



# DEBATES

SESSION OF 1942.

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Friday, August 7, 1942.

The Council met at 10 a.m., MR. SPEAKER [THE HON. SIR WAITIALINGAM DURAISWAMY] in the Chair.

## PAPERS TABLED.

(Minister of Communications & Works): Memorandum on the termination of the Civil Engineering Contract of the Ceylon Hydro-Electric Scheme.

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS.

**Mr. A. P. Jayasuriya (Horana):** I give notice of the following motion:

That inasmuch as the film has been recognized as the best medium of propaganda and the Department of Information is at present using English and Tamil films for war propaganda throughout the country, this Council is of opinion that propaganda films in Sinhalese as well should be used in order that such propaganda may have the maximum effect in the rural areas.

I also give notice that I shall move for the suspension of the relevant Standing Orders to enable me to move this motion at an early date.

**Mr. J. H. Ilangantilleke (Puttalam):** I give notice of the following motions:

(1) That in the opinion of this Council all Government Apothecaries should be provided with quarters close to their respective institutions.

(2) That in the opinion of this Council all allowances in respect of the members of the families who are liable to pay Income Tax should be increased as the allowances remain in the same form from the time of the enforcement of Income Tax.

**Mr. D. M. Rajapaksa (Hambantota):** I give notice of the following motion:

That in the opinion of this Council the administrative limits of the Southern Province should be extended so as to include the village of Katarama in the Southern Province.

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

## CREATION OF A MINISTRY OF FOOD.

**\*Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam (Point Pedro):** Mr. Speaker, there is a motion standing in my name on the Addendum. Might I appeal to the Board of Ministers to give us time to dispose of that motion? We do not want more than the morning session to discuss that matter. I understand that several Members are anxious to have that motion disposed of now, particularly in view of the fact that they will not be present here this afternoon because of a social engagement. Might I appeal to the Board of Ministers to give us these two hours in the morning especially as the Leader of the House would be absent from this Council for some time and when the Budget debate is over there would be nobody to reply to the comments made?

**Mr. S. Natesan (Kankasanturai):** May I suggest that I be permitted to conclude my remarks on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill?

**The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake (Minister of Agriculture & Lands):** Yesterday we decided that that matter should be discussed to-day, and we have therefore fixed 2 o'clock this afternoon for that purpose. I believe the Hon. Leader of the House is making a special effort to be present at 2 o'clock to take part in the debate. Having fixed that subject for 2 o'clock this afternoon, we find it very inconvenient to accede to the hon. Member's request to take up that motion now.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Minister says that he is not prepared to have that motion taken up now, the time for discussing it having been fixed for 2 o'clock.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** If the House agrees—

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Am I to understand the Hon. Minister as saying that if the House wants to take up that motion now, he would have no objection to it?

**Mr. Speaker:** He thinks that it should be taken up at 2 o'clock.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Did the Hon. Minister say that if the House agreed to take up that motion now he had no objection to it?

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** Perhaps my hon. Friend did not correctly hear my remarks. I said that yesterday we agreed to have that motion taken up at 2 o'clock this afternoon and that the Leader of the House has made preparations to be here at 2 o'clock to take part in the debate on that motion. It is not fair for us to discuss that motion now in his absence.

### † APPROPRIATION BILL, 1942-43.

The debate on the following motion of the Hon. S. D. B. Jayatilaka (Leader of the State Council) was continued:

"I move the Bill intituled 'An Ordinance to make provision for the Public and Railway Services and the Electrical Undertakings for the financial year 1942-43, to authorise the payment by way of advance out of Revenue of moneys required during that financial year for specified purposes, and to provide for the refund of such moneys to Revenue', be now read a second time."

#### **Mr. S. Natesan (Kankesantural):**

When the House adjourned last evening, I was discussing the proposal of the Board of Ministers to send the Hon. Leader of the House to India on a food mission at this juncture. I must say that there is a veil of mystery about the purpose of that mission. Yesterday, when that question was raised on the adjournment motion, two Ministers—the Minister of Agriculture and Lands and the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce—made statements as to why the mission was necessary. I do not think the House was convinced of the cogency of the reasons which the Ministers gave in justifying the mission. The House knows—and the country knows—that two Ministers have already been to India on this very same mission. I do not know whether the Board of Ministers are taking this House and this country into their confidence about the precise object of this mission.

When I was in India recently, I gathered the impression that there was some hitch in the transport of rice and

foodstuffs from India to Ceylon, due to certain misunderstandings between the Ceylon Government and the Indian Government. In the course of my remarks yesterday, I alluded to the fact that there was some dissatisfaction caused to the Indian Government by the fact that soon after the agreement between the Indian Government and the Ceylon Government was arrived at with regard to the supply of rice to this country, officials of this Government were instructed to go into the Indian market and purchase rice and other foodstuffs, instead of this Government purchasing those commodities through the usual channel.

**\*The Hon. Mr. G. C. S. Corea (Minister of Labour, Industry & Commerce):** That is not at all correct.

**Mr. Natesan:** I wish to know—

**\*The Hon. Mr. Corea:** I shall explain later. But I want to say now that that statement is not at all correct.

**Mr. Natesan:** Anyway, that was the impression I gathered. There was the further impression in the public mind of India that some other undertaking given by this Government with regard to the rationing of rice in respect of the nationals of India living in this country had not been properly implemented. There was an editorial in a prominent newspaper in Madras—*The Hindu*—which drew attention to this matter some time ago, and there was a reply to that editorial in the columns of the local *Daily News*. That is all that we know about the matter on this side of the House. We do not know what the exact position is.

I should like to know from the Minister, in the course of his reply, whether there is any justification for the impression that is prevalent in some parts of India in regard to the rationing scheme.

**\*The Hon. Mr. Corea:** There is no justification now.

**The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake (Minister of Agriculture & Lands):** It would be a good thing if the hon. Member explained what he says. He speaks of the Indian nationals receiving some treatment or other.

† For the Observations of the Financial Secretary and the Report of the Board of Ministers see HANSARD of July 10, 1942.

**Mr. Natesan:** If the Hon. Minister wants to make an explanation, I hope he will make it in the course of his reply.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** I should like to know what is in the mind of the hon. Member.

**Mr. Natesan:** I am only stating certain facts which I gathered in India and they may be with or without foundation. I do not vouch for the correctness of that statement.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** I was only trying to find out what the facts he gathered in India were. Did he gather any facts to the effect that Indian nationals were treated differently from Ceylon nationals?

**Mr. Natesan:** I mentioned that in certain newspapers in India this question had been taken up.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** Which question?

**Mr. Natesan:** That some undertaking was given by this Government with regard to the method of rationing. I am referring to a question raised by the Indian Press. I say that there is some hitch between the two Governments, and I should like to know—

**\*The Hon. Mr. Corea:** There is no hitch anywhere.

**Mr. Natesan:** I should like to be enlightened on the subject; I should like to see some enlightenment forthcoming from the Board of Ministers on that matter. I should like the country to know what the precise object of this mission, on which the Leader of the House is to be sent to India, is. That is the point I am making. It is open to any Member of the Board of Ministers to make a statement about the point I am raising. That is the object I have in view.

I wish, however, to make this observation, that if the Hon. the Leader of the House is going to India—my own personal view is that the mission is essential because of the gravity of the situation, and I hope the mission will achieve success, as it deserves success—there should be some unofficials associated with him, some people who are able to deal with the business aspect of the matter.

The Leader of the House should be accompanied by such people so that the object we have in view may be achieved.

In addition to getting the supplies we want from India, transport facilities should be arranged. The Indian Government should be approached on that question specifically.

**\*The Hon. Mr. Corea:** That has been done.

**Mr. Natesan:** If that had been done properly, we should not have had the difficulties that we have been experiencing during the last few months. There were plenty of supplies available in certain parts of South India, but we were not able to get the supplies because of the reason which I brought to the notice of the House yesterday. That state of affairs was largely due to transport difficulties as arrangements in that respect had not been properly negotiated.

In this connexion I should like to say that if the northern ports in Jaffna had been developed, the difficulties we are experiencing could have been considerably removed. If that had been done, schooners would have been plying between the coast of the Tanjore District and that of the Jaffna District and there would have been more supplies coming in. I trust the Board of Ministers will give their immediate attention to this matter, because otherwise next year too we are bound to be faced with the same situation as regards transport. It is imperatively necessary that there should be an unimpeded flow of transport so that we may get down in a satisfactory manner the supplies that may be arranged, in due course.

I wish also to refer to another aspect of the food problem. Some hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare), have touched on that question, namely, that some arrangements should be made with regard to the disposal of country grains, such as paddy, kurakkan and other products. It is clear that much attention has not been given to this matter.

The hon. Member for Matale, and I myself too, have in the course of discussions referred frequently to the troubles arising on account of the unsatisfactory manner in which this aspect of the question has been tackled by the Board of

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Ministers. It is abundantly clear that the Board of Ministers are acting together in this matter, and we expect a co-ordinated policy from them but such a policy has not yet been forthcoming. We know that the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Lands has very sound views on this subject. He is of the opinion that unless we encourage cultivators in this country, there would be no incentive to produce foodstuffs. Accordingly, the Hon. Minister has been giving the cultivators a number of facilities for producing food. Extensive schemes have been planned and emergency officers have been engaged under the Home Minister for increasing production in this country. But still we have not been able to achieve the results which we have a right to expect.

The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce deals with only one aspect of the problem; that is, obtaining supplies from India or from other countries. But he is not apparently concerned with the other problem which is essentially intertwined with the problem with which he is dealing.

I do not know whether the Board of Ministers really tackled this problem. I do not know why this difference should exist because in many matters they seem to act in a concerted manner; even Committees are not consulted. But why in this matter they should have failed to act together passes my comprehension. It is desirable that this Council should give the Board of Ministers instructions that they should act together in this matter so that the country might secure the best result possible.

This question of the purchasing of country paddy and kurakkan and other grains in this country has not been satisfactorily tackled. If the producers are given sufficient encouragement by the Government for producing these foodstuffs at a reasonable price, it would be satisfactory to all concerned. Certainly we should have had a good store and supplies of these foodstuffs in the country, and during the lean periods of the year when supplies do not come from India, it would have stood us in good stead if this question had been dealt with in all its aspects.

There are certain Provinces where, we know, paddy harvests have been very

satisfactory. We have abundant grain in those Districts but yet there have not been storage facilities; there have been no distribution facilities; and in some cases there has been an annoying persecution, may I say, of the producers. If this state of affairs continues there would not be sufficient incentive, encouragement, for producers to go on with the task of cultivation.

If we are going to encourage these cultivators, the Government must pay sufficiently high prices which may amount to a subsidy. I ask, why should not this House face the question of this subsidy boldly and squarely? We owe it to this country. At this time of a dire crisis, when we are fighting for our own existence, as I said, it is necessary that we should rise to the occasion, that we should face this problem boldly, and that the Government should not deal with this question as if they were a set of people sitting on a commercial Board of Directors.

**\*Mr. B. H. Aluwihare (Matale):**  
Profiteering.

**Mr. Natesan:** I do not know why this Government has lacked imagination in this matter. Why should we grudge paying the producers who have been hard hit for several decades? Why should we not give them some reasonable price for their produce, while profiteering is going on in the case of so many others who are making tons of money in an illegal way? We have legislation to prevent profiteering. But that seems to be of no avail.

Now there is a Food Ordinance, according to which the transport of paddy, even in a non-self-supporting area, from one place to another is a crime which will be visited with punishment. Private purchase is a crime; it is visited with punishment.

I moved certain motions in this Council to effect some amendments to the Food Ordinance so that these difficulties may not arise. This House accepted those resolutions, but they have not been implemented at all. I think no time should be lost in evolving a co-ordinated policy so that the producers might be encouraged to do their best.

I know that in one place in Jaffna, at a time when the food regulations were

going to be stringently applied some cultivators thought that it was not worth their while to go to the initial expense of cultivating their fields when there was no incentive at all given to them in this matter. I think this aspect of the question should be tackled in right earnest, at once, and a proper solution offered by the Board of Ministers.

With regard to the food-production scheme, I must say that there is no definite Island-wide planning of the scheme. We do not have statistics about how much food is used in certain parts of the country; what further developments can be made, and so on. There is the Department of Agriculture coming into play. But, as the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) pointed out, the Department of Agriculture which is there for the primary purpose of food production is playing a minor part in this matter. There are other people dealing with this question.

The Hon. Minister of Home Affairs has a number of Assistant Government Agents working under him; some of them are doing their work very well, I should say. But where does the Department of Agriculture come in? The officers of the Department of Agriculture are there to give technical advice. Is this the way in which a problem of this magnitude should be tackled at the present moment? The officers of the Agricultural Department do not take a proper place in this scheme.

I know that in Jaffna there was a very fine Divisional Agricultural Officer—a Mr. Karunaratne. I am sorry that the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Lands is not here. I must pay a tribute to the zeal and efficiency with which this officer has worked. But his scope is very limited and even that officer is going to be transferred to some other place. He will have to tackle the problem in another part of this country all anew. This is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Food production is divided into groups. We are not concentrating our energies in one direction. The technical officers of the Department of Agriculture should be pressed into service in this matter with a view to improving food production.

I wish particularly to refer to certain difficulties which have arisen in Jaffna

as a result of dealing with a certain part of Pooneryn, Karachechi and Pachilapallai which were, owing to an unreasonable administrative order, classed as self-sufficient areas. Later, on a motion of mine, this area was brought back into the Revenue District of Jaffna, and it was accepted that a scheme of food rationing should be introduced in that area immediately.

But owing to the delay in implementing the resolution of which I gave notice in this House and which I moved, to the effect that Government stores should be established in the area, especially because there are labourers working not only under proprietors but as colonists, under the Agricultural Department, these people could not easily obtain their supplies. There ought to be a rationing scheme in this area and I understand that owing to the delay in introducing a rationing scheme there is a great deal of suffering in the area, which could have been very well avoided. I wish the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce to whose notice I have brought this matter, and who has assured me that he would give immediate attention to the matter, would remedy this difficulty that has arisen at once.

I wish also to refer to the necessity for augmenting our food supply in other directions. Take the question of eggs. There is an inadequacy of supply in this country at the present moment for coping with the demand. I understand that the price of eggs has risen to an exorbitant level because there are people who have come here to defend this country and there has been an addition to the population of this country. There should be an adequate supply to meet the demand.

I would like to draw the attention of the Board of Ministers in this connexion to the fact that you can get hundreds of eggs from South India—from Tuticorin and Travancore State. Some years ago the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Lands got a ban imposed upon the importation of eggs, for the very good reason which he stated at that time that he wanted local production to be stimulated. But now that we are relaxing the quota system in so many cases, it is absolutely necessary that we should obtain this supply of eggs required so that the people may supplement the inadequate food

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supply that is given to them at the present moment. I think this is a very urgent matter and the Board of Ministers should give their attention to it.

There is also difficulty about the supply of milk these days. The prices of foodstuffs used for cattle have gone up and there has been profiteering in that direction. This should be stopped immediately; otherwise there will be an inadequacy of food supply in all directions. We can avert some of these difficulties. But the Board of Ministers are not taking the necessary steps at once so that these difficulties may be tackled immediately.

I wish also, Sir, to refer to the important question that the food problems should be tackled by an independent Minister. There is a motion on the subject, and I do not want to refer to it at length at this stage. But I should say that though the amalgamation of two important Departments like Civil Defence and Food Supply, Food Purchase and Rationing has been effected, with one officer in charge, that arrangement is not satisfactory. The officer may be admirable in several ways; he may be an efficient officer. But even in dictator-ruled countries, in the case of two vital departments like these there will be two chiefs.

It is impossible to conceive of important departments like these being in charge of one officer, however efficient he may be, especially as when an emergency occurs these are the two problems that will come to the forefront—the defence of the civil population and the supply and rationing of food to them. How can one officer then give a satisfactory account of himself and do justice to the country especially where the lives of millions of people are involved in this manner? I do not know why this appointment should have been effected in this manner. If a new chief for the food department is wanted, by all means have this gentleman, but relieve him of the other duty. It is not fair by him and it is not fair by the country to entrust these two departments to him. I think this should be looked into carefully though now it is perhaps too late to raise criticism of this kind.

Apart from that, a Constitutional anomaly has been created in this matter.

Constitutional anomalies have been created by the score during the short period we have seen these changes emanating from high quarters. Now this officer is a Member of the War Council. In the War Council we have Ministers, and this officer acquires the status of a Minister.

This is a time when we should have expected and welcomed the expansion of the character of the Government of this country on a national basis, to face the extraordinary crisis which is confronting us at the present moment. We should have at this juncture a National Government representing all sections of the community, because all sections of the community are involved in this dire struggle with which we are confronted, and it is good for all concerned at this time that there should be confidence inspired throughout the length and breadth of this country. I suggest that this matter be seriously considered by the powers that be so that sufficient confidence may be created in all sections of the population manfully to face the crisis with which we are confronted.

#### Mr. H. R. Freeman (Anuradhapura):

Sir, I am dealing with only one point, and that is the "red tape" which is dominating the country now more than ever. I want to get the definition of "red tape" recorded in HANSARD.

In the Shorter Oxford Dictionary up stairs, the definition is "excessive formality or attention to routine; rigid or mechanical adherence to rules and regulations". We know how this country is flooded with rules and regulations intelligible or unintelligible.

I also looked at the Sinhalese and Tamil Dictionaries and I am glad to find that "red tape" is there. The Sinhalese Dictionary gives it as "Bajakaria pilibanda thadakama"—(fine word: "thadakama")—and the Tamil Dictionary gives it as "Uttiyoga Murei," or "Kadumai".

We need encouragement to get rid of "red tape". Its effects, as everybody knows, are devastating.

In support of the food "drive" in war-time the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) mentioned that the Government cannot even give a mamoty



to a villager who is without a mamoty, and there are thousands and thousands of instances like that arising everyday.

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva (Minister of Health):** I have been Minister, Sir, for a few months, and I want hon. Members to bear in mind that I want the maximum co-operation from them if I am to achieve any success in the Department of which I am in charge.

The hon. Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare) quite rightly complained that we have not made any provision towards the attainment of the very important object we have in view, and that is to protect and to conserve the health of the people of the country and bring it up to a good standard. I am grateful not only to him but also to other Members for laying stress on this question which has been subordinated to a secondary position all along in the history of this country. They have paid lip-service to the health of the people, and to-day we find that we are in a parlous position, not only in regard to health, but even in regard to food production and various other things.

I would entirely agree with hon. Members when they say that this Budget has not provided anything very much.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** Nothing!

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** I would like to analyse that position now. This Council has voted money for building Hospitals and Cottage Hospitals; my Committee too has decided in their favour. But I am entirely helpless, because once a motion for building a hospital is passed, the responsibility for implementing that decision, is transferred to another Minister, and I have to go begging to the Head of Department and to the Minister in charge of that Department to get that work done. I cannot do anything further. The result is that you find that no money is provided for the construction of these buildings during the next financial year. It may be true, with regard to the next financial year, that no materials will be available. Perhaps that is some excuse. But I want hon. Members to fix that responsibility on me. If they entrust me with the construction of hospitals, small and large, I will undertake to carry out the work faithfully and hand over the build-

ings in time. I must make that position absolutely clear.

With regard to Maternity Homes, luckily for this House the execution of that work is entirely in the hands of my Ministry, and therefore I can do it within a very short time; and I have done it.

With regard to the question of providing Midwives and certain amenities, I would ask hon. Members to give me encouragement and help to achieve that object, because within a short time I propose to bring before the House a scheme which some might think revolutionary; but I hope the progressive Members of this House will support me when I bring those proposals before the House.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** Tell us about it now.

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** Then, Sir, I should like hon. Members to give me encouragement with regard to the establishment of services in village areas for the protection of expectant mothers, to give every possible help and make them fit to produce healthy children. I wish to bring before hon. Members one instance where tremendously good results have been obtained—one instance only. In the Nuwara Elya District, within the Urban Council limits, all expectant mothers were fed before childbirth and not one case of infant mortality has occurred. I want to extend that to every town, every village and every home in the country. For that perhaps we want a great deal of money, but that money will be well invested.

Now, what is the amount that we are spending on health services in the country? A paltry sum of Rs. 12,000,000, and that is for hospital and all ancillary services. It works out at the rate of Rs. 2 per head. In some places there are no facilities provided at all.

So I would ask hon. Members whether we can succeed in any colonization scheme or food production scheme unless we help people to maintain their strength. I had occasion to visit a large number of colonization schemes, and I found that those schemes will never succeed unless the health of the population is well protected. Every encouragement and aid

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 should be given to people towards that end. You cannot produce food unless you have a healthy nation, and therefore it is absolutely necessary for us to consider the matter.

Sir, with regard to this provision at the rate of Rs. 2 per head, 30 per cent. of the money is spent on hospitals. But that should not be the policy. Government should undertake to look after the health of these people and make it unnecessary for them to enter hospital. If they are healthy, there will be no need for them to go to hospitals. I feel that Government are not tackling this question in the proper way. They should reorientate their policy with regard to this matter.

Then some hon. Members want Dispensaries in various areas. That is absolutely necessary. I am at one with them in regard to that matter. I would not grudge giving them any facilities provided those Dispensaries are necessary in the areas in which they are asked for. Even with regard to Maternity Homes, I would ask hon. Members, if they think such a home or more than one such home is necessary, to make their applications, so that I can consider all the applications and establish such Homes at places which are very backward, establishing those that are absolutely necessary immediately. We will then be able to have a co-ordinated policy later on, not to-day, but within the next five or six years we will be able to do that. In regard to all these purposes I would ask hon. Members to take a great interest in their own areas and invite me, if they are willing to do so, and tell me that these things must be done; I will inspect those areas personally and go into the question.

**\*Mr. A. R. A. Razik (Nominated Member):** Batticaloa needs them very badly.

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** I am not making any suggestion with regard to any particular area, but I am willing to do whatever I can provided it is within my province and within my ability to do. I am willing to do that and I would appeal to hon. Members to remember the fact that I have been a Minister now for only some six or seven months, and per-

haps they will bear with me if I cannot reorganize the whole thing in a day. But I am willing to do so as soon as possible, provided I get all the encouragement required from hon. Members of this House. So much with regard to my Ministry.

I should like to say a few words now in regard to colonization. In the year 1919, when there was a famine confronting the people of this country, with the help of all the people of this country I discovered Minneriya for colonization purposes. From that time onwards various colonization schemes have been carried out, but it breaks my heart to see that we are not doing our best for these colonists. They are drawn from all parts of the country and are taken to unhealthy areas; and they expect that when they go to those areas, the Government would protect them, look after them and give them all the facilities for safeguarding their health. But I find that it is not so. How can you expect these people to do the work that has to be done in those areas?

These unfortunate people went to these areas because they were forced to do so as they had no other work. They have been infected with malaria and other diseases; and they have spread the infection in their villages. We must try to prevent that; such prevention can and must be effected. I say without any hesitation that we can do it easily, provided all these Committees which are entrusted with certain functions agree to work for the benefit of these colonists. For instance, there are certain maternity benefits in the hands of the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce; there are some other benefits in the hands of the Minister of Local Administration and yet others in the hands of the Minister of Home Affairs. The work has been distributed like that. As a result, a number of matters cannot be tackled by the Minister concerned.

Then, as to the state of affairs obtaining with the food production "drive", I say that it is due entirely to the apathy of this Government. You ask people to cultivate, but lands are only available in unhealthy areas. Lands in healthy areas are in the hands of the capitalists. When you ask people to cultivate land,

if it is chena land, they must go to the Government Agent, to the Headman, and then to the Land Commissioner, and by the time a man is able to obtain permission from these officers he is "finished". This is because of the cursed redtapism involved in all these matters. That is why the hon. Member for Anuradhapura (Mr. Freeman), who has been a Government Agent himself, feels that it is time that we did away with this vicious formality.

I must also admit that having been a Member of the Board of Ministers for a few months I feel that this red tape has killed many activities that could have been carried on in this country. [A MEMBER: Whose fault?] Whose fault? There are very many people who ought to be blamed for it. First of all, there is the Order in Council; second, the Kacheheri system. These factors must all be eradicated if we want to get a move on.

What is the harm if a man who has not got a piece of land cultivates a piece of Government land? I am only speaking now with regard to chenas. Why should not that man be allowed to cultivate that land. On account of this red tape, are you going to allow the country to starve, when there is so much land available and when people are willing to cultivate it, by forcing people to go to this man and that man and beg of him for land? Whose lands are these? These lands belong to the nation and not to an individual, and why should not the nation produce food without any let or hindrance? Fancy a man from the Batticaloa District, where there are millions of acres lying fallow, cultivating a piece of land which does not belong to him. He will be prosecuted—taken before a Court and hounded out as a felon. If that is the case, how are you going to produce food?

Sir, food can be produced in this country within a short time if the necessary inducements are offered and lands are made available to the villagers without let or hindrance and also by your guaranteeing them a definite price for their paddy. If the villagers are told that Government will pay Rs. 3 or Rs. 3.50 or Rs. 4—whatever the amount may be—for every bushel of paddy produced by them, then they will feel that it is up to them to produce the paddy. Now will

a poor man who has nothing to fall back upon undertake to cultivate food if there is no stability, and no prospect of selling his produce when he has produced it? If there is no such inducement, what will happen is that the exploiter will go to the villages and buy up the paddy at fifty or seventy-five cents a bushel. The Government must, therefore, enunciate a progressive policy and lay down that for five years at least it will buy the paddy at a certain fixed price. If that is done, you will find that this question of growing more food will not be a difficult one to solve, and there will be no need for us to depend for our food supply on other people.

With regard to the question of food control, how can you control food when hoarding is not made an offence? A rich man can to-day have one year's or two years' supply in his house or barn. How can you compel that man to disgorge that stock? To-day if you take stock of the situation, you may find in the hands of the rich people sufficient food perhaps, to go round the country for a couple of months or more. Nobody knows that, and it has not been made an offence for anybody to hoard foodstuffs sufficient for an inordinately long period. Instead of doing that, what we find to-day is that a man is penalized for selling an article of food at a few cents above the controlled price.

But what is the position of the producer? The man who has money buys up his produce or a mere song, hoards it and sells it to-day at ten times more than the price he paid to the producer. How can you, I ask, solve this question in the manner in which you are trying to solve it? As long as we play into the hands of the rich capitalists, we will never be able to affect any improvement in any direction, much less in the direction of solving the food problem.

What is more, if I am a townsman I cannot consume more than one measure of rice per week, but if I have hoarded rice for six months and I have 1,000 bushels at my disposal, I can give my people not one measure but five measures of rice per week. There is no offence committed by my hoarding the rice. Could the national existence of a country depend upon measures of that kind?

[The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva.]

We have for so long been at the mercy of these capitalists that it is only to-day, because the problem has now become so acute, we are trying to find ways and means of solving it. Perhaps, we may find it difficult to solve the problem at the moment, but I would appeal to hon. Members to depend on our own efforts to find a solution, and not on anybody else. If lands are not given to the people, let them go to the lands that are available, plant them and produce food. This may involve a breach of the law, but that can not be helped if you want food. This is the only way of ridding ourselves of this conservatism. What is the use of blaming anybody? Let us take matters into our own hands. [A MEMBER: You are the Government?] If I had my own way, you will not starve for a day or at all.

Years ago I suggested a harmless thing—the planting of jak trees alongside the roads. If that suggestion had been implemented, to-day there would be nobody who need starve. I proposed that the prisoners, whom the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs is protecting, should be sent to the colonization schemes and made to produce food. The Hon. Minister felt that it was a great crime to do that. But now we are penalizing the free man who has not committed any offence by feeding at his expense people who have committed offences.

Some time ago I suggested that kital trees should be planted in every village. Then what did the Excise people do? They not only prevented that being done, but they also cut down the trees that were there. There was bound to be some retribution, and that retribution, I feel, is in full visitation to-day. No conceivable attempt, not even a humble attempt has been made, and that is why we are to-day faced with the problem of having to go with begging bowls to many countries in the world and ask them to feed us.

We have been described as an agricultural country; when we wanted to undertake any industrial work, we were told, "No. Do not touch industries. You are not fit for industry. Yours is an agricultural country; therefore, stick to agriculture". That is how we have been lulled into a sense of security.

There are so many things that I feel we have neglected, but of course, no useful purpose will be served by our considering those matters at the present juncture. Let us, therefore, put our shoulders to the wheel, and stand together, and try to solve the problem. There can be no question of race and no question of colour or community to-day, because the problem has affected everybody alike. That is all the more reason why we should be united in our efforts to bring into being a Government of the kind that will bend its every effort to achieve the desired result. You really require a National Government to come into office. If you look at it from that point of view you will I am sure realize that there is only one race, one nation to look after, and that is the people who are in this country.

Sir, I would now like to touch upon another point. We have troops here who have come from various parts of the world. They have been sent to various parts of Ceylon, and we have to be responsible for their health. Consider the magnitude of that task, Sir! We have not been given any additional facilities, but we are doing as much as we can; and you can all be proud of our achievement in having conserved their health even up to this time.

Again, I would appeal to hon. Members. There must be co-operation, and unless they give me that co-operation I will not be able to achieve anything, because health is dependent on the goodwill and help that the general public give to medical men and others who are engaged in this part of national service.

When we are anxious to do as much as we can, and we cannot achieve our goal, naturally Members become critical. They accuse other Members. It is not that they have any malice, but they like to see something done for the people. That is how I feel in the matter. I have been very anxious to achieve our object within a very short time. So when I am not able to realize it, naturally I feel disgusted with my own existence, Sir—I believe most Members feel the same—because you see everything happening before your eyes. You are anxious to do something; you have the money, but you cannot achieve your object.

In those circumstances we must all be sympathetic towards each other, and we must work together. It is in that spirit that I would appeal to the Board of Ministers and to Members: Never mind the compartments that have been created. Let a man who can do the work be given a chance of doing it. Even if we incur the displeasure of others, it does not matter, provided we can do a national service to this country.

I am grateful to hon. Members for listening to me patiently, and I may add that I expect in the future all possible co-operation from them.

**\*Mr. T. B. Jayah (Nominated Member):** When a Member of the Board of Ministers has raised the standard of revolt and called upon his colleagues to break the law in order to save the people from starvation, it is clear that there is something radically wrong somewhere. It is clear that the situation calls for drastic measures. At a time like the present we should not think of personalities. I interpret the righteous indignation with which the Hon. Minister of Health spoke as an indication that even with the best of intentions he has not been able to do all that he proposed to do.

Well, Sir, in the light of his remarks, if one examines the Budget proposals one is tempted to say very hard things. We are budgeting for a deficit of over Rs. 30,000,000, and this fact has been viewed by Members from different points of view. One Member who spoke said that this country was not sufficiently taxed, and that if the country was sufficiently taxed, there would not be any need for us to resort to loans to meet these deficits.

Last year when this very question was discussed it was contended by the Hon. Minister of Local Administration that for very good reasons it was not advisable for us to resort to taxation, however necessary it was at that time. I feel that this question should be viewed from an entirely different angle altogether. At a time like the present, everything possible should be done to enable us to meet difficulties, however insurmountable they may be, and as was remarked by a Military Officer some time ago, money should be of no consideration if it is felt that the situation has to be met. So, we

must not be taken aback by the prospect of increasing expenditure. Although the estimated expenditure for next year is over Rs. 184,000,000 we should not be staggered at that high figure. What I feel is, if it is necessary for us to spend more for the successful prosecution of the war, and if it is at the same time necessary for us to rouse the people to a realization of their responsibilities at this hour, and if on that account it is necessary for us to spend for those essential social services which would make the people join heart and soul in this struggle which is a world struggle, then I think money should be of no consideration.

I think the Hon. the Financial Secretary, in the course of his remarks yesterday, said that it was all very well to suggest expenditure on essential social services as was done by the hon. Member for Balapitiya (Mr. Kularatne) and the hon. Member for Colombo Central (Dr. Kaleel) who, in the course of their very elucidative and admirable remarks, pointed out clearly that this Council had not sufficiently paid heed to certain essential requirements which would enable all classes of the people of this country to join whole-heartedly in any measures necessary for safeguarding this country. What I feel is, even though we might be called upon to spend enormous sums of money, even if the expenditure reaches a very high figure at which we might be staggered, at the same time we must see to it that expenditure on social services is not stinted.

Do you see, Sir, the results of the war? Some of the very problems which would have baffled our rulers some time ago have been solved. One would not have thought that we would have been in a position to spend so much on our A.R.P. schemes as we are spending. One would not have thought that so many changes would have taken place overnight in Colombo itself as have taken place. Slum clearance and similar questions have engaged the attention of the public for a very long time. Time after time it was proposed to widen certain streets in Colombo and to rid this City of certain pestilential spots. But it was considered impossible to carry out those very necessary measures. The war came on, and

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certain measures were considered necessary and, as I said, overnight one found that some of these very desirable changes were effected.

There was, again, the question of unemployment, which was worrying us. Different methods were suggested for solving that problem. All sorts of schemes were put forward, but nothing tangible was done. But with the war, even that problem has been solved to a great extent.

What I want to say is that this is a very special opportunity for us to tackle those problems which have baffled us all these years. The war has brought home to us the priceless value of freedom, the potentialities of which a free people are capable, and the necessity for bridging the gulf, the yawning gulf, that divides the more fortunate from the less fortunate, the haves from the have-nots and the exploiters from the exploited.

Do you not think, Sir, that this is a most opportune moment to deal with all those problems which will bring about a complete unification in this country so that there would not be any kind of hesitation on the part of the people who have been for centuries suffering from social disabilities and other inequalities which have been rightly condemned and which I do not think would be tolerated at the close of this war? It is, therefore, not right, however eminent a financier the Financial Secretary may be, that he should show any discouragement towards the social amelioration of the people. It is no use saying that you want so much money for other purposes and that you must cry a halt and wait till the situation is relieved. I do not think the situation would be relieved if we do not attend to these essential needs, essential not from the point of view of people who want to gain everything, but from the point of view of people who are suffering and whose suffering is becoming intolerable.

That is the reason why the Members who spoke have taken great pains to point out the misery that has been created over the food question. In their utter despair, I know, they had to say some very hard things; they were forced to accuse this Minister and that Minister, and they were forced to refer to all

this bungling over the food question. But the situation is one fraught with enormous difficulties, and we must approach the question in a very dispassionate manner.

I do not think any useful purpose would be served by indulging in mutual recriminations, in pointing out, "I said so, and if the measures I suggested had been taken in time, all this would not have resulted". I can quite understand the feeling of the Minister of Health when he referred to the proposal he made some time ago about the planting of jak trees. At that time some of us were inclined to laugh at him; but it is easy to be wise after the event.

The situation calls for immediate action, and when we are dealing with a situation like the one in which we find ourselves, we should see to it that not only are all classes of people satisfied but that all communities constituting this country are fully satisfied. It is from that point of view that I regard the appeal made by the hon. Member for Kankasanturai (Mr. Natesan) for the formation of a National Government.

There should be an attempt on the part of all peoples, the rich and the poor, the highly-placed and the less fortunate members of all communities, to face the situation. That situation can only be faced fairly and squarely if it is realised among the people concerned that there is equal opportunity for all. That equal opportunity will not be forthcoming unless we can say that there is a Government which will be free to act in the best interests of all concerned.

It was very odd to hear a Minister of State openly declaring that he was helpless, openly saying that if he had had his own way all these difficulties would have been cleared. I was wondering whether he meant that his colleagues stood in the way, or whether he meant that the Constitution made it impossible for the Board of Ministers to act. Whatever the cause, these difficulties should not be allowed to exist. If the present exigencies require certain drastic changes, nobody should hesitate to effect those changes; otherwise we shall be only tinkering with the difficulties.

It has been suggested that we should redistribute Ministerial functions, and that there should be a Ministry of Food

created. I do not want to comment on that suggestion at this stage, but if the situation demands such a change, and if the desired effect cannot be produced except by a change, no consideration should be allowed to stand in the way of a change like that being effected.

Viewing the Budget proposals in that light, I should like to make brief references to some features of the Budget which particularly appeal to me.

To begin with, where was the question that agitated the minds of those engaged in the work of education. Some time ago it was felt that unless certain drastic measures were adopted to meet the situation, the whole educational future of the country would be jeopardized. In spite of difficulties, of certain misgivings, of certain fears expressed in this House, the situation was tackled, and an Emergency Education Ordinance was passed. As a result, matters have improved, and the difficulties envisaged have been met and partially overcome.

The provision that was made to meet that situation will last only till the end of next month, and I am sorry to say that nothing further has been done. No provision has been made to enable those engaged in education to meet the situation during the next financial year. I have no doubt that the Minister of Education will tackle the problem. It is feared that because of a feeling among Members that so much money is spent on education there might be some opposition to any additional expenditure even if the situation demanded it. I have no doubt that if it is necessary that certain measures should be adopted in order to meet the situation, in view of the quite unprecedented nature of the difficulties ahead of us hon. Members will not hesitate to sanction any proposals that might be placed before us.

As was quite rightly said by one of the speakers, in the matter of education and other social services, there should not be any stinting of expenditure, and there should be no hesitation on the part of this House to spend whatever is needed. That does not mean that there should be wasteful expenditure, or that the country should not insist on having its money's worth. But if the requirements of the situation make such ex-

penditure imperative, I do not see any reason why there should be any hesitation on the part of anybody, even the Minister of Education, to come before the House and say that it is impossible for us to carry on the work satisfactorily unless the proposals we have in mind are carried into effect.

In matters relating to education, although there are one or two aspects which particularly appeal to me and on which I have touched on previous occasions, I do not think it necessary now to refer to them. I have no doubt that if it is found that some special consideration ought to be given to the special, or peculiar, position in which certain communities are placed, hon. Members will not hesitate to meet the wishes of those who are affected.

With regard to the Ministry of Home Affairs, in almost every Budget debate during the last few years I have drawn the attention of the House to a certain matter which has greatly agitated the Muslims, and over which feelings had become so acute that there was a motion introduced in this House to remedy the state of affairs complained of. I refer to the method of recruitment of Divisional Revenue Officers.

Unless some definite steps are taken in time, the position of the Muslims, who are directly affected by the rules governing the appointment of Divisional Revenue Officers, will be very bad. The Minister of Home Affairs—I am sorry he is not here—felt keenly that something should be done in the matter. In fact, he said that he did not know what to do, but he had certain suggestions to make to this House. He discussed with me a scheme by which the difficulties could be met.

Although that scheme was not satisfactory, I told the Minister of Home Affairs that if he could explain it in this House and obtain the consent of the House, it ought to meet, even partially, the wishes of the Muslim community. The Minister of Home Affairs felt that after one or two years it may not become necessary for him to appoint Divisional Revenue Officers, and he said that all Chief Headmen might be called upon to relinquish office. In those circumstances, it was just possible that there

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 might not be more than one Muslim holding the office, although in the past there were several officers doing the work and doing it with efficiency and conspicuous success. The Minister of Home Affairs told me that if it was possible, he would not call upon these Muslim Chief Headmen, who are doing very good work, to retire along with the others, till he found it possible to recruit Muslim young men as Divisional Revenue Officers. He had a scheme like that in mind, and although it is not altogether satisfactory, it might go a long way to meet our wishes in the matter.

Then, with regard to these (Emergency) Government Agents and Assistant Government Agents, we found that some of these officers are doing very good work. The Muslim Community felt so much on this question that they suggested to Government the transfer of an officer to a Muslim area to enable that particular officer to give of his best and make the Muslims, particularly of that area, respond to the demands of the situation.

I must say in this connexion that I was greatly disappointed with the attitude of some of the Officers of State, although the question was placed before them in all its bearings, and it was pointed out that such a change would mean so much not only from the point of view of the Muslim community but also from that of the general community. In spite of that, it was found almost impossible to make them change their attitude.

I must say in this connexion some of the Ministers were more ready—it is not a question of liking us—to understand our point of view. After all, in understanding our point of view, they were only doing something that was going to benefit the country.

Thanks to the influence of some of those Ministers, it was found possible to send an officer to a Muslim district, and I must say that although the change was effected with a certain amount of hesitation, the results were good. If you are going to judge by the results which have already been achieved, it would look as if the change was long overdue.

But if changes like this can be made all over the country, sending only those

who are able by their initiative and driving power to bring about a complete change among the people over whom they are placed, then, I say, these (Emergency) Government Agents will be in a position to bring about such a revolutionary change that the question of food production will solve itself. I do not think it will be necessary for people to break the law as suggested by the Hon. Minister of Health. These (Emergency) Government Agents, armed with special powers, would be in a position to give land for people to open up, and even suggest the overcoming of certain difficulties in a particular way. So that the very ideas that are in the minds of some Members will be given effect to by those emergency officers.

After all, Sir, in the matter of food, it would not do to depend on this country or that country. Placed as we are, however, there is no doubt that we find ourselves in a helpless position. If we do not get all that we need from our neighbour, perhaps the situation here will become intolerable. That is the very reason why we should take all possible steps to make this country self-supporting in the matter of food.

Even during the last Great War similar steps were taken and similar blunders were committed by the people who showed a good deal of enthusiasm for cultivating land. I know, certain associations took up this question and even opened up thousands of acres of land in the Southern Province. But immediately the war came to an end and the moment economic conditions changed, all the determination on the part of the people vanished and all the ordinary economic laws prevailed.

After all, it is well-known that agriculture is not a paying proposition—especially paddy cultivation. People were so enthusiastic during the war, owing to food shortage and to difficulties similar to those which we are experiencing to-day, that they went from place to place preaching to the people the necessity for opening up thousands of acres of paddy land. But, after the war, as I said, all the enthusiasm vanished, and we fell back into the old groove with the result that we are again in a similar position.



It is just possible that owing to the needs at the moment our people will again enthusiastically take to cultivating paddy-fields and producing paddy. The question is how long this enthusiasm will last. That is why, I think, as the Hon. Minister of Health suggested, we should have a definite plan spread over a number of years so that we may not give up the attempts we are making simply because of the special difficulties we are faced with now.

Sir, the Hon. Minister of Health, while expressing his helplessness at this time to do all that he wants to, referred to some of the problems affecting his own Department. If he bears in mind the criticism that was offered by the new Member for Colombo Central (Dr. Kaleel), who is well qualified to criticize the administration of hospitals and the Medical Department, I am sure he will be in a position to carry out all the reforms he desires to effect. Fortunately, the hon. Member has joined the Executive Committee of Health, and I think it would be possible for them to do what is needed.

In this connexion, I would like to say that although I fully sympathize with the view expressed by the hon. Member, I think he was too hard on the Ayurvedic College in Colombo. I know the great difficulty we had in getting the old Legislative Council to approve of a scheme that would enable the people of this country, the majority of whom are great believers in Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, to resort to men who are qualified to practise these systems of medicine. There is no doubt that the Ayurvedic College has not fulfilled the highest expectations.

As I have said on a previous occasion, those who gain admission to that college are not fully qualified by the training they receive there. Perhaps it may be because the best qualified men are not prepared to join that College; that may be the reason. But, whatever it be, even if a higher course of studies is prescribed for those students, it is possible that they may not be able to take full advantage of what is offered to them there. So that the graduates of that college necessarily do not derive the full benefits of the training they are likely to

receive in those three systems. When they go out and practise, people naturally feel inclined to say that Ayurveda should have the old *Vedicalas* who know their business. It may be that they had learned it from their fathers and forefathers who practised their profession according to what they had learned from in the old books without making use of some of the modern methods practised by the so-called Western system.

There is also a feeling that these graduates, having learned something of the old system and something of modern methods, want to pass off as men fully qualified to employ modern methods, which perhaps they had not the benefit of studying in their own institutions. That may be the reason why the hon. Member for Colombo Central (Dr. Kaleel) felt that the money spent on that institution and on the indigenous hospital could be better spent on research work.

Sir, I was asked by some friends of Ayurveda and Indigenous medicine what research work had been done by our own Medical College, whether the best medical men have been employed and whether the students are expected to have the highest qualifications. In fact, this question was seriously put to me by some people who have intimate knowledge of what is taking place. They said, "if you are going to condemn the Ayurvedic College because no research work is being done, we want to know whether any research work has been done in the last 125 years or in the last 75 or 85 years in our Medical College." I was not in a position to answer that question, but I said that I knew of a case where a Unani physician had come to the rescue of a dying man who was, according to these well-qualified Doctors, expected to die in a day or two.

The facts are these; a well-known Mudaliyar of the Southern Province was very seriously ill, and the Doctors had given up hopes. They said that it was a matter of ten or fifteen hours and no useful purpose would be served by treating the patient because he would die in a few hours. The Unani physician came on the scene and suggested that he be allowed to treat the case,

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because, he said, the Doctor was absolutely wrong in saying that the man would die in a few hours.

I know that case personally because I was there myself. I approached those medical men and asked for their advice as to what we should do. They said that they were helpless and no useful purpose would be served by our taking more trouble over that particular case. This Unani physician explained to us the various steps by which the cure would be effected. It was almost a miracle to us because we found that day by day the expected results were achieved by this Unani physician. The man who was going to die in a day or two lived another three or four years and was able to do some useful work in this country!

So that, Sir, I must say that although the hon. Member for Colombo Central (Dr. Kaleel) had his own reasons for pointing out what it was best to do with the expenditure on the Ayurvedic College, yet, I think there is another side to the question which we must not ignore.

There is one other matter, Sir, which is certainly agitating the minds, if not of the whole country, at least the minds of one community. As I said, at this juncture we want the co-operation of all; all should be contented. There should not be any feeling on the part of anybody or any community that its affairs are ignored. If it was in that sense that the Hon. Minister of Health was appealing for the co-operation of all Members, I am sure he will get the unstinted co-operation of every one of us.

Now, it was found that most Muslims are concerned that owing to the defects of a certain Ordinance, to meet certain difficulties that have been pointed out from time to time, an amendment of that Ordinance was absolutely necessary. I am referring to what is called the Wakfs Ordinance. Some time ago, I gave notice of a motion to the effect that an Amending Bill should be introduced without further delay. I was told that the necessary steps would be taken and the necessary measures introduced without any delay. But, unfortunately, although Committees are sitting, reports

are being submitted and other things done, yet so far neither the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs nor the Hon. the Legal Secretary has made it possible for us to have that Amending Ordinance.

The Muslims are naturally apt to think that their matters are ignored by this House. They are so much wedded to that belief that they even accuse the Muslim Members of not paying any heed to the demand they have made from time to time for an Amending Ordinance. As I said, all the necessary preliminaries have been carried out, and it was left to the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs to bring up the Bill; and I am sure this House will pass it. But somehow or other, nobody has thought it fit, in spite of the promises made on the Floor of this House, to bring this matter up.

The same thing applies, Sir, to the Muslim Marriages Ordinance. Various amendments have been suggested; Committees have been appointed, and recommendations made. The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce assured this House that before long he would introduce an Amending Bill in this House, but nothing has been done so far. So, are not the Muslims justified in feeling that they are being absolutely ignored? Are we not justified here in pointing out to the Board of Ministers that it would not do for them, when they ask for our co-operation, to forget the position in which we are placed?

It is all very well to appeal to all classes and all communities to unite in a common endeavour. But the important point remains that the needs of all communities, even the smallest, should be met, if there is going to be a feeling of relief amongst all sections of the people. After all, as I said in my opening remarks, if there is going to be a whole-hearted effort, if all sections of the people are to give of their best to meet the difficulties of the situation, it is absolutely necessary that all classes of the people, with special reference to the needs of all communities, should feel that their needs and aspirations are satisfied.

I do not think, I need say anything more. I have no doubt that the Board of Ministers, instead of saying that they are helpless in these matters, will go forward with a grim determination to

carry out the suggestions that have been made, and if they do it, they will be not only justifying their own position but showing the country that they are able to tackle problems affecting the country in a manner that will satisfy all sections of the people.

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** I move that the question be now put, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will put the question.

*A quorum not present, and division Bells rung. Later, a quorum being present—*

**\*Mr. Dudley Senanayake (Dedigama):** What about the reply?

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Leader of the House is not here.

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** There is no need for a reply, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will now put the question.

Question, "That the question be now put," put, and agreed to.

Question, "That the Bill be now read a second time", put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** I move that the Bill be referred to a Committee of the whole House, and that the Committee Stage be taken on next Wednesday.

**The Hon. Mr. H. J. Huxham (Financial Secretary):** There will be other Government business, I take it. Must we fix a precise day?

**Mr. Speaker:** Not necessarily.

**\*The Hon. Mr. Corea:** Immediately after Government business.

**Mr. Speaker:** The sitting is suspended till 2 p.m.

*Sitting accordingly suspended until 2 p. m., and then resumed, MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES [MR. R. S. TENNEKON] in the Chair.*

## CREATION OF A MINISTRY OF FOOD.

**\*The Hon. Mr. G. C. S. Corea (Minister of Labour, Industry & Commerce):** In view of the statement made yesterday, I move the Emergency Standing Order 6 be suspended to enable the hon. Member for Point Pedro to move the motion standing in his name on the Addendum dated August 6, 1942.

Question put, and agreed to.

**\*Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam (Point Pedro):** I thank the Board of Ministers and this House for giving me permission to move the resolution standing in my name:

That this Council is of opinion that the immediate creation of a Ministry of Food with a new orientation of policy in the matter of purchase, control, pricing and distribution is a paramount and overriding necessity for the safety, preservation and defence of this country.

In sponsoring this resolution, I should like to make it perfectly clear that it is not my object to damn anybody with feigned praises or praise anybody with feigned damns. My motion is purely and simply a request to the Government and to His Excellency the Governor to create a Ministry of Food, in view of certain circumstances that have arisen during the last eight months.

Hon. Members will recall the situation in which this country was placed in respect of food shortly before Japan entered the war. It cannot be gainsaid that there have been numerous unforeseen circumstances and situations arising in the last eight months which warrant a reconsideration of the whole situation. The Ministries, as then constituted, were fully cut out for peace-time functions. The question of the administration of food control, of food distribution, of food purchase and pricing never arose during peace-time. But to-day we are confronted with a situation in which these matters have become a full-time job for the most hard-working Minister. That is the position in which we are placed. The question that I should like to ask is this: is it possible for a peace-time Ministry, with a number of Departments under it, to regard the purchase, control, pricing and distribution of food as something tacked on to its normal functions? That is the first point I wish to place before this House.

[Mr. Ponnambalam.

I think it will be readily conceded that even if the policy that is now being pursued is acceptable to this House and to the country, the Ministry has been completely unequal to the task. That is the position I should like this House to bear in mind. The time that should normally have been devoted to this question of paramount importance to the people of this country has not been devoted to it, and in the very nature of things cannot be devoted to it if the present Ministry, with its various other functions, is to continue to administer this very important subject.

Quite apart from that, I wish to say personally for myself—at the same time I think I am voicing the sentiments of the vast majority of Members of the House and also expressing the popular feeling in the country—that the method of food control that now obtains and has obtained during the last six to eight months leaves a great deal to be desired. I say that very specifically. To be more specific, in the matter of laying in sufficient reserves, in the matter of obtaining the maximum quantity of rice that India could spare us and could have been persuaded to spare, in the matter of distribution of the available supplies of food within the country, in the matter of getting the consumer to pay only the minimum necessary for the food that he obtains, in the matter of the prevention of the latent profiteering that is going on daily throughout the country and, lastly, in the matter of ensuring to the manual worker an adequate supply of food, what has happened in the last six to eight months is a sorry tale of woe.

The question is, how is that situation to be remedied? One might very well ask that question. Will the creation of a new Ministry give us more food? I have anticipated that query in my preliminary remarks when I said that the devotion of attention by a full-time Minister to this job might help him to solve the situation; at any rate, it will enable the House and the country to feel that an earnest endeavour is being made by a full-time Minister to solve this problem.

It will be remembered that hon. Members of this House almost unanimously favoured Government control of the importation of food, I believe, even be-

fore, we entered the war. Subsequent to Japan's entry into the war, we felt in every district of this Island there should be Government-controlled depots. It was well known that profiteering would necessarily ensue as a result of food rationing. And what has happened during these eight months? Except for spasmodic efforts, sporadic efforts, made by certain local authorities to start check depots run by them, there has been no attempt at co-ordination, there has been no attempt made by the Central Government to see that there is no profiteering. Even upon the introduction of Control, I do not think a serious endeavour was made to check, to inventorize the available stock of rice and other foodstuffs with traders and importers in this country. (The result is well known to-day—that side by side with the rationing scheme, the large importers, the large traders, are conducting a black-market. It is a well known fact that, by day and night, traders are in a position to obtain a profit of 200 per cent. or 300 per cent. on the sale of rice. That state of affairs has not been stopped and apparently cannot be stopped.)

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya (Galle):** It will be never stopped.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** I am told that it can never be stopped. Perhaps the hon. Member knows things better than I. The country demands that something should be done to put an end to that state of affairs. The situation cannot be allowed to continue like that, to make it possible for a measure of rice to be sold for as much as 70 cents. I do not know whether hon. Members are aware that in the black-market one has to pay as much as seventy cents for a measure of rice. If a person is willing and is prepared to pay as much as seventy cents for a measure of rice, he gets it. You cannot have that happening alongside the attempt to control and distribute food properly.

To come to the next point. The whole basis of village economy, upon which the daily-labourer has depended for his credit facilities, has been completely disorganized; and to-day the poor consumer of rice is absolutely at the mercy of the trader. It was in anticipation of those

difficulties that I moved the adjournment of the House a few months ago in an effort to induce the Minister to accept a scheme under which the consumer would have been in a position to buy his rice from whichever trader he chose. I believe the Minister gave us a qualified undertaking, but administratively that undertaking has been completely negated and to-day the consumer has to depend for his rice on a thoroughly unsatisfactory dealer to whom he is willy-nilly attached. The result is that there is no inducement whatever for the trader to give the man credit. What is more, making the control system the basis, the instrument, of exploitation, the trader compels the consumer to buy other commodities at prices which he dictates. Otherwise, rice is not made available to the consumer. That is the position in the country to-day.

In this connexion, I am constrained to refer to the fact that the Hon. Minister, in introducing the control scheme, referred to the system of rationing that obtained in England during the last war. He said that the consumers in England were attached to traders, that the consumers could obtain their requirements only from specified traders. But the Minister omitted to state this, that the staple food of the Englishman is bread and that bread was not subjected to rationing during the last war. As far as I can gather, bread has not been rationed in England even during the present war. So that to try and draw an analogy between the system of rationing referred to by Sir William Beveridge in his book on the subject which related absolutely to perishables—with regard to perishables consumers must of necessity be attached to traders—with such a system in the matter of the staple food of this country like rice is to beg the question.

If people are to obtain even the very restricted quantities of rice they are allowed under the rationing system, some attempt should have been made by the Ministry to enable the consumers to choose their traders, instead of creating small vicious monopolistic circles which practise downright profiteering. These trying deficiencies must be remedied.

We have on more than one occasion brought this matter to the notice of the Minister in one form or another, upon

an adjournment motion, upon a substantive motion and also, I think, more recently upon a no-confidence motion sponsored by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama). Can we honestly claim that there has been a change in the state of affairs as far as the people of this country are concerned? Has there been an excess of confidence in feeling that the situation can be handled or is being handled properly? No, Mr. Chairman, whichever way you turn, wherever you go—I say this without fear of contradiction—there is a tale of the grossest dissatisfaction, of great suffering, of untold misery, and something has got to be done.

It would appear that at least one section of the Government in power has realized the feeling of dissatisfaction in the country. It might well be said that probably because the control scheme was not functioning properly they appointed a full-time officer—or perhaps a part-time officer—to control a number of Departments and be under the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce. As far as this House is concerned, such an arrangement is beside the point and is irrelevant to the issue. This House can only conceive of a Minister and his Ministry—in other words, a Minister and his Executive Committee—attending to this matter. A particular Minister may be *persona grata* with this House and with the country, but there is no guarantee that that person will not be changed according to the exigencies of the situation. Will this House be satisfied with such a temporary device as the appointment of a Civil Servant or a non-Civil Servant to manage affairs, the policy for which rests with the Minister and Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce?

I should like to say that upon the motion of no-confidence sponsored by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama), a number of us felt that there was the amplest room for dissatisfaction, but we could not fairly and responsibly have supported that motion because it laid certain charges specifically at the door of the Ministry of Labour and we felt that, somehow or other, those charges were not proved. However, on the larger issues involved, we felt that the reply of the Minister of Labour, In-

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dustry and Commerce did not give satisfaction to the people at large.

Let us take the Budget debate, for instance. During the last few days, Member after Member got up on the Floor of this House and addressed himself—to what? To the question of food, to the question of food control. And yet I am sorry to say, there was no reply from the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce to those remarks. The second reading of the Appropriation Bill has closed without a speech of explanation on the various criticism made by Members of this House. What does that mean? Does that mean that the Ministry and the Board, generally speaking, can flout the opinion of Members of this House? Is it that they feel that we are out of touch with the electorate in general and that they could ignore the criticism of Members of this House?

It is after considerable thought and with some degree of hesitation and anxiety that I sponsor this motion, because I can quite understand some hon. Members drawing one or two red herrings across the trail. The question might be raised now, if a Food Ministry is to be created, how is this resolution to be implemented? That can be tackled in one of several ways. I would at this stage appeal to hon. Members to confine themselves to the general state of public opinion on the question of food and to make the demand for a Minister for food.

As I said, a Ministry can be created in one of several ways. Such a Ministry is the means to the desired end and the details can be decided by consultations between Members of the Board of Ministers, the Officers of State and His Excellency the Governor. This House is called upon by this motion only to express its grave dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs in order to get a Ministry established which will devote its full time to the question of food control.

One thing further I wish to state. There have been misapprehensions, there have been misgivings in the minds of hon. Members as to the possibility of somebody not responsible to this House being appointed to look after the question of food supply. I wish to make my position and that of the people perfectly clear with regard to the appointment recently

made. This is a subject which very definitely affects the people of this country. The elected representative of the people must be in a position to criticize and to obtain what they demand from a Minister responsible to this House. Let that position be well understood. Speaking for myself, I think it is well known that quite recently the Governor's Government contemplated the appointment of an Officer of State to be in charge of the administration of food control. I hope I am not letting out a secret. I think that was well known. Let it be clearly understood that as far as we are concerned we want a Minister responsible to this House, answerable to this House upon this all-important question—[*Interruption*], and certainly removable by this House—to be appointed to administer this subject.

The other question that might be asked is, how are you going to get a Minister under the present constitution? Perhaps I might very briefly, very sketchily, suggest one of several possible ways of achieving that end. Speaking for myself I should like to say that any Minister of the present Board of Ministers might be entrusted with the functions of the Food Minister, provided he is not saddled with other functions. That can be done by a redistribution of the functions of the various Ministers among themselves. It will mean that one Executive Committee and the Minister concerned will be in charge of food and food only. An alternative might be the enlargement of the Members of the Committees by the creation of a further Committee—an eighth Committee—one of which would be in charge of food and food only. That would naturally involve a slight amendment of the Constitution or at least of the general principle on which this Constitution is based.

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** An increase in the number of Committees?

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** An increase from seven to eight—that might involve a slight amendment of the Constitution—during the emergency, for the purpose of overcoming the difficulties that arise. It may even be suggested that a Minister responsible to this House but without an Executive Committee be appointed for this purpose. These are more or less three of about, shall we say, four or five

possible arrangements that could be made in order to meet and overcome this situation.

Mr. Chairman, this is a sorry spectacle. With a Minister and a Ministry in charge, we have had a third Minister in the last six months proceeding to India. As a matter of fact, I believe, it was the wish of several Members of this House to introduce a motion after the statement made by the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce yesterday against the Home Minister proceeding to India. Some of us felt that a motion such as that, directed against an individual, might not be the very best thing in the circumstances. But for myself I would honestly and seriously consider and ask the Board of Ministers to consider whether they will not accede to our request for the creation of a Food Ministry and hold the Food Minister responsible for negotiations with India.

It is no use having a number of Ministers each nibbling at this problem and nobody even nibbling exclusively responsible for it. I do not propose to delay the House much longer. I expect in my reply really to meet some of the questions that are bound to be raised. I have endeavoured to confine myself, as far as possible, to a bare skeleton of suggestions that I should like to make upon this subject. I would commend this resolution to the House; I would appeal to the Board of Ministers, individually and collectively, with the full realization that they must have of the magnitude of the problem confronting us, of the seriousness of the situation that has arisen, to try and get this motion through unanimously and have it implemented for the good of the country and all sections of the people.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana (Gampola):** I beg to second the motion that has been so ably proposed by the hon. Member.

I do not think that there is any hon. Member of this House who will deny that the country feels very strongly that the food problem has not been properly tackled. The rationing scheme has been under fire for some time and the only question that is engaging the attention of the country at the present moment is the food problem. It is useless blaming the particular Minister in charge. It is

humanly impossible for one Minister to deal with this gigantic problem.

In fact, I felt rather pained to find that the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce has been the target of criticism day in and day out. It was really asking the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce to do an impossible task, and I am surprised that the Board of Ministers did not realize it. The Board of Ministers should have realized that the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, saddled as he is with other functions of equal importance, dealing as he does with other essential services—the labour question is important; the commodity purchases question is important; I am afraid every subject that he has to deal with is one of very great importance at this stage of the country's development—cannot perform this task single-handed. In that line of affairs, I am surprised that the proposal did not emanate from the Board of Ministers itself that it was time that one Ministry was held responsible for this all-important problem.

After all, so far as the country is concerned, the masses are concerned, the one and only question that matters is the food problem. We know that the defence of the country is in good hands. I do not think this country has much to fear from enemy attacks. But we are face to face with the spectre of starvation.

The question may well be asked, will the creation of a Ministry of Food bring us more food? It may not bring us more food, but probably we may be able to see that the food we have is properly and equitably distributed. I do not think there is anyone in this country who will say that everything is perfect; it is useless for us to be complacent; it is useless for the Ministers to say that this problem has engaged the whole attention of the Board of Ministers. The whole Board of Ministers may have been concerned with one aspect or another of the matter. But it requires one person and one Committee to deal exclusively with this subject.

This question no doubt raises a Constitutional issue. But it does not matter. If the Constitutional issue is to be faced some way or other, an amendment of the Constitution will be necessary. It does not matter in what form it takes place. Then it would be the

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stage for the House to consider in what form the amendment should be or for the Board of Ministers to place certain proposals as to what the amendment should be and how it should be secured. But it must be secured at all costs, and if the Board of Ministers have the interests of the country at heart I do not think they will have serious objection to this resolution. Far more than that, they should welcome the motion and I do hope that this proposal will meet with unanimous support.

It is feared in some quarters that perhaps a slight amendment of the Constitution may mean that the whole constitutional question will be delayed. That, I think, really is a red herring drawn across the trail. The consideration of the constitutional problem must wait, I suppose, till the war is over. That is the announcement that has been made. If the Board of Ministers want a pronouncement on the subject, they can deal with that question independently; they need not bring that into the food problem. The food problem requires immediate attention; it cannot be delayed for a day longer; there is no time for negotiation and things of that nature. If this question has to be promptly tackled there is one thing we can do and that is the House should act promptly and see that a separate Minister of Food is appointed who will be answerable to this House.

Surely, the Board of Ministers have recognized the importance of the subject and the urgency of the matter by consenting to the appointment of a Government Officer over the heads of 3 or 4 Civil Servants to be virtually a Minister. He is not answerable to this House. He has to act, I suppose, under directions from the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce and will be answerable to the Hon. Minister. But the Hon. Minister himself can hardly assume responsibility for the work of another officer whom he actually cannot control in the real sense. We want a Minister who will be answerable to this House; we want a Minister, as the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) pointed out, who will be removable by this House; a Minister who must answer for his acts; a Minister who will

be guided by this House. Therefore, the only way in which we can secure that object is by the creation of a separate Food Ministry.

I trust the House will accept this motion.

**\*Mr. S. Abeywickrama:** I wish to make a few remarks on the motion before the House.

You will remember that there was my own motion regarding the unsatisfactory state of the food-supply question which was debated in this House. I brought in a vote of no-confidence about three weeks ago. On that occasion my hon. Friend the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) waxed eloquent, but never voted on the motion.

Now, in plain English and simple language, I want to ask the mover of this motion whether it does not amount to a vote of no-confidence, to remove the Ministerial functions of—

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** By no means.

**\*Mr. Abeywickrama:** That is the English you learned. The legitimate duty of the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce to-day is to look after the food problem of the country. The mover of this motion has tried to convince the House that a separate Food Ministry must be set up. I want to know whether that does not mean a vote of no-confidence in the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce. The hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) refused to vote on my no-confidence motion.

Many days have not passed since the introduction of my motion. It was only about thirty days ago that I moved my motion. I do not understand the subtlety or the meaning of the motion now sponsored by the hon. Member, following as it does on the heels of an important decision that has been taken by those responsible for the administration of this Island to-day; that is, the appointment of the Civil Defence Commissioner as Controller of Food Supply and his attachment to the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Commerce. It is a well known fact to-day that whatever undertaking the Civil Defence Commissioner has handled, he has carried it out to perfection.



**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** What about the betting parlance?

**\*Mr. Abeywickrama:** That has disappeared. He is now concentrating his energies on the welfare of the Island, because the racecourses have all closed down. His talents are now devoted to benefiting the country. That is the answer to the question of the hon. Member for Gampola (Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana).

If I moved a vote of no-confidence in the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, I did not do so for personal grievances. The situation at the time demanded that some action ought to be taken. I did not stop at that. But further representations had to be made as mildly as possible in order to draw the attention of two other people who are concerned in the welfare of this Island, in the administration of the Island. In consultation with the Board of Ministers and the three Officers of State, His Excellency the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief have considered this situation and given over the working of the Department to the Civil Defence Commissioner, and an announcement regarding that appointment was made only yesterday in this House.

I cannot understand why this great necessity has arisen to-day for the establishment of a Ministry of Food. Why do you not allow the Civil Defence Commissioner to carry on his new work for at least 2 or 3 weeks? He has not had the time to study the situation. I am told that he was engaged in the task of studying the papers till 1 a.m. to-day.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** He will still carry on.

**\*Mr. Abeywickrama:** I am afraid I cannot continue with all this interruption. I hope some tolerance will be shown to me. I did not disturb the hon. Member while he was speaking. I can also disturb him.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** I would not disturb you.

**Mr. Abeywickrama:** At the start of the war, the work of Civil Defence had to be carried out by the Hon. the Chief Secretary. We know that the former

Chief Secretary was not keen in doing this work. Since we entrusted that work to the Civil Defence Commissioner, we know that the Air Raids Precaution Scheme has been brought considerably up-to-date. The whole Island has been covered by some scheme or other to the satisfaction of all concerned. It is well known that the Civil Defence Commissioner has the confidence of the country. As Auditor-General, and now as Civil Defence Commissioner, he has done his work, his capacity for work is very great.

One great point that was made by the hon. Member for Gampola (Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana) was that we must have a person whom the Council would be able to remove and who would be answerable to this House. I want to ask, in all sincerity, whether any Minister is answerable to this House in regard to any question or whether we can remove any of them from office. By adding another Minister it would be only increasing the burden we are carrying to-day.

I come to the question of voting. I have attended every sitting of this House and I have carefully observed the method of voting followed by this House. The voting takes place in this wise. The Board of Ministers are seven in number. The Nominated Members invariably vote with them; as also the Members of the Executive Committee concerned when the subject discussed is one of theirs. Now, seven Ministers, eight Nominated Members and four or five Members of the Executive Committee make a *bloc* of twenty votes. You will always find about thirty or thirty-five Members present in the House, and the result is that the Board of Ministers get the day when a vote is taken. I challenge any hon. Member of this House to sponsor a vote of censure for the removal of any Minister under the present circumstances and have it passed.

My hon. Friend, the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam), says that we must abide by the Constitution, and that according to the Constitution it is regular for one man to do the work of somebody else and for someone else to be responsible to this House. I understand that the functions of the Executive Committees form part of the Constitution. The hon. Member wants to

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reshuffle the functions of the Executive Committees. That is against the spirit of the Constitution. To add another Minister will mean a change of the Constitution. Even to appoint an Officer of State would be against the Constitution. When it suits the hon. Member he recommends a change of the Constitution. In the present instance we have a permanent Government Servant attached to the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce. What is wrong about that?

The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce has always answered our questions. Of course, in the case of difficult problems he is unable to give satisfactory answers. I must congratulate the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce on giving us answers to our questions even though they are not very satisfactory. The same cannot be said of the other Ministers. Sometimes they show us angry looks and keep quiet. But credit must be given to the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce who, however difficult the question may be, has always given a reply. He is always prepared to answer questions even though such answers do not satisfy hon. Members. Whether those answers are satisfactory or not is not my concern.

I am afraid that, although I have always been harping on this question of food control and saying that the existing state of affairs is unsatisfactory, I cannot make up my mind to vote for the motion of this hon. Member in view of the changes that have been effected since yesterday. I cannot understand why this motion has been introduced to-day, at this late hour, when we are about to adjourn for the week-end. This motion has been introduced as a matter of very great importance, as if a gap had to be filled immediately. I must say that if there was a gap it has been satisfactorily filled since yesterday. I understand that statistics are being collected by the Civil Defence Commissioner. Let him, who has the confidence of the country, report to us officially or unofficially about his work, whether he is being obstructed by the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce and that he cannot do his job. Let him tell us some of his diffi-

culties. He has taken up his new duties only since yesterday.

I cannot understand this great hurry of the mover of this motion who, when this question was debated two weeks ago, preferred not to vote on the motion. If I had been able then to carry my motion of no-confidence against the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, there would have been a separate Ministry by to-day. The defeat of my motion meant that the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce enjoyed the confidence of about 90 per cent. of the people of this Island. How then can you remove him from office when he has the confidence of this House? It is absolutely impossible to remove him from office, from handling the food situation, when this House has recorded its confidence in him.

I need not take the time of this House much longer. I hope the House will understand the utter fallacy of the arguments adduced and the mysterious way in which this motion has been sponsored in this House. I do not know what the implications of this motion are. The hon. Member refuses to explain the fourth and fifth reasons; he only explained the first, second, and third reasons, namely, the changing of the Constitution. I do not know whether the fourth and fifth reasons mean more changes in the Constitution. If the Constitution has to be changed let it be changed by the Board of Ministers on whom we have to depend in a crisis like the one confronting us, and let the matter be fully gone into. Let the Board of Ministers, the Officers of State, the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief change the Constitution if they want.

Finally, I might say this, that if this country is going to get a little relief in its present plight it is due to the appointment of the Civil Defence Commissioner to look into the food problem. We are grateful to other sources for this little relief. That fact must be faced. There was no resolution moved in this House to relieve the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce of the work in connexion with the food situation. Although my vote of no-confidence was lost, somehow or other action in regard to the question of food control was taken. Although there was no mandate from this

House, somebody else has taken the matter in hand and come to our rescue. And that is the best that could have been done. Let us wait.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** Who is responsible?

**\*Mr. Abeywickrama:** It is for the hon. Member to find out.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** These are State secrets which we know not.

**Mr. Abeywickrama:** When hon. Members come to this House and disappear after a few minutes, how can they know what is going on? When they are not in touch with their electorates, they do not know what is happening.

There is no doubt that this House cannot take credit for the changes that have been effected. From the day before yesterday, higher authorities who are very sympathetic regarding the present plight of the people have effected these changes. I certainly approve of the action taken. The Civil Defence Commissioner has been entrusted with the work of food control. Let us wait for a month and see what results he will achieve. I am confident that a liberal-minded person like the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce will certainly not interfere with the Civil Defence Commissioner but that he will give him every assistance in working the scheme.

**\*Mr. Dudley Senanayake (Dedigama):** While I often have appreciated what the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) has said on various occasions, I find myself totally unable to accept the point of view put forward by him on this occasion.

The hon. Member criticized the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) for not supporting his vote of censure and at the same time bringing this motion, which he calls a vote of censure. I feel, on the other hand, that this is a logical sequence or consequence of the vote of no-confidence being refused by this House.

The position is that the country and this House are not satisfied that on the

question of food and the control of food satisfactory steps have been taken. But the House does not feel that the Hon. Minister is responsible for it, because the vote of censure was not passed by this House. Therefore, one has to look for some other reason for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. That other reason was adduced by the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam). The Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce burdened as he is with various other duties is unable to give his full time to his work as Food Minister.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** He has not been given a fair chance at all.

**\*Mr. Dudley Senanayake:** The House feels that the Hon. Minister has not been given a fair chance in that he has been overburdened with work, but the House, while not blaming him, is still not satisfied with the food position in general. A solution has to be found. We were told by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) that the appointment of the Civil Defence Commissioner was the solution. But surely the Hon. Minister never took up the position that the dissatisfaction is due to the fact that his officers are unable to cope with the work or are—

**Mr. B. H. Aluwihana (Matale):** Incompetent.

**\*Mr. Dudley Senanayake:** He has never on the Floor of this House taken up that position. If he had taken up that position, the appointment of another officer to supervise them or in their place would be the answer. I do not feel that the Hon. Minister would ever take up that position. He was satisfied with the officers under him. He did not say that they were incompetent. Therefore the appointment of some other Government officer to relieve them or to be above them is certainly no solution, as long as all these functions are still under the same Minister. Therefore, we cannot rest satisfied that the recent appointment of the Civil Defence Commissioner to take over these functions will be a complete solution to this problem or that the

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situation as regards food will be considerably improved. I have great faith in the particular officer appointed.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** We too have.

**\*Mr. Dudley Senanayake:** But, Sir, the Minister has always been satisfied with the officers under him; at least so it seems, unless he has complained against them to other quarters. To this House or on the Floor of this House he has never uttered one word of complaint. Therefore there is one position that we must accept and that is that the Minister is doing all he can, that the officers that he has hitherto had are competent to deal with the task, but unfortunately the task is of such a nature that it is not possible for one Minister to cope with it. Sir, if that be the position, I do not see the difficulty of accepting this motion.

I would like to stress the point emphasized by the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) that that officer or Minister or whoever is appointed must be responsible to this House and answerable to this House. That is a position that I would rather have. Were it otherwise, I would rather have the present position than appoint another officer not answerable to this House and beyond the criticism of Members of this House. That is why I feel that the House in all earnestness should support this motion.

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya (Galle):** Sir, when the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) asked me to support him in regard to the principle underlying this motion, I explained to him that there was no doubt as to the feasibility of such a proposal, but that I was in a difficulty because the Constitution did not permit us to create a separate Ministry of Food as such without certain serious amendments being made to the Constitution. I do not think it is a small amendment as the hon. Member tried to make out, because if he advocates that there should be an additional Minister, that is to say that the Board of Ministers should consist of 8 Elected Ministers and 3 Officers of State then the balance of the Committee System would be very greatly upset.

Under our Constitution the Council has to divide itself into seven Committees and the executive functions of those Committees have been very clearly laid down in a Schedule appended to the Order in Council. Article 32 of the Constitution reads:

"Subject to the provisions of this Order, the State Council shall be charged with the administration of the subjects and functions of Government specified in the seven groups given in the First Schedule to this Order or in any amendment of that Schedule or which shall be deemed to be included in any of those groups in accordance with this Article.

The Council may, by resolution, amend the First Schedule and may declare that any subjects or functions not expressly mentioned in that Schedule shall be deemed to be included in any of the groups specified therein . . . ."

That is to say, if there is a new function, something new altogether which is not in the Schedules, it can be added to the functions of any Minister out of the seven Ministers by a resolution of this House. Similarly, any functions of a Minister can be removed and entrusted to other Ministers also by a resolution of this Council. But I do not think all the functions of a Minister can be removed.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** Where is it proposed to do that?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** The only way in which it is possible to give effect to the contention of the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) is to relieve the present Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce of all other functions and duties and only leave food control in his charge. I think that is possible under the Constitution, and I do not think we can create a separate Ministry of Food?

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** If you leave him only with food, will that not be a Ministry of Food?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** No. It will be an Executive Committee in charge of one Department, that of Food Control.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Is not that a separate Ministry of Food?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** Well, that might have been explained by the hon. Member when he moved the motion.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** I did explain it.

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** I do not know whether the other Ministers will not also be burdened if all the functions of the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce are removed, functions like the administration of labour, administration of industry and commerce and various other functions and duties that are entrusted to him at present. Then there may be a time when other Ministers may be overburdened with work like the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce. In such an event we will have to find other persons to entrust their duties and functions to.

Sir, there is also a wrong assumption on the part of the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam). He is perturbed and greatly agitated that the Civil Defence Commissioner has been appointed to deal with food control and distribution. I do not know whether he is a Head of Department, but he has been put in charge of food purchase and food distribution.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Who told you that?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** He is in charge of the purchase and distribution of food, but at the same time he is neither a Minister of State nor is he an independent Head of Department. He is under the control of the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Who says no?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** The Civil Defence Commissioner is responsible to the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce for all his actions and functions, and the Minister is responsible to this Council. If any questions in regard to the future distribution and control of food is addressed to the Minister, the Minister will naturally get the necessary information from this new Head of Department and answer the questions. The Minister cannot disclaim responsibility. He cannot turn round and say: "Sorry, I am not responsible for this work and I am not answerable to this Council". On the other hand, if he disclaims responsibility he is answerable to

this Council. If he is unable to cope with the situation that may arise in spite of this very efficient Civil Defence Commissioner in the new office as distributor and purchaser of food, then it is still open to this Council to bring a vote of no-confidence in the Minister.

Therefore, I am in a difficulty, although I feel that owing to the present exigencies there should be somebody who will be responsible only for the distribution and production of food. The Ministry of Food, I think, is responsible for the production of food and not only the distribution of it. The new functions that the hon. Members contemplate will not be merely distribution. The Ministry of Food will also have to be responsible for the production of food. At the present moment, production of food is in the charge of the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, and the new Minister contemplated under this resolution will have to take over that subject too. He will also be in charge of the purchase of food from abroad, and be responsible for the fair and equitable distribution of food, food control and rationing and all allied subjects with all their implications.

**\*Mr. R. S. S. Gunawardana:** Is not that enough work for one man?

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva (Minister of Health):** How is he to be elected?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** He cannot be elected by anybody. The only way in which it can be effected to some extent, in my opinion, is by relieving the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce of some of his other functions and leaving him in charge of food control, and giving him a new designation as Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce and Food as I do not think you can take away from him all his functions.

I am in that difficulty. If the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) can find a way of getting out of that difficulty I may support him. Probably he will find many Members in the same position. It is true that up to now there have been complaints in this country with regard to the unsatisfactory state of affairs prevalent, but unfortunately we are tied down by the Donoughmore Constitution. We must either work under the Constitution or get out of this place.

[Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya.]

I do not think we can ask the Commander-in-Chief to create Ministers and Ministries because the Commander-in-Chief is unknown to this Constitution and we cannot approach him. As long as it is a matter relating to Civil administration, His Excellency the Governor is responsible to the Secretary of State in regard to civil matters and the functions of the State Council. Therefore, if our Ministers cannot discharge their functions I do not think we should go with a begging bowl to the Commander-in-Chief and ask him to do certain things. I think it would be absolute political suicide to adopt an attitude of that nature. If our Ministers are unable to cope with situations arising, or to discharge their functions, I think the remedy lies with this Council. Members of this Council can bring forward votes of no-confidence, and if they are passed the Ministers concerned must naturally take the consequences. I think that is the only way in which we can bring our Ministers to book.

In the circumstances, although I would very much like to support the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) in regard to the creation of a separate Food Ministry, I am unable to do so. If he would only show me how this could be done within the four corners of the Constitution, then I am with him. If the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce can be relieved of his other functions, and they can be distributed among the other Ministers, and if the other Ministers are willing to undertake those functions and responsibilities, I can see some way of giving effect to the good intentions of the hon. Member. We have not yet heard a single Minister or Officer of State, particularly the Legal Secretary, on the Constitutional aspect of this question.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Who wants to hear about the Constitutional aspect of the matter? We want food?

**Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya:** If it can be done in a practical way without seriously disorganizing and upsetting the balances of the Committee System then I will certainly reconsider the matter.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** The hon. Member for Galle (Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya) has raised a very pertinent question, and

that is the rigidity of the Constitution. There was once a question as to the sanctity of the Sabbath, and I think a prophet of old times said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath". I would recommend that particularly to the hon. Member for Galle.

It is no use saying that we are bound by our own words and cannot do something because we are unable to alter a section of this Constitution in whatever circumstances, in the gravest emergency. Consider for a moment our position. Where does the War Council come in under our Constitution? How was that created overnight? We were told that the War Council had been created? It had been created, how? Minority Members were included, Officers of State were included, Ministers were included. Then, that was at one time the Constitution; the supreme head of affairs. [A MEMBER: What about the Commander-in-Chief?]. Just a minute. I would like to follow a sequence of time.

Next, suddenly we became what was called the bastion of the Empire. Then the War Council was suddenly reduced to the Ministers, His Excellency the Governor and Service Chiefs. Then we not only became a bastion; we got right into the thick of it and we suddenly found the Commander-in-Chief on top of the Governor. Where is the Commander-in-Chief known to the Constitution? How was he suddenly put over the head of the Governor? Well, we swallowed that, and having swallowed a camel we now strain at this gnat.

Further, what has happened now? The War Council is the cabinet of the country. For a long time it consisted of the cabinet so far as we have it: Service Chiefs, very rightly; one or two Admirals as were going about, the Governor and the Commander-in-Chief. What happened yesterday? A Departmental Head was co-opted into this inner cabinet, and yet we grumble about our Constitution! Sir, it is no use talking about the Constitution these days. We have to manage as best we can and do what is necessary for the moment.

Hon. Members were also worried, especially the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama), that it hurt their

feelings that we should now pass a vote of censure on the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce in whom the hon. Member for Udugama has now conjured up the greatest confidence after the Civil Defence Commissioner had been half put under him. He was very hurt that we should now pass what seemed apparently to him a disguised vote of no-confidence on the Hon. Minister.

I would ask hon. Members to consider the position. It is not so much the passing of a vote of no-confidence, but really giving the fullest effect in the interests of this house to what is an accomplished fact. And what is that accomplished fact? The Board of Ministers saw fit to recommend a certain person—I have the greatest affection and regard for him, I suppose for his ability and his goodness to me personally—to be in charge of food. Now, if that stood alone, you could possibly argue that a Head of Department had been put under the Hon. Minister. Everything was well. The Minister was fully responsible. But what followed? That Head of Department became a member of the cabinet! Let there be no mistake about that. When he was appointed to the War Council, immediately the whole position changed. It is futile to say, Sir, that the Minister is responsible for his subject when actually there is someone representing his subject in the higher cabinet.

That actually is the position that has been created. Therefore, the position now is that it has actually been found necessary, both by the Board of Ministers and His Excellency, that something very nearly akin to superseding the Hon. Minister should be done. That is the stark fact. I know you can try to argue it away. You can argue this and you can argue that, but the position created by putting a Head of Department into the War Council was clearly that that man was considered to be important enough to be put in charge of this subject.

In those circumstances there is the very gravest danger that the Hon. Minister will, in time, if not immediately, lose complete touch with his subjects, particularly because his is a very busy Ministry; his Ministry is the Ministry that has actually grown beyond all

expectations within the last seven years. I suppose that is something to his credit. But apart from that, I feel very sorry that there should have been all these criticisms of the Minister, and these appointments, because I know that the Minister has had less than a fair deal from the Press of this country. He has been pilloried by the Press, and I feel very sorry that these events have occurred in the case of a Minister who has tried to do such splendid work. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the activities with which he is entrusted must demand an enormous amount of time. Sir, just at this time it is essential that he should not stop his industrial activities, but should increase them.

I will give you only one instance. Sir, it seems to me one of the most curious things about this war that with all this sinking of ships we are sending raw rubber to America and England to have it manufactured for tyres for vehicles used in the war in Ceylon and India. We want to save shipping space; we want to save labour; and we want to save waste, and here you are doing it. Those are problems that the Minister is in charge of, and are they not big enough? Where you have three or four absorbing interests and one interest practically thrown on to another, the chances are that you would not take that interest into account.

What is the danger to this House? The danger is that we shall lose control of it altogether. The Hon. Minister has time and again come to this House and said, "Well, I would like to do this, but the Board of Ministers have overruled me". Now what will happen? Not only the Board of Ministers, by a recommendation made to the War Cabinet, but the Department of Food will overrule the Minister. That is exactly what is going to happen.

The hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) thought that we were casting aspersions on the person who has been appointed. Sir, the hon. Member will be glad to hear that I learned a number of little tricks at the feet of that particular gentleman, and I consider him in a certain way my *guru*. I am certain the hon. Member also does the same. There is no question of lack of confidence but what we have to see is that there is

[Mr. Aluwihare.]

nothing in the nature of a diminution of the control of this House over a subject which is in our charge; and that is what we are apparently threatened with. We have to guard against any semblance of such a threat. I know the Minister will say that these things have been done with their approval, but I regret to say that on the contrary the Ministers want to do away with the State Council, the Executive Committees and everybody who put them into power.

Why, a Minister told me to-day, "Well this proposal will be accepted if you consent to Cabinet Government". Why? Because the Executive Committees are at variance with them. I would ask the Hon. Ministers when an Executive Committee has overruled them on these matters. When have the Board of Ministers agreed on a policy, and placed that policy before the Executive Committee concerned, and when has that Executive Committee refused to pass it? I challenge my own Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, to tell me whether on any occasion an agreed plan by the Board was put before us and whether we were asked to consent to any item to which we refused to consent? That is not so. I do not want to deal with that, but all that matters is that, apart from any assurance from the Ministers, this House should see to it that there is nothing done in the future, however rosy the present may be, to take away the control of subjects vested in this House.

**Mr. T. B. Jayah (Nominated Member):** I do not want to give a silent vote on this subject. The hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam), by introducing this motion, has raised issues of very far-reaching importance. I do not know whether the creation of a Food Ministry at this juncture will help us to obtain all the food that is required; the hon. Member himself does not suggest that. What I cannot understand is how he is going to meet the remarks made by the hon. Member for Udugama (Mr. Abeywickrama) by suggesting the creation of a Food Ministry soon after a definite motion of no-confidence had been rejected.

It looks as if the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce is to be

deprived of the functions he is in charge of by this means. But whatever it be the important point to consider is whether, when certain steps have already been taken to meet the situation, we should suggest some other method of meeting it even though it may mean the creation of a new Ministry. If the position taken up by the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) is that the steps that have so far been taken are such as to affect the Constitutional position fundamentally, then I can understand his objection. But as we know, the new Director of Food is going to function under the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce.

So then the only logical position that can be taken up by the mover of this motion is to say that the Hon. Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce has failed in his duties and that as a result he has lost the confidence of this House and of the country, and, therefore, he should be relieved of those duties and those duties entrusted to somebody else. That would have been a more logical position, but he has not taken up such a position. Instead, he and his seconder said, "The Minister is so overburdened with work that it is not possible for him to carry on his functions." [Interruption.] It is not a question of it being humanly impossible. After all, the Minister has to discharge certain functions, and in discharging them he either discharges them properly or otherwise, efficiently or inefficiently. That is the main issue. If you feel that he has not been able to discharge his duty because he has not the ability to discharge it, then of course it is quite a different matter. But the mover does not suggest that. He says that the Minister is overburdened with work and, therefore, he suggests the creation of an 8th Ministry.

In suggesting the 8th Ministry, the hon. Member is really striking at the very roots of the Constitution. I personally do not mind the Constitution being altered, provided it is altered in a manner that will meet with the wishes of all sections of the community; but I am certainly opposed to the alteration of the Constitution in this fashion by taking advantage of a grave situation. If the mover feels that any other Ministry can tackle this question, then the problem



is simple. But why should we have an 8th Ministry? The only thing is to suggest that the Minister be relieved of some of the functions which he is at present discharging.

Some time ago, I remember, the Minister of Education was in charge of industrial schools, and by arrangement with the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, we permitted the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce to take charge of them. Similarly, if we feel that the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce is overburdened with work, then the only thing to do is to see that some of the functions which are being discharged by that Minister are given over to some other Minister. For instance, the Minister of Local Administration might be given some additional work, or the Minister of Education or some other Minister might be given some work. That would have been a more logical position to take up.

But if the mover says that the Ministers have failed in their duty, and that none of them can carry out the functions of the Food Minister efficiently, it is a different matter. If that position is taken up, then we can say, "In the circumstances here, we have no alternative but to create another Ministry".

But if that position is not taken up, then I do not see how we can support the motion of the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam). Perhaps he moved it with the best of motives. He feels that a grave situation has arisen and that some immediate steps should be taken, as otherwise matters might go wrong, but as we know already—whether the arrangements made to meet the position are satisfactory or not, it does not matter—the situation is going to be tackled. It may be that owing to the urgency of this matter, certain steps have to be taken which may not be very agreeable to us, but, I think, we should wait and see. If the new arrangement fails then, I think, it is time for us to say openly that the Board of Ministers has absolutely failed and suggest a reshuffling of the Board of Ministers in a manner that will be acceptable to the whole country.

\*Mr. H. F. Parfitt (Nominated Member) I have no alternative but to support this motion. It is not because I

have lost confidence in the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce that I support this motion, but because I have had such intimate contact with the Minister as to know for myself that he has far too much work to do. His interests extend from actual problems of labour right through to price control and distribution of food-stuffs and, I think, events have shown that the distribution of food-stuffs and price control have not been satisfactory. It is not because the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce is unable to do that work or has not, shall I say, the capacity for doing it; he certainly is capable, but he has not the time.

I feel that hon. Members as Elected Members must do something to satisfy the public that the State Council do realise this difficulty about food, and that they do not propose merely to appoint the Civil Defence Commissioner to be in charge of the work and leave it at that. They must take some action. They as elected representatives should understand the position, and see to it that everything is done for the people, and to place this country in a position of stability.

What will happen to this country if we cannot have food and distribute it properly? It would be absolutely finished. Why talk about Constitutional difficulties when the position is that this country has got to exist whether we have an 8th Ministry or not? I personally do not think it is necessary. That is by the way.

But whether we must have an 8th Ministry or not, I still feel that the Board of Ministers must be forced by the elected representatives—I happen to be one of the Nominated Members but, nevertheless, if I were an elected representative, I would insist on it—that they should have a Minister wholly devoting his time to the questions of food, price control and distribution of food. Now, after it became known that we were going to get large quantities of rice, what is the position to-day? Not one pound of subsidiary foodstuffs can we buy in Colombo to-day, and yet are we going to say, "Well, we have put the Civil Defence Commissioner in charge, and he will see to it all?" No, we cannot. We have to have some representations in this House, a Minister who can confine

[Mr. Parfitt.]

his whole attention to this one great pressing problem of this country, and it is for that reason that I must support the motion placed before the House to-day.

**The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake  
(Minister of Agriculture and Lands):**

We have heard a number of hon. Members speaking in favour of this motion. When all those Members said that they were supporting the motion, I was wondering whether they could have carefully read the motion and have come to a decision. Perhaps those hon. Members who preceded me will pardon me if I draw their attention to the motion and its implications, and ask them to reconsider their opinion before they give their verdict.

We are all aware that there is a shortage of food, and that owing to restriction and other difficulties there is a great deal of discontent in the country. If there is anything that could upset a person in this country it is when he finds the possibility of a food shortage and the necessity for having a changed diet. In such circumstances he is likely to become impatient and find fault with someone or other.

It was stated by my hon. Friend, the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam), when he moved the motion that he was not condemning the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce. Although he did not stand up here and say that he would like the Hon. Minister to continue as Minister of Food, yet he has been saying so seated for almost the whole House to hear when other Members were speaking.

The hon. Member started by saying that he was bringing this motion forward, not because of want of confidence, or because of mismanagement on the part of my hon. Friend, but because it was physically impossible for the Minister to do all that was expected of him, although he had done his best. The seconder even went to the extent of saying: "Why did the Board of Ministers thrust this work on an unfortunate willing horse who is not able to bear the burden?" When my hon. Friend, who usually studies his subject before he speaks, put the question, "Why did the Board of Ministers thrust this on the

unfortunate Minister?" I wondered whether he was ignorant of the Constitution, or whether he wanted to strengthen his argument, or whether he wanted to get support by saying that someone had put some work on the Hon. Minister which he could not bear. I could not imagine my hon. Friend not knowing that under the Constitution "Food Production" is a subject which is entrusted to the Hon. Minister.

It is not a question of the Board of Ministers having thrust the work on any one. The Board of Ministers never did anything of that sort. So when my hon. Friend, knowing the Constitution as he does, asked, "Why did you do this?" I felt that it was more a relief to his conscience than a question that was asked of us. He felt that such relief was necessary, and though the motion implied condemnation he did not want to admit it. He thought, well, we will put the blame on somebody by asking why the Ministers did this. He wanted some relief in a matter which was pricking his conscience. That is the sort of argument, I thought, that was adduced.

My hon. Friend, the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam), I know, is a great advocate, but with all his advocacy, ability and oratory, he said, "Let that Minister have this food control" and at the same time he asked the House, "Can we be blind to the dissatisfaction that exists in this country? Can we say that the control of food, the distribution of food and all the other things are carried on satisfactorily?" Yet my hon. Friend says, "I do not mean anything else. My Friend is a darling boy. He is good, and he is the best Minister on earth".

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Who said that?

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** You said so. "Let him carry on the thing"; yet, he says, that he is not in favour of it. He asks me, "Who said so?" I know that his conscience does not say so, but what he says he expects the Council to believe.

Sir, let us look at this motion. The motion reads:

"That this Council is of opinion that the immediate creation of a Ministry of Food . . ."

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It is not a redistribution of work among the Ministers that my hon. Friend refers to. Creation is something new, I thought. I am a Buddhist, and I do not know much about it, of course. But these English scholars must know something about it. The words "creation of a Ministry of Food" implies the creation of an 8th Ministry. I say that not only because of the wording but because of the circumstances under which this motion has been introduced and the time at which it has been introduced.

A pertinent question was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Udagama (Mr. Abeywickrama). He asked the Member for Point Pedro why he did not vote on the motion of no-confidence that he brought against the Hon. Minister. At that time he refrained from voting, and now he is anxious to have this motion through. Well, that makes me think that my hon. Friend is not quite inconsistent always. At that time he did not want to vote against the Minister. Even to-day my hon. Friend does not want to say anything against the Minister. He says that the Minister's work is quite satisfactory but that at the same time circumstances have changed between that day and to-day.

What are the circumstances which have changed which makes it necessary for my hon. Friend to bring forward this motion to-day? It was not considered possible to give even the five days' notice that it is necessary to give the House? So the altered circumstances could not have arisen five days previous to yesterday. If the circumstances had changed, then my hon. Friend who acts promptly would naturally have given the five days' notice required. My hon. Friend would have made up his mind within the last five days, and although the House had agreed on Tuesday last to go through the Budget without any interruption, it must have occurred to my hon. Friend after Tuesday that this motion should be moved.

So, Sir, it was not on Tuesday but after Tuesday that this emergency occurred. And what is this emergency that has occurred? The emergency that has occurred is not the emergency created by the food situation, because the difficulties of the food shortage due to our rationing scheme were known to

everyone. Then the dissatisfaction that existed was known to everyone, and we were trying our best to get food for all places. That was known to everyone.

Therefore, what was it that has come about now which has given rise to this motion? The answer was furnished by the hon. Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare), and that is, the appointment of the Civil Defence Commissioner to look after the food situation and all aspects of the food problem. That is the immediate cause of the dissatisfaction. Well, if that is the cause of the dissatisfaction, let us examine it with the reason given by my hon. Friend the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam). Getting another person to assist the Minister does not overburden him. The difficulties would have been certainly greater before the appointment of this officer. If these difficulties only came into existence after the appointment of this officer, then certainly it must appear to anyone that it is this appointment that has been responsible for this motion.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** I should have thought that the Hon. Minister need not have taken this oblique angle of view because on the motion of the hon. Member for Udagama (Mr. Abeywickrama) I actually sponsored an amendment to this very effect, namely, that Ministry of Food be created, and that amendment was ruled out by the Hon. the Speaker; and, therefore, I have brought up that proposal at the earliest possible opportunity.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** I do not think that he has done it at the earliest possible opportunity, because it is some time between that day and now. If that explanation is acceptable to hon. Members, I am sorry for them. I am sure they are not so gullible as that.

Sir, on this occasion, we have to be very careful in whatever we do. When we are hungry we sometimes take certain steps which we do not take under normal conditions. This is a time when there is a great deal of feeling and a lot of discontentment in the country. At a time like this we may feel that we are not able to give the same thought to the matter as we do in normal times. Let us, therefore, carefully consider this motion. This is a matter which has arisen recently, as

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recently as yesterday, and this matter, as I mentioned, is the appointment of a person to deal with the food situation.

If that appointment has given my hon. Friend the opportunity to come here and to say, "We had ourselves felt all these days that the situation was not satisfactory and that this matter should be dealt with by some others and that there should be a Constitutional change because of this and other reasons. By the Governor's and your acceptance of this appointment, you have realized that there is some change that is necessary and that someone has to be appointed who will be above the Heads of Departments and yet be answerable to the Minister. It shows that the provisions of the Constitution are not sufficient to meet the situation and therefore a change of the Constitution is desired"—I could have understood it. I could have understood my Friend coming forward with such an argument and proposing a change in the Constitution.

I may tell my hon. Friend that I am a villager, and there is one thing that I have learned in the village. We are always told, "If you want to hit a bird, do not shake your gun when shooting. But if you have four objects in view, you may move your gun above or below, and then you will hit one object".

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** But if you have four objects in line?

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** But the Minister has not heard of the number of birds shot by Baron Munchausen in that way.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** I never thought that my hon. Friend, and the hon. Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) have tried to beat Baron Munchausen in any way.

Now, what does my hon. Friend say? He says, "You can have a Constitution with Cabinet responsibility without any Committees". And my hon. Friend, the Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare), who is his great supporter, said: "If we have Cabinet responsibility and if we have no Executive Committees, it is all right." He challenged me and asked me, "When did we obstruct you?" But still the hon. Member for Point Pedro

did not want Cabinet responsibility. It has been stated that Cabinet responsibility is a thing that we wanted ourselves. The hon. Member also asked, "Did the Minister of Agriculture and Lands bring forward a policy that was the considered policy of the Ministers and put it to our Committee, and did we ever refuse to pass it?" I do not think that he or any other Member can say that a policy enunciated by the Ministers has been put before the Executive Committees, because our Constitution expects the Ministers in their Committees to do the initiation of policy. What the Board of Ministers does is to co-ordinate the policies initiated by others.

So you see, Sir, that it is not a lack of appreciation of the great assistance that the Ministers have received from their Executive Committees that makes the Ministers feel that Cabinet responsibility is necessary. Why they feel that Cabinet responsibility is necessary is because there must be, at any time, and especially at a time like the present, some person who should be solely responsible. If my hon. Friend says that the time has come when there should be Cabinet responsibility, and if he moves a motion to that effect, I would be his supporter, and I would even go further and say that we want more than eight Ministers.

But when things are put forward in a very doubtful way with this possibility and that possibility, and when I know how clever my hon. Friend the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnambalam) is, I rather begin to be suspicious, and I must be careful that I do not step into his net. I would tell my hon. Friend the Member for Matale (Mr. Aluwihare) that when Cabinet Government is given, the two opponents who would be practically fighting with their hands would be the Member for Point Pedro and himself.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** What does the Hon. Minister say?

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** They would be fighting tooth and nail.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** Where?

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** Here and everywhere. When that form of Government is given, there would be, as did

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happen this morning, all sorts of communal claims put forward by different people. When that time comes, and when the different Ministries are formed, there would be one who would be fighting for the Kandyan rights, and also there would be the Member for Point Pedro fighting for Tamil interests. I would warn my hon. Friend to be careful when he joins the Member for Point Pedro (Mr. Ponnaambalam).

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** I would tell my hon. Friend that it was he who joined the Jaffna Tamils to defeat the Kandyan claims.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** I challenge him to give an instance.

**\*Mr. Aluwihare:** The Jaffna Tamils and the Congress joined together and asked for separate representation and got 7 seats for the Tamils in the old Legislative Council.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** I think he has misunderstood the position. My hon. Friend has joined the Member for Point Pedro, let him stew in his own juice—

**\*Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees:** Please confine your remarks to the motion.

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** If it is a change in the Constitution that my hon. Friend wants, let him not conceal it under the emergency but bring a straight motion for Constitutional changes. Let him come forward openly with a motion for a change in the Constitution. If there are any difficulties in the working of the Constitution, these difficulties have been created by my hon. Friend the Member for Point Pedro, and it is because of him that we have to put up with all these makeshift arrangements. It is he who has come to an arrangement with other people that there should be no change in the Constitution till the war is over. The war does not come to an end by Mr. O. E. Goonetilleke being appointed Food Controller. Constitutional changes have become necessary merely because of this appointment. Because of this appointment my hon. Friend's principles are forgotten.

I wonder, Sir, how it is possible under the present Constitution to make a change. I ask you, if it is a change of the Constitution that is necessary, do you suggest that it could be achieved by relieving the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce of a little duty which might be done by adjustment? Whatever it be, let us have the issue clear. If it is a change of the Constitution that is desired, let us discuss it openly. It is a big issue, and it cannot be discussed by trying to introduce a motion of censure on the Minister. The question should be threshed out on the Floor of this House properly, in a straight manner.

There is another objection which I wish to put forward. I do not think a change of the Constitution could be brought about by motions which are sponsored on the spur of the moment and by getting one or two people to support it. I am not against a National Government, but I only wish to mention this fact. I would ask my hon. Friends, who are supporting this motion, what they are supporting and where they are drifting, and what do they expect to get by passing this motion? Whether they are Congress Members or communal Members, I would ask them to consider these things carefully. This motion undoubtedly involves a change in the Constitution. There is not the slightest doubt about it.

There was another thing that they said. They said, "Oh, you can have a Food Minister without reducing the present number of Ministers; you need not disturb them at all. Let all the present Ministers remain in office, as they are now, with their respective Executive Committees. You merely take—some other Member and nominate him as Minister of Food and put him there".

**\*Mr. Abeywickrama:** And he will get Rs. 1,500 a month!

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** "And put him in charge of all questions relating to food, without his being bothered by an Executive Committee, or being worried by anyone else."

**The Hon. Mr. G. E. de Silva:** At what time are we adjourning, Sir?

**The Hon. Mr. Senanayake:** Can we adjourn at 4 o'clock to-day?

**\*Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees:** I will ascertain the wish of the House at 4 o'clock. I will then put to the House the question whether we should adjourn for tea at 4 o'clock or carry on till 4.30 P.M.

**\*Mr. G. A. H. Wille (Nominated Member):** We might adjourn now and come back at 4.30 P.M.

**The Hon. Colonel J. L. Kotalawala (Minister of Communications & Works):** I move the adjournment of the House till Wednesday.

**\*The Hon. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (Minister of Local Administration):** Either we adjourn altogether or we come to some decision as to whether we are to adjourn for tea and resume—

**\*Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees:** Adjourn till Wednesday next, at 10 A.M.

**\*Mr. Ponnambalam:** Or are the Ministers agreeable to a division being taken now?

**\*The Hon. Mr. Corea:** Will not the hon. Member give me an opportunity of saying a few words?

**\*Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees:** Is it the wish of the House to adjourn till 10 A.M. on Wednesday, August 12?

**Members:** Aye!

The debate was adjourned.

**\*Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees:** We adjourn till 10 A.M. on Wednesday, August 12, 1942.

Adjourned accordingly at 3.57 P.M., until 10 A.M. on Wednesday, August 12, 1942.