

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

The Council met in the Council Chamber at Government House, on Friday, the 17th March 1922, at 2 P.M.

P R E S E N T :

The Hon'ble Mr. J. C. Arbuthnott, C.I.E., *President*, the Hon'ble the two Members of the Executive Council, the Hon'ble the Minister of Local-Self Government and 32 elected and nominated Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

(UNSTARRED QUESTIONS.)

MAULAVI RUKUNUDDIN AHMAD asked :—

1. Are the Government aware of the fact that the following places in the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur are the chief centres of Muhammadan population :—Jorhat town ; Kekojan and Titabor of Jorhat subdivision ; Golaghat town and Nahoroni of Golaghat subdivision ; Sibsagar town, Nazira and Namtiyal-Sariali of Sibsagar subdivision ; Dibrugarh town, Tengakhat and Doomdooma of Dibrugarh subdivision and North Lakhimpur town ?

provision for a course of Islamic learning.

(b) If the reply to the above question is in the affirmative, will the Government be pleased to state whether there is adequate provision for a course of studies in Islamic learning as laid down and recommended by the Board of Assam Madrassa Education for the Muhammadan students of Assam ?

(c) If the reply to the above question is in the negative, will the Government be pleased to expedite the provision of such a course in these centres or in such of them as require immediate attention ?

2. Is it a fact that there is a proposal to start a training college for teachers ?

Starting of a training college for teachers.

If so, will the Government be pleased to place on the table the detailed scheme for the working of this institution ?

MR. A. R. EDWARDS replied :—

1. (a)—Government are aware that Muhammadans are numerous in the centres mentioned.

(b) and (c)—There are facilities for instruction in the course referred to in most of the centres named.

The adequacy of the facilities provided must in each centre be tested by the demand. All that can be said is that whenever a demand exists and the conditions laid down are satisfied, classes have been duly opened.

The Assistant Inspector for Muhammadan Education when on tour does everything he can to stimulate the local public in suitable centres to form such classes. No further or other action on the part of Government is intended.

2.—A scheme was sanctioned by the Assam Administration in the year 1920.

There is no likelihood of funds for carrying it into effect being found in the near future and there is no certainty of the form which it will ultimately take. In the circumstances Government are not prepared to lay the papers on the table.

SRIJUT DALIM CHANDRA BORAH asked :—

Collection of revenues by Mauzadars.

1. (a) Is it a fact that in some localities in Assam mauzadars are assisted by Government with the services of the Gurkha sepoy for collection of revenue from the ryots?

(b) If so, will the Government be pleased to state the reason which led them to give such military aid to the mauzadars?

(i) Are the defaulting landholders whose arrears are realised with the aid of Gurkha sepoy made liable to any cost other than that prescribed by the Assam Land Revenue Regulation for recovery of arrears?

(ii) If so, what is the rate of such additional cost per head of defaulter?

Improvement of collection.

2. Has the condition of revenue collection improved since the employment of Gurkhas to assist the mauzadars in their collection work?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID replied :—

1. (a) and (b)—It has in some cases been necessary to detail parties of Assam Rifles to protect mauzadars in the performance of their lawful duties.

(i)—No.

(ii)—Does not arise.

2.—The improvement has been most satisfactory.

SRIJUT BEPIN CHANDRA GHOSE asked :—

Treatment by Police officers of Boko thana.

Has the attention of the Government been drawn to the fact that many innocent persons, within the jurisdiction of the Boko thana in the district of Kamrup, are being inhumanly treated by police officers (military)?

If the answer is in the affirmative, will the Government be pleased to punish these officers for their inhuman acts and also to take immediate steps to put a stop to such conduct ?

If the answer is in the negative, will the Government be pleased to hold an enquiry into the matter at an early date ?

THE HON'BLE MR. A. MAJID replied :—

The Hon'ble Member is referred to the reply given to a similar question put by Rai Bahadur Krishna Chandra Chaudhuri.

Copy of question referred to in reply to question No. 1 asked by Srijut Bepin Chandra Ghose.

Will the Government be pleased to state if there is any truth in the allegation that there have been cases of violence committed by the Punitive Police at Boko in the Kamrup district? If so, will the Government be pleased to cause an enquiry to be made into the matter ?

Government are not aware of the allegation in question and do not propose to institute an enquiry. Any persons aggrieved have their remedy in court.

MUNSHI SAFIUR RAHMAN asked :—

Are the Government aware that extreme hardship is experienced by the people of Goalpara for want of a daily Steamer Service between Goalpara and Dhubri? If so, will the Government be pleased to take steps to arrange a daily Steamer Service?

Running of daily Steamer Service between Goalpara and Dhubri.

MR. A. W. BOTHAM replied :—

The Hon'ble Member is referred to the answer* given to a question asked by Srijut Bepin Chandra Ghose during the present session about the steamer service.

RAJ KUMAR CHANDRA NARAYAN SINGH asked :—

Will the Government be pleased to state as to how many free-studentships in High Schools and Cotton College together with scholarships have been enjoyed by the students of the Ahom community?

Free-studentships in High Schools and Cotton College.

MR. A. R. EDWARDS replied :—

The particulars asked for are given below :—

Statement showing the number of free-studentships and scholarships now enjoyed by students of the Ahom community in High Schools and the Cotton College.

	No. of free-studentships.	No. of scholarships.
High Schools† ...	137	30
Cotton College ...	4	9

* Published in the Proceedings of the 14th March 1922.

† The return opposite High Schools includes half-free pupils, two such pupils being reckoned as a unit.

SRIJUT LOHIT CHANDRA NAYAK asked ;—

Selection
of candi-
dates
for Subor-
dinate
Executive
Service.

1. Will the Government be pleased to state what is—

(i) (a) the total number of candidates selected this year by the Assam Valley Board for appointments in the Subordinate Executive Service, and (b) how many of them were appointed from this Valley? And (c) what is their proportion according to the population of the Assam Valley districts?

(ii) From the *Assam Gazette*, dated 28th December 1921, it appears that 6 (six) appointments were made this year for the Assam Valley. Is it a fact that out of six appointments 3 were filled up by the candidates from the other Valley?

(iii) Was Srijut Kamakhya Nath Thakur, B.A., selected for this service? If not, will Government be pleased to reconsider the case of this deserving young man?

MR. A. W. BOTHAM replied :—

(i)—The Hon'ble Member is referred to the reply* given to question 3 (b) asked by Rai Sahib Padmanath Gohain Barua at the present session. Of the eight appointments recently made to the Subordinate Executive Service, one was made on the selection of His Excellency the Governor, three were made on the recommendations of the Assam Valley Selection Committee and four on those of the Surma Valley Selection Committee.

(ii)—Recruitment is made for the whole cadre and not for a particular valley. It so happened that the Assam Valley was under-staffed at the time, and so six of the newly-appointed officers were posted there.

(iii)—The candidate named was not selected for appointment. Government are not prepared to make further appointments at present.

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY asked :—

Pay of
Babu
Janaki-
nath Chau-
dhury.

1. (a) Is it a fact that Babu Janakinath Chaudhury, an Assistant in the office of the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, is doing the same nature of work as that of Babu Girish Chandra Bhattacharja, and that the former is placed in the grade of Rs. 50—4—150, while the latter is placed in the grade of Rs. 150—10—200?

(b) If the answer to question (a) be in the affirmative, will the Government be pleased to state the reasons why such a difference is made?

Pay of
Babu
Rasik
Chandra
Roy Gha-
tak.

2. (a) Is it a fact that the duties entrusted to Babu Rasik Chandra Roy Ghatak, an Assistant in the office of the Director of Public Instruction, are of similar nature to the duties of Babu Girish Chandra Chakravarty, and that the former is placed in the grade of Rs. 50—4—150, while the latter is placed in the grade of Rs. 150—10—200?

(b) If the reply to question (a) be in the affirmative, will Government be pleased to state why such a difference is made?

* Published in the Proceedings of the 14th March 1922.

3. (a) Is it a fact that Babu Monaranjan Das, an Assistant in the office of the Conservator of Forests, is doing the same kind of work as that of Babu Devendra Lal Ghosh, and that the former is in the grade of Rs. 50—4—150, and the latter is in the grade of Rs. 150—10—200? Pay of Babu Monaranjan Das.

(b) If the answer to question (a) be in the affirmative, will Government be pleased to state why such a difference has been made?

4. Is it a fact that the two assistants in the office of the Inspector General of Police who are practically head assistants are placed in the same grade with their junior clerks who work under them? If so, will the Government be pleased to state the reasons why they have been placed in the same grade? Pay of two assistants of the office of the Inspector General of Police.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID replied :—

1-4.—The Government have laid down a scale of pay for the clerks in the office of each Head of Department and within that scale Heads of Departments adjust their establishments and distribute work among the various clerks in the manner they consider most suitable. The Government have no information as to the nature of the work done by each clerk and are not prepared to call for such information. Heads of Departments are responsible for the internal administration of their offices and the Government have no intention of interfering with their discretion.

RESOLUTIONS.

Medical School at Sylhet.

KHAN SAHIB ALAUDDIN AHMAD CHAUDHURI :—Sir, the resolution which stands in my name runs thus ;—

“This Council recommends to the Government of Assam that immediate steps be taken towards the establishment of the proposed medical school at Sylhet.”

The establishment of a medical school at Sylhet is a crying need and a long-felt want. This matter though it engaged the attention of the Government for some years past is still under contemplation. The inconveniences, difficulties and expenses of the people of the Surma Valley in sending their wards to the Dibrugarh Medical school are unbounded and have been hampering the progress of the Surma Valley a good deal. As a Member of the Finance Committee I noticed the Hon'ble Finance Member put down this scheme as a desirable one but could not take it up for want of money. The matter has already been kept in abeyance for a long time perhaps on the same ground of financial stringency and it is not known when better days will come for the Medical school. I think money will be available by the proposed retrenchment and if necessary further retrenchment should be effected and money thus found should be utilized for the Medical school, at least to give it a start this year. I think I need not press the point much for the consideration of the Hon'ble Members of the Surma Valley who must have been getting tired of waiting for the Medical school, but I think I should request my Hon'ble friends of the other Valley to consider the matter calmly and lend their whole-hearted support to it.

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR GHANASYAM BARUA :—Sir, in the absence of my Hon'ble Colleague I am sorry I have got to deal with this resolution. I very much regret my Hon'ble friend's absence. I know how close to his heart the scheme of this Medical school is and I may say that I am not any the less interested in the matter. I need hardly tell the Hon'ble Members that either Minister is not for this Valley or for that but for the whole province. Although my friend is absent I hope the Council will not feel his absence and I will try my best to do my duty with regard to this resolution.

The resolution demands that immediate steps should be taken towards the establishment of the proposed Medical school at Sylhet. Well, Sir, the Hon'ble Mover and the Members of the Council are fully aware of the state of our finances. Independently of anything else I should say that on financial considerations alone it is clearly impossible for the Government to take immediate steps as desired. The project, as every one will realize, is a costly one, while we have no money now and it is doubtful whether funds would be free for some years to come. Moreover, it will be remembered that for a medical school we should first have to extend and improve the hospital. A well-equipped hospital with sufficient number of beds and patients are essentials for a successful medical school. It would clearly be unwise to establish a medical school until it has been shown that there is sufficient clinical material for such an institution to be managed with success and for students to study upon. In these circumstances I can only say that if the

resolution is to be taken at the desire of the people of the Surma Valley for a medical school of their own, Government to some extent is already aware of that wish and will bear this wish in mind. If more than this desired or asked for, Government at the present moment can neither do anything nor promise anything. So the resolution as it stands, I regret I have to oppose. Government cannot accept it in its present form.

RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, it appears from the Government reply that the Government fully realize the necessity of a medical school for the Surma Valley. I, for my part, have been trying for it for some time past and have been in communication with the Hon'ble the Finance Member in regard to this. I was told at the time that money could not be found this year. Now if what the Hon'ble Minister says is true then it seems that the scheme is going to be indefinitely postponed. We have been told that money would not be available for some years to come. This is an answer which is most disappointing. Of course it is impossible to have everything done immediately, but I ask that a start should be made by provincialising the hospital in Sylhet. There has been a recommendation made to the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals about provincialising it. If this is done there would be some hope at least that the thing will be accomplished. Unless this is done our feeling will be one of despair.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—If the Hon'ble Minister will allow me to intervene—speaking from the point of view of the Finance Department I can only endorse what he has said. I need hardly tell the Council that his remarks were made after consultation with the Finance Department. Frankly, Sir, the immediate outlook of our finances is so uncertain that no promise can be held out. The Hon'ble Member who have just spoken said that we might provincialise the Sylhet hospital as a start. Well, Sir, if by provincialising the hospital we give people to think that in the immediate future we are going to carry out the larger project we shall be deceiving them. We can promise nothing. If the question of provincialising the Sylhet hospital is taken up as a separate project by itself I am sure the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Medical Department will be prepared to consider it. But that must not be regarded as any undertaking that the larger project will be taken up in the near future. We cannot agree to give any such undertaking, and I must regret that I should have to make this statement.

KHAN SAHIB ALAUDDIN AHMAD CHAUDHURI :—Sir, after hearing the Finance Member I beg to withdraw my resolution ?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—The request has come at a somewhat late stage, Sir, but perhaps all things considered the Council will agree that it would be well if the resolution were withdrawn.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—I shall take the the opinion of the Council. The question is that the resolution be withdrawn.

KHAN BAHADUR MUHIBUDDIN AHMAD :—I think it is now too late to withdraw the resolution.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—I think, Sir, the majority of the members are in favour of its withdrawal.

SRIJUT LOHIT CHANDRA NAYAK :—We cannot vote on a resolution which involves the Government in additional expenditure.

The motion was then, by leave of the Council, withdrawn.

Pass Book system for rationing the opium-eaters.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—The resolution that I am to move now, Sir, is :—

“ This Council recommends to the Government of Assam that as a natural sequence to the recent census-taking of opium-eaters of the Brahmaputra Valley a Pass Book system be introduced from the next financial year for rationing the opium-eaters of the Assam Valley districts, or as a tentative measure at least in the district of Lakhimpur which is so contiguous to Sadiya where this system now prevails. ”

Sir, This resolution is a necessary corollary to recent census-taking by the Government, of the opium-eaters of the Assam Valley. At least I could draw no other conclusion. Before I enter into the subject I take this opportunity of acknowledging on behalf of the drugged people of this country their heartfelt gratitude to the Government of His Excellency Sir William Marris and to His Excellency personally for their determined efforts to root out the vice from the land. I hail also the Spirit of Temperance that is now hovering over the country's sky. Sir, in moving this resolution, I also remember gratefully the kind words Hon'ble the Finance Member had for me in this connection and I anticipate too, perhaps he will again say that I am going too far and too fast in this matter. But, Sir, this time my resolution has been framed with an eye to both. At this time I remember with a grateful memory the parting wish of Sir Nicholas Beatson Bell, our Missionary Governor, who contemplated “ a thorough scheme of personal registration to be gradually introduced throughout the Assam Valley ” which is now only awaiting a blessed consummation at the hands of his august Successor. I can also well imagine how this consummation, now, will elate the heart of old Rai Bahadur Panidhar Chaliha in the evening of his life, who sounded the first clarion call in this very Council Hall. I feel, Sir, to-day we are only carrying the banner of the old knights who fought so gallantly in the last Council under old order of things. I am proud to see one of them now in the Ministerial Bench, who last moved in this matter in those days, and the defeat of whose similar resolution was a “ personal disappointment ” to Sir Beatson Bell. With such a chronicle behind it I believe, I am justified in bringing this matter again at this right moment, if the meaning and labour of the last census-taking of the opium-eaters is not to be lost. Unless, I am otherwise convinced of the reason of this census taking, I take it, and I am sure the House will agree with me, my resolution is its natural outcome.

Sir, I propose no new experiment. It has been already tried and found quite workable. The result is not disappointing. “ No pass book no opium ” has become the motto of the Political Officer of Sadiya. At Kohima all opium-eaters are registered. In the last Excise Report the Political Officer of Sadiya describes his method thus :— “ No pass book, no opium ; the consumer

is rationed for a monthly amount ; all sales to him must be entered at the time by the vendor on whom the onus rests of seeing that the monthly total amount is not exceeded. With the stricter supervision, illicit sales have undoubtedly largely decreased " Sir, his remarks "illicit sales have largely decreased " show how undesirable a thing it is to have a contiguous district where registration system does not obtain and he actually makes some reflection in the latter part of his report. In this connection, I may be permitted, Sir, to refer to the Registration resolution moved by the present Hon'ble Minister for Self-Government in the old Council. He was kind enough to read before the House a portion of the private letter I had the privilege of addressing him on the subject. There I said, if Sadiya system failed it would not be due to any inherent defect in the system, but to its proximity to a district soaked in opium, where no registration system prevailed. Fortunately, Sadiya system is working satisfactorily and if this system is now extended to other districts, at least to the contiguous district of Lakhimpur which was in contemplation of the Government of Sir Beatson Bell—and which shows how overdue this measure is—I am certain Government will have no occasion to regret this step. Sir, I feel my alternative proposal will not meet the wishes of the House. Nay, some of my friends of the other Valley and hill districts took me to task for not including the whole province in my resolution. I am glad of their zealous advocacy of the cause. If I leave my resolution confined to Assam Valley only, it is only from a desire to take another surer step, which will not be transgressing too much in the declared policy of the Government.

Sir, I do not know yet the exact number of opium-eaters in the Valley after the census operations. In my district, it will come to about thirty thousand. Judging from this, I believe the number of opium-eaters in this Valley will come to almost one lakh. I do not propose any legislation prohibiting new initiates though I devoutly wish it. Now, Sir, thanks to the prompt action of the Government, that the most difficult task of finding out the existing opium-eaters of the Valley has been finished, it remains for the Government to utilize its results to the best advantage of the country. Let a license be issued to every opium-eater in the form of a Pass Book and let him renew it every year. This will further have deterrent effect on prospective indiscreet youthful consumers. Under this system the staff will be able to work effectively and smuggling will disappear to a great extent. In this connection I may bring the ripe experience of a respectable *mahaldar* who has been carrying on the business for last thirty years to bear upon my proposal. As he has permitted me to disclose his name, I do it most gladly. The gentleman is no other person than Rai Sahib Ganga Ram Chaudhury who is a much respected citizen of Dibrugarh. He honestly thinks the Pass Book system will work most potently in stamping out the vice from the country. Sir, the question has been raised so many times in so many forms, the public judgment is so pronounced in this regard, and the policy of the Government is also so clearly declared, that I need not detain the House by dilating on the subject any more. I should only appeal to the Government through this House to give my suggestion a weighty consideration and I am personally hopeful of its results. I now resume my seat with full belief of an unanimous support of my colleagues and firm conviction of its acceptance by the Government of His Excellency who has already earned the blessings of the whole country by his prompt action in several ways in this matter.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID:—Sir, my Hon'ble friend who has moved this resolution has no intention of allowing the Government to grow weary in well-doing. We are now for the third time in the brief life of this Council discussing the opium problem in Assam. We fully recognize its importance and we do not in the least object to its coming up again and again as it does. Our Excise policy has been enunciated so clearly and so often that I need not do this again. Instead I shall begin by telling the Council something of what we have done.

Well, Sir, just over a year ago I told the Council what reduction we had then made in the ration, that is to say the maximum quantity of opium which we allow to be issued to all the shops in one month. In the year 1920-21 the monthly ration was 134 maunds, 16 seers. This year it is 116 maunds, 19 seers, or a reduction of 13.5 per cent. For the coming year, 1922-23, the ration fixed on the ordinary lines was 103 maunds, 22 seers, or a reduction of 11.1 per cent. Now, after considering the census figures, and I shall presently explain what exactly these census figures mean, we have decided on a further reduction to 98 maunds, which will be roughly a reduction by 5.1 per cent. of the ration originally fixed for next year. The Council, Sir, are aware of the measures what we took after the resolution which was carried here in March last year. These were stated in a Resolution dated the 23rd May 1921. We said:—"In pursuance of this policy the Governor in Council has decided that all vendors of opium shall now be required to record the name, caste, age, occupation and village of each purchaser of opium, and also the amount and date of every purchase made. It is recognised that the information may be incomplete or inaccurate, but it will undoubtedly be useful as a basis for, and as a guide to, future action. In order to supplement the information so obtained *mauzadars* in the Assam Valley and *sarpanches* in the plains districts of the Surma Valley and in Goalpara will be directed to record the names of consumers of opium village by village, while in the hill districts the work will be done by the agency at the disposal of the Deputy Commissioner. Touring officers will be instructed to make a point of checking the lists, and as soon as the information obtained has been consolidated the possibility of further steps will be considered by the Government." We hoped that the taking of these steps would enable the rationing of shops and the systematic reduction of the ration to which we are pledged to be done on more accurate and less arbitrary lines than heretofore:

Well, Sir, we took steps to put these measures into force. We regret that owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding for which Government are not responsible this registration and enumeration was only carried out for a period of three and half months and ceased on the 31st of December. As I have said this was a misunderstanding, and orders have already issued for the immediate reintroduction of the system. We have collected figures and so far as possible we have tabulated these, but unfortunately we can place little or no reliance on the figures. This is due to the abnormal times through which we have been passing. The fact remains that the differences between the figures of consumers and consumption according as we take the registers maintained by the vendors, the lists compiled by the *mauzadars* and *sarpanches* and the estimates made by the Deputy Commissioners in the

ordinary course of work, the estimates on which ordinarily their ration proposals would be based, are very great. The vendors' registers of figures may of course be correct as regards the number of actual purchasers, but they do not discriminate between consumers who purchase for their own use and servants or others who purchase for other people. The lists compiled by the *mauzadars* are clearly defective. For this there are many reasons. It may be that there was not always as much interest taken in the task as there should have been. What occurred much more frequently was that the *mauzadar* was too harassed and anxious about other things to be able to do as much as he would otherwise have done. There was a natural reluctance on the part of consumers to admit that they took opium. Some were doubtless ashamed to confess to the habit, some were inclined to resent interference, some were genuinely afraid of the attentions of the non-cooperators. Some one asked in this Council the other day what harm there was in exhorting people, in beseeching them not to take opium. I say emphatically "No harm." I apologise for referring yet once more to the remarks I made last year in the budget discussion about the preaching of temperance. They were :—"provided the efforts of temperance reformers are confined to precept and example and unlawful and objectionable methods are not followed this Government will welcome any reduction in the consumption of liquor, of ganja and of opium, and will cheerfully face any resulting shortage in receipts." Does this Council, Sir, seriously believe that only such praiseworthy methods were followed? I admit readily that the excesses which were committed in the name of temperance in some parts of India were unknown in this province, but in many instances of which we have reliable information improper pressure, picketing beyond the limits of non-violence, actual threats were employed. We have had cases in which opium lawfully purchased was snatched away from the purchaser. Then, Sir, the check by touring officers to which we attached so much importance has not been carried out. It was clearly impossible for Revenue and other officers to do this. And, most important of all, the Deputy Commissioners on whose supervision the whole success of the census depended were unable to carry out their duties. I ask the Council—Hon'ble Members are not ignorant of the times through which our district officers have been passing, not ignorant of their preoccupations and grave anxieties—was it possible for the ordinary Deputy Commissioner to devote sustained attention to this most important subject? Our Deputy Commissioners have all done what they could. Some have found more time than did others to examine the registration and enumeration and have given us valuable information. They have suggested in some cases a reduction of the ration following their examination. Others have frankly had no time at all to devote to this matter, and Government cannot blame them.

I have tried, Sir, to show how imperfect the census has been for causes over which Government had no control. Yet even on this imperfect census we have reduced the ration as I explained earlier. It seems to us clear that the census must be continued in more normal conditions, and we all trust that more normal times are approaching: and that only then can the information obtained be useful as a basis for and as a guide to our future action as we said in our Resolution. I mean the Resolution of last May.

The Hon'ble Mover of the resolution before the Council calls his recommendation the "natural sequence" to the recent census taken of opium-eaters. Perhaps he will forgive me for saying that this rather begs the question. In our Resolution of May last we said:—"The Governor in Council recognises that the resolution which was adopted by the legislature expresses the sincere desire of the enlightened part of the community for reform, and is in the fullest sympathy with this desire and anxious to give effect to it." But I must to prevent misunderstanding say emphatically that we are not so far as a Government committed to any particular course of action. We are not committed to individual rationing. I hope that the Hon'ble Member will not feel it his duty to divide the Council on his proposal. If he does we must oppose him.

I should like to point out one or two practical difficulties. We have reduced, as the Council has been told, and we are reducing the number of shops, our object being to retain only the minimum number required to supply genuine consumers with opium. But the numbers still run into hundreds. Our distances are great, our population is scattered. To adopt the Hon'ble Member's proposal would mean at the very least the employment of one Excise officer at each opium shop, and he would have to be an officer of a standing and in receipt of a salary sufficient to place him above the very grave temptations which would undoubtedly assail him. What would be the cost of such an undertaking? If on the other hand we reduce the shops in each Subdivision to one or two what would be the effect on the existing consumers of the drug? Are the Council prepared to recommend so drastic a measure? These remarks apply with equal force to the minor recommendation that the experiment should be tried only in the Lakhimpur district. This it is true is contiguous to the Sadiya Frontier Tract but is not surrounded on all sides by the Sadiya Frontier Tract, where, by the way, the Political Officer exercises an authority very much greater and more arbitrary than any district officer could possibly exercise. This partly accounts for the success of his experiment. The Lakhimpur district marches with two other districts where under this proposal there would be no restrictions. How would the Hon'ble Member prevent the consumers in the Lakhimpur district from getting their supplies from shops in these districts? How would he prevent smuggling from these districts, or how would he prevent smuggling from the neighbouring hills where the poppy is so easy to grow and where our control is either non-existent or so loose that we can take no effective measures?

In conclusion I should like to remind the Hon'ble Mover that we are making the promised enquiries about the desirability or feasibility of making the smoking of opium in company an offence against the law. I want to assure him once more that we realise to the full, and respect, the purity of the motives by which he is actuated. But I want, Sir, in all friendliness to tell him once more that, as he anticipated, in our opinion he wants to go too fast and too far.

RAI SAHIB PADMANATH GOHAIN BARUA:—Sir, I rise to give my full support to the resolution moved by my Hon'ble friend. More especially I recommend the latter portion of his resolution, *viz.*, to introduce the system in the district of Lakhimpur as tentative measure. Sir, I think there will be no great opposition now to introduce the system even in other districts because recently we have seen that the tendency of giving up the habit of opium-eating and the desire of seeing the extinction of this poisonous

drug is already in evidence in almost every district of the Brahmaputra Valley, which is, as I have already touched upon in my budget speech, chiefly due to the legitimate efforts of the temperance reformers working as non-co-operators. Now, Sir, the time has come and the opportunity presents itself when we may take some practical steps to give a practical shape to our object in view of substantially diminishing the consumption of and severely discouraging the habit of taking this intoxicating drug throughout the province and more especially in the Assam Valley. I think, Sir, there should be no objection on the part of the Officers and the Administration to introduce the system at least in the Lakhimpur district.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—Sir, I have definitely told the Hon'ble Mover that I am compelled to oppose this resolution. I do not understand how the Hon'ble Member says that there will be no opposition.

RAI SAHIB PADMANATH GOHAIN BARUA :—Yes, Sir, but I press that it might be introduced at least as tentative measure; and as it has proved a success in the Sadiya tract which is so contiguous to the district of Lakhimpur, an experimental measure might be introduced with advantage in the latter also without anticipation of any serious difficulties on its way.

MR. E. H. FEATHERSTONE :—Sir, although this resolution has my sympathy I am afraid I shall have to oppose it on the understanding given by the Hon'ble Finance Member as to the policy which Government has adopted and will adopt in future. The system that the Mover proposes in his resolution of having Pass Books appears to me to be very cumbrous and the best way of getting at the root of the question is stopping or reducing the supply of opium in the first instance. I think as we have an assurance from the Hon'ble Finance Member as to the policy of Government to keep on reducing the supply of opium I think that the opinion of the Council will not be in favour of the resolution.

RAI BAHADUR PROMODE CHANDRA DUTTA :—Sir, I should like to say just a word, and I hope I shall not be misunderstood by the Hon'ble Mover when I oppose the resolution. We have heard from the Hon'ble the Finance Member that the census which has been taken is defective. If that is so, the ground on which he takes his stand falls. The next question is that of cost. We have it from the Finance Member that the cost will be something very large. Without knowing what the cost will be I for one am not prepared to ask the Government to take any step. On these grounds I think the resolution is one which cannot, though we have all sympathy for the cause, have our support.

SRIJUT DALIM CHANDRA BORAH :—Sir, may I ask what will be the probable cost of the system in the Lakhimpur district?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I fear, Sir, I cannot even give the roughest estimate. I cannot say offhand how many shops there are in the Lakhimpur district, but if the Council realise that in each shop we should have to have an officer of the status of perhaps an Extra Assistant Commissioner and on that pay the cost would it is clear run to a very large figure.

SRIJUT LOHIT CHANDRA NAYAK :—Sir, though the resolution has my full sympathy still I am going to oppose it not only because the task will be a cumbrous one, but at the same time we have got to think of the cost. In the face of what we have heard from the Hon'ble Finance Member we may be rest assured that the policy adopted by the Government will go far to kill the devil, so to speak. On these grounds, I oppose the resolution.

MAULAVI MUNAWWAR ALI:—I beg, Sir, to ask the Hon'ble Mover whether he should like us to vote for a resolution about which he has not presented any scheme whatsoever as to the amount of cost. He has suggested one district and has not even made a mere mention of the number of opium shops that are existing in that district. He has not given us any clue to the measure of the money that may be required for the purpose. Would he, Sir, request us to commit ourselves to a scheme in a manner which would not be anything but haphazard. To my mind, the nature of work seems to be difficult and it would be cumbrous too, nor will it serve any good or useful purpose inasmuch as the difficulties to be overcome would be rather enormous as pointed out by the Hon'ble Finance Member. In spite of my most hearty sympathy for the cause advocated by our friend, I cannot, Sir, lend my support to his resolution. Sir, in this very House we have often and often urged that whenever a new problem comes before the House, it should at least be accompanied by a bare suggestion of the scheme. I therefore request the House to bear in mind that whenever any of us bring anything new before the Council, we may at least give them some idea about the scheme so far as the cost of the scheme is concerned. In these days of financial difficulties the most important question that suggests itself to us is the question of cost. And when we find that the good that may accrue may not be in proportion to the cost we have to dissociate ourselves from it. I therefore in all humbleness would request the Hon'ble Mover if he can see his way to withdraw the resolution. He of course will have full right to bring it up again in a simpler form with a very definite scheme before the House.

SRIJIT NILMONI PHUKAN:—Sir, after what I have heard from the Hon'ble Finance Member and some of my friends, of course, I think that it would be prudent on my part not to press the resolution further. But before withdrawing the resolution—I am also not in a mood to divide the House when so long we have been able to work together on this point—I want to make certain replies to the Hon'ble Finance Member which he expected of me, and some of the Members also. As regards my scheme, actually it was not a question of scheme. It is known to the House that the ordinary census of the opium-eaters was taken by the Government through the mauzadars and the *mahaldars*. In my district I took some part in this matter and I can bear testimony to the fact—exactly what some of my friends say and the Hon'ble Finance Member has said, happened—that the census-taking has not been properly done. There are great variations in the figures of the mauzadars and the *mahaldars*, and in my private talk with the Hon'ble the Finance Member just after the resolution was passed in the Council I anticipated it on the part of the *mahaldars*. I examined myself several cases in the *mahaldars'* books. A certain opium-eater who had taken 14 tolas of opium in one month was put down in the mauzadar's book as having taken only two tolas or so in the whole month. This shows that either no proper account was kept in the *mahaldar's* book or that the opium-eater did not tell the real truth to the mauzadar. I understand that this census-taking by the mauzadars, or I think the *mahaldars*, will be continued next year. The same thing I am sure will again happen, and in order to remove these anomalies and that the trouble already taken by the Government should not go for nothing, I have suggested this system of pass book, and this is to my mind a very simple matter. I have heard some of the Hon'ble Members asking the Hon'ble Finance Member that supposing the system is introduced in the Lakhimpur

district how many officers will be required to look after this work. I think there are between 20 to 25 opium shops in the Dibrugarh subdivision. Of course if so many officers are to be retained there of the grade of a Sub-Deputy Collector or Extra Assistant Commissioner to look after the *entry* of the pass book certainly my scheme would be a titanic one, but in my scheme no such supervision is required. What I suggest is that each consumer should be given a pass book, something like a savings bank book, in which the *mahaldar* will make an entry of the amount issued to the consumer at each sale, so that if a man is entitled to two tolas a month the *mahaldar* will be able to say on an inspection of the pass book when this amount has been issued and stop his further rationing. How this can be a cumbrous matter I do not understand. If such small pass books are issued to the consumers I do not think the services of an officer will be required. So it is not a question of expenditure to the Government but rather I may tell the House that if this pass book system is introduced, like the gun licenses, and they are sold at one rupee each nearly a lakh of rupees will be coming to Government and Government can well afford to spend fifty thousand or sixty thousand from it for the extra work entailed. This is my idea, and if it is not practicable to be tried for the whole district it may be tried in a smaller area. However, if the House thinks that at this moment after the assurance given by the Hon'ble the Finance Member that the matter has received the careful attention of Government and it will receive the same attention in future I will have no objection—and seeing the spirit of the House which I mis-judged—to withdraw this resolution. Only I should like to be clear on the point that the present system will never work well. So far as my own experience goes, neither the *mauzadars* nor *mahaldars* have taken the matter seriously and as it is honorary work they can never be very serious, and this is why I suggested this measure. Of course if the House is not in a spirit to accept it I do not like to divide it. But may I make another request? If the Hon'ble Finance Member is not in a position to accept my views in a modified form may I request him that next financial year on this very question of introducing a pass book system he would appoint a small sub-committee to see whether there is any possibility of introducing this system? If that assurance is given, of course, I shall be only too thankful to him for that. For it is with the best of intentions that I have moved this resolution after knowing the results of the census operations.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—Has the Hon'ble Member withdrawn his resolution, Sir?

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—I gather that he is pressing his resolution so far from withdrawing it.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—I wanted to hear the Hon'ble the Finance Member on this point.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I may say, Sir, that if he withdraws I shall ask your permission and the indulgence of the Council to explain one or two points. But I want to know first what he is doing.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—I have said that I withdraw when the House is not in a mood to support it. But I hope the Hon'ble the Finance Member will give

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THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—Sir, I have no right to speak as the resolution has been withdrawn, but possibly Hon'ble Members would like * *

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—When the resolution is withdrawn there is no discussion.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I only suggested an explanation. There can be no discussion on a resolution which is no longer before the Council. I do not wish to press any remarks on the Council.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—If the Hon'ble Members like I have no objection to the explanation.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—The number of shops in the Lakhimpur district I find is 51. I find too that there has been some misunderstanding about the resolution.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN :—May I know what the figures are for Dibrugarh subdivision?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I am sorry, Sir, but I have not got figures for the Dibrugarh subdivision. By the pass-book system I understood the Hon'ble Member to mean the system which is followed in Burma under which a holder can purchase opium to the extent allowed in his permit. I think the Council will agree that there is some justification for my assumption. The resolution asks that the pass book system be introduced from the next financial year for rationing the opium-eaters of the Assam Valley Division.

I still maintain, Sir, that if no one is to be allowed to purchase opium except by having a pass-book for which he pays a fee we cannot let it depend on the honesty of the consumer or the honesty of the shop-keeper whether the law is observed or broken. In Burma where the system is in force the number of shops is very small. They have I understand at each shop a fairly senior Excise officer whose duty is to see that irregularities do not occur. I should be sorry if Hon'ble Members thought that I was misleading the Council.

As regards the suggestion the Hon'ble Member made about the appointment of a small sub-committee next year all I can say at the present moment is that this will be considered.

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

Selection of candidates for Provincial Civil Service and Subordinate Executive Service.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR moved the following resolution :—“That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that for Surma Valley the Committee for selection of candidates for the Provincial Civil Service and Subordinate Executive Service henceforth be composed of seven members. The Commissioner will be the president and the Deputy Commissioners of Sylhet and Cachar will be official members and 4 non official members nominated, or elected, two from each district—one Hindu and one Muhammadan.”

He said :—Sir, this year I had the fortune to be a member of the Selection Committee for the Surma Valley. This has given me the knowledge and privilege to move this resolution to-day in this Council and I hope the whole Council will agree with me to support this resolution for the following reasons.

"I suggested that both the Deputy Commissioners of the Surma Valley should be in the committee instead of one only, as it is now. Because the Deputy Commissioner of each district forwards the applications of the candidate with his remarks to the Committee. If one Deputy Commissioner be in the Committee it is quite natural that he will try his best to nominate that candidate whom he had strongly recommended or for whom he had any fair opinion. This shows that the fortunate candidate of the district whose Deputy Commissioner is in the Committee, will get some advantage over and above the candidates of the other district whose Deputy Commissioner is not in the Committee. The Committee is intended to nominate candidate impartially. In such Committee one batch of candidates should not be allowed to have any opportunity to be enjoyed against some other batch. And at the same time the Deputy Commissioner is a most desirable person in the Committee. The Deputy Commissioner of Cachar not being in the Committee he can't see to the interest of his district. Thus Cachar people do not get their reasonable share in a services. Sylhet people pay land revenue less than eight annas per head per annum while the Cachar people pay about Rs. 1-8. The population of Sylhet is nearly 25 lakhs and that of Cachar is nearly five lakhs. Therefore Cachar may expect reasonably 1/5th of the appointments. But at the time of the last Selection Committee we found that beside all retired Extra Assistant Commissioners of Sylhet there were 25 in the service while there was only one Extra Assistant Commissioner of Cachar in the service and none retired. Still all the Extra Assistant Commissioners this year are appointed from Sylhet. Had the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar been a member of the Committee Cachar would not have met with this sort of injustice. Sir, this reminds me of an old and pathetic story "পাইতে বেড় কাটতে দেড়" Once upon a time there was one Rajah Bhoja and Ganga Ram Teli—Teli means oilman. Both of them were born on the same day nearly at the same moment. The difference was this when the planet "Vrihaspathi" (Jupiter) poured water over his head in bathing, naturally he closed his eyes and at that very moment Gangaram was born and Raja Bhoja was born just when "Vrihaspathi" opened his eyes. The same results were written in their horoscopes. It was mentioned in their horoscope that on a certain day each of them would get a four-footed creature. Vrihaspathi's eyes being open when Raja Bhoja was born he was presented with an elephant and his eyes being shut when Ganga Ram was born, the latter got a big frog in the field. On another day as it was in their horoscopes that each of them should receive injury from weapons Raja Bhoja got a slight injury from his knife while mending a pencil but Gangaram cut one of his legs into two while chopping wood or fuel.

Now compare the fate of Sylhet and Cachar. When it was the time of gain, Sylhet got 25 Extra Assistant Commissioners and Cachar got only one. This, according to the story is "পাইতে বেড়" the meaning of which is that at the time of gain it is frog for Cachar. Again land revenue paid per head by Cachar people is about three times that of Sylhet people. This is equivalent to "কাটতে দেড়" which means that at the time of loss it is a leg for Cachar. The absence of the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar whom I may call "Vrihaspathi" is the only cause of the evil fate of Cachar.

So long Cachar is a temporary-settled district, the people have hardly any chance to avoid cutting their legs. But I believe legitimate attempts may be made to turn the frog into a pony though not an elephant.

Hence I suggest that both the Deputy Commissioners of Sylhet and Cachar should be in the Committee.

I suggested 4 non-official members two in each district, one Hindu and one Muhammadan, because the Committee as it stands now has got only two non-official members which has tendency to give rise to discontent of unfair representation. Take for example if two members are taken from one district the other district will cry as loudly as their voice permits them to do that they are not represented in the Committee. If on the other hand one member is nominated from each district the nomination is bound to be either from Hindu or from Muhammadan. If a Hindu member is taken the Muhammadan will have the just right to protest or if a Muhammadan is taken the Hindus are bound to raise cry. Therefore under the present form of Committee fair representation cannot be attained. Hence I suggest that one Hindu and one Muhammadan member should be taken into the Committee from each district.

I suggest the non-official members are to be elected by the voters of the Provincial Legislative Council in the district. Such election will be made at the same time of the Council Member. The life of the Committee will run with the life of the Council. Before the next election the method of nomination may be followed. This method if adopted there will be hardly any extra expenditure and troubles for election.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I am sorry, Sir, to find that the Rai Sahib has so little trust in his fellowmen, not even excluding the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet. The only person in whom he seems to place any reliance seems to be the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

I confess, Sir, I was not quite certain of the object of this resolution when I first saw it. It is now, I think, clear to us all that the object is the natural and laudable desire of the Rai Sahib to see that his district does well in the matter of appointments. But however laudable this desire may be it is hardly I suggest a sufficient reason for altering our system of selection. The Council are aware what that is. We follow the recommendations of the Public Services Commission except that instead of having one Selection Board for the province we have one for each Division. This is composed of the Commissioner of the Division, the Senior Deputy Commissioner, the Principal of the local College, and two Indian gentlemen co-opted by the Commissioner. I have never heard the choice of the Commissioner questioned. The gentlemen selected to the best of our knowledge have always commanded the confidence and respect of the inhabitants of the division, and as the Hon'ble Mover told us he himself was recently chosen by the Commissioner to be a member of the Selection Board. On the basis of population I suggest that Cachar was well represented on that Board.

The real objection, Sir, to the proposal is that we have not taken, we cannot take, the district as the unit in considering the representation of communities. We recognise broad distinctions, Hindus and Muhammadans, inhabitants of the Assam Valley and of the Surma Valley. We go further. We recognise Ahoms, Khasis and so on. The Council surely would not wish to discriminate between the Hindus of Sylhet and the Hindus of Cachar or between the Muhammadans of Sylhet and the Muhammadans of Cachar.

Then, if we are to be logical, action on the resolution would have to cover the whole province. If we agreed to put on the Board the Deputy Commissioners of Sylhet and Cachar and two non-official gentlemen from either district could we justly refuse similar representation to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills? Should we not be compelled in the Assam Valley to do the same for the six districts there and possibly for the Garo Hills as well? It is quite clear that these Selection Boards must not be unwieldy. We have five members already and we, at least, think that the system works very well. We see no reason to make any change.

MAULAVI RASHIDALI LASKAR :—Sir, I beg to say only a word or two about this. I do not wish to discuss the merits or demerits of the resolution, but I beg to bring before the notice of the Council the fact about the Subordinate Service, as the Hon'ble Finance Member remarked; it may be true that Cachar might be represented, but about the Provincial Service I say that Cachar with its 5 lakhs of population.....

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—The Hon'ble Member has misunderstood me, Sir. I was not talking about representation in the Services. I said that Cachar was well represented on the Selection Board. The Rai Sahib said that he himself was a member of the Board.

MAULAVI RASHIDALI LASKAR :—I must admit that I did not quite catch the Hon'ble Finance Member. However, the main grievance it seems to me is that Cachar with its 5 lakhs of population has not yet got a single Extra Assistant Commissioner directly posted. One Extra Assistant Commissioner is only promoted from the Subordinate Service. Then again about the Senior Deputy Commissioner having or not having trust upon him, I see no question of trust here, Sir. The Deputy Commissioner selects or nominates the members and is the best person to know for and against the candidates. So if the Deputy Commissioner is not taken on the Board and some other private member is taken on the Board it is more likely that the private member might know less than the Deputy Commissioner himself. Besides the Deputy Commissioner of one district is very likely to know much less than the Deputy Commissioner of the district from which the candidate comes. So even if the resolution in its entirety be not taken my suggestion is that the Deputy Commissioner at least may alternately be changed.

SERGEANT LOHIT CHANDRA NAYAK .—Sir, I rise to support this resolution whole-heartedly firstly on the ground that it is harmless; secondly on the ground that it does not involve Government in any expenditure. It is quite natural and reasonable that the two Deputy Commissioners of the Surma Valley should be on the Selection Board to consider the various questions regarding the selection of candidates. I think I am convinced by the many examples given by the Hon'ble Mover and they have considerable effect on my mind. In spite of that I must remind my Hon'ble friend the Mover by taking this opportunity of referring him to a couplet of Goldsmith which runs as follows :—

“ How little of all that the human heart can endure
That part which King or Laws can cause or cure.”

That, Sir, should be our motto in life.

KHAN SAHIB ALAUDDIN AHMAD CHAUDHURY :—Sir, I do not understand why the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar should be reasonably nominated to the Committee simply to represent the cause of the people of Cachar. I say the Commissioner is there and he may possibly know all the candidates. I therefore don't think there is much force in the argument that the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar should be one of the Members of the Selection Board so long as the Commissioner is there.

RAI BAHADUR AMARNATH RAY :—Sir, I think the Hon'ble Mover's demand is quite unreasonable. He himself said that the population of Sylhet was about 25 lakhs, whereas that of Cachar is 5 lakhs. I therefore do not see how he can reasonably claim equal representation.

REV. J. J. M. NICHOLS-ROY :—May I ask, Sir, how many members there are on the Select Committee now?

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—Five—the Commissioner, the senior Deputy Commissioner, the College Principal and two Indian gentlemen. The Commissioner nominates. He selects sometimes from Sylhet and sometimes from Cachar. We do not know. The rule is that the senior Deputy Commissioner is a member, though I have myself as Commissioner taken a Deputy Commissioner other than the most senior in the Division on the ground of convenience.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—Sir, I do not say that the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet should be appointed. I only say that the Deputy Commissioners of the respective districts if appointed will see to the interests of their own districts; that is my intention, and I don't see any harm if the Deputy Commissioner is appointed a Member of the Committee.

The resolution was then put and a division was taken with the following result :—

Ayes.	Noes.
Srijut Bihnu Charan Bora.	The Hon'ble Mr. W. J. Reid.
„ Dalim Chandra Borah.	„ „ Mr. A. Majid.
Mr. A. J. G. Cresswell.	„ „ Rai Bahadur Ghanasyam Barua.
Srijut Bepin Chandra Ghose.	
Maulavi Rashid Ali Laskar.	Mr. A. W. Botham.
Srijut Lohit Chandra Nayak.	Mr. A. R. Edwards.

Ayes—concl'd.

Noes—concl'd.

Rai Sahib Bepin Chandra Deb Laskar.
Munshi Safur Rahman.

Mr. J. R. Cunningham.
Khan Sahib Alauddin Ahmad Chaudhuri.
Sardar Bahadur Anjab Ali Khan.
Rai Sahib Padmanath Gobain Barua.
Babu Krishna Sundar Dam.
Rai Pahadur Amarnath Ray.
Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy.
Rai Bahadur Promode Chandra Dutta.
Mr. E. H. Featherstone.
Rai Sahib Manomohan Lahiri.
Maulavi Munawwarali.
Haji Muhammad Abdul Ahad Chaudhuri.
Khan Bahadur Muhammad Bakht Majumdar.
Srijut Nilmoni Phukan.
Mr. E. S. Roffey.
Dr. H. G. Roberts.
Raj Kumar Chandra Narayan Singh.
Mr. W. E. H. Grayburn.

The ayes being 8 and the noes being 23, the resolution was negatived.

Executive Councillors in Assam.

The following resolution of Rai Bahadur Promode Chandra Dutta was withdrawn by leave of the Council:—

“This Council recommends to the Government of Assam that the Government of India and His Majesty's Government in England be moved to take such steps as may be necessary to reduce the number of Executive Councillors in Assam to one.”

Statement showing effect of Resolutions.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN:—I beg to move this resolution:—

That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that a statement be laid on the table at the beginning of every session of the Council showing what definite steps have been taken or are being taken to give effect to the resolutions passed at its last session.

Sir, my resolution is, I think, a most harmless one, inasmuch as it does not involve any expenditure, and so far as I remember, I believe a similar resolution has been accepted by the Central Provinces Council. My intention in moving this resolution is not that the recommendations of the Council which are accepted in the form of resolutions are not being given effect to, but that there may not be any vague idea in the minds of any members of the Council that these resolutions are not being considered. So, on the whole

if my suggestions are accepted and if every time we come to the Council we find on the table a list showing that the resolutions which we have already passed have already received the attention of Government or are in the way of receiving attention, then that will satisfy the minds of all the members, and if there be any misgivings they will be removed. This will not be a very tedious task for the Government also, now that the resolutions are getting fewer and fewer. So I hope that Government will be pleased to accept this resolution.

RAI SAHIB PADMANATH GOHAIN BARUA :—I beg to second the resolution.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—The strength of my support to this resolution, Sir, may be gauged from the fact that I myself was contemplating to propose a resolution of this nature, and I was so glad to find that my friend, the Hon'ble Mover, had brought the same question. It would be very gratifying to the members of the Council to be able to know that action is being taken or has been taken on the resolutions carried in the previous session of the Council. Sir, I was myself so anxious to know the result of certain of my resolutions accepted in the September sessions that I put questions as to them and was glad to know that Government was moving in the matter. There are yet certain other resolutions about which we have not yet been enlightened as to what Government are doing. For example, I may mention one, that is the resolution accepted in the September session about postponing the work of the courts on Fridays for an hour. We have not yet heard what action has been taken as to that. I should be glad to learn if definite action has been already taken. This question was brought to my notice in my subdivision and people complained that they were not permitted, although not prevented, to go to the mosque to say their prayers on Fridays, and that cases were conducted and the courts were sitting on Fridays and a large number of the litigious Muhammadans, for fear of losing their cases, could not say their prayers... ..

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—May I suggest, Sir, that this is a little foreign to the subject of the resolution.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—I think the Hon'ble Member is only giving an instance.

MAULAVI MUNAWWARALI :—Yes, Sir, only giving hints, only to bring to the notice of the Government how very necessary it is that we should know what action has been taken on the resolutions passed by the Council so as to be able to say to the public that this is not a mere paper transaction or mere speeches in Council.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—It seems to us, Sir, that there are three reasons against this resolution. The first, I need not remind the Council, is that any resolution operates only as a recommendation to the Local Government. The second is that it implies, and I maintain without any justification, that this Government is prone to secrecy, that it is not willing that its acts and decisions should be known. The Hon'ble Mover has it is true disclaimed any such intention. The third is that it is always open to any member to ascertain by asking a question what action has been taken on any resolution. This is the line of action which Maulavi Munawwar Ali says he followed on one occasion. If he had followed it on other occasions also he would undoubtedly have similarly received information.

SRIJUT NILMONI PHUKAN:—Sir, I want to make a reply to this. I never meant by this resolution that Government keeps anything in secrecy or that Members are not supplied if they put questions with any information or that all our resolutions should be accepted and acted upon by the Government. I do not mean that. Whatever action is taken—if any action is taken at all—on any resolution, then if that is known at the beginning of every session, it will give a clear indication to all the members present. Further, perhaps it will also save the trouble of replying to each member individually in the way of questions and answers. That was my motive. I do not mean that by accepting this resolution the Government is bound to give effect to every resolution. That is not my intention. If any action is taken, and if that is known to the members at the beginning of every session I think that will smooth the matter. It would be better than asking questions as my Hon'ble friend Munawwarali did. Government might be taking action on some of the recommendations, but we do not know of it. If a member asks a question and gets information he alone knows it, because he might have asked for it at some other time. My intention is that if these are laid on the table at the beginning of each session, then every member would be able to know what is being done to the resolutions passed. That is all I intend.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID:—I must apologise to the Hon'ble Member, Sir. It was remiss of me not to have acknowledged more fully what he said in his opening speech—that he did not mean that resolutions were disregarded by Government or that Government worked in secrecy. I hope he will not think that in what I said I had any intention of accusing him of so doing.

The resolution was put and adopted.

Quarters for Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR:—Sir, my present resolution is:—

“That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that all Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors be provided with Government quarters.”

When an Extra Assistant Commissioner or Sub-Deputy Collector is transferred from one district or subdivisional headquarters to another, he is put to great inconvenience as regards procuring a suitable quarters in his new place. On the other hand, if any one builds a quarters in his new place at his own cost he has invariably to sell it at a much reduced price at the time of transfer.

Again in all districts and subdivisions quarters are not available on hire. Even in those places where hired quarters are forthcoming for the purpose, the owners demand exorbitant rent. Thus in both ways these two classes of officers have to meet with great disadvantage.

Now if the Government kindly undertake to build quarters in all districts and subdivisional headquarters for the Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors, the difficulty may very easily be removed. It is admitted that the Government will have to spend some money for the purpose; but this deficit may be met by rent realized from the officers who will use the quarters. The use of such quarters by these classes of officials will be compulsory and a portion of their salary will be deducted as rent according to the scale fixed by the Government. We are glad to find that

the Government have provided free quarters for the police and rented quarters for the officers of some other department. The services of Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors are transferrable and hence it is absolutely necessary to provide them with quarters realising rent from them.

The executive officers are always busy with heavy and responsible work. When they are transferred to a new place their first duty becomes to procure quarters and arrange household materials. This is evidently a great hindrance to the prompt discharge of their duties.

In consideration of the valuable services rendered by the Executive Officers I fervently hope that the whole House will be at one with me in supporting the resolution.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—I readily admit, Sir, the force of much of what the Hon'ble Mover of this resolution says. We realise that in this province difficulties are experienced at almost all stations and all centres by Government officers who cannot find suitable accommodation and have to depend on houses constructed by the enterprise of private landlords. We have liberal rules for giving house-building advances but it is not every officer who can take advantage of these. My own views are known to the Council. I told them a year ago in the course of a debate that for many years it had been my firm belief that every Government officer should have quarters allotted to him. Then when he is transferred he knows that he will find suitable quarters provided for him at a rent calculated on his monthly salary and will not have to depend on the favour of a local landlord for accommodation.

The Hon'ble Mover, Sir, said that our difficulties could be very easily removed. Whether this will be easy or not I leave the Council to judge. The only thing that has stood in the way of our constructing more houses for our officers is the question of cost. The resolution refers only to Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors and I am sure no one here will contend that the officers of other services should not receive a similar concession if this were possible. The cost of building has increased, and according to our latest estimates to provide our Extra Assistant Commissioners with houses of a semi-permanent type would cost seven and a half lakhs. If the accommodation was *kutcha* it would cost some three lakhs. For Sub-Deputy Collectors the cost would be two and a half lakhs. We have from time to time built quarters here and quarter there and we shall continue to do so. More than that I fear we cannot do.

SRIJUT DALIM CHANDRA BORAH :—I think, Sir, I should thank the Hon'ble Mover at least for courtesy's sake for his bringing so many things before us during these days. He deserves our thanks simply because he is actuated by the philanthropic motive to do good to the public. But I should like to say that the Hon'ble Member has lost sight of the fact that the Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors have already been favoured with big salaries. He would rather render great services to the country if he would take into consideration the case of the poorly paid clerks and mohurrirs who scarcely go with two meals a day. These clerks deserve more encouragement and sympathy than the highly paid officers.

However, I would not have the least objection to support his resolution had we been in a solvent state. I would not only move the Government for their lodge and board but also for a suitable arrangement or provision for their marriage expenses as well (laughter). Since we are not in a solvent state it is useless to thrust our hands into an empty purse simply to disgrace ourselves.

I think the Hon'ble Mover has got an idea from the speech of the Finance Member as to the extent of expenditure that his scheme involves. Such a resolution is bound not to meet with the sympathy of the Council. I think he is now satisfied to withdraw the resolution.

The motion was put and negatived.

Civil Sheristadars.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—Sir, my present resolution is :—

“That this Council recommends to the Government that duty allowance of Rs. 30 and Rs. 10, respectively, be attached to the posts of Civil Sheristadars in the Assam Valley Districts and Cachar or their pay be fixed as follows :—

Civil Sheristadar at Sadar Rs. 100—5—150.

Civil Sheristadar at subdivision Rs. 75—5—125.

I need scarcely remark that the Hon'ble Members are quite aware of the duty and responsibility of the Civil Sheristadars in the Ministerial Service. I think that the task and responsibility of the Civil Sheristadars are in no way lighter than the Subdivisional Head clerks whose scale of pay has recently been revised to Rs. 100—5—150. The Civil Sheristadar is the Commissioner for administering oaths on affidavits, as such is required under the High Court rules to be a specially trustworthy capable and efficient officer. He is also delegated with certain functions of the Judge such as, signing Civil Court processes including warrants of arrests, signing certified copies of documents issued from the Civil Court. He has to receive and examine plaints, consider court-fees, check Nazir's account and etc. The Civil Sheristadar at sadar has to act as Sheristadar to the Judge or Sub-Judge as well as to the Munsiff. It is thus clear that the responsible duties which a Civil Sheristadar has to perform mark him out for distinction in regard to pay from the ordinary clerks over whom he has to exercise supervision. But in the recent revision of scale of pay of the Ministerial officers of different services the Civil Sheristadars have been brought to the same level with the other ordinary clerks in respect of pay, viz., Rs. 40—4—4—60—4—100 while formerly they were clerks of the Upper Division. In the district of Sylhet distinction has been marked in the posts of Civil Sheristadars by attaching special allowances to these posts as follows :—

			Rs.
Civil Sheristadar to the Additional Judge	20
Civil Sheristadar to the Sub-Judge	20
Civil Sheristadar to the Munsiff	10

In the circumstances it is only expedient that in the Assam Valley Districts and Cachar the salary attached to the posts of Civil Sheristadars be raised immediately and made sufficiently attractive. I think I am perfectly justified in appealing to the good sense of the Council to give whole-hearted support to the resolution just moved by me. The scheme does not involve a heavy expenditure.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—It is with some surprise, Sir, that I find myself replying to this resolution which deals with Civil Sheristadars and seems more a subject for my Hon'ble Colleague. However, a very few words will suffice for reply.

No one wishes to minimise the services rendered by these officers, but I submit, Sir, that the Hon'ble Member hardly allowed the Council to realise that they have received a considerable increase in pay already. Before the revision of pay the Sadr appointments were on a fixed pay on Rs. 80 a month. After the revision they came, as he said, on the ordinary clerical scale of Rs. 40—60 by biennial increment of Rs. 4, and then by annual increments of Rs. 4 to Rs. 100, and of course they did not begin at the bottom. They began at Rs. 80, what they got before, and got credit for the length of service they had put in.

I am afraid, Sir, I have again to put forward the sordid financial aspect. To give effect to the proposal of the Hon'ble Member would mean ultimately for the Civil Sheristadars at Sadr stations an increase of about Rs. 4,200 a year and for those at Subdivisions an increase of Rs. 2,100 a year. I think too, Sir, my Hon'ble Colleague and those members of the Council who have knowledge will agree that the duties and labours of Civil Sheristadars in the Assam Valley and in Cachar are not nearly so onerous as are those of similar officers employed in the courts in Sylhet or for that matter in Bengal.

The resolution was put and negatived.

Subordinate Educational Service.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—Sir, may I ask for permission to ask the Director of Public Instruction if he is going to submit a scheme for the reorganization of the Subordinate Educational Service?

THE HON'BLE MR. J. R. CUNNINGHAM :—I am not in a position to answer the question at the present moment.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—I understand that a deputation is going to wait on His Excellency the Governor on this subject. I think it is desirable to wait and see what action the Government take by way of redressing the just grievances of the class of officers who are the backbone of society and whose case was taken up in 1913 before the sitting of the Public Services Commission.

THE HON'BLE MR. W. J. REID :—On a point of order Sir. Does the Hon'ble Member mean to move or to withdraw his resolution? If he intends to withdraw I do not think our rules allow him to make a speech on the subject.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—Yes, I want to withdraw the resolution, but wish to say a few words.

THE HON'BLE THE PRESIDENT :—You can explain why you wish to withdraw.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR :—I say the case of the Subordinate Educational Service was taken up before the sitting of the Public Services Commission when increment in the pay of any other service was not even dreamt of. With these few words I beg leave to withdraw my resolution.

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

Pay of the Clerks and Muharirs of the Registration Department.

RAI SAHIB BEPIN CHANDRA DEB LASKAR moved the following resolution :—That this Council recommends to the Government of Assam that the pay of the Clerks and Muharirs of the Registration Department should be equal to the pay of the clerks of the General Department of the Deputy Commissioner's office.

He said :—Sir, the pay of the Clerks and Muharirs of the Registration Department has been fixed—Rs. 30 to 60 and Rs. 25 to 30, respectively. But their works are much heavier than clerks of the other Departments. As the Registration Muharirs are to copy daily 10 pages of 300 words and to compare 20 pages and clerks are to do 200 index entries above their legitimate works. They can not keep up works for next day. Whereas in other Departments the clerks can keep up their work for weeks together. From this it will be understood that the works of the Clerks of the Registration Department is more heavy and responsible and in consideration of their works the pay given to them is too inadequate. Even the Tahashil Muharirs who do exclusively Bengali works get pay from Rs. 40—100 according to new scale, also there are Muharirs in Civil and Revenue office who do Bengali works but designated as Clerks, also they get from Rs. 40—100 but unfortunate Registration Clerks and Muharirs are getting step-motherly treatment from the Government though this Department is one of the source of income of the Government. As I am Mouzadar and also Sub-Registrar so I have experience of the nature of works done by the clerks and muharirs of both the Departments and I find the works of the Registration Clerks and Muharirs are too much in comparison with the works of the Tahashil Clerks and Muharirs. In the *kist* time, *i.e.*, three times in a year—one month at a time the works of the Tahashil Muharirs and Clerks increase. But the Registration Clerks and Muharirs are to do heavy works during the whole year. Therefore I hope that the whole Council will kindly support the cause of the poor Clerks and Muharirs of the Registration Department.

THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR GHANASYAM BARUA :—Sir, this is also a resolution with which I have to deal for my colleague who is absent. The Hon'ble Mover bases his claim on the allegation that the work of the Registration muharirs and clerks is not only heavier but more responsible than the work of the Deputy Commissioner's office clerks. With regard to this point however the Government have an entirely different opinion whatever the ideas or experiences of the Hon'ble Member may be. His remarks are based upon a comparison of the Registration clerks with the Mouzadar's clerks. As between them of course the Registration clerks might be a little superior but compared with the clerks of the Deputy Commissioner's office,

they are not only not superior or more heavily worked but it may be said that no comparison can be made between the two services. If a Registration clerk is put in the Deputy Commissioner's office he will perhaps find himself in the wilderness whereas any clerk of the Deputy Commissioner's office will be able in no time to pick up a Registration clerk's work. Government do not think either that their work is heavier or that their work is more responsible than that of the Deputy Commissioner's clerks. Now, the scale of pay of the Registration clerks like that of most other clerks was revised in the year 1920. The clerks of the Registration Department with the exception of a few special posts used formerly to get a pay ranging from Rs. 25 to Rs. 45. They have now been put on a time-scale of Rs. 30 to Rs. 60 with an efficiency bar at Rs. 40, the increment being Re. 1 annually during the first 10 years and Rs. 2 a year during the subsequent 10 years. The moharrirs who used to get Rs. 20 are now getting Rs. 25 rising to Rs. 30. Practically speaking therefore all these clerks and moharrirs obtained an increase of Rs. 20 per cent. at least while their prospects have been considerably improved. There is therefore no case for any further revision of their pay at present and even if there was any the Government could not have afforded the money to undertake it. I regret the Government is unable to accept the resolution and I oppose it.

The motion was put to vote and negatived.

The Council was then adjourned to Saturday, the 18th March 1922.

SHILLONG ;

The 10th April 1922.

S. E. STINTON,

} *Offg. Secretary to the Legislative
Council, Assam.*

