



DEBATES

SESSION OF 1942.

CONTENTS:

	PAGES
Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce: Vote of No-Confidence	... 1164-95



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Wednesday, July 8, 1942.

The Council met at 2 p.m., MR. SPEAKER [THE HON. SIR WAITIALINGAM DURAISWAMY] in the Chair.

PAPERS TABLED.

(Minister of Labour, Industry & Commerce): A regulation under Section 5 of the Food Control Ordinance (Cap. 132).

MINISTER OF LABOUR, INDUSTRY & COMMERCE: VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE.

*Mr. S. Abeywickrama (Udugama): I have given notice of a motion of no-confidence, and I would ask the permission of the House to move it now. The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce himself desires that it should be taken up now. I would ask for the permission of the House to move the motion now.

Mr. Speaker: What does the Hon. Minister say?

*The Hon. Mr. G. C. S. Corea (Minister of Labour, Industry & Commerce): I would like it to be taken up now.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Udugama move the suspension of Standing Orders to enable him to move the motion now?

*Mr. Abeywickrama: Yes, Sir.

Dr. A. P. de Zoysa (Colombo South) seconded.

*Mr. G. A. H. Wille (Nominated Member): There is a small Bill to be taken up, which has been upon the Agenda for some months.

Mr. U. Batuwantudawe (Kalutara): But the subject-matter of the motion of the hon. Member for Udugama is much more important.

Question, "That the relevant Standing Orders be suspended", put, and agreed to.

[Note.—An asterisk (*) against the name of a Member indicates that his remarks have not been revised by him.]

Leave being granted—

*Mr. Abeywickrama: I rise, Sir, to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows:

That in view of the very widespread discontent prevalent throughout the Island regarding the most unsatisfactory manner the food rationing and control schemes are operating, particularly regarding currysuffs and sugar, this Council has no confidence in the Hon. the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, who has utterly failed to formulate and work the above schemes satisfactorily.

I am not going to take up very much time in moving this motion, as I expect that several hon. Members will participate in this debate as it is a matter of grave importance to all of us who represent various constituencies in the Island. This matter is one that relates to a serious problem affecting the country to-day. If the present position was not intolerable, I would not at all have brought forward this motion against a Minister whose work in other directions I have always appreciated.

At the outset, I would like to mention that the Hon. Minister himself may have had very good intentions and progressive schemes for the proper control of foodstuffs. But the Deputy Food Controllers in the Provinces are not at all keen in putting into operation the various schemes that the Hon. Minister formulates for the proper working of the Department. You will find that in many instances the requests of the people have been neglected.

I did not expect to move this motion to-day. I had some interesting facts and figures collected in regard to this matter, but I am unable to use them now because I have left them at home. However, I have been able to get at one or two facts of great importance which I will mention now.

To begin. When the rice rationing scheme was introduced, there was a general cry all over the country that the allocation of consumers to retailers had not been done in the manner in which the people and the representatives of the various constituencies wished it to be done. The Hon. Minister assured us over and over again that it would be done. But up to date it has not been done. When participating in a recent debate, the Hon. Minister informed hon. Members that he was going to implement every reasonable suggestion put forward by hon. Members. But unfortunately nothing has been done. We have been

[Mr. Abeywickrama.]
waiting for weeks and months, but none of our suggestions has been given effect to.

In the matter of registering traders, all kinds of dubious methods have been employed by Headmen, and some *bona fide* traders, whose only source of income were their boutiques, have been completely wiped off as a result of the piecemeal legislation introduced by the Hon. Minister. I know that this was used as a weapon by interested parties. People who never dealt in rice were made dealers because they had ready money with which to obtain supplies from the Food Controller. The result was that the people in the rice trade were wiped out, because they had no ready money or because the Mudaliyars and Headmen did not wish to have them in the trade.

So these were the initial difficulties traders had to contend with. But the country was very tolerant because in a state of emergency one cannot expect to have the same comforts as one had in times of peace. The people co-operated with the Hon. Minister and the various Government Agents, thinking that the situation would improve in due course. But what do we find? We find that the situation is getting worse daily.

We started with control of rice and paddy. But later on the scheme had to be extended to various other commodities. We find that fancy prices have to be paid for various foodstuffs.

There is another point regarding rice control. In my own area there is an overflow depot at Baddegama, which was opened to ensure stocks being available to other depots. The Deputy Food Controller transports rice to this depot at a very much higher rate than that paid by dealers. That increase is invariably passed on to the consumer. If the wholesale dealer pays 30 cents for transporting rice from Galle to Baddegama, what justification is there for the Government Agent to transport rice to the overflow depot at 60 cents?

I questioned the Government Agent about this matter. He said that he had called for tenders but that none had been received. There is a ring of Clerks in the Kacheheri who are in league with the Storekeeper; they get the rate increased and the additional 30 cents is

passed on to the consumer. It is owing to these methods that high prices have to be paid for foodstuffs.

There is another point. Various kinds of rice have been imported, and I presume that the Department made the Hon. Minister believe that it was getting Muttusamba and other good qualities of rice. But later on, when the consignments came to Ceylon, I was informed that it was found that they were not of the quality ordered. The result was that inferior grades of rice had to be distributed to the people, and the public is paying for the many faults committed by the Food Control Department in not properly indenting for and supervising the transport of rice from India to Ceylon.

I have repeatedly questioned the Hon. Minister with regard to the publication of price lists in the vernaculars, and the distribution of such lists to traders. But up to date nothing has been done in this regard. It was only during the last session of Council that I appealed to the Hon. Minister to see that apart from *Gazette* Notifications price lists are issued from time to time, printed in the vernaculars. Excepting for lists printed in English, no lists have been printed in the vernaculars and distributed to outstation dealers. I have some of the lists in question with me. Almost all the traders in the Galle District are Sinhalese, and they have to find out the ruling prices from the lists printed in English. It is impossible for them to find out the actual prices. Some of the notices that are hung up in the boutiques are those that were issued at the beginning of food control; they are hardly readable to-day.

This is the state of affairs that is prevalent in the country. I dare say it must be the Deputy Food Controllers who are responsible for this state of affairs, but we, as Members of this House, cannot deal with them and have them dismissed. According to the Constitution, the Hon. Minister is responsible for the proper working of the Food Control Department, and if anything goes wrong it is he who is answerable to this House and to the country.

It may be that the Hon. Minister himself may not have intentionally violated any of the wishes of the Board of Ministers. But he must have a set of officers who will carry out his instructions,

and he must carry out our instructions—that is the whole point of my no-confidence motion, because the country is dependent on the State Council for the proper administration of the Food Control Ordinance; and it is the Hon. Minister who is responsible.

There are bound to be many faults. Unfortunately, some of the Government Agents, who are Deputy Food Controllers, may not be taking orders from the Food Control Department in the proper spirit. We cannot help that. But the Hon. Minister should bring such cases to the notice of the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs and see that the Government Agents carry out orders in the manner that he desires. If he gets up and says, "What can I do? The Government Agents are to blame" it is not going to help us. The Hon. Minister must see that his instructions are carried out properly.

You will always find that the *Government Gazette* is becoming a very convenient form of publication to the Hon. Minister. This is a very complicated system of informing the people of the actual prices of foodstuffs. The *Gazette* notifications are divided into various schedules, and if you do not have the notifications filed regularly, you cannot find out to what regulations a particular Notification refers. Nobody knows what the regulations mean. The Notification simply says that the Order issued on such-and-such a date under Schedule I. is cancelled. The particular Schedule is not reproduced, and nobody knows what the Schedule is. It may be that that Schedule had been cancelled previously.

In Ceylon there are about 5,000,000 people. About 3,500,000 use the vernacular in their business. What is the use of Notifications such as this:

"By virtue of the powers vested in the Controller of Prices by section 3 of the Control of Prices Ordinance, No. 39 of 1939, I, Reginald Sydney Vernon Poulter, Controller of Prices, do by this Order: (1) revoke with effect from this date my Order dated June 28, 1942, published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*."

What that Order is, nobody knows. All kinds of notifications are made in the *Government Gazette*. These boutique-keepers will require clerks of a Matriculation standard of education to interpret the regulations published in the *Gazette*. The regulations are not interpreted to

the villager in the language that they can understand. I challenge the Hon. Minister to telephone to the Food Controller and find out whether any notices have been issued in the vernaculars.

At a meeting held in Ambalangoda this matter was brought to the notice of the Government Agent. The Mudaliyar said that they send the price lists to the Headmen. I inquired about it from the Headmen, and they told me that only 1 copy is sent to them. Each Headman has about seven or eight boutiques in his area. How can you expect the Headman to surrender that copy to the dealers? Nobody knows what the ruling prices are.

There are sufficient currystuffs in the country; there is enough rice and sugar. But the Hon. Minister has not been able so far to evolve a proper distribution scheme. That is my complaint.

The House will remember that on the last occasion the Hon. Minister made a very eloquent statement and said that he was taking sugar under his control. The statement was made on Thursday, 4th June, and on Friday, 5th June, all the sugar in the Island was supposed to have been brought under his control. But what did that control mean?

This is the main point that I am making in regard to my motion, and I want a satisfactory reply from the Hon. Minister. The Hon. Minister knows all the faults in his various schemes, having handled them personally. As regards sugar, I wish to know on what grounds the Hon. Minister exempted people who were having 5 bags, or 10 cwt., in their possession, and did not call for a declaration from them. Every regulation that the Hon. Minister makes is known to the merchants before it is known to any of us or even to his Deputy Food Controllers. A ring of Colombo merchants are always associated with the Food Controller's Department, and any regulation that is to be made, which would be detrimental to certain interests if made known earlier, is known to these people. Before any action can be taken the merchants come to know of the matter, and somehow or other devious schemes and methods are adopted to defeat the objects of the proposal contemplated. The result is that the Hon. Minister's scheme becomes null and void.

[Mr. Abeywickrama.]

In the particular case of sugar, it has been confidentially brought to my notice that several Indian merchants had plenty of sugar in their possession. For the sake of argument, let us take the quantity as 1,000 bags. The Hon. Minister, knowing very well the cunning nature of these merchants and how they scheme night and day to wreck his schemes, thinks that their professed intentions to help him are honest. The Hon. Minister wants these people to furnish him with a return of stocks in their possession above 5 bags (10 cwt). Now, what do these merchants do? With prior knowledge of the Hon. Minister's scheme, they transport all the sugar they have and distribute 5 bags each to their dealer friends. Sometimes a man who has 1,000 bags in his possession declares that he has only 200 bags in stock, having disposed of the 800 bags earlier.

In my reply I will quote extracts from HANSARD in support of my statements. The other day when we wanted rice ration card-holders to be given the right to purchase from where they liked, the Hon. Minister said that the corner-stone of any food rationing scheme is that the consumer must be attached to the retailer, and the retailer must be attached to the wholesaler. We accepted that statement because the Hon. Minister is supposed to know very much more than we in these matters, and we presumed that that was the correct procedure. But when it came to sugar it was discovered that the whole foundation of his scheme was built on clay. He made us believe that it was on a concrete foundation that his scheme for rice distribution had been built, namely, that the consumer must be attached to the retailer. But in the case of sugar, the foundation had been built on clay. He did not want to have that well-founded theory of attaching a permit-holder to a particular dealer.

Now, what happened with regard to the sugar business? People hid their stocks, in quantities of 5 bags, at different places, and declared that they had only small quantities. What did the Hon. Minister do? He instructed the Food Controller to issue permits to people for quantities of 5 bags or 10 bags,

whatever the number was. I want the Minister to tell me how he judged each man's capacity? I know that some people obtained permits for 15 bags, and some *bona fide* traders were given permits for only one bag. What are the figures the Hon. Minister went on for issuing permits for sugar? Any man can go to the Food Controller's Office and ask for a permit for 10 bags, and there is a Clerk there who gives him a permit for 5 bags.

Then what happens? That permit does not disclose where the sugar is, although the Minister says, "I have taken over the control of sugar", and that man has to go with that permit from merchant to merchant. These permits are not like petrol or rubber coupons. If you have a permit for 5 bags of sugar, and you buy only one bag, you cannot take away the permit. You have to surrender it. He goes with the permit to a merchant, and he is told that there is no sugar. Then he goes to another merchant, and is told the same thing. I know of instances where people from Ratnapura and Ambalangoda had come and wasted three or four days in going from one sugar merchant to another only to be told that stocks of sugar had been exhausted. Let us say, however, that ultimately the permit holder comes across a merchant who has sugar, and he says, "I want 5 bags", but the merchant says "I will give you 2 bags". You cannot divide the permit in order to buy 2 and 3 bags. You have to surrender the permit and take away 2 bags at Rs. 42. The merchant enters in his books that on such-and-such a permit issued by the Food Controller he sold 5 bags of sugar! Are there any Inspectors who go and check these things? Are returns called for by the Food Controller's Office? Do they know what has happened to the declared stocks of sugar? If a man tenders a permit for 5 bags, but is given and takes away only 2 bags, is that correct?

I can understand a private party being placed in such a situation when dealing with a matter like this; but a Minister? There are the Defence Regulations, and he can commandeer any houses or stores. [Interruption.] I want the Minister to listen to me, Sir.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I am listening.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Well, he appears to be listening, but the Minister of Health is talking to him; and the Minister of Health seems to be very happy in that seat. I am very angry with him, because he would have sponsored this motion if he was a back-bencher. He has deserted us, and the country is feeling his loss at a time such as the present. I only hope he will allow the Minister of Labour to hear our bemoanings.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I am listening.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Very well.

I want to ask the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce why he did not think it fit to buy up all the sugar, store it and then distribute it. Under the rationing scheme prevalent in the country, every person has a rice ration book except those in Batticaloa and other areas where food is being produced. The Minister should have commandeered all the sugar in the country at that time, and he could have paid for it. There was no necessity to have bought buildings, as he could have commandeered buildings in Colombo under the Defence Regulations. We have given a vote of Rs. 20,000,000 to the Board of Ministers. It is not for them to play about with, but for them to spend on the people. The sugar bill could have been paid from that money, and then, as we were not in a hurry, within two weeks everything could have been perfected and the same channel of distribution as for rice used, that is the Deputy Food Controllers in the different Provinces and wholesale and retail dealers. As things are some people have bags and bags of sugar, while others do not have a grain of it.

Then, if the Hon. Minister thought that it was not necessary to buy up sugar, there was the other scheme that he could have introduced. He should have obtained declarations from all sugar dealers without exception. I do not know on what theory the exemption of quantities of 5 bags and under was allowed.

We know the rule prevalent now in regard to the sale of arrack. The Home

Minister will not contradict me when I say that there is a rule in force that only 2 bottles of arrack can be removed by a man at any one time, but is that rule in operation to-day? I know that buses are stopped near taverns, and they remove arrack at the rate of 2 bottles per passenger. If there are 20 passengers in the bus, one man goes and buys 40 bottles of arrack, and if the Police or Excise authorities catch them, it is shown that they are within the law as the 40 bottles of arrack are for the 20 passengers in the bus!

Therefore, knowing the nature of the people with whom the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce was dealing, why did he introduce the exemption in regard to quantities of 5 bags of sugar? If I was unscrupulous, I could have bought 5 bags of sugar and kept the sugar at home while all my neighbours went without sugar. Why was this generous exemption made?

When that became known to the traders, they could have circumvented the regulation while keeping within the law, by dividing their stocks into lots. That is a great wrong. There was no use in the Minister issuing permits. The Minister says that he has taken all the sugar under his control, but he does not state on the permit that one should go to So-and-so for the sugar—for example, E. G. Adamally and Co., or somebody else. He ought to have obtained returns of stocks, and if a firm had 1,000 bags of sugar, he could have issued permits for them and then followed it up with another lot, and so on, till the stock was exhausted, and then refused to issue permits.

There were favourites, people known to the traders, who obtained the sugar. The villagers are not known to the Colombo traders, and they have therefore to go through brokers. People known to the traders obtained their sugar, but those who came from the country had to waste days and days, going from boutique to boutique, cursing the Minister and the Food Control Department, and ultimately go away without sugar.

The Minister took over the control of sugar on Friday, the 5th, and he made the statement that the Food Controller would issue permits for people to buy

[Mr. Abeywickrama.]
sugar. The Baddegama Village Committee wanted to buy sugar, and I sent a letter to the Food Controller saying that the Village Committee wanted 5 bags of sugar, but I received a reply from the Food Controller saying that they were not issuing permits for outstations and that it was the Government Agents as Deputy Food Controllers who would do so. Then I sent the person concerned to the Government Agent, who wrote back to say; "I have not received authority from the Food Controller to issue any permits. I have 330 bags of sugar, and I am awaiting instructions from the Food Controller". That was on the 13th. The Minister took over the control of sugar on the 5th, and on the 13th the Government Agent says that he has not received instructions. These dates are very important; I would like the Minister to verify them. Except for the Hambantota area, all the Deputy Food Controllers are Government Agents and they are connected to the Food Controller by telephone; and any order could have been communicated to the Deputy Food Controllers within an hour by telephone or in a day by letter. If a letter had been written, it would have been delivered the following day. Mails were being delivered; there was no trouble about that. The Minister tells us one thing in this House, but the Department bungles it. They do not issue proper instructions and carry out measures promptly.

The situation was so intolerable in Galle and several representations were made to me that I had to send the following telegram to the Food Controller on the 17th:

"Deputy Food Controller, Galle, says that he has no authority yet from you to issue permits for purchase of sugar. Galle town traders have over 200 bags of sugar in declared stock. Serious inconvenience caused to residents in the district. Please wire instructions to Government Agent, Galle, to issue permits."

That was on the 17th. The Minister takes over control on the 5th, and up to the 17th nothing has been done, in spite of the fact that there were declared stocks in Galle. Is that not a scandalous state of affairs for us to tolerate as elected representatives who have to look after the interests of the poor people? I

was compelled to bring up this vote of censure much against my wish, as the situation is so intolerable. This is the reply I received to my telegram:

"With reference to your telegram of the 17th June, 1942, the position as regards sugar in Galle District is as follows: On 12th June a letter was sent from this office to the Government Agent, Galle, giving him an allocation in bags of sugar for his District and authorising him to issue permits at his discretion to the total of that allocation."

He says that he wrote on the 12th of June, but I went to the Kachcheri on the 17th of June, and after verifying the fact that no instructions had been received, I sent my telegram. During those five days all the telegraph lines were working and mails were being delivered, and I cannot understand who is to be blamed in this matter. Then he continues:

"As regards possessors of sugar stocks, six dealers in the Galle District have made returns to me in accordance with the requirements of the Sugar Order; two of these are in Galle, three in Ambalangoda and one in Hikkaduwa. The total stock disclosed by them amounted to 276 cwt. and they have been granted by me licences to sell sugar, and permits to retail a quantity of 116 cwt. within the next 14 days."

Now, who is responsible for these orders not being sent in time? I want to know who is responsible. This is a serious matter, as far as we are concerned. On the 5th June the Minister takes over the control of sugar, and on the 17th, when we go to the Kachcheri to obtain permits, we are told that no instructions have been received.

If the Food Controller is incompetent, it is up to the Minister to tell the Board of Ministers or His Excellency the Governor about it and get somebody else.

We have seen control schemes which have been already in operation with regard to tea and rubber, which are a much more intricate business though they are not Island-wide in their operation, and there is the Controller who has done very well. [A MEMBER: What was the reply to your telegram?] That was the reply. The Hon. Minister said that instructions were sent on the 12th, but the Deputy Food Controller does not issue permits on the 17th.

In Galle there were a certain number of bags of sugar available, and it was a known fact that bags of sugar were being sold at the rate of Rs. 80 per bag. If you asked for sugar at the controlled

price, you were told that there was no sugar, but I know that in copra stores at Dewa. Bope and other areas there were bags of sugar with bags of copra, and if a person who was known wanted sugar, and there was no fear of detection, he was given the sugar if he was prepared to pay Rs. 80 for a bag.

Is this not a scandalous state of affairs? Why did the Hon. Minister allow the sugar to be removed from the hands of the dealers? That is my point. When he is introducing a scheme, knowing the type of cunning traders he is dealing with, he should see that there are no loopholes. I would not have allowed a quantity of more than 28 lb. to remain undisclosed. He should have asked not only traders but private parties also to disclose the quantity of sugar they had in their possession, and surrender any quantity in excess of 28 lb. That would have been a most equitable form of dealing with a matter like this. The Hon. Minister cannot break the ring of these traders. He is accommodating these traders, unconsciously, I say, not by agreement or any such thing. The traders are taking advantage of the situation.

Regarding rice and paddy, is the state of affairs not scandalous? The price of a measure of rice goes up by 4 cents overnight. From Monday this week, the price of a measure of rice has gone up by 4 cents. We read in the newspapers—thanks to the Press, they are taking a great interest in food-control matters and giving us information from time to time as to what is happening in other parts of the Island—that in Anuradhapura the Deputy Food Controller has stated that he has no accommodation for storing paddy, and is not buying paddy as he has bought what he wanted. Is that a correct attitude for the Deputy Food Controller to take up when rice is going up in price? The cultivators in Anuradhapura are not able to sell their paddy at a proper price. I purposely asked the Minister of Agriculture yesterday what price he was paying for paddy, and he said that he was paying up to a maximum of Rs. 3. I do not know what the minimum is. Presumably it is Rs. 2.50. In my area—the Baddegama-Galle District—last week rice was sold at 22 cents a measure and

paddy at 11 cents. There are 32 measures in a bushel, and if this extra 4 cents is also added I presume the price will come to about 124 cents for a measure of paddy. Working it out at that rate, a bushel will cost about Rs. 4.12. Now, is it fair for the Minister of Agriculture and Lands and the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce to get together and cheat the cultivators by importing paddy from India at a higher price than they pay for country-grown paddy?

I am sorry I had to mention the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. At his request, coupled with that of the Minister of Home Affairs, a large number of public meetings were held and cultivators advised to cultivate paddy and foodstuffs. The country has responded admirably to the call, but what is the position to-day? Has the Minister of Agriculture a scheme for buying any foodstuffs that have been produced at the request of these (Emergency) Government Agents and the Minister? No, Sir. You find tons of manioca in Galle District being hawked about for sale at 2 and 3 cents a lb.

What is the plight of the poor cultivators who have spent three months in planting foodstuffs when they would have been better off if they had worked on estates? They are sorry that they participated in the agricultural "drive". Normally they used to cultivate something for their own use, but at the request of the Minister and all of us, they took to large-scale cultivation. Is there a scheme in operation for buying up these foodstuffs? No. It is to the discredit of the Board of Ministers that there is no scheme for buying foodstuffs.

Paddy is said to be a perishable commodity; you cannot therefore preserve it, and normally I would have always expected the ruling price of paddy to be the same as that fixed for the Indian paddy that is given to the villagers under the rationing scheme. We would have desired a higher price, but I would be satisfied if the same price was fixed. Nobody knows when this period of emergency is going to end. We are always in danger so far as food is concerned. If the paddy, produced in this country is not bought at reasonable rates, and stored, I do not know what the

[Mr. Abeywickrama.]

Board of Ministers, particularly the Food Controller and the Minister concerned, are going to do to save the situation.

Now, paddy is available not only in Anuradhapura; it is available to a large extent in Tissamaharama, the granary of the South, and I would not really have thought that the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, after producing much of the paddy that is needed, would have come before the Board of Ministers with a scheme for purchasing and storing it in Colombo and not in those areas. May I ask why paddy should be stored only in those areas? I would suggest that it be distributed all over the Island. If the Minister only wants to do so, there are the Defence Regulations and he can commandeer any house and make use of it as a store. The money is there; and of the Rs. 20,000,000 that we voted, we have so far not heard how much of it has been spent. I believe there is still a fairly large sum left over. If there is the money and the storage accommodation and if the Ministers are honest in their intention to relieve the situation, then why on earth do they not take proper steps to regulate these products? That is one question which I should like to ask the Board of Ministers, particularly the Minister who is responsible for the proper distribution of these foodstuffs.

Can you imagine—I am just repeating it once more—Indian paddy being sold at Rs. 4.12 a bushel, and Ceylon-grown paddy, which may have benefited in other ways such as better wages and so on being paid if a better price is paid for it, being bought at between Rs. 2.50 and Rs. 3 per bushel? Even the Minister was not definite with regard to the price. Is that fair? Why should there be this particular affinity with and great liking for purchasing Indian paddy at Rs. 4.12 and issuing it when our paddy is there? I do not think the Board of Ministers can give me a satisfactory answer to that question. You find paddy all over the country, and unless the long-range plan of the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce is to starve the people to death, there is no reason why he should not appeal to the other Ministers to buy up all the paddy available. Besides, there are other foodstuffs in large quantities, such as manioc and sweet potatoes in the villages.

We have been the interpreters of the wishes of the Board of Ministers. We have told the villagers that the Minister will buy up all these foodstuffs. Even the Minister of Home Affairs has said, "Do not fear Japanese bombs. You might have to die of starvation. The starvation problem is much graver than Japanese bombing or any enemy bombing". So the people took to cultivation. They cannot consume all the food, nor are they going to throw them aside. Now there are large quantities of sweet potatoes and manioc being cultivated; after four months, the sweet potatoes will either have to be sold or consumed. The Government has neither bought them, nor is there a buying scheme in operation. Manioc can be preserved only for one month, or two months at most. There is no scheme for that commodity too in operation.

It is a crying shame that innocent villagers have been led by the Board of Ministers to take to cultivation in this manner. Without telling them, "You had better cultivate for yourself and not for others"—then they would have cultivated sufficient for their needs—what did they do? They appealed to landowners; took over their uncultivated land, cleared Crown forests at great expense, and started to cultivate. You will not experience such a great shortage of food as you do now if only the food is properly preserved and distributed.

There seems to be a great liking on the part of the Ministers to go to India. In the absence of any proper control of food, they go to India and get hold of the big merchants. If I go to relate the rumours that one hears, I will be doing an injustice. I do not, therefore, want to relate them. However, there are a large number of rumours current in the country; and scandalous stories are being spread all over the country regarding the purchase of rice and paddy from India.

But whatever it may be, the Board of Ministers and His Excellency the Governor have thought it fit to send our Mr. Kanagaratnam, the Acting Auditor-General, to find out the truth of certain statements that have been made. The initial step taken by the Board of Ministers and the Governor indicates that it was considered that an inquiry was worth while. We will rest at that—that some-

thing shabby must have been done in India for the Auditor-General to proceed there to inquire into the matter and submit a report.

I do not want to go on hearsay and add to the scandalous rumours that are already being spread about the purchase of paddy and rice, but it is certain that if the Minister went about it in the proper way, he would have been able to buy the rice required. I say if the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce who went on this pilgrimage to India and who was responsible for the purchasing scheme had got the officers to set about the matter in the proper manner, he would have been able to save millions of rupees to this country. Those millions are not coming out of the Treasury, but out of the stomachs of the poor starving population of this country.

It is a shame that we are not utilizing our resources properly; but we are fond of drawing blank cheques in favour of Indian merchants, of bringing various commodities here and serving them at very high cost, irrespective of the difficulties of the poor people.

I do not think I will take up much more time of the House. But there is something which I would like to read out—it is from last evening's *Times of Ceylon*—and it is the report of a meeting of the Colombo Municipal Council. I am not going to quote the whole report. Mr. Gilbert Perera, an elected member of the Municipal Council, and the Whip of the Congress in the Municipal Council, of which the Hon. Minister of Labour, I presume, is the President, is reported to have spoken as follows with regard to this scheme:

"Conviction was now complete that Government had bungled and bungled very badly the problem of food supply for Colombo and Ceylon. It was a very amateurish control for which Government has been responsible. The business community of the country had been kept away as if they were a plague. Every citizen of the country had paid to the tune of Rs. 10 extra per bag for Government incompetence."

That is a statement that came from a responsible man, a member of the Municipal Council and a person who is in very close touch with the Minister of Labour; and if Congress had adopted the proper attitude, it should have brought up a vote of censure on its President.

Then again, all kinds of head-lines appear in the papers like, "Food Bungle Outcry". Sometimes the newspapers in this country are very fair to all parties, and unless a situation really demands head-lines of this nature, they will not say that there has been a bungle. The *Daily News* and the *Observer*, I know, had a number of editorials on the difficulties experienced by people in obtaining their rice.

There is another point which I would like to mention, regarding rice. The Minister assured us here that in computing the price of paddy along with rice, if rice is sold at 22 cents a measure, paddy would be sold at a lesser rate, at about 10 cents less as pounding involves labour. But what has happened in the Galle District? There has absolutely been no reduction in the price. They simply divided the price of rice by half and they are charging—I am sure the hon. Member for Weligama (Mr. Wani-gasekera) and the Member for Galle (Mr. Amarasuriya) will bear me out—11 cents for paddy; that is really half the price of rice. May I know where the compensation is for the labour involved in pounding the paddy? That is another great flaw in the scheme.

The Hon. Minister seems to think that everybody reads what appears in the *Government Gazette*. That is all that he requires. If that is to be the case, then people will have to buy the *Government Gazette*, they must have clerks to follow them; every boutique-keeper will have to employ a clerk. The Hon. Minister and his crew, the Food Control Department and various other Deputy Food Controllers are very happy that they have done everything once they have had a notification published in the *Gazette*. For the last 100-odd years we have not had such a scandal, such mismanagement and gross abuse on the part of a Food Control Department.

I am very sorry that I have had to bring in a vote of censure. It is not a general vote of censure; it is only a vote of censure on the particular section of Food Control that is managed by the Minister. I have no grouse whatsoever against the Minister regarding other works of his, excepting for criticisms made on the Floor of this House. But

[Mr. Abeywickrama.]
the Food Control Department requires drastic changes, if we are to save the people of this country.

In moving this vote of censure I would like to draw attention to the very unsatisfactory state of affairs prevailing, not only in the villages, but also on estates. There are estate representatives in this House, and I know the difficulties prevailing on estates regarding sugar, Maldive fish, and other commodities.

There is another aspect of this question which the public have not realized nor has it been brought to the notice of the Minister; that is, the soaring prices. Maldive fish which was previously sold at 45 cents a lb. has now gone up in price to 80 or 90 cents. We are not grousing at that, but we are grousing at the inadequacy of the quantity obtainable. These high prices are fixed, so to speak, overnight. There is no meaning in their raising prices.

If the Minister keeps the intention to raise the price of a commodity a secret to himself, it would be a different state of affairs; but before he even thinks of it, the Colombo crew seem to be aware of it. He creates these loop-holes. I do not know whether he does these things intentionally; I do not presume it to be so, but somehow or other many people come to know of the impending control of an article beforehand. For instance, when a man has a cwt. of Maldive fish, and he suspects that the price is going to be raised by Rs. 5, he will not sell the Maldive fish till he is covered by the notice. It is only after that that he sells the article. The Minister cannot deny it. The whole country is discontented to-day with his scheme of food rationing.

If he would only care to travel incognito, by bus and by train, he will be able to hear for himself the language in which he is described by the villagers. He travels from his bungalow to Office in his car, and people do not know who he is even. If he will only go into the villages, say, from Jaffna to Dondra or from Batticaloa to Puttalam, and takes the sense of the people on the food control scheme, he will find that 99 people out of 100 swear that they have been neglected, ruined and starved by his imperfect scheme of rationing.

The traders are enriching themselves at the expense of the poor. Instead of saying—I have heard it before—what can I do when the Board of Ministers have not accepted my scheme or this project?" I hope he will make a frank statement when replying, so that I may know who is obstructing him, and what the schemes that have been brought forward are. It is no use saying that people are against him. Let us face facts: We are the representatives of the people, and this is a golden opportunity for us to take such steps as are possible to safeguard the poor people from the mismanagement on the part of the Food Control Department.

There are 52 Elected Members and there are always, I presume, about 40 Members present in the House; and I would appeal to them to think of their constituents before they cast their votes on this motion. If there is a single electorate that has suffered as a result of the imperfect scheme of the Minister, I would ask the representative of that electorate to think well of the situation and to vote with me in this matter, in fairness and in justice to his electorate. So with the Nominated Members. Their responsibilities are even greater. They have a large number of estates whose interests they have to look after. I have personally gone to these estates, and I know the difficulties obtaining there. It is no use saying, "How can I vote for the motion?" because when the country says that the situation demands correction then hon. Members will have to vote with me in this matter; otherwise the situation will deteriorate from day to day, and we will have no end of suffering and misery in this country.

I thank the House for patiently listening to me.

Dr. de Zoysa seconded.

Question proposed from the Chair, and debated.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** Not in a spirit of foolhardiness but in all humility I am quite prepared to take up the challenge of the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) to undertake a pilgrimage throughout the villages of this country. It is nothing new to me; it

is not something which I would undertake only purely on the invitation of my hon. friend; it is something which I have been accustomed to in all my very short, may be very imperfect but nevertheless very sincere, public service in this country. I am not one who claims to be a great showman.

I am not one who wishes to proclaim or has ever proclaimed from the house-tops what I have done or what I intend to do. If the public are satisfied with my work, I am quite prepared to take the public verdict at all times.

I have only done my best; it might have been an imperfect best, but I have done that for my country, and I am quite prepared to go through the country every time. It is not only occasionally that I go about in state; I go about every week. It was only last week that I was out in the villages myself in my own humble way, but I do not talk about it. I can assure the hon. Member, however, that if it is necessary for me to go, if it is necessary for me to place myself before the public for their verdict, I shall never be one to keep back.

I listened very carefully to the indictment of my hon. friend. It is a serious motion; and as the House knows, it is a motion in which he condemns, by means of the specific instances he has cited, my work in the responsible office I hold. It is a vote which is serious, because it means, if the vote is accepted, that it is the verdict of this country given through this House, and it is a verdict which I will accept. I listened, therefore, very intently to the catalogue of charges on which it had appeared expedient to the hon. Member to bring up this motion. I give him full allowance for sincerity of purpose. I have not the slightest doubt that he was moved by what he thinks his duty to his constituents.

But what are the charges? Sir, that is a point which I would like hon. Members to address themselves to, and that is a point to which I will address myself. I am not going, on this occasion, to range through the various duties I am entrusted with, but I will confine myself solely and purely to the charges levelled against me. I shall be brief but I shall try to deal with that point fully.

The hon. Member says in his motion that there is general and widespread discontent and dissatisfaction in regard to the food rationing and control schemes; that these schemes have been imperfectly framed and badly administered and, therefore, he invites this Council to express its want of confidence. That is the motion.

What is the evidence which the hon. Member has brought in support of that motion? He said, with regard to the rationing scheme, that some time ago the House indicated certain methods of appointing distributing agents, and that that had not been done. The hon. Member also said that certain overflow stores were rather expensive, because the cost of transport was rather high. That, as far as I remember, was the gravamen of the charge in respect of the rationing scheme. In respect of the control schemes, the hon. Member referred to sugar, and he said that that is one of the main points that he had to bring forward. He said that the rice purchases in India were unsatisfactorily conducted. He referred to high prices being paid and to the inquiry that is now afoot. Those summarized, are the charges on which he has invited the House to accept this motion.

Sir, I would ask the House to take its mind back to the whole of the rationing scheme. The only rationing scheme as everyone knows, is the rationing scheme in regard to rice. It is a curious thing that shortly after this rationing scheme was introduced in February this year, the same hon. Member criticized the scheme rather severely. He called it a brainless scheme, and was generally opposed to it. But the hon. Member would himself remember how, within a few days of it, from his own home he himself telephoned to me and said how sorry he was for making that criticism and how glad he was to find that the rationing scheme was working so well in his own constituency.

There is no doubt that sometimes when you look at a scheme, specially a control scheme or a restriction scheme, it is inevitable that there should be dissatisfaction with such a scheme. It is not in the nature of things possible to satisfy everyone, to satisfy every point of view,

[The Hon. Mr. Corea.]
because, in the nature of things, it must be inconvenient to some if not to the whole body of the public. I should like to remind the House that we have dealt with, for the first time in the history of this country and, perhaps—I believe I am correct—for the first time in the history of the East, a rationing scheme in the staple food of the people. I claim for the rationing scheme, whatever small defects there might be in the scheme, that at a time of limited supplies everyone in this country has been given the share of rice required by him without a single day's break. Whether that ration is sufficient or not is a different consideration, depending on the availability of rice. But the scheme that had been drawn up was a scheme to ensure that every single person who was entitled to that rice received his rice daily, and that there was no differentiation between rich and poor or one from another.

Sir, whatever inconveniences there may be in that scheme, whatever difficulties there may be, I say that the most essential thing at a time when the staple food is in short supply is to see that a scheme is introduced by which that commodity will reach the people who need it. Tested from that point of view, I say that the rationing scheme has been a success. There were many complaints at the very beginning. Changes were made in the scheme at the very beginning, in deference to the views of this House. A vital change that was effected was the giving up of the authorized-distributor scheme and permitting every single trader to deal in rice. That was tried and, as we anticipated, that led to very serious difficulties; I mentioned these difficulties to this House subsequently, and with the approval of this House we reverted to the authorized-distributor scheme.

But what does this authorized-distributor scheme mean? It means, as I said, that everyone who had his ration card, except those from whom the ration card had been withheld, had his rice without a break. It means the organization of the distribution, so that the rice which is in Colombo will be available throughout the country. It means the organization of a scheme for the measurement of rice, for the testing of the

quality and for its dispatch to every part of the country. It also means the distribution of cards to consumers which will entitle them to obtain the rice.

This is not a scheme which is simple of administration. It is difficult. But I say—and I claim with all humility—that anyone who looks at it from a reasonable point of view will see that whatever defects there may have been, the whole scheme has served the public well. There are defects sometimes which I cannot always take notice of. The hon. Member (Mr. Abeywickrama) himself suggested that it is necessary to have overflow stores. We accepted his suggestion and provided overflow stores in various areas and we saw to it that the overflow stores received a supply of paddy and rice. Now the hon. Member says that sending rice from Galle is more costly than sending it from Hikkaduwa. . . .

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Every step taken by the Hon. Minister is shaped to the advantage of other people, to make money or to take bribes. That is my charge.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I am dealing with the rice rationing scheme. I do not see any occasion there for anyone to be bribed, because under the rationing scheme the Government distributes the rice to the wholesale and the retail distributors who were selected by the Government and who are paid a certain amount for the work they do. I feel that there must be some justification for remarks of that kind, and I do not know whether the House will see any justification for remarks of that kind with regard to the rationing scheme that is in operation. That is with regard to the rationing scheme.

Now I should like to say one word with regard to the statement made by the hon. Member with regard to the purchase of rice in India. The hon. Member said that I had gone to India, and I think I heard him say that I had dealt with some merchants and that the whole arrangement in India had been bungled. The hon. Member perhaps has a short memory. The hon. Member perhaps chooses to believe those rumours which he himself lightly brushed aside.

The hon. Member will remember that the Government of India in March agreed to give this country 38,000 tons of rice monthly. The Government of India stipulated that the supply of that rice to Ceylon should be obtained through the normal trade channels. We waited for this rice through the normal trade channels in March. It did not come. Then I was deputed to go to India to look into the matter.

Of course, in this country sometimes one cannot undertake a public business without some allegation being made of improper action. That is the penalty which some people have to pay when they undertake a work which is thrown on them by the responsibilities of their office.

I claim this, that I did the duty with which I had been charged and that I obtained a release of the rice, at least the issue of the licences immediately. It must be noted, Sir, that it was the Government of India which issued these licences to merchants, and not the Government of Ceylon. The Government of India said that they would utilize the trade channels. They utilized the trade channels; they selected their own merchants and they issued their own permits, and they controlled the quantity given to each merchant on each permit.

It was the delay in giving those permits that required my going to India. It was that matter that I took up with the authorities as forcibly as I could, and it was thereafter only that the licences were issued to those merchants. There was no necessity for any action on the part of the Government of Ceylon, nor was it possible to select any merchants except to authorize these merchants or to see that these merchants sent the rice that we had bought.

It was before this, however, that the Trade Commissioner of Bombay was requested to buy rice on behalf of the Government of Ceylon. It was because the Government of India objected to the Trade Commissioner undertaking that business that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, was sent to discuss the position with the Government of India. But until the Trade Commissioner was stopped from doing so, he purchased rice on his own.

In connexion with those purchases, I wish only to say this, namely—it was a point made yesterday by the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) also—a complaint has been made by the former Secretary of the Trade Commissioner himself in which there were certain allegations made against the Trade Commissioner. The matter was put into the hands of the Auditor-General to inquire into, and the Auditor-General desired that he should pursue those investigations in India, and he has been sent across.

***Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam (Point Pedro):** What are the terms of reference of that inquiry?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** There were no terms of reference as there were no charges framed against anybody. The bald fact is this—I want without any reserve to bring it before every Member, because there is so much said to the effect that the former Secretary of the Trade Commissioner had written in making certain allegations in regard to certain transactions of the Trade Commissioner. Those papers were forwarded to the Auditor-General who looked into them. Having formed certain conclusions on those papers, he desired to pursue the investigations in India.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** Could it be possible to say on what lines the investigations are being carried out?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** No lines have been indicated. He is inquiring into those allegations to find out whether there is anything in them. Now, he should be allowed to do that. We have allowed him to proceed to India. Everyone knows the Auditor-General and his position. Let him make the inquiry as fully and as freely as he can, and when his report is out it will be possible to see what the position is and what action, if any, should be taken. Of course, before that, as not unusual in this country and elsewhere, people make all sorts of wild statements, but in justice to that officer himself who has had a good record of service I would ask the House to wait for the results of the investigation that is proceeding before listening to any rumour or comment that one may have heard.

[The Hon. Mr. Corea.]

But I do want to say this in view of the statements made about the rice purchases made in India by Mr. Chablani and by the Trade Commissioner. All these matters will come up at that inquiry, and I do not want to go into them in detail. From the statements of the prices paid for purchases sent to the Office of the Purchasing Commissioner, it is clear that the prices paid by the Trade Commissioner are not very disproportionate to or different from the prices paid by various other people. There is, for instance, requisitioned rice. We did not buy that. It was bought by some merchants to be sent to some other country. It was diverted here and we took it over on the price shown in the documents, in the invoices; and we find that the landed price of that rice is almost the same as that paid by the Trade Commissioner and Mr. Chablani. However, I do not want to go beyond that at this stage, and I would leave the matter in the hands of the officer who has been charged with the duty of investigating the allegations which have been made.

The hon. Member also said that the quality of rice which was imported was different from the quality bought and paid for. I do not agree with that. I never had any indication of any difference between the quality of the rice purchased as against the quality of the rice that was sent on that purchase.

The hon. Member stated that the price lists in this country are published only in the *Gazette*, that he had mentioned this to me but that no action had been taken, and that price lists are not distributed to the public.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Not published in the vernaculars.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I do not know whether there is anything wrong in the postal arrangements in the Baddegama area, but I have a note here to the effect that on 6th June I wrote a letter to my hon. Friend on this point, explaining that my order with regard to the publication of the price lists in the vernaculars—the broadcasting of these price lists throughout the country—had been carried out, and that from quite a number of areas I had received reports to this

effect, but that I was waiting for some other reports from certain areas and that I would inform him again about the matter. I do not know whether the hon. Member received my letter. Some Revenue Officers have not yet made a return on this subject, but several of them have replied and I can show the hon. Member copies of the price lists printed in English, Sinhalese and Tamil.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Show us one for the Galle District.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** These are not printed merely in the *Gazette*; they are published in different places.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Is there one for the Galle District?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** Yes, I have here with me a copy of the price list for the Galle District, signed, "W. O. Stevens, Deputy Food Controller", dated 1st May, 1942.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** That must be in his Office.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** The hon. Member asked why these price lists had not been broadcast, and I have stated that I ordered that lists should be printed and broadcast. I do not think the officers concerned merely print these lists and keep them in their Offices. In some instances, we have ourselves printed the necessary copies and sent them to the Revenue Officers concerned, and hon. Members will see here clear proof that the suggestion of the hon. Member has been carried out. I have not merely implemented his suggestion; I have stated that I have done so, in my letter to him, and I was surprised to hear him reverting to that charge in spite of the letter I had written to him.

I do not know why the Government Agent, Galle, has printed these price lists if they were not meant for distribution. He could not have done it for the mere love of printing them. It may be that the lists have not been properly distributed, but the price lists have been printed, and that they have been distributed is clear from what I have stated.

This is a small matter, but the charge was that even in regard to this small matter no action had been taken. I have shown hon. Members that even this small matter had not been ignored. It is unfortunate that in some places my orders were not carried out, but orders had been issued and put into execution in several places—in some places in a very effective way. The Government Agent, Anuradhapura, has done it very well; in some other places it has not been done quite so well, but it has been done.

I want hon. Members to bear that in mind—that wherever possible even small matters have been attended to, but the hon. Member has utilized even this small point to support this motion of no-confidence. I have proved conclusively that this matter has been attended to.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** I am not convinced.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** You cannot convince people against their will. If a Member cannot be convinced by proof of this kind, then certainly one is not very much hurt by a vote of no-confidence proposed by that Member.

The hon. Member has stated that this vote of no-confidence was not against the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce himself; the Minister is a jolly good fellow, at any rate he is not a bad fellow, but the officers under him, the Deputy Food Controllers, his Food Control Officers—they are the villains of the piece; they are the fellows who cause all this difficulty. "If it was merely that poor fellow, the Minister, I would have left him alone, but these are the fellows who are causing all the difficulty."

Sir, I do not think that that is quite the correct view to take. If the officers concerned do not carry out instructions, if the policy laid down is not carried out, these officers should certainly be brought to book, but in regard to these matters, it is not the fault of the officers; the responsibility is mine, and I am not going to take shelter behind these officers and throw them to the wolves. If they have not carried out any instructions, that is a different matter. But I say that in all these matters, action has been taken as

far as possible after consultation with, and the approval of, my Executive Committee, and, in many cases, with the approval of the Board of Ministers, to whom most of these matters of policy are referred. Of course, I am quite prepared to take the responsibility myself.

The hon. Member gave the reasons I have referred to as his grounds for this vote of no-confidence. He concluded on what he regarded as his most important point in favour of his motion, and that is the question of sugar distribution. There is a reference in his motion to currysuffs, but he did not say one word in his speech about currysuffs.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** I will do that in my reply.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** The hon. Member promises to do that in his reply! I must be thankful for these small mercies! Perhaps he wants to save me the trouble of replying to what he has to say about currysuffs. He makes no charges against my Ministry in regard to currysuffs, although that question is referred to in his motion. I thought, in my foolishness, that the hon. Member thought that the position with regard to currysuffs was fairly satisfactory, but he seems to be keeping that up his sleeve to be used in his reply. But what is he going to reply to with regard to currysuffs if I chose to say nothing about that subject? The hon. Member himself has not said one word in his speech about currysuffs.

Of course, the hon. Member can make grave charges against me with regard to currysuffs, and feel quite happy that those charges cannot be met by me because I would have no right to speak again. That may be a very clever tactical move but I have doubts about its propriety.

With regard to sugar, I would like to say that there has certainly been some difficulty. The hon. Member wanted to know why there was no individual rationing for sugar as in the case of rice. That question was considered, but the proposal had to be abandoned because it was felt that it would be almost impossible to have a rationing scheme for every single individual in the case of sugar. In this country most people buy their sugar from the boutiques in quantities costing one cent and half a cent; they buy a few

[The Hon. Mr. Corea.]
cents' worth of sugar at a time, and it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to undertake the rationing of sugar.

As a matter of fact, of all these commodities, to my mind sugar should be regarded as the least important in this country, because with every drop in supplies of imported sugar recourse should be had, and is being had, to country jaggery. There is no very great dearth of that, and I am certain that there will be a great impetus to its production.

But apart from that aspect of the question, we had to devise a scheme for the distribution of sugar. The hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) should not forget the fact that timely action was taken when it was known that there was going to be a shortage of sugar. That is something for which I think we can justifiably take credit. When the importation of sugar from Java ceased, or was about to cease, we were faced with the possibility of a sugar shortage. Timely action was taken to enlist the support of the Secretary of State in our efforts to obtain sugar from Australia and India.

As hon. Members are aware, Indian sugar cannot be exported, but special efforts were made and with the support of the Secretary of State we were able to provide for this country a very large quantity of sugar, both from India and from Australia.

The hon. Member complained about the price of sugar. We have to charge the consumer here the price we ourselves have to pay for the purchase of that sugar, and unless it is the policy of this Government to subsidize the consumer by fixing a price below the cost to Government of purchasing the sugar, it is utterly impossible to get over the necessity of fixing the price of sugar at the figure which we ourselves are charged by those who sell the sugar to us.

In this case, nobody can say that some merchants were favoured or had cheated the Government. The sugar we bought was the property of the British Government in India, held by them in India, and they sent the sugar to us, to help us, and they quoted their price for it. We paid that price, and then we fixed the selling-price of sugar in Ceylon according to the price we ourselves had paid.

Fortunately for us, we obtained the sugar from India cheaper than the price of sugar in India itself, because we were able to get our requirements out of the quantity which had been purchased by the United Kingdom. To-day sugar is selling in Ceylon cheaper than it is sold in India.

With regard to Australian sugar, the Government of Australia which is supplying us with the sugar, asked for a certain price and we charged that price to the consumer, plus the handling charges.

That is what we have to do, unless it is decided to fix the price of sugar at a certain figure, and if the cost to the Government goes above that figure, to charge the excess to the Government as a subsidy to the consumer. That is a policy which must be considered. It came before the Board of Ministers for consideration, and until the Government decides to meet the losses resulting from a subsidy of that kind, these increased prices cannot be helped.

If individual rationing in the case of sugar was considered to be out of the question, what was the scheme that was introduced? I will explain that a little later, and before I do that, I would refer to the other point made by the hon. Member.

He complained about the exemption of those possessing quantities under five bags from the control we introduced. The hon. Member has apparently not considered that matter quite fully; otherwise he would have understood the reason for the exemption. In order to effect Government control we had to do one of two things: we had either to purchase all the sugar in the hands of the importers, or we had to control the sugar in their possession by preventing the sale of that sugar except under permit.

In view of certain circumstances, one being that we would have had to bear the loss resulting from the purchase of inferior sugar, or sugar that was deteriorating, we decided to control the sugar in the hands of the importers. We issued regulations to the effect that no importer should sell sugar, from the moment that proclamation was issued, except under permit. When we did that, we had also to say that they could sell only to certain authorized persons, persons permitted by the Government to

buy. We had to issue permits; then we had to find out to whom we had to issue those permits. We had to compile a register of all dealers in sugar. When you had to do all this, if you had restricted the sale of sugar, without limit, it would have meant that there would have been no sale of sugar anywhere at all for a week or ten days.

That is the reason—I think it is a very good reason—why those possessing sugar below a certain quantity were exempted from the rule we passed. We wanted to get hold of the “big” people, people who had large stocks. We obtained returns from them, and on the information contained in those returns, written permits were issued. No doubt difficulties were encountered at that time, but hundreds of permits were issued until the stocks of these importers were completely exhausted.

Now we are issuing sugar from Government stocks. Certain agents have to be appointed both in Colombo and in the outstations, and through them it is hoped to supply the retail dealers. I myself see a weakness in that scheme: the retail dealers may not be able to get the sugar from the wholesale dealers scattered throughout the country. I want to see how this works before I undertake the task of establishing Government sugar distribution depots in every part of the country. It is much easier and cheaper to do it through existing channels, if it can be done. In most places the scheme we have introduced is working to-day; it has not begun working fully all over the country.

I am indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare) who has passed on to me a telegram on this subject, from the Assistant Government Agent, Matale:

“Our conversation, arrangements for purchase in Colombo now appears satisfactory, but transport charges exorbitant and if fixed prices allow for high transport charges, the traders will also buy—”

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** That is the Deputy Food Controller's telegram.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** You cannot say that all the Deputy Food Controllers are not telling the truth.

The point is that the traders are buying. I know personally that in several places the traders are buying sugar and are able to buy sugar. Our difficulties have been enhanced to a very large extent by the transport problem. I know, the Hon. Minister of Local Administration is now going into that question, and I am sure a solution will be found to it.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** When?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I believe a solution will be found. The Minister of Communications and Works and also the Board of Ministers are considering that question.

What we want, to a very large extent, is that this transport problem should be solved. We have made representations, we have protested and we have asked for transport arrangements. I have to send sugar out every day; I have to send rice and flour to the different outstations, and to see that every supply station has rice, flour, sugar and currys stuffs. How can these articles of food be sent out when the whole transport system is in such a state of chaos?

I hope the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama), with his great perspicuity and ingenuity, will look into this matter very soon and try to see what can be done to remedy these transport difficulties in Ceylon. I am sure it will be a matter for great satisfaction when some steps are taken in that direction.

We know the difficulties. We do not say that the transport system is not quite right and rush away to blame those responsible for it, because we know the difficulties that exist. The problem of transport is one of the most difficult problems that we have to tackle, but some thing has to be done, and the question of food supply is in a very large measure bound up with it. With all these difficulties and drawbacks, I say, we have never yet failed in serving out rice. Then, again, once we took up the distribution of flour, we made it available at every supply station; it will be the same with regard to the distribution of sugar.

One other point which the hon. Member referred to was that there was something wrong in the system of purchasing

[The Hon. Mr. Corea.]
locally-grown paddy. Well, we are offering a minimum price of Rs. 2.50, and we are buying paddy at even Rs. 3 per bushel.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** What is the price of a bushel of Indian paddy which you are selling?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** The price of Indian paddy is between Rs. 3.12 and Rs. 3.42 per bushel. That is the purchase price. The sale price is lower than what we have paid; we are losing on paddy. We are not charging the consumer the price we paid.

We are not buying paddy in India now, but when we were in difficulty, during March and April, when we were faced with starvation, when we found that the Burma market was cut off to us, we had no alternative but to go to the Indian market and buy paddy regardless of the price. At that time, if anyone had raised this question of price, or if I had said that Rs. 3 per bushel was too much to pay for paddy from India, and that we could get it at Rs. 2.50 per bushel in Ceylon, perhaps I would have been called a madman.

The point was that we had to buy the paddy, and we gave instructions that it should be bought, and it was not bought at too high a price. The only thing is that we were paying more than Rs. 3 in Ceylon, and it comes to this that either the Government must bear the loss when selling the paddy back to the public, as a subsidy, or we must increase the price offered to the consumer. I had no objection to paying anything since we wanted the paddy; and you have to bear that in mind. Some people pay Rs. 4 for a bushel, and if we want to buy in competition, we will have to pay that price. Even if we pay Rs. 4, we will have to sell it and either charge the consumer Rs. 4 or we will have to sell the paddy for less and bear the difference as a subsidy to the consumer. That is the difficulty. But instead of doing that, we are paying as much as we can.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** Sir, rice is being sold in the Baddegama District at 28 cents a measure. What is the corre-

sponding price for paddy? Is it correct to say that it is being sold at 14 cents a measure?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I do not know at the moment. I cannot say at what price paddy is sold without referring to my file, but I know that paddy was being sold at a lesser price than was paid for rice.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** No.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I will inquire into that matter. I do not know why that is so only in the Baddegama area, but I know very well that that is the practice all over. That is the order that has been issued, and I think there is a difference of a couple of cents.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** To-day Government is charging Rs. 4.16 for a bushel of Indian paddy.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** If there is anything like that in Baddegama, I will look into it. I shall certainly look into it. Indian paddy is cheaper than rice.

Sir, we are now buying paddy in Anuradhapura. The difficulty there was that the Government Agent went on buying paddy until he filled all his barns. He is prepared to buy 1,000,000 bushels of paddy, and we have told him that he must do so and that we will take the stock off him. From the day we had that conversation, we have been trying to find means of transport. We are trying to build additional stores. We have used almost every school in Anuradhapura for storing the paddy. We have called for tenders for the removal of this paddy, from bullock-cart owners. We have also asked lorry owners to tender, and we are awaiting the results. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that whatever the cost of transport is, such cost will have to be added on to the price of this paddy. That is the difficulty.

We have inquired from the Railway, but they say that they cannot give us any transport facilities. We have asked the Military authorities whether any arrangements could be made. The whole question is being looked into by

the Ministry of Local Administration and the Minister of Communications and Works, it is also being considered at a special meeting of the Board of Ministers. That is the difficulty with regard to the purchase of paddy in the North-Central Province. We are determined to purchase those 1,000,000 bushels which the Government Agent there says are available.

***Mr. Abeywickrama:** How much paddy has he already bought?

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** The Government Agent has bought about 200,000 bushels of paddy, and we will see to it that the remainder is somehow bought and stored. So that, Sir, the point made by the hon. Member that nothing has been done there, is not correct.

Those are the only points that the hon. Member has referred to. But I do wish to say, before I sit down, a few words with regard to currystuffs. I am glad to inform the House that the position with regard to currystuffs has very materially improved. The position with regard to stocks is very satisfactory and the price is going down. For instance, red onions soared to about 30 or 40 cents a lb. at one time because of its scarcity. The controlled price is now 10 cents a lb., and there is always a very large stock available out of the imports. I have the import figures here which are very interesting and which show a marked improvement.

Take, for instance, dried chillies. The normal monthly imports this year, before the raid and before this trouble started, was something like 5,000 cwt. in January; 11,000 cwt. in February; 17,000 cwt. in March, and 16,000 cwt. in April. In May, imports had gone up to 22,500 cwt. Onion imports were in the neighbourhood of 35,000 cwt. to 38,000 cwt. In April, imports were only 11,000 cwt.; now they have gone up to 61,000 cwt. As a matter of fact, I know that there is such a glut in the market now that people are cancelling orders. The same applies to garlic and potatoes. These are available all over the Island, and anyone can buy them. In March we had no supplies for more than one day at any time. In April there was hardly any supplies imported till the 20th. Then, on 30th June, the imports amount-

ed to twelve days' stock of chillies. The imports from India are regular. The Tuticorin service has been resumed; and more ships are run now than previously.

As a matter of fact, the chillies' and the currystuffs' position has improved. But in addition to that, the officer who has been appointed for the purpose is now preparing a scheme for a system of Governmental distribution of currystuffs also in case it becomes necessary to introduce such a scheme. At the moment it is not necessary, but it may become necessary for Government to do the distribution, and we are going to set up stores at every station where there will be these currystuffs available—sort of wholesale distribution centres available to all dealers. Then, as soon as that is complete, we are going to have flour and sugar on that scheme, so that from those centres we will be able to issue rice, and so on, throughout the country.

I have been at it for days and days. There is a special officer who has been appointed in this connexion, and the delay is not due to want of "drive" but because of the very serious difficulties of preparing the way and making arrangements for setting up these stores.

You know what it means. It means that, just as we have displaced, for instance, 240 importers of rice or anything else, we will have practically to take the place of several importers of sugar who are not only importers but also distributors. There are several hundreds of importers of currystuffs, the number running into thousands, who are also distributors, and we will have to take over all their work, in establishing a system of distributing foodstuffs throughout the country.

In a way, the purpose for which this new officer was appointed was to work a system of purchasing and distributing foodstuffs—at any rate the three commodities, flour, sugar and currystuffs. It is the distribution that is wanted now. The imports are all right. We are importing sugar, flour and rice, and there is no difficulty.

But where distribution is concerned, there is great difficulty. One of the most important things is a constant and satisfactory system of transport. If I undertake distribution to-day, and say that

[The Hon. Mr. Corea.]
 foodstuffs will be available at all our centres, I must be able to depend upon a definite system of transport in order to get the articles supplied; otherwise the whole undertaking will fail; that is why we attach a great deal of importance to the transport problem. This matter is being specially looked into by the Board of Ministers.

I do not wish to delay the House much longer. I am very grateful to the House for giving me this patient hearing. I have tried to meet the points brought by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama). I have tried to explain the position as fully as I could with regard to the particular matters he has touched upon. I do not claim to be immaculate, nor that these schemes are perfectly sound; but I do claim this, that I have done my very best to put up all the necessary schemes. It may be that my work, owing to its heaviness, has not been as satisfactory as Members would like it to be, but I have tried to do all the work that has been cast on me by the exigencies of the present time. With regard to food rationing, I have from time to time brought the matter before this House for discussion and, except for little difficulties sometimes, which might have existed, I say that the whole scheme has been conceived in the spirit of serving the convenience of the public, and everything has been done that is humanly possible to discharge the duty that has been imposed on me.

***Mr. B. H. Aluwihare (Matale):** Sir, now that the Hon. Minister has given his explanation, could he be allowed a chance of replying after Members have spoken? I ask this question because I think it is only fair that he should have an opportunity of replying to Members. Obviously we did not want to say anything until the Hon. Minister had a chance to explain the position.

I looked up the procedure in the House of Commons, and there I noticed that the Member who moved a vote of censure spoke. Then, a Member of the Government spoke. After that there was a general debate. The Minister replied, and the mover replied.

But here, unfortunately, our Ministers are single. They are each, sort of, against the other, and the Government is not one; and you cannot trust one to explain for another. So, we have to allow the Minister to make his own explanation and I do suggest that he be allowed to reply at the end of the debate.

Mr. Speaker: We will consider that point later.

The sitting is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

Sitting accordingly suspended until 4.30 p.m. and then resumed.

***Mr. D. Wanigasekera (Weligama):** I want to ask for permission to take up a motion of mine.

***Mr. Aluwihare:** The vote of censure is going on.

***Mr. Wanigasekera:** My motion will not take a minute.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that cannot be done in the midst of a debate. It can be taken up immediately after this debate.

***Mr. Aluwihare:** Sir, I made my suggestion before we adjourned, because it will be helpful to us. We could not possibly discuss the charges or whatever they were without hearing the Minister. Some of us felt a difficulty about that. I wonder whether that procedure can be arranged, because it will help everybody concerned.

Mr. Speaker: No Member can speak more than once. All the same, if it is the wish of the House, an exception can be made later on.

***Mr. Aluwihare:** Then I expect the House will give permission. Sir, I think so far as this vote of censure is concerned the specific charges brought by the mover have to some extent been met by the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, but I must confess that I take this opportunity to vent my general grievances, and I shall not vote for the motion. I think the grievance against the Hon. Minister is not so much that he did not issue a licence or a notice in the vernacular, as the complacent way in which he seems to look at the whole question.

From the point of view of most of us, if this war is to be taken seriously, if we are seriously to believe that Ceylon is ever to be attacked, the greatest assistance we can give in the defence of Ceylon is that in the matter of food Ceylon should be siege-proof; that is, that we should be so self-sufficient that no cutting off of supplies is going to impair the defence of the Island. It is from that point of view that I feel there must be grave dissatisfaction about the Minister's defence of himself and his policy.

There is a fundamental assumption about the Minister's administration which I think he is not entitled to make. The fundamental assumption is that supplies from India will always continue to come in. I do not think that we have any right to go on that assumption. Everything favouring us, the Indian Government was prepared to give us some colossal quantity of rice—[A MEMBER: 38,000 tons]: Whatever the tonnage; some colossal tonnage—which would have satisfied our wants, but when the Indian Government was willing to release it to us, we were unable to ferry it over, to bring it and make it available to the consumers in this country.

To this day we do not know what quantity of rice there is in the country; what quantities of rice are coming in; what guarantee there is about the future. The Hon. Minister did not choose to tell us any of these things.

***Mr. E. W. Abeygunasekera (Nuwara Eliya): Confidential!**

***Mr. Aluwihare:** I submit that it is grossly that the policy of the Minister is grossly at fault. He cannot assume, with the war going as it is, that we shall be able to bring that rice into this Island, and his preparations must be made to meet a situation that will make it impossible for us to get that rice. It is against a crisis of that sort, it is against that background that we have to consider the Minister's policy.

It is very easy to say that not a man in Ceylon has been without his ration.

Of course, not—because no crisis has arisen. Every man would, in spite of his rationing scheme, have had something to eat. Take even his rationing scheme. Has he considered, so far as every man in this country is concerned the question of the food that is required to ensure to a man his full working capacity? Even in the Minister's rationing scheme, about which he is so happy, there is the grave defect that admittedly his rationing scheme does not give to every worker a sufficient ration of rice to preserve his full working capacity. We need not argue about that.

Sir, the confession of the Hon. Minister stares us in the face. It was only a few weeks ago that the Minister rose in this House and said that, because of the inadequacy of the rationing scheme, he would have to alter the whole system and that he would do it in July. It is nothing to say that every man has had his measure of rice. That is not the question. In a time of war, when you may be called upon to make the fullest use of your working capacity and of your man-power, are you ensuring to every man who is able to work, every man whom you want to make use of, a sufficient amount of food as will enable him to give you the maximum output he is capable of?

On that basis, on the Minister's own admission, even his rationing scheme fails. But, leave his rationing scheme alone; I am not concerned with that. Obviously, as he said, "We are new to this business; we have to learn by experience", and the Minister admits that he is using his mistakes and that he is altering his rationing scheme. I shall come to that point again, but the bigger question is this: it is not enough for the Minister complacently to say, "I have ensured to every man that he will have some quantity of rice, the quantity of his ration". The Minister is not responsible for that. The rice has come in, but so far as one can see, he has made no provision against a day when that rice may not come in. It is for that reason that I feel that his Ministry of Food has failed.

What has been the attitude of the Ministry so far as the agricultural produce of this country is concerned? We have the position in this country that for a

[Mr. Aluwihare.]
long time we have made all our calculations on the possibility of obtaining rice from India at low prices. We have considered it economically worth while to grow, to concentrate on, what are called economic products, namely tea, rubber, coconut and cacao, and not on rice-growing. As a result of that policy, we are now faced with the necessity of immediately increasing our food output.

Now, the Ministry of Agriculture is supposed to be putting out what effort it is capable of in encouraging people to grow more, and, Sir, apart from that, the natural instinct of the farmer population in this country is responding magnificently to perhaps the one occasion when it has had land made available to it by perhaps the most niggardly Government in the world; and there you have that position of agricultural expansion. I personally feel that the policy has not gone far enough. I think, in this emergency we ought to make land available—large acreages available—wherever there is a population. That is one of the cardinal points which I suppose the Ministry of Agriculture will have to adopt, because if we are going to grow food against a siege, we must give food-growing preference; and no other produce can have priority of place, because all other production must depend upon there being food in the country.

I only want to say one thing more. The growing of food in this country, I think, will also help the export of other produce, in that there will probably be a great deal of effort expended on imports which will be released. But apart from that—that is, the agricultural side—on the other side, does the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce give an impetus to agriculture in this country by giving them even preferential prices? That is the test of the Ministry of Food. What encouragement is it giving to the local grower to grow more and more and to expand his growing of food to an enormous extent?

If you read the history of food production in England within the last five years, you would be amazed; you would be amazed at the assistance given to the farmer; you would be amazed at his res-

ponse to that assistance. In England, as here, for years the farmer was considered to be the most backward man. The farmer was neglected for higher income-producing industries, but since 1939 England has gone out for food production and has given real assistance to the farmer and the farmer's response has, as in this country, been amazing. I would ask the Hon. Minister to compare the incentive to the farmer given in England for food-growing and the incentive given here.

Sir, so far as the Ministry of Agriculture is concerned, it can give assistance, it can give land; I do not say that everything has been done, but a good deal is being done. Quite apart from the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce, there is a gross lack of enthusiasm about our own produce. I was told by a certain person the other day that at a conference people had been told that the North-Central Province could produce, for the consumption of the Island, this season, 1,000,000 bushels of paddy, but what was the reaction of the Department of Food? A sniff! Yes; food for 10 or 16 days! Well, what is the good of that attitude? That attitude at the present time is almost criminal; and that attitude is reflected in the prices offered for produce.

I think we have heard enough about the price of rice. The Hon. Minister was good enough to say that the price of foreign paddy, delivered in Colombo, varied between Rs. 3.12 and Rs. 3.42. Well, if that is so, should you not pay more for paddy grown in Ceylon? I will tell you why, because you have to encourage people, not only to grow paddy, but also to bring land under cultivation, to asweddumize land. You must make it worth while for them to asweddumize new land, but if you are going to count your Rs. 3.42's and your Rs. 3's, what is the inducement to people to make high lands irrigable and bring them under cultivation? There is none, Sir.

The only assistance that people get is assistance to colonies; it is colonies that need assistance everywhere. Dotted all over the country there are villages and lands that can be asweddumized, and if you pay them attractive prices, even if you inflate prices, I say that the response

will be such that you will not be bullied by India when you go there for rice. I was told that the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce was bullied when he went to India for rice, and yet I blame that Ministry because, in spite of that humiliation, the Hon. Minister has not been prepared to appeal to the agriculturist—the farmer—and tell him, "I will pay you a preferential price" and thus save the dignity of this Island, and the people against any crisis.

Leave paddy alone; take kurakkan. The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce has been buying wheat flour from somebody and is giving it to the people and asking them to alter their food habits. Then they have an article called Cambu brought from somewhere, and they want everyone to cultivate it. But when you are asking people to eat wheat and to change their food habits, the answer is this: for God's sake consider first, when you ask them to change their food habits, whether there is some grain which is the food of this country and which is as nutritious if not more nutritious than wheat.

***Mr. Abeygunasekera:** What about kurakkan?

***Mr. Aluwihare:** The hon. Member for Nuwara Eliya, with Absalom hair and prophetic wisdom says, "Kurakkan?" I ask you to consider the food analysis of kurakkan; you will find that it is at least as nutritious if not more nutritious than wheat. Why is there no encouragement to grow kurakkan?

Sir, there is a belief that because kurakkan is grown in the jungles, it robs you of something marvellous and that, therefore, it should be discouraged. Supposing you grow it only in the jungles, I say at this time of emergency, is food that should not be eaten, is not its food value better than that of rice? And if its food value is greater than that of wheat, what is the prejudice against it? The only prejudice can be that forests have to be cut down.

Sir, because kurakkan is grown on the ashes of a burnt forest, people think that it might be priced low, but what you forget is that the lower the price of kurakkan

is, the longer will it be grown only on forest land. If you want to encourage people to grow kurakkan on land that is not forest-land, then you have to pay them a price commensurate with the labour and the expense involved in cultivating kurakkan on land that has been cleared more than once.

The encouragement that the Minister of Labour gives, I think, is to pay a maximum of Re. 1.50 for kurakkan. Kurakkan, even on its merits, is more nutritious than rice and produces twice the amount of eatable stuff per bushel. I do not think you need as much as two bushels of kurakkan to produce a bushel of flour; I think it is something less. Yet the price of kurakkan is less than that of paddy. What is the incentive for people in the wet zone, in this crisis, to manure their high land and put kurakkan into it? Is it economic?

My submission is that those are the vital questions that have to be faced, and those are exactly the questions that the Hon. Minister, I feel, is not facing, because we are confronted with the position that we have to induce—

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I might get a chance of replying, because that position has been taken up.

***Mr. Aluwihare:** The point I was making is that the vital question is the growing of essential foodstuffs. I do not think vegetables matter so much as grain; grain is the essential article. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister why it is that he is not trying to induce a very conservative people whom the Government has been prosecuting for growing grain, whom the Government has tried to wean out of growing one of the most nutritious foods that is available in this country—why it is that even now he is not inducing them to grow kurakkan by paying them at least a decent price for their produce by even paying them an inflated price?

Let me give an instance—rubber. The Empire, they say, wants rubber. So what is the Empire doing? They are paying bonuses; they are exempted from income tax, and they are doing all kinds of things for those people who will grow rubber. They are also doing all kinds of

[Mr. Aluwihare.]
things for people who mine plumbago. The plumbago industry avoided excess profits for one year, and even in the second year it brings a tax of only 30 per cent.

Now, that is the way in which you treat other essential products. Why do you not apply the same principle to an article like paddy and an article like kurakkan?

My submission is that your whole war effort depends upon your food products, and if the people in this country are not going to be self-sufficient in the matter of food, you might collapse at any moment. After all, the biggest contribution this Council can make is to induce the people to grow food, and my grievance against the Minister is that he is not offering us sufficiently attractive prices to induce us to make unusual efforts to grow food all over the country, and to grow essential foods. Sir, that is my main grievance.

The other point is this matter of rationing. At one time the Hon. Minister passed regulations, and he rationed mainly foreign rice. At that time it was thought that under the regulations you could deal in any country-grown paddy, and people dealt in country-grown paddy; but there was an outcry that all the paddy was being brought into the barns of the wealthy, and the effect of it was to smash the rationing scheme of the Hon. Minister.

There was that attempt, for which I was partly responsible, to keep the paddy in the villages, in the hands of Government. It was then pointed out by a Member of the Ministry that under the regulations it was illegal to sell any paddy at all; apart from the five bushels, nobody could sell any paddy at all. Well, that was the position, and some time later the Hon. Minister repealed those regulations about transport. The reason for that repeal was said to be the necessity that there should be free movement of paddy.

I was glad of that, Sir, for many reasons, because if you were not going to pay a fairly high price for grain as would make it very profitable for people to increase the growing of it, it was much better that you should allow a free market for rice and kurakkan to fetch market

prices. I myself, under that belief, paid as much as Rs. 4 for a bushel of paddy in Uva; and I know that kurakkan was selling at Rs. 8 in Uva, and in my own area kurakkan could not be bought at Rs. 6. I know that the agriculturist felt that it was a very good thing. It was only a week ago that I learned that some people had bought paddy from an adjoining village at Rs. 5 a bushel, and one person said that it was great fun, because the labourers on Tamil estates had bought a bushel for Rs. 5 and that they had received chaff, sand and a small quantity of good paddy. Those were the prices. The villager was certainly profiting, even if the labourer was paying very heavily.

But then when that would have induced an expansion of paddy-growing, what happens? The Ministry, again this week, has apparently unearthed those forgotten regulations and now says, "It is illegal to sell paddy at all" and Government took over the monopoly of buying paddy; then you heard the story of the Minister of Agriculture—"I suppose the price ranges between Rs. 2.50 and Rs. 3". What is the inducement to people to come to your aid? You have never bothered about them. They have grown sufficient food for themselves for the last 100 years, and they are not going to starve till your wretched Island is besieged.

But if you want food, the only thing to do is to pay such attractive prices as will make them grow food. That is the grievance I have against the Minister. They are not being given good enough prices to expand cultivation. That is the wrong way, the grossly wrong way, in which we prepare for—I hope it will never happen—a siege of this country when imports cease.

Mr. R. C. Kannangara (Morawaka):
I should like to say a few words on this motion. The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce very complacently said that he was prepared to accept the challenge of the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) and go to the country and see whether the people have anything to say with regard to his administration in the matter of food control. Well, unless

the people of Colombo are hypocrites, I do not know whether the Minister would come out with flying colours.

The Hon. Minister said that there was nothing wrong with Colombo, and there may be some inconvenience in the outstations due to transport difficulties. I say that Colombo people are going without sugar. The debate in the Colombo Municipal Council is an index showing that there is something wrong with the method of control adopted by the Minister and his Officers.

The other day I happened to go to the Food Controller's Office for a sugar permit. While I was waiting there, a man from Matale came with a permit for 70 bags of sugar, and complained to one of the Officers that he was not able to get the sugar from the particular wholesale dealer to whom the permit had been endorsed. The Officer in question promptly took his telephone and phoned up that particular dealer. At the same time, he called for the Stocks Book and found that there were 4,700 bags of sugar with this particular dealer. When this Officer questioned the dealer, he was told that the sugar was going bad and therefore they had to put the sugar in tins and that his firm had decided to distribute that sugar among the estates in their agency. I have written a letter on that subject to the Minister. Well, this Officer gave in to these people when they said that they were going to distribute the sugar they had among their estates. The Officer had nothing to say, and he endorsed the permit to another dealer. That sugar, as far as I can see, will not come into the control scheme. That is how the Controller's Office is working.

Now, with regard to the permit I wanted, the Superior Officer sanctioned it and wanted a young officer to issue it. When I went to this officer, he said that it was against all rules of that Office to issue that permit to me, but as he could not disobey his Superior Officer, he issued it to me.

The Hon. Minister must realize that when we make complaints, we are really bringing to his notice the difficulties that we as well as the public experience. Therefore he should inquire into them and put matters right. But

as far as we can see, there is no attempt on the part of the Minister to do so. I realize that the Minister may be doing his best. He assured us that it was so.

But the fact remains that the sugar dealers treat the permit-holders with contempt. When people go to these sugar dealers, they have to wait for hours together, and sometimes for three days, to get their sugar. At one place, they issue the permit, and it has to be taken to another place where a receipt or some note is given which has to be taken to yet another place. Then, when you go there the same procedure is adopted by the merchants. They say, "The sugar is not here; you must go to a third place". Like that, we are driven from pillar to post.

What is the Controller doing? He expects the Police Department to go and see to these things and punish the wrong-doers. Why cannot the Controller or one of his Assistants find out whether what we say is true? Cannot they go and sit in one of these places and see how the permit-holders are being treated? The Minister does not intend to do anything of the kind. He thinks that he and his Officers are doing their best. He says "This is a difficult task. Therefore there may be mistakes, and you have to put up with what we do".

That should not be the attitude that he should adopt. I dare say the Minister is very sincere; he is trying to do his best. But, Sir, the moment that the sugar control scheme was started, people were not able to get the little sugar that they were able to obtain before, because the Minister gave advance publicity to the control scheme. The moment it was made public, people hid their stocks; and I hear that one gentleman who came from Nuwara Eliya and who remained in Colombo for a number of days had to pay as much as Rs. 100 for a bag.

When people complain about these things, the Controller never takes any notice. He wants us to go to the Police. When we go to the Police, they say, "We have nothing to do with this matter".

With regard to transport, the Minister of Labour, Industry & Commerce and the other Members of the Board should realize that there are great difficulties,

[Mr. R. C. Kannangara.]
and the Railway would some day or other
collapse. According to the Minister of
Communications and Works, the Rail-
way might collapse at any moment.

**The Hon. Lieut.-Colonel J. L. Kotala-
wala (Minister of Communications &
Works):** Certainly not.

Mr. R. C. Kannangara: I saw a letter
in this morning's issue of the *Daily News*
asking the country to go back to
'*tavalam*' transport of goods—on the
backs of bulls.

The Hon. Lieut.-Colonel Kotalawala:
Morawaka bulls!

Mr. R. C. Kannangara: Yes, Sir, there
are bulls in Morawaka. But there are
worse bulls towards Raigam Korale.

Now, what have the Board of Ministers
done to get over the difficulties of trans-
port? They perhaps will wait until the
last moment and then say, "We are
trying to solve the problem". Well, if
'*tavalam*' transport is to be introduced,
something must be done to stop the
slaughter of cattle that is going on now.
Bulls that may be useful for '*tavalams*'
and carts should not be slaughtered and
also cart bulls should be brought from
India. [laughter.] This is not a mat-
ter for laughter. This is not a place for
us to joke. The people in the villages are
going without sugar. The Minister of
Labour, Industry and Commerce says;
"The best thing for the country is to
go without sugar. Why cannot we have
jaggery?" Yes, Sir; jungles were
cleared and kitul trees were felled with
the jungles. Now you find only a few
kitul trees here and there from which a
little jaggery is made, and that is also
sold at exorbitant prices. A bundle of
jaggery which was sold for 6 cents is now
sold for 28 cents in the villages. I under-
stand that the Colombo price is 75 cents.
The poor villagers cannot afford to pay
28 cents for a bundle of jaggery.

I see from the daily papers that the
Hon. Minister is trying to get the people
to take to wheat flour. The hon. Mem-
ber for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare) thinks
that this will be a discouragement to the
growers of kurakkan. I can understand
the difficulties of the Minister. There

is flour in Colombo, but that flour will
rot in Colombo as onions and chillies rot-
ted in Jaffna. The Ministers must not
ask the Commander-in-Chief for two or
three lorries to bring the onions and
chillies to Colombo, with the result that
the people in Colombo had to go without
these commodities. That is what is
going to happen to flour. The Hon.
Minister must not think that the Con-
troller is doing his best. The Controller
is controlling, but the transport difficul-
ties must be seen to and the Minister
must try to solve that problem.

I shall come to the question of rice. I
understand that there is going to be a
great loss in the distribution of rice.
You find that the price of rice is going
up gradually, and at the same time the
quality is deteriorating; the price is
going up while the quality is deteriorat-
ing. When I pointedly asked the ques-
tion of the Minister the other day, as to
whether it was not the fact that paddy in
India had been bought at Rs. 3 above the
market price, the Minister said, "No".
Well, it would be interesting to find out
the price of paddy and rice brought from
India, excluding transport charges, to
ascertain whether my statement is not
true.

I say in all earnestness that the Board
of Ministers must try to solve the prob-
lem of transport. Why allow foodstuffs
in Colombo to rot when the people in the
outstations are going without them?
The Hon. Minister must not think that
we are out to harm him or his reputation.
No, Sir; his reputation is being attacked
all over the country. He says that he
can go to the country and face the people.
Well, I can assure him that if he comes
to my area I can organize meetings to
show the feelings of the people towards
the control of rice and sugar.

The Minister must bring to book the
officers concerned with regard to mis-
managing the control of rice and sugar.
There is no question that the Control
Department is not able to control com-
modities. The officers there are ineffi-
cient, and they are not able to calculate
and fix proper prices. Prices are being
changed from day to day. There is
something wrong somewhere, and if the
Minister is not to be censured, he must
find out things for himself and put them
right.

I understand now that there is no necessity for permits to obtain sugar. That is what I have been informed by the Government Agent, Sabaragamuwa. I do not know whether the public was informed about it. I was told that you can go to any dealer and obtain your sugar. I asked the Minister if that was so, and he said that it was so. I did not know that; nobody informed us of that.

The hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) blamed the Deputy Food Controllers in the outstations—the Government Agents—but I say that the Government Agents are not to blame. The Food Controller in Colombo sends a telegram to the hon. Member to the effect that orders had gone from his Office on such-and-such a date, but I say that the authorities in Colombo are at fault. I know the difficulties that the Deputy Food Controllers in the outstations have to face. All these difficulties are caused by the pig-headedness of the Control Officers in Colombo.

Mr. Speaker: There are only ten minutes more for this debate. I do not know whether other hon. Members want to speak on this motion.

Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya (Galle): Several want to speak.

***The Hon. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (Minister of Local Administration):** May I suggest that the debate should be continued and concluded to-day? It is very necessary that a vote of no-confidence should be dealt with as soon as possible. There is Government business for Thursday and Friday, and I therefore suggest that we go on till 6 P.M. and that, at that point, a vote should be taken—if the House agrees.

Mr. Speaker: That can be done if one of the Ministers moves the suspension of the Emergency Standing Orders.

The Hon. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka (Leader of the State Council): I will move that.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** May I ask a question? At 5.30 P.M., would there be the normal "interruption of business"?

and if there is that interruption of business, will this debate be continued to-morrow, or will it lapse?

The Hon. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka: It cannot be continued to-morrow.

***The Hon. Mr. Bandaranaike:** There is extremely urgent Government business to be taken up to-morrow.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** Therefore?

***The Hon. Mr. Bandaranaike:** The suggestion is that the debate on this motion should be continued to-day after 5.30 P.M. The relevant Standing Orders can be suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Unless the House agrees, the debate on this motion cannot be continued after 5.30 P.M.

The Hon. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka: It is utterly impossible to continue the debate to-morrow. It would be far better to suspend Standing Orders to allow the continuation of the debate till 6 P.M. and then put the motion to the vote.

Mr. Speaker: Shall we go on with this motion till 6 P.M.?

The Hon. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka: I move, Sir, under Emergency Standing Order 8, that Emergency Standing Orders 2 (4) and 2 (5) be suspended to enable the debate on the motion to be continued.

Question put accordingly, and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We will continue the debate on this motion till 6 P.M.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** Mr. Speaker, I could not help feeling a degree of unreality about this whole debate. A motion of no-confidence has been introduced by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama); he has made certain specific charges, and the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce has, in a dialectic effort, sought

[Mr. Ponnambalam.]
to meet those charges. The question now arises, what is the rest of the House to do upon this no-confidence motion?

I speak on this motion with a great deal of misgiving, because I know the degree of sentimentality which characterizes this House. I know that hon. Members, pressed to it, would be reluctant to pass a vote of censure against a Minister, particularly when that vote of censure is directed against an individual—[A MEMBER: Why?]: I know it; and the voting on this motion will bear me out.

But, I would ask hon. Members in all seriousness, if this motion is to be treated as purely a matter for the exercise of dialectic skill, whether the defeat of this motion would not mean, by implication, that the House continues to repose confidence in the present Minister and—why single him out?—the present Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce, in their handling of food rationing and food-control schemes?

I would, if I may, address this one question to every single individual Elected Member of this House: Can he honestly and seriously say, if he has been in contact with his electorate, his constituency to-day, that there is not the most unqualified, the most rampant, deep-rooted, dissatisfaction and discontent prevailing in every part of the country over the rationing scheme and food-control schemes? I ask if there is any single Member to interject "No", to that question. I venture to submit that there is not one single Elected Member in this House who would say that there is not the gravest, the most profound, dissatisfaction reigning in the country over the present food control and food rationing schemes.

That being the position, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the continuation of this debate, if it is likely to end in a verdict which can be interpreted—I use that word deliberately—interpreted as a continuance of confidence in the Minister—would be most ill-advised; we would be stultifying ourselves and letting down the country.

I do not think it is necessary for us to indulge in recriminations against the Minister as such. We know that the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Com-

merce has risen from meagre beginnings into a very important Ministry indeed. Time was, in the last State Council, when I happened to be a Member of the Executive Committee of Labour, Industry and Commerce, when that Ministry had only the Registrar-General's Department and a very small Labour Department to administer. Since then, that Ministry has been expanding out of all bounds, out of all proportion, almost out of recognition. Add to that the peculiar and grave problems arising out of the war and the emergency arising therefrom. All this has created a situation in which it is almost impossible for any one person to fill with acceptance the post of Minister in charge of all these Departments and varied functions under him. That is the least that can be said for the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce in his individual capacity.

It was for that reason that I ventured to send to you in writing an amendment to this motion. I do not think anybody here is out for the scalp of the Minister but I think that every Member of this House, Elected or Nominated, will agree with me that there is profound dissatisfaction in this country. How can the situation be best met? Why should it be impossible for us, even at this stage, to follow the example of England by the creation of a Ministry of Food? [Interruption.] How is it to be done? It can be done. Let us meet it.

Let us take the various points that have been raised in this debate. The hon. Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare) referred to the competing interests of the producer and the consumer; the demand made by the producer for an economic price for his agricultural products; the desire on the part of the local producer to compete on equal terms with produce imported from India. That subject would be within the purview of the Minister of Agriculture and Lands. Competing with that is the far bigger problem of the price that the average consumer can afford to pay for primary agricultural produce.

On this one question of producer and consumer, in relation to the article produced or consumed, there is a bifurcation of Ministries. There are two Ministries concerned with that question to-day.

July 8, 1947]

We will take one of the points raised by the hon. Member for Morawaka (Mr. C. Kannangara), namely, the question of distribution and the complete failure of the transport system. Naturally the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce will say, "Well, we have got the goods, but your Railway is unequal to the situation. There is nobody to convey the goods; to carry the goods from the place where the goods can be obtained, to the places where they are needed."

If we go on in this dialectical fashion are we getting any nearer to solving the problem? There is not the slightest doubt that there was a time when there was such a glut, such a superfluity of primary agricultural produce in the ports in the North, that it led to absolute putrefaction. Produce worth lakhs of rupees were lost; they became rotten and had to be buried, while thousands of people in other parts of the country had to pay the exorbitant prices demanded for these articles, or go without them. There was such a scarcity that people had to go without onions and potatoes for weeks on end.

That is another instance illustrating the utter impossibility of our tackling the situation unless there is a centralized Ministry, such as is now functioning in England under Lord Woolton, namely the Ministry of Food, which can deliver the goods.

Therefore it is, Mr. Speaker, that I ventured to address to you, as the debate was going on—in fact when the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) was moving his resolution—an amendment incorporating most of the words of the resolution and removing that section relating to "no-confidence", and ending up as follows:

"In view of the very widespread discontent prevailing throughout the Island regarding the operation of the food rationing and control schemes, this Council is strongly of opinion that a separate Ministry of Food should be created."

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** Is that an amendment to the motion? This is a censure motion, whereas the amendment of the hon. Member is a substantive motion making a definite proposal. I can understand it being debated as a separate, substantive motion, but it is

not an amendment to the motion before the House.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** Will you permit me, before you give your ruling, Mr. Speaker, to make my submission as to why I commend for your acceptance and for the acceptance of the House this amendment as a proper amendment to the motion before the House? Although the operative words of the original motion are:

"This Council has no confidence in the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce

all the qualifying sentences which lead up to an expression of opinion, namely, that the House has no confidence in the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, are incorporated in my motion. The hon. Member for Udugama moved.—

"That in view of the very widespread discontent prevalent throughout the Island regarding the most unsatisfactory manner the food rationing and control schemes are operating particularly regarding currysutuffs and sugar, the Council has no confidence in the Hon. the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce who has utterly failed to formulate and work the above schemes satisfactorily."

All that I have summarized in the first three or four lines. My amendment would, therefore, technically run as follows: omit all the words after "That in view of the very widespread discontent prevalent throughout the Island regarding," and insert the words, "the operation of the food rationing and control schemes, this Council is strongly of opinion that a separate Ministry of Food should be created."

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. Member anything more to say on the question of the relevancy of this amendment?

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** No.

Mr. Speaker: As I told the hon. Member earlier in the day, when this amendment was submitted to me for my informal consideration, the amendment is not in order as it is not relevant to the question, and it relates to quite a different subject-matter. It appears to me that it must be brought in as a separate motion.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker. That pleases those

[Mr. Ponnambalam.]
of us who feel strongly against this question, and I am given to understand that a good section of this House feels that under the circumstances the present Ministry must be relieved of these functions and a separate Ministry formed. But those of us who feel strongly on that question are, nevertheless, confronted with a very serious difficulty with regard to the voting on this motion if it is to proceed because, I say, of the charges brought against the Minister. It will not reflect the views of the people whom we seek to represent in this House. It is under those conditions that I propose to make a few further observations in order that my views on the motion would be understood.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible, under the conditions with which we are confronted to-day, to live from hand to mouth in the matter of food—literally from hand to mouth. The Hon. Minister and his Ministry and the rest of the Government which may be responsible for food cannot come along and try to create a feeling of temporary confidence in the minds of hon. Members and lull the country into a feeling of security which is hardly justified by the known facts of the case. It is useless for the Hon. Minister or the Ministry to keep on saying "We are doing our best". There are certain circumstances beyond our control, therefore you can only hope for the best".

They say, "You can change your diet". You will have always available an expert who will give you information with regard to the vitamin and other contents of foods that are supposed to replace the staple diet overnight. All this can happen, but I do not think that it is going to satisfy the country.

Before the war really started—in 1939 or about that time—the question of a Ministry for food, particularly for rice, was present in the minds of the people of this country. That question was debated on the Floor of this House. There was, in 1939, already a panic created in this country. People were beginning to hoard rice at that time. It was only then that a somewhat nig-gardly policy, a tentative policy of building up puny little reserves of rice,

was started. Even then we could have built up sufficient reserves of ~~padding~~. Instead of that, from a few days' stock of rice, we were enabled by certain Ordinances, namely the Essential Commodities Reserves Ordinance, to compel traders to lay in certain stocks as reserves and I believe we built up reserves over a period of two years, but we did not go beyond the stage of a few weeks'—probably five or six weeks'—reserve of rice.

Speaking on the Budget of 1940—the second reading of the Appropriation Bill—I said that the only war effort, the real war effort that the country would be confronted with would be the maintenance of its food supply. I do not think we could have really assisted Britain and the Empire more than by making ourselves self-sufficient in the matter of food supplies. At that time the question of food was present in our minds and yet, neither the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, nor the Board of Ministers seemed to have been at all prepared as late as December, 1941, for the situation that has arisen. It is no use Ministers saying, "We did not anticipate this or could not anticipate the other". It is their business to anticipate such possibilities, and if they have failed in doing so, they have failed the country.

That is the position. We can put on faces and talk, but the fact remains that this country is confronted with the gravest situation that it has had to face in the matter of rice. We do not have rice sufficient for even a few weeks. At a time when the harvest in India is over—and the next harvest is not due for a period of five or six months—there have been no reserves bought and maintained in India until we can start buying after the next harvest.

What is more, the Port of Calcutta is threatened. That is the position. Can we obtain any rice, even the little that we have bought in India? Are we not threatened with a failure?

That is the real situation, and on top of these facts what do we find? We find inquiries being held. I am sorry that this debate commenced before the actual facts had been revealed, and while the

inquiry was being conducted in India into rice and paddy purchases. But if the inquiry were to reveal—what I very much feel it will reveal, namely—the misappropriation of Government funds to the extent of several lakhs of rupees, possibly over Rs. 1,000,000, then, will not the people be justified in saying that this Ministry, nay, more, this House itself, because it is by the acquiescence of this House that the Ministers and Ministries function—will the people not be justified in saying that we have not played straight and fair by the country? That is one aspect of the position—the very definite possibility of a complete failure of supplies. Even with the meagre supplies that are available to us, we have been clamouring and agitating for Government depots in order to prevent profiteering.

At the outbreak of the war, in 1939, I urged most earnestly that the Hon. Minister should have the machinery necessary for inaugurating Government check depots throughout the Island in order to prevent profiteering. But what is the present position? You have your ration system. Will the Hon. Minister be surprised to know that each man has not received his ration, because the whole basis of economy has been disturbed, because the people have not the wherewithal to produce the cash; and in several instances the poor villagers have been exploited, with the result that a good many of them are going without the actual ration of rice and paddy allotted or allowed to them? That is the position.

Actually, what has the Ministry done on the question of the present existence of a black-market? It is true that you have couponed rice. I am not speaking of the Municipal area, but of the areas outside the Municipal area of Colombo. It is a notorious fact that even couponed rice is sold at more than the controlled price, but running parallel with it, there is a definite black-market for uncouponed rice. People who have the money buy a bag of Muttusamba rice for Rs. 30, Rs. 35 or Rs. 40. That is the position.

I wish the Hon. Minister will tour the various districts and see things for himself. The people are very badly affected, and they blame not only the Hon. Min-

ister but also the whole lot of us. Instead of continuing to sit here as Elected Members and indulging in these little debating tactics, while nothing radical is done, it would be well for us to go home, because the people will compel us to go home. We cannot go on deceiving the people any longer.

When the rationing scheme was introduced, the one cry raised throughout the length and breadth of this Island was that, in order to enable the masses to buy even their rationed quantity of rice, they should be in a position to buy it from any authorized dealer and not from a particular authorized dealer.

I raised the matter by way of a motion for the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgent public importance. That motion for adjournment was accepted without a division by this House. The Hon. Minister knows it. The Hon. Minister undertook to see that, whilst consumers would be attached to particular retailers they would nevertheless be given freedom to purchase their rice from other traders also. Then, by an administrative fiat, by the intervention of his officers, that undertaking of the Minister became a dead letter, and the people were forced to buy rice from a particular dealer, the people were willy-nilly attached to one person for the purchase of their rice.

Certainly one Deputy Controller—the Government Agent of the Northern Province, to speak of one instance—definitely told us that if we experienced hardship, with the change of ration books in July we would be able to change our retailers. But when July came, administrative convenience and the question of expediency overshadowed all other considerations and the people were, whether they liked it or not, attached to particular retailers.

If a man is attached to a particular retailer from whom he has to buy his rice requirements, he will have no choice with regard to the quality or the price of the rice purchased. That is the intolerable position in which the people are placed to-day. The richer and the more fortunate people living side by side with the poor are seen taking away large quantities of rice bought at "staggering" prices.

[Mr. Ponnambalam.]

What has the Ministry done in the matter? On the Floor of this House we have advocated, time and again, that we must have a definite price fixed for rice, that we cannot allow the ration scheme to continue with the price of rice at an upward trend, that the Ministry—the Government—must decide upon the maximum price at which rice would be available to the consumer and that any loss suffered should be regarded as a subsidy. The situation is not going to be met by merely giving the producer a very good price. I do not say that you should not give the producer a good price, but I do say that even if you do that you must fix the price at which rice would be available to the consumer. The difference between the purchase price to the consumer and the prices paid to the producer must be met by Government as a subsidy. Has any pronouncement been made on that matter?

We have been clamouring for it for weeks and months, but nothing has been done. The only attempt made to meet the present problem has been the multiplication of posts in the Control Department, posts filled by highly-paid Civil Servants. I cannot think of any one Department of Government in which there are so many high-salaried Civil Servants as the Food Control Department; and what is most pathetic is that no increase of Civil Servants in that Department seems to have made any appreciable difference to the starving people of the country.

You have a Class I, Grade I, Civil Servant to go into the intricacies of trading in onions, chillies and coriander matters he has never probably handled before in his life. One cannot blame that poor man for that. You have another highly-paid Civil Servant doing "very good work", but, unfortunately, to me it seems very funny to see a European Civil Servant touring the country in a van trying to hawk goods. He is responsible for buying things, as the Marketing Commissioner. Nobody seems to know who else is ultimately responsible.

There is no particular authority responsible for the purchase of certain

commodities produced at certain places. There are three or four competing authorities, and right on top of this little pyramid, of this little broad-based pyramid, there is the Controller of Purchase and Supply. The Food Controller has about six Assistants, each with a separate telephone line. If you want to get into touch with any one single Assistant Food Controller, and he is not available at the moment, you will have to spend quite half an hour to get some Clerk or Telephone Operator to put you on to somebody else.

This whole question does not depend on little things like the issue of pamphlets in Sinhalese, Tamil or English.

***The Hon. Mr. Corea:** That was one of the charges.

***Mr. Ponnambalam:** I see that the Hon. Minister is amused, but merely because the mover of the resolution over-emphasized that point a little, the Minister cannot say that everything is functioning so satisfactorily that we can boldly face the country. The time has come to take stock of the situation. I do not think that there is any one Member of this House who will say that everything has worked satisfactorily.

I think the Hon. Minister should have certainly relinquished his position; but upon the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) and met by the Minister, it would not be fair for me to vote for the motion. On the other hand, I do not desire to vote against the motion as that might, by implication, mean that I am satisfied with the present state of affairs. As you have ruled out my amendment, I have no alternative but to refrain from voting.

5.55 P.M.—

Mr. A. P. Jayasuriya (Horana): I move that the question be now put.

Mr. Speaker: I accept that motion.

Question put, "That the question be now put".

July 8, 1942]

Debates.

1195

The Council divided (under Standing Order 88): Ayes, 25; Noes, 12.

Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya (Galle) seconded.

Mr. Speaker: The closure motion is passed.

Question put, and agreed to.

I will now put the main question.

Question put, "That in view of the very widespread discontent prevalent throughout the Island regarding the most unsatisfactory manner the Food Rationing and Control Schemes are operating, particularly regarding currysutuffs and sugar, this Council has no confidence in the Hon. the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, who has utterly failed to formulate and work the above Schemes satisfactorily.

The Council divided—Ayes, 4; Noes, 30; Declined to vote, 10:

THE BRITISH SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' INSTITUTE OF COLOMBO (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Mr. H. E. Newnham (Nominated Member): I move,—

That leave be granted to me to introduce a Bill intituled "The British Soldiers' and Sailors' Institute of Colombo (Amendment) Ordinance."

Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana (Gampola) seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

AYES.

Abeywickrama, Mr. Simon
Amarasuriya, Mr. Thomas

De Zoysa, Dr. A. P.
Freeman, Mr. H. R.

NOES.

Jayatilaka, The Hon. Sir
D. B.
Kannangara, The Hon. Mr.
C. W. W.
Senanayake, The Hon. Mr.
D. B.
Bandaranaike, The Hon.
Mr. S. W. R. D.
Gorea, The Hon. Mr.
G. C. S.
Kotalawala, The Hon.
Lieut.-Colonel J. L.
De Silva, The Hon. Mr.
G. E.
Abeygunasekera, Mr. E. W.
Dharmaretnam, Mr. S.
Goonesekera, Mr. H. A.
Griffith, Mr. F. H.
Gunasekera, Mr. D. D.

Gunawardana, Mr. R. S. S.
Hewavitane, Mr. Rajah
Ilangantilleke, Mr. J. H.
Jayasuriya, Mr. A. P.
Jayasuriya, Mr. D. P.
Kotalawala, Mr. D. H.
Kuruppu, Mr. J.
Natesa Iyer, Mr. K. R.
Newnham, Mr. H. E.,
C.M.G., V.D.
Parfitt, Mr. H. F.
Pereira, Diwan Bahadur
I. X.
Rajapaksa, Mr. D. M.
Samarakkody, Mr. S.
Tambimuttu, Mr. E. R.
Tennekoon, Mr. R. S.
Vytilingam, Mr. S.
Whitby, Mr. G. R.
Wille, Mr. G. A. H.

DECLINED TO VOTE.

Aluwihare, Mr. B. H.
Amarasuriya, Mr. H. W.
Jayah, Mr. T. B.
Kannangara, Mr. R. C.
Kularatna, Mr. P. de S.

Mahadeva, Mr. A.
Natesan, Mr. S.
Ponnambalam, Mr. G. G.
Razik, Mr. A. R. A.
Wanigasekera, Mr. D.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is rejected.

VIDYALANKARA SABHA, KELANIYA (INCORPORATION) BILL.

*Mr. D. Wanigasekera (Welligama): I move,—

That leave be granted to me to introduce a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to incorporate the Vidyalankara Sabha, Kelaniya."

PUBLIC SERVICE MUTUAL PROVIDENT ASSOCIATION (AMENDMENT) BILL.

The Hon. Mr. R. H. Drayton (Chief Secretary): I present, under Standing Order 71 (5), the following joint report of the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary on the Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Public Service Mutual Provident Association Ordinance and to declare the extent and scope of the powers to make rules conferred by section sixteen of that Ordinance":

REPORT.

The Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary consider the proposed legislation desirable.

*Mr. G. A. H. Wille (Nominated Member): I move,—

That the Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Public Service Mutual Provident Association Ordinance and to declare the extent and scope of the powers to make rules conferred by section sixteen of that Ordinance", be now read a second time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time, and allocated, under Standing Order 77 (b), to Standing Committee "B".

**FOODSTUFFS DEPOT FOR
KARACHCHI IRRIGATION
AREA.**

***Mr. S. Natesan (Kankasanturai):** I
move,—

That this Council is of opinion that Govern-
ment should open immediately a depot in the
Karachchi Irrigation Area for the sale of rice and
other foodstuffs to the colonists, the labourers
working under the Agricultural Department and
others.

Motion ordered to be referred to the
Executive Committees of Labour, In-
dustry and Commerce and of Agricul-
ture and Lands, under Standing
Order 57.

ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. Speaker: The Council will now
adjourn until 2 p.m. to-morrow.

Adjourned accordingly at 6 p.m. until
2 p.m. on Thursday, July 9, 1942.