vigilance Committees is bogus and a mere show. If the Government really want to do good to the people they must exert themselves to increase the supply of foodstuffs, cloth and yarn and stop the black marketing which is as rampant as it was. Simply the transfer of one officer from one place to another will never stop black-marketing.

Sir, as regards formation of Liaison Committees. the Government issued a circular according to which some particular interests and the local Members of the Legislative Assembly were to be represented in the said Committees, but I am surprised to see in the Gazette that some other persons were taken in, in contravention of the Government circular and I am more surprised to see that places have been created for representatives of Jamiat-ul-Ulemas even though there is no Jamiat-ul-Ulema organization.

As regards granting of licenses for controlled commodities and clothes, Sir, I beg to say that almost all the licenses were granted to the Marwaries and a few Hindus. Will Government take note of all these and do justice to the Muslims? As time is limited, with these few words, Sir, I resume my seat.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, food-stuffs for maintenance of life and clothing essentially necessary to hide nakedness of the body are so vital and crying necessities of life for the citizens that it should have been the endeavour of all to keep this debate out of party politics. Unfortunately, the discussions of acts of omission or commissions of Government from Members of either side has gone to such an extent or taken such a form that you, Sir, had to take steps in order to preserve the dignity of the House. There is a saying well-known to every hon. Member of this House that 'if you sow the wind you cannot but reap the whirlwind'. Members sitting in or behind the Treasury Bench have indulged in such wild accusations of the previous Government that they have blackened the proceedings of this Legislature. As the new and young enthusiastic Members are ignorant of the principles of parliamentary procedure, they can be excused for crossing the bound of decency. It is only they who have adopted the beaten track, as is to be found in the speeches of the previous Opposition Members.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Sir, on a point of information, excepting a very few all the Members of the last Assembly are the Members of this Assembly.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble the Leader of the Opposition is talking about accusation by the new Members.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: If the old Assembly is not in existence, the proceedings are in the Library and the new Members refer to them for their guidance. The hon. Member who got up and challenged me is a very old Member and is the Chief Whip of the Congress Party. I am surprised that he should get up to challenge my statement. He has, by his point of information, tried to deflect my line of thoughts; anyway, I come back and take up the threads of my submissions.

While people are not holding responsible position of administration, they do not gather experience which is required for administration of the Province. I am very glad, Sir, that one leading light of the other side, I refer to my hon. Friend, Srijit Rajendranath Barua, has appreciated the difficulties and he requested the party in Opposition to realise that the administration of a subject like supply of foodstuff and clothing is beset with so many difficulties that it will not be proper on the part of the Opposition Members to criticise the Minister of Supply. I wish this sense had dawned upon him and those of his way of thinking in earlier times.

I started by saying that food and clothing are so vital subjects that it should seriously attract the attention of every hon. Member of the House, either those of the Government or of the Opposition, to think over the matter calmly and coolly, expressing views before the House so that Government may benefit by it. Nobody can assert that our representatives in the Treasury Benches have got the monopoly of wisdom, or their schemes are perfect.

I am glad, Sir, that my Hon'ble Ex-Colleague, the present Supply Minister, has been good enough to request everyone to give him constructive suggestions, and it is for this reason, in order to give little from my experience, that I have taken my stand to-day.

Assam, as I consider, is fortunate that she had not to suffer the pangs of hunger and the disadvantages of acute shortage of foodstuffs in recent years. Hon. Members may have read that in the great Madras Presidency ration for food-grains, I mean rice, has been reduced to 8 ounce. I have spoken twice on the subject that in Mysore, Travancore and Cochin, food ration, i.e., rice, is as low as 1½ seer per week per adult. It is surely a matter of gratitude to the great Providence, the all-knowing and all-seeing Allah that Assam had not to suffer such dire shortage up till now. Nay, through the humble efforts of both the Government and the people, Assam has been raised from a deficit rice-growing area into a surplus one. I make bold to say that from 1943 onwards, on an average, Assam has been able to release at least half a crore of maunds of rice every year to those that need rice badly. My Hon'ble Friend, the Supply Minister, was perfectly correct when he stated that unless Government took troubles of collecting the surplus and selling it to those parts where it was necessary, the price of the commodity would be forced down in Assam and our cultivators would suffer thereby. We aim at giving relief to the grower by buying their surplus at a reasonable price and during the war times, we supplied the Military and also the neighbouring provinces where there was acute shortage. The people of Assam, specially, the growers of paddy, got quite a reasonable price for their chief agricultural produce.

I first tried to procure rice from the Surma Valley through Government agencies. Those who are old Members of this House may remember that there was a huge outcry against procurement by Government agencies. Hon. new Members

may benefit if they go through the proceedings of the years 1942 and 1943. In Assam we had the Steel Brothers, a firm of world wide reputation, as regards rice trade, and in the Surma Valley in 1944 we tried two agencies of local people. Man is a creature of unsatisfied desires. This change in the procedure again raised such a storm in the House that Government was compelled to curtail activities of the Syndicates who were supposed to be traders and relegated themselves to the previous system of procurement through Government agencies. My Hon'ble Friend, the Supply Minister, or rather the present Congress Cabinet, believes that procurement through Government agencies will be much better for the people at large. I ascribe no motive for this change of policy. I am charitable enough to say that they make a new approach to this very vital problem and seek a solution as best as they can. The Hon'ble Minister, himself, was constrained to say that the staff that has been recruited are new and in experienced and procurement has not yet been up to expectation. If in spite of after six months of experiments with this process, the Hon'ble Supply Minister finds that the procurement is insufficient then our request is to re-consider whether procurements should be done through trade channels.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: It is only two months, Sir.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I know. Two months in the Assam Valley but 6 months in the Surma Valley.

Sir, I sympathise with my Hon'ble Friend, the Supply Minister, for he has really been dogged by bad fortune. The Province had providential escape from floods during the time when I had the reins of administration in my hands. This time, there has been a very serious flood which has converted the Surma Valley, according to my Hon'ble Friend, into a deficit area. He has also pointed out, so far as imported foodstuffs from outside are concerned, movement of all stuffs meant for Assam has been hampered by the threatened railway strike, postal strike and the last month's communal riot in Calcutta. I make full allowance for all those difficulties that have confronted him. Yet, I believe, Sir, that there is an inherent defect in the policy which he has adopted. While I was in-charge of the Department of Supply, in order to procure the foodstuff that were necessary for feeding the people, I made a Government to Government contract *vis-a-vis* the exporting provinces. There was an additional difficulty in those days, for the private traders could not get any transport. It was the Government who could manage to get transport to carry foodstuff to the Province through the mercy of the Regional Priority Committee whose headquarters was at Calcutta and where Assam had no representation. It may be argued that the war is over and, therefore, transport must have been more available. But it has been the experience not only of the traders but also of the common man that things in India have not come to that state of normality that transport is available in the way as was used to be before the war. But if Government were the importer of the foodstuff, they would have received a better consideration from the railway administration than the private traders. My policy was to get the foodstuff at all costs, because otherwise, people of Assam would suffer untold miseries, and therefore, I was bold enough to use the provincial exchequer to get things brought and moved quickly. The distribution was also left in the hands of two distributors in the two Valleys. But now, that policy has been changed and a new approach has been organised by my Hon'ble Friends, the present Cabinet. Here again, Sir, I do not wish to be uncharitable to them and say that they started the move with the best of motives. Instead of procuring the foodstuff so vital for the existence of the people by the Government they

have allowed certain license holders or permit holders to buy it with their own finances and to make their own arrangement for transport and to sell it in specially localised areas at controlled rates. On paper and in theory, this arrangement looks very well. As a matter of fact, my Hon'ble Friend has stated that with a view to safeguard the tax-payers he has adopted this policy. This is very well, but what has been the result? At the time of selection of permit holders, great care was taken by my Hon'ble Friend and *ex-Colleague* the present Supply Minister, and his Colleagues in the present Congress Cabinet to give the permits as far as possible to local men as an encouragement. But I don't know whether they tried to find out if the men who received the permits had the necessary financial backing or not. It is a matter of common knowledge that everywhere these permits had been transferred to members of the mercantile community who had to pay a certain amount of remuneration to those who procured the permits. If anybody challenges and say that this is not so, I can tell him from my personal knowledge that this is a fact. Because, one of the parties who secured the contract by such indirect means came to me and complained that the Government had issued license in the name of persons who had neither the capacity nor the funds behind them to procure the foodstuff. The permit holder wanted my informant to provide him with funds on consideration of six annas interest in the concern and also to help him in carrying out the Government contract. If necessary, I can give the name of the party in this transaction, but I think, I should leave the subject unchased. This is the state of affairs going on everywhere in the Province. I know that my Hon'ble Friend did try to do good things, but circumstances intervened. Probably, there was too much pressure by his Party Members of the Legislative Assembly to which he succumbed and adopted the policy. It is very well to be guided by a party but every policy should be settled in party meetings, but the details of carrying out the policy should be left unhampered. It is a question of supply of essential foodstuff and it is reprehensible that contracts for supply of such goods had been forced into hands of inexperienced and incapable men.

Sir, if the procurement of rice is vital, importation of pulses or *dal* is equally vital, for it is well known that we the inhabitants of Assam—whether Assamese or Bengali—are rice eaters and we eat rice with *dal*. It is very unfortunate that we are to depend on Bihar and the United Provinces primarily for the supply of our *dal*. Many a time in the previous sessions of this House I stated that our pre-war import of *dal* was in the neighbourhood of 11 lakh maunds. During the war the Government of India were good enough to give us an annual quota of 40,000 tons of *dal*. I am surprised to learn, Sir, while my Hon'ble *ex-Colleague* was speaking that this year we have been allotted 15,000 tons which comes very nearly 1½ lakh maunds. It is the bounden duty of every hon. Member of this House to devise ways and means how best we can fill up this gap in procurement of *dal* as soon as possible.

It is a fact that our immigrant friends who have settled in this Province grow pulses. I have seen it with my own eyes. Their produce of pulses amounts to 2 lakhs of maunds, *viz*, Masur, Mug, not to speak of *Mati Kalai*. Government should seriously think whether they should not attempt to collect the local produce and distribute it equally to all the districts of the Province, otherwise there will be such a shortage of *dal* that the people of the Province will suffer very greatly.

The same applies to mustard oil also. Some hon. Members are fortunate enough to get adulterated mustard oil in Shillong and they are complaining. It will be a news to many that my household in Shillong had to go without mustard oil for one entire week, because nowhere in Shillong I could procure mustard oil. Luckily, one day my *ex-Colleague*, now Member, Central Legislative Assembly, hon. Srijut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri came to my house and I narrated my difficulty to him and he added his own grievances, saying that his household had

also gone without mustard oil. Luckily he had with him a Marwari trader from Gauhati who was asked to send two tins of mustard oil and I could tide over the difficulty. (*Voices*—By black marketing?) No black-marketing, from the mills, one tin to me and the other to Srijut Chaudhuri.

Sir, this is a very desirable point which should be considered by the Hon'ble Members of the Congress Cabinet—whether they should not take up the former policy of my Government, *viz.*, to try to collect and procure all the mustard seed that is grown in the Province and have them pressed under Government supervision. In normal times 15 lakh maunds of mustard seed used to be grown in the Province but during war period the produce went down by half. I tried to collect the entire quantity and hand over to oil mills rateably to "Ghani" capacity, but it was unpalatable to most mills because Government gave certain quantity of mustard seeds and wanted that this should be returned at one maund of oil for every three and one-third maund of oil seeds. This policy was a great check against adulteration. It is difficult to procure oil from the United Provinces and other places. It is incumbent on the part of my Hon'ble Friend, the Supply Minister, to consider whether he should try to follow some such scheme to keep check on the oil produced and the total oil produced in Assam to be equitably distributed within the Province.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have many more suggestions to give but I have got only three minutes and I have to shorten my speech. But I want to say that my hon. Friends opposite will not take me amiss when I say they are also responsible in some ways for reducing our quota of sugar and Gur. The Government of India were pleased to issue their orders during the Christmas Holidays in 1945 that Assam had been allotted a quota of 12 thousand tons of Gur—seven thousand tons to be imported immediately and five thousand tons later on. As I was busy with electioneering during the first three weeks of January, 1946 I could not pass any orders on the file. I received various applications for Gur permits direct, while a large number was received by the Secretariat. Those applications I received direct were with me, but I could not dispose of that file at Gauhati without the other lot and I asked the Deputy Secretary to come down to Gauhati with the applications but he was touring in the Surma Valley and I did not get those applications at Gauhati. I returned to Shillong on the 21st January and immediately passed orders for the import of seven thousand tons leaving five thousand tons to be distributed by my successors, the Congress Ministry, who in their wisdom stopped by wire to the United Provinces the sale of Gur to those to whom I gave permits. They took two months' time in order to make their own selection with the result that the United Provinces Government or the Central Government believed that Assam did not require any Gur and they immediately cancelled Assam quota. My Hon'ble Friends were in a quandary; they wired to the Central Government and United Provinces Governments who began bargaining with Assam. They at first offered two thousand tons and later on five thousand tons. I am glad that ultimately eight thousand tons were granted by the Central Government. It is only 66 per cent. of the original quota. If the present Ministry had not stopped those permit holders whom I had selected to import the Gur there would not have been these difficulties. I had selected permit holders not merely on communal basis but also on a district population basis. If there was any omission to issue permits to a particular group, they could make it up by distribution of the rest five thousand tons to such people. The Ministry took up this unusual course by disowning the orders passed by me and the Province lost four thousand tons of valuable Gur.

Now it is known that the distribution of imported foodstuffs has been taken out of the hands of the Syndicates whom we had selected, but, in spite of the fact that orders have been issued about six weeks ago to take over distribution in

various places by new permit holders, they have not been able to take over food-stuffs that are to be handed over to them for want of funds. Previous distributors complained to me that the present Government had given the distribution of food-stuffs to particular parties who have not got the money to buy the goods.

I do not want to take up more time. I will refer to one subject and finish my speech. I hope, Sir, you won't take it that I am challenging your ruling that you gave the other day about expunging certain passages from the speech of Mr. Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry. You are pleased to make a statement but there was a little omission according to me, of one fact. I want to lay before the House that my Friend, Maulavi Mayeenud-Din had got a list of names with the relationship between some of the hon. Members of this House and the contractors or permit-holders which he wanted to read out to the House. I prevented him from doing that with a view not to embitter the feelings further. I went to your chamber at about five minutes to eleven requesting you not to press the Member to make the statement but to throw oil on troubled waters and requested you to allow me to deal with the subject in my speech and I promised to deal it in a way satisfactory to all. The fact that I approached you and you were pleased to give me certain directions has not been mentioned before the House. My Hon'ble Friend is complaining to me that various hon. Members of the opposite were taunting him that he was a coward and had not the moral courage to furnish the list—that he could not substantiate the allegations made. I hope, hon. Members on the opposite will not taunt Members of this side of the House who are young and enthusiast. What my hon. Friend, Mr. Mayeenud-Din, did, was in the best interest of all. He laid bare the rumours that are afloat and this should put the Ministry on guard and they should comfort themselves in such a way that the Opposition can find no loophole in criticising them as was done this time. Mr. Mayeenud-Din was actuated by patriotic motives in making the allegations, which he was fully prepared to substantiate but for keeping the good name of the House and peace and amity amongst Members of different groups inside the Assembly and to prevent further embittered feelings between the two communities in the Province, I prevented him to take that particular course. (*Applause.*)

Mr. C. W. MORLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of information. Two issues have been raised in this debate affecting the Tea Industry—one relates to cloth and the other to foodstuffs. Let me take first the question of foodstuff.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: How can it be a point of information?

Mr. C. W. MORLEY: I submit, Sir, that when you altered the ruling you said then that there will be a debate at 4 O'clock on this subject in that case I could take part in it.....

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Yes, but on resumption of the Assembly after lunch I enquired of the European Group as to whether any of them would take part in the food debate but I was told that none would take part. I mentioned then that Mr. Purnendu Kishore Sen Gupta has waived his right of the debate and that no debate under rule 40 would take place. *Thereafter* I enquired of all the parties and groups to supply me with the list of speakers. The list was supplied by the Congress Party as well as by the Leader of the Opposition, but the Leader of the European Group said that none from his side was taking part. To-day we are very hard pressed for time but since supplementary demands are coming in, probably some Member of his party may find an opportunity to ventilate their grievances.....

Mr. C. W. MORLEY: Very little time I will take, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : Sir, the hon. the Mover, Maulavi Abdul Khaleque Ahmed, has a right of reply.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Yes.

Maulavi ABUL KHALEQUE AHMED : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very glad to gather from the statement of the Hon'ble Supply Minister that there is no chance of any shortage of staple food in the Province of Assam. I am more glad to learn that Assam will not be affected even on the occasion of a famine in other provinces of India. He assured us of the surplus in Assam Valley, but he said that he could not yet make any account of the position in the Surma Valley. I would request the Hon'ble Minister not to withhold all export from the Surma Valley till he is in a position to know the real state of things of the threatened crisis in the Surma Valley. Sir, I must cite a Bengali proverb "ঢাচা অ'পন বাচা"। I would most respectfully warn the Hon'ble Minister that in case of a crisis in the Surma Valley it will be his first and foremost duty to save the people of the Surma Valley from the surplus of the Assam Valley and then and then only if there be a surplus he will export it for the people of other provinces. Sir, the Hon'ble Minister in his lengthy statement did not utter a single word regarding his activities with regard to rooting out corruption and blackmarketing which was a general demand during the last session from all groups of this Assembly. Is it because the Hon'ble Minister himself is the hero of the whole scene? Sir, again I suggest that the Supply Department be taken in the hand of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. Sir, the Hon'ble Minister stated that there is ample Government stock of paddy and rice in the different subdivisions of the Surma Valley. I venture to say, Sir, that this statement with regard to Sunamganj is not correct. The procurement Department failed there to make any purchase. I would request the Hon'ble Minister to make an enquiry and arrange for stock in different centres of Sunamganj so that the people of the deficit and affected areas may get paddy at controlled rate and I request him to do it immediately as the situation there is very alarming. Further, in this connection I should like to say that there will be a scarcity of Buro paddy seeds, almost everywhere. Strenuous efforts should be made by Government to collect and stock Buro paddy so that the Buro cultivators may not suffer during the season time. Sir, there has been a very hot discussion as to the charge of favouritism and nepotism on the part of the Hon'ble Minister in the distribution of contracts, agencies, especially in the Supply Department. In this connection I beg to submit that whatever argument is put forward by Government to plead their efficiency and innocence there can be no denying that some wrong has been done.

Sir, the Hon'ble Minister in charge of Supply invited our suggestion as regards our quota of mill-made cloth, and whether we should get mill-made cloth or yarn in place of Standard Cloth. I suggest that we should get mill-made cloth for our quota of Standard Cloth.

Lastly, before conclusion I request the Hon'ble Prime Minister to give us light as to how he proposes to help the people of the affected areas and what amount he is prepared to sanction for the purpose of relief to the people of the affected areas of the Sunamganj subdivision.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, both hot and cold water has been thrown on me. I must at the outset

thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition who, just befitting his position, has taken up the matter in right earnest and has given some useful suggestions. Sir, with your permission I shall deal with his suggestions first, and then I shall try my best to meet the criticisms of other hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. Sir, I shall have to meet the criticism of 20 hon. Members and I hope unless I repeat anything or I am not irrelevant you will be kind enough to give me the time which I require. While I crave this indulgence I assure you that I will not take even a single second more than what is absolutely necessary.

Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has suggested that so far as imported foodstuffs are concerned, procurement should be made on Government to Government basis. Sir, this was also considered, and only in one case I have been successful, *viz.*, our quota of *masur dal* from the Central Provinces. I made an attempt about some other stuffs as well, but the Governments of other provinces did not like to take the responsibility of doing so. It is not that I tried simply by writing, but at the All-India Food Conference, which was held in Delhi last month, this point was discussed but nothing but cereals was accepted for Government procurement, *i. e.*, the purchase of rice, paddy and wheat, were accepted by the Conference. It was resolved that it did not matter whether a province was deficit or surplus, the foodgrains mentioned above (cereals) should be procured by Government, and then Government will be in a position to know whether any area is surplus or deficit. But so far as *dal*, mustard oil, *gur* and other things were concerned, the same procedure was not accepted because there were vehement protests from many provinces. Sir, this point has again been taken up by us, because in course of this one month since I left Delhi, I am experiencing difficulty. There is only one snag in Government to Government procurement, that wherever the allotment is made we shall have to send an officer there to inspect the quality of the thing. In this connection I would like to mention about our experience during the war when we brought *khesari dal* from other provinces. It so happened that the quality was bad, and at the same time it was not wanted by the people of this Province. A huge stock accumulated, and I am sure if people knew that there was no other kind of *dal* in sufficient quantity to meet their demand and if the quality of this *khasari dal* was good, most of the stock would have been used up.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: May I correct one statement of my Hon'ble Friend? The *khesari dal* which later on was found to be not fit for human consumption was a local product. The imported *khesari dal* was good and was sold like hot cakes.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: I am thankful to the hon. Leader of Opposition, Sir, but I am sorry that the information in my possession is otherwise. Both imported and local products became unfit; however, I am not going to challenge the statement of my *ex-Colleague*, the hon. Leader of the Opposition; I shall make further enquiry, Sir.

Now, Sir, as regards distribution of permits, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned that some of the tenderers, who have got permits, have not got financial backing. Sir, we made it a condition at the time of calling for tenders that the tenderers should submit a certificate from some sound Bank that they will get finance for their purpose. We got that, and in no case we gave permit to anybody who did not possess such a certificate. Sir, it might be that in some cases the Government was misled by some tenderers, but for that, as has been said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition,

the Government should not be blamed. If we try to pick up hairs from the blanket in that case it will be found that there will be nothing left. There is a Bengali saying “ঠক বাদ তে গাঁ উজার”; if we want to do that, we will find none and the system of purchasing with Government money will have to be introduced which I am not willing to do. If we try to find fault that some are war profiteers, some are foreigners it will be very difficult to find one who possesses all the requisite qualifications and no defect. Some though honest lack financial backing; if we take all these things into consideration I think we will be left with none who possesses all the qualifications required by all the hon. Members of the Opposition. Sir, I do not like to contradict that there may be some who have sold their permits, but I can say for the enlightenment of this House that there is a condition in the permit that the permit is not transferable. Sir, if any specific case is known to the hon. Leader of the Opposition I shall certainly take advantage of it, and I can assure him that I shall take all necessary steps as will be advised by him according to the conditions of the permit. I would be obliged to have definite instance.

Now, Sir, as regards the scarcity of mustard oil in Shillong, I can say that very recently, in course of the last few days we have brought up 500 maunds of mustard oil from Gauhati for Shillong consumption. When the scarcity was brought to my notice I brought this quantity up from Gauhati just to supply the people of Shillong. But, Sir, we cannot supply to all parts of the Province from the Gauhati mills. As I explained the other day, we are dependent on the exporting provinces and our traders are feeling great difficulties there.

Sir, our sole object is to give adequate quantities of the necessaries of life at a reasonable cost to our people, but there are also limitations over which we have no control.

Sir, as regards mustard seeds and pulses, about which the hon. the Leader of the Opposition very pertinently referred to—I can say for his information as well as for the information of the hon. House that during the month of February last, three or four days after I took over the charge of the Supply Department, I called for the Director of Agriculture and discussed with him about these two items. In the discussion he pointed out some difficulties that there are not sufficient lands where we can grow pulses and that there are some lands where only mustard seeds can grow. It is our desire to take up both mustard seeds and pulses from this year. We will try to increase the acreage as far as possible for the cultivation of mustard seeds and pulses. What we want is that this year we shall give a great drive with mustard seeds. Sir, we do not want to make this Province self-sufficient only with regard to mustard seeds and pulses but our desire is to make this Province self-sufficient in respect of all foodstuffs as well as cloths, but it will take time. I can assure the House that Government will try their best to expedite the matter.

Now, Sir, before I take up the criticisms of other hon. Members, I must assure the hon. the Leader of the Opposition that his suggestions will be very carefully considered by us.

Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SADULLA: Thank you, Sir.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, after eulogising the Leader of the Opposition for his constructive suggestions, I am sorry to say that I shall not be able to speak in the same strain about the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Sir, after delivering my speech for about 1 hour and 15 minutes explaining the real position I was charged by the hon. the Deputy Leader of the Opposition as to why I went to Rajputana to bring up mustard oil. I am really sorry that he did not care to hear me. It is neither the sweet will of the Provincial Governments nor of the Central Government to allot quotas for us from neighbouring provinces like Bengal, Bihar

and Orissa, the provinces which have been declared as surplus. The Central Government is also bound to allot quotas to the deficit provinces only from those provinces who are really surplus. Was it the desire of the hon. the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that Bengal would give her products to Assam, and her requirements should be met from Rajputana? Is it not really absurd on the very face of it? Sir, it is rather painful to hear such remarks from a veteran legislator like our Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who once adorned the office of a Minister of this Government for about seven years. Sir, another point has been raised by him that due to inefficiency of the Supply Minister no groundnut oil was sent to Assam from Madras. The other day I remember to have said that we sent 3 telegrams requesting the Madras Government to let us know from what place we could get our quota. Even then we got no reply and it was only after we had sent two more reminders when we were informed that their traders had despatched the quota to Assam. Sir, are we to be blamed for this? I took up this matter in the last Conference. I would therefore request the hon. the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that in future he should give me suggestions befitting his position. He should try to follow the debate with due attention and should not say something absurd. I can assure him that so far as I am concerned—I cannot say about others—I have got some respect for him not because we come from the same place and I will carefully consider his suggestions also provided they are sane. (*Laughter*).

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The Assembly is not concerned with your private relationship.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Yes, Sir; I know it but yesterday one hon. Member of Gauhati was accommodated by the Hon'ble Revenue Minister who comes from the same place and to-day also, Sir, you accommodated the Hon'ble the Medical Minister who belongs to your district.

Now, Sir, the hon. Mover of this Motion wanted to have some figures from me which I am going to furnish now. The hon. Mover wanted to know how much was exported from the Assam Valley and how much from the Surma Valley, during the months of April, May and June.

From the Assam Valley Amon was exported to the extent of 27,911 tons and from the Surma Valley during that quarter 3,600 tons were exported. Another point that was raised by the same hon. Member was what would be the actual expense of Procuring Staff of the Assam Valley for the first two months. Sir, the cost for July and August in round figures is Rs. 53,000.

Now, Sir, as regards procurement of rice, if the hon. Members want to know the figures district by district I can give them or if they want the total figure I am also in a position to give the same.

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: Give us total figure.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Rice 9,651 tons. Paddy 3,340 tons. We shall get cess over these quantities. From all these, Sir, you can judge whether I am criminally negligent of my duty and Government will lose due to my action or make a profit or whether the hon. Member who has made this wild charge against me is criminally liable for making such a statement. I leave it to you, Sir, to decide, who is criminally liable and negligent.

Sir, my hon. Friend Maulavi Ziaosh-Shams suggested that the Textile Industry should be taken up by Government. We have already issued a communique to this effect. I am so glad to find my Friend thinking in the same line as we are thinking, but I am sorry to find that the communique had escaped the notice of my old Friend.

Now as regards the allegation about the appointment of the Chairman of the Vigilance Committee, the same hon. Friend said that at present the Chairman of that Committee in his Subdivision is a nominated one and therefore he said that it was not the direction of the Government to nominate one. I admit that the definite instructions of the Government is that the Chairman of the Vigilance Committee must be elected. But I think that it might be due to some reason like shortness of time, etc., the Chairman could not be elected in some cases only and had to be temporarily nominated. But I do not myself approve of this idea of nomination. However, I shall see that all the Chairmen of the Vigilance Committees are duly elected.

Regarding the point raised by my hon. Friend Mr. Harendra Nath Sarma I may say that the matter will be looked into by this Government. I am glad to notice that my hon. Friends of the European Group have already taken up the matter in their hands and in the matter Government will have to do very little.

Sir, my Friend from the Goalpara District, I mean Maulavi Abul Kashem, gave me some credit and for that I was a little pleased to find that at last there was someone to speak in my favour. But ultimately he charged me by saying that I was not inefficient and unintelligent but communal. This is the worst charge that a gentleman can make to another gentleman. Sir, I really felt it. Though he said very many wild and false things against me, they did not touch me so much as this remark did. I have so many friends in his community that when I was branded as communal I was shocked and very much hurt; he has hit me below the belt which is most mean. He made several charges against the Deputy Commissioner. But instead of making such vague charges if he had brought definite charges to my notice I would have taken due steps. Instead of doing that he hurt my feeling which is not befitting an hon. Member of this House. So long as I am in charge of the Supply Department he is at liberty to get all possible assistance and co-operation from me and this I can assure him.

My hon. Friend Mr. Bora spoke about counts of yarn. I can tell him that I shall remember about this and will discuss about it with those who know about it. I shall also see how we can remove our defects, if there are any with regard to this.

Sir, really I was in troubled water until I heard the hon. the Leader of the Opposition and his advice. Maulavi Mayeenud-Din Chowdry quoted me for two points. I will touch the two points he raised. Sir, he is the only person I find who tried to follow me on the floor of this House. On two occasions he mentioned my name and stated that what I did in the past he was trying to do it now. I am really glad that my hon. Friend has shown me some respect and I felt then that I was of some worth at least to one of the oppositionists. He quoted several suggestions which I gave during the last Assembly. I can assure him that I am trying my level best to implement those points—excepting the first one I have adopted the rest to the fullest extent. It is the desire of the Government to collect data as to how much land one cultivator possesses, how much dependents a cultivator has, what is his requirement and what is his production, etc. I can say this much that I shall try to implement them all as far as possible and as soon as possible.

As regards the point raised by Mr. Sen about Vigilance and Liaison Committees. I have no objection if the Committees take over the work of distribution,

checking corruption, black-marketing and so on. Let them settle their own affairs. If they are successful I shall welcome their suggestion for other activities for the benefit of the people. I might be a little late in this respect and that also for good reasons, but nobody can challenge my sincerity. I am sincere to the core of my heart for all intents and purposes for the betterment of the people of the Province.

As regards salt, Sir, I explained the position in my first speech. One hon. Member asked me why I did not reduce the price of salt, I can tell him that I am going to reduce the price by 2 pice per seer. Now the question of further reducing the price, as it seems to me, will automatically come as the Central Government is proposing to withdraw the salt tax. I hope hon. Members have noticed this in the newspapers.

Now, Sir, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my thanks to my hon. Friend, Maulavi Nasir Uddin Ahmed, who really expressed the real grievances which he felt. He spoke from personal experience. It was not the outcome of idle talk while sitting or playing cards. Really I feel that what he has said deserves most careful consideration of the Government. He really expressed his view points with suggestions, and I am grateful to him. I thank him for the suggestion he has given, and I can tell him that I will try to give effect to the suggestion of my hon. Friend as far as possible.

***Maulavi ABDUL HAMID:** May I know where the Hon'ble Minister got the information of playing cards ?

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Let me explain, Sir. There are places where this kind of loose talks go on and card table is one of them. Sir, I pity the hon. Member for not being able to follow me.

***Maulavi ABDUL HAMID:** Was the Hon'ble Minister present there ?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Minister may go on.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, while an hon. Member of the position of a Deputy Leader of a Party makes such imaginary remarks it becomes really difficult to overlook them. Without trying to follow the spirit of my speech he has made some absurd remarks which is not at all befitting his position. What I meant was that the suggestions were not based on rumours. If the hon. Deputy Leader of the Opposition has got any objection let him clearly put it. Sir, I have got nothing wrong in my mind. I have expressed what I felt and rightly too.

Now, Sir, as regards Dr. Hussain, I can say that he practically did my work to a very considerable extent. I expected this from him and he has done full justice to me. As regards his suggestion, I have brought it to the notice of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, and I hope he will give reply to this point. Not only Dr. Hussain but also another hon. Member raised the same point but there are difficulties in accepting the suggestion.

Regarding my hon. Friend Maulavi Muhammad Abdulla, he cut a very sorry figure. He had no substance to talk, so he spoke something nonsense. My point is this: let our people have food and cloth first and then we can take up other points.

As regards Maulavi Abdul Bari, he challenged our action saying that why did we not give to those tenderers who quoted a rate of 7 per cent. As a matter of fact, there was no tender at the rate of 7 per cent. It was the intention of the Government to examine whether we could procure ourselves or not. That was our

first intention. When we calculated we saw that for different reasons and from our Standard Cloth experience as well as the procurement of other materials, it will not be possible. Moreover when we were going to take up procurement of rice and paddy from Steel Brothers we thought that this would be a huge affair and we would not be able to look after it properly and we might fail and we might be criticised for our failure. Therefore we gave it to the tenderers. As I told, there were two tenderers who were working previously and three new tenders were accepted and the policy of the Government was to help the local traders as far as possible. Keeping in view the question of efficiency, if there be one or two experienced men and if there are financial backings, in that case we think that the concern will be able to function satisfactorily.

One hon. Member suggested that in all the exporting provinces of food-stuffs as well as in Bombay, we should keep officers. So far as cloth is concerned, one officer is already there. He was sent by the previous Government practically from the beginning and he is a responsible officer who is looking to our interests at Bombay.

So far as other exporting provinces are concerned, Sir, I can tell this much that in Calcutta we have got one officer and we are going to send one officer to the United Provinces. We are also considering whether we should keep one officer permanently there. From the trend of discussion I find that it would be better if we keep one officer there permanently. But, Sir, it all depends on the quota that will be allotted from that Province. If it is justified, in that case we shall keep one man permanently there, otherwise, we shall send one capable officer, from time to time, just to help our traders. But if we can succeed to make arrangements of procurement and export, as desired by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in that case, of course, we need not require a permanent man to be kept there, but at the time of despatch we shall depute our officer there.

My hon. Friend, Maulavi Nurul Hossain Khan, has said that coming here after 7 months he has found that nothing has been done. Sir, I do not know what he wanted of me. He was quite satisfied while he was at Habiganj, but when he came here after 7 months he found that nothing had been done. As a matter of fact, my hon. Friend did not come here after 7 months; he has come only after 2 months or so. He desired to say something and he said something irrespective of the sense.

Now, Sir, after meeting the criticisms of my hon. Friends, I should say something on the points which I could not touch on the first day. I touched only one side of the problem; but so far as distribution and anti-corruption movement and the general policy of the Government are concerned, I could not do justice which I intend to take up now to make the picture complete. I will not take much time; a few minutes will do.

***Maulavi Saiyid MUHAMMAD SAADULLA:** Is it proper for the Hon'ble Minister in charge to introduce new things? I think he had already the opportunity to speak on them.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: But these points have been raised by hon. Members and I have not touched them. The other day I could not get time. I got only 75 minutes. (*Laughter*).

The problems are so great, the difficulties are so numerous and the charges are so many that in all fairness I should be given sufficient time.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : I hope the Hon'ble Minister will be brief.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Now, some defects have been brought to my notice regarding the Vigilance and Liaison Committees by the hon. Members. Let them bring particular and specific charges, and I assure them that they will receive our best consideration and we will try our best to mend them. I never claimed in the past nor do I claim now that whatever I do is perfect. There may be some defects. It is the duty of the hon. Members to point out the defects.

Sir, we have been charged of treating people in different ways. Far from it. It should never be in the mind of, not to speak of this Government, but of any Government. There are some who have at least got some sense of justice. I have been called communal. This is a mean allegation of the worst type. I can assure the hon. House that our sole intention is to see that all people, whether they are rich or poor and whether they belong to the urban or rural area, get an equitable quota at the minimum price. We are for one and all.

Sir, I have been charged even to-day that we have done nothing to stop corruption. In course of reply to a Question, Sir, my Hon'ble Friend, the Minister-in-charge of Home said that we have already started an Enforcement Department with Anti-corruption Branch who have already taken up with great eagerness and seriousness whatever complaints we received in the past and are receiving in the present. Sir, I can assure the hon. Members that it is our earnest desire, as it was in the past also, to drive out corruption. Sir, I do not understand the meaning of the remarks that have been made against us on the floor of the House. If they are made just to attack Government, as was made in most cases, only for attacking Government and for no other purpose then it is quite clear and as a matter of fact it is so. But I would request my hon. Friends first to know the facts and try to understand the circumstances and then to make remarks against us if we have not done the right thing. Who prevented them to ask me for information? If they ask me for some information and I do not give the information, in that case they can blame me. I am sorry for the remarks that have been made by some of the hon. Members without going into the question properly. I hope that in future, as I am asking for their co-operation, they will make constructive suggestions and I assure them that they will be given the best consideration by the Government, as it is a popular Government. Ours is not a Government, if I am permitted to say so, of this particular Group but it is a Government of the people. My hon. Friends who are sitting on the opposite benches are also part and parcel of the Government. How can they discard their responsibility? Sir, healthy criticisms are always wanted. It is the healthy criticisms which can make a good Government. Sir, I hope that in future, my hon. Friends, if they have anything in particular against me, let them inform me and take me to task. But let not the valuable time of the House be wasted in cursing me as has been done this time for no real reasons. Criticism for criticisms sake without truth is most deplorable to say the least.

Now, Sir, I am coming to the close of my speech and will finish in course of 3 or 4 minutes, as my Leader will have to say something. As some reference has been made regarding the policy of supply of food-stuff, I would like to tell the hon. House that it is my desire to make the Province self-sufficient. Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has brought to the notice of hon. Members a very pertinent point by saying that he did not care for the money but he wanted to get things supplied to the people at any cost. I can tell my hon. ex-Colleague that it is also the intention not only of the Minister-in-charge of Supply but of the entire Government who are anxious to see that people get the

necessaries of life in time. We are not going to export rice and paddy outside so long we are not certain of our position and so long we find that we have not got sufficient stock for the consumption of the people of the Province but at the same time we do not like to waste public money on any account.

Sir, I am sorry, that I have not been able to give a rosy picture of the Supply Department and I can boldly say that at present there is none who can give a rosy picture. There may be many able, intelligent and shrewd men who can tackle the problem better, but, Sir, I can challenge that there is none who can give an all-round rosy picture about food and cloth when the whole world is groaning under the pressure of wants.

There are wants everywhere—want of food, want of cloth—there are a few—one or two countries which are favourites of God, which are not feeling the pinch but the rest of the world is feeling.

Lastly, Sir,

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : The stipulated time is over.

The Hon'ble Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : This is the last sentence, Sir. In comparison with other provinces I am not going to take any credit because this is due to circumstances and not simply to my credit which have placed ourselves in a better position than other provinces. If my hon. Friends go outside the Province if they see four or five other provinces—in their heart of hearts they will say that Mr. Mookerjee deserves credit. Instead of blaming me or the present Government they will praise us and they will thank their stars as well.

The Hon'ble Srijit GOPINATH BARDOLOI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I feel it will be an act of injustice in having to keep the hon. Members waiting at this late hour but certain personal references were made of me by some hon. Friends on the opposite and I have considered it my duty to say something with regard to them. My hon. Friend, Mr. Abul Kashem, and another Friend I do not exactly remember who, were pleased to state that I should take over the portfolio of Supply. I do not know whether it is their kindness or it is due to anything else. Friends who know me and those particularly who know how busy I have got to keep, know whether it is possible for a man in my circumstances to take any more responsibility; but kindness can kill a man also and I would have been prepared to be killing myself if only I knew that I could do any better than what my hon. Colleague Mr. Mookerjee has done. I would assure hon. Members who have made certain charges against him that they can as well make those charges against me. During these six or seven months that he has been in charge of this Department I am keeping close association and contact with him, and I can say with all emphasis, I could not do what he has done. As I will be explaining to you certain policies which were adopted by this Government in consultation with all my hon. Colleagues in the Cabinet, I want to tell you that he was merely carrying out those policies; even in reference to details he has been keeping us all informed. Therefore, if any blame appertains to this administration it equally appertains to me and the Cabinet. So however kind that suggestion might be it will do no good. I might be prepared to kill myself only if I knew I could do something.

While I was the Leader of the Opposition, the present Leader of the Opposition may very well remember, that I put certain constructive suggestions in reference to the food policy which I thought then would have given relief to the

man in the street and the poor man in the village. Our whole policy is based on how best to supply a thing to the consumer at the cheapest rate. The last Government was maintaining many agencies of procurement ; procurers from the Bihar districts for Messrs. Shaw and Wallace and other big Agencies such as the Supply Syndicates brought these things to Assam and then other agencies such as wholesalers and retailers functioned before the things ultimately came to the consumer. Thus there were at least 5 or 6 agencies working and getting profits before the consumer could get his things. Prices therefore must have been in a higher level. But this Government from the very beginning considered it desirable to cut down the number of those agencies as far as possible in order to put the cost of commodities as low as possible. We have accordingly set up only district agencies in place of the big agencies at Calcutta and Assam. As a result of the change of the policy the top people—big people—have ceased to function ; and is it to be expected that we should be subjected to criticism. Some of which was voiced during the day. Sir, if we have distributed agencies to many places and to many people, it is entirely due to that policy, *viz.*, to cut down the intermediate agencies, to give the lowest possible rates to the consumers. Secondly, procurement by Government may possibly be a good thing, but it lent us in huge losses to the Province. It seems however that other provinces have changed their policy in the meanwhile in favour of Government to Government movement. We have therefore been compelled to change our policy as well from time to time. But the broad policy remains and must remain till it has obtained sufficient trial to be abandoned. It is yet expected that these district and subdivisional agencies will bring us enough and to spare for the consumers if the Government of India and the Provinces do not obstruct us in the fulfilment of this policy.

I do not claim perfection for what has been done ; I am prepared to own that the supply has been insufficient for the time being. I am not one of those who would disclaim facts by arguments. But the conditions under which the difficulty has arisen has been explained by the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Supply. I want you to judge us by our motive and the policy, which explains our motive. I know that criticism in these circumstances will be those both in regard to policy and the method of operation. I only want to say, that if there has been anything wrong in the execution and particular cases are brought to the notice of Government, they shall be dealt with by us.

As an illustration of the attempt to reduce prices for the consumers, take the position of cloth. The last Government charged us 23 per cent. *ex-mill* price. In distant places they had to pay 25 per cent but the maximum that could be worked up to under our present system of procurement is 20½ per cent. only, that means to say, that a poor purchaser will get a piece of cloth at least 2-pice cheaper than he used to get before. Similar is the case with the distribution of food-stuff. The present arrangement is expected to make things slightly cheaper ; yet I say that it has not been upto the mark ; till now I could only say that we are doing our best but the policy requires some time to work up and I expect that the Opposition will give us that time.

My Friend over there is talking about change of portfolio. I do not know what he wants me to do. But one thing I can say that nobody on this side of Government is fond of any portfolio. You have got to put your shoulder on the wheel, and, I believe that none of our Ministers has any predilection for any portfolio or any particular nature of work. Therefore, the question that was raised about the change of portfolio had absolutely no meaning for us. Therefore, I do not think it necessary to speak any further on the subject.

There are one or two things that have been raised about corruption. All that is possible for Government to do in this behalf is being done, and I can assure the hon. Members—when the question being raised by Maulavi Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry—if there is any case which requires investigation, I shall take it up. If there is anything we hold dear in public life, it is honesty and integrity. May we consider it to be a thing to strive after. Therefore whenever any case of any unfair dealing and an unjust action is brought to our notice, I could assure that we shall take adequate steps in reference to that.

I have very little more to say, Sir. There is one fact which requires categorical reply ; and that is in reference to certain charge made by Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury regarding arbitration of certain dispute between some food contractors. I could not actually follow him. All that I can say is that if it has any reference to myself or the Hon'ble Home Minister it is absolutely incorrect. Lot of talk goes about in the country and I would request the hon. Members not to listen to them, but to refer to me and I will always give adequate and correct information.

I will not like to take any more time, Sir. I do really thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the height to which the debate was actually taken by him. I do particularly thank my young Friend, Dr. Emran Hussian Chaudhury for having taken us to a discussion of the food situation of the world. I thank everybody inspite of the remarks they have made. Surely we shall take into consideration all that can be taken into consideration subject of course to the policy that I have already enunciated, and in that behalf I will request all to give us a little time for the policy to work.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I crave your indulgence to take about five minutes time of the House. I had no mind to avail myself of any opportunity to take part in this Food Debate. I contented myself by willy nilly gulping the food that was being supplied on the floor of the House in the form of speeches, some well-spiced, some moderately spiced and some highly spiced ; but, Sir, on account of a reference made to me by my hon. Friend, Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury, I owe it to myself to say a few words in order to clear up a point he stressed. Now, Sir, he said that there was a difference of opinion in connection with the distribution of contracts, I think, he mentioned textile, between the Hon'ble Supply Minister and the Hon'ble Prime Minister.....

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY : No, Sir, I did not say that. My position was that it was reported to me that there was some bickerings among contractors and ultimately the Hon'ble Home Minister had to arbitrate it.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS : That also is not true that there was some bickerings among any contractors and thus ultimately I was called upon to play the role of an arbitrator. If my Hon. Friend was informed like this by anybody, he was certainly misinformed. Therefore, Sir, my appeal to the hon. Members is that when such rumours reach their ears suggesting any wrong conduct on the part of any Member, the Ministry or a wrong conduct on the part of any Member belonging to the Congress Party, it would always be better for them to approach the Minister or the Member concerned and ask him point blank about it. There were many tenderers for contract from Government for being agents for the supply of various kinds of commodities. Of these numerous tenderers only some have got the contracts. It is most likely those persons who did not get the contracts became disgruntled and were responsible for

spreading these rumours. But my submission is, Sir, that before giving credence to these rumours and coming to a definite conclusion about the truth of them they should have been verified with the help of definite evidence. To bring charges on the basis of these rumours is really doing a grievous wrong to those against whom the rumours were spread. The episode arising out of the speech of my hon. Friend, Maulavi Mayeenud-Din Ahmed Chowdry, bringing sweeping charges against the Ministry and some Members was closed the other day and I did not expect that any Member would re-open that unhappy chapter to-day; but unfortunately it was re-opened with as much vagueness of details as was done the other day. I am glad and feel happy that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition took up a very nice attitude and what he has said to-day we all appreciate. I would only like to say, Sir, that, from what he said to-day it appears that he wanted to close it in a different way than it was done the other day and that with that object in view he approached you with a suggestion which you accepted. But we were not aware of what his suggestion was.

But, Sir, it appears from what he has disclosed in his speech that he had with him a list showing the relationship between some contractors and some Members and that from the relationship traced the conclusion was drawn that the Members having relationship with these contractors must have also some interest in the contracts given to these contractors. But I beg to submit, Sir, that from relationship no inference can be drawn as to whether a particular Member of the Congress Party or a particular Minister because of that relationship is having any interest in the contract. I also doubt very much, Sir, whether the information that was given to them about the relationship existing between some contractors and Members is correct or not. All these required sifting enquiry and examination before one could come to the sort of conclusion that was arrived at. It is very natural, Sir, that some Members of the Opposition in their enthusiasm came forward with such allegations without taking due care for ascertaining the truth of them. I appeal to them that in future if they want to make any allegation against any Member of this hon. House they would please examine the information very carefully before drawing their own conclusion.

My hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury referred to a statement of Mr. Brojendra Narayan Chaudhury. I did not see that statement. It must have escaped my notice

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: It was published in the 'Shillong Times'.

The Hon'ble Mr. BASANTA KUMAR DAS: I may tell the hon. Member that I did not see Mr. Chaudhury at Shillong after we had assumed office, and it may be that he also was misled in coming to certain conclusions by rumours and hearsays.

With these few words, Sir, I beg to thank the House for the Debate.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. I thank the hon. Members for having taken the trouble of sitting a little late and also for bringing this debate on a very important subject to a happy termination.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 a.m., on Tuesday, the 17th September, 1946.

SHILLONG.

The 22nd November, 1946.

A. K. BARUA,

Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.

A. G. P. (L. A.) No. 186—120—28-11-1946.

[Handwritten signature]