
SOME SPEECHES AND REMARKS

OF

Pandit Nilakantha Das, M.L.A.

In the Delhi Session of
the Legislative Assembly 1929.

(From January to April)

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I

**Opposing the Reference of the Public
Safety Bill to Select Committee.**

4th Feb. 1929.

Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division : Non-
Resident) : Sir, my friend Mr. Ranga Iyer, who is
now, spoke just before me and it is to be regretted
brought into this question many extraneous
with which Members of this House are not con-
I wish he had only concentrated his observations
motion for circulation of this Bill or its reference to
Committee. As for myself, I am not much
sured of this motion for circulation. It is evidently
atory motion, and it has its use only to that extent.
I must make it clear that I shall have perhaps, if
ed be, to go to the lobby with my Leader for obvious
asons.

The debate on this question is not new to-day in this
House. We had long discussions on this self-same ques-
tion in Simla, and there I was not all the time present ;
but what I gathered afterwards was that the main burden
of the argument was that Government have already so
many weapons in their armoury, that no new weapon is
necessary for this purpose. From the speeches of many
of my friends on this side, it would appear as if, to avoid

this measure, they were going, perhaps unwillingly, to give sanction to all other repressive measures and measures for excluding Europeans or Englishmen who are considered undesirable. I am here to give sanction to none of them.

But I am simply wondering how long this kind of thing would go on ; how long imperialism and capitalism would be nursed in glass houses.

Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer : Without capitalism, how can there be labour ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Is labour a counterpart of capitalism ? This is a new idea. Labour has nothing to do with capitalism, as such.

Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer : Has labour anything to do with capital ? Can labour exist in the absence of capital ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : But in modern political philosophy capitalism has a special significance. I have heard the argument particularly of Mr. Ranga Iyer on the evidence adduced by the Honourable the Home Member to justify the Bill. To my friend Mr. Gaya Prasad the evidence was not sufficient, but to Mr. Ranga Iyer strangely that evidence was more than sufficient. Even for arguments' sake, admitting that it is sufficient, I say communism is there. It is a menace and a terror I know, to the world's imperialism and capitalism which are trembling to fall at the very thought of it. Communism is there, a new ideal of world civilization. It is dawning on the horizon ; it has already come up, and in ordinary course, it must affect the destiny of all the previous new ideals of the world. What doubt is there about it ?

There was always an existing order of things which was threatened by any new ideals that came up, and again those that profited by the things existing have always opposed, in the course of history, in this particular manner, all such new ideals. We have had experience in history

of fires at Smith Field during the reign of Bloody Mary. There was also the extreme penalty of the Inquisition, But Protestantism could never be killed. It triumphed on the other hand. Galileo died in jail for something which he said, which appeared as communism to men who were interested in things or orders existing then. But who has lived ? Galileo or the Pope who imprisoned him.

It is a fact that communism has dawned. How ? Who preached it in Russia ? What number were exiled in Siberia and how long ? Do you remember ? Was communism shut out in the snow of Siberia ? You cannot now make this Indian Empire a harem, a Zenana of the British Imperialists, to be exploited in the dark. I say communism has come in. Let it come, and we are here to face it. If you are so very suspicious of your own position here, if the Government is not broadbased on the very will of the people, if you have not convinced our people that your Government is good and that the administration is quite stable, how can you protect all your existing orders in this manner ? Can you ward off all the ideas of communism and other such ideas from the shores of Bombay ? You may deport half a dozen or a dozen Europeans or Englishmen for reasons you know best ; you may suppress the beautiful youth movement for you have power, but will communism be warded off ? Will not the communist principle come into India ? As it is a new idea, it will, as it is new idea, it will, as it is already doing, pervade the atmosphere of the world, and it must come to India as it has come to England or to any other country.

You call it a revolutionary something. What is revolution ? As a student of philosophy I do not understand the meaning of revolution. I do not understand it even in the dictionary. In the order of progress, I know everything new is a stage in evolution. The idea of revolution is a creation of unscientific understanding, or of the people interested. Take the case of a plant, and its flower, which, any botanist will tell you is a variation of

the leaf. A common ordinary man goes to a plant and looks at its flower. He finds something new and calls it perhaps a revolution in the life of the plant. But to a scientist it is clearly a stage in evolution. It is nothing new. So you may call it a revolution whenever you find something new. Strange it is, that a new leaf, so long as it looks like its predecessor, is an indication of evolution, and not the flower which is perhaps the *summum bonum* of the plant ; perhaps the best stage in its evolution—the object or the purpose for which the plant exists ! Who knows that this new ideal that is coming is not the best stage in the evolution of human culture—an indication of the purpose for which humanity exists ? Let it have a trial all over the world ; let it have a trial in India. We are here to face it as I have told you.

You say you try to protect us from ideals and ideas which some people are coming to preach here. In this connection you dare to speak of our culture. What is our culture ? Indian culture is always open to all sorts of ideas and movements and all sorts of thoughts. No ideas or ideals have ever been shut out of our doors. Even in the days of Brahminism we had our Charvaka philosophy which preached :

यावज्जीवेत् सुखं जीवेत् ·श्रयां कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् ।

मरुमी भूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः ॥

That is, “enjoy as long as you live ; borrow money, drink ghee (with that money), (for) after your body is done to ashes, you are not coming again”. That was the Charvaka system of philosophy preached by Brihaspati. It was not only tolerated in India, but was given as free a scope as any other philosophy in the land. Culture was not damaged. The then existing order of things did not come down like a house of cards. Rather our culture was synthetically supplemented by this aspect of human life. You speak of preserving culture against ideas which are foreign to the India. I do not understand how you can preserve culture by wording off aspects of culture from the

shores of India. It is impossible. So I say the very principle of the Bill is wrong and vicious.

Don't, therefore take to these means, proved ineffective during ages, to tighten your grip for a time and then to justify your existence. You must take to other means of convincing people that you ought to be here, that the order of things you have established and have carried on for these 150 years, the economic order, the administrative order—or whatever you like to call it—that all your orders of things are stable and are not to be thrown as under at the whisper of a new idea. In plain words, convince people that you should stay on here you should adopt other means and not the means you are adopting. These means are against our culture, our tradition, our temperament. We cannot agree that people coming to preach certain new ideas in India should be shut out. This is unthinkable. No Indians care for new ideas being preached among them. If you go for public opinion, if you go on this issue for any election, you will find that even the masses you want to protect against this new economic order of things will be against you. You are here for your own purposes. You interpret the opinion of the masses for your own convenience ; but have you gauged what that opinion really is ? Have you understood it carefully ? Had you understood it even partially, your opinion would be otherwise. But here we are to reply to a body of irresponsible people who work for their own purposes and have not even the foresight to listen to reason and that is how such a measure came to be discussed in this House. I oppose it ; I oppose the principle of the Bill.

II

General Criticism of the Railway Budget.

21st Feb. 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division : Non-Muhammadian) : Sir, it is not for me to curse or congratulate the Railway Board on this occasion. They are above both. But this much I can say that the Honourable

Sir George Rainy and his colleague have played their part cleverly so far as the budget is concerned as well as the speech. Language and statements have a function in State craft, and in my opinion, such a function has been well discharged.

I was also glad to note that our Honourable friend Sir George Rainy almost began his speech with a straight confession that a reduction of fares and rates ended in an increase of receipts of $1\frac{1}{2}$ crores of rupees, for it afforded an incentive to activity in the general trade. But he recoils at once to the traditional timidity of a Departmental Head and says that it is yet too early to say whether the increase is due to reduction, though even in passenger traffic, he admits, the income is down by 7 instead of 21 lakhs in this age of motors and buses. Commerce is not ordinarily expected to be imaginative, and I am therefore not inclined to blame the Honourable Member on that score.

Now I shall turn to the main criticism of the budget. Such a criticism from a Member of the Opposition, as I am, is oftener than not generally looked upon as destructive, and I am afraid, nothing better than the ordinary can I give so long as the basic policy of the administration remains as it is. Railways ought to be a national industry, but there is nothing national in our administration. So long as the industry does not become at least Indian in spirit as well as in form, the suggestions I am going to offer are in danger of losing their constructive character, But let us hope against hope so long as we are here.

A good portion of the speech of the Honourable Member for Commerce appears to be a pleading for a new Member on the Board. A case is attempted to be made out for him on the ground that he will take almost exclusive charge of labour. He may perhaps be an Indian by caste. Thus, our Honourable friend seems to aim at killing two birds with one stone. Both the cry for Indianisation in the highest place as well as that against merciless exploitation of labour are attempted to be gagged

in this one stroke of policy. An Indian Member in charge of labour too may be used, not only as an apparent argument, but as a seeming moral antidote even against real labour unrest.

I have got little to do with Indianisation of high offices, as it is being often demanded and tardily and unwillingly conceded in these days of job-hunting in many quarters. I have always held with but a few of my friends on this side, and I hold to-day, that Indianisation in higher service means a complete remodelling and even overhauling, as well as possible, of the pay and other service conditions on the basis of Indian standard of living and requirements,

We may invite experts on their terms when and so long as we cannot but do without them. But there is no reason why our ordinary service should be paid according to the time-honoured English standard, and be supplemented from time to time by "Lee-Loots" and other like devices to keep it perpetually attractive to the Englishmen coming to India. I have often uttered the warning that, by putting Indians in high services under the present foreign service conditions, our national future is being almost irremediably jeopardised. I shall not therefore repeat my arguments here on this subject.

But what about labour, for which is necessary the additional Member on the Board? If the Honourable Member honestly feels that radical and far-reaching measures are needed for permanently pacifying discontented labour, then he will not convince the House by forcing suddenly a new Member upon their vote. An oblique look towards Geneva conventions or a tardy and suspicious effect given to those conventions will neither bring permanent satisfaction to labour, nor will justify the addition of a new Member to the Railway Board.

Labour is a big problem, and that specially on our railways. The discontent there has been just and chronic. The Board has a distinct and most imperative duty here. But the appointment of a Member in this fashion appears

to be shelving rather than doing the duty properly. This way of avoiding solution of problems has been a custom of this administration in other spheres. If a real solution of the labour unrest is intended, then a properly thought-out plan and programme of work based on a careful study and sympathetic appreciation of labour grievances is the primary necessity. A Member on the Board, or a like device to put such a programme in action may then be considered by the House in a more congenial and convenient atmosphere.

Labour grievances are many and varied. First and foremost among them is providing for the education of labourers themselves and particularly their children. Sir George Rajny says that there are 8,00,000 employees working on the Indian railways. At the most modest calculation, the number of the children must be 16,00,000. But how many high schools or colleges have been arranged for this vast number? How many more does Sir Pnrshotamdas Thakurdas hope (A pause.)

Mr. President : Hope what? (Laughter,)

Pondit Nilakantha Das : For out of the information he gave out to-day?

Suppression of the labourers and depriving their children of education has long been a recognised curse of Western industrialism. It kills the culture and the manhood of the individual. Who knows what genius remains hidden in the child of the labourer and the poor employee? Besides, in India education is a tradition among many classes of people toiling as employees under the railways. I am here put in mind of a poor mofussil stationmaster who retired actually a pauper as he had had to educate his only son. The son subsequently died of heart troubles and the father died of starvation. Under conditions like this, how can it expect responsible co-operation from the employees by foisting a new Member on them, God only knows.

The circumstances of discontent on this score are all the more accentuated when we find that much better pro-

vision is made for white children to the exclusion of the real sons of the soil. It is an open secret that on many railways, if not on all, besides the official provisions, about 90 per cent. of the fines realised from the employees goes to the education of the children of the white servants. But what of the children of those that pay the fine ?

Technical education, enough to man the national industry, should also be thoroughly and liberally provided for. Arrangements should be made for training skilled hands extensively to ensure efficiency beyond doubt in a scheme for radical Indianisation. Intellectual genius and proper adaptability are not wanting in the Indian. In learning capacity Indians yield to know other race in the world. But adequate and proper facilities for training are wanting.

In para 101 of the Report of the Railway Board for 1926-27, for instance, a training for only 17 students is provided for. The attempt may appear to have been in the right direction, but considering the hugeness of the industry the meagre character of the provision only makes the darkness palpable, so to say.

The modern industrialism is a man-killing engine, and its inherent spirit refuses to be reasonably considerate to the labour it exploits. The sturdy and solid middle class, which is the backbone of a nation, gets dismantled and disorganised under its influence. Added to this we have got to work under foreign conditions and foreign ideas. All this should be carefully realised by our Railway Board.

Preference given to the children of the employees in recruitment for service is another safeguard which must not be lost sight of. Much is heard of rank corruption in recruitment of lower services. Companymanaged railways are notorious for this vice. Open recruitment and that as far as practicable through school and college authorities and means of public examinations and competitions should immediately be thought of.

Measures like these surely will go a great way to kill

the present germs of strike which are otherwise inevitable. A new Member as such will be of little help if old ways are not changed.

Sanitary arrangements and housing are also of immediate importance. The design of houses for Indian employes has never changed perhaps from the time of Marco Polo, so to say, though bullock carts have since been replaced by aeroplanes. It is a strange sight to see the Indian quarters in a railway settlement. Kitchen and and privy, if any, are built together. With an apology for a window provided, if at all, the cubic space allowed reminds one of the ancient Buddhist caves of Udayagiri near Puri. Still Indians who are to use the houses have never been nor are being consulted in designing them.

I have seen quarters for employes in Jamshedpur. They are much better though still considered to be inadequate. Other industrial centres might similarly be advancing with the times. But our Railway authorities seem to walk about with their eyes and ears in their pockets, and here attempt to create the belief that a new Member appointed will bring the millenium to the workers.

There is much room for improvement in providing medical aid to the workers and employes who are being sent with their families to all sorts of places lonely and unhealthy. Provident fund and death benefit for all classes of labourers, including daily rated workmen working for years at daily rates, is also a necessity. Water supply should go hand in hand with housing. Various other like facilities for the welfare of labour are awaiting solution. All this should be properly investigated, and remedies planned before the appointment of a new Member is brought up for consideration in the House.

Coming to freights and fares one is mortified to find the scant courtesy with which the lower class passengers are treated. The little relief in the Eastern Bengal Railway in this budget is much less than what was long overdue and is in actuality more formal and apparent than real. The sacred preserve of the first 50 miles has nowhere been

violated, though the intending competitor, namely, the rise of road motor and buses, has a special fascination for this particular sphere of our Railway activities. The telescopic logic of this system of reduction, I am afraid, is not perhaps to be discernible to the naked eye of the lay enquirer.

The reduction of coal freight is news after many years of whining appeals from the dying coalfields of Jharia and other places. I hesitate to call it even overdue. Many of our coalfields have actually lost all use for this measure and we are not told whether this measure will at all help the few living fields in standing competition, with the fields of distant South Africa. Probably this telescopic method of microscopic reduction will be adequately magnified when all the Indian-owned collieries will have been completely killed. Non-Indian coal interests like those of Talcher have, however, received protection and help from our Railway by other means and such interests need no fear.

As to new constructions, Members in this House as well as of the public, suggest new lines from time to time on various occasions in various ways for the convenience of the general taxpayer. They sometimes demand it and give reasons for their demand. During my last budget speech on the Railway Board I myself demanded a line of about 150 miles between Cuttack and Sambalpur in my constituency, which distance is now covered by a railway route of 500 miles from a district town to the headquarters of the division. But such demands are not even refuted or reasonably refused, and new lines still appear in the Budget year by year. Why? What is the etrics of all this? Last year I referred in this connection to the Vizagapatam harbour which I said is a sister of Singapore base. The Talcher new line, I also said, was necessitated for the Taleher coalfields which had already been leased by a European company, on what secret or overt assurance of communication, God alone knows. Thus, I think, our new constructions are proving their creations both as

strategic and commercial concerns—strategic for harbours like that of Vizagapatam, and commercial for British coal companies like that of Talcher.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Commerce and Railways seems in his speech to lament over the competition of what is inevitable, I mean of the road motors and buses. As the Commerce Member perhaps he hints at the advantages of those conveyances in carrying passengers and goods to stations, and thus stimulating traffic. But he said nothing of the advantage to be reaped by opening suitable feeder lines to business centres, where road motors and buses may will be utilised in carrying goods and men to new stations opened. This aspect of the question has not been investigated.

We hear something of damage caused by floods such as those of Orissa and other places. But in repairs no plan or programme appears for remodelling waterways which have been long and criminally neglected by our Railways in their hasty anxiety for ready traffic and business. A general survey of these waterways in our entire railway system with a view to finding out some scientific and permanent remedy is a primary duty of the administration. Stagnant pools by the side of railway lines—a regular byproduct, so to say, of our railways—have been a nuisance and a hotbed of malaria in many parts of India. It is high time for our Railway Board to include the remedy of this evil in their repair works.

The convenience of the travelling public is a common burden of criticism, and much of it will be exposed during the next four days. Some hopes have been held out in the other House yesterday for issuing return tickets and coupon advantages to lower class passengers. Sleeping advantages and such other dainties of life, as my friend Mr. Duraiswamy Aiyangar pointed out, are not for them. But will the Board at least care to instruct their inspectors to see that their seating accommodation is not stuffed beyond the prescribed limit ?

Here I feel inclined to cite a very funny instance. Patna is our provincial headquarters. We demanded a direct train from Puri to Patna *via* Cuttack, to be saved the trouble and expense of travelling *via* Howrah. After much consideration the reply was that not many tickets have been in the past purchased direct from Orissa to Patna and hence a direct train is unnecessary. With all my knowledge of the deductive logic of Gotama, I could not find out the relativity of cause and effect in this argument. Perhaps, Sir, logic and self interest are poles apart. But I was a little relieved to learn the other day that our Railway Board is not directly concerned in the appointment of those officers of the Bengal Nagpur Railway who are responsible for the decision. Chronic mismanagement, profiteering and bad capital expenditure in many of our company-managed railways may thus be passed over with hopes that they may, as soon as possible, be taken over by the State, though in the meanwhile a stricter supervision is, however, necessary even now.

A word on the capital expenditure, Sir, and I have done. In the memorandum given to us the capital expenditure in England has gone up from Rs. 13,91-41,893 in 1927-28 to Rs. 17,22,67,000 in the budgeted estimate of 1929-30. The same in India has come down from Rs. 18,57,00,284 in 1927-28 to Rs. 16,50,00,000 in the budget of 1929-30. With all the sweet and fine language of our Honourable friend, Sir, George Rainy, about the real owner of the money and his pious carefulness in speeding it, this is a strange phenomenon. Are the railways meant only to find a market for industries outside India ?

Two main items in capital expenditure are the workshops and the stores purchase. As regards the workshops the basis of establishing and running them is not given. Nor do we find any relation between the expenditure incurred and the value of production obtained. It is difficult to say whether they are being run on commercial lines or at the expense of the taxpayer as well as other

industrial concerns in the land. A full statement on this subject in the Report of the Board is, however, required.

Let us then examine the stores purchase in detail. For instance as well as for future guidance let us take the purchases for 1927-28 published in the Railway Report. The entire store purchase this year is Rs. 35,86,50,000. Of this direct imports represent Rs. 12,94,97,000 and imported stores purchased in India represent Rs. 6,75,83,000 or a total of Rs. 20,70,80,000. Now, Sir, let us analyse these imported stores.

Bridge Work.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	33,37,000
Imported goods purchased ...	15,35,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	48,72,000
	<hr/>

All these can without difficulty be manufactured in India with materials purchased from Tatas. What attempts were made or facilities given to this effect? Were Indian firms asked in time to supply these materials? As far as I know, firms in India, *viz.*, Burn & Co., Jessop & Co., John King & Co., all of Calcutta, Richardson & Cruddas of Bombay can handle big bridge works. Many railway bridges have been constructed by them. The Bally Bridge of Calcutta on the East Indian Railway has actually been given to Braithwaite & Co. We are absolutely in the dark as to why these materials have not been purchased in India. An explanation on this item is necessary in the report.

Engineering plant excluding petty tools.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	66,18,000
Imported goods purchased ...	17,18,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	43,36,000
	<hr/>

Why has not the manufacture of these things been tried in India? Factories in Bengal and Bihar & Orissa, *viz.*, Villier's Engineering Works of Calcutta, Fairburn Lawson Combe, India, Ltd. (Sarisatali, Asansol), Monyfith Engineering Worke, Tatanagar, P. N. Dutta & Co., Calcutta, F. N. Gupta & Co., Calcutta, and others have either collapsed or are in a moribund condition for want of encouragement. Most of these firms could have manufactured a considerable portion of these materials. The same is the case with workshop machinery and heavy tools. The above firms could have manufactured them also. The total value of these was Rs. 80,33,000.

Permanent Way Materials.

Steel Sleepers :

	Rs.
Directly imported ..	1,57,64,000
Imported goods purchased	8,18,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	1,65,72,000
	<hr/>

The life of these sleepers is 35 years as compared with 50 years for cast iron sleepers, which are made in the Jamalpur workshops and have long been used by the East Indian and North Western Railways. I am quoting from information for which I am thankful to Mr. Parsons. Big private factories in India are starving for want of orders for cast iron sleepers, the price of which was almost equal to steel sleepers. In the coming year, as I can now say, each cast iron sleeper is expected to cost Rs. 10-4-0 and each steel sleeper not less than Rs. 11.

Cast Iron sleepers (purchased in foreign countries) and purchased from imported stores cost :

	Rs.
Directly imported	... 2,95,000
Imported goods purchased	3,63,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	6,78,000
	<hr/>
	:

We do not really understand the ethics or logic of this outside purchase when indigenous firms are starving for want of orders.

Wooden sleepers, imported, cost Rs. 8,67,000. This is an abnormally strange purchase. Wooden sleeper supplying firms in this country are already hard hit on account of the fact that steel sleepers are being imported. This is simply adding insult to injury, and reminds one of the story of the doctor hastening the death of a hopeless patient.

Rolling Stock : Locomotive and spare parts :

	Rs.
Directly imported	... 1,86,02,000
Imported goods purchased	20,36,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	2,06,38,000
	<hr/>

A similar amount is being spent on these articles outside India year after year. My friend, Mr. Sanmukham Chetty, raised a question last year on the locomotive factory which was first encouraged and then killed by

the very hand that nursed it and ultimately purchased by the Government, never perhaps to encourage the industry again in this land. We cannot understand the disqualification for which these articles cannot be made in India. Are there any insurmountable difficulties in the way? Government ought to take to manufacturing these in India, which ought not to be for ever dependent on foreign countries with regard to these most vital Railway materials. During the last world war, Sir, even Great Britain had to depend on India for some materials. Why not, I ask, prepare India for being self-dependent?

Coaching Stock.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	2,12,93,000
Imported goods purchased	18,81,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported ...	2,31,74,000
	<hr/>

Goods Stock.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	31,18,000
Imported goods purchased ...	25,30,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	56,48,000
	<hr/>

Spare Parts for Coaching and Goods.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	1,44,18,000
Imported goods purchased	33,03,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	1,77,21,000
	<hr/>

In India the self-same articles purchased respectively are Rs. 3,74,000, Rs. 8,63,000 and Rs. 18,66,000. Most

of the above materials can well be manufactured in India in parts. So there is no difficulty in assembling them, either in private firms or in our own workshops. We cannot purchase these articles from other countries year after year in enormous quantities. Objections may, however, be generally made that these materials are not available in this country. But the public should never be satisfied without an explanation in detail. Sir, will this excuse be pleaded if India like other countries is a self-governing country ?

Both as regards certain items of permanent way materials and particularly as regards rolling stock, a thorough investigation is necessary with a view to making India self-contained. Means should be devised and schemes prepared to manufacture these articles in India as soon as possible. The Railway Board should seriously think of starting model as well as encouraging commercial workshops for this purpose.

Building and Station Materials and Fencing.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	29,59,000
Imported goods purchased ...	55,58,000
	<hr/>
Total Imported	85,17,000
	<hr/>

These figures have not been analysed and therefore it is difficult to say which can be purchased in India and which outside India.

Electric Materials.

	Rs.
Directly imported ...	1,45,31,000
Imported goods purchased	90,49,000
	<hr/>
Total Imparted ...	2,35,80,000
	<hr/>

The Indian purchase of these materials is only a little over 2 lakhs. Here I may mention that the Indian Cable Co. of Tatanagar is in a position to supply electric wires. Manufacturers of Clyde Fan and those of India Fan and other firms make fans and other similar articles. Have they been afforded a sufficient chance to supply these materials? My information is that they have not. Is it not the duty of the Government to encourage them?

Now, Sir, let us look at the poor purchases from indigenous sources for which purchases there is our pompous show, the Indian Stores Department.

In 1927-28 the total stores purchase increased from the previous year by Rs. 7,85,00,000. But the purchase of indigenous articles shows a decrease of Rs. 33,00,000.

The entire purchase of indigenous articles in 1927-28 is Rs. 15,16,00,000. Out of this Rs. 4,58,00,000 has been spent on coal, coke, bricks, Indian lime, ballast, etc., which probably includes earthen jars, wicker-baskets, broom-sticks and other like articles. Surely it does not require an industrial genius or a commercial expert to find an indigenous source of supply for these articles.

	Rs.
Purchase of Timbers	... 1,34,64,000
Wooden sleepers	... 2,73,15,000
	<hr/>
Total	... 4,07,79,000
	<hr/>

I am sorry that the Railway Board could not find any benevolent firm or individual in foreign lands to help us with more than Rs. 8,67,000 worth of wooden sleepers and the Board perhaps ultimately felt compelled to fall back upon a process of rude denudation of our Indian forests. However, the rest, that is, a sum of Rs. 6,50,21,000, the Board could not help buying from indigenous markets, though one must feel sure that, had the details been given, barring the purchase from Tatas,

one would find that about 90 per cent. of the rest had been supplied by firms owned and managed by people not in any sense indigenous. Tatas, however, have supplied only rails worth Rs. 1,76,72,000. Let no one, however, understand that this purchase is in any way a favour, help or encouragement to Tatas. This is purely a business transaction, and it means a distinct profit to the State of Rs. 25 on every ton of rail. I am thankful to my friend the Honourable Mr. Parsons, who kindly supplied me with the figures I am quoting from. On the entire supply of 182,400 tons of rail ordered from Tatas, the profit to the Railway Board comes to Rs. 45,60,000 in one year. For Tatas supplied at the rate of Rs. 110 per ton, whereas foreign supply was at the rate of Rs. 135 per ton. 80,500 tons ordered from outside would yield to the Railway Board a further profit of Rs. 20,12,500 in the same year, if Tatas had somehow been helped or encouraged to supply it.

Thus it will be found that the protection given to Tatas is being well paid back, and a loss to the tune of Rs. 20,00,000 if not more, in rails alone, could well be prevented and prospectively utilised for promotion of indigenous industry as well as profit to the taxpayer.

The ultra-commercially minded Railway Board, with the Honourable Member for Commerce at their head, might not possess a vision to this end. Let us be charitable to them. But what does the Honourable Member in charge of Industries say to this? Is not this piece of analysis of the capital expenditure of his Honourable colleague interesting to him and specially the lesson of the rail business with Tatas?

Sir, I have done. But before I sit down, I am sadly reminded of that King of whom I read in my schoolboy days. He was probably a King of England. He said "My subjects and I have a happy contract. They will say whatever they like, and I will do whatever I like."

III

Criticism of the Policy of Railways stores Purchase and Promoting Indian Industry.

25th Feb. 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I trust I may be allowed to speak on this motion, as I have got a similar amendment regarding capital punishment of the Railway Board. . . .

Mr. President : Regarding capital punishment of the Railway Board ? (Laughter.)

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I am sorry, Sir, capital expenditure is what I mean. It is akin to this store purchase, on which has been moved the amendment by Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.

Mr. President : What number is your amendment ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : No. 23, Sir.

Mr. President : That is the same thing, isn't it ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Akin, yes, practically the same.

Mr. President : The Honourable Member may speak on this amendment.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My Honourable friend, Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru, has referred to the internal administration of the Stores Department, but as stores purchase is intimately connected with capital expenditure, I shall speak on that aspect of the question alone.

I referred, during the course of my general discussion, to this subject at some length, and there I quoted facts and figures from items of stores purchase to establish that this capital expenditure of the Railway Board practically means gradually increasing the purchase of stores in England and other countries, and gradually reducing the same or keeping it stationary in India, and as the Indian Stores Purchase Department have got to purchase various articles, such as fuel, timber, lime, sand, ballast and all that sort of thing, which count for as much as half—nay much more than half—of the fifteen crores and odd that we have

spent on indigenous articles in 1927-28, the policy underlying their action therefore seems to be that our Railway Board is bent upon giving substantial encouragement to industries outside India, encouragement perhaps in quarters where it is to the interest of some people whose claims cannot be overlooked. It was probably to afford this encouragement that the 5-year Railway development programme was launched side by side with the separation of Railway from general finances.

In this connection I may quote from the Imperial Economic Conference proceedings a paragraph, which, though it was quoted in this House some three years ago, may perhaps bear a repetition.

Our Honourable friend Sir George Rainy's predecessor, who attended that Conference on behalf of India, said particularly with regard to stores purchase as well as to the new development scheme :

"Large sums have been set aside for the rehabilitation of her (India's) railways and I hope that we may be able to embark on some new construction. On railway material alone we spent last year, almost entirely in this country, more than 8½ millions sterling. Other development schemes are in contemplation, and in one way and another the Government estimate that something like 70 millions sterling will be spent on imported stores during the next five years for the railways and other development schemes. As in the past, so in the future, I have no doubt that the skill and enterprise of the British manufacturers will see to it that the vast bulk of their moneys Indian Railway moneys will be spent in this country."

In another place he said in the same connection :

"The Government of India were required by rule to buy their imported stores through their Stores Department in London, which was under the control of the High Commissioner for India. The High Commissioner had to accept the lowest satisfactory tender; not necessarily the cheapest, for he has been given a wide latitude for selection.

"Not necessarily the cheapest" has its own significance, and I do not know, there may be many things underlying such a latitude for selection. Later on it is said :

"The practical result has been that between 90 and 95 per cent. of the value of purchases made through the High Commissioner during the past year had been expended in England on articles produced by British manufacturers."

Sir, this explains the policy of stores purchase and this exemplifies the gradual increase of capital expenditure outside India year by year for at least the last three years, for in India it has come down from 15·48 crores in 1926-27, to 15·15 crores in 1927-28, whereas in England it has gone up during the same period from about 12 crores odd to 19 crores odd, as is clear from the Reports of the Railway Board for those two years. I quote simply from the columns of stores purchase.

When there was a difficulty in supplying work to labourers engaged in English industries, there was this beneficent plan of dividing railway finance from general finance. The scheme of separation appeared quite a nice arrangement, even to the Indian Members of this House, who always expect to derive their initiation from the experienced Benches over there, and many of us are still perhaps enamoured of it and actually think that we have found something very wise in it. Was it not, I suspect, some scheme put forward for separating the railway purchases in England from Home charges, the entire amount of which, English purchases for railway included, would otherwise come as a single visible lump in the budget as it was. But the separation has a particular advantage. It has opened up an unnoticeable back door to introduce certain Home charges which would go unscrutinised to the benefit of the Home industry.

Then, again, my Honourable friend Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru objects that the decentralisation of purchase in the policy of stores purchase is a curse. He says it should be centralised, but where is the tendency to centralisation? Now, this capital expenditure on Railways is inter-dependent on the promotion of Indian industry, for really it is not a small thing. The Railway system itself ought to be a national industry,—had our Government been a national Government,—and the promotion of our indigenous Indian industry even now depends very much on this stores purchase policy regulated to that end. Industry has a very close connection with labour. It is the counterpart of the labour problem which is cropping

up every day. If you look to help labour, you must give them a reasonable share of the profits, if you think of profits, you must encourage and strengthen industry. Thus you must promote industry before you can satisfy labour. Now, there is another decentration attempted here to frustrate all our pious expectations. Labour is being separated from industry. Our Honourable friend Sir George Rainy, like his predecessor, Sir, Charles Innes, will perhaps henceforth exclusively look to the Home industry and the purchase of the High Commissioner not in the cheapest, but in the most convenient market. I need not explain the standard of convenience here. Labour in railways is going to be likewise exclusively entrusted in the hands of a new Member on the Railway Board. That Member will be an Anglo-Indian, Indian, or European—I do not mind or care who he is. But the fact remains that if you want to represent some grievances of labour, if you want to look to labour interests in India, that question will go to that gentleman who is in charge of it. The little chance that there was of the representatives of the Indian taxpayer attempting for the promotion of Indian industry through pressure of labour demands and thus by directing capital expenditure, is all gone, and with that labour too is doomed. Thus our attention is being diverted from time to time whenever there is any little chance or occasion of our entering into the very secret preserves of the Government.

I should not make my speech very long for I have already dwelt at great length upon this self-same subject, though then I discussed only the economic aspect of it so far as our indigenous industry is concerned. Perhaps my Honourable friend Sir George Rainy had not the time nor the inclination to look into my analysis of stores purchase the other day. I hope he will look into it and investigate the matter very carefully. I also hinted there that his colleague, my Honourable friend Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra, the Member in charge of Industries, has got a good deal to do in that matter. In that connection decentralisation of industry and railways will not do. Our Honour-

able friend is responsible for the national industry, at least I may call it Indian industry for the present. I have not the heart to call it national, because, as you have just now heard from my Honourable friend, this Government which runs our railways is not just and reasonable. It is not responsible either. So, be it national industry or Indian industry, my Honourable friend for the Industries has certain duties to discharge there, and he must be very intimately watchfully looking into the entire policy of the stores purchase of our railways. I should also expect that henceforth this matter would be investigated thoroughly and in the Report of the Railway Board a distinct chapter should be devoted giving us a complete analysis of the purchases in India and in England, and outside with a view to explain in what way and by what means, and with what amount of sacrifice, if any, impetus and encouragement have been afforded to Indian industry and what actual progress Indian industry has made in consequence of such impetus or encouragement. At a glance one ought to know from the Railway Report, how far Indian industry is being promoted year after year under the nursing care of railway administration. In short all this information of vital economic importance in detail should be given in that Report.

Our attention is, moreover, expected to be diverted to rates and fares, amenities to passengers, or to the grievance that some railway inspectors are not attending to their duties at the Howrah station and so on. These are all very little things after all. Such things might crop up even under a national Government, and they might be remedied from time to time in the usual way. We should not be expected to be absolutely absorbed in these things, with the result that the main object, so to say, of our railway business is left out of sight. Even all possible convenience to the taxpayer should not be purchased so dearly in this fashion. With these few words, I support the motion of my Honourable friend Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru.

IV

Employment of Oriyas in B. N. Ry.

27th Feb. 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division : Non-Muhamadan) : I would like to make one suggestion, Sir. The Bengal Nagpur Railway is a railway which runs almost more than half its distance in Oriya-speaking country ; but it was not a company which began in an Oriya-speaking land. Therefore in course of time in its service some vested interests have been created, and few Oriyas are in its service. There have been representations very often to put in Oriyas in the Bengal Nagpur Railway for the convenience of the public, as well as for the convenience of the administration of the railway service. But although there have been many circulars—and very pious circulars to that effect, that is, to recruit Oriyas into the service, as is well-known, on company-managed railways—here I cannot vouch for the other railways—there is rank corruption and inequitable discrimination in various matters connected with recruiting for service, and hence no practical effect has yet been given to those circulars which were elicited in response to various public demands and representations. I would therefore draw the attention of the Honourable Member to this fact in this particular connection.

V

Purchase and use of steel cast Iron and wooden sleepers in Indian Railways and their bearing on Indian Industry.

27th Feb. 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Sir, this is a very important question so far as Indian Industry and economic life in India are concerned, and the question is full of complications—and I may say very shabby complications. My

friends before me have pleaded for wooden sleepers. Yes, there are many forests in India, and by developing the forests, that source can sufficiently be tapped. But we find on the country, that, year after year, we have got wooden sleepers supplied to our railways from countries other than India. In the year 1927-28 we got Rs. 8,67,000 worth of wooden sleepers imported from outside, and in former years they were even more. I hope the tendency has been not to purchase them in Australia any longer.

Now, apart from the wooden sleepers, iron sleepers are of two kinds. One is of cast iron and the other is of steel. Steel sleepers are supplied mainly from other countries and in India some quantity from the Tata Iron and Steel works alone. The other firms that supply sleepers to the railways, supply cast iron sleepers. These cast iron sleepers consist of two plates, one tie-bar and some keys and cutters. They, that is, these cast iron sleepers, are manufactured by many private companies, and they are also manufactured in some of our own workshops, particularly at Jamalpur. If my information is correct, of late years, capital in India, as well as English capital in this country, has been so much enamoured of casting these cast iron sleepers, and has been active in this business to such an extent, that, if the Railway Board only make it a point to purchase them, they could get the entire supply of iron sleepers in India. But what are they doing? They must get their quote from abroad. I do not propose to say, from which country or from what source. That may be unpalatable, and even offensive. But the fact is that they will have their quote of metallic sleepers from outside India, and the quantity of it is enormous, and growing year by year. Just as they did in the case of the locomotive company, directly or indirectly they are giving encouragement to Indian firms with Indian capital to set up factories for casting cast iron sleepers. Then, to the dismay of those firms, the Railway Board kills them by starvation for want of orders.

Mr. B Das : Is it not a fact that Tatas are selling pig iron at Rs. 68 ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My friend, I am coming to that. Of course there are the complications of competition. In that competition the Railway Board as such may well appear not to have any hand. I have always been telling my Honourable friends that the Honourable Member in charge of Industries and Labour has got to do much to watch and make the Railway Board see that such competition is fair and equitable. For the competition has been unfair and manipulated.

An Honourable Member : By paying more wages to the labourer ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : By seeing that there are no combines. There is the Bengal Iron and Steel Co., the Indian Iron and Steel Co., and Tatas have unfortunately joined these, and they have all formed into a combine. They produce pig iron at a very low cost ; and they also supply pig iron out-side India at a very low price. But when they come to sell it to manufacturers of cast iron here, they sell it to these manufacturers at a higher price and make that price prohibitive so far as competition goes. What is the effect ? You may say that these cast iron firms get pig iron at the self-same price at which they would otherwise get it from the other side of the seas, that is, from foreign countries. It may be so. But when you order cast iron sleepers the members of the combine quote them at a much lower price, and the firms, who have got to buy pig iron, for which they have to depend on this combine or on foreign countries, cannot possibly supply cast iron sleepers. Under such conditions how can these firms supply them ? How can they thrive in this unfair competition ?

I will read from a memorandum of the Bihar and Orissa Chamber of Commerce, a copy of which, I suppose, has been supplied to the Honourable Member in charge. The Memorandum says :

"It is against public interest that a combine should be allowed to charge a monopoly price for an important commodity like pig iron."

Again :

"The producers are in a position to give an unfair advantage to the allied firms in the production of iron castings. A case may be cited in support of this contention. In February 1928 the Railway Board gave a contract to Messrs. Martin & Co. for the supply of cast iron sleepers at Rs. 84 per ton, *f. o. r.* Kulti. This firm could quote this price on account of having supplies of pig iron at a price substantially lower than the market price. The cost of manufacture of iron sleepers is about Rs. 20 per ton, and it is impossible for an independent producer, who has to pay Rs. 67 per ton for pig iron, to manufacture sleepers at Rs. 84 per ton. Messrs. Martin & Co. not only covered their cost at that price, but realised a handsome profit of about Rs. 20 per ton on account of their being in the family group of the producers of pig iron. The danger of creating conditions, which make it possible for some manufactures to enjoy such differential advantages, is too obvious to need any special emphasis.

This is what is said in the memorandum of the Bihar and Orissa Chamber of Commerce. Let me remind the House that in that Province are situated many of our cast iron sleeper foundries.

Then again the Commerce and Railway Department is responsible for some little additional advantage being given to those people, and thus helping this unfair competition. We have got certain freight rates for this pig iron, and Tata's and other producers of pig iron get those concessions. They carry their pig iron at those rates to Calcutta, Patna, Cawnpore and all other places in India. If pig iron imported from other countries is carried from Calcutta to Patna or other places, the freight rate is more. Now let us see, at what price they are selling pig iron at Calcutta? At Calcutta the price is Rs. 67 per ton. This price is the same for both Indian and foreign pig iron. Carried to Patna there must be the difference of freight. If we make this allowance per ton and. . . .

Mr. President : Order, order.

The House stands adjourned till twenty minutes to three.

The Assembly then adjourned for Lunch till Twenty Minutes to Three of the Clock.

The Assembly re-assembled after Lunch at Twenty Minutes to Three of the Clock, Mr. President in the Chair.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I was saying, before the House adjourned for Lunch, that pig iron was sold at Rs. 67, at Calcutta, the price being Rs. 65-12-0 and the freight, according to the reduced rate, being Rs. 1-4-0. Similarly according to that rate, the price at Patna, including freight, must be Rs. 67-11-0. Instead of that they charge Rs. 78. Similarly Rs. 10 more are charged in every place wherever it is sent for sale. The concession freight affords no advantage to cast iron firms. This is also one of the difficulties which is created on account of the pig iron trust or the combine formed in India. If I may be permitted, I shall say that this trust is practically managed and controlled by concerns in India, which are British in economic status and character ; that is, managed and controlled by what may be called rupee, as well as Sterling British capital. The Trust has actual British capital, as well as *de facto* British capital so to say. The Tatas alone, of firms with Indian capital, have somehow been dragged into and have joined the trust. The pig iron sale of Tata in India is only 10 per cent. of the total Indian consumption. The total pig iron sale in India is 150 thousand tons. Out of that consumption, Tatas supply only 15,000 tons.

(At this stage Mr. President vacated the Chair which was taken by Sir Darcy Lindsay.)

There is no reason why the Tatas should have joined this pig iron trust. That mystery must be investigated and found out either by the Commerce Department or the Industries Department.

I shall not detain the House much longer with these figures and commercial technicalities. The Government, it is found, are directly and indirectly, helping this pig iron trust, with a view to keep out the younger and newer concerns, for whom no concession for supplying cast iron is either allowed, or of avail. Let us take another instance of direct help. The other day I asked a question about cast iron sleepers and the steel part of it called the tie-bar, which joins both the plates. I pointed

out that the actual duty realised on these bars was only Rs. 10 per ton, whereas the tariff duty, according to the Schedule, should be Rs. 26 and Rs. 37 per ton. In the 150 item, the import duty for railway steel tract material tie-bars is Rs. 26 per ton British and Rs. 37 per ton non-British. I asked a question in order to be enlightened as to why it is charged Rs. 10 per ton. I was given the reply that "tie-bars for cast iron universal sleepers which cannot be used as tie-bars for rails" the freight charged is Rs. 10 per ton. I could not follow this reply, as it was perhaps not meant to be followed. I have been referred there to item 61. In item 61, we have iron or steel tramway tract material, under which comes the tie-bar for tramways, that is, tie.bar connecting tramway rails and for these the rates are Rs. 100 per ton. How could any one follow this reply then? I asked my Honourable friend Mr. Parsons for fuller details; he too could not explain it. He said it was given to him by the Commerce Department. I hope perhaps the Honourable the Commerce Member, Sir George Rainy, whom I have already written to, to secure me the help his Commerce Secretary in the matter, will to-day explain it. Of course, there is bound to be some explanation, for which action of the Government has not? But the intention of the Tariff Board is clear on the point. The Tariff Board say in their Steel Report of 1927, Vol. I, page 92 :

"Spikes and tie-bars require to be dealt with. We recommend that the principle embodied in the present protective scheme should be adhered to, namely, that these articles should be subject to the same duties as bars. The basic duty would thus be Rs. 26 per ton and the additional duty of Rs. 11 per ton."

They have given a schedule to explain this. In this schedule distinct mention is made of tie-bars in railway track material, selected for this protection duty. This schedule has been copied in the Tariff Duty No. 150 in the list. Now the mystery which seems to surround the name 'universal sleepers' would be another interesting piece of research. In a word, the name is something

like a patent mark, and the sleeper so named does not materially differ from any ordinary cast iron sleeper of any other type. They want perhaps to purchase steel sleepers from England and other countries for reasons obvious. As the daily output of cast iron sleepers is in danger of growing in India from year to year, a very good device is invented to check this progress. There are experts employed to invent types from time to time. The types of cast-iron sleepers may have little difference from one another, still these experts say, that this type will not do, that type is better and so on, with the result that our poor firms and young concerns are forced to give up all hope under pressure of types. Types manufactured by favoured firms sometimes are the only articles that count. Thus the 'universal' type which has been supplied for three years by the pig iron combine having *de facto* British capital, is used by the Bengal Nagpur Railway. This "universal" does not mean anything else, but a kind of patent mark. The "universal" cast-iron sleepers is as good as our cast-iron sleepers sanctioned by our own experts in the Railway Board. It may even be worse, who knows? But the Bengal Nagpur Railway has nothing to do with all that. The Bengal Nagpur Railway will only have that "universal" sleeper from that particular company without, as far as I know, even the formality of a public tender. Public tenders are not called for. It is strange that the Railway Department should be sleeping over the matter and the Bengal Nagpur Railway should go and purchase these universal sleepers by secret arrangements and in the dark. In spite of the fact that the experts in the Railway Board have certified to the quality and utility of cast iron sleepers of many other firms and patterns, the Bengal Nagpur Railway would not care for their opinion, but would go in only for this half foreign "universal" sleepers. The other day I was told that the Bengal Nagpur Railway, being a company-managed railway, would not care for the Railway Board in their purchases and in their tenders. Very well, we shall see what is the policy behind this.

When wooden sleepers and cast-iron sleepers are so plentiful in India, why should our railways go in for sleepers from other countries? If you go into the modern industrial basis of human relations, and thus if you go to the modern industrial life of India in its economic aspect, what do you find? You find that the entire demand for sleepers can be met in India alone, and yet no advantage is taken of this by those who have to guide the economic and industrial destiny of India. India is being sacrificed at the altar of vested as well as foreign interests. To illustrate this I crave your indulgence for troubling you with some figures here quoted from our Railway Administration Reports. Cast-iron sleepers, indigenous, in 1925-26 amounted to Rs. 25, 21,000, In 1926-27, to Rs. 92,48,000 that is an increase; this is how new firms and enterprises were encouraged and nursed to elicit sanction for big expenditure. In 1927-28. Rs. 76,51,000. *i. e.*, a decrease began here perhaps to continue. These sleepers, it must be remembered, can be purchased in India to the extent of the entire demand. But so many firms have actually been starving for want of orders and some of them have even been killed. As regards the cost of import from foreign countries of cast-iron sleepers, it was Rs. 2, 91,000 in 1926-27 and Rs. 6,58,000 in 1927-28. Mark the increase.

In steel sleepers, what do you find? In 1926-27, it was Rs. 36,15,000, but in 1927-28, it rose by about 450 per cent., *i. e.*, to Rs. 1,65,82,000. In this year's budget, I looked in vain for any enlightenment. In your detailed estimates, you simply put "sleepers". There may be very many varieties, but you do not say if they are wooden or steel or cast-iron sleepers. In the disbursement of the Depreciation Fund in the different books for different Railways is found, say, "Be., B. C. I. sleepers, total 32 lakhs rupees; N. W. R. sleepers, total 54 lakhs rupees. etc." But whether it is wooden, cast-iron or steel cannot be known. So, 186 lakhs go undesignated. You cannot know this much of details which is most vital in a way, yet you have got a pompous array of pink books called a budget. What is the use of this budget? (Laughter.) Only a few

railways have, however, been kind to us, and they are the careless Bengal Nagpur Railway, the South Indian Railway and the East Indian Railway. They say plainly that these sleepers will have been purchased from England by this time next year. They are honest folk. (Laughter.) At least they are honest in their mismanagement of our national industry.

But I do not want to carry you further into all these details. I shall simply say something about the price, the comparative life or durability of the cast-iron sleepers produced in this country and the steel sleepers imported here. I asked a question, and I was given a statement from which I found that generally the prices were equal. In the case of cast-iron sleepers, the price was 2as. or 3as. this way or that way per sleeper. Mr. Parsons, in reply to one of my questions, said that, expert opinion is, that the life of a cast-iron sleeper is 50 years, and that of the steel sleeper, which is being imported, is 35 years. That being the case, and the price also being almost the same, why should you have this gradual increase of imported steel sleepers and the gradual decrease in the purchase of indigenous cast-iron sleepers? Then we have to look to the price prospects. If you look into the *Trade Review*—as good business people do—and I think the Commerce Department also will be well advised to look into the *Trade Review*,—you find that the price of each cast-iron sleeper is about As. 12 or As. 14 less than the steel sleeper in the coming year. There is also the other factor to count—that the life of the indigenous sleeper is 50 years, while that of the imported sleeper is only 35 years. I hope I have explained the point sufficiently to enable the Members on those Benches to understand the position; and if I inflict on the House greater details I am afraid it will be awful.

An Honourable Member : It is interesting.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : I thank you, I am glad you think so. But here my Honourable friend the Member for Commerce will say: "We are business men, we have nothing to do with your industries;" or "I am always pressing this matter on the attention of my

brother, the Member for Industries and Labour" or "You are setting up firms to manufacture cast-iron sleepers which are not good"; and such other things. But to him my reply is that, it is you who kill them; you or your Industry brother, matters little to me: I do not know what interest you have in killing them. Presumably your primary economic interest is elsewhere.

And yet you sometimes speak of labour troubles being fomented either by people from beyond the oceans or their accursed agents here, as if you are not capable enough to fan, foment, nurse, or develop such troubles. You come here with a Safety Bill and a Trade Disputes Bill. What is the use, I ask? There are these poor labourers; should I bring them straight into the House so that they may invade you here? Will that then be evidence enough? You have simply starved them in big industrial centres, where you were responsible for bringing them from their hearth and home for you wanted to encourage Indian industry for purposes you know best; and it is on account of what you have done to kill those industries again that they are now out of employment which was rather got up for them with hopes and prospects. You find employment for some people far away for whom you have a soft corner in your heart, though you have come here to serve India—you cannot forget that—and you are asking us to forget those for whom you are daily creating unemployment. How can these things be tolerated and these budget figures be scrutinised with graceful concurrence to find money for your home purposes, I do not know. If I ask you, you simply say that these things are cheaper; or you give a reply which I do not understand, Or you are even unable to explain in certain cases; or again you perhaps say "The Honourable Member will be given a statement" or "the information is not forthcoming and as soon as it is available, it will be duly sent to him", and other such answers. Under these circumstances, Sir, I say this question of steel sleepers has grown to be a regular scandal, and this policy of the Government must be discontinued. (Applause.)

VI

On Indian Salt and Particularly on Salt Manufacture in Orissa.

7th. March, 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I have put down a cut on Orissa salt, and as there has been some reference to it in the reply of Sir George Rainy particularly, I do not know if I may be allowed to speak on this motion.

Mr. President : The Honourable Member has every right to speak.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I have also been particularly invited by my friends on this side to speak on Orissa salt, and I do not propose to go much into the general questions because it is the desire of my Honourable friends on this side that the debate should end very soon. So I shall confine myself particularly to two or three points raised on Orissa and Bengal salt by my Honourable friend, Sir George Rainy. He said

Sir Victor Sassoon : On a point of order, Sir, May I ask whether Members will be allowed to discuss points raised by other cuts, on this cut ?

Mr. President : Not at all.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : No. I forego the right to move the other cut ; I know that myself. (Laughter) Low density of the brine on the Orissa coast is one of the reasons ascribed. This subject was discussed in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council when it was not exactly a central subject, as such, as it is now. In 1918 it was discussed by the late lamented Pandit Gopabandhu Das in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, where a *prima facie* case was made out for reviving salt manufacture in Orissa, as well as in regard to the favourable density of the Orissa brine. At that time the brine of the Orissa salt manufacturing area was compared with that of North Madras, and it was found out that the brine of Orissa, even where the river mouths joined the sea, was 3° in density, whereas in the Ganjam area it was 2.75° . (See Bihar and Orissa

Gazette, 1911, page 241). As regards season available for manufacture, in the very same debate it was discussed, and in the comparative table given, you will find, in the Madras area, where salt manufacture is still continuing, the date for the commencement of operations is January 1st, and in Chilka January 3 in 1895, and January 7th in 1896. The commencement of scraping in the former place was February 25th and February 16th in the two years, and in the latter place, March 4th and March 5th. The closing in the former place began on the 18th and 17th June, and in the later place on the 22nd and 1st June.

As to *panga* salt which was being manufactured in Orissa—it is called *panga*, and it means salt obtained by evaporation by fire of sea water, i.e., salt obtained by artificial evaporation—it was declared by Mr. Sterling in 1822 as the “finest salt of all India”, I have myself seen *panga* salt prepared in times of famine and it is as good as, if not better than, Liverpool salt. It is white and has small grains and there is no difficulty in connection with magnesium chloride, as in the case of Tuticorin salt.

As regards another argument advanced by my Honourable friend, based on scarcity of fuel, I should like to say that, so long as this salt business is a money-making business of the Government, there may be many difficulties. *Panga* salt was prepared as a cottage industry. When there was famine in Orissa I know people used to take sea water in pans or in pots and prepare a certain amount of salt, which they not merely used in their own homes but also sold it to some outsiders. That was how it was being prepared; it was formerly also more or less a cottage industry sometimes on a rather big scale, and there was no big factory to manufacture *panga*. That *panga* salt, as well as Orissa *Karkach* of Puri used to command markets even up to Raipur and Jabulpore in those days. A question has been raised with regard to communication. Now, you can carry by rail from Naupada or some other Madras factory to Raipur, and now the new Vizagapatam Harbour Railway will help the business. But what was

the means of communication in those days? It was country bullock cart, or the bullock alone carrying loads. These bullocks or bullock carts carried merchandise from inland areas to Orissa coasts. Instead of taking back bullocks or carts empty or unloaded, the merchants carried salt on those bullocks or in those empty carts. This was the ancient ballast system in India—a system by which salt is now carried in ships from Liverpool to India without freight. The same system, however, can be arranged on our Railways, if the Indian coal industry is not compelled to be ruined in competition with South African coal. Indian coal is found in Bihar and Orissa, and it should be enabled to be carried from Calcutta or places near it to command markets in Bombay, Cawnpore and even Lahore. The empty coal waggons may return with salt. Then there will be neither congestion in traffic, nor freight difficulty. Now, this salt industry has been killed by Government in Orissa. The history of it is long and woeful. The Government again, it appears, are determined not to revive it in Orissa. In the 1924-25 budget debates, I raised the question. Government replied that the Bengal Nagpur Railway brings salt more cheaply from Madras to Orissa. The freight across the Chilka Lake was dearer, they said; it was 6 pies dearer per maund. Then, the next year, I desired to know if the Government were prepared to lease out an area for the manufacture, and encourage the industry if a private individual or firm wanted to take up the business. Government tried to dissuade me by suggesting that no one ought to burn his fingers like that in a losing business of this kind. I pressed further to elicit the reply that they would make arrangements for advertising, to the effect that any private company, individual, or firm desiring to open salt manufacture on the Orissa coasts might apply for it, and Government would give them a lease. The Raja of Parikud was encouraged by this assurance to take up the manufacture of Chilka salt, which was the occupation of his forefathers. He has been applying for the last three years, and he is being, I am informed, asked to go from Provincial to Central and Central to Provincial Government. Nothing has been done in

the matter till now. Government are very careful, perhaps even now, to see that their subjects are not allowed to burn their fingers. I say there is some motive behind it. Foreign imports of salt into this country are not being tabooed, on the contrary various facilities are afforded to them. Why ?

I am not going into any discussion of the publication of the Central Board of Revenue and the recommendations of the Taxation Committee. I should not enter into details. But the gist of the whole thing is that salt is plentiful in India and able even to compete in quality with foreign salt. It is there in Tuticorin, which has only 16 to 30 lakhs of maunds, which will go for local consumption and the Ceylon supply. It is abundant in Karachi. But there is no labour to manufacture it. It would be more than enough for Bengal supply in Northern India. But there would be railway congestion, and there is also the freight difficulty. Is the motive far to seek ?

Now, my friend Mr. Duraiswamy Aiyangar has said that 1·6 is the average percentage of magnesium chloride in Madras salt whereas it is 2·005 in nine different salts averaged in Dr. Ratan's book. It is said that magnesium chloride is the difficulty in Tuticorin in regard to crushing the salt for the Bengal market, for the crushing machines cannot long be worked. They get corroded. It may be a difficulty in Tuticorin but will the Government tell us if, in other factories in Madras, salt of less magnesium chloride variety can be made and crushed for Bengal purposes ? We have no knowledge as to that. But I know, as a matter of fact, that scraping can be regulated, and the first crop of salt in Madras factories can be gathered almost as white as foreign salt without any process of artificial evaporating. I am glad to find some arrangements for regulating scraping in the Report of the Madras Salt Department.

But the secret of the whole thing is that it must be made a source of revenue. That is the main difficulty. I would ask my friend Sir George Rainy how many crores he has got in the railway reserve ? It is about 23½ crores. Where did he get money from ? When-

ever the railways wanted money, was it not taken from salt? If you want money, salt is laid under contribution—salt is taxed. We do not care for your traffic congestion on the railways. We do not care for your high freight. You must give some of the money back to salt. Salt cannot be made for all time a revenue reserve, and a poor scapegoat for fresh taxation. That is the long and short of it. The revenue that is in the reserve should be made worth the salt from which it has been taken.

Now, I was going to say something about *panga* salt. I say it should be revived again as a cottage industry, which it used to be. Salt is the gift of God and nature and so very necessary for man, animal and the fields. We are not able to give salt to our cattle, and our fields are starving. Though I am glad to learn that salt is well supplied to cattle and animals in our Army, in the cultivators' homes cattle have been without salt for these two generations. Big agricultural projects are in the making directly under the Indian Government, 25 lakhs are being set apart for the purpose. But will all this pomp ever bring salt to our agricultural cattle? Will even twice this 25 lakhs buy duty-paid salt for any fraction of the vast number of our useful animals? Will it supply any percentage of the demand for manure in our fields? Salt is such a necessary of life—to man, cattle, and even crops, and it should be made free. There should be no preventive measures against its manufacture. Let the old cottage industry be allowed to go its merry course. You say *punga* salt is costly for there is scarcity of fuel. But in Orissa only a few years ago, when free manufacture was allowed in the famine area, I know how it was cheap to the poor man. But all the same, I understand how you manage to call it costly. You purchase pans in a factory, prepare the oven for which you employ the services of paid coolies, spend on every little preparation accessory to the process, use fuel purchased at a distance of 300 miles and carry it at a freight, calculate all these items, then by a process of rule of three you find out the rate per maund, and then you say the cost price is 8 as. 6 ps. whereas otherwise it ought to be perhaps less than 3 as.

6 ps. How can that be, may be the question. A villager in his cottage does not purchase his fuel and the members of his family find occupation in the activity. Thus all over the land people were happy in their cottages with industries like this. Salt making was thus a good industry. Now the whole thing has been stopped. With these few words I support the motion.

VII

The definite Assurance elicited from the finance Member for encouragement of Salt manufacture in Orissa.

7th. March, 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : May I ask the Honourable Member if he can definitely assure me of his giving a chance to any private individual or company, if they are prepared to take it up ?

The Honourable Sir George Schuster : I was just coming to that. I was going to say, that if the Honourable Pandit himself or anybody else liked to apply for facilities to be given to erect a factory, the Government would give him every encouragement.

VIII

A technical as well as material objections to the expenditure on Railways,

16th. March, 1929.

Pandit Nilakantha Dass (Crissa Division : Non-Muhammadan) : This is only a demand consequential on the capital expenditure which we have got on the list today. During the last Railway Budget, we have, I hope, sufficiently discussed this particular question, which also relates to our stores purchase and the development of Indian industries. Though we have got to

pass these as two items, I take it that the whole expenditure is one, which has been incurred in excess of the grant of last year.

Mr. President : Is that the position ? I thought the Railway Board were going to spend this amount in the next few days. If they have already spent the amount, they cannot make a motion in this form.

Mr. P. R. Rau : It is expected that the total amount of expenditure will exceed the amount granted by the Assembly last March by this amount.

Mr. President : I am very sorry the position was not made clear earlier. I thought the amount was going to be spent during the course of the next few days. The Honourable Member is I think, not entitled to come before this House and make motions in this form for monies already spent. These are really excess grants. Perhaps Sir George Rainy will explain the position.

The Honourable Sir George Rainy (Member for Commerce and Railways) : I think that the procedure in past years has undoubtedly been that, after the approval of the Standing Finance Committee for Railways has been obtained, the expenditure has proceeded in anticipation of the approval of this House. I understand that that has been, in fact, the procedure and undoubtedly much the greater part of this sum of Rs. 50 lakhs represents expenditure already incurred.

Mr. President : I think the Honourable Member will agree with me when I say that if money has been spent already in excess of the grant voted by this Assembly, the Government can only come by way of a motion for excess grant. That is, as I understand, the right Parliamentary procedure. However, as the Honourable Member points out that this practice has been in vogue for the last few years. I do not wish to raise any objection at this stage, but will see that the procedure is regularised in future.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : This is exactly what I was going to say. This comes for the vote of the House after the money has been spent. We have only a very few days left of this year. As that point has already

been made clear, I am not going to expatiate upon that particular point of technical objection, but the thing remains that this money has been already spent in excess. The whole grant of capital expenditure has a history which has been sufficiently discussed. It was first contemplated that 30 crores every year, for five years, would be spent. The House would not have sanctioned money had it not been under the impression that our Indian industries would get sufficient development by that means. We have seen that some of the Indian industries were first encouraged in order to elicit the grant from this House but that process has been discontinued and purchases have gone to England more and more. Besides company-managed railways are not at all controlled by our Railway Board in matters of purchase.

Mr. President : Order order. The Honourable Member is not in order in discussing questions of policy on this supplementary demand for grant,

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I was simply going to say that this amount should be taken from the grant we have already passed for the coming year. This amount should be appropriated from that and after a full scrutiny of the situation, we shall see if we are in a position to grant anything in excess next year. That is my position.

Mr. K. Ahmed (Rajshahi Division : Muhammadan Rural) : This is for inspection only.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : This is not for inspection only. This is from the Depreciation Fund, I believe. My point is that this is a consequential Demand arising out of capital expenditure, and should, with all other similar excess demands of today, be appropriated from next year's grants, and we shall see if we can give excess money in next year's capital expenditure, consistently with the spirit and meaning of our programme on that head.

IX

A general criticism of Indian Financial Policy and Indian administration raised in opposing the consideration of the Indian Finance Bill.

20th March, 1929.

Sir Darcy Lindsay (and other Members of the European Group) : The question may now be put.

Mr. President : Pandit Nilakantha Das.

Pandit Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division : Non-Muhammadan) : Sir, I wish to begin by saying . . .

Mr. President : I hope the Honourable Member will not be too long. If Honourable Members think that the Chair will postpone the debate till tomorrow, they are entirely mistaken. I am going to sit till midnight if necessary in order to finish the debate. Pandit Nilakantha Das.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Then I hope the Chair won't mind. . . .

Mr. Jehangir K. Munshi (Burma : Non-European) : On a point of order, Sir, I heard you say that you propose to sit till midnight. May I suggest taking the vote of the House as to whether the House will sit after 5-30 P. M. It is a tremendous strain on Honourable Members to sit here beyond that.

Mr. President : That is no point of order, Mr. Munshi.

Mr. Jehangir K. Munshi : It is a point of procedure, Sir.

Mr. President : The Chair is not prepared to give up its power in favour of the House.

Mr. Jehangir K. Munshi : I am not trying, Sir, to challenge your power. I am trying to make a submission in view of the convenience of the House.

Mr. President : I have decided, in view of the protracted debate on this Bill, to sit as long as it is.

necessary for the purpose of finishing this debate.
Pandit Nilakantha Das.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Sir, I shall try to be as short as I can be. The introduction of tea has, I am afraid, made the atmosphere of the House a little warm—I may say, hot. I propose first, Sir, to deal with that first. My Honourable friend Diwan Chaman Lall, in his speech yesterday made some observations on the Tea Labour. Today two other speakers, Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Ghuznavi, have both raised the same point by way of reply to Mr. Chaman Lall. Mr. Chalmers simply repudiated the charge that there was something rotten in the state of Denmark, as I may put it. Interested as he is, he should have given some authority for his repudiation. There is a dark corner in Assam and North-East Bengal, where the eye of law or of any public man never penetrates; and it is also a fact that there is a soft corner in the hearts of those that are in charge of our destinies (Hear, hear), for the people who are engaged in profiteering there.

(At this stage Mr. President vacated the Chair which was taken by Sir Darcy Lindsay.)

Mr. Chalmers said there are members of my Party who have knowledge of the facts—if I heard him aright—and that my friend Diwan Chaman Lall had not listened to them before he raised his voice against the oppression of the tea labourers

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : On a point of explanation, Sir; I said that no member of the Swarajist Party in Assam had ever said that tea plantations were slave plantations.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I am thankful; I stand corrected. But my friend, Mr. Chaman Lall, gave an analysis of the Members of the Assam Legislative Council, and perhaps he proved that there were no Swarajists or non-Swarajists there who would care to go to the help of those poor workers in the tea plantations. I need not expatiate upon the reasons; for they are uncanny and perhaps unpalatable especially under the rules of etiquette here. My Honourable friend, Mr.

afraid. If I Ghuznavi, thinks that he has rightly hit the point, I am heard him aright, he said there are Indian as well as European planters. I know. But because there are Indian planters there, that is no gurantee that our workers will remain safe in their hands. They are planters for all that ; and in the agricultural arrangements of India these planting operations have been a curse—a fact well exposed since the days when the Rev. Mr. Long of Indigo fame was imprisoned.

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : Question.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Ours is an agricultural country ; the population is mainly agricultural ;. our people have ancestral plots of land to depend upon, and perhaps it would take a long time if I tried to prove—but it is a self-evident truth and perhaps awaits no proof—that, in this land, we want neither big farming operations nor big plantations like those in Assam. We have got industrial centres which my friend, as well as I know are considered by some as unavoidable—a necessary evil I call it. Though even Mahatma Gandhi, and men of his thinking may differ, I call it a necessary evil ; but it is a n evil for all that. But where is the necessity for plantations ? Why should not Government offer this land under plantation, in small holdings to the people ? Any national government in India ought to see that those lands are brought under cultivation by conveniently small holders. If you want to have tea in this land, better set up factories for curing tea or doing the necessary processes after it is brought from the field. Why do you have planfations ? I will not go into the question of profits ; they are there

Mr. K. Ahmed : Otherwise it would have remained jungle ; India could not have been made so fertile and is is a great blessing to India that the tea plantations have taken place.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Small holdings cannot make it fertile ? I do not understand my Honourable friend.

An Honourable Member : Can anyone ever understand him ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My friend, Mr. Chalmers, perhaps charged Mr. Chaman Lall that he had no direct knowledge

Mr. K. Ahmed : Neither have you.

Pandit Nilakanta Das : I have knowledge which is nothing if it is not direct.

Mr. K. Ahmed : Your people have got no plantations.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My people the Oriya labourers, account for more than 25 per cent. of the tea labour in Assam and North-East Bengal—3 lakhs out of 12 lakhs.

Mr. K. Ahmed : How would you maintain them otherwise ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : If I were to choose, I would not, of course, maintain them on the five rupees a month that is given to them in the tea gardens, though mine is a poor flooded and famished province.

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : Question.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : It is sometimes less than four annas a day, is it not ? I ask my friend Mr. Chalmers.

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : Question.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Very well, I have not got the book with me now to quote it from, but I shall make a present of it to my Honourable friend, if he is so sticky in his interested opinion.

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : Sir, I pay them personally ; never mind the book.

An Honourable Member : How much do you pay ?

Pandit Nilkantha Das : Personally my friend, Mr. Chalmers, is a very good man and a hospitable gentleman ; I am coming to that. I shall have very good tea if I happen to go there. Never mind, I shall quote a single instance of my personal experience ; I had a barber servant of mine

Mr. K. Ahmed : And still you have not got your hair cut ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : He was fond of tea labour. How could he shave me ? He went to Puri, and there got into the trap of one of the recruiting *sardars* who have been called by some of our papers as "the very reptiles of humanity"; the *sardar* gave him opium to smoke and taught him for about two weeks how to smoke opium

Mr. K. Ahmed : No, no ; it was *ganja* probably.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : In Assam they have very little of your *ganja* Mr. Kabeer. It is a place where the opium consumption is perhaps the highest in the world. He was going to be transported to that Assam, where he would have little or nothing to do with *ganja* ; and under the influence of intoxication some hopes and prospects were held out to him, and he was spirited away. We could not find out where he was for a full year and more after which he returned—ugly, emaciated, and perhaps suffering from dysentery if I remember aright, a mere skeleton ; a complete wreck of himself ; and in that condition he was found in our village. He gave a description of his life there in the gardens, and said he had to walk to some steamer station through a jungle for three days for fear of

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : How long ago was this ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Some four or five years ago ; I do not exactly remember.

Mr. K. Ahmed : Things are better now. I move, Sir, that the question be now put.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I speak from memory ; my friend invites me or some of us so that he will be able to show us the real state of affairs there. I have already said that my friend is a very hospitable gentleman ; but I know there are traps everywhere ; otherwise a new comer would be tabooed as a trespasser—there are labyrinths of arrangements for that. Will you deny that ?

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : Certainly.

Mr. K. Ahmed : The question may be now put.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : If my friend is so very confident of his position, I should ask him to invite the ex-President of the Trade Union Congress, my friend Mr. Chaman Lall to send out his men, and I shall be willing to be a worker there, to establish trade unions in the gardens. Is he willing ?

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : We certainly have no objection.

Mr. K. Ahmed : Here is an invitation for you,

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I am so glad.

Mr K. Ahmed : It is not Rs. 20 a day.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I shall take advantage of such an invitation ; I hope it is a genuine invitation, and that the Honourable Member speaks in his representative capacity.

Now, Sir, there are labour rules. They are secret rules. I put some questions the other day to my Honourable friend Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra over there. I was told, in reply, that those private rules were not published and the Government of India had no knowledge of them. Now, what are those rules, Sir ? As far as I could find out from my neighbours and servants, some of whom have fortunately come back, they told me that, if a man is discharged after his contract terminates,—I do not know if it is called a civil contract, but it is criminal.—if a man can somehow manage to secure discharge after the termination of his contract, and if he wants to join another garden, there are difficulties in his way. It appears, Sir, there is some secret understanding among the planters themselves not to admit such a man for two years. . . .

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : Nonsense. He can go and work in any garden.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I hope that my Honourable friend will quote from the confidential rules. It may be his opinion that such a man can go and work in any garden ; it may be his feeling, and I have all respect for his feeling. Then, Sir, if a male coolie happens to marry a female coolie in another

garden, then the female will only be allowed to live with her husband on condition that either the mother, sister or some other female relative would be brought from somewhere to take the place of this woman to work in her place in the garden.

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : That is not true, Sir.

Pandit Nilakanta Das : I should like to have a copy of these rules from my Honourable friend as a present.

Mr. T. A. Chalmers : That is not true.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : It may be your personal opinion and I have nothing to do with such opinions here.

Then, Sir, there are the *Sardars* who are sent out on a recruiting campaign. They generally find the inhabitants of our small native states very convenient victims. I know, as well as many of my friends here know, what these native states are. There are no councils or constitutions. Doubly enslaved as the tiny chiefs of these states are, they are tyrants in their states. Nobody can raise a voice against oppression, for the rulers are all in all. It is these rulers, who are paid Rs. 15 for supplying each single coolie, and that payment is made through our Provincial Governments. For each man recruited, the Raja of the State is paid Rs. 15. Can you imagine, Sir, what is happening there under circumstances like these? I said that things are not all right in the State of Denmark. Was I not right, Sir?

And there is what is called the Labour Board to look after all this. My Honourable friend Diwan Chaman Lall, I think, has sufficiently dwelt on this aspect of the matter. Now, what is this Labour Board? It is a Board which consists of members of the Planters' Associations in Calcutta and in Assam. Is it not so? There is no Indian on that Board who can be trusted to represent the interests of labour. I hope, Sir, that the new Bill, which is going to be framed on the subject, will perhaps introduce provisions for proper supervision. Now, Sir, these poor

coolies should not be left entirely in the hands of people who have vested interests. . . : .

Mr. K. Ahmed : Why don't they trust you and remain loyal to their masters ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I find, Sir, that the Honourable Member in charge of Industries and Labour is not here. He refused the other day to publish the correspondence or to publish any information about the new Bill which is being hatched and which will perhaps come into this House in Simla, the next session of the Assembly, as an amendment to the so called existing Assam labour laws. I submit, Sir, that all matters relevant to that correspondence should be published from time to time, and particularly before the Bill is circulated for eliciting public opinion in India, so that we may be in possession of certain facts, figers and informations to arrive at a correct conclusion as to the exact state of affairs,

Then, Sir, my friend Mr. Ghuznavi said that there are Indians who will protect the interests of the labourers.

Mr. K. Ahmed : He did not say that.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Here is a bigger and a far more comprehensive questions that arises. The name "India" perhaps looks like a panacea to most of my Indian friends. For the last three or four years that I have been in this House, I have been fighting, almost single handed, perhaps with the help of my friend Mr. Duraiswamy Aryangar alone, for Indianisation in spirit, I said so in connection with my speech last year on the Railway Byard, and my Honourable friend Sir George Rainy made a fun of my remarks and told me that he would think of such an Indianisation when there was a one-rupee Railway Board. Yes, I wanted to have a one-rupee Railway Board in my motion. That does not matter ; that does not take away anything from the spirit of Indianisation, for which I was fighting, and for which I shall continue to fight as long as there is life in me. (Loud Applause from the Swarajist Benches.)

Mr. K. Ahmed : The question may be now put, Sir.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My friend has already put so many questions during the last three days that it will be awful if he puts any more. Whether a Member or a servant of the Government be Indian or European I do not mind. Even if all those benches be manned by Indians in personnel I do not call it Indianisation. When I was listening to the speech of my Honourable friend Mr. Abdul Aziz the other day on the army cut, I was painfully reminded of those eternal lines of Sir Walter Scott, "Breathes there the man with soul so dead?" And is this then the Indianisation in which you rob the soul, the spirit out of the Indian? What is the meaning of the Indianisation with Indians like this on your benches—with a foreign soul in an Indian body? With white face, with white skin, there may still be Indianisation in India if the standard of pay and conditions of service be adapted to the living of Indians, to the Indian ways of living. What are you doing here?

Mr. K. Ahmed : Why have you got such a prejudiced mind? Don't be afraid of them.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : From the very beginning, what did the East India Company do? There was practically no remuneration paid to the servants of the Company. What did the Company do? They would give them a share of the profit, they would allow them to be engaged in some business. We shall perhaps come to salt in the course of the debate on this Bill, and we shall then see how the salt business was in the hands of the servants of the Company for their remuneration and profits. Time after time, there were Resolutions not to give them any hand in the business, and objection was taken that they ought to be properly remunerated. That was the beginning of service in this country. The Cheshire people actually made a representation to Parliament, to the effect that people of the East India Company should not have all the benefits of the Indian market. The Cheshire people must have a share, as a matter of right,—“natural and paramount”. That was there plea, and that was the

plea for raising or abolishing the salt tax. This happened about a hundred years ago.

Mr. K. Ahmed : Let the question be now put.

Mr. Chairman (Sir Darcy Lindsay) : Will the Honourable Member proceed ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I bow to you, Sir. That was the beginning of British service in this land. It was created long ago during the time of Lord William Bentinck I think

Mr. K. Ahmed : In which year ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Let my Honourable friend go to school. It was adapted to a standard which would attract people from England under conditions which were very different from those obtaining today. There were no steamships in those days, There were no aeroplanes; and the servants were to be practically segregated and banished, practically sent to the Andamans so to say. The pay of the servants of the Company was fixed to attract such people, as it were, into banishment. Has there been any move on the part of the Government of India to go into those circumstances, and is there any proposal to cut down the pay of the services to the Indian standard ?

(At this stage Mr. President resumed the Chair.)

Has there been any attempt ? On the other hand, only the other day the so-called Lee Loot came to crown the gradual allurements held out to the service during the ages. The Lee Commission came and put some more money into the pockets of the so-called public servants and it was put in such a way that there might not be even an apology of voting on these amounts. It is not Indianisation. I do not know, what else you mean by Europeanisation or Anglicisation. It is an engine to undermine India's soul, its spirit, its life, its culture. It is the conquest of culture which is the worst conquest in the human world. (*Cries of 'Hear, hear, from the Congress Benches*). This is a country which has lived through 6,000 years and more. It has a history, a continuous history, a tradition, a civilisation, a living civilisation, and even today, in our daily ablutions we

say "*Somapa pitaras strpyantam*". That means that those who were offering *soma* on the banks of the Drsadvati—those forefathers are propitiated even now by us.

Mr. C. Duraiswamy Aiyangar : On the banks of the Thames.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : That attempt is now being made, so that we may pour it into the Thames instead of pouring it into the Drsadvati for our forefathers. And where do you find in the world, except perhaps China, such a country where the civilisation lives through the ages? Egypt. I have every respect for the nationality of that country, but it is not the Egypt of the days of the Pyramids. But here is India, in spite of all the vicissitudes of our cultural life—it is the India of the *Vedas*. We still claim it to be so, and if your this *maḱee* Indianisation goes on in industry, in service, in trade, in everything else, where are we drifting? We do not know. This is no Indianisation. When we have our national government, as we will have very soon, our first duty will be to have a committee which will make a thorough inquiry in order to Indianise the services, industry, trade and everything. Now, I shall pass on to my friend Mr. Abdul Haye.

Mr. President: It is not wise to enter into it.

Pandit Nilakantha Das: I shall then leave it. Then finally I do not understand what use there is in discussing finances in this House at all. That is a question which I ask myself very often. But still so long as we are in this House, we have got to look into the Bills of expenditure and this and that connected therewith. We cannot avoid that. We do that for getting what many of us call Dominion status. It has been discussed here already, and it is not for me to go much into that. I was not a student of constitutional history in my early life. But I was the other day simply astounded when my Honourable and gallant friend Colonel Crawford asked the question "Will you not carry on a fight for independence if you get Dominion status?" I asked myself, what is this? Is it that our leaders are going out with their hats in hand so that Dominion status will have to be put into those hats, with certain conditions

and restrictions. As my Deputy Leader said, he questioned the Colonel's credentials. I don't do that. I take it that he was expressing his national sentiment in a representative character,

Mr. President : The Honourable Member is not a Leader ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I hope I am entitled to discuss the question in spite of it. When the talk of Dominion status came into the political atmosphere of India, I began to study it. I questioned myself whether I had studied it aright. I was put in mind of a line from the *Gita* :

यस्यां जायतिभूतानि श निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ।

“Where devils revel, it is darkness for the Gods”.

Canada, Australia and South Africa have each a Dominion status and they revel in it, and surely they have not got it on conditions. Why does the same thing portend darkness to the Indian ? Where does the question of agreements and conditions come from ? Therefore I say, a subject and a dependent people we are, and ours is to strive for independence pure and simple at any cost and without considering consequences. If any party is interested in living with us amicably, it is their business to come forward with the offer of Dominion status, or whatever you call it. Then will be the time for us to see it and sit in judgement over it, and dictate our own terms and conditions, if need be. But my gallant friend, the Colonel, must understand that our leaders were never out with their hats for Dominion status. They made a generous gesture, for to be generous has been traditionally ingrained in our constitution. India has been generous to foreigners through the course of her history, and this has been the treatment ever accorded to India by the foreigner. It was to help England that Dominion status was agreed upon by so many parties in India. We have been over generous, and the Colonel has proved the type foreigner. Therefore now is the time either to do or to die. We cannot live under conditions like this. It is not only painful but humiliating. It is more.

It is insulting, and it is injurious to the health of the nation.

Coming to the scheme of expenditure, an offering of it, so to say, was made the other day in the form of a big book containing items for so many crores of rupees. It was an offering on all fours, for not a pie could be touched. If the Gods swallowed or coveted a particle of the offering, who would give it? (Applause.) We are used to give offerings to the Gods. Our *Vedic* forefathers gave them. Then they included a drop of *Soma* juice—a kind of wine; and now there is big dose of opium in this Budget offering. (Laughter.) It is very interesting. We all know how the Indian Government long and strenuously fought in the International Convention for opium to be permitted to help the people of the East with opium. That is a long and unpalatable history. But the agreement came in spite of our self-constituted representatives, and in consequence of that our Provision opium sale is being perhaps gradually reduced year by year. Whether and how far that is being carried out, is not my concern here. Provision opium is safe in the hands of the international arrangements. But I find here, as a matter of fact, that excise opium has been the stronghold of my friends over there.

In 1926 we were told that our excise opium was sold to the provinces, the price being calculated on the basis of the cost price of the production of opium. Then naturally the price is practically stationary. Nobody can deny it. But when do you look into the income from the sale proceeds of excise opium, it was 70.03 lakhs last year (revised estimate), and this year it is 71.23 lakhs. (*An Honourable Member*: Crores, you mean?) Lakhs or crores, may be crores, I think they are lakhs. But what I want to point out is that the proceeds from the sale of excise opium are gradually increasing. Was it not high time for the Finance Member to make a scheme for gradual reduction, just as the Convention adopted a scheme for gradual reduction of Provision opium? I ask you, Sir, whether it was not up to him to make a scheme to reduce it gradually in ten or fifteen or

five years, or whatever it might be, and to abolish the sale of opium ultimately in the provinces.

I was given a copy of the Bihar Budget the other day. I looked into this excise opium in which I am interested (Laughter), yes, I take opium as a subject. I mean as far as this House is concerned. I don't go i to the income, for there I cannot know whether there is a reduction or an increase. But the opium which was purchased from the Government of India excise opium, in 1925-26 cost Rs. 7,46,620, and in the revised estimate it is Rs. 7,58,123. It is a distinct increase of a few thousands, and the Finance Member of Bihar and Orissa seems aggrieved this year for he says, "It is anticipated that this year's poor monsoon will affect consumption (of excisable drugs and liquors) resulting in a decrease in revenue" (Bihar and Orissa Financial Statement page 3). But still my friend, Mr. Coatman, in his book 'India in 1927-28' tells me that, in 1910-11, the consumption for the whole of British India was 12,527 maunds. In 1926-27 it was 7,021 maunds. Yes, he is a very clever officer of Public Information (*An Honourable Member*: "Misinformation"). Misinformation, yes. He very slyly left out the year 1921. He should have compared the figures with 1921. There was a great fall, and three years ago it was proved by figures in this House that, all over India, there was a tremendous reduction in the sale of excise opium that year on account of Mahatmaji's efforts. But he cleverly compares the present with 1910-11. Then he says about Bihar and Orissa. that, "The Bihar and Orissa Opium Smoking Act prohibits opium smoking except by licensed vendors". I wish his information was correct. I belong to the Province of Bihar and Orissa, and I had the privilege to appear as a witness before the last Opium Committee, where I pressed for this particular measure, and yet it has not been given effect to. I give him this piece of information and I challenge him to deny it.

Then, Sir, I believe it has already been very taxing to you.

Mr. President: Not at all (Laughter). (*Cries of 'Go on!'.*)

Pandit Nilakantha Das: This opium offering is

quite in fitting with our traditions. There was an offering of the whole budget. My Honourable friend, the Finance Member, will be glad that he is Indianising the budget to this extent at least.

The scheme of expenditure is, as I have said, not on the basis of Indian life and Indian income or Indian expenditure. With regard to the expenditure
 6 P.M. in our ordinary domestic affairs, we say "Cut your coat according to your cloth", but here the cloth is found out for the coat which is already there, and the cloth is found out for that coat and not for this *Khadar* coat; for that coat over there, the English coat. For the *khadar* coat we have cloth enough in this country, but we have not enough for the English coat, which must be made and maintained clean and fresh. (*An Honourable Member*: 'And dry?') No, it is not dry. My Honourable friend, Mr. Amar Nath Dutt, said, the dress has nothing to do with culture. He has his own ideas, but once, year after year, we are asked to appear in morning dress. Once our friend, *The Forward*, remarked that the Viceroy would be horrified to know what the morning dress of an Indian is. Let not our friends there be horrified. Our coat is like that and they must find cloth enough in this country for this Indian coat. Let him not first conceive the expenditure as he is doing. What is he doing? He is following the tradition created and fostered for him.

As soon as the Government of India Act of 1919 came into being, and this kind of budget offering came to be discussed in this House under what is euphemistically called the Reformed Constitution, there was anticipated a difficulty in finding money to meet the problem of unemployment in England. There was, of course, then the blush of virginity and nowness and a device was planned to take money "Home" in a way constitutional. At once the pompous Industrial Commission was announced under the pretence of developing Indian Industry. This mountain of a Commission produced the Indian Stores Purchase Department. That was the main recommendation of the Commission for the development of Indian Industry. The other day when I was appealing to my friend, the Honourable Sir

Bhupendra Nath Mitra, he said, "Industries is a Provincial subject and transferred. I am concerned with industries in centrally administered areas only." I have nothing to do with them, but I was supplied with a poor report of the Indian Stores Department. Very well, it was so small a book. I really thought that the Government of India had decided that all purchases, whether railway, military, civil engineering, and every thing should be purchased through the Indian Stores Department. But what do we find? The whole thing is a sham. It is a fresh luxury at the cost of the tax-payer. In the last year under report the tax-payer is laid under contribution to the extent of more than Rs. 50,000. Why all this paraphernalia? If you do not like to give an impetus to Indian industry, then what is the use of all this pompous Stores Department? How much do you buy here? The other day, in the course of my discussion on the railway budget, I proved home the whole case for the railways. There was no reply from the Government side. The difference between last year and this year in the railway stores purchase, so far as foreign purchases are concerned, is 7 crores more and the Indian purchases are 35 lakhs less I was referring to the last year under report and the last year but one. And here I also expect that the Army Department, which is getting 55 crores and 10 lakhs, should give its order for its stores purchase. But I find that there is a Marshal, General, or some other big officer who will purchase things direct. (Shame.) We have no knowledge as to what he is actually doing. But a very poor sum comes, of course, to the Indian purchases. Perhaps our Honourable friend, Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra, thinks that he is helpless in the matter.

There are so many other departments for which purchases are made; why should they not all go through the Indian Stores Purchase department? Why is there no attempt at centralisation? Unfortunately I have lost the list. (Laughter.) There are so many departments which purchase stores for themselves. Even pencils are purchased elsewhere. The pencil industry was a growing industry during the war time and after, but it has now practically collapsed. When we first came to this Assembly, we used to be supplied with Madras

pencils. Now we see none. These we use, seem to bear some Indian names. Some Indian firms, I am afraid, import these pencils from abroad and impress their names. Cedar wood is the best for pencils. There are various forests in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Provinces which have plenty of this cedar wood. But no thought has perhaps yet been given to develop them by communication or anything like that. Timber for pencils has to be purchased from California. What is that timber? It is a kind of sugar pine, which is coloured artificially by chemicals injected into the living tree. Here in India you have plenty of sugar pine in the Himalayan forests. We do not investigate into the subject at all in our Dehra Dun Depot of experts and the Indian Stores Department has nothing to do with pencils has nothing to do with telescope; it has nothing to do with microscopes and machines, and many other things, the purchase of which ought to be centralised in the Indian Stores Department. The Indians by this means, should systematically be encouraged to produce and manufacture the required articles. This is a very grave situation. The master General of Supply, Printing and Stationery Department, and all these departments purchase their own stores. Even the State railways purchase their own stores, they do not purchase through the Indian Stores Department. If they purchase the oils and paints, which they have been doing a little for two years, they seem to think that they are showing some favour to the Indian Stores Department. A sum of 13½ crores as my Honourable friend tells me, is spent in England in purchases for the Army. All those purchases ought to have been made through this Indian Stores Department, But decentralisation is the principle followed by the Government of India.

I suggested the reason of this decentralisation in this House. Money is wanted in England to deal with the question of unemployment, and the reformed constitution is functioning as it does. It is more convenient if the discussion can be cleverly evaded. Then, the railway finance was separated and that was to create a psychological compartment in the scrutiny of the budget. This is railway, so this money set apart must go for upkeep and development. This is the decentra-

lised concentration fostered in us. When you come to ways and means, 30 crores go every year for railways. This sum of 30 crores must go unscathed and uncriticised, for there is an arrangement for five years. So you create this psychological compartmentality. When we talk of railways, we say now to ourselves yes, this is railway money and we should not touch it with our sacrilegious cuts or criticisms. Ways and means must, as a matter of course, find money here in England, or anywhere for railways. What doubt or dissent can there be? There is no centralisation, everything is decentralised with a set purpose. If you have all the money for stores purchase in one lump, then you can view things in the proper light. I do not know whether this is not the thin end of the wedge. The military expenditure is separated this year, and that by an arrangement. It is another decentralisation. If we want to cut something out of 55 crores and 10 lakhs spent under military, the idea comes up that it is military, and under arrangement, we should not touch it. They include their estimates in a very big book all-non-votable yet there was an inclination to look into it. But after this separation even my Honourable friend Dr. Moonje will not perhaps look into it, for the very source of the desire is being psychologically killed. So my submission is that the inevitable mentality is there to work itself out in the military or the railway or whatever may be the department concerned in this clever policy of decentralisation. I shall narrate to the House one story, to illustrate this mentality fixed and set. A school master was once asked by a student: "Sir, *Prana* and *Jibana* both mean one and the same thing (life). But how is it that the *na* in *Prana* is *Murdhanya* (palatal); and the *na* in *Jibana* (dental)?" The teacher scratched his head for a time, and then said in disgust, as it were "Silly child, don't you realise that this is *Prana*, and should therefore be *Murdhanya*; and that that is *Jibana*, and therefore should be *Dantiya*!" Similarly when we come to the Military Department, it is military, and should not be touched, and so on. This is a kind of very dangerous mentality to which we are being introduced. All money should be put together in one lump to be examined, and there should be no separate reserves

created. Here you have 23½ crores—Railway Reserve. The other day, I said that this money was being taken from salt. It is the tax-payers' money. By putting money in reserve, like this they are not only keeping the money idle but also they are encouraging certain industries somewhere in England. Now I don't know if the military arrangement announced the other day with a military reserve is the thin end of the wedge for another decentralisation. By reserve I mean the surplus which will remain without lapsing, year after year to accumulate under the arrangement for a certain number of year. towards the expenses of recognition, about which we know nothing. We do not know any items or details about that. That is the idea, I say, of creating another reserve. We will see, by 1930 how many more reserves, how many more decentralisations are being created out of the tax-payers' money.

Then about debts. I put a short question to my Honourable friend Mr. Sesha Ayyangar. when he was speaking and he replied, "Yes". 'First we shall' he said, 'take Indian money if it is available; otherwise, we shall take a loan, we shall if need be, borrow money from abroad.' I put a question Even in England? He said, 'Yes! I have no objection But I am sorry. Sir, I have to differ from him. I should, if I am put in charge of directing national finance, (Laughter.) borrow money from any other country in the world but not from England. I tell you as my friend Mr. Birla over there—I do not find him here now—pointed out this is political debt, not economic debt only. I say I can stand economic debt, but vested interests and political interests have been created and are being created in this country, and it is this money which we borrow in England that is more than half responsible for our subjugation and subjection. Do not borrow from England, if we have to borrow anywhere at all. Yes, every nation sometimes does want money when it desires to grow; but I say, do not borrow a farthing from England. That should be our principle, even if we get it in England at a little less interest. Then, Sir, no money actually comes here; we get debts accumulated in papers but get perhaps worked iron clay

or stone or something of the sort for which labour and art is paid in England. You hear you have a national unproductive debt, a commercial productive debt and so many names of various significance. What is the meaning of all these? Do the debts develop your own industry and do they increase the paying power of the tax-payer? No. I have no desire to go into further details. (*Honourable Members: 'Go on.'*) I have great suspicions that this money, which is borrowed, is not utilised for the purpose of giving an impetus to our indigenous industry, or for promoting our national wealth. National wealth does not consist of wagons and locomotives, these stones and those buildings of New Delhi; that is not national wealth. National wealth is the applied genius of the nation; that is, national labour having a money value. It is this applied genius which is national wealth. And what promotion is given to that applied genius of the nation—the genius which can be made into money and which can produce money?

I shall now turn a little to agriculture, if I am permitted. Reduction of rates is said to help agricultural wealth. I shall show you what all these reductions in railway rates mean; they mean something else than what they appear to be. They are fresh agencies for draining. Over and above that, as I was saying, money is borrowed in England. What is the meaning of that money? It is only a paper business. The stores are purchased in England, our locomotives, our rails, our telescopes, our microscopes, and even men are purchased there. As a matter of reality, at the back of the paper business, their industry is supported and encouraged, and they have their own vested interests even propitiated. The starving industry is paid, new industry is paid, new industry encouraged, unemployment dealt with; and for the produce of industries, the interest on the capital again is assured. Thus it is a double debt. It is a very subtle thing. I am not an economist myself; and my friend, Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, will help me next year at least, if necessary.

Mr. C. Duraiswamy Aiyangar : Don't bother him.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : Then comes agriculture. My friend Mr. B. Das has in this connection referred to the floods and embankments. That is a big and pressing problem in India, and particularly in Orissa. On that I propose not to speak as he has spoken well. But, I shall here speak to you a word about agriculture proper which is the subject now before the country. There was a big Commission, a pompous one. When it came, we all expected that perhaps it was bringing some millennium into India. The terms of reference were published. My friend Mr. Goswami is here, and he was responsible for a Resolution in this House by which we demanded an economic inquiry into the conditions of the people. We expected something would turn up, but what did we get? A taxation inquiry we got, instead of an economic inquiry. Then when the Royal Commission was announced, generally we thought it would go deep into the matter and hold something like an economic inquiry, as all economic inquiry must be based on agricultural inquiry. But it was not the fault of Lord Linlithgow or his friends. They were prevented from entering into the economic position of the Indian peasant. Land tenure, irrigation of land, tax—all these things which materially affect the agriculturist of India, were precluded from the terms of reference. They were shut out altogether. Then, after two or three years of inquiry, something like a voluminous report came out. On the recommendations of that report something was being hatched, and we were in the dark for a long time; as to what it was; and even now it is not published. Of course I am thankful to my friend Mr. Bajpai, who gave me some information privately (Laughter) as to what was being done about that. In spite of the anxious cares of my friend Mr. Bajpai and his Honourable Member to ensure Indian representation and Indian interest I am sure that in the name of experts—the very negation of Indianisation in spirit and matter—something will be newly introduced. I shudder, Sir, at the name of experts. We have been slaves not only of culture of finances and arms, but also to a certain extent, of experts. And those experts will come, and perhaps some arrangement for big farms—I know and many of my friends know what those farms are—like

the plantations of Assam will crop up along with them. There may also be some central office or Institute where will sit probably some entomologists with microscopes with two or three pinned insects under these microscopes. In three or four years they will tell you : "Well, to kill or ward off such and such an insect, irrigate the fields with solutions of potassium permanganate". That is what we find in Pusa. Once there was an insect pest in my cocoon garden, and I was asked to inundate the plants with a solution of potassium permanganate. It was impossible. How could I do it? I do not know, if, in the end, the same thing will happen here, too. . .

I am not in this place going into the subject how all the labour is being depleted in our rural areas and being thus forced into plantations and to foreign countries in search for a living I shall not go into all those questions. (*Honourable Members* : "Go on, go on") It is too late now. But I shall now go to the communal question which I consider from quite a different view point. It is not the communal questions between the Hindus and the Muhammadans. There is some other communal question which has been brought up and fostered in this atmosphere of the Government of India. and that is in connection with provincial redistribution, distribution of provinces in India on the basis of language. Linguistic province is the only natural administration division. (*Some Honourable Members* : "Question") There might be Honourable Members who question, but the answer is there in Linguistic Division of Provinces and nowhere else. That is the only natural solution where harmony out of and among all the sub-cultures is possible. They will all in that harmony grow into a healthy body politic. It will be a synthesis. India cannot expect to have one homogeneous shade of culture throughout. There must be sub-cultures as there are and will be, and those sub-cultures in synthesis will become one synthetic body politic of the Indian Nation, one comprehensive culture. When our fore-fathers, in the distant post-Vedic times, found the race divided and their language fallen into dialects, what did they do? Where did they find the principle of nationalism or culture? They formulated the Sanskrit language.

They did not expect a homogeneous culture but one synthesis they created out of a heterogeneous mass.

But this Government came here not with any such idea in their head. The provinces were somehow or other thrown into their present forms, and some provinces were formed according to the circumstances of annexation. Now I belong to a province (*Mr. C. Duraiswamy Aiyangar*: "With no culture!") whose culture has been studiously killed for these 150 years or more under the British Government. Some portion with the conquest of the Northern Circars during the Carnatic War was thrown out into Madras. That is the main cultural portion. Bengal had absorbed a big slice under the Dewani of the Company. Then another portion was thrown into Bengal during the second Mahratta War, and a third portion was still, upto 1849, under the Bhonslas of Nagpur, under which it was allowed to remain. And what is happening? Culture with its vehicle, language is being killed not only in its struggle for existence in the outlying areas; but in one province where you have more than one sub-cultural entities, what is the affect? They always quarrel with one another, and as the outcome of the quarrel, one party always goes to the Government for what it calls its self-interest and the other party does not lag behind in securing its own benefit just in the same way. As rivals of one another they seek the help of a third party, and this, as we all know, is very advantageous to Government. These communal wrangles, these sub-communal wrangles, must be put an end to. I do not know that the Government are thinking about it, but I should like to tell them that unless this natural division of provinces comes to be a real arrangement, there is no hope for the growth, for the smooth growth of India nationality. I know this Government may have very little to do with our nationality, but if I seek to convince the House, I picture to myself what things ought to be under a national Government. If anyone is worth his salt in this land, then he should remember this aspect of the problem this aspiration of the people, and direct his energies accordingly. Sir, I oppose the motion.

(Pandit Nilakantha Das.)

An unfinished speech proposing remission of tax on indogenous Indian Salt made during the detailed discussion of the Indian Finance Bill.
21st March, 1929.

Mr. President: Mr. Acharya.

Mr. M. K. Acharya (South Arcot *cum* Chingleput: Non-Muhammadan Rural): Sir,

Pandit Nilakantha Das (Orissa Division: Non-Muhammadan): May I rise to a point of order? I presume you will allow my Honourable friend Mr. Acharya to move his amendment at this stage, and if so, I rise to a point of order. That amendment is for reducing the duty from Rs. 1-4-0 to four annas. I have got an amendment which is No. 8 on the list. It is remitting the salt duty in its entire extent.

Mr. President: That is what Mr. Ram Narayan Singh wants.

Pandit Nilakantha Das: As I understood his amendment, he remits the salt duties imposed since the days of British rule or the East India Company.

Mr. President: I am unable to differentiate between the amendment of Mr. Ram Narayan Singh and that of the Honourable Member. I thought the amendments of both the Members were the same, namely, that they wanted the remission of the tax altogether.

Mr. C. Duraiswamy Aiyangar (Madras ceded districts and Chittoor: Non-muhammadan Rural): May I point out, Sir, that the amendment in the name of Pandit Nilakantha Das is different from that in the name of Mr. Ram Narayan Singh? Pandit Nilakantha Das's amendment and my amendment will retain the duty of Rs. 1-4-0 upon imported salt, but will take away the duty on locally manufactured salt either wholly or to the extent of twelve annas according as it is proposed

Therefore there is a considerable difference between the amendment proposed by my Honourable friend Mr. Ram Narayan Singh and that proposed by myself and Pandit Nilakantha Das.

Mr. President: I wonder if Government accept that view.

The Honourable Sir George Schuster : I understand that the interpretation of Mr. Ram Narayan Singh's amendment is the abolition of all salt duties. I was not quite clear myself, on the wording, whether he intended only to abolish the duty on salt manufactured in India and imported by land into India, or whether he intended to abolish both the import duty on foreign salt and the excise duty. But I understand from what my Honourable friend has said now, that he intended to move the abolition of all salt duty, that is, duty on imported salt, as well as on salt manufactured in India. In that case his amendment is substantially different from that proposed by Mr. Duraiswamy Aiyanger.

Mr. President: In that case, I will ask Pandit Nilakantha Das to move his amendment.

Mr. C. Duraiswamy Aiyanger: May I make a suggestion to the Chair that all the amendments might be first moved and discussion take place thereon and ultimately the questions may be put ?

Mr. President: Pandit Nilakantha Das.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : My amendment is :

"To clause 2 of the Bill the following be added at the end :

'and the said provisions shall, in so far as they enable the Governor General in Council to remit any duty so imposed, be construed as if, with effect from the 1st day of April, 1929, they remitted the duty to the extent of the said one rupee and four annas and such remission shall be deemed to have been made out of the leviable duty by rule made under that section'."

The whole clause will then read like this as amended :

"The provisions of section 7 of the Indian Salt Act, 1882, shall, in so far as they enable the Governor General in Council to impose by rule made under that section a duty on salt manufactured in, or imported into, any part of British India other than

Burma and Aden, be construed as if, with effect from the 1st day of April 1929, they imposed such duty at the rate of one rupee and four annas per maund of eighty-two and two sevenths pounds avoirdupois of salt manufactured in, or imported by land into, any such part, and such duty shall, for all the purposes of the said Act, be deemed to have been imposed by rule made under that section, and the said provisions shall in so far as they enable the Governor General in Council to remit any duty so imposed, be construed as if, with effect from the 1st day of April, 1929, they remitted the duty to the extent of the said one rupee and four annas and such remission shall be deemed to have been made out of the leviable duty by rule made under that section."

Section 7 of the Salt Act, 1882, provides :

"The Governor General in Council may from time to time, by rule consistent with this Act,—

- (a) impose a duty, not exceeding three rupees per maund of 82 $\frac{2}{7}$ pounds avoirdupois, on salt manufactured in, or imported by land into, any part of British India ;"
- (b) (*My amendment is under this*) 'reduce or remit any duty so imposed, and re-impose any duty so reduced or remitted'."

From time to time, duties have been remitted by notification under this particular clause. In 1893, in the case of salt manufactured in the Punjab mines, the duty was remitted for salt used in glazed earthen ware. On another occasion in case of Madras salt sent out to Travancore and other places. There are other instances also quoted in the foot note of the section and clause. So, under this amendment, if it is carried, the effect will be that the duty will be levied, and that duty, so far as Indian indigenous salt is concerned, will be remitted entirely to the extent of Rs. 1-4-0. The idea is that the tariff duty on foreign salt is just as much as the excise duty on salt manufactured in India. If we have Rs. 1-4-0 as excise salt duty on salt manufactured in Bengal, say, then the tariff duty on the salt which is imported into Bengal from Liverpool or Germany will be just Rs. 1-4-0. If we say, we have no duty here, then the import duty goes, as a matter of course. When there is no imposition of excise duty, there is no standard by which we can levy a duty on imported salt. So the excise duty there technically, according to my amendment, remains untouched.

That excise duty will be remitted, though technically it will be there on the Statute-book for the purpose of the tariff duty on imported salt. That is the idea of my amendment.

Sir, I was just listening to the very sweet and what I may call beautifully persuasive speech of my Honourable friend, Sir George Schuster.

Mr. President : He did not persuade you ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : It was persuasive all the same. He did, Sir, but perhaps could not persuade me. I quite realise his position and if he could carry the sweetness of his tongue to the depths of his heart, he would be the first man, before I make any speech, to prove my case, to accept my amendment and pour oil over all agitation here. For, this salt tax is the centre of the objectionable features of the Finance Bill, so far as the economic aspect of it is concerned, this salt tax is the crux of the whole problem. He may not have known it. He is new to this House. Year after year, this salt tax has been, as my friends described it, a hardy annual. I think my amendment requires little persuasion on this side of the House. I know we shall be very strong in carrying this measure, for this measure requires little persuasion to the representatives of the people, irrespective of their political opinions. On this question, I must apologise to you, Sir. Our memories are not only long and painful, but to some utterly unpalatable and even galling.

This salt tax painfully puts me in mind of a tax, which I call mediæval, I may even call it primitive. It is, Sir, a poll tax, and as such, is full of the humiliating memory of the days and dealings of ancient slavery, as well as mediæval fanaticism. I need not go into details of this historical significance of the problem for obvious reasons. Let me say this much, that it is all unseemly for a people to fight with their Government in this second quarter of the 20th century on the issue of a tax round which cling the associations of barbarism.

It is a poll tax, a capitation tax, and more so from the view-point of the Government. We know, it can be proved on authority that consumption of salt decreases, when the tax is increased. But to the Government the consumption is inelastic. What else is it then but a poll tax, a capitation tax? What else is the principle and significance of a capitation tax? True, it puts one in mind of the days of human slavery. Which Government was that that thought of poll taxes? Not an organised, not a civilised Government. A poll tax can only be thought of when the Government wants to make money out of the ignorance of the people. No Government would ever think of a poll tax. This salt-tax is a poll tax venerated over, with what the Government calls 'indirect', I mean, the principle of indirect taxation. It is a direct poll tax I say, and it is primitive in its character.

Mr. President : The Honourable Member is repeating the same thing over and over again.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Am I? I am sorry, Sir, but this subject is so very painful.

Mr. President : That may be, but there are rules governing the debate in this House.

Pandit Nilakantha Dass : I am not consciously doing it.

Mr. President : I am prepared to believe the Honourable Member!

Pandit Nilakantha Dass : It is a tax which is levied on food. Rich people are not affected by this tax, although I don't say that rich people have nothing to do with the tax. It is a tax all the same, and they pay as much perhaps as the poorest man pays. It is in keeping with the character of the present Imperialistic civilization, which should no longer find its *proprio* on the exploitation and oppression of the poor. For it has always been the function of Imperialism to exploit the property of the world where protection of such property is the weakest. The poor man is ex-

ploited and what else is this tax? It partakes of the distinct character of that Imperialistic policy of exploitation. It is a tax on human blood. The poor man is bled to find money for the coffers of the State under this tax. I don't propose to pose as a chemist in this House, but I say salt has very much—perhaps 90 per cent.—to do with human blood, and when you tax salt you tax the poor man's blood. Poverty has been a sin for a long time and therefore it is being punished. But how much longer will it be punished like this? Whatever may be the character of my opposition to this tax, I say it should not be a source of revenue. Salt should not be a source of revenue, If you make it a source of revenue, as I remarked some time ago, you are always tempted to make it your sure reserve, a certain source of revenue. Many other taxes are there, they are not certain, but there is no uncertainty about the poor man, or even the rich man for all that, taking a pinch of salt. You are always tempted to grasp the poor man, to bleed the poor man. It engenders a sort of depravity which is not healthy to the cause of humanity. It stands to murder humanity in ignorance and weakness. This is such a tax.

You may say there is France, there is Italy, there is that Republic of Brazil. They have it, they have this salt tax. It does not matter if. England does not have it. It has something else. We shall explain that later on, but big countries have it. Why should you not have it in India? There are examples in the West and in the countries Westernised. I know, but I refuse to enter into the circumstances which actuated them to put on this salt tax. I look within before I look without. What have I got to do with Brazil having a salt tax, I have not been to Brazil. You may have got many books, many accounts, this and that. Only yesterday my friend Mr. Chaman Lall's statements and mine were being questioned for our not having been personally to the tea gardens in Assam. For that reason our statements could not be regarded as authoritative. Whether authoritative or not, whether facts or not, whether

reasonable or not, I don't go to question or to criticise what others are doing in this world. I ask myself what I should do, and I say, so far as I am concerned, I am not going to give any sanction whatsoever, moral or physical, for this tax on the poor man's blood.

Mr. President : Does the Honourable Member say "physical sanction" ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Yes.

Mr. President : How can he give physical sanction ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Physical sanction in voting. We are sometimes carried to the Lobby against our will. Sanction there is not mental or moral, I think it is physical. Is'nt it ?

Mr. K. Ahmed : You will be hauled up to the police court !

Mr. President : It is not possible for the Honourable Member to finish before lunch I suppose ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I don't think so.

Mr. President : The House stands adjourned till a quarter to three.

The Assembly then adjourned for lunch till a quarter to three of the Clock.

The Assembly re-assembled after lunch at a quarter to three of the Clock, Mr. President in the Chair.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I was going to say, Sir, that the salt tax should not be made a source of revenue. One may very well ask if it is not to be a source of public revenue, what do you propose to have in its stead. There are two reasons for the total abolition of the entire tax on indigenous salt in India. I have got to explain them a little. One reason is that this is a measure of protection. The other day when Demands for Grants were being discussed, we carried a cut in the salt Demand on the issue that India should be made self-supporting in matters of salt. Indian salt should be made to supply the whole of India. There is a difficulty and the main difficulty is foreign imported

salt. If we cannot make Indian salt, it was found out the other day—at least it was so given out—if we cannot make Indian salt very very cheap, as compared with foreign salt, we have no hope, at least for the next 20 years, of making India self-supporting so far as salt is concerned. It will be very difficult to put a very heavy protective tariff duty on imported salt. It will not look well for many reasons, salt tax being a poll tax, as I have said, it is a bad tax, it is obnoxious to tax the blood of man. Realising all this, and Indians as we are by culture, we have been all along throughout our historic tradition first members of humanity and then members of the nation, it is not for us to say, let English salt, German salt or Aden salt be taxed, not ours. It does not look well. But we are here constrained to give some protection to indigenous salt, and what is the compromise? I will give you here a compromise. The compromise is to remit the excise tax, *i. e.*, excise duty on indigenous salt. Then, this Rs. 1-4-0 per maund remains on imported salt and that is a measure of protection.

It is said that the people in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and some parts of Assam have to depend, entirely on foreign salt. They have also been made during the course of the last hundred years or so, to contract a kind of liking, natural or artificial, whatever it be, they have been made to contract a kind of liking for foreign salt on account of its quality. Whatever that be, I hope my Honourable friend Pandit Duraiswamy Aiyangar, I mean Mr. Duraiswamy Aiyangar

Mr C. Duraiswamy Aiyangar: I am a Pandit all right.

Pandit Nilakantha Das: My Honourable friend proved it home the other day that quality matters very little to the common man, even in Bengal and Assam. It is not a question of quality so much as the question of unavailability. It is not made available there. That is our position. But supposing a certain section of the people are attracted by its quality, they love foreign

salt, they prefer it on account of its better quality. Admit, for the sake of argument, that it is so, I believe even the Members of Government will agree when I say that such a preference can be found only with the richer section of the community. It is quite natural that, when protection comes, the richer and the more enlightened section for that matter, who have been mainly responsible except Government, for killing the indigenous salt and for killing its market in Bengal, they ought to be made to pay for relieving the poor.

(At this stage Mr. President vacated the Chair which was taken by Mr. Deputy President.)

It will be a very small burden which such people will never, I believe, grudge to pay. It will be in the fitness of things that, if any one is to be taxed in this country for the purpose of giving a certain protection to the native industry, I mean indigenous industry, it is that section of the people who can bear such a burden without difficulty. In this case, there will be practically no difficulty to them.

My second reason is that it is not possible for us to propose an adjustment of tariff duty perhaps on this occasion. Had I wished to increase it, I am afraid, Sir, I could not have done so. It is only the duty on excise salt which I propose to remit—perhaps some of my friends do not understand the significance of it; I apologise to them as I have not perhaps been intelligible. The bill says “salt manufactured in, or imported by land into” India and not Burma. That is, if we pass this Bill as it is, we levy a duty on indigenous salt alone. This Bill is for excise salt duty only. Our difficulty arises there. In this Bill, by no amendment shall we be able to conveniently adjust the duty on imported salt. That duty, I mean tariff duty, is, according to the Tariff Act, levied on the basis of this excise duty, which by rules made under Section 7-(2) of the Indian Salt Act, can be remitted by the Governor General in Council. Thus the duty will remain leviable for the purpose of taxing imported salt, and will not

be realised on indigenou salt on account of the remission proposed here. Now, I hope, it is clear that the adjustment of the salt duty conveniently is forbidden ground so far as this act is concerned, and we shall
 3 P.M. have to take the previous sanction of His Excellency the Viceroy before we can bring in such an amendment. That amendment, as I understand it, and as far as I have experienced it in previous years, that amendment means the putting in of something new into the body of this Bill. If you want to do that, you cannot do that merely by means of an amendment. Two years ago, I looked into the question, and I applied for sanction to a mend this particular section to that effect. I am sorry to inform my Honourable friends that I was not allowed to do so.

An Honourable Member: I am very sorry.

Pandit Nilakantha Das: There is nothing to be sorry under the present arrangement. So, I say that the question is hedged in a double difficulty. For these two reasons, I propose this particular amendment.

So far as the other countries are concerned, I have said, I refuse to enter into the circumstances prevailing there ; our main concern is India, and in this connection, I confess, to a certain extent, also England. England is the home of my Honourable friends who rule over our financial and political destinies. When they think of making money out of the poor man's pinch of salt, will they look back across those 6,000 miles of the blue ocean and tell me what are the things obtaining there ? Is there a salt tax in England ? I know there was one some hundreds of years ago. That was in the middle ages. The world has advanced since then, and much water has since flown under the bridge of the Thames. They had a salt tax then ; but as soon as the people realised that they had a certain right, a substantial right to govern themselves, as soon as their eyes open towards the political and national future of their country, and their particular share in it, they did not brook a medieval, a primitive tax like that. Objections

were raised—I could write pages and volumes, and I can read many quotations, but I refrain from doing so, because I do not propose to take much time of the House if I can avoid it. But I know, from the point of view of human health, health of industry, health of agriculture,—from all sides there were objections—so many and varied that the levy of such a duty was at last found impossible. I may here quote a small passage.

Mr. D. K. Lahiri Chaudhury : (Bengal: Landholders): May I ask the Honourable Member what is meant by the health of industries and the health of agriculture?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My Honourable friend ought to have known by this time perfectly well what is meant by the health of industries and health of agriculture. If he looks only to his own orchards and fields, and if he goes to some industrial centre or even to a village to inspect what the state of cottage industry is there, he will see that it is anything but healthy. I know he is a big zemindar; I am making no reflection on him but I am afraid he is not in touch probably with the real state of things in the villages.

Mr. D. K. Lahiri Chaudhury : I differ from my Honourable friend. I keep in close touch with my tenants.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Then I ask him, is industry in a healthy condition? Is your agriculture in a healthy condition in the villages?

Mr. D. K. Lahiri Chaudhury : I simply asked the Honourable Member to explain what he meant by it. I did not mean to attack him.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I have explained it sufficiently well, I think, and I hope I have been intelligible even to my Honourable friend over there. I was going to say—I am going to quote one passage to show that even in England, where I need not say anything about the income of the individual or the circumstances of living or the standard of life, which

is dinned into our ears day in and day out, even in this House for imitation; but I shall quote one thing. An English salt manufacturer, giving evidence before a Select Committee on Salt in 1836, by name William Worthington, said this. A member of that Committee put the question, "Since the repeal of the duty, has there been an increase in the demand, for that sort of salt which is used for household purposes?" The answer—what is the answer? "Very considerable." And here in India the salt tax gives you, gives the Government, six, sometimes ten and sometimes even more, crores of rupees year after year. We are told it is only six annas, or four annas or something like that *per capita*, as if it were a very small thing. But the gentlemen who are sitting during the winter in this Imperial Delhi and enjoy the summer on the heights of Olympus, Simla I mean,—to such people four or six annas I know means nothing. They do not understand what a four-anna piece means. I am afraid they have not seen one, for it is not gold nor is it paper. But we, all the representatives here on this side of the House, have very painful experience of what that little thing means, that four anna piece, to our villagers. As my friend here (Diwan Chaman Lall) tells me, it is a matter of life and death for them.

I should like to remind you of the history of the salt tax in this country. We are sometimes told that the history of this tax is a very long one; I know long and painful it is under British Rule in India. But I was once surprised that even the Arthashastra of Kautilya was laid under contribution to afford an authority for this particular tax in ancient times, I felt sorry to think that there should be so much ignorance—genuine or put on, does not matter here—about Indian life. Indian culture, Indian government, Indian polity. On account of a kind of a spoon-feeding in culture, we have been gradually accustomed, innured, to things which, if we knew what our forefathers were, we should not care a tuppence for. Now what was the principle of taxation in India in those days? The land

today belongs to the Government, or the zemindars—for that matter, through the zemindar it is Government's land—the land then never belonged to Government. It was never the Raj's land. When the kingship was first conceived as is illustrated in the story of Bena there was no idea of Kings proprietorship over the land. It was a willing contribution of one-sixth of the return on the land, later on supplemented by a land tax that maintained the King and maintained him to please the people and to work for the good of the people, to consider himself the real servant of the people. This was the principal theory of our Indian taxation. How can it be possible that there was a salt tax? If there was a salt tax, the men who made salt perhaps used to give one-sixth of what they made out of it to the King, probably a little land tax in addition in later days. As a matter of fact, a mendicant in the forest, who used to live by picking grains from the streets or cart ways had to pay one-sixth of those grains picked up, and that was the King's portion. If you look at it from the side of the King, that was a tax; but I must tell you clearly

Diwan Chaman Lall: On a point of order, Sir. There is no quorum.

(A count was taken.)

Mr. Deputy President: There is a quorum.

Pandit Nilakantha Das: In India there was no tax which the King ever imposed on the people: the basic principle of our culture, I may say, was "Duty", whereas a complete change has come over the world and now the basic principle is "Right". Now the King, as well as the people, are always demanding of each other—the King says, "Give me my tax", the people say, "Give us our rights of representation and of shaping the state policy." "No representation, no taxation". But in ancient days there was no such struggle for existence or for kingship; there was no oppression of the people by the King, and the people did not feel that they should take away anything called

power from the King. That was the culture then, the smooth working, the dovetailing of each other's interests, and in such an arrangement, the salt tax must be impossible. Then what is the meaning of quoting Kautilya to prove the ancient history of the salt tax ?

Mr. M. S. Aney (Berar Representative) : Why does the Honourable Member not refer to the historic fact that the sage Agastya was the first Aryan to give free sea salt to the people of this country ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : My gallant Mahratta friend knows these matters better than I do : he is proud of the heritage of the culture of Agastya, who went to his part of the country never to return to Northern India. We believe he is still there guiding their destinies and rising up year after year in the autumn. But it was he who gave free salt ; he went to the South, and the allegorical story is that he made salt out of the sea and before that, as I shall just come to it, the people were making salt from the earth. I am just coming to that.

It is during the Muhammadan period we are told that there was a salt tax ; but what was that ? $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. Was it a tax ? I cannot say what it actually was. Perhaps just as the produce of the land was taxed, so was the produce of the sea, or the land which produced salt. It was like a common tax, an ordinary tax ; it was no salt tax, it was no poll tax, it was no capitation tax ; that is what I want to impress upon the attention of the House. It was $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. Now, will any one compare the percentage of the present salt tax. What is the present percentage ? 1,000, 1,200, is that the proper calculation ? It will come to even more, for the salt price is sometimes 1*a.* 6*p.* whereas the tax is Rs. 1-4. According to the proper rule of three calculation, it comes to how much ? 1,600 per cent. Am I right ? And during the Muhammadan times it was $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. I take it out of reports written by Englishmen—authentic

reports ; but I am sorry I have not got them to quote from. Was that a tax at all ?

If you say what is the character of the salt tax, I have already told you it is the public revenue reserve. Had it been so, every one, every school-boy knows the story of Muhammad Tughlak, that idealist, that scholar-Emperor, who dabbled in economic problems without studying them, and he would have been the first man to draw on this tax, had it been the custom in those days. He was in want of money, and he went from house to house to collect a poll tax ; for state expenditure he collected his own subjects' property in desperation ; he was in dire need of money and he wanted to issue notes, I mean, paper currency without any metallic reserve in the treasury ; and he wanted that copper coins with the stamp of the Emperor should pass as gold and silver coins. He took to so many means of making money : but we do not hear of the salt tax even then ; it has never been recorded by Ibn Batuta, that famous African traveller who was a friend and for seven years practically an associate and a colleague so to say of Muhammad Tughlak. Am I to hear that he could not record it ? I maintain, Sir, that the salt tax had no history before the coming of the East India Company.

I shall simply rapidly pass over the Sikh regime in the Punjab, when some little money—inconsiderable though it be—was realised from leasing out mines in the salt range, the stronghold of the Indian Government's monopoly even today. But the salt, as such, was never taxed. Though in the Sikh days in the Punjab, which were the days of the East India Company in other parts of India, when these mines were leased out and when we might expect to hear of a salt tax in the Punjab salt range, we do not hear of anything like that at all. It was a mining lease rather than anything else ; that is not a salt tax. Just as a zemindar lets out his stone mines, or the Government lease out their silver mines, so it was with this salt range ; under a mining arrangement it was let out.

But admitting, for argument's sake that the salt tax was a tax in India just as it is today, for argument's sake I take it, it was so ; but will the Honourable the Finance Member take note of the fact that all the sources of supply were open to the people ? The mine was there in the Punjab and the sea from Sind to Chittagong ; all this was open to the people who were making their own salt. Who began the monopoly ? The word "monopoly" came into this country with the East India Company. That the cursed word "monopoly" of salt came into this country with the advent of the British merchant rulers. Evidently there was no monopoly of salt in India before then. There being no monopoly, it would be self-contradictory if you say that there was a tax. People were not making salt in factories, and *Nimak Mahal* is a word which the East India Company probably coined. In those days, there was no big centralised manufacture of salt. Sometimes people carried a potful of water from the sea, boiled it in their houses and made salt. I shall now tell the House how the monopoly system has pressed heavily on the poor people, how it has actually operated itself on the people, and how clandestinely people prepared their own salt for which, not they, but their zemindars were punished.

But you may say that if today we give salt free, how can it be supplied to the people in the interior ? They will be put to a lot of expense and trouble to carry salt into the interior from the sea coast. You may say that, But, Sir, I have got literature in my hand to show, I do not know whether I shall be believed at this hour of the day if I tell you, Sir, that all over India there is salt earth from which salt can be made easily. It is made in this way, Sir. First take out the earth and then put it into water. The water is then filtered and boiled and allowed to evaporate, and the deposit that remains is salt. That is how salt is made, and the earth for making salt nature has supplied in her abundance, and such earth can be found even in the land of my friend over there, in Allahabad.

Munshi Iswar Saran : (Lucknow Division : Non-Muhammadan Rural) : Not very Much.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Much or little, the source has not been tapped, and you were not living in the days of your grandfather to tell me now

Munsi Iswar Saran : Address the Chair please.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I am sorry, Sir, my friend ought to have lived in the days of his great grandfather to tell me today whether that salt was much or little

Mr. C. Duraiswamy Aiyangar : Did you live then ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Sir, Mr. Thornhill of the Board of Revenue, perhaps of Madras, in the Report on Salt in 1876, on page 94, says that, "the quality of earth salt varies greatly in different localities. That produced from the black cotton soil is generally the best". Mark the quality here. "It is pure white", and not muddy, not the black salt of Madras which is not palatable to

An Honorable Member : To Mr. Kabeer-ud-Din Ahmed.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : To my friends like Mr. Kabeer-ud-Din Ahmed in Bengal. The salt produced "was in well-formed small crystals" like the Cheshire salt. "That produced in red soil is dirty and red in appearance, the former is used largely for human consumption and the latter exclusively for the use of cattle." Mark, Sir, there was a provision in every household for giving salt to cattle.

Sir, the earth salt policy of the Government recently came in for criticism at the hands of Sir Thomas Holland in a speech which he delivered before the Royal Society of Arts. He alleged that the restriction on the manufacture of earth salt pressed heavily on the poor. The policy, he maintained, was responsible for stinting the supply of salt for agriculture opera-

tions, and to that extent accountable for agricultural deterioration in India. This is the criticism of Sir Thomas Holland.

Sir, five years ago, in March, 1924, a question was put in this House regarding salt earth, not by a man who lived on the sea coast, but by a man who lives in the Surma Valley, I mean Mr. Ahmed-Ali Khan. He was pressing for an industry, the extinction of which affected his own constituents, and as a matter of fact, here is my friend Mr. S. C. Dutta from the same constituency who tells me that, not only is there an abundance of salt earth in his district, but there are springs in his own gardens and orchards which give saline water and formerly salt was made out of that water. Now, Sir, a stone has been put and a guard has been established there so that no man can carry a jarful of water and make salt out of it. But whatever be the real state of things there the answer given to the question put by Mr. Ahmed Ali Khan was that, "The Government of India do not propose to abolish the restrictions, nor do they think it worth their while to institute any inquiry in regard to the extent and nature of hardships occasioned to the poor." I hope my Honourable friend, Sir George Schuster after the fine sentiments he has expressed, will take note of these words—Government do not consider it worth their while to institute an inquiry in regard to the extent and nature of the hardships occasioned to the poor. And, Sir, we are crying ourselves hoarse we have been crying ourselves hoarse on several occasions in this House, for the promotion of cottage industries which are being killed day after day. Of course the machinery for this extinction is imperceptible to the common man. But may I tell you, Sir, that this salt industry was almost a cottage industry throughout India, and it afforded occupation to people in their slack season for which Mahatma Gandhi is now putting,—I cannot say unwelcome or welcome,—the *charka* into the hands.

Mr. Deputy President : We are discussing the question of taxation of salt, and not the manufacture of salt. I hope my Honourable friend will be a little more relevant.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I only mention it in order to press it upon your attention as well as upon the attention of the House.

Mr. Deputy President : But the question of the formation of salt is not under discussion.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : No, Sir. It is not the formation of salt. But I submit the formation of salt is connected with the taxation of salt. If you take out the tax, then I want to show to the House how people will have their cottage industry, how they will thrive, how it will help them to grow, how their agriculture will be improved, and how their cattle will be fed with salt. All this is relevant, I submit, to the question of taxation on salt. You have heard of the floods in Orissa in Balasore district in 1927. That was a salt producing district. Formerly there were monopoly centres there, but now there are not even those centres, and people are thrown out of employment and they are sinking in floods and dying of famine. Nobody cares for these *rayats*, sometimes they are decoyed by *sirdars*, and sent out to Assam plantations. If they have got a plot of land, it produces nothing. For a land on which salt was formerly manufactured cannot produce rice. Men who have experience in land will tell you that on a land where salt was being manufactured for about half a century at least, not even the best scientific manure can bring the proper amount of fertility. If they have got a plot of land, that land is taxed cultivated or fallow—for that is the *royati* tenancy—and in order to pay the tax, these *rayats* have to go to Jamshedpur or to Calcutta to earn money and pay the tax.

Mr. K. Ahmed : Don't look at me, look at the Chair. (Laughter).

Mr. Deputy President : Possibly you might be able to extract some black salt from over there. (Laughter).

Pandit Nilakantha Das : I tell you this is the condition, and I would not have told you all these things had I not been required to do so. But the thing is there. They were, out of pity, in 1927 allowed to make their own salt, and for a full year, I have not got statistics with me, emigration from that particular land was arrested a good.

Mr. K. Ahmed : You are not true to your salt if you have not got the statistics.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : It is the salt of the Government. I cannot be true to Government salt. They were very healthy, and I have seen them making their salt. Government had not the face to forbid them from doing it. Gradually some preventive officers or some other officers were secretly set on them, and local officers were made by law to fine these people Rs. 5 or 6, or 10. That was enough to produce the effect desired by Government, for the people got terrified. They are probably now emigrating in large numbers to industrial centres, Fiji and other places as before.

Mr. K. Ahmed : Were you arrested for smuggling ?

Pandit Nijakantha Das : I do not know whether some of them are today carrying loads of salt as labourers from ships which come from Liverpool to Calcutta. The purpose of my saying all this was to show how a whole machinery of spies, under the name of preventive officers, is constantly in operation so that people cannot even have a pinch of salt if it is not purchased directly from Government. These machines of demoralisation, some germs of which have developed into the Criminal Intelligence Department, were invented even when the monopoly first began, in the early days of the East India Company. They were then fresh—brand new. Those were the days of regulations. In those days there were no Acts as we have now. There were two regulations, Regulation X of 1819 and Regulation X of 1826, to which I shall refer here. One of them, namely of 1819, makes the boiling of salt water criminal. Then there occurs in the other, *i.e.*, of 1826 a peculiar thing, a very interesting thing. Under the Regulation of 1826 burning of straw soaked in salt water was to be severely dealt with. If it was burnt, what was the punishment ? They were not so civilised in those days. Criminality in those days could perhaps be transferred from one man to another. Vicarious punishments were, I suppose, allowed. The zemindar was to be fined Rs. 500 for each single case round out among the tenants, and the cases were dealt with not by judicial officers. There is another very interesting thing too. If the zemindar had co-sharers, 2, 3 or 4 or 5 sharers, then the fine, *viz.*, Rs. 500, for each offence was not divided. Each of the co-sharers was to be fined Rs. 500 for

each single case. That was the law in respect of which Devendranath Tagore on behalf of the British Indian Association made a petition where he said :

"In general it is the poor 'rayats', often without any malicious designs against their landlords, and owing to their inability to pay the high price of so necessary a condiment, who have brought themselves under the operations of this rule, by preparing solely for domestic consumption a little salt upon their daily fires in one of their ordinary cooking utensils, or by burning a little straw steeped in salt water. The manner in which the 'rayats' prepare the salt for such daily consumption precluded all probability of discovering . . ."

Still, if cases were discovered? Mr. Devendranath Tagore was fined Rs. 500 each time. I shall not tax the patience of the House by narrating the long history of how it grew in severity and how it killed many races of poor people during the course of a century and a quarter. In the Famine Report of Orissa of 1866, page 222, paragraph 49, it is said that "salt manufacturers, who had turned to landless labourers through sheer helplessness" on account of the Government monopoly in salt were the people upon whom "the utmost severity of the calamity" had fallen. You do not, perhaps, know the extent of the mortality in that famine. Now, I am quoting from the Government Report on the famine of Orissa and Bengal. 20 lakhs of people died out of a population of 60 lakhs. That is one-third of the population died, and this salt monopoly was substantially responsible for this calamity.

Then comes another chapter in the history of the salt tax. It is against the imported salt that I propose my amendment to-day. Now, Sir, the East India Company came here. It is useless to quote things. So much quoting is unnecessary. It will simply tax my friends and take longer time than necessary. I shall be as brief as I can be. When the East India Company came here, they pounced upon this salt. Who were the manufacturers and who were the tax-payers? As I hinted the other day, servants of the Company were not paid. They were let loose on the people. Yes, it is a fact. One of my friends told me that he went to pay a visit to that great historian Vincent Smith. He was buried among his books. My friend found in his library that there were many records about the doings and activities of the East India Company and their servants. He

asked Vincent Smith, "In your books I find nothing about the things one may find here." The historian said, "My dear friend, what can I do? I have come to realise that these men were a perfect set of scoundrels, but for political reasons, I do not write about them." This is what I have heard from my friend. I do not know how far it is true, but I have reasons to believe it to be true from what I know of this salt tax business. I know how the early servants of the Company were let loose on the people. They were paid very little, and were freely allowed to carry on business and plunder people. There was a Resolution to prevent them from taking part in the manufacture of salt. What was the reply? They must make some money. The service must be made attractive to them.

The East India Company was making lots of money. Human nature is human nature everywhere. In England, why should the nation of shop-keepers brook this profit making of a few individuals? A set of people are making profits in India. Why should others be deprived of doing the same? The Borough of Droitwich complained. Then the Chamber of Commerce in the City of Gloucester also pointed out that the manufacture of salt by the East India Company was a manifest violation and evasion of Act 3 of William IV, c. 85 and protested against the exclusion of "the British merchant from the benefit of a market to which he had natural and paramount claims to be admitted." Similar Resolutions were passed by the Chambers of Commerce of Bristol, of Liverpool and other important Trade Centres. I draw ...

Mr. Deputy President : Order, order. I hope the Honourable Member will realise that he has already taken one and a half hours. I think he should try to be more brief and more relevant.

Pandit Nilkanta Das : I will be very brief (Laughter) though I have so much to say, for the subject is so vast and momentous, and the description is so painful. Then with regard to the principle of the duty. It was to give facilities to the English merchants in the market of India, where they had a paramount and natural right. What is that paramount and natural right? I cannot say, nor have I any desire to say that. I don't like to say unpalatable things, especially because my friend over there is so very polite and sweet. Then what was the principle? The principle is, as first mooted by the Duke of Argyll, that famous Secretary of State for India, that the poor man must pay

something—I am not quoting it. Perhaps I am not going to speak for a very long time. The Duke of Argyll said—but this is so important (Laughter from some Honourable Members). This is not a thing to laugh at, The Duke of Argyll said :

“On all grounds of general principle, salt is a perfectly legitimate subject of taxation. It is impossible to reach the masses by direct taxes, if they are to contribute at all to the expenditure of the State, it must be through taxes levied upon some articles of universal consumption, there is no other article in India but salt answering this description, and therefore I am of opinion, that the salt tax of India must continue to be regarded as a legitimate and important branch of the public revenue.”

I consider this to be not an indirect tax as it is called, but a direct tax, and if I get time and if you will allow me, Sir, I will prove it.

This is the principle of our salt tax—our salt *magna carta* so to say, as my friend Mr. Aney would like to remind me here—and if this be the principle, may I ask what about the poor man's matches in the market? Is it not a taxable commodity? Do we not fill the coffers of our State with taxes on matches?

Mr. Deputy President : Order, order. May I remind the Honourable Member that Standing Order 29(a)(vi) lays down that :

“A Member while speaking shall not—

(vi) use his right of speech for the purpose of wilfully and persistently obstructing the business of the Assembly.”

I hope the Honourable Member will try to bring his remarks to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Diwan Chaman Lall (West Punjab : Non-Muhammadan) : May I ask whether it is not within the right of the Honourable Member to use his right of speech?

Mr. Deputy President : Quite so, but within the restrictions contained in the rule I have quoted.

Diwan Chaman Lall : Is there any time limit?

Mr. Deputy President : There is no question of time limit but I say that the speech of the Honourable Member must be relevant.

Pandit Nilakanta Das : I am sorry, I never meant to be irrelevant.

(At this stage Mr. President resumed the Chair).

Mr. President :-Is the Honourable Member still speaking? Although there is no time limit to speeches, on this motion, the Honourable Member is expected to make a legitimate use of the procedure of this House.

Pandit Nilkanta Das : But considering the importance of the subject, and the fact that we have been paying a tax like this for such a long time, over a century and a half, I hope I shall be wanting in my duty if I do not make it a point this year to convince even the Government Members who have not yet been convince: by argument.

Mr. President : Pandit Nilakanta Das.

Pandit Nialkanta Das : Thank you, Sir. Then I was speaking about the Duke of Argyll (Langhter). I asked this being the principle of the salt tax, that every poor man must give something to the State for its protection of the poor—if I may say so—perhaps the other aspect of the same principle is that the poor man is protected by the Government, receives some benefit real or chimerical, and should be taxed for that purpose—if it be so, I was just going to ask on how many things is the poor man not paying in this land? Kerosene, does he not pay for it? Does he not pay a heavy tax for matches and for income-tax? Who actually pays the income-tax? And all the taxes that are gathered that come to the Government coffers, where do they come from? They are all based on primary articles of human consumption. Prices go up. There was the currency trouble, and the price went high and low. Whom did they ultimately affect? And that, I say, is a thing which reaches each and every poor man in every land, not to speak of matches, or kerosene, or even income-tax, which is sometimes directly levied on the debtor. As a matter of fact I know that many creditors, at the time of lending money, take some proportionate advance as interest for the income-tax. That does not matter. Am I to explain here that the grain of rice, the grain of wheat which the poor eat, is the real article which ultimately bears the burden of almost all taxes? Then how do you say the poor man must pay something and that it must be out of salt? By no stretch of logic can such a position be maintained. Here I am reminded of a very curious statement of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who was discussing this selfsame subject long ago :

"What a humiliating confession to say that, after this length of British rule, the people are in such wretched plight that they have nothing that the Government can tax, and that Government must therefore tax an absolute necessity of life . . . and how can anything be a greater condemnation of the British lines of policy that the people have nothing to spend and enjoy, and pay tax on, but that they must be pinched and starved in a necessary of life."

This was what our famous Grand Old Man, Dadabhai Naoroji, a man who gave the ideal of nationalism in the single term Swaraj to the country at a time when the whole country was going to be thrown into chaos, a man who brought cosmos out of chaos, this was what he said about the salt tax. He condemned this salt tax and condemned the Government on that score.

It was said that the tax was no tax at all and that it did not affect the consumption of salt. It was so stated in this House, and I myself heard it often. It is not we are told, like India rubber, elastic. It is inelastic. If you tax salt at the rate of even Rs. 30 per maund, even then the man has to eat salt. He must find money for paying the tax and eat it. The other day, in a communique which we are discussing, the average was given as 12 lbs. in India per head consumption. The lowest was 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. per head. That is the figure, if I remember aright. Shall I tell you, Sir

Mr. President : Why do you threaten me ? (Laughter).

Pandit Nilkantha Das : Whom did I threaten, Sir ? am I only appealing to the House through you, Sir.

Mr. President : The Honourable Member knows that the Chair is very unwilling to hold that any Member of this House is wilfully and persistently obstructing the business of the Assembly and I am not still prepared to believe that the Honourable Member is doing on this occasion.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : No, no, Sir.

Mr. President : I would therefore ask the Honourable Member to be brief.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : I bow to your ruling, Sir, and I shall be ruled by you whenever I am irrelevant. I may be unconsciously irrelevant, I never mean to be irrelevant, but I am prepared to abide by your ruling.

An Honourable Member : Kindly be brief.

Mr. President : The Honourable Member may be rele-

want, but there is another rule which says that the right of speech shall not be used for the purpose of wilfully and persistently obstructing the business of this House, but I am not prepared to believe that the Honourable Member is doing anything of the kind. I would, however, ask the Honourable Member now to be brief and conclude his observations.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : I hope I have convinced the House of the fairness of my motion. That was my only object in speaking at this length. I am very very anxious to convince the House with as many arguments from as many aspects as I can. I never mean to obstruct the business of the House and I never like to stand in the way of any Honourable Member exercising his right of speech.

Then, Sir, let me be brief (Hear, hear). Before I was interrupted, I was upon that *per capita* consumption.
4 P.M. It was 12 lbs. average and $8\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. minimum. But what was the official calculation when the salt tax was yet green and young ?

General John Crawford (not our Honourable friend here, Colonel J. D. Crawford) Medical Officer of the Bengal Government, in a statement to the Select Committee on salt (1836) says :

“A Bengal or a Madras sepoy receives a ration of 17 lbs. per annum, that is 3-4 oz. per diem. A Bombay sepoy 2 oz. per day or 45 lbs. per annum.”

This is the land allowance

“at sea it is 40 per cent. more with salt fish to boot.”

This was what was being given in the thirties of the last century.

Mr. President : Order, order. If the Honourable Member does not conclude his speech in another five minutes I shall have to revise my opinion about the Honourable Member's attitude.

Pandit Nilakanta Das : I shall if possible take another opportunity, with your permission, to say many more things that I have got to say.

Mr. President : I always give the Honourable Member an opportunity to speak.

Pandit Nilkantha Das : Then, I have finished.

Proposing the Trade Disputes Bill for recirculation for eliciting opinion there on and opposing the consideration of the Bill.

3rd. April, 1929.

Pandit Nilkantha Das (Orissa Division : Non-Muhamadan) : Sir, I had no mind to take part in this debate. This is indeed a similar Bill, a twin brother, I may say, to the other Bill the fate of which is yet hanging in the balance—I mean the Public Safety Bill. Following all the debates on this Bill, there is something like a *suppressio veri* or whatever it may be called, something like that, and Members who spoke have not been speaking out, as it were, their whole minds. Some such impression was always perceptible throughout the debate, and the cat has at last come out of the bag. It is now clear, at least from the last two or three speeches, that the real object of the Bill is to suppress all political movements in this country, by, if possible, making labour always remain tangled to capital, as its sweet submissive hand-maid, as if labour has nothing else to do in this unfortunate land, as if it has nothing to do with politics, and as if labour does not want Swaraj, and as though labour wants a regulation such as Regulation III of 1818. The Government seem to think that, because the labourers do not get enough to eat, their, I mean Government's, duty will be always to keep them half-starved and to minister to their wants in such a way as to make them, *i.e.*, the labourers, always look to their own bellies and never look beyond that limit. I say on the other hand, that the masses of the population have decidedly a greater concern in the question of Swaraj than perhaps some commercial men or others who have allied or vested interests in this land.

Mr. K. Ahmed : What vested interest have you—to mislead them, or to make them dabble in politics ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : Sir, today I am not in a mood

Mr. K. Ahmed : Why not ?

Pandit Nilakantha Das : to reply to my friend Mr. Kabeer-ud-Din Ahmed. For this is, as my Deputy Leader said, a very grave situation we have got to face today. We have no time to be frivolous. This is no occasion for it. My friend, Mr. Ibrahim Rahimtulla, who was just speaking

Mr. K. Ahmed : He is Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla. You are not in good mood and even forget his name. So better not speak at all.

Pandit Nilakantha Das : He said that labour organisations are used for political purposes which he would not allow. I say, you look at the question with an outlook it deserves, and see if it is so used only in this land. Peculiarly circumstanced as we are, the question moreover has a special significance here in India. Let us not mince matters. (Hear, hear.) I do not know, as a matter of fact, what is not politics in this land. (Hear, hear.) The basic principle of living in this land is the struggle to get free. It is as much necessary to me in this House as it is necessary to the poor man who is engaged in those city slums of Bombay. It is again with a view to relieve him and to give him better conditions of life that we want better Government in this country, that we want our own Government. To that extent at least, all labour organisations and all labour movements are intimately connected with the political movements in the land. Politics divorced from labour is as much sham, as labour divorced from politics is abject slavery—and that specially in a land like India. When one ought to seek the solution of our national problem in a proper study and practical application of this aspect of the question, people from those Benches want to keep politics apart from labour.

Labour, it is said, should not be exploited by politics, or politicians. To men of this way of thinking, labour has never been anything but an object of exploitation. They think of labour in no other terms. Well, it is a question of exploitation in any case. The thing is that the commercial men, and those that have interests allied with them, object to labour being exploited for political purposes. Sir, that exploitation for political purposes, if it is exploitation at all, is quite legitimate. But is not exploitation. It is education of labour in understanding its own interests. In all such attempts of the politician it is only labour's own interests which are concerned. But, Sir, what about

the exploitation of the other side? The other exploitation is the exploitation of labour by capital for commercial and profiteering purposes, for putting money into the pockets of the capitalists at the dire expense of labour. It is for that exploitation that the entire punitive portion of the Bill has been framed, and it is that exploitation which we must counteract—which it is our duty here to combat at any cost.

It has been said, Sir, that there is no necessity and no case has been made out for re-circulation of the Bill. Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla said this. He is not here unfortunately, but in the same breath he says, in his minute of dissent that the Bill cannot be acceptable unless some clause about picketting gets in there. It was not there, as far as I know, in the original Bill; it is not there in the Bill as it has emerged from the Select Committee;

but my Honourable friend, Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla, is going to move an amendment to that effect. Is it not proper, Sir, on that issue alone that opinions should be elicited? He speaks against himself, he says all the opinions are there and no more opinions are necessary. But, Sir, he proposes an entirely new amendment himself. This is his amendment:

“After clause 18 the following new clause 19 be added, and the subsequent clause be re-numbered accordingly:

‘19. Where any trade dispute is under inquiry or investigation by a Court or Board, any person who, with a view to compel any workman employed by an employer who is a party to the dispute to abstain from doing or to do any act which such workman has a legal right to do or abstain from doing, wrongfully and without legal authority . . . ’

The Honourable Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra (Member for Industries and labour): On a point of order, Sir. Is a discussion of this amendment relevant to the present debate? That is an amendment which will be moved later.

Mr. President: The Honourable Member is giving a reply, as a understand, to Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla. Mr. Fazal Rahimtulla said that there was no necessity for circulation and the Honourable Member is pointing out that, if not for anything else, it was for his own amendment that circulation was necessary.

Pandit Nilakantha Das: I am not moving this amendment myself nor am I criticising it with that object. It is his

own personal view ; and if for nothing else. I say it is for his own amendment which wants to be inserted in the Bill that opinions are necessary. The amendment proceeds :

“(a) persistently follows such workman about from place to place ; or

(b) watches or besets the house or other place where such workman resides, or works or carries on business, or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place, shall be punishable with simple imprisonment, which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both.”

I am sorry to have to say, Sir, that this is more formidable than any of the existing provisions, and on this particular amendment alone opinions are necessary. But I am simply saying that gentleman who proposes this come forward in this House and says that no case has been made out for recommitting the Bill for eliciting opinions.

My Honourable friend. Mr. K. C. Roy, suggested that he was a journalist himself and that he always depended upon the opinions of the Press in this matter. If, Sir, the Press has already given their opinions and do not give any fresh opinions at this stage, it is perhaps because they do not think it worth their while to give any more opinions. Perhaps they simply entrusted the entire question to the good sense of the Members of this House.

It is therefore clear that what you want is that, in no way should the very smell of politics ever enter into these city slums. I would first of all ask those who hold this view to explain to the House and to the country what exactly they mean by politics. If we want to give some more wages to the labourers and make that an issue for a general strike, I think we are legitimately entitled to go out into the country and approach the labourers from door to door to go on strike on that issue. If we, the politicians, who look to the better government of the country, who know what the country wants, if we feel that a certain state of things should not continue among our labour population, I maintain, it is our duty, at the risk of being imprisoned even in that Meerut jail or anywhere else, even at the risk of being charged with the most unrelishable intention of exploiting labour for politics, go to from door to door in the slums of cities and ask them to come out on a general strike. But, Sir, if you are going to prevent things like these, you are simply cutting us away from.

the mass of our people who are the real elements in any fight for Swaraj. You simply do not like that the labouring population of our country should come in contact with us or that we should come in contact with them. Your object is to shut out labourers from all light as well as right of citizenship, to make them convenient victims to your own greed of profit and power. What a horrible idea is this ?

The framers of this Bill, Sir, come here and tell us that this is a Trade Disputes Bill, that there was some requisition from certain trade union organisations to have arbitration boards or things like that in order to settle trade disputes. And, Sir, the occasion was taken, when the Government thought the opportunity was ripe, to put in some venom like this. They saw this opportunity and took advantage of this requisition of those trade union organisations in this country to further their own purpose. As the Bill stands, clauses 15 to 20 form a separate portion altogether and have nothing whatever to do with trade disputes as such. If you want to separate trade and industry from the politics of the land, if you want to estrange these two things from one another, you not only destroy our national wealth, but fill our legitimate national aspirations. I must point out, Sir, that politics is comprehensive and is the very life of our nation. To any nation it is a thing which pervades the entire life of that nation ; and to a subject nation I say there is nothing else but politics, pure and simple, in every department of life. I cannot think of a state of affairs in India where even some of my Honourable friends on the opposite Benches can divorce themselves from politics. Every moment in this land the struggle is going on in labour, in industry, in Congress, in fact in every department of human activity, and that struggle is political and political alone out and out. If you will divorce politics from your trades and industries, we will be nowhere ; we will not be able to live in this land. This is our position.

Now, as to eliciting opinions, after the full analysis by my friend, Diwan Chaman Lall, of the opinions that you have elicited, how can any one stand up here and say that there is no necessity for re-circulating this Bill. Whether you accept the principle of the Bill or not, it does not matter to me, and I do not want to enter into that technical question. Suppose you did accept the principle of the Bill, you are entitled to change your opinion even now. Even just before the Bill is passed, you are

entitled to change your opinion. Now, look at the array of the minutes of dissent. People who have signed the Report, subject to their minutes of dissent, stand up one after another and say that the Bill should be sent out to the country for eliciting further opinions thereon. Then again, rightly or wrongly, even people, who are expected to be interested in this matter, are not in the House today; they do not seem to take as much interest as they ought to have taken in this matter. They are callous about it. After all this, to hear it said that no case has been made out to justify a re-circulation of the Bill is simply astounding to me. Again it has almost become customary to say, at the end of the Reports of Select Committees, that no such change has been made in the Bill as to require its further publication. These two or three lines at the end of the main Report of the Select Committee here are being made much of in favour of immediate consideration of this Bill. I have seen it stated so many times in other Reports similar to this. I am a common man; I am not a lawyer; still sometimes I have seen that Bills have emerged from the Select Committee out of all recognition. I am a common man, and even as such I have not been able to recognise some of the Bills after they come out from the Select Committee. You must take me as the test, because lawyers who have to deal with legal matters day after day can find out the intricate points, but I am a common man, and even then, as I have said, I could not recognise some of the Bills after they had come out of the Select Committee. I don't know if I recognise even this particular Bill. But this common formula is here. Sometimes I have myself signed Reports, typewritten without this common formula, which is afterwards put in after the signatures are taken, as if that were a formal matter. I have very often seen such things, and I have myself signed many such Reports, though I did not attach any importance to those three or four lines at the end. The present is a somewhat similar case. Members, again, whose dissent is the very negation of the very negation of the main Report, are asked to sign the main Report. I myself have got the experience. What importance can they attach to such a signature, and why should they care for the last three lines which is, so to say, a common conclusion to almost all main Reports? Now, to base arguments on those three lines seems absurd.

Well, what a pity, I don't understand the whole situation.

We are asked not to use labour for political purposes. Certain clauses of this Bill have been surely used for political purposes, to kill all our political movements, to kill Indian nationalism, as if to promote nationalism politics, and not to kill it. I cannot enter into the details of those clauses now lest the Chair should call me to order. One way to stifle all legitimate discussion on the Bill is to gag people, by telling them that it is bad that politics should be allowed to be introduced into labour problems. Another way of gagging is to come from the Chair, and it is from the Chair, I know, for it was protection against this gagging that I intended in the point of order I wanted to raise yesterday. For every sentence that I or any one else on this side of the House will utter about these clauses will have intimate reference to facts and circumstances, such as,—how the strikes have been conducted, who are the leaders, whether they are Communists, whether they are influenced by any other labour movement in some other part of the world. Things like these are bound to be discussed, and I do not know whether the Chair will allow it. The Chair will not allow it, but without making such a reference to these things I do not know how the discussion can at all go on. Then where is the consideration of the Bill? Gagged on both sides the House would feel helpless. There is no scope for discussion. Still people are here who stand as it were hypnotised and take this moral and material gagging as the best argument on the Government side.

Material gagging is there from the Chair. It requires no explanation. To say that politics—national politics—is taboo so far as labour is concerned, is a real hypnotic influence. Politics and labour are poles apart. They are two distinct things and Indian politicians should shun the criminal habit of mixing them up. This is politics—that is labour. I really don't understand this watertight division—this attempt at creating psychological compartments, as it were, to divert our attention from the real issue.

Therefore, Sir, I say that a good case has been made out by my friend, Diwan Chaman Lall, and the Bill must be re-circulated for eliciting opinion, and whether the Whitely Commission comes or not in the meantime, or it comes and goes, it does not matter. I do not attach much value to its being limited for five years. Other Acts were so limited in 1919. Such limitation may again be the thin end of the wedge. I need not predict what is in store for this Bill as an Act, or in effect what may fall.

to our labour population or to the politicians of India. But my present position clearly is that the Government should not gag people morally and materially, and in various other ways in their attempt at passing the Bill, and the Bill must be re-circulated for eliciting public opinion. There is no other way.

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