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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OFFICIAL REPORT

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS [Col. 1061.]

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1948-49

[Twelfth Allotted Day.]

CONSIDERED IN COMMITTEE

Heads 101 to 116

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, 11th August, 1948

The House met at 10 a.m., Mr. SPEAKER [THE HON. MR. A. F. MOLAMURE] in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Training School for Bandarawela

1. **Mr. Sugathadasa:** Will the Minister of Education please state: (a) Whether he is aware that a plot of land has been reserved for the purpose of opening a Training School at Bandarawela. (b) Whether he is aware that hundreds of teachers in Uva have to give up hopes of being trained due to the fact that they cannot find accommodation in the existing training schools? (c) Whether he will take immediate steps to open a training school in Bandarawela?

The Hon. Mr. E. A. Nugawela (Minister of Education): May this question be asked tomorrow morning?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Divisional Agricultural Association, Udukinda

2. **Mr. Sugathadasa:** Will the Minister of Agriculture and Lands state: (a) Whether he is aware that the District Agricultural Committee in Udukinda is not functioning and that all important village irrigation works are totally neglected? (b) Whether he will take immediate steps to set up a Village Works Sub-Division to handle all such work in Udukinda.

P. B. Bulankulame Dissawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands): (a) It is presumed that the hon. Member refers to the Divisional Agricultural Association of Udukinda. It is a fact that this association has gone out of office. It is not correct that all improvements to village irrigation works in Udukinda are totally neglected. The maintenance and improvement of village irrigation works in Udukinda is considered to be satisfactory. (b) It is not necessary at present to set up a separate Village Works Sub-Division for Udukinda as the existing organization is considered sufficient. It is suggested that the hon.

Member might take up any specific work which needs improvement with the newly constituted District Agricultural Committee.

Mr. Sugathadasa: It is taking a long time to attend to certain irrigation works. What does the Hon. Minister consider doing with regard to them?

Bulankulame Dissawa: There are already about seven new irrigation works which have been undertaken for improvement this year and included in the priority list. There are several others too on the Priority List which will be taken up in the course of the year.

Ambewela Reservoir Irrigation Scheme: Gampaha Korale Paddy Fields

3. **Mr. Sugathadasa:** Will the Minister of Agriculture and Lands state: (a) What is the delay in implementing the Ambewela Reservoir Irrigation Scheme, when plans and estimates were prepared a few years back? (b) What he proposes to do to supply water to the Gampaha Korale paddy fields, where all such works proposed had been turned down by the Government Agent and Field Assistant? (c) Whether he is aware that thousands of acres of paddy fields are abandoned yearly due to the failure of rains?

Bulankulame Dissawa: (a) The Ambewela Reservoir Scheme is no longer necessary as the Alut Ela which was to be supplied with water from it will be benefited by the Kande Ela Reservoir which is at present under construction. (b) All Irrigation works in the Gampaha Korale which were included in the Priority List for investigation by the Irrigation Department have received due consideration and Improvements have been effected where necessary. (c) It is correct that paddy fields remain uncultivated but are not abandoned due to the failure of rains, especially, during the Yala season. It is the policy of this Ministry to construct reservoirs to absorb the surplus flow in rivers when and wherever possible to be released during the "dry seasons".

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Dr. N. M. Perera (Ruwanwella): Before you pass on to the other Business on the Order Paper, you will remember I wanted to raise the question of Business for the following week.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member may bring the question up on Thursday because we said we would consider it on Thursday.

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1948-49

Considered in Committee. [*Progress, 10th August.*]

[*MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.*]

Head 101.—Education Department

Vote No. 3.—Grants-in-aid to Assisted Schools, including living and other Allowances to Teachers in Assisted Schools and Grants to various Societies, &c., Rs. 31,402,386.

10.06 A.M.

Question again proposed that the sum of Rs. 31,402,386, for Head 101, Vote No. 3, - be inserted in the Schedule.

Mr. S. Thondaman (Nuwara Eliya): Mr. Chairman, yesterday when the House adjourned, I was speaking about estate schools and I was referring to a communication addressed to the owners of estates by the Director of Education. That communication stated that the Director wanted it to be treated as a notice under Section 35 (3) of the Ordinance. Section 35 (3) requires that notice should be given specifying the time limit. But the communication which was expected to be treated as a notice does not specify any time limit. Therefore, even at this late stage I say that although the communication has been sent, it is not a communication that falls within the required section of the Ordinance. The Ordinance itself says that at least six months' time should be given. Therefore, till such time, a notice properly confirming that the section is not to be observed in the estates, could be thought of. I earnestly ask the Hon. Minister to see that an early communication is issued confirming that Section 35 (3) is not to be observed in fixing the maximum time limit.

The Hon. Minister, in the communication he sent out, said that he has made the necessary provision in the Estimates for the full quota of teachers needed to man all estate schools. As it is, even if another notice is issued, it will be over

six months before a school is ready, and I am not sure whether anything in the way of improvements to estate schools can be possible in the course of this financial year. Therefore, it is not very satisfactory to allow the present state of affairs to continue any longer. The sort of education which is carried on in estates today practically amounts to no education at all. In fact, the Hon. Minister will remember that in answer to a question of mine which I put to him some time back, he said that only reading, writing and arithmetic were the subjects that were taught in estate schools. The teachers who are now in charge of the estate schools are persons who draw a pauper's salary. They draw Rs. 20 a month. Therefore, now that money has been voted in the Estimates, I appeal to the Hon. Minister to consider commencing, from the next financial year, the introduction of a curriculum for estate schools on the same standard as that of any other State school or Assisted school run outside estates. The money is available, and, as I understand that there are a large number of teachers who are unemployed, I trust the Hon. Minister will meet the demand of these estate schools. I believe the Hon. Minister is very anxious that estate children should have the benefit of free education, and I hope that he will give serious consideration to this matter.

In spite of the fact that the Hon. Minister told us that he is highly satisfied with the administration of his department, I should like to refer him to one or two points which I shall bring to his notice.

The Chairman: What is all this? We have passed all that.

Mr. Thondaman: I am on the question of estate schools.

The Chairman: We have dealt with the estate schools.

Mr. Thondaman: When I took the question up the other day, you said I may deal with estate schools under this Vote. I offered my estate schools somewhere in 1946. But the matter is still in the correspondence stage. In front of Ramboda Group there are 400 children of school-going age. The workers of the estate appealed to the management in a letter dated 31st May, but so far

no one has been sent to examine the conditions there. I also spoke to the Permanent Secretary and he was kind enough to tell me that if I could get a block of land in the Ragalla area, he would help me in establishing a Government school. I also went to the Superintendent of Ragalla estate and I was able to persuade him to agree to donate the land. Further, I got some money donated for the purpose. The Superintendent wrote to the Hon. Minister asking for certain clarifications in general; but no reply has been received by him and he informed me to that effect two days ago. One knows how difficult it is to get anything like this done with the planters, but by chance when we are able to come to some agreement with them, things are delayed in this manner. As the workers will be put to great hardship, I earnestly appeal to the Hon. Minister to seriously consider my request and see that these people are granted the benefits that others get.

Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam (Kankasanturai): I should like to follow up the request made by the hon. Member for Nuwara Eliya with regard to the question of estate schools. It is at times thought that it is a very small, or, perhaps, a small matter that affects only the Ceylon Indian Congress. It is not that.

I wish to bring to the notice of the House the fact that it is a very big question. In a broad way, it affects half the Tamil children in this country, but in a real way it affects the policy of education in this country, and, what is more, it affects the policy of the Government of this country. We boast that there is free education from the Kindergarten right up to the University, but we fail to note that there is no type of education for a very large class of children, a large class of children whose parents produce a greater proportion of the revenue of the country than any other class of people. Yesterday the Hon. Minister without Portfolio questioned that statement. If he will look into the question of the revenue—

The Hon. Mr. A. E. Goonesinha (Minister without Portfolio): That is not what I questioned.

Mr. Chelvanayakam: The revenue estimates of this country show that Rs. 111,000,000 has been earned out of export duty on tea alone and these estate children, largely, if not altogether, contribute—at least their parents contribute—towards the earning of that revenue, and, that is not the only revenue that is earned out of the tea industry. The tea industry, quite apart from contributing the sum of Rs. 111,000,000 towards the export duties of this country, also contribute another large sum of money by way of Income Tax, Profits Tax and various other taxes.

10.15 A.M.

I think it would be a very fair estimate to say that the tea industry produces not less than one-third of the estimated revenue of this country for the current year. When that is the position, how is it that estate children are denied the least amount of facilities for education? One has got to visit the estate schools to see that there is not even an apology for education. During the last Budget Debate this question was raised and, if I remember right, the Hon. Minister of Education said that he would look into the question. I must admit that by the 1947 Amendment to the Education Ordinance, a principle was laid down which removed the slur on the Ministry of Education that there is discrimination against a very large class of children. If the revenue of the country cannot bear the cost of education in these estate schools, even a one-cent cess on tea exports would bring more than Rs. 3 million.

If there is some disease in the plants in the tea-producing districts, immediately the matter is attended to on governmental scale; or if some money is required, say for the purpose of establishing a Tea Research Institute to look into the diseased condition of the tea plants, immediately a cess is raised and everything that is necessary is provided for. But when it comes to the human element, the education of the children, it is looked upon as a matter that affects only the Ceylon Indian Congress or some other portion of this House. It is a fundamental question. I take it that it is the boast of this Government not only here but all over the world that

[Mr. Chelvanayakam.]

they are providing the most up-to-date education in this country. It should be pointed out to them that in this country there is a very large section of children who are not given the elementary rights of education, not even the 3rd or 4th standard of education; and they are the children of people, one tenth of the population, who produce one third of the income of this country. Before we come to discuss the next Budget, I take it that the Hon. Minister of Education will have something more than hopes and promises and that he would have done something in the matter.

Mr. T. B. Subasinghe (Bingiriya): I would like to raise one point. We note that in this country at the present moment we have the State-owned schools and Grant-in-aid schools. Most of us on this side of the House believe that all schools in this country should be owned and managed by the State. However, the present Government—they have made it quite clear to us—is not prepared to take that step of taking over the Grant-in-aid schools to the State. But even this Government can do one thing. There are still a fairly considerable number of Grant-in-aid schools which are not under the management of institutions or organizations or societies like the Buddhist Theosophical Society, but owned and managed by private individuals; and I believe, whatever one may say, that much of the criticism levelled on some of these private institutions by the hon. Member for Chavakachcheri is quite correct. If there is any corruption, most of this corruption prevails in those privately owned schools. I believe even this Minister, even this Government, can take the progressive step of taking over to the Government these last vestiges of private vested interests in education by taking over these privately-owned schools.

Mr. S. A. Pakeman (Appointed Member): Sir, I want to deal with sub-head 2, item 1—the question of the Royal Asiatic Society.

The Chairman: Do you mind the Prime Minister replying to the last point?

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake (Prime Minister): Not to the last point. The hon. Member for Kankasanturai, when he spoke, was under the impression that this Government makes a distinction between the members of the Tamil Congress and other citizens of Ceylon. I want to deny emphatically that statement. If there is any such idea in the minds of hon. Members, I would wish them to remove that idea from their minds.

Mr. Chelvanayakam: No such suggestion was made.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: We are not concerned whether the people belonged to the Tamil Congress or the Sama Samaja Party. We are concerned with the people of this country and we will pay due attention to them. My good Friend told us that the tea industry brings the largest amount of revenue and thereby implied that since that industry brings in a large amount of money the people concerned with that industry must receive the best attention. We do not accept that principle. Merely because a person earns more for this country, it does not mean that he should be well looked after. Perhaps, it is quite the contrary. Those who deserve attention will be given the necessary attention.

Mr. Chelvanayakam: We want equal treatment, but not preferential treatment.

Sub-head 2.—Other Grants, Rs. 53,670.

Mr. Pakeman: I move, “That the Vote be reduced by Rs. 10 in respect of Sub-head 2.”

I wish, Sir, to refer to Sub-head 2, Item, Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch). I must say that it does irk me to hear people—and that includes some of the Members of this House—talking about the glories of the ancient culture of Lanka without knowing the first thing about it. I admit that the system of education is somewhat to blame for this, but not altogether. When the British first began to take a directing hand in the affairs of India and Ceylon there were two schools of thought about their ancient cultures, which may be typified by two names—those of

Macaulay and of Sir William Jones. Macaulay was all for westernisation, and the neglect of oriental culture, of which he had very little idea, and unfortunately his ideas prevailed, with results which have been undesirable and sometimes ludicrous. Sir William Jones did much to promote, I might even say to revive, the ancient culture of India. He and those who thought like him would have based education on that. And it was such men who founded that body known as the Royal Asiatic Society.

Sir, we have a branch of that Society in Ceylon, founded one hundred years ago. In that Society certain Europeans have worked closely with the scholars of this country in the direction of studying all branches of its culture—the names that occur to me taking a random selection are those of Hugh Neville, Simon Casie Chitty, Professor Wickremasinghe, Sir Baron Jayatilaka, Humphrey Codrington, and Dr. Paul Peiris, who worked together without any distinctions of race or colour.

Mr. W. Dahanayake (Galle): E. W. Perera.

Mr. Pakeman: Now, Sir, that Society is in low water; it seems to me to be a disgraceful thing that no one can be found to take the burden of the Secretaryship from the shoulders of Dr. Paul Peiris, albeit he has borne it ably and cheerfully. The Society this year cannot even afford to keep a full time clerk; and, despite an appeal for funds to celebrate its centenary by putting up a worthy building and to house its unique and valuable collection of books and manuscripts, there has been but a miserable response. This Society should be encouraged. I hope there will be response from this Government. I do hope that members of the public, Members of this House and particularly University graduates will support this Society. How many members of the Civil Service, my own history students belong to that Society? How many Honours graduates in Oriental languages and History, how many members of this House belong to the Royal Asiatic Society which does its best to support, promote and investigate the ancient culture of this country. I do hope that the Hon. Minister of Education and Members of this House and members of

the public will give serious consideration to the question of supporting this very, very worthy society. I sincerely hope that everything possible will be done to put this worthy Society on its feet.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to offer a few remarks heartily endorsing every word which fell from the lips of the hon. Member for Kankesanturai on the question of estate schools. I am sorry the Hon. Prime Minister is not here; but I want to point out to his colleagues that, when the free education proposals were discussed, there was a very definite Resolution which concerned estate schools. It stated that all estate schools should be taken over by the State and the State Council accepted that Resolution without any opposition. Almost three years have passed by and nothing has been done to implement that proposal. We hope that the Hon. Minister, in addition to the various other points that he will have to attend to in the future, will note that it is very necessary to implement that decision of the State Council, because it concerns such a very large section of the school-going population of this country.

I want to say a word also on the subject over which the hon. Appointed Member, Mr. Pakeman, has waxed eloquent. I myself have been an interested observer of the activities of the Royal Asiatic Society and would like, if I had the time, to become a member of the Society and do some work connected with it. But the only trouble, Mr. Chairman, is that there are so many problems connected with the living that we have hardly any time to devote to the dead. But anyway, I wish the Royal Asiatic Society all success in its endeavours. We would like that it should change its name. I myself feel that the grant that is given to this Society is inadequate, because hardly any research work can be undertaken unless there is some provision of adequate funds.

Mr. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla (Dandagamuwa): While reading through the Estimates I find that the Government is trying to play the devil by giving a grant of Rs. 15,000 to a Buddhist priest for the compilation of a Sinhalese Dictionary. I know that several lakhs of rupees have been spent on an

[Mr. Iriyagolla.]
etymological dictionary and I do not know the reason why you should pay Rs. 15,000 for another dictionary.

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister has answered that yesterday.

Dr. Perera: Not yet answered.

Mr. Iriyagolla: Some time ago, during the time of the State Council, a sum of money was paid to another Buddhist priest for compiling a history of the British period for the Mahawamsa. He has stated that one of our greatest heroes, Keppitipola, was a traitor. I do not know—

The Chairman: We need not go into all that now.

Mr. Iriyagolla:—why such a large sum of money should be paid to a priest as a grant for compiling a dictionary. Another matter is the grant given to the Science Society. I do not know what researches they have made, and we should like to know some details about it. They are also giving another sum of money to another society which is newly formed—the Ceylon Geographical Society. We should like to have some details about them.

You form societies and you give them money, and we do not hear anything about them afterwards.

10.30 A.M.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera (Dehiowita): With regard to the Art Society, it has hitherto been allowing the exhibitions of collections of fashionable men, traitors I should say; and the Art Gallery has been their high temple. This Government should be ashamed of the fact that the Art Gallery is given a grant of a paltry sum of Rs. 1,500. I say, Mr. Chairman, that we should increase this grant, but at the same time direct the Society in such a way that it becomes a centre for the revival of an art, of a people's art, an art closely connected with the lives and work of the men and women of this country.

Mr. H. W. Amarasuriya (Baddegama): I should like to know whether the Minister has made special provision for schools that have joined the scheme

of free education. *As this House is aware, the Hon. Minister has made a certain concession to the schools which have not yet entered the scheme, in that he has allowed a certain specified period during which such schools could enter the scheme. The schools that have entered the Scheme are being worked at a great loss, and it is not possible for the management or the societies to find the necessary funds in order to cover up this large deficit. The present position is that unless the Government gives them relief by way of larger equipment grants they will be unconsciously penalising the schools that have entered the scheme of free education. For the last three years they are giving free education. They are giving free education to those pupils who attend the schools. I hope the Hon. Minister will go into this matter and see that the schools which entered the scheme are shown greater consideration than those which remain outside the scheme. Now, as it is, all the concessions are given to those who, may I say, attempted to defy the scheme by standing out. On the other hand, those who loyally accepted the scheme are being penalised.

I should like to know whether adequate provision has been made, and if not, whether a consequential Amendment will be made in the Vote to enable the Minister to give larger equipment grants, or to give some sort of special grants to those schools, of course, after examining their accounts and after satisfying himself that the schools have, in fact, been run at a loss.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera (Matugama): About these estate schools, Sir, either Sinhalese or Tamil, will the Hon. Minister consider giving a teacher in Tamil to each Sinhalese school and a teacher in Sinhalese to each Tamil school outside the allowable quota.

In connection with the grant for the Art Gallery, will the Hon. Minister kindly consider making a grant to the Lionel Wendt Trust next year?

Mr. G. R. Motha (Maskeliya): We, on this side of the House, are happy over the assurance given by the Prime Minister that there is no distinction made between the treatment of the children of the Tamil Congress and those of the rest of the population—

An Hon. Member: Why Tamil Congress?

Mr. Motha:—although certain remarks of the Minister without Portfolio some time back gave rise to the suspicion that there was some foundation for such an allegation. But the Member for Kankasanturai did not make such an allegation. He was only speaking about an undeniable fact to which the Prime Minister did not reply.

There is a large population in the estates which has been resident in this country for the last five or six decades. The education that is given to their children is much inferior to that given to the rest of the school-going population, although a definite promise was made in the last State Council that the same education that is given to the rest of the population would be given to this section. In spite of three years having elapsed since the necessary Amendment of the Ordinance was passed, nothing has happened as yet.

The Hon. Minister, even about six months ago, told some of us who met him on this question that circulars had been issued to the Superintendents. We find that it is only a few days ago that a circular has been issued. The Hon. Minister may probably have issued certain instructions that this circular should be issued earlier, but it was not done. This section of the population is grossly neglected.

The Prime Minister made a statement which was rather ambiguous, namely, that all sections of the population would receive equal consideration. I know there are certain members of the Government who probably hold that many of the children in the estates are not people of this country. I certainly appeal to the Government, whatever differences may exist on the so-called Indian problem, that these people who live in the estates and who have been here for decades, be given equal treatment and the same opportunities as are given to the rest of the population of this country. They are not children of slaves. They are not come here as slaves. Opportunities which are offered to the other children should be given to them.

The Chairman: Any other remarks?

Mr. Dahanayake: May I know what machinery the Minister proposes to set up to investigate the allegations of wrongful discontinuance of teachers of Assisted schools?

The Chairman: Will the Hon. Minister reply please?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: This same point was raised last evening, and I gave my explanation.

About the dictionary, it is now being produced by the University authorities. I went into this matter and I was told that the dictionary will not be out for at least twenty years. Well, that is not a matter for surprise because, I believe, the Oxford Dictionary took some 70 years to be produced. This dictionary, that is the Sinhalese Etymological Dictionary, will take twenty years more to be completed. Until then we have not got an authentic dictionary. This Sinhalese Dictionary will place emphasis on the Sanscrit derivatives and will be used for purposes of studies. I am satisfied that the author of this dictionary, for which a grant has been proposed, is a competent person, a scholarly person; and that is the reason why the grant is proposed.

Dr. Perera: What is the guarantee that the work will turn out to be a useful work? Have you got any assurance at all?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: Well, there is no guarantee given, but we must wait and see. This is not a new thing. There was a similar grant given to Father Gnanapragasam to compile a Tamil dictionary. In fact, it has been a very useful dictionary. For twenty years more we will not have a proper authentic Sinhalese dictionary. I think until then we should have a proper dictionary by a competent scholar.

The other point is about the establishment of training schools for juvenile offenders, which was raised by the Member for Galle. There is only the Maggona Institution. The subject of juvenile offenders is really in the charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and my

[Hon. Mr. Nugawela.]

Ministry is concerned only with the educational aspect. The two Permanent Secretaries are discussing the question now. They have already held several conferences with the object of going into the question of the vocational aspect. Last year there was provision in the Budget for the establishment of another juvenile reformatory at Hammen Heil Camp in the Jaffna area, but I am not satisfied with that site. There is a big rock near the sea, and it would not be a suitable site. I thought of a better place. I think it is in the electorate of the hon. Member for Dehiowita.

An Hon. Member: Yatiyantota.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: Yes, I think it is in Yatiyantota. There are two or three other sites in view. Both the Permanent Secretaries and the Superintendents concerned are going into this matter.

Now we come to the Royal Asiatic Society. The hon. Member for Dehiowita complained about the grant given. In 1945-46 the Government gave a grant of Rs. 500, to this institution. A similar grant was given in 1946-47. In 1947-48 the grant was raised to Rs. 5,000. The Society only asked for Rs. 2,000, but the Government gave Rs. 5,000 because the Prime Minister and I felt the importance of this institution; and several letters have been sent to us, thanking us for this windfall.

I am sorry to say that my information is that the Royal Asiatic Society is not functioning efficiently, that books were lost, and so forth. Before any increase in the grant is contemplated I will have to be satisfied that the Society is on a proper footing. If it is not, I shall have to consider a decrease in the grant.

Dr. Perera: It is a useful institution; therefore do not consider decreasing the grant.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: About the Art Gallery, I do not know what the position is. This is what they have asked, and it has been given.

With regard to the question of the Science Society, which was raised by

the Member for Dandagamuwa, that society is a society for scientists. They meet regularly and confer.

Dr. Perera: Why do you not have some sort of science schools?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: There are some schools. I cannot tell their exact locations. It is not possible to say where and where these schools are. I shall send that information on to the hon. Member.

With regard to estate schools, Sir, my statement during the last Budget discussion was that I will consider the matter sympathetically and shall take necessary action. I remember that somewhere in April my Permanent Secretary inquired from the Director why that circular had not been sent out, but now it has gone out. It is true that the State Council had come to a decision on the Resolution, but that Resolution has since been embodied in an Ordinance and I have to follow the law in this matter.

10.45 A.M.

Section 35 of the Education Ordinance lays down that, subject to the provisions of sub-section (2), the owner of an estate shall set apart on the estate premises consisting of a building which conforms to a certain type, a house for the teacher, and an area of uncultivated land not less than one acre in extent.

Dr. Perera: No estate has it.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: If anyone who is not satisfied makes a complaint to me, then it will be my function to notify the estate concerned that it should comply with the requirements of the Ordinance. As it is, the circular has been sent out—

Mr. Motha: It is defective.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: It is not defective. The Ordinance says, "for the purposes of a common school" and later on, "any reasonable time not less than six months." I can give that length of time to any estate, but in any case they must take action within six

months. I do contemplate action in this matter, because I have included provision in this year's Estimates for teachers in these estate schools.

There are 900 estate schools and, of course, I have to go into the matter rather closely as it is not possible for me to take over all the 900. All these schools are of varying sizes; attendances are different; so I have first of all to find out how many of these can be amalgamated. What is more, I am going to put into practice the idea of not shutting out the estate schools from the village children. As a matter of fact, I will have common schools. I know that is the view of the Prime Minister as well. We have discussed this matter, and wherever we can put up common schools, or wherever we can amalgamate two or three schools in a compact group of plantations, we shall do so. Schools have, roughly, to be situated $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from each other. Our general policy will be to have a common school for the village people as well as the estate population.

We shall certainly welcome the entry of estate labour children into Government schools, and every facility will be given to them.

As the hon. Member for Maskeliya (Mr. Motha) will know, when I went to the Ginigathena school, I inquired whether estate children were there, and I was disappointed to learn that they were not there.

Mr. Motha: There are no Tamil teachers.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: There are numbers of schools which will be quite prepared to appoint Tamil teachers.

Mr. Thondaman: Estate children are not admitted at the Talawakele school.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: If that is so, it must be brought to my notice. In regard to these schools, the policy of the Government will be not to insist on linguistic groups, and I hope that the hon. Member for Maskeliya will appreciate that the Government has a responsibility to the whole population, and that education, in particular, is not a matter for a single party, parish or community. It is my object and the policy of this

Government to have common schools and to see that, if estate children want to attend Government schools, they will be given every facility. I shall make it a point to appoint Tamil teachers to these schools in estate areas, and I hope that those children will themselves learn Sinhalese. That is the position with regard to estate schools. Action has been taken by the Department, and I do not intend to let things lie.

Mr. Thondaman: What about the interim arrangements till such time as the schools are taken over?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I must follow the law.

Mr. Thondaman: What about the curriculum—change of the curriculum?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I do not know whether I have the power to do it. If so, I will do it.

Mr. Motha: The chief obstacle is that. Because of the nature of the curriculum, the children are unable to get over the primary stage. On the other hand, they are not admitted to the other schools.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: It is also partly due to the fact that estate teachers are only part-time teachers.

Mr. Motha: One question more—will it be possible to turn these estate schools to State-aided schools pending conversion into Government institutions because that will really benefit the poor teachers?

An Hon. Member: They are already State-aided.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I do not know the position with regard to that aspect of the matter, but I shall look into it.

Mr. Dahanayake: The hon. Member for Matale (Mr. Nanayakkara) raised a very important point yesterday which remains yet unanswered. What are you going to do with the non-teaching employees of the Assisted schools who have not been given any salary scale? There are some of them who have served for fifteen to twenty years but are in

[Mr. Dahanayake.]

receipt of such paltry salaries as Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 a month. Some have even been discontinued. Surely some provision must be made for them. These are matters that need looking into.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I shall look into it. As hon. Members know, I have taken time to go into this matter. It will be taken up when I consider the question of increased grants, adjustments of grants and things like that.

With regard to the question of the hon. Member for Matugama, he had a reply before in this House when I made a statement that the Department is now engaged in devising a scheme to give immediate relief to those schools that have already come into the Free Education Scheme.

Mr. Iriyagolla: The Hon. Minister said that it would take twenty years to complete the Sinhalese Dictionary but according to information that I have gathered, I understand that the compilers of that Dictionary have already compiled a concise dictionary. Therefore I do not think that we should pay for another dictionary, and I cannot vote for it.

The Chairman: You can oppose the Vote. The hon. Member can vote against it.

Mr. V. Kumaraswamy (Chavakachcheri): My question about the salaries of estate teachers has not been answered.

Mr. Dahanayake: The Hon. Minister must make a statement on the wrongful discontinuance of teachers in Assisted schools.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: With regard to the wrongful discontinuance of teachers, I have gone into the matter. I remember that the hon. Member mentioned the Burnham Report. The Department is actively engaged in the matter. I have had representations from teachers, and a draft scheme is drawn up which will enable managers, teachers, and representatives of the Treasury and the Education Department to sit round a table and discuss their difficulties.

This is the way, I think, in which we can have a check on the managers themselves. At the moment I cannot think of any other way, but to have teachers and managers represented on a common board where they can fight out their differences.

There is, of course, the right of appeal to the Director of Education in the case of wrongful dismissal, and I must say that in two or three cases the Director has disagreed with the managers.

That is what is going on although it is not quite satisfactory, but it cannot be helped so long as we go on with this system of Assisted schools which are run by managers. I am trying to expedite the establishment of these boards according to the recommendations of the Burnham Committee, because they will give some sort of relief to teachers by enabling them to air their grievances round a common table and bring up for arbitration any point on which no agreement has been reached.

With regard to the salaries of estate teachers, I think I received a report about two weeks ago. I have had no time to read it but immediately I have the time, I will do so.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: Last evening I raised the question of grants to *pirivenas* which teach English to lay students.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: The primary education in *pirivenas* include English, Arithmetic and some Elementary science. I do not know whether it is not desirable to have those subjects taught in *pirivenas*, but the main difficulty met with by the *pirivenas* is the payment of teachers. The grant has not been sufficient, but I hope to remedy that matter.

I had a discussion with the priests. Several *pirivenas* had a joint conference, and they have agreed to my suggestion that I should train some priests in these subjects at a denominational training school. They will then be used for the purpose only of teaching in the *pirivenas*. That is the most desirable thing, that teaching in *pirivenas* should be in the hands of the priests themselves rather than the laity.

Instructions have gone out to make arrangements for the training of 30 priests at the Nittambuwa training college, and when this is done the question of inadequacy of grants for the payment of teachers in the *pirivenas* will not arise.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: My point is this—that *pirivenas* are now duplicating ordinary schools. You are setting on yourself an extra burden.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: After all the age of a pupil in a *pirivena* ranges from eleven to fifteen years and if he can learn something, it will all be to his good.

The Chairman: What the hon. Member wants to know is why lay children are taught in *pirivenas*.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: This is a matter of choice. Those who want their children to be educated in a spiritual and religious environment, do so by their own choice, and I do not see why anybody should prevent them doing it.

Question, “That the sum of Rs. 31,402,386 for Head 101, Vote No. 3, be inserted in the Schedule”, put, and agreed to.

Head 101, Vote 3, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Vote No. 4.—Cost of midday meals to school children, scholarships (tenable in Ceylon and abroad) maintenance allowances, and sundry awards, Rs. 9,021,875.

Sub-head 1.—Midday meals for school children, Rs. 8,000,000.

Dr. Perera: I have something to say on sub-head 1, midday meals for school children.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: The hardy annual!

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva (Wellawatta-Galkissa): The slice is getting thinner and thinner!

Dr. Perera: There is an increase this time of only about Rs. 800,000 after all the complaints we have been making. I do not remember whether there is an Amendment in my name—

The Chairman: Yes, there is an Amendment under sub-head 1, “that the Vote be reduced by Rs. 10.”

Dr. Perera: Yes, Sir. I move, “That the Vote be reduced by Rs. 10 in respect of sub-head 1”.

I am going to press that Amendment. Last year we thought that at least this year the Hon. Minister would try to remedy matters. There is no change in the amount that has been allocated—six cents per child. This has now become a farce. The meal consists of a small piece of bread with a little ‘pol sambol’ and perhaps a little ‘sodi’, but more often, I think, a little jam.

Either we must provide the midday meal on a satisfactory basis, or entirely give it up. There is no point in carrying on this farce. I would like to tell the Hon. Minister that this is one of the few items on which nobody in this House would have refused to exceed the Vote even to the extent of spending Rs. 20,000,000 on it, and this is the one item from which we can be sure of valuable results, at last so far as the rural population is concerned.

In the English schools I think there is still discrimination shown in the matter of providing this midday meal. I remember it was only recently that the supervisor of midday meals who visited the Kolonnawa Vidyalaya wanted the Principal of that school to find out the needy children and to make a list of them, because she said that the money was not sufficient to provide the meal for all children. So the Principal was asked to make a list of those whom he considered to be ‘needy’ children. Why should there be this odious distinction? Why must the Principal be made to pick and choose?

I am afraid the Hon. Minister must immediately withdraw this Vote or give us the assurance that he will introduce a supplementary estimate asking for an additional Rs. 10,000,000 or Rs. 15,000,000 in order to increase the rate that is being paid per child; or, in the alternative, agree to provide at least a glass of milk to the children. Some arrangement must be made. Otherwise, I am going to press the

[Dr. Perera.]

Amendment as a protest against the continued negligence on the part of the Minister in regard to school feeding.

11.0 A.M.

Mr. Dahanayake: There are one or two aspects of this question to which the Minister should pay greater attention than he has done in the past. As a result of the recent increase in the price of bread, for which Government was responsible, the meal, which was bad, became worse.

Today the task of supplying the meal is entrusted to the headmasters, who have a good deal of other work, and are unable to make satisfactory arrangements in this regard. They are given a very meagre sum, but they have to satisfy the Department that something is being done.

We have, time and again, pressed on the Government the need for some system of central kitchens for supplying this midday meal, conducted by Government, the Government itself being responsible for the distribution of the meals. It is unsatisfactory to leave this work in the hands of private parties.

I am not casting any aspersions on anybody, but you are giving the headmasters an impossible task to perform. You are "passing the baby" to somebody else because you feel that you are unable to carry out the work satisfactorily yourself.

It is not in every district, or in every school, in the Island that even this meagre meal is doled out to the children. A local body is called upon to pay a share of the expenditure under this head, and most local bodies are unable to contribute anything substantial, because of the low state of their finances. In some parts of the country, therefore, the children do not get even the meagre meal that is provided in other parts of the country.

The Government is perhaps laying the flattering unction to its soul that by voting a few million rupees under this head, it is doing all that is necessary, and that it does not care tuppence what happens to the money, or whether the children, for whose benefit this money is provided, live or die.

May I also remind the Minister that when the free education proposals were mooted, a Resolution was passed by the State Council to the effect that a full midday meal, on a balanced diet, should be given to every school-going child in the country, and, further, that in cases of malnutrition, all the other meals of the child should be the concern of the State.

But what effort has been made to view this problem from the angle of the need to remedy malnutrition? The reports of the school medical officers reveal that malnutrition amongst school children is widespread, and nothing is being done to correct it, no special attention is being paid to such cases.

We are thoroughly dissatisfied with the indifference shown by the Cabinet to this question—

The Hon. Mr. C. Suntharalingam (Minister of Commerce and Trade): Certainly not!

Mr. Dahanayake:—the indifference shown towards the school-going children of this country. It will not do for the Minister of Commerce and Trade to shout, "Certainly not". Let him prove it by deeds,—

"Words are like leaves, and where they most abound,

Much sense of fruit is rarely found."

May I recall those lines to the Minister of Commerce and Trade. He should not think that by merely shouting across the Floor, he can get away with it. Let him go and see for himself the children who suffer from malnutrition, and let him ask himself the question, "What am I doing to remedy matters?" Let him improve the meals now given to the children, and then let him come here and say that everything is all right. We say that nothing is right in this affair, and we call for immediate investigation and an immediate reform of the system.

Mrs. Kusumasiri Gunawardena (Avisawella): Will the Minister inform the House whether the Inspectress of Schools who was asked to investigate and report on the free midday meals scheme has submitted a report, and, if so, whether he will table it?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I shall read out the report to the House, and then table it.

Mrs. Kusumasiri Gunawardena (Avisawella): Six cents is not enough for providing a wholesome meal to a child. This sum should be increased to 10 cents or more, to enable a really wholesome and substantial meal to be given to the children.

These children are sometimes given meals made from crops grown in the school garden, but all the same the Government is charged for the meals. I feel that this vote should be referred back so that the Cabinet might increase it.

The burden of supplying the meals to the children should be taken off the shoulders of the teachers, as the work now interferes with their school work. They make the children cook the meals.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Arising from that, I wish to make two points, one a criticism and the other a suggestion.

As for the criticism, it should be obvious to the Minister, if he has not forgotten his elementary arithmetic, that since the rise in the cost of living, particularly in the price of bread, he should have provided at least for a proportionate increase in the grant to keep up at least that which was provided at the level at which it was provided.

Now, for the suggestion: pending the establishment of central kitchens, etc., there is a simple road to ensure that at least what is allocated for the purpose is used for the benefit of the children. The party most interested in seeing that these children receive this meal properly, on the spot, is neither the Government nor the teacher, but the parent. Nothing is done by these schools effectively to bring the parent in direct contact with the actual administration of the school.

Every school in which this scheme operates ought to be ordered by the Minister immediately to summon at least a group of the parents who are interested and ask them to set up a committee which would undertake the task of expending this money and seeing that the best possible meal, out of this money, is provided to their own children.

It will remove the stigma, and it will minimize the possibility of corruption, and it will effectively stop leakage.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: I understand the Minister was investigating the possibility of giving malted milk instead of bread and sambol, for the midday meal. Yesterday, in connexion with the Estimates of the Ministry of Food, on the vote for the milk-feeding centres, I asked whether, in view of the fact that a large number of milk-feeding centres are housed in the schools, it would not be possible to amalgamate these two schemes. If this were done, it would be possible to utilize the money spent on free milk and the money spent on the midday meal to provide a better midday meal and also increase the supply of milk to the pre-school children.

If the Government would agree to increase its contribution to the midday meal scheme to 11 cents per meal, it would be possible to supply a plate of rice and two curries in the rural areas.

Dr. Perera: Since we are pressing this Amendment, cannot we take up this sub-head first, and then go on to the others—

The Chairman: I shall put the Question to the House—

Dr. Perera: The Minister is going to reply.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: This matter was brought up before me very forcibly during the last Budget discussions by Members on both sides of the House. They urged that I should take immediate action.

It is just not possible to make an increase in the sum allowed and say that all would be well by reason of that increase alone. One must be satisfied that there is a plan and an organization effectively to deal with that increase.

With that end in view I deputed an officer of the Department, who has had experience both here and overseas in this type of work, to report on this matter. I gave instructions that she should start with Colombo. She did report to me. She recommends three types of meals. Since May those three types of meals are being tried out in three different sets of schools.

[Hon. Mr. Nugawela.]

She visited 200 schools in eight Provinces. To Uva she has not gone. She submitted a very useful report on this question. In her report she refers to the types of meals in the Colombo Municipal area in the following words:

"For 10 cents: 3½ oz. bread with jam or plantains. Where there is systematic organization, the ten-cent meal is adequate and nutritious but in most schools the bread is hard, the curries poor in nutrition and quality. For 8-8½ cents: In urban areas a meal costing this sum is given, the local council supplementing the amount with 2 cents.

This is not an adequate meal, only a "snack": 3 oz. bread, curry, *sambol*: poor in nutrition and quality.

In rural areas: 6 cents meal. This is an unsatisfactory "snack": 2 oz. bread, with curry, *sambol*. A few schools give the best value for this meagre sum. A few schools in the Island receive tea and sugar free from the Tea Propaganda Board. Source of supply of bread: The bakery is selected by each school, not necessarily the closest to the school, nor the one providing the best or cheapest bread. An extreme case: bread was transported by rail 35 miles; two days old bread, 32 cents per lb. a bakery by the school offered fresh bread for 32 cents.

In the majority of cases, curries cooked by school children, by groups in turn, who spend two to three hours in the process. These children lose class lessons for a whole morning. In a few cases curries were ordered from outside

The method of feeding is also bad—"

Dr. Perera: Why not publish this report as a Sessional Paper?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela:

—the bread being kept out on tables, exposed to flies. There are no bins, no utensils for the children to carry the food in. Some children are given pieces of bread, with curry placed over it, with the curry dripping fresh milk is the best "snack" for a child, but milk is not available in large quantities.

Milk powder: Elephant House offer to deliver 6 ozs. for 10 cents for schools in Colombo.

Bakers approached all over the Island have agreed to supply bread for 28 cents"

11.15 A.M.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Will the Hon. Minister be pleased to table that document?

Mr. Dahanayake: I rise to a point of Order. If the Minister is reading from a document, he ought to table it.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: There is no objection; I certainly could do it.

The Chairman: There is no objection to it.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Will the Minister table it?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: If you object to my reading—

Mr. Dahanayake: Not at all; the only thing is we want a copy of it.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: You certainly can have one, but now I have only one copy with me.

The Chairman: The Department admits all that is stated in that document.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: We are fully aware of these conditions, but you cannot alter a system at once. I did explore the possibilities of the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Ruwanwella about the Central Bakery in Colombo. They wanted 14 cents for a meal, exclusive of transport. They have to have a staff which would be employed only for 180 days in the year for this work. I did explore the possibilities, but that proposal was beyond our means. You cannot have a plan without information. Now I have got some sort of information, and I will certainly produce the plan. When money is necessary, I cannot just give an increase in the Vote and say, "Well, everything is all right." But I must see that it is properly worked. We are spending a sum of Rs. 8,000,000, which is equal to the expenditure on a Department; it is twice the expenditure on my Archaeological Department. There is no officer administering this work, all this money is paid out on vouchers. We have appointed a special officer this year to be in charge of this work for the whole Island, and if need be, I shall have to appoint more officers to be in charge of sub-divisions.

Yesterday the question was raised about these attendance officers. Why have attendance officers at all? I do not see the necessity for them. I do not know what my term of office would be, but I mean to turn them on to the job of supervising the midday meal in the schools. That is why I stressed the

importance of Parent-Teacher Associations in every school. That, I submit,

is the proper body to take up such matters. I have tried to get in touch with the local bodies.

Dr. Perera: Surely, the Minister can devise a meal that is much cheaper than 14 cents. That Kitchen is working satisfactorily, only they are utilizing an expensive method. The C. D. C. Bakery can provide the bread——

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: But they want 14 cents for a meal, excluding transport.

Dr. Perera: The Bakery can provide the bread. He might get for 28 cents a 14-oz. loaf instead of a 16-oz. loaf——

The Chairman: The Minister has said that he is going to look into the whole matter.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: About a year ago, the Colombo Municipal Council asked the Minister of Education to give two cents more on a meal, in order that we may ask the C. D. C. Bakery to supply all the meals in the schools in the City of Colombo. There was a conference held with the Assistant Director of Education, Mr. Kapukotuwe. I was chairman of that particular conference. We asked for 2 cents more in order to supply a meal at 11 cents. I cannot understand how it comes to 14 cents now. That extra 2 cents was asked for transport. The suggestion was that, everything provided, the Municipal Council was to run the whole show, Government only paying this extra 2 cents.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 30,000 in respect of sub-head 5, item 6."

Question put, and agreed to.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 25,368 in respect of Sub-head 6, New Item '2, Scholarships for Accountants in the United Kingdom.'"

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. K. Kanagaratnam (Vaddukkodai): In the Budget of 1947-48 provision was made for 4 Scholarships for

Accountants to proceed to the United Kingdom for higher qualifications. May I know from the Hon. Minister whether these scholarships were utilized during the year, or whether it is proposed to utilize them, because, as I said at the Second Reading Debate, it is very essential that we must have Accountants in the Public Service who have specialized in certain branches of accountancy; for instance, farm accounts and cost accounts. Special mention has been made of these two systems of accounting in the Reports of the Auditor-General in the last two years, and it is very necessary to have such Accountants, if we are to control the expenditure of certain departments. The Accountants appointed to keep the accounts in these departments should have a specialized knowledge of these two branches. Four scholarships were provided in 1947-48.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: As regards the scholarships for Art and Music, I think the Hon. Minister has done some drastic pruning. Where he has not absolutely eliminated the scholarships, I think he has stopped further expenditure on some of these scholarships. When this is placed side by side with the dangerous theory the Minister has propounded of evolving a pure-line form of national art and national music, it becomes alarming. He has provided for a very small sum. If the idea of scholarships is to encourage the development of national aptitudes by their interaction with the art and music of other countries, certainly the Minister should encourage the giving of more scholarships. But we find that some of these people are sent to India with a paltry allowance, and they come back with long coats and longer hair, but with no art. We must move in the direction of America, and when these young artists go, they must be supervised, and there must be reports received about their progress. Free education must not be put forward at the expense of things like art and music. We must have a progressive policy in these matters with more scholarships, and better scholarships.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: On the question of art, I went into it myself, and I am not satisfied, as the hon. Member says, with the progress

[Hon. Mr. Nugawela.]
made. You will find in the Estimates provision made for the immediate establishment of an Art School. When we establish that Art School, we shall have visiting lecturers coming from outside, and we shall send only one scholar out. The proposal is to have this school at "Heywood", and there is provision for the alteration of the building for the Art School. Once that school is established, we propose to get the best instructors from overseas and make them available to a larger number of people.

Dr. Perera: Surely, the Hon. Minister is not ruling out the giving of scholarships even though the Art School is established?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: No I do not. We will have scholarships as well.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: Would it not be better to have the Art School somewhere in Kandy rather than in Colombo.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I think the National Theatre and the Art School must be in Colombo.

The Hon. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene (Minister of Finance): A question was asked when my Votes were taken up about the accountancy scholarships, and I could not reply to it. Those scholarships have not been utilized because the Budget was passed only at the end of January. But in the course of the year we hope to find scholars who will go on those scholarships to England. I quite realize that there is a great dearth of Accountants, but you cannot create Accountants overnight. They are like doctors, and they have to be specialized men.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: With regard to this, I wish to bring one matter to the notice of the Hon. Minister. We have got a system at present of local examinations for Accountants. But on the last occasion it was found that, for instance, questions were said to be asked on sub-heads *a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, and j*, and it was found that even a trained Accountant could not, with the books before him, have answered that list of questions in the given time.

The Hon. Minister must carry in mind one thing: the accounting branch is one of the best-organized, exclusive, limitative, false trade unions in the world. They are out to prevent people from coming into that thing, and therefore the Government must break that ring if it wants Accountants in sufficient numbers.

Dr. Perera: Does this mean that these scholarships are in addition to what was passed last year, that the number would be six and not four?

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: This is in addition.

Dr. Perera: That is what I wanted to know.

Mr. Chelvanayakam: In regard to these scholarships, I wish to refer to the scholarship at the Government Training College for graduate inspectors. Though this scholarship exists for the good of the inspector class, it seems to work hardship on such of those members of the class as do not get selected by those who choose the officer who should have the scholarship. I am aware that there are other members of the inspector class who are prepared to go through the training provided at the Training College at their own expense, or rather on no-pay leave. In order that those who are selected do not get an undue advantage over the rest, will the Minister consider the question of giving every member of the inspector class an opportunity of getting trained at their own expense?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I do not know the snags in that proposal, but I will go into it.

Dr. Perera: On page 318 of the Estimates, you find three scholarships provided for Army children. That is an old item, and I did not know that it is going on still.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: It has not been made use of.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: We have our own Army now.

Dr. Perera: But I do not know why you should have special scholarships for the children of men serving in our army.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: No demand has been made on this item.

Dr. Perera: Under Sub-head 7, "Financial Assistance to *ex*-Servicemen for further education", I wish to know how much has been given?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: Nothing has been given so far.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 9,071,707 for Head 101, Vote No. 4, be inserted in the Schedule", put, and agreed to.

Head 101, Vote 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 102.—Department of National Museums

Vote No. 1.—Salaries and Expenses of the Department of National Museums, Rs. 328,330.

Dr. Perera rose.

The Hon. Sir John Kotelawala (Minister of Transport and Works): Sir, are there any Amendments on this Vote?

Dr. Perera: The Hon. Minister comes here from his sleep and wants to know whether there are any Amendments?

The Hon. Sir J. Kotelawala: Sir, did you hear that remark?

The Chairman: No, I did not.

Sub-head 8.—Upkeep of live animals, Rs. 500.

Dr. Perera: Cannot these animals be handed over to the Zoo?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: These are not meant for the amusement of the public. They are kept for the purpose of research, to study the habits of animals, and so on.

11.30 A.M.

Dr. Perera: With regard to sub-head 11, there is a big increase of about Rs. 100,000. Will the Hon. Minister give us some information as to why this increase is provided for?

Then, on sub-head 18, "Ethnological Survey of Ceylon" also, we want to have some information. I was wondering whether this amount was provided in connexion with some work that Dr. La Marett did.

Mr. Dahanayake: With regard to sub-head 11, the Hon. Minister knows that the Services were responsible for damage and destruction to a very large number of very valuable show-cases. I do not know whether these show-cases have yet been replaced. What I wish to know is what attempts have been made to recover any losses that may have been caused by the Services and whether all the show-cases have been replaced.

Mr. Iriyagolla: I understand that many of the books that were in the Museum are missing. In some cases the covers of books are available but there are no pages. I also understand that very valuable manuscripts have been lost. Will the Hon. Minister kindly inquire into these losses and let us know?

Mr. Pakeman: I hope that in framing the next Budget the Director of Museums will consider the point of an Ethnological survey of Ceylon. It is most desirable to have it as soon as possible, as with the increase of education in the Island old customs and traditions are rapidly dying out, of which a record ought to be preserved.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: With regard to the shelves and so on, Rs. 40,000 have been recovered from the Military as compensation. The increase in the Estimates is due to the Museums which are being started at Kandy, Jaffna and Ratnapura.

New Sub-head, "California University's African Expedition (Re-vote) Rs. 3,500."

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 3,500 in respect of New sub-head, 'California University's African Expedition' (Re-vote)".

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Perera: There is one point which I should like cleared up on this Museum question. A proposal has been made recently to restrict students from entering the Museum for making use of books there. Will the Hon. Minister look into the matter? I thought rather an absurd reason was given.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: The idea seems to be to discourage students who intend to sit for examinations.

Dr. Perera: I think every facility should be given to students as they have only one institution to go to, for the information they require. Any little discomfort to the officers should be secondary.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 331,130 for Head 102, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule," put, and agreed to.

Head 102, Vote 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 103.—Department of the Government Archivist

Vote No. 1.—Salaries and expenses of the Department of the Government Archivist including the Government Record Office, the Office of the Registrar of Books and Newspapers, and expenses of Ceylon Historical Manuscripts Commission, Rs. 146,311.

Sub-head 5, Accessions of records to the Archives, Rs. 10,000.

Mr. Pakeman: I move, "That the Vote be reduced by Rs. 10 in respect of sub-head 5."

You kindly allowed me, Sir, to say what I wanted to say on the Hon. Minister's Vote on the vote now under discussion. I refer to the location of the National Archives which I mentioned in last year's Debate on the Budget. Since that time, I have heard and verified that there is a project of putting them within the precincts of the University at Peradeniya. I am firmly of the opinion that there is no place suitable for the National Archives save only the Capital City of a country.

My reasons, if I may say so, are endorsed by such prominent scholars and enthusiasts for the Island's culture as Dr. Andreas Nell, Dr. Paul Pieris, Mr. E. W. Perera, Fr. S. G. Perera and Sir Charles Collins. It is an almost universal practice to which I know of no exception anywhere in the world that the Archives of the Central Government are situated where the Central Government is. I give instances such as London, Washington, Paris, the Hague, and, I think, Moscow. I should like to explain that there are two types of documents, namely, records and archives. Archives are certain records made before a certain

date. They are constantly being added to, and it is even now desirable that records here should become archives at a later date than at present.

I understand that the reasons put forward for the placing of the Archives at Peradeniya is that few people now make use of them. This, Sir, is an entirely irrelevant point. Archives do not exist for students so much as for administrative officers, legislators and draftsmen. While it would be very nice for the few University post-graduate research students and members of the University staff to have the Archives at their doorstep, I should like to say that the undergraduates have nothing to do with them. They must go to the Archives and not expect the Archives to be brought to them.

There is a further important point. In this country, the Government Archivist is also the Government Record-keeper and is therefore in charge of a mass of records which will eventually become archives. He should not have to be in two places at once. I admit that owing to wartime conditions the invaluable Archives had to be moved Up-country, to Nuwara Eliya, for, one of the most important duties of an Archivist is defence of the Archives. They must be brought back to the Capital City as soon as possible. There, Sir, the condition of the documents have very greatly improved. Therefore, when they are brought back to Colombo, and that should be as soon as possible, they must be housed in an air-conditioned building. Plans were got out for this building and a site selected before the outbreak of war. So that, unless it is intended to move the Capital City to Kandy or Pusselawa, which in my opinion would be a cardinal error, or to any place other than Colombo, I hope the Archives will soon be brought back and housed as I suggested.

Dr. Perera: I want to have some information on sub-head 7.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: You have an Amendment on sub-head 5.

Dr. Perera: I am only asking a few questions. Last year there was an amount of Rs. 6,400 provided for the training of the Government Archivist. What I should like to know from the

Hon. Minister is this: whether our training the Government Archivist will be of any use. He is a fairly old person.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: He is Mr. Paulusz, who is quite young.

Dr. Perera: I notice that there is provision for an Assistant Government Archivist. I do not know why he is temporary. Is it not also necessary to train somebody else, a younger person? The reason is, some time back we had the misfortune of having to import a person, one Miss Jurriaanse, who was imported from Holland. She was expected to train some people here. To the best of my knowledge, she did nothing, and we might have the same experience unless we send a younger man for the purpose. Can the Hon. Minister consider that aspect of the matter?

With regard to the translation of documents under sub-head 10, might I know who is doing these translations? Will the Hon. Minister please note to answer that question of mine?

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to know what work was done in the past year by the Ceylon Historical Manuscripts Commission. I understand that it is not functioning now.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: The hon. Member for Wellawatta-Galkissa is the Chairman, and the Commission is functioning.

Mr. Pakeman: We have at last persuaded the Government Printer to print the third report of the Commission which had been in type for several years, and, when it is printed, if the hon. Member for Galle will give me a certificate that he has read the whole thing through, I will stand him the best dinner that can be got in Colombo.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: I wish to have some information on the Archives. The hon. Appointed Member has said nearly everything that could properly be said about it. I want to remind the Hon. Minister of two matters. One is this: He has now got an Archivist who has on the one hand some capacity for the training of archivists, and, on the other, a training in the Dutch language. Both are necessary equipment for a Keeper of Archives where the most

valuable Dutch "thombus" are. But the Hon. Minister should look into the question of expanding the staff and also who is to replace the present Archivist in due course.

Secondly,—if I may be permitted to a little touch of the autobiography,—while I was in prison I wanted to deal with certain material which had been made available about the 1848 period, and I wrote to certain people concerned at the time in order to avail myself of the manuscripts so as to do some useful work with regard to that period. The shifting of all the documents to Nuwara Eliya, which was due to defence and military considerations, had resulted in everything being stacked away in boxes, and it had become absolutely impossible for anybody to get at anything.

Wherever the Archives are to be situated, at least it should be essential that where they are situated, it is possible for a person to get at the manuscripts. I wish, strongly, to support what my teacher said, and that is that these Archives should be nowhere else than in the Capital City. I also wish to underline that the Capital City should be Colombo, because, when it comes to these questions of research, there is too much of an approach to it from the angle of the post-graduate student in the University.

11.45 A.M.

It is true that a very great deal of research is done by post graduate students in the Universities. But the mature, the lasting, and from very many points of view, the invaluable, because it pursues minute points, and the most valuable research in that respect is done by people in their spare time or during their pensioned period. We should have the Archives situated handily for such people, apart from considerations of Government's own advantages in respect of the Archives.

Major Montague Jayewickreme (Weligama): May I ask the Hon. Minister to give us some details in respect of sub-head 5?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I was told that many of our valuable archives were out of the country. They have been removed. I have asked the Government

[Hon. Mr. Nugawela.]

Archivist, who is now in England, to try and catalogue them, particularly the Neville manuscripts, when we will try and get those back. That is why I am asking for that amount.

Now we are a free country and one of the things that the Government Archivist will do when he is in England is to catalogue what is worth while and try to get them back.

The only difficulty was from the point of view of the climate. It is a wrong analogy to quote Moscow and Paris. They are all European countries, and you can get the necessary humidity anywhere. But the solution here is to get the necessary air-conditioned room.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: The climate must also suit the Archivist.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: And the accommodation. My difficulty is to get good men for this Department. I had a long discussion with the hon. Appointed Member (Mr. Pakeman) regarding this matter.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: If the Hon. Minister will announce from now on that he is separating out a grant and that he will in due course, at the proper time, when he finds suitable persons give scholarships, some young men might take to the study of this subject.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I discussed this matter with the Professor concerned and asked him to persuade some University students to take to the subject. I have asked the Archæological Commissioner to conduct tours through the archæological areas in this country.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 146,311 for Head 103, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule," put, and agreed to.

Head 103, Vote 1, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 104.—Archæological Department
Vote No. 1.—Salaries and expenses of the Archæological Department,
Rs. 1,186,055.

Sub-head 1, Personal Emoluments,

Rs. 136,522.

Mr. Chelvanayakam: I trust that the Hon. Prime Minister would not think that every time we speak of a section of the country we are merely a section. It is a section that goes to make up the whole. This observation is very pertinent to the remarks that I am going to make.

When I refer to the Archæological Department I would merely say that they are concentrating all their activities round Anuradhapura and the North-Central Province. There is no doubt that that locality has produced the largest amount of work for the Department, but there is work elsewhere.

Yesterday you mentioned that you know as much of Jaffna as the hon. Member for Chavakachcheri. Be that as it may. There are portions, for example, in the Northern Province which have not been touched by the Archæological Department. During the short time that Dr. Paul E. Peiris was District Judge of Jaffna, he had found the time to go round and dig up gardens in ancient villages and get material out of those parts which were useful as material for Ceylon's history.

For example, there is yet Sangilithoppu—I do not know whether you had been to Sangilithoppu. It is the place where the last King of Jaffna had his palace. After nearly 3½ centuries there are still remnants of that building. The Hon. Minister of Education went to all parts of Jaffna, and I doubt whether he went there.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: I have seen it.

Mr. Chelvanayakam: It is in Nallur. The Hon. Prime Minister knows it, and he has seen it. His knowledge of Jaffna is more extensive than even the wide knowledge you possess, Mr. Chairman.

The remnants of the building at Sangilithoppu are still private property. The Archæological Department must look at it, and when I make that request, I do so as a student. The activities of this Department should extend wider than Anuradhapura because in the more remote parts the chances of decay are greater. I ask the Hon. Minister to direct the Archæological Department to

go to those parts, especially those parts of the Kingdom of Jaffna which surrendered three centuries before the kingdom of Kandy, where there is still some valuable material which students of history want to preserve rather than allow to perish.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: I move, "That the Vote be reduced by Rs. 10 in respect of sub-head 1, item, 'Archæological Commissioner'".

I move my Amendment really to draw attention to certain matters. We have a very scholarly gentleman in charge of the Department. At present archæology and all matters connected therewith is merely confined to a group. For instance, Mr. Chairman, large numbers of school children go round to these places. There is no guidance to these various places of valuable monuments, art, &c., and as a result school children are entirely in the hands of some professional guides. I am suggesting that at these various places there be sign-boards erected giving accurate information regarding the monuments so that we can get people to be interested much more than they are today.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: I want the Hon. Minister of Education to follow this point very carefully. It is a very small one. What are the qualifications of the Assistant Archæological Commissioner? Why is the Assistant Archæological Commissioner placed on the maximum salary within three years of his assumption of duties?

Mr. Iriyagolla: My personal opinion is that this Vote is not enough. I have travelled right round the Island where archæological surveys are being carried out. I find that they are doing work of very much more value than the money spent. If there is one officer who is conscious of his duties and who is conscious of his patriotism, it is the Archæological Commissioner. If you are to pay a grant for any valuable literary work, it should be for the literary work of the Archæological Commissioner which, I think, is now in print.

There are many more places in the Island which you have not even explored, and I personally think that this Vote should be increased. I also know

that the Archæological Commissioner, unlike many other heads of departments, personally supervises even the buildings that are being put up for the use of the various officers in various places. I personally feel that this Vote should be increased.

Mr. H. Sri Nissanka (Kurunegala): This particular Department is one for which I have a very special affection being a student of Ceylon history and being proud, as all of us are, of our great past, culture and tradition. I wish to endorse the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Dandagamuwa that this is one of those departments which has been progressively neglected in the past. I am glad to see that there is an increase in the Vote this year but I do submit that it is hardly sufficient.

The Archæological Commissioner, we are proud to be able to say, is an officer who is not only conscientious but also eminently suited to that task and a person whom it is difficult to find in the whole of Asia as far as knowledge of matters connected with Ceylon is concerned. To realize his capabilities it requires an appreciation of the tremendous difficulties that he has got to labour against to select the valuable evidence, and I trust that the Government will give him all the assistance in their power to see that this Department is worked at a high pitch of efficiency. Constructively I suggest that he be encouraged to establish national museums. I find that the Hon. Minister is engaged at the moment in a side conversation—

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I am listening.

Mr. Sri Nissanka: He should consider the establishment of museums in all places where there are excavations so that objects of value could be housed *in situ* and not removed from those places. With these observations I would not only commend the Vote to the House but ask the Hon. Minister, if possible, to see that an increase is granted and that this Department is very carefully looked after because it concerns our national heritage.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I move, That the Vote be increased by

[Hon. Mr. Nugawela.]

Rs. 1,830 in respect of sub-head 1, item 'Assistant Archæological Commissioner (Publications)' ''.

Question put, and agreed to.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 275 in respect of sub-head 1, item 'Rent Allowance' ''.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: Is there a first-class hand book available?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: There are more than one available.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to raise a question of policy. I want to ask the Hon. Minister whether he now agrees that all excavation work should be done by the Government and should not be allowed to be done by private parties.

The Chairman: That is done.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: That matter has already been settled.

Mr. Dahanayake: I raised this point because I read in the newspapers that some discussion was going on between the Hon. Minister and certain religious societies on this point. I had at the last Budget Debate expressed the view that private bodies should not be allowed to do any excavation work whatsoever.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: That is settled.

Mr. Dahanayake: If that policy is settled, yet another policy should be settled in regard to excavation work itself. There has been a certain amount of disquiet in the country in regard to certain excavations that are going on just now in the Dakshina Vihare, the tomb of Elara. We want to know what the policy of the Government is. Is it proposed to excavate every ancient monument?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: No.

Mr. Dahanayake: Then what are the ancient monuments that you propose to excavate? Do you propose to dig into

every relic chamber? Under what circumstances do you propose to excavate the ancient monuments? If such excavation leads to the hurting of religious susceptibilities on a wide scale, will you start work, will you continue the work, or what will you do? I want the Hon. Minister to tell us his policy.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: The excavation of the relic chamber was done by people very unscientifically. We are now doing it scientifically, and there is no desecration. We are just doing the earth work. No other place will be handled like that. This is a very important archaeological work.

Mr. Dahanayake: Where it has been broken into, you will excavate?

Mr. Sri Nissanka: You will have to find out what is stolen.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 1,188,002 for Head 104, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule," put, and agreed to.

Head 104, Vote 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

The Chairman: The Sitting is suspended till 2 P.M.

Sitting accordingly suspended until 2 p.m., and then resumed.

Head 105.—Ceylon Technical College Department

Vote No. 1—Salaries and expenses of the Ceylon Technical College (including scholarships), Rs. 893,780.

Sub-head 1,—Personal Emoluments, Rs. 574,071.

Dr. Perera: I want to make some observations. After a series of vicissitudes, Mr. Chairman, I think the Technical College is now on a, if I may change the metaphor, fairly even keel. I am glad the Minister has got a fairly suitable man at the head. The misfortune of the Technical College is that it has in the past been unsatisfactory for want of a proper man to be its head. The Hon. Minister has succeeded in having secured a competent person to be the head of the Technical College. I would like the Hon. Minister to indicate to us the progress he has made so far; now far his efforts to provide adequate

higher engineering training had met with success. I see there is provision here for a large number of Professors. The Hon. Minister will remember that formerly there had been serious difficulties with regard to the filling up of these various posts. I would like to know whether the Minister has succeeded in filling all these posts that have been enumerated in the Estimates on page 331.

Secondly, Sir, one general point which is of importance, I think, to most students, is that the degrees of the Technical College should be recognized by the London University; for instance, the B.Sc Engineering qualification should be recognized by the London University.

The Hon. Mr. A. Ratnayake (Minister of Food and Co-operative Undertakings): They sit for the London Examination.

Dr. Perera: I thought the Hon. Minister was hoping to develop it and form it as a part of the Engineering Branch of the University.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: A Professor has now been appointed, and he is now functioning.

Dr. Perera: The question is whether this is going to be a portion of the University to be treated as an Engineering Faculty. If that is so, then the question arises of having it recognized by the outside universities, particularly the London University.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Sir, I wish to say something really more extensive on the subject of the Technical College; and the first thing I want to say is this, I want to ask the Hon. Minister of Education to consider the proposition that the Technical College be treated at least on the same footing as we treat the University. By that I mean not merely the question of whether the Degrees that may be obtained through it on the higher levels of its studies should be paraded with the Degrees of the University, but that the very special position that this institution holds in the educational structure of our

country, particularly in relation to the expanding needs of the technical departments of Government, should be fully recognized and put into effect.

Sir, this Technical College in the first place, I find, is the subject of regular insidious attacks by the present head of the University of Ceylon. I think the Hon. Minister ought at least to pass the hint through the proper quarter that that type of somewhat ill-mannered, in my opinion, attitude to another institution is not desirable. To lump the Technical College along with things like some of these tutorials as a cram-shop is belittling a Ceylonese head of a department, who for the first time as far as we are aware, as my friend on my right has said, brought the Technical College to a position at which we can say progress has been made.

The next point I wish to make is this: Sir, the Technical College has no trained people, to use a term that was used today, at different levels. The University concentrates on the so-called higher education and the production of its own atmosphere. The Technical College, on the contrary, has to produce, on the one hand, high-grade, highly trained engineers and, on the other hand, ordinary mechanics at various levels of technique between these points. The Technical College has somehow to take in a teaching staff which will be adequate to reach that level, and yet not so far as to reach each other's toes.

Now here, Sir, I think the Hon. Minister should look into a series of matters. The first is this: I find that he has made provision for a number of Professors, especially on the engineering side. The first point I wish to make on that is this: He had provided certain salary scales. If my information is correct, and if the intention is to import good men from abroad, then these salary scales are admittedly inadequate. Sir, if we are to import men, we must import men of the very first class. Engineers are the subject of a world shortage today. Consequently, first-class engineers have to be paid for by good and appropriate salaries if we are to attract them. I understand that the class of engineers whom we wish to attract for these posts would receive something like £2,000 a year as a normal salary in Britain. It is no use our importing third-grade men.

[Dr. Colvin R. de Silva.]

We have a good number of men here although we have not an adequate supply of the first-grade men. So the salary scale has to be looked into.

Secondly, Sir, there must be a move to transfer the Engineering Faculty to the University. I would suggest that that is a matter that ought to be looked into far more carefully than on the basis of the Estimates presently made. Then the conversion of the engineering branch into a Faculty at a level in keeping with the Technical College in Colombo is, to create a meaningless duplication in the Technical College itself. Even from the angle of administration it would be ridiculous.

Then, Sir, there is another thing. It is not merely the quality of the staff that we should concern ourselves with in relation to the Technical College. I think, I am entitled to say this: That yesterday I got to know that the head of one of the technical departments telephoned to the authorities of the Technical College, requesting them to make arrangements, if possible for the training of some 160-odd people who are needed in connection with certain development schemes.

I certainly congratulate the Minister concerned, and I congratulate the Technical College for having made some arrangements for training that staff. But you will see that unless you rapidly improve, first, the staff of the College, and second, the amount of space for that College—unless you provide these two things, you will simply compel, by circumstances, the Technical College to remain at the level which it has already reached. I would, therefore, urge that the Hon. Minister take immediate steps to inquire into these matters from a broad angle, and in doing so, and in coming to decisions, particularly to keep in mind the necessity for treating this institution on the same level as the University.

Mr. Pakeman: I very strongly support the views of the last two speakers. I cannot help thinking that rather less justice has been done to the late Principal of the Technical College, Mr. Bartlam, who recently met with so tragic an end. But he was rather too inclined to turn the College into an institution for producing highly qualified

engineers. Certainly engineers are needed, and badly needed, but this should be done by a Faculty of Engineering in the University. There is today a very great need for engineers and technicians in this country—technicians who are something more than mechanics.

2.15 P.M.

The people of this country and, if I may say so, the Sinhalese in particular, take very kindly to technical work. I think this talent is by no means rare—the old tradition of craftsmanship is not dead, Sir—and, if properly trained, will attain a high level of practical skill. The point which I have mentioned has already been put rather neatly by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Sir Ivor Jennings, in a small book he has written lately. This is a book that every Member ought to possess as it is a very useful book indeed for all Members of this House and others interested in the economy of Ceylon to read.

What he would like to see stopped is any prejudice against technical work, a prejudice coming down perhaps from time immemorial which has resulted in turning away the young men of this country wholesale from technical work. He put it this way: the difficulty is not that there is no adequate human material but the social tradition and education prevent it from being utilized.

I hope the Hon. Minister will give this problem his very serious consideration, because I feel that something in the way of real organization is necessary and, possibly, overdue.

Mr. Kanagaratnam: Sir, I wish to ask two questions from the Hon. Minister. First, whether all the posts which are indicated in the Estimates for both 1947-48 and 1948-49 have been filled. I understand some of these posts have not yet been filled in a permanent capacity.

The second question is with regard to Sub-head 7—"Scholarships: Post-graduate Engineering Scholarships tenable outside Ceylon." With regard to the sum of Rs. 65,000 provided for this purpose, may I know whether any of the engineering students who passed the Final Examination at the Technical College were actually sent out for training abroad on post-graduate work.

I need not emphasize that today with the Ceylonization of the Public Service and the great dearth of technical officers, it is very necessary that the students who pass out of this College should be sent immediately after the termination of their career in the College itself, for post-graduate training outside.

You will see, Sir, that in regard to the Estimates for the Irrigation Department 13 posts have been provided which carry a very high salary of about £1,500 each for Construction Engineers. This is because these engineers are not available locally.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: Sir, if our six-year plan is to materialize, the means by which this plan will reach fruition have to come through the Technical College; and here I find provision under sub-head 12 for the acquisition of sites for provincial technical schools. I also remember the Hon. Minister, in giving his answer to the hon. Member for Kandy in regard to a Technical College, saying that he has in mind a scheme for starting technical colleges in the provincial towns, or at least in the important provincial towns of Ceylon, particularly in Galle, Kandy and Jaffna.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: In provincial areas.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: Certainly, I do not mind a technical college being established even in the wilderness of Vavuniya.

The other point on which I want to ask for some information, is in regard to sub-head 11, "Expenses in connection with Sinhalese and Tamil Shorthand." A sum of Rs. 5,000 has been provided for this purpose, and we would like to know what progress has been made with regard to the new addition to this Vote.

One point which occurred to me on my visits to the Technical College was that the time of the teaching staff of the Technical College was being wasted by a large number of teachers who are supposed to have been sent there for technical training by the Education Department. I remember that in 1946 there was a one-year course of training provided for teachers. From there they were drafted to the Training College, and after that they became qualified trained teachers.

Just two weeks ago, an interview was held by the Director of the Technical College for the selection of school teachers for training. This will presumably produce a number of half-baked educationists in the end because no useful purpose will be served by giving a mere technical training to these teachers. The only thing they will do will be to waste the time of the Professors and Lecturers.

Mr. Dahanayake: There are two points I wish to bring up before this House. We are all agreed that the Technical College needs to be expanded and the Minister intends to expand it. But I find, Sir, that the provision in the Estimates points to a different story. In the last year the Vote passed for the Technical College was Rs. 994,530. This year the Vote is as much as Rs. 1,104,200; but I see that a certain amount is deducted—ten per cent.—from the Vote, with the result that what we are requested to approve of is Rs. 893,780 only, that is, about a lakh less than the estimate for last year. Therefore, I should like to know what the Minister's intentions are and what really he has in mind, whether it is a policy of expansion or a policy of contraction.

The second point that I would like to mention to the Hon. Minister is that today the terms and conditions for Special and Engineering Apprentices have not been regulated. The result is that those who wish to start on such careers are quite at sea. I remember a Committee sitting on this question and suggesting that such terms and conditions for Special and Engineering Apprentices should be regulated. I think one of the foremost steps that needs to be taken is to regulate such conditions.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I am glad to have all the sympathy from Members opposite for the Technical College and their general appreciation of the work that that institution is doing. I quite agree that the institution is serving a very useful purpose at the moment and I am satisfied that the Head of the Technical College has a thorough grip of his responsibility and his work.

Unfortunately, Sir, we have not yet completed the re-organization of the College. We are still going through with it. For instance, the staff position is unsatisfactory. Although provision has

[Hon. Mr. Nugawela.]

been made, it is very difficult to fill these posts. In the Engineering Section three posts of Professors are needed and provided for in the Estimates. There are three vacancies but none has been filled. There are five posts of Lecturers in Engineering; two are vacant. There are three posts of Instructors in the Engineering Branches; two are vacant. So you see that, in spite of all these deficiencies, as I hope to show a little later by examination results, this institution has to be congratulated on the work that has been done. We had to employ seven students who have got through their B.Sc. London, or got the Scholarship Diploma, to fill these vacancies; and also Professor E. O. Perera who was in the P. W. D., an eminently qualified Engineer, who had been appointed to be Professor of the Engineering Faculty of the University which never materialised. As his time was being wasted, he has kindly consented to work at the Technical College until the Faculty of the University starts functioning.

On the Pure Science Section there are nine posts of Lecturers and Assistants; five are vacant. In the Commerce Section there are three posts of Lecturers and Assistant Lecturers provided in the Estimates; two are vacant. That is the position.

As regards attendance, the number of the students of Engineering, Pure Science, Arts and Commerce is approximately 1,700. Of these 1,075 were taken on in the academic session which commenced in July. Every year we have to refuse about 300 to 400 applications for admission due to lack of accommodation. We have 150 students who are being assisted by awards, bursaries, scholarships, exhibitions and equipment. Expenditure on these items amount to Rs. 50,000.

I am sorry the hon. Member for Ruwanwella is not here, as I would like to give the position with regard to the London B.Sc. 1947 Examination (Engineering Section). The results were: Part I.: First Class, 3 passes; Second Class, 4 passes; Simple passes 14. This is roughly about two-thirds of those who entered for the Examination.

London B.Sc. Part II.: First Class, 24; Referred, 3.

London Intermediate Examination: Passed, 32; Referred, 18.

College Diploma: First Class, 1, and so forth.

Then again there are Minor Supervisors. We have seven Draughtsmen. The Public Works Department is in urgent need of draughtsmen, and we are making arrangements for training 70 draughtsmen this year. We have 6 Surveyors and 12 Levellers. Of the Engineering students who passed out, roughly 40 have now been taken over by the P. W. D. and the Irrigation Department. That is the position. Even with lack of staff, we have been able to do this work. I quite agree that although the posts have been advertised overseas, suitable candidates have not offered themselves for employment. It is not merely the question of an inadequate salary, but everywhere in the world there is a great demand for technically qualified men.

Dr. Perera: That is why you must offer a higher salary.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: Exactly. These posts have been advertised and one has been filled. Of course, finally, all those things will be done; but I will wait until applications for these posts are closed, and I will consider the feasibility of an increased salary, and if I feel it is necessary, I shall offer a higher salary.

With regard to accommodation and extension of the College, the hon. Member for Wellawatta-Galkissa (Dr. Colvin R. de Silva) will note, if he refers to the Loan Fund Expenditure, Item 16, that there is provision for Rs. 450,000 for purchase of land across the canal. I have had a number of representations, including representations from my Hon. Friend, the Minister of Commerce, not to acquire this land, but I am afraid I cannot accede to that request. It is urgently necessary to relieve the shortage of accommodation at the Technical College. Already this has been hanging fire for too long a time, and we have to go ahead. The problem of accommodation is one that cannot wait.

The hon. Member for Wellawatta-Galkissa again pointed out that this Technical College caters for different levels. I quite agree. To enable skilled workmen to get their due grading, etc.,

I want something of this kind of institution but when we open our polytechnics in the outstations we hope that all their claims will be catered for. I also agree that this College should cater for higher technical studies.

2.30 P.M.

In the outstations we will have polytechnics for training labourers and mechanics. That will be a different branch. The need is for instructors at these polytechnics. Unless we have more Technical Colleges we cannot train the necessary men. The token vote for Rs. 100 under sub-head 12 is for the establishment of these polytechnics.

An Hon. Member: What about hostel accommodation?

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: Technical Colleges are built in the heart of cities, and hostel accommodation would be needed only for the Instructors. For the students, accommodation could be obtained in boarding establishments. Our immediate need is for the expansion of the present Technical College.

With regard to the question about scholarships three scholars have gone, two are going this year.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: There is a large piece of ground adjoining the Technical College.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I am acquiring some of that land [*Interruption.*] That land is reserved for Judicial buildings.

I am grateful for the suggestions made by the Appointed Member (Mr. Pake-man). He is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Technical College. They are very valuable suggestions and I shall certainly go into them.

The Chairman: A question was asked about Sinhalese and Tamil shorthand.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I cannot give a progress report at the moment. I have not got the details with me. I shall certainly go into that matter.

The Hon. Mr. Nugawela: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 100,000."

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 993,780 for Head 105, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule", put, and agreed to.

Head 105, Vote 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 109.—Minister of Labour and Social Services

Vote No. 1.—Salaries and expenses of the Office of the Minister of Labour and Social Services and his staff, Rs. 139,114.

Mr. P. G. B. Keuneman (Third Colombo Central): There are certain matters that I would like to raise under the item "Minister", concerning the policy now adopted by the departments under the Minister of Labour and Social Services.

The Labour Department is supposed to be, in theory at any rate, an impartial Department, presiding over the destinies of employers and employees, and meting out justice with an even hand. Whatever the intentions of particular officers of that Department may be, I am afraid that most of us who have had anything to do with the Department realise that under the present policy operating in the Department, the Labour Department actually exists to chain employees far more firmly to the employer than ever before.

I want to refer particularly to the way in which this Department, under the Minister, is now not even putting into force those penal sanctions against employers with which it has been armed. Under the Wages Board Ordinance, if the officers of the Department find any employer violating the labour legislation, or agreements arrived at under the Wages Boards Ordinance, they have the power to see that such persons are punished with fine or imprisonment. Nevertheless in the actual operation, it is quite clear that the Labour Department does not seem to pursue any such policy. When employers indulge in the most flagrant violations of the Labour Legislation of the country, over a long period, when it is found that arrears have not been paid, that proper wages have not been paid, officers of this Ministry run after the culprits and beg of them to pay off the arrears, they try

[Mr. Keuneman.]
to cajole them, and make supplications to them. No firm action is taken against these people.

I could quote a large number of examples. Recently there was a case, in which I was also involved, concerning a bus company. This bus company was not paying the legal overtime, for one and a half years, to its employees. When we took up the matter, we were able to establish that these people were not paying overtime, but yet even though for one and half years the people had dodged the law, the Minister's Department were prepared to give time, and even now they are not prepared to enforce the regulation.

It is very obvious to us on this side of the House that under the policy of the Minister, the Department is being operated to help the employer more than the employee.

I want also to refer to certain other questions, particularly in relation to the appointment of certain Wages Boards. The Minister several months ago gave me an assurance in this House that he would appoint a wages board for the employees in the cinema trade. I have been in correspondence with the Minister's Department, and I was told that the matter is being expedited, that it was being looked into and that the wages board would be appointed very soon. Still we have had no definite information on the matter. I hope the Minister will give further information today.

The same applies to the case of the mercantile employees. These employees have been asking for wages boards. The grievances of these men deserve the most careful consideration. This has been a most oppressed section of the people. There should be no delay in seeing that they are allowed an opportunity of getting their grievances redressed. I hope the Minister will tell me what is the position with regard to wages boards for mercantile employees.

I want now to proceed to certain sweated industries in this country, and ask the Minister what his policy is in regard to those industries. Certain industries in this country employ only a very small number of workers. The working units are extremely tiny and fragmentary. Not more than ten,

fifteen or twenty workers are found in these units. There is the soap industry, the tile industry, brick-making and the *beedi*-rolling industry.

Industries of this sort are today sweated trades. What are regarded as minimum standards of wages and conditions for other branches of industry are flagrantly violated here, because no regulations, no governmental policy, exist to protect these workers.

The argument usually brought forward is that as it involves a small number of people, it is very difficult to bring these workers under the labour laws. I think it is the duty of the Government, which says that it is interested in labour, if it is really interested in labour, to see that the sweated trades do not continue, that there is legislation enacted to see that such persons do have even the most elementary protection of the labour legislation of the country.

This has been agitating the minds of the labour movement for a long time, and there has been no assurance from Government, or its representatives, on this matter. I would like to know from the Minister what policy he has to offer to these hundreds of workers in these small establishments who are today being thoroughly sweated and exploited.

I have one or two questions on the policy regarding workers on estates and plantations. I want to refer particularly to the policy of the Minister regarding the housing of workers on estates. There is a system of what has been called "coolie lines", which has existed for a long time. The situation has become much worse than it ever had been before. As many of us are aware, several workers live in these lines in conditions in which pigs should not live. I have seen these most abominable conditions. Several years ago one of these "advisers" from England came here. I refer to Major Orde-Brown, who wrote a report on this subject. Amongst various questions he dealt with was this question of the housing of workers on estates. Major Orde-Brown recommended that the system of lines should be abolished and that there should be an attempt to build houses or cottages for these workers so that they can have not only decent places to live in but the rights of tenancy which they do not enjoy under the lines system.

We have not seen even a formal recognition of this principle from the Minister of Labour or the Cabinet. I hope the Minister will be able to tell us whether the Cabinet accepts this policy, whether they are in substantial agreement with the recommendations made by Major Orde-Brown. That would be a very good indication to the hundreds of thousands of estate workers in the Island as to what they can expect from the Minister of Labour.

I would now like to deal with certain other questions. One is the question of the right of entry into estates. This is a matter which had been taken up by the entire Trade Union movement, and if the Government states that it is anxious to encourage the growth of healthy Trade Unions in this country, as it often proclaims it does, then it must see that facilities are granted for Trade Union Officers and Trade Union members to make contact with each other, otherwise no Trade Union, healthy or unhealthy, could exist.

The position on the estates is really difficult. The workers on estates live tucked away in lines, and the planters do not concede, except when there happens to be a D.R.C. road through the estate, that Trade Union employees or visitors to these workers have the right to pass along a public path and go to the houses of the workers to speak to them. Today the fact that workers on estates are denied these rights makes them virtual slaves on the estates. These workers do not enjoy the right to have friends coming to visit them, let alone, the right to have Trade Union members visiting them.

We would like to know from the Minister what exactly is the attitude of the Department, the Ministry and the Government, if he can speak for the Government, towards this matter which is agitating the entire Trade Union movement and the vast mass of estate labourers. We would like to hear a statement from him on the position.

I want to advert now to a matter which is not included in the Estimates, but which in my opinion should be included. It involves a question of policy. I raised this question last year too in the course of the Budget Debate. I refer to the provision of *creches* for

working mothers. The Minister on that occasion told us of his experience in the labour movement, but he did not give us any special assurance on this point, apart from the statement that the matter would engage his attention. Anybody who knows conditions of women workers in factories will agree with me when I say that the situation is an intolerable one. In some estates there are places which are supposed to be *creches*. Actually, if you go there you will see a *saree* hung up on a branch and an infant dangling from the *saree*. If you go to a factory in Colombo you will see squalling in the tea leaves and dust, infants and young children which these women workers bring with them because they have no other place where they can leave them.

2.45 P.M.

That is the position. There is great talk about protecting the workers from industrial diseases, but these young infants are being subjected to all those industrial diseases to which the women workers are subject. I think if this Government is genuinely interested in the welfare of the worker, it should bring in immediate legislation to see that there are *creches* provided in all factories where a large number of women workers are employed, so that they can have their children looked after during the period of work. That is an elementary right which the working classes have to expect in any civilized country, and from any Government which calls itself democratic or progressive, and it is a regrettable fact that from this Government no such measure is forthcoming.

The last point to which I wish to refer is a question of policy, the question of the Government attitude to unemployment. I am not going to talk on the general question of unemployment, on the question of the dole or State assistance to the unemployed, because that matter is in the process of Debate in this House. I wish to refer to the way in which the Government, particularly the departments under the Ministry of Labour and Social Services, is setting about this problem.

Apparently the Government has now woken up to the idea that there are some unemployed in this country. There seems to be—I understand that

[Mr. Keuneman.]

the Hon. Prime Minister is one of the movers in this matter; I speak subject to correction—an attempt now to try and find out exactly how many people are unemployed, and how many people who are registered as unemployed are in actual fact unemployed, how many persons who are in fact employed, have their names entered in the books. Now, in order to carry out this measure, certain officers of the Department have been sent round to try and investigate this. But the net result of this policy, as I have seen it work, is that the Government is not trying to rope in and find out all the unemployed in the country; in actual practice it is only trying to whittle down the number of registered unemployed, which would give a false impression to the people of the country of the extent of unemployment. I have seen some of these officers work. I want to know from the Hon. Minister whether that is the policy of this Department. These officers go round to see a person who is registered as unemployed, that person does not happen to be in at the time, and they leave behind a message asking him to come on such and such a date. Very often this message is left behind with the little children or the wife, if she happens to be in. They do not know what is happening, and when that person comes home and is told that a Government officer came there and wanted him to come and see him, he does not know where and why. So the person does not turn up and his name is struck off the list. Such persons are struck off the list as people who have no right to claim any assistance at the hands of Government as unemployed persons.

That is not the way to make statistical investigations of unemployment. On the other hand, it is known that there are many hundreds of people who do not register themselves at the recruiting exchanges, because they know that these exchanges are an absolute farce from which they can hope for nothing. If the hon. Ministers and the Government want to find out the extent of unemployment in the City, then a much broader survey would have to be carried out, without any sort of whittling down of the figures of unemployment. On this matter I would like to hear the opinion of the Hon. Minister of Labour

and Social Services, expressing the viewpoint of this Government. There are certain other matters I would like to raise under the separate Heads, but these are matters concerning policy.

Mr. Dahanayake: The hon. Third Member for Colombo Central referred to the census of the unemployed that had been ordered by the Hon. Prime Minister. I noticed the Hon. Prime Minister vigorously denied that the position as described by the hon. Member for Colombo Central was correct. I have it from one of the Staff Officers of the Labour Department that the direction that was given to the inspectors who went out to check the lists was that the names of the list should be verified, but that no new names should be added.

Mr. Keuneman: I was also told that, Sir.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: Absolutely wrong.

Mr. Dahanayake: I was given that information by a very highly placed Staff Officer of the Labour Department. Whether that information was or was not correct, the fact remains that the inspectors who went round, compiling a new list for the Prime Minister's information, did drop certain names and added no new names. If the Prime Minister really wants an unemployment survey of the Island, he should not wait for the unemployed to stand for hours in a queue at a labour exchange, but he should direct the Revenue Officers, and through the Revenue Officers, the headmen, with the co-operation of others interested in the matter, to compile a house-to-house list of the unemployed in this country. That has not been attempted. If that was the intention of the Hon. Prime Minister, let us be thankful for small mercies, and let us hope that ere long such a list would be compiled.

I want to deal with another aspect of this unemployment question. One notices the large sums of money allocated for unemployment relief, but our experience in the past has been that the money that has been voted by the Legislature has not been spent as

In 1946-47 a sum of Rs. 114,900 was provided in the Estimates for unemployment relief. Of this sum, only Rs. 6,595.45 was expended. In June of 1947 a sum of Rs. 5,000,000 was set apart for the relief of unemployment. According to the figures I have before me from the Administration Report of the Commissioner of Labour, for 1947, the total expenditure in respect of the financial year was only Rs. 128,461.96—that is a little more than one-fiftieth of the amount voted. It is not sufficient for the Government to allocate money; we ask that the Government should provide the schemes on which these moneys are to be expended.

On this matter, I will not throw the whole blame on the Hon. Minister of Labour. After all, the Hon. Minister of Labour and his Departments are there to provide the labour; the schemes must be evolved by the Cabinet as a whole; the schemes must be put into effect through the close co-operation of all the Government departments—

The Chairman: This whole question of unemployment is being discussed now on a Motion, the Debate on which stands adjourned.

Mr. Dahanayake: I am discussing policy.

The Chairman: It is just the same thing.

Mr. Dahanayake: Do you suggest, Sir, that a Motion about the dole is the same thing as the policy in regard to unemployment?

The Chairman: Well, it is six of one and half a dozen of the other; it is just the same. The hon. Third Member for Colombo Central was good enough to say that he would not dilate very much on it. But we are now—

Mr. Keuneman: I said I would not dilate on the question of the dole.

The Chairman: Whether you want the dole or not, you are discussing the whole question of unemployment.

Mr. Dahanayake: As a matter of fact, I gave notice of a cut of Rs. 10 on the salary of the Hon. Minister mainly in

order to indicate to the Minister that we are not satisfied with the measures he has taken.

The Chairman: Before this came up, the hon. Member should have withdrawn the Motion that stands against his name, because I cannot allow the same matter to be discussed anticipating that Motion.

Mr. Dahanayake: That Motion is already being debated; it is difficult to withdraw a Motion that is already being debated.

The Chairman: I am afraid I cannot allow the hon. Member to discuss this matter now.

Mr. Dahanayake: In any case, the question that is worrying us at the moment is that the provisions under the Estimates do not grant the relief that we have all expected from the Hon. Minister of Labour.

The Chairman: Go on to some other point now, please!

Mr. Dahanayake: The hon. Third Member for Colombo Central referred to the policy of the Department in regard to prosecutions for the violation of regulations connected with the work of wages boards. I am prepared to admit that the Labour Department has done good work, but I must say that Department has been directed in the wrong way by the Cabinet or by the Minister; because on this question of underpayments by various factories, firms and estates, the Administration Report of the Commissioner of Labour, 1947, states in paragraph 135 as follows:

"There was no change in the policy of the Department in the matter of prosecutions for infringements of the Ordinance. Prosecutions were entered only on failure, after every endeavour had been made, to recover short payments or to correct the employer by departmental procedure."

What is wrong is the policy. The departmental officers are not responsible for the policy. The Hon. Minister and his colleagues must hold themselves responsible for the policy, and I understand, on very good authority, that the Department of Labour has been instructed in each and every case to give every possible chance and any

[Mr. Dahanayake.] number of chances to the defaulting employers. [Interruption]—That is what the Commissioner of Labour says in his report. The Hon. Minister without Portfolio does not understand plain English, Sir.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: It looks as if the hon. Member for Galle does not understand it. That is not what is said there. Read the English again.

Mr. Dahanayake: We want an alteration of this policy. We ask that in all cases of infringements of the Ordinance, prosecutions should be entered. We go further. We ask that the Department should keep a lookout for these offending employers, not merely regarding the offences they commit from day to day, but also in regard to the refund of under-payments.

The position today is that the Labour Department acts very much like a Good Samaritan towards the employer alone. The employer is given any number of chances. Thereafter the employer undertakes to refund the money. I know a large number of cases in which the employer's undertaking was nothing but a ruse to deprive the worker again of the refund of the arrears that were due to him. The employer undertakes to pay back the money, and what does he do? He calls up the worker and gets him, under duress, to sign a receipt. We ask that the Department and the Minister should take note of the various ruses that are being adopted by crafty employers. In every case where an under-payment has been detected, we demand a prosecution, and if a refund is made, it should be made to the worker through the Department, and not through the employer.

3.0 P.M.

There are one or two points to which I wish to refer on the subject of industrial diseases. Many of the workers in this country find it impossible, even through the existing machinery of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, to get their dues from the employers. In the printing presses of the country, lead poisoning is a very common industrial disease. I have yet to hear of anyone in a private printing firm who has been

able to get compensation for lead poisoning. When cases are taken up before the Workmen's Compensation Board, invariably the workmen are unable to prove that their sicknesses are directly attributable to the work which they are engaged in doing. Therefore, I ask that there should be legislation to compel employers to carry out a pre-employment medical examination of the workers in many of the trades in which industrial diseases occur.

With regard to the working of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, one finds that one officer of the Department is detailed to do all the work. In the year 1947, there were no less than 170 inquiries, and, as a result of just handing over the entire work to one officer, these cases are outstanding for the last two or three years with the result that the workers have not been able to obtain any relief. It is necessary that the Hon. Minister should strengthen this Department by the addition of one or two more officers to carry out these inquiries.

I shall speak of public assistance under the appropriate Head, but I now wish to draw the attention of the Hon. Minister to the present policy of the Government by which public assistance is rendered only in those areas in which the Poor Law does not operate. Thus, the Government deprives the people of towns like Colombo, Kandy and Galle, —and next year in three more towns when three additional municipalities are constituted—from receiving public assistance.

The Chairman: The hon. Member can take it up under the proper Head.

Mr. Dahanayake: I am going on a question of policy.

The Chairman: The hon. Member can deal with the question of policy when it comes under that Head.

Mr. Dahanayake: I am entitled to question the policy of the Hon. Minister. I am not challenging the detailed working of the department. All that I want to point out is that a section of the country is shut out from the scheme of the Hon. Minister and that that should receive his early attention.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena (Kotte): May I bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister the utter chaos that exists in his particular Ministry? We find that many employment exchanges have been opened throughout the country but the work that has been going on through the officers of the employment exchanges is utterly unsatisfactory. I should say that people resent the work that is being done in these exchanges. I find that, when workers who are unemployed go there to get some type of relief by way of securing a job, they are asked to come there not once or twice but over a hundred times. They have to go there many times in order to get some sort of employment. They are first asked to register themselves. They do register; then, they are asked to come in three week's time to get the registered card sealed.

The Chairman: That matter also comes under a different Head. You speak about policy, but when you come to the Vote you want to speak again. You can speak on the general policy but not on particular matters like that. When you speak on a particular matter, that does not mean that you can meet a particular point and then take it up again. There is an item for it. Will the hon. Member take it up under that item?

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: That is inadequate to meet the needs of the unemployed and the people who need some sort of relief in this country. I find that happening not in the employment exchange bureau alone, but in cases where disputes have to be dealt with by the Labour Department, it has acted always in favour of the vested interests. Whenever we want to get a thing done, there is always some sort of obstruction by the Labour Department. Sir, in many instances, when the motor workers had gone to get the wages which had not been paid to them by the motor employers, they found that, even after having ten to fifteen conferences with the Labour Department their dues were not settled. But, when once it was settled, when the arrears and so on were to be paid to the workers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Galle said, they were advised to go to the employer who

paid them openly in the presence of the Labour Officer. But, later on, under the threat of expulsion, the money that they received had to be refunded.

The Chairman: There again the hon. Member can bring it up under a separate Head. It will come under the next Head.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: On the question of old-age pensions.

The Chairman: That comes under a different Head, and besides, there is a Motion on old-age pensions.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: I should like the Hon. Minister to make a special survey of Colombo and the suburban areas regarding the number of people who would generally need some sort of relief. When one gets up at night and walks from the Pettah to Borella, say between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m., he will find hundreds of people sleeping outside on the doorsteps of houses without any protection or any provision made for them. There is no provision even to shield them from the rain. This is the state of affairs in the City of Colombo. Then what happens? The Police, in order to make the Ordinance operative, come up to these people, pull them out and lock them behind the walls of the Welikada Prison or they are sent to the concentration camps at Angoda. This is the state of affairs that exists.

Then, with regard to the general policy adopted by the Department, after registration of the workers, it is for them to give jobs. The earlier policy enunciated by the Department of Social Services was that people who are registered would be given jobs.

The Chairman: The registration of unemployed persons comes under another Head.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: I am speaking about relief works. If, say, there are 100 unemployed people in the Kolonnawa, or Wellawatta-Galkissa areas, these people should be given preference at a work started in that area. That policy has not been adopted by the Department yet.

[Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena.]

I should like to say a word or two in general regarding the peasantry in the country who need a great deal of help through this Department. Off and on their crops fail and off and on their huts get washed away by floods.

The Chairman: There is another entire vote on that too. Practically everything the hon. Member has in mind is supplied under various other Heads. All that the hon. Member can criticize under this Vote is the conduct of the business of the Department.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: There is one more point on which I should like to speak. It is regarding the right to enter into estates and to hold meetings.

The Chairman: That matter has already been dealt with by the hon. Third Member for Colombo Central.

Mr. S. A. Silva (Agalawatta): I wish to refer to a conference which was held by the Hon. Minister and the lawyers of owners of rubber estates.

Mr. Dahanayake: That was a conference held by the Hon. Minister.

Mr. S. A. Silva: The Hon. Minister held a conference of the delegates of owners and employees of rubber estates with regard to the dismissal of estate workers from rubber estates because of depreciating prices. At that conference, we brought it to the notice of the Hon. Minister that because the estates were not paying now, even if the estates were being run at a loss, it was not proper for the estate authorities to dismiss labour for that reason alone. We suggested that, if it is proved that estates could not be run by employing the full complement of labour, those estates be taken over by the Government.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: And be worked at a loss?

Mr. S. A. Silva: I should like to know from the Hon. Minister whether he has taken any steps to pass legislation against the wholesale dismissal of labour from estates.

Mr. Motha: There is only one point to which I should like to refer. It is with regard to prosecutions for offences committed by employers. In this connection, I do wish to stress that the Department should be directed by the Hon. Minister to take a more serious view of the question. It is also necessary, and I believe the Labour Officers themselves will confirm what I say, that there is this necessity for legislation. We have frequently made complaints of short payments, of no name being given, and so on, to labourers who have worked on estates. It takes considerable time to arrange a conference to inquire into these matters. And, because the Labour officers have no power to compel the attendance of the employer to a conference or to an inquiry, these officers find themselves in a helpless position. The cause is that they are short of personnel. The only power which the present legislation gives them is the power to visit and inspect the books on the estates. Well, in certain cases, these people have to travel fifteen, twenty or even thirty miles for the purpose of inspecting the estate books. They may probably take the whole day. If legislation is passed, which will compel the attendance of the employers on credible information that an offence has been committed against any section or provision, which is in favour of the workers, which would ensure to them that wages and other welfare conditions will be met, that is all that we want.

3.15 P.M.

We would also ask the Hon. Minister whether, in view of the fact that social security is the objective in the sense that the well-being of the common man, his earning capacity, his security of income, security of job and full employment—all converge upon the one objective of social security—he has a policy whereby even by gradual stages we can approach the state in which every man, woman and child in this country can be assured of his income and of his meals being provided for.

Mr. Iriyagolla: Will I be in Order if I make a few remarks regarding the policy of the Hon. Minister in regard to relief works under Social Services?

The Chairman: Why not take it up under the particular Vote?

Mr. Iriyagolla: Once we come to the particular Vote we will not get an opportunity of firing because the big guns will shut us out.

The Chairman: Even the small guns will be given a chance to fire.

Mr. J. A. Martensz (Appointed Member): Much has been said in the course of the last few minutes in regard to the incidence of lead poisoning in printing establishments. A statement was made, I believe, by the hon. Member for Galle in a general way. I took the trouble to ring up two prominent printing firms who have a considerable business, and I have been authorized to state that in both those firms they have a doctor who examines any worker who complains of any illness and that no single case has been brought to the notice of the doctor of lead poisoning. If such a case had been brought to their notice, it would have received their immediate attention and all the necessary action taken by the employers to pay the necessary claim under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance and everything possible would have been done to give adequate compensation. I feel that I should make a statement in fairness to the printing firms because a general statement should not be allowed to pass without being challenged.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: Is not the Minister replying?

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: Not necessary. If he replies, there will be another discussion.

The Chairman: You talk on the general policy and leave the other Heads.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: You can deal with the hon. Member for Galle.

The Hon. Mr. T. B. Jayah (Minister of Labour and Social Services): The hon. Third Member for Colombo Central (Mr. Keuneman) in his usual way started by saying that he had serious charges to make against the Labour Department.

Mr. Keuneman: Against your policy.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Or against the policy the Minister is operating. But when he mentioned certain facts connected with the administration of the Labour Department and with the alleged policy of the Minister, he somehow or other could not come out with a single fact which could bear out the case which he made so vehemently.

Mr. Keuneman: Why not?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: He attacked the Department for not being impartial. He attacked the partiality of the Labour Department in dealing with certain matters.

Mr. Keuneman: I say that the policy is one of partiality and not that the officials are partial.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I only made it a bit milder. And then he stated that although the Wages Boards have been set up to deal with matters as between the employer and the employee, the Labour Department did not carry out the law as it should do, because somehow or other it was partial towards the employer. And that charge was reiterated by the hon. Member for Galle although he endeavoured to pay a compliment to the Labour Department; and in doing so he found fault with the Hon. Minister without Portfolio for his lack of knowledge of English.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: Let him go back to Richmond College.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Either the hon. Third Member for Colombo Central has not read the Administration Report of the Commissioner of Labour or the hon. Member for Galle does not understand the finer points of the language of the Report. It will be clear when I read what the Department has exactly done in this matter. This is what the Administration Report of the Labour Commissioner says at page 28, paragraph 138:

"There was no change in the policy of the Department in the matter of prosecutions for infringement of the Ordinance."

[Hon. Mr. Jayah.]

There was nothing vague about it. The Report goes on to state:

"Prosecutions were entered only on failure, after every endeavour had been made, to recover short payments or to correct the employer by departmental procedure."

Mr. Dahanayake: That is what we object to.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: It is common sense procedure. The Report says:

"Sixteen prosecutions were instituted for various offences under the Ordinance and convictions were obtained in twelve cases. Four cases were pending at the end of the year under review."

Mr. Dahanayake: How many cases were detected?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The Report states:

"300 cases of enforced deductions from the wages were detected"

Mr. Dahanayake: Out of 300 cases only 16 prosecutions!

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I am in a position to state that I have gone into a number of these cases. Representations were made to me by employers that these Inspectors of Labour were somewhat hard on them. But what actually happened? It is quite clear that the Inspectors were doing their duty, and I do not think you can at any time question their impartiality. It is very unfortunate that hon. Members should question the impartiality of the officers of the Department who are trying to do their duty in a matter—

Mr. Keuneman: I am not questioning the impartiality of the officers but the policy of the Department.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Our partiality towards the employer! There is no question of partiality here; if at all, it is the other way about. We are more inclined to help the workers because we know that they are in a helpless position sometimes.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: That is why you are there.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Hon. Members must not make rash statements. If

there is any particular case, I have always told them that they could bring such cases to my notice.

Then he said that there are certain trades with a paucity of workers and that we allow them to sweat. How easy it is for the hon. Member to make statements like that! We have already established 38 Wages Boards dealing with a number of trades and even the small trades, to which the hon. Member referred to are receiving attention.

I have already appointed a Wages Board to deal with the cinema business. In fact when the hon. Member asked me about this the other day, I said we were waiting till the members of the Board gave their consent to function on the Board. We are taking every possible step to see that the employees are properly treated.

With regard to mercantile employees, it is a very difficult question, but I have not been deterred by that fact; there are obviously so many difficulties connected with that question. I am determined to see that something is done. In fact it is more than a question of minimum wages where the mercantile services are concerned. I want to see whether we cannot evolve a satisfactory salary scheme that will be acceptable both to the employer and to the employee. After all, there is no use carrying out projects which will not be acceptable to an important section of employers who have much to do with the payment of salaries.

Then with regard to the right of entry into estates to see workers there. I think an hon. Member raised this question; if I am to answer that question in the way I should, I have to blame the hon. Member and those who think like him for any little trouble they have experienced. I do not think estate proprietors are so bad. I do not think it is difficult for people with peaceful intentions to visit estates. But if the intention of certain leaders is to create trouble in the estates, to put up the workers against the employers, then I think they have no right to expect better treatment. But from a theoretical point of view, I can assure my hon. Friend that the right of entry would not normally be questioned. I quite agree with him that estate voters should be in a position to know what is going

on. It is certainly not right that difficulties should be placed in the way of these workers. But I do not think there will be much of a difficulty if hon. Members, who are rather keen on emphasizing this aspect so much, will also do their duty by allowing the labourers to go in the way they are going. After all, estate labourers are not such innocent men. We know the number of strikes in which they have been involved and the amount of trouble which they have given. They stand up for their rights. I do not think they need the helping hand of some of the leaders who want to make out that without them these labourers will be neglected. No; they know their rights and I think, when the occasion demands it, they exercise their rights. That is why I instructed, as soon as I assumed office, that if at any time there was any trouble between workers and employers the officers of the Department should place their services at the disposal of both parties. There is absolutely no difficulty.

I am sure the leaders of the Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union or leaders of any other Union would not have anything to say against the officers of the Department who deal with such questions.

3.30 P.M.

Regarding matters connected with unemployment, I do not know whether I should really say anything much because already the subject has been discussed. But one thing is clear. The Government has taken a series of steps to see that the unemployed are really found employment. During the last three or four months we have succeeded in formulating a number of schemes which will give employment to a fairly large number, and if all the schemes that we have in view are put into effect, very soon a large percentage of the unemployed will be found employment. That is why I made it a point to convene a meeting between the Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments so that steps might be taken to expedite matters. I myself was not satisfied with the progress that was being made. The Hon. Prime Minister was very keen that the question should be tackled promptly, and that is

why an island-wide survey of the unemployed has been made. But unfortunately, though that has been done, yet what is the inference drawn of what has been done? The hon. Third Member for Colombo Central remarked that what we are doing was that we are trying to "whittle down". I do not know whether it was he or the hon. Member for Galle who said that. It was the hon. Member for Galle who said that he heard it from a very high authority—

Mr. Dahanayake: From a Staff Officer.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah:—a Staff Officer who is in charge of this particular branch—the Colombo Central Exchange. His instructions were—

Mr. Dahanayake: Please read out the instructions.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: His instructions were definite. They are that the register should be carefully checked. The people who do not deserve to be kept—naturally their names were struck off, and the people whose names were not in the register—their names were included.

Mr. Keuneman: Not in the register.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Well, the hon. Member seems to be knowing more than the Staff Officer who is in charge of the Department. If the hon. Member goes round and sees it for himself, he will find that something definite has been done and I would suggest to him that we are acting in a very sincere manner. I think it is a libel on the work that is being done in this connection.

I do not know whether there are any other points.

Mr. Keuneman: What about estate housing?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Yes, even there, the hon. Member is not in possession of the actual facts. He must not think that he is the only man who visits the estates.

I do not want them to be called "cooly lines" because there is a revised type plan approved by the Medical Department in connection with

[Hon. Mr. Jayah.] these new houses. The cottages that are being put up as a result of the report of Major Orde-Brown are semi-detached cottages. All lines constructed at present are modelled on the revised type plan.

Of course, you cannot have all these new housing schemes carried out in a day. These things are being done in a number of estates. I myself have had the occasion, before I became Minister, to visit some of these so-called lines. In fact, they are comparatively much better than some of the houses that we find in Colombo. That clearly shows that we are doing everything that could be done.

In regard to occupational diseases, to which the Member for Galle referred, in fact, we have got persons specially qualified in this subject, like Dr. Tiruchelvam. I would advise the hon. Member for Galle to visit him, well even to consult him, if necessary, and to visit the exhibition at Ananda College which is to take place on the 16th. There is a special room there set apart to show the great work done by Dr. Tiruchelvam.

Mr. Dahanayake: You ask us to go and see work that has not been done.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The hon. Member is a much more qualified man on the subject.

I have gone into this matter fully and am satisfied that the work is being done very well.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Sir, I wish to have an opportunity to state in open House before hon. Members why it is that we, on these benches, intend for the first time in the course of this Appropriation Bill in Committee, to divide on the question of a Minister's salary.

The Chairman: It has happened on very many occasions previously.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: But on this particular occasion it is better to know why; and I want a couple of minutes to explain whatever the reasons may have been for the previous divisions.

Never, Sir, I think, in the experience of this Parliament has a Minister permitted himself to a tone and manner and contempt of respect that deserve reprehension as on the present occasion. To this extent, Sir, it is no pleasure even for Members behind him, the hon. Members sitting behind him, to see these diluted actions on the part of a Minister. The Hon. Minister of Labour informed the Members of the Opposition that he questions the right of entry into the estates of labour organizers. His view is that we should continue to depend upon the so-called "goodwill of the employer" based upon his concept of good behaviour in relation to the very men who are exploiting labour to the very limit. I say, Sir, the Hon. Minister is guilty of dereliction of duty.

The Chairman: I do not think that the hon. Member is entitled to use such language.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: I do not know which section of my speech you refer to.

The Chairman: To the very last sentence of yours—"guilty of dereliction of duty". I cannot allow the hon. Member to use such words.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Then, Sir, I withdraw those words and put it in another way. In fact, there is no way for the Members of the Opposition to express their disapproval, to express their utter disapprobation, their sentiments of the policy to which the Hon. Minister of Labour now gave utterance except to divide on the vote on this subject.

Sir, there are one or two other matters to which it is necessary to advert. I would advise the Hon. Minister, despite his grey hairs, to take a lesson from the younger members of the Cabinet, for instance, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture or the Hon. Minister of Education who stood up to criticisms and met them with facts. He would then find things easy. He should know how to hold a good position. He should know how to tackle the unemployment problem more thoroughly. He should know how to reduce a great percentage of unemployment in the country in a given period. Sir, the Hon. Minister will have to labour

harder in order to carry this Cabinet upon his shoulders. On his work and upon his record will the Cabinet be judged, more than the work and the record of any other Minister like the Minister of Agriculture. If he is going to look at the problem of labour from the point of view of labour officers, from the angle of welfare officers, if he does not understand that "men wrestle in battle against their problems when there is nothing else to do," then before the end of this Parliament, life will teach him a bitter lesson, which he will have to apply in his policy. In the meantime, I trust that it would be in Order for me to say this, that even from a Government like this, a Cabinet like this, by actions so reactionary, so nakedly reactionary, we shall have the shame of having been in this Parliament.

Question put, "That the vote be reduced by Rs. 10 in respect of sub-head 1".

The Committee divided (under Standing Order 48): Ayes, 22; Noes, 41.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 139,114 for Head 109, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule," put and agreed to.

Head 109, Vote 1, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 110.—Commissioner of Labour

Vote No. 1.—Salaries and Expenses of the Department of the Commissioner of Labour, Rs. 3,168,161.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to point out to the Hon. Minister that while we generally agree that the Department of Labour has done good work, we understand with regret that very recently there has crept in to the Department a sense of frustration, despondency and discontentment. It was only the other day, Sir, that the Hon. Prime Minister, when he was an honoured guest at a dinner, made a remark that Inspectors of the Labour Department formed the backbone of the country.

3.45 P.M.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: I do not remember it.

Mr. Dahanayake: Whatever the Hon. Prime Minister says, we on this side of the House are agreed that the Inspectors

of the Labour Department do very onerous and responsible duties which, up to this point, within the narrow U.N.P. policy, they have rendered to the best of their ability. Therefore, Sir, it is a sad commentary to have to state that these Inspectors who form, in the words of the Hon. Prime Minister, "the backbone of the country" are today a sadly disillusioned and discontented lot.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: I do not think I said that.

The Chairman: You must not pay serious attention to what was said after dinner.

Mr. Dahanayake: If that is so, the Prime Minister can contradict it here.

The reason for this discontentment is that these Inspectors, the majority of whom are graduates, and were recruited very carefully by the Department about five or six years ago, have been trying for a number of years to better their prospects in the Department. Their work is of a specialized nature and the Inspectors, most of whom, again I repeat it, are graduates, hope in time to become Assistant Commissioners of Labour.

The agitation for such an improvement in their prospects lasted for a few years when, in May 1947, the then Commissioner of Labour, who today happens to be the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, gave the Inspectors the following undertaking. This is what the then Commissioner of Labour wrote to the Secretary of the Association of Inspectors of the Labour Department:—

"It will be my normal policy to recruit from the Inspectorate to the Assistant Commissioner's Grade, but such recruitment will be purely on merit and suitability as in Class III. of the Ceylon Civil Service."

That assurance was given in May, 1947, and the agitation on the part of the Inspectors stopped for a while last year. Recently, Sir, with the expansion of the Department and with the officers of the Department being entrusted with more and greater duties, it became necessary to recruit a certain number of Assistant Commissioners. But how was this recruitment made?

It is a sad fact that the assurance of May 1947, was forgotten, that the claims of the graduates and the other

[Mr. Dahanayake.] experienced men who had served as Inspectors were overlooked, and that the Department recruited a number of Assistant Commissioners of Labour from outside the ranks of those in the Department. When those recruitments from outside were examined in detail they showed that no regard had been paid even to the feelings of the men over whose heads these new men were selected. Many of the new Assistant Commissioners of Labour who were recruited were not graduates, and one of them was an individual who had been considered not fit to be a permanent Inspector, but was nevertheless recruited as a new Assistant Commissioner of Labour.

This matter was brought to the notice of the Head of the Department, of the Permanent Secretary and of the Hon. Minister of Labour on several occasions through several representations, but nothing has been done to allay the fears of this very deserving body of men that their very genuine claims are being overlooked by the authorities.

Now, Sir, what has been done cannot be undone; but we ask the Government for an assurance that this type of blundering will not be repeated. We ask that the Inspectors of the Labour Department who have done good work in the past should be permitted to continue to do good work without having feelings of frustration forced upon them. We ask, in short, Sir, the Minister to tell us that the assurance given to the Inspectors of this Department in May, 1947, will be carried out in the future.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: There is one thing I wish to mention with regard to the assurance that was asked from the Minister. I am sure my good Friend knows that according to the Constitution, promotions and transfers are not in the hands of the Minister. We are not expected to bring any influence to bear on the conduct of the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Keuneman: This need not go to the Public Service Commission.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: The powers have been delegated to the Commission, and I do not think that the Hon. Minister can give an under-

taking, because it is not our intention to influence the Public Service Commission in the matter of appointments.

Mr. Dahanayake: In reply to that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to state that the question is one of policy. If the Cabinet says, "Recruit from outside," the Public Service Commission will proceed to do it; if the Cabinet, on the other hand, says, "Recruit internally," the Public Service Commission will do so. It is only the question of whether A, B, C or D is recruited, that will have to be decided by the Public Service Commission. But the policy, as to whether appointment should be from outside or by process of internal promotion, is one for decision by the Minister.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: No, Sir. I can assure the hon. Member that it is not so. The Permanent Secretary can only deal with normal promotions and transfers which do not involve an addition in salary.

A certain reference was made to me with regard to a statement which I am supposed to have made after dinner. But I should have thought that by this time hon. Members would have come to realize that any statement made by me even after dinner should be taken more seriously than statements that are made after dinner by some others. Nevertheless, I might say with regard to the matter under reference that I never said that the Labour Inspectors formed the backbone of this country, but I remember saying that the way in which they conduct their business can be a means of bringing about good feeling between labour and capital, and that they were functioning in a capacity of great importance to the country.

Mr. Keuneman: Referring to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Galle on the dissatisfaction and alarm among the officers of this Department, Sir, I would like to say that it is not only among the Inspectors but also among the clerical staff and those lower down in the administrative ladder that a feeling has come that there is something seriously wrong in the administration of this Department.

I do not know whether the Hon. Minister is aware that there is a general feeling among the clerks in this Department that very often far too stringent punishments are meted out for what are after all very minor offences. I do not know whether the officers concerned are now trying to import into the Department the policy of the U.N.P. outside it; but I would like to bring to the attention of this House one particular case which, according to information in my possession, seems to have received rather harsh treatment and which, I hope, will not continue.

This is a case concerning one of the clerks of the Department who used to be in the habit of trying to find out what the time was—obviously a man very much interested in his time. One day he phoned up the telephonist at the Control Office of the Exchange and, instead of asking the very normal question, “What is the time?”—this clerk apparently was somewhat of a wag with a peculiar sense of humour—he asked the young lady concerned, “How far have we progressed towards the grave so far?” Apparently, this young lady was not quite sure of the exact meaning of this request, and she reported him to his superior officer.

Undoubtedly the young man was rather flippant; but subsequently apologies were made, and one would have expected the matter would have been settled between the two parties to the dispute. Instead of that, however, I find that this young man has been punished by having his increment stopped for six months for such a minor matter. That punishment seems to be unnecessarily harsh, and obviously it is not a thing which is going to encourage good feeling among the clerks in the Department. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister—I suppose he is aware of these matters—to see that this sort of punishment for trivial matters is not indulged in.

The other point which is engaging the attention of the minor staff and the clerks of the Department of the Hon. Minister is the question of their canteen.

This Labour Department is supposed to go round and advise and organize all other Government Departments on how to run canteens; but it is pointed out that in the very canteen of this Labour

Department there are no chairs for anybody to sit down. On the theory, Sir, that charity should begin at home, I think the welfare which they are now trying to spread to the other Departments might very well have begun with the employees of the Labour Department itself.

Mr. Cholmondeley Goonewardene (Kalutara): I wish to say a few words about the enforcement of the Shops Act.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: That comes under the next Head.

Mr. Dahanayake: We are dealing with sub-head 1.

The Chairman: Sub-head 1 is really the working of the Department. I do not mind dealing with any sub-head under this Vote. There is nothing else.

Mr. Cholmondeley Goonewardene: It is a mistake today to think that the Shops Act is being enforced in various towns in this Island. It is only certain provisions of the Shops Ordinance of 1938 that are in force. Those are the provisions with regard to the closing hours, the number of hours of work, and the question of holidays with pay.

One of the most important provisions, Sir, with regard to the Shops Act is that no employee should reside within the premises of a business. This provision, however, was not enforced during the war on account of the special conditions that prevailed at that time. This concession, one would have thought, would have been withdrawn when hostilities were over, but we observe that that concession is being still afforded to employers, with the result that it has become extremely difficult for Inspectors of Labour to detect people working after hours when their place of residence is also on the premises of the employer.

There are certain other provisions, too, Mr. Chairman, in the Shops Act in regard to sanitation and other matters which are not in force. I brought up this matter during the last Budget Debate, too, but I find that no action has been taken during the past year.

Even with regard to those provisions of the Shops Act which are already in force, we find that most of the rules

[Mr. Cholmondeley Goonewardene.]
are honoured more in the breach than
in the observance. This is a well-known
fact.

The Chairman: The Sitting is
suspended till 4.30 p.m.

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

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Cholmondeley Goonewardene:
When we adjourned for tea I was
referring to the Shops Ordinance.
It is within the knowledge of
Members of this House that shop
workers are compelled to work beyond
the legal hours behind closed doors. The
law on this point can never be effectively
enforced until the provision which pro-
hibits employers from allowing their
employees to reside in the premises is
enforced. There are thousands of shop
employees in the Island who undergo
hardships on this account. I cannot
understand the failure on the part of the
Minister of Labour to take action.

The facts I have referred to are borne
out in the Administration Report of the
Commissioner of Labour for 1947. I
am at a loss to understand why the Min-
istry and the Department of Labour
should be so anxious to obtain the
“Co-operation” of employers in en-
forcing this regulation. Every attempt
on the part of the Government to reduce
the working hours of an employee in an
attack on the capitalist, and to expect
the co-operation of employers in a move
detrimental to their interests is, to say
the least, absurd.

If the Ministry is really serious about
limiting the number of hours of work
of the employees, it must see that the
regulations are enforced in spite of any
opposition it may have to meet from
the employer.

I would like to say a few words on
the Wages Boards Ordinance and the
decisions under that Ordinance prescrib-
ing minimum wages, and also on the
provision requiring employees to work
a certain minimum number of hours,
before they are entitled to the minimum
wage. Because of this provision a num-
ber of employees today are not being
paid the minimum wage. Employers
resort to various devices to circumvent

the law on this point. One such device
is to get an undertaking from the em-
ployee that he is not prepared to work
more than two or three hours a day.
This undertaking most employees give
through fear of dismissal. I have re-
ported a number of cases of this type to
the Department of Labour, but I find
that the Department is reluctant to
launch prosecutions against the employ-
ers. I do not say that this is due to
any partiality on the part of the officers
concerned towards the employers. I
have been told by the officer concerned
that they really fear—

The Chairman: This matter was fully
argued, and a reply was given. Figures
were given of the number of prosecu-
tions and convictions.

Mr. Cholmondeley Goonewardene:
I am referring to the law on this parti-
cular point. I am told that the officers
are afraid to enter prosecutions because
the law on the subject is defective.
They fear that if a prosecution were to
fail it would create a bad effect on other
employers. It is time that the Minister
took the matter up and reviewed the
legislation on this point so as to avoid
the provisions of this Ordinance being
circumvented by unscrupulous employ-
ers. There is no point in appointing
Wages Boards and empowering them to
make decisions if there is no effective
machinery for carrying out these
decisions.

We have raised this matter time and
again and we hope that the Minister will
take very early action to have the law
on this point reviewed so that it could
be made thoroughly effective for enforc-
ing the minimum wages that employees
are entitled to under this Ordinance.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to refer to
one or two points not already
touched upon. I want to ask the Min-
ister to look into the duties entrusted
to the Registrars of Servants. These
officers are found in only six towns of
the Island, Colombo, Kandy, Nuwara
Eliya, Hatton, Trincomalee and Diya-
talawa. These Registrars have to main-
tain a register of all domestic servants.
The idea of maintaining this register of
domestic servants, or of those who wish
to become domestic servants is an old

one, but the idea has not been extended to seeing that the lot of the domestic servant is a happy one.

I want to point out to the Minister that the domestic servant in this country is a thoroughly neglected, uncared for, individual who is completely at the mercy of his master. The law relating to the compulsory attendance at school of children below a certain age is circumvented in cases where children are taken on as domestic servants.

Wages are not paid regularly to these domestic servants. Some employers pretend to accumulate the wages of their servant and kick the poor fellow out on the slightest pretext. There have been instances of little boys running away and becoming lost to their parents and to the world. Nobody knows where they are today. Thousands of these little boys and girls originally recruited as domestic servants, today roam the streets of Colombo.

I want to ask the Minister whether he cannot extend the scope of work of the Registrar of Servants so as to ensure to all domestic servants some of the ordinary amenities of life to which they are entitled in any civilized society. In particular, I ask the Minister to see that even if a child is engaged in domestic work, it is not deprived of the education to which it is entitled.

I want to speak a few words on the question of maternity benefits administered through the Department of the Commissioner of Labour——

Mr. Subasinghe: Social Services.

The Hon. Mr. A. Ratnayake: The next Head.

Mr. Dahanayake: Then I shall not refer to it now.

I want to say a few words on Sub-Head 4, "Measures for increasing employment". This is a new sub-head. In last year's Estimates we had an item entitled "Unemployment relief and other special unemployment relief measures." I want to know what prompted the Cabinet to alter this to read, "Measures for increasing employment".

The Chairman: Unemployment relief comes under the next Head sub-head 11, which provides a sum of Rs. 2,400,000.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to know what is their plan for the future. Evidently the Commissioner of Labour is being entrusted with the task of devising measures for increasing employment. I say that the Commissioner of Labour is not competent to devise measures for increasing employment. The whole scheme has been misconceived. How can the Commissioner of Labour devise measures for increasing employment when that is really a matter for the Cabinet and the Central authorities.

I want to ask the Minister how he proposes to spend the Rs. 2,400,000 allotted under this sub-head. What are his plans, and how many people will find employment under those plans? Will the plans be effectively carried out? Is there any attempt today to devise measures for employment in various parts of the country, to meet the needs of the unemployed who are seeking work?

In my view, sub-head 4 is, if you will permit me to use the term, a "bogus" item, an item that is inserted in the Estimates merely to fool the country and to dupe the Opposition. If that is not the case, I ask the Minister to give a list of the plans; where it is proposed to start these works and how many of the unemployed could be recruited through this scheme, so that we may judge whether this vote is adequate to cope with the problem in this country.

I want now to refer to certain subtle devices used by employers to avoid payment of wages at the rates laid down under the Wages Boards Ordinance. In many of the engineering firms, for instance, apprentices are paid nothing at all. The apprentice is looked upon as a "little chap" who loiters about, doing nothing. But he really has to do work, and Government acted correctly when it prescribed certain wage rates for him, so much for the first year, so much for the second year, and so on. A large number of engineering firms, and even printing firms, do not pay the apprentices the correct wages. When cases of that type are detected, payments are made and underpayments made good. Then follows victimization.

4.45 P.M.

Quick on the heels of the payment of wages according to the Wages Boards Ordinance, a large number of apprentices

[Mr. Dahanayake.]

and other workers are discontinued. That is a tragic state of affairs. We ask the Government to devise legislation to ensure a living wage to the worker. The employer, crafty, cruel, wicked, malicious, when compelled to pay that living wage, resorts to kicking the worker out. Now, there must be some method whereby that type of victimization is stopped once and for all. I ask the Minister to tell us what he proposes to do in such cases. I know of even reputable firms who, when called upon by the Labour Department to pay the correct wages, have revenge on the workers by discontinuing them. "You compel us to give the correct wages. Out you go, because we want you no longer." Surely, some measure must be devised to ensure that there is continuity, that there is security of tenure for the workers of this country, to see that when they ask for their rights, for their elementary rights, they are not deprived of their employment.

I also want to ask what work is done from the Vote allotted under Sub-head 8, "Expenses of students in training abroad."

Mr. E. E. Spencer (Appointed Member): If I may be permitted just to say a few things, having listened to the hon. Member for Kalutara (Mr. Cholmondeley Goonewardene) I must submit that his statement was most unfair to the general body of employers. He has painted a picture to this House which suggests that on all accounts employers refuse to accept or consider the interests of the employees. I cannot answer for the great body of employers, but from considerable experience, I can assure this House that employers are fully alive to the need for meeting all reasonable and just requirements on the part of employees. A tremendous amount has been done in recent years on estates in terms of housing, medical and other facilities, but where hours of work and the question of wages are concerned, obviously they can only be considered from an economic viewpoint, and impossibilities cannot be carried out. I merely want to say in defence of the employers of whose affairs I am cognisant, that the general statements of the hon. Member for Kalutara are not in accordance with the facts.

Mr. Dahanayake: He gave you facts and figures.

The Chairman: Order, please!

Mr. Motha: I would like briefly to draw the attention of the Hon. Minister to the fact that in Up-country areas the labour offices are understaffed compared with what the position was about a year or two ago. That is the situation in the Up-country areas where there are thousands upon thousands of workers employed on a fairly organized basis.

I freely acknowledge the great service which many of the officers of the Department in those areas have done, in spite of certain very limiting conditions which cramp their activities, to which I would presently refer. But at present it is very unfortunate that, for instance, in the Hatton office, which is practically the headquarters of the whole of the Central Province, which has over 300,000 workers on estates alone, apart from other workers, there is an insufficiency of staff, there is no Deputy Commissioner of Labour to guide the Assistant Commissioners and Inspectors. Therefore the whole area during the last six or seven years is in an awful condition. There is only one Inspector in the Hatton office, unless another has been recently added; until about two or three weeks ago, there was only one Inspector, attending to a number of other duties in addition to inspection. There is one Inspector and one Assistant Commissioner, I believe, in Kandy, and one Inspector at Nawalapitiya. These officers have to spread their activities from Nuwara Eliya down to Peradeniya. They do not act expeditiously when workers want their intervention, and the excuse is that they have not got the time. I think that is a very justifiable excuse. It certainly is the duty of the Minister to provide sufficient personnel to enable the work to be done satisfactorily.

With reference to the remarks of the hon. Appointed Member (Mr. Spencer) who spoke immediately before me, it is true that there are some very good employers, and most of them belong to his community. They do realize, in a spirit of enlightened self-interest, that they have to observe the Governmental regulations as far as possible, and they heed to Government policy. But both among Europeans and Indians

and Ceylonese employers, there are very many black sheep. I certainly differ from the hon. Appointed Member when he says that a great deal has been done in recent years by way of housing, and so on. During recent years, on account of war conditions, the position has deteriorated on many estates, and whether this particular branch of labour welfare falls within the purview of the Hon. Minister of Labour or not, the inspecting medical staff appears to have been reduced. There is only one officer stationed in Badulla for the whole area, and when we draw attention to the shortcomings in respect of housing and sanitation, all that the Inspector is able to do is to make a note and say that he would refer the matter to the Medical Department for attention and report. It takes anything from six months to two years to obtain a report, and meanwhile this scandalous state of affairs continues, and it is only when things are really scandalous, when conditions are incurable that complaints are really made, but even urgent requests remain unheeded. It is necessary, therefore, that the personnel of the inspecting staff should be increased.

I think I should bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister that there is a feeling among the junior members of the staff that if they take too strong a view of the shortcomings of the employers, they may be pulled up by the Department. It may be well-founded, it may be ill-founded; but that feeling is there. We who have to refer matters to them constantly and secure inquiries or redress of grievances can see that undercurrent of feeling among the junior officers. It can only be due to the fact that they do not receive sufficient backing from the top.

If you will permit me to say just one word about prosecutions, I think prosecutions are necessary, because ordinarily the word of the employer against the word of the worker carries greater weight, and in cases where the charge can be brought home to the employer, it is necessary that he should be made an example of, so that the other employers may not trifle with the regulations which the Government has imposed for the welfare of the workers.

I would also refer in this connexion to the divided responsibility for the welfare of labour, both on estates and else-

where, between the Labour Department and the Medical Department. It may be necessary on technical grounds to keep them separate, but it is equally necessary that they should be well co-ordinated; or else, it may lead to overlapping of work. When the Labour Department makes reports of irregularities or shortcomings, the Medical Department does not pay prompt attention to them, and the Medical Department, with very limited opportunities of inspection, is unable to find out the shortcomings with regard to sanitation and housing on estates, and to remedy them. It will serve no purpose for the Department to remain indolent and inactive when there has been a real deterioration in the position of housing due to war conditions. These questions should be taken up immediately.

Mr. D. F. Hettiarachchi (Niwitigala):

I wish to bring one matter to the notice of the Hon. Minister. Last year I brought up in this House the question of the discontinuance of 300 workers from one of the estates in my electorate. This matter was taken up by the branch of the Labour Department at Ratnapura, and at a later stage, at a conference it was decided that these 300 workers should be paid a month's salary because the Superintendent had failed to give them a month's notice. About two months back I visited the estate on a letter received from the Superintendent, asking me to be present as he had to make a statement, and stating that he was prepared to pay the month's wages to the workers. But to my surprise, I found that he made a wrong statement, and I protested against it; I said I was not prepared to accept that statement.

These 300 workers are from the villages, doing *sillara* work. I know there are about 50 workers from the Balangoda area. I regret to say that the Minister has taken nearly eleven months to settle this matter, and these things happen almost every month in those areas, especially in the Niwitigala, Ratnapura and Balangoda areas. I would ask the Minister to take immediate steps to see that these workers are paid their wages according to the agreement they had reached with the Superintendent.

Mr. J. C. T. Kotalawela (Second Badulla): I believe the Hon. Minister is aware that last year there were nearly fifty-two strikes outside the plantation area. Regarding the causes of those strikes the Labour Department happens to disagree with the Minister. The Hon. Minister holds that the strikes were due to the existence of certain "misleaders". As far as the Labour Department is concerned, the Department has divided these strikes into various categories and shown that the strikes were due to genuine causes.

5.0 P.M.

I wish to know from the Hon. Minister whether he has taken the trouble to read the Administration Report of his Department, and if so, whether he will take steps to see that employers do not exploit the workers. As it is, he must be aware that there are no strikes today. The fact is that the employers are evading the Regulations of the Wages Board and its decisions. I know a number of cases, especially where the bus magnates are concerned. Like the income tax defaulters they too keep two sets of books, one for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the Labour Department and the other for their own private use. The particular set of books which they keep for their private information contains all the legal fines, the overtime that has not been paid, and so on. The other set of books is kept for the inspection of officers of the Labour Department. It contains every particular to suit the Regulations.

I feel that the Regulations should be revised and tightened in order to prevent employers from evading the Wages Board decisions. I should like to mention one instance for the information of the House. A section of the motor workers are very badly exploited in this country. What happens is this: In order to get over the eight-hour day, motor employers now give out lorries on contract. And a worker is paid according to the mileage that he registers as having been run during a week. The result is that the greater the mileage a person runs his lorry, the more would be his wages. In that way they evade the Wages Board decisions and the worker works more than eight hours a day. I would, therefore, urge the Hon. Minister to take steps immediately to

revise the existing law so that these employers who evade the Wages Board decisions may be punished.

Mr. S. A. Silva: I should like the Hon. Minister to instruct his Department to institute prosecutions against employers when they discover that employers are not paying the employees their full wages, or that they are under-paying them. At least, if a few of these defaulters are dealt with and punished, it will serve as a deterrent to other employers.

The other point I wish to bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister is with regard to the workmen's compensation. When workers on estates are injured the employer must be made to pay for his medical treatment.

The Chairman: That comes under the next Head.

Mr. S. A. Silva: I shall deal with this matter under the next Head.

Mr. S. M. Subbiah (First Badulla): Hon. Members might know that on an estate called Cobo there are nearly 200 people on strike for the past twenty-five days. I understand the Labour Officers in Badulla suggested a settlement but the employers would not agree to it. I shall be glad if the Hon. Minister without Portfolio will intervene on behalf of the labourers and try to get the Directors of the Company and the Employers' Federation to arrive at a settlement. I understand they have refused to submit the case for arbitration.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: Sir, it was only last week that we came to know that in the Kirillapone housing scheme about 40 workers who were engaged under a particular contractor were suddenly dismissed. They were not even paid their wages. I think the matter was brought to the notice of the officers of the Labour Department, but so far nothing appears to have been done.

There is another point: The Hon. Minister says that sub-head 4 deals with employment of persons on new schemes planned for giving relief. I wish to

know from him whether he is guided by the vested interests of a particular area. I ask the question because I find that when people who are unemployed apply for work on one of these schemes the Hon. Minister first finds out from the estates in the locality whether it is likely that labour which might work for the estates would get drawn into that new scheme because of the better conditions offered when compared to what are offered by the estates.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: Sir, I will be very brief and refer to one aspect of this matter which has been overlooked. It is the question of the salaries of the Labour Inspectors. These officers are doing very useful work. It was only half an hour ago that we saw the Hon. Minister of Labour pleading for them and praising them for the way in which they have performed their duties.

The Labour Inspectors' Association submitted a memorandum to the Hon. Minister asking him for an interview. But, unfortunately, he has refused their request. At page 339 of the Estimates, I find that the salary allotted to an Inspector starts with Rs. 2,400 per annum.

The Chairman: The hon. Member is referring to the lowest class.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: The Class III. Inspector is started on Rs. 2,400 per annum which works out at Rs. 200 a month. The Salaries Commission, in paragraph 457 of their Report, speaks in very glowing terms of these officers and the type of work they are called upon to do.

The relevant passage is as follows:

"These officers have very important duties to perform. They have to be able to hold inquiries with a tact and impartiality which will secure the respect of both employee and employer. They must have a thorough knowledge of labour laws and practice and must have sufficient personality to be able to stand up to any employer or Trade Union representative. They should normally be graduates."

I must congratulate the Hon. Minister on the quality of Labour Inspector he has. But, at the same time, I should like to say that when these Labour Inspectors were engaged, great hopes were held out to them that their

salaries would be increased in course of time. So that, when one compares their salary of Rs. 2,400 per annum with the salaries that are paid to other officers of the Department who have the same qualifications, it looks very much as if their case has gone by default.

The Chairman: But their salaries go up.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: Their initial salary must be Rs. 3,120 per annum. Take the case of other Inspectors who start on Rs. 3,120—the Grade I. Inspector, whose maximum is Rs. 6,480.

The Chairman: The Class I. Inspector starts on Rs. 5,280 per annum.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: Take the case of a Rural Court President. He is started on a salary of Rs. 3,600 per annum and he goes up to Rs. 7,680. After all, the Labour Inspectors are graduates, and most of them are Proctors and professional men. I earnestly request the Hon. Minister, who is always sympathetic, to see that this class of officer who really does tough work is given an initial salary of Rs. 3,120 per annum instead of Rs. 2,400.

The Chairman: There is an Amendment of the Hon. Minister of Finance under sub-head 6.

*Sub-head 6, Incidental Expenses,
Rs. 12,000.*

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 2,000 in respect of sub-head 6."

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: Mr. Chairman, at present this Department only addresses itself to the question of paying compensation. In fact, it concentrates on seeing that the employers pay compensation to disabled employees.

The Chairman: That matter should be dealt with under sub-head 7.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: Then I shall confine my remarks to the question of rural unemployment.

The Chairman: All matters relating to workmen's compensation, come under the other Head. I thought we had finished dealing with that matter. Unemployment relief comes under the next Head.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: I should like to make a few remarks on the statement made by the hon. First Member for Badulla with regard to the strike on Cobo estate.

I think the blame is entirely due to the Indian Congress Labour Union, primarily, because they refused to accede to the advice of the Arbitration Board. In this case, the men went on strike because of the dismissal of four or five men, and the Superintendent insisted that all these men should go away. The Indian Congress Labour Union intervened and submitted the case to the Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner of Labour. He went into the whole question and found that one man who was actually guilty of the offence should be dismissed and the others given an opportunity to get back to work. When this decision was made known to the Superintendent of the estate, he refused to agree to it. All the same, the Labour Union advised the Superintendent to accept the decision of the Commissioner. But the Superintendent, perhaps to maintain his prestige, said that those other four men could not be re-employed.

The hon. First Member for Badulla mentioned this fact to me and I communicated with the Company, namely, Messrs. Mackwoods, Ltd., asking whether they would be good enough to accede to the decision made by the Assistant Commissioner of Labour and permit the other four people to be employed. They were rather reluctant to do so and referred me to the Employers' Federation. I then contacted the Employers' Federation and asked them whether, as a compromise, they would accept the decision of the Assistant Commissioner. But the lawyers of the Federation said, "No, we will fight it to the bitter end." I have not submitted this information to the Indian Congress Labour Union, but, if I ask all the men to go back to work, would they accept arbitration? Will they agree that the other men, barring the one found guilty of the offence, go back to

work and the whole case be submitted to arbitration? The employers themselves do not want to go to arbitration. They will fight, if they could, to break the Union. On the other hand, there is also the Union that would try to fight and break the employers, and, between these two, the position is made extremely difficult for the labour masses because the Union, on the one hand, tries to defeat the employers, and the employers, on the other hand, try to wreck the Union. So, the only course available to us is to submit to arbitration.

The Ministry of Labour asked the various Labour Unions whether they would agree to the method of arbitration. And, I think the first to say "No", was the Indian Congress Labour Union. They suffer by it.

That is not the only instance in which there has been this trouble. There was a case at Ratnapura a few months ago when they refused to go to arbitration. The result is that it is a set-back to the whole Trade Union movement. If the employer and the employee had agreed to submit their differences to arbitration, which is always the civilized form of settling these matters, the trouble may have ended long ago. But, of course, when we have to deal with the Marxists we cannot meet with co-operation.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: Difficulties will always arise where either party would not go to arbitration. Both the employer and the employee should consider their difficulties with greater understanding.

5.15 P.M.

Mr. Dahanayake: There is one important point which I omitted to mention under sub-head 4. It is a very important sub-head. Under these various schemes that will be worked under sub-head 4, the wages that will be paid are Re. 1.50 per unskilled worker and just a little more for a skilled man. Now I say that it is an unconscionable wage. An unskilled labourer in Government Service or outside today draws nearly Rs. 3 a day. There are thousands of unemployed and you give them some work and tell them, "You go and work at Re. 1.50 a day." What are the ethics of that reasoning? I have been told by the authorities that Re. 1.50 is decided upon because it is a relief measure. Look at the curious argument

offered by the authorities. A man cannot live on nothing and he is put on to do hard work and is given a paltry sum and asked to live on it. I cannot understand the reasoning behind the attitude of the Government.

Whether it is a so-called relief measure or whether it is any other type of work, the labourer is worthy of his hire and he must be given as much as he needs to keep his body and soul together. I see the Hon. Minister of Transport nodding assent, and I hope that he will persuade his colleagues to make no difference between the unemployed who are engaged on relief works and the others who are employed continuously. As a matter of fact, if one argues it further, the unemployed man who does relief work should be paid more than the employed man who gets continuous work. I will tell you that many an unemployment relief scheme is doomed to failure if you persist in this attitude of paying the unemployed man only Re. 1.50 a day. I can cite the instance of Galle. We have started some unemployment relief works within the town and in a place 12 miles away from distant Dodanduwa and Ambalangoda—

The Chairman: I have already told the hon. Member that I cannot allow him to speak on the same subject over and over again. I cannot allow you to chase after the same subject.

Mr. Dahanayake: I am chasing after the most important subject under the sun. I am dealing with the question of wages.

The Chairman: I am sorry. Please sit down.

Mr. Dahanayake: May I point out respectfully that sub-head 4 is for measures for increasing employment?

The Chairman: It is just the same.

Mr. Dahanayake: It is something absolutely different.

The Chairman: I cannot allow any further discussion. I shall put the Vote to the House now.

Major Jayewickreme: May I have your permission to make a general observation on Vote 1? Under Vote 1, I would like to bring to the notice of the House, particularly the Hon. Minister of Labour, the anomaly that exists as far as the actual feeding of the estate children are concerned. You would remember that the present Government—

The Chairman: I cannot hear what the hon. Member is saying.

Major Jayewickreme: I wish to deal with a certain anomaly that exists in the feeding of children in estates and also the question of provision of certain contributory expenses by estate superintendents. In the present Indian Immigrant Ordinance there is provision for all Indian children to be fed and the manner in which they have to be fed. It is computed as follows: every male over 16 years of age is reckoned as an adult and therefore he is entitled to four measures of rice.

It so happens that in the estates there is a big population and the Labour Inspectors and the Department insist that the Indian children should be fed. The result is that there is general discontent because the Sinhalese children are not fed. I would suggest that the Ordinance be amended. I think we must consider the fact that the Indians have got off very well in this country. As a matter of fact, they have been treated far better than the indigenous population of this country and today under the Indian Immigrant Labour Ordinance, they are entitled to many more facilities and privileges than the Sinhalese or the Ceylonese that form the majority of the people of this country. So, I would like the Hon. Minister to kindly consider this fact. We have heard the hon. Member for Maskeliya talking at length about certain privileges that he expects the Indian Immigrant Ordinance to confer on the Indian children, but we have not extended half those privileges to the children of this country. I would suggest to the Hon. Minister to consider that aspect and to see that similar treatment is extended to the children of the indigenous population.

The Chairman: There is another Amendment to be moved by the Hon. Minister in respect of sub-head 6, incidental expenses.

Mr. Dahanayake: The Hon. Minister must reply to the points raised.

The Chairman: If he does not want to reply, I cannot force him to reply.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I am somewhat reluctant to reply because I do not know whether I can adapt myself to suit hon. Members who in their frenzied arrogance sometimes forget themselves.

The Hon. Sir J. Kotelawala: Madness.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: But anyway, as the questions were asked with a view to elicit information I am prepared to answer them as far as possible.

The hon. Member for Kalutara referred to the Shops Act and made pointed reference to the fact that shop assistants are allowed to live in the shops in which they work and that no steps have been taken by the Department to see that assistants working in shops are offered facilities to live outside the shop. All the provisions of the Shops Act are not fully observed. That is a matter which is engaging our attention and unfortunately, owing to the housing shortage, we have not been able to enforce the health provisions of the Shops Act. But certainly we are fully alive to the situation, and at the earliest possible opportunity the necessary steps will be taken.

The hon. Third Member for Colombo Central is not here. Therefore I do not think I need answer the questions raised by him.

Dr. Perera: No, no.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: He referred to a clerk who did not make wise use of the telephone and that, owing to the unfortunate impetuosity of that clerk, there might have been very serious consequences. I am fully aware of that incident and I do not know whether, if you know the circumstances, you will

blame the Head of Department who did what he should have done in such circumstances.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Galle is serious about the question of the Registrar of Servants.

Mr. Dahanayake: Very serious.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: We have already appointed six Registrars. There is a Domestic Servants Ordinance but somehow or other owing to certain difficulties, that has not been brought into operation. We are fully alive to the situation. There are some masters who abuse their rights. They do not treat young servants in the way that they should, but as things are it is not possible for us to enforce the law.

Mr. Dahanayake: Why?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Because of certain difficulties; I cannot go into details just now.

Dr. Perera: What are the difficulties?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The difficulties connected with the enforcing of the Ordinance. The hon. Member will recall the famous anti-smoking Ordinance. Now it is practically a dead letter. There are certain Ordinances which however good they may be, cannot be enforced in an effective manner.

Mr. Dahanayake: This matter affects thousands of children.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I know. With regard to the measures that we propose to take to promote employment, that particular heading had been used because, since the creation of the Social Services Department, we had to draw a line between unemployment relief and measures for giving employment. We have in mind certain very effective measures. One thing is subsidizing the Votes of other Government Departments which are prepared to carry out certain parts of their programme provided their Votes are subsidized and we are prepared to subsidize provided such Departments will relieve unemployment. That is one way. Then—

Mr. Dahanayake: That is very vague.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Subsidizing the Votes of other Departments with a view to giving employment to those who are unemployed is surely not vague. I am sure the hon. Member for Galle could understand that.

Mr. Dahanayake: But the unemployed will not understand.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Then again certain competency tests will be applied so that some of our skilled workers will be ready to find work. Just now when we send our skilled workers, employers say that they are not up to standard. So we want to satisfy ourselves that these are competent men and when we recommend men whom we are satisfied are skilled, there will be no difficulty in finding employment.

Mr. Dahanayake: What are the schemes you have in mind?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Training of the unemployed because we believe in a greater scheme of industrialization. When you come to deal with the Votes of the Ministry of Industries you will know what is proposed to be done. In conjunction with the Ministry of Industries we hope to establish a number of subsidiary industries in which some of these men could be engaged, particularly those who suffer because of seasonal unemployment.

Mr. Dahanayake: Give us more details please.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: What about Labour Inspectors?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Anyway I do not know whether the Minister himself can do anything in this matter.

5.30 P.M.

Now about the salaries of Labour Inspectors, I do not know whether I myself can do anything about this matter. I am always for increasing the salaries of those who perform good service. After all a worker works for a salary. But whatever it may be, this question was considered by the Salaries Commission

and, perhaps, when we propose to revise the salaries, representations might be made so that the salaries of these Inspectors might be increased.

Dr. Perera: Will you permit me to raise a question on the Labour Gazette—sub-head 9.

The Chairman: We have already finished with sub-head 9 and no questions were asked. This question should have been asked then.

Dr. Perera: It did not strike me then to ask this question, Sir. It is unavoidable. We would like to get some information about this Labour Gazette. Members of this House are not furnished with copies of this Gazette.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Last year hon. Members wanted certain information, and I gave it. I am glad that they now realize the value of a Labour Gazette. In all progressive countries they have a Labour Gazette, and very soon we will also bring out this Gazette, so that hon. Members and others who are interested in labour might get valuable information on the subject.

Major Jayewickreme: I should like to know from the Hon. Minister what he has to say about the remarks that I made regarding the treatment accorded to the children of the soil as distinct from the others.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I do not see any reason why the children of the soil should be treated differently from the others.

Mr. Dahanayake: Regarding sub-head 4, may I ask the Hon. Minister to give us even one illustration of increasing employment?

The Chairman: Hon. Members have already been given the information.

Mr. Dahanayake: I am certain that the Hon. Minister will be able to give us at least one illustration.

The Chairman: Any other members who wish to have any information from the Hon. Minister?

Dr. Perera: Can the Hon. Minister give us some information about Factory legislation? The Hon. Minister knows that the present position is very unsatisfactory. I understood that there were some efforts being made by the Department to strengthen that particular section of the Department. There is provision for two Assistant Factory Inspectors. Let us have some information.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The Factory Ordinance was passed in 1942, and unfortunately, we have not been able to secure the services of a competent Chief Inspector who could organize the department. Some time ago an officer was selected, but somehow or other he could not make up his mind to come. We have contacted the U.K. Government, that is the Minister of Commonwealth Relations, in order to secure the services of an efficient officer. There is one available, but he insists on having a salary which we are not prepared to pay. But in any case, we want to see that the Factory Ordinance is introduced, and pending the appointment of this Chief Inspector, we want to appoint two Assistant Inspectors and also clerks. The work is really considered to be very important.

Dr. Perera: No appointment has been made as yet?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: No.

I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 285,000 in respect of a New sub-head 'Expenses of I.L.O. Membership,' " put, and agreed to.

Question "That the sum of Rs. 3,426,461 for Head 110, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule", put and agreed to.

Head 110, Vote 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 111.—Department of Social Services

Vote No. 1.—Salaries and expenses of the Department of Social Services, Rs. 14,709,441.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: Regarding the Department of Social Services there are

one or two matters which I want to bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister.

The Chairman: Personal Emoluments first, and nothing else. Anybody who wants to speak on Sub-head 1—"Personal Emoluments"?

Dr. Perera: Yes. This, Sir, is an important department from our point of view, perhaps the most important department. I notice that the Hon. Minister has provided for 22 Inspectors. I would like to know whether the Minister has succeeded in appointing all these officers as provided for in the Estimates—a Deputy Director, three Assistant Directors and a Statistical Officer. I notice, Sir, that these Inspectors are attached to the Kachcheries, to the various Kachcheries in the outstations. The Hon. Minister is shaking his head. Well, I hope I am not wrong. My impression is that these officers were attached to the various Kachcheries, perhaps working on their own but under the general supervision of the Government Agents.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: They are working independently.

Dr. Perera: I am very glad that the Hon. Minister has given that assurance, that they are working independently, directly under the Department. Then I think the situation is much more satisfactory than it appeared to be. From the working of the Inspectors hitherto appointed, at least those with whom we have had occasion to come in contact, we are satisfied that they are breaking away from the old routine of Kachcheries, and that some progress has been made. I would like the Hon. Minister to encourage them, to see that they do not become mere appurtenances of the Kachcheries. This is an entirely new field we are breaking into, and it is important that the independence of these officers should be maintained and not be made subject to the old Kachcheri routine. It is necessary that these officers should be given a certain amount of assistance. You cannot expect these inspecting officers to visit a number of villages and at the same time do clerical work. I know that these officers work till about 8 or 9 o'clock in the night, and then come

back to their homes and do clerical work. If they are given some assistance, I know that they will work more quickly and more efficiently. The Hon. Minister must consider the desirability of backing them up and seeing that every clerical and other assistance is given to these Inspectors.

Then, Sir, there is provision for 28 clerks to do staff work and work in Kachcheries. This is why I raised the question whether they were to be under the Kachcheries or not. This provision for 28 clerks gives the impression that they are to be under the Kachcheries.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: They are to do the work in connection with Public Assistance and Relief of Distress.

Dr. Perera: These Social Service Inspectors also attend to that type of relief work. But the clerical hands who are attached to the Kachcheries would be assisting the Social Service Inspectors, or they would be functioning separately?

The Chairman: Any other remarks?

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to ask whether the Minister had decided what the duties of the Inspectors would be. I raise this question, Sir, because the bulk of the work in connection with Public Assistance will have to be attended to by investigating officers. At present, Sir, the method of investigation is thoroughly unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact, there is hardly any investigation made by an official source. I understand that a new Director has assumed duties and has since issued circulars, but even today the manner in which the Department works is as follows: A person who wants public assistance must apply for it; thereafter the application is investigated through the village headman whose work is supervised by the D. R. O. Now, that method of work shuts out a large number of the deserving cases. Only those who happen to be friends and relations of these officers are recommended for public assistance. What we want done is something quite different. We ask that the investigating officers should go from door to door, gather as much data

as possible, and find out for themselves, at first hand, the needs of those who apply for public assistance. The officers should visit the houses not once only, but more than once. If the work is not done in the way I suggest, I am sure that the whole scheme would collapse. You need an army of investigating officers.

There is provision for 22 Inspectors. Now what is the present proposition? The present proposition, I take it, is to utilize once again the services of the village headmen; not to take a census of those who are deserving of public assistance, but merely to depend on people making applications either on their own or through Members of Parliament. That is why, Sir, I ask whether the Hon. Minister can tell us what the functions of these Inspectors would be.

I see that there is provision for 28 clerks to work in various Kachcheries in connection with Public Assistance and Relief of Distress. Now these 28 clerks will be in the various provincial and district Kachcheries attending to the clerical work, and I suppose then the Inspector will be the real investigating officer.

The Chairman: Will you wait till the Hon. Minister replies?

Mr. Dahanayake: I say, Sir, the whole scheme is doomed to collapse unless you give more Inspectors than are provided for in the Estimates.

The Chairman: Will the Hon. Minister reply?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I am not sure whether the hon. Member has read a circular issued by the Director of Social Services. Evidently the hon. Member has not read it; otherwise he would not have raised this question. Definite instructions have been issued so that Members of Parliament will have a hand in assisting the District Advisory Committee and the Local Assistance Committee to deal with this question.

I do not know why there should be any difficulty. In the first place, the Inspectors will work independently of the Kachcheries. They will be sort of checking officers. It may be, perhaps, some of the Revenue Officers may

[Hon. Mr. Jayah.]
not like it very much. But I think the Social Service Inspectors are doing a bit of useful work deserving of credit, and I think, as the Hon. Member for Ruwanwella has said, they have already created an impression.

I have found that some of the Revenue Officers had not carried out the assessment work in connection with the damage suffered by flood victims, but as I said, the representatives of the Kachcheries, the Social Service Inspectors and the Member for the area might go round and see whether the assessment had been properly done. In fact, I am very particular that the Revenue Officers should act in consultation with the Members of Parliament. If there are any difficulties, I think such difficulties might be removed.

The clerks are needed for the Kachcheries because of the increased volume of work. My hon. friends representing areas around Anuradhapura always complain that although they were insistent on relief being given promptly there was always some little delay in the Kachcheries because the staff was inadequate. So we had to appoint additional clerks. Even then, it was found that the work could not be promptly carried out. Consequently I had to communicate with the Ministers and appeal to them to relieve some of their Staff Officers to help the Revenue Officers to carry out this work. Now I think the work has been satisfactorily done, and no doubt hon. Members will do their bit and help the Ministry in carrying out this work to get the best results.

5.45 P.M.

Mr. Dahanayake: In regard to sub-head 4, "Public Assistance," is the Hon. Minister aware that in Kachcheries they maintain what is called a waiting list of persons who are to receive public assistance?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: There are no more waiting lists.

The Chairman: There are no waiting lists.

Mr. Dahanayake: I know that in the Galle Kachcheri there is a waiting list.

This is a matter within my knowledge and within the knowledge of the hon. Members who represent the district.

The Chairman: The answer was given by the Minister at the Second Reading Debate that the Revenue Officers have been instructed not to have any more waiting lists, but to absorb everybody for the grant of public assistance.

Mr. Dahanayake: Then instructions might immediately be given to pay all those who are on the waiting list at present.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Instructions have already been issued.

Mr. Dahanayake: It has not been done. I know it was not done up to a few days ago. The Governmental machinery moves very slowly.

The Chairman: Probably they wait till the Vote is passed.

Mr. Dahanayake: By that time many of the people who seek assistance will be dead and gone.

There is one other point which I wish to raise, Sir. It is a matter of policy.

The Chairman: A supplementary vote was taken on the very matter, explanations were made, and instructions were sent out as soon as the Vote was passed.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want to raise a question of policy.

The Chairman: I am afraid the whole matter was thrashed out when the Supplementary Estimate was brought up some days or weeks ago. The whole matter was then gone into—policy, what should be done, and so on. I do not know whether the hon. Member was here.

Mr. Dahanayake: I was here and took part in the discussion. There is much more to be said on this important subject.

The Chairman: I cannot allow the same matter to be discussed over again in the same Session.

Mr. Dahanayake: Not in the same way, Sir.

The Chairman: Not in the same way, perhaps, but it is the same matter.

Mr. Dahanayake: It is a new point that I want to raise——

The Chairman: Not even a new point.

Mr. Dahanayake: Does it mean that we cannot speak on sub-head 4?

The Chairman: A little while ago I allowed the hon. Member to speak.

Mr. Dahanayake: May we know, Sir, what we can say?

The Chairman: The hon. Member has said all there is to say.

Mr. Dahanayake: There is a new point——

The Chairman: What is the new point?

Mr. Dahanayake: The new point is that the claims of the municipalities are omitted.

The Chairman: Committed?

Mr. Dahanayake: Omitted, Sir. There is no public assistance given to those residing within the municipal limits.

The Chairman: That matter was also brought up.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: That has already been dealt with.

Mr. Dahanayake: Will the Hon. Minister without Portfolio show mention of it anywhere and the reply given by the Minister?

These are matters of vital importance to the people of this country and, if we do not raise them at this stage, what is the use of our being M.Ps?

The Chairman: That matter is dealt with by the municipalities under the Poor Law Ordinance, and the Hon. Minister of Labour has no control over it.

Mr. Dahanayake: May I point out that when I asked a certain question from the Hon. Minister of Health as to whether he was aware that the manner in which the Poor Law was administered within the Municipalities of Colombo, Kandy and Galle is such that recipients get only about Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 a month, whereas the Government scheme is to give a recipient somewhere between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20, he told me in this House—on the Floor of this House—“You are referred to the Hon. Minister of Labour.” On that occasion I was precluded from raising this question, and I am attempting to raise it now.

The Chairman: All right, go on.

Mr. Dahanayake: Now, Sir, under the Poor Law, it is the duty of the Municipalities of Colombo, Kandy and Galle, and it would be the duty of the new Municipalities of Nuwara Eliya, Kurunegala and Jaffna in the coming year, to levy a poor rate, if necessary, and to render public assistance under the provisions of the Poor Law; and the Hon. Minister of Health is aware that not a single municipal council is in a position to give sufficient assistance to those who deserve it, nor is a single local body in a position to take care of any of the deserving cases.

I will take the cases of Galle and Kandy. What happens is that in Galle and Kandy only a minute fraction of the deserving cases are taken on for payment of relief, and even that minute fraction is paid only a meagre allowance. So, Sir, in two respects the scheme for rendering public assistance through the municipalities is a failure, and we now ask the Hon. Minister of Labour to subsidize the municipal councils——

The Hon. Mr. Bandaranaike: Under the Ordinance he cannot.

Mr. Dahanayake:——and give a grant to the municipal councils to enable them to carry out the provisions of the Poor Law Ordinance——

The Hon. Mr. Bandaranaike: The Ordinance will have to be amended.

Mr. Dahanayake:——so that the arrangements within the municipalities

[Mr. Dahanayake.]
may be in consonance with the arrangements outside.

I am pointing this out as something very important because sometimes, on one side of a road is a recipient of an allowance of Rs. 2 or 3, while on the other side of the road is another, perhaps less deserving, who is in receipt of Rs. 20. The people are therefore entitled to ask why there should be such an anomaly. If the recipient of the Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 just crosses over to the other side of the road, he becomes entitled to Rs. 20. The whole thing, as somebody said, is becoming "curiouser and curiouser".

Unless the Government makes up its mind to carry on all the various schemes of public assistance and give the Island a comprehensive scheme of public assistance, we are not able to give the Government a recommendation for even good intentions.

Dr. Perera: I wish to speak a few words on Public Assistance, Sir. It is true——

The Chairman: I hope the hon. Member will not touch on matters already dealt with.

Dr. Perera: It is true that we discussed this matter and the Minister undertook to issue certain instructions, but I do not know whether instructions have been issued.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: They have been issued.

Dr. Perera: I raised the point, particularly of Muslim women. To date I do not think the matter has been taken up.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: It has been kept in mind.

Dr. Perera: He may not have forgotten it. The Minister says that he has kept it in mind.

The Chairman: It was discussed only a couple of weeks ago. A Supplementary Estimate was brought up not even a month ago.

Dr. Perera: I remember the discussion we had. But I have got in my file at the moment the replies that I have received from the Assistant Government Agents from which it would be seen that these people have been definitely knocked out on the ground that they were apparently young persons, or people who otherwise do not need relief.

One more point. Till public assistance goes through the Head of Social Services, Social Service Inspectors are not utilized, because the administration of the fund is in the hands of the Assistant Government Agents——

The Chairman: The Minister has just explained it. He said that Inspectors will have to go and check up on the administration of the relief by Revenue Officers and Government Agents.

Dr. Perera: Is that also one of the proposals?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Yes, instructions have been issued to that effect.

Dr. Perera: I am sorry, I thought it was only in regard to relief of distress, and so on; but up to date that is the position in regard to public assistance.

The Chairman: He said that hon. Members of this House will have the opportunity of——

Dr. Perera: Only in the case of relief of distress arising out of failure of crops——

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Public assistance.

Dr. Perera: I am prepared to accept that position. I am very glad if that is so, but I would like to press the case of the Muslim women in particular.

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Can I suggest one thing?

The Chairman: On what sub-head?

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: On this very sub-head. If the law is found to be in the way, may I suggest to the Hon. Minister that he would please take into consideration an early amendment of the law, because this is a serious anomaly?

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: With regard to sub-head 8, "Relief of distress due to failure of crops, floods and other exceptional causes," Mr. Chairman, last year when a large number of people in my electorate as well as in other electorates on the banks of the Kelani River, were suffering the hardships caused by the floods, a large amount of money was spent by the Government on relief of distress. That is true, but it must be said on the Floor of this House that this money was not wisely spent. A large amount of this money did not go to the people who really deserved help.

The Minister must inquire as to why that situation arose. May I submit that one of the main reasons for that debacle, for that absolute waste of money and why that money got into the wrong hands, was that the Minister had no imagination to handle that job of work. For instance, he relied on headmen—a practice that must not be repeated. I say the village headmen cannot do that job for several reasons—they are not intelligent enough, they do not have the time, nor do they have the money—

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister said that the Members of this House in their particular areas and the Government Agents could check up these things, after which the Inspectors also will exercise a check.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The Members have been appointed to serve on the Advisory Committees.

Mr. P. L. Baudhasara (Polonnaruwa): I regret that I have to complain against the officers who have been entrusted with this work in my area. As far back as March I informed the Hon. Minister that relief work was necessary in my area, but the Government Agent told the Hon. Minister that no relief work was needed there. However, at the end of that month he started two or three schemes of relief work close to my electorate, especially in Egoda Pattu. Last August the floods carried away almost the whole of the paddy cultivation and tobacco crop. Knowing all that, the D. R. O. informs the Government Agent that no request has been made for relief work from these villages.

What I understand, Sir, is that it is the duty of the D. R. O. to go about and find out cases that need relief rather than wait until appeals are made to him by the villagers. Numbers of villagers in my area have come to me and asked for help.

Today in more than ten or fifteen village areas the people have taken to eating 'olu' rice. In spite of all that, the D. R. O. reports that no relief work is needed there. I appeal to the Hon. Minister to look into this matter, especially because this is an area over which nobody is interested. It is in a corner of the North-Central Province and has been neglected for a long time. So I appeal to the Minister to look into this matter and take an interest in the welfare of the people of this area.

6.0 P.M.

Mr. Iriyagolla: With regard to the complaint that relief is not properly administered, last year and the year before paddy crops failed in my constituency as well as in Bingiriya constituency. When I interviewed the Minister on the subject he asked me to discuss the matter with the Government Agent, with whom I did discuss it. The Government Agent referred me to the D.R.O. who in turn referred me to the Korala. The Korala referred me to the Gan Arachchi and finally I was told that no relief was necessary. Knowing quite well that the crops in many Korales had failed, the D.R.O. merely reported that no relief was necessary! When I explained to the Government Agent that there was real distress, he told me that he would look into the matter personally. He found that crops had failed in several Korales, but he writes to me. "The matter is being watched carefully".

I brought this to the notice of the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary. I was asked to write in, and I understand that the matter has been again referred to the Government Agent and the D.R.O. The reply comes again that the matter is being carefully watched—

Mr. Dahanayake: Watch and pray!

Mr. Iriyagolla: The Minister says that we as Members of Parliament, are to be appointed to the Advisory Board on

[Mr. Iriyagolla.] this subject of relief measures. We will have to go and bow down to the Government Agent, who will be guided by what the D.R.O. says. I shall never be a party to such an arrangement.

I know that in several areas in Nikaweratiya relief work is going on. I had several letters—

The Chairman: The Member for Nikaweratiya will speak on that.

Mr. Iriyagolla: I have received several letters to the effect that half the money goes into the hands of the Korala or the headman because the work is not being properly supervised.

The Minister says that an Inspector from the Department of Social Services will inspect this work, but this officer never goes to this area. I have not seen the colour of this Inspector there. I hope the Minister himself will visit my area, find out the exact amount of distress prevailing there and do justice to the people of the place.

Mr. K. Herat (Nikaweratiya): I am happy that on this occasion, from this side of the House I am able to thank the Minister for all that he has done during the short time he had been in charge of this Department.

As for the complaint of the Member for Dandagamuwa, I do not know from where he obtained the information that the headmen, Koralas or D.R.Os. take more than half the amount voted for relief works. I know that 90 per cent. of the village headmen are the worst going scoundrels that we can get hold of—

The Chairman: You must withdraw that. It is not fair to make such a charge.

Mr. Herat: I withdraw it. They are not of the standard which you would expect of a responsible person.

The Chairman: You are referring to the village headmen in your area?

Mr. Herat: Yes, the village headmen in my area form the greatest drawback to the uplift of the people there.

The Chairman: You referred to 90 per cent. . . .

Mr. Herat: 90 per cent. in my area.

I would like to inform the hon. Member for Dandagamuwa and this House that we have got over the difficulty by having committees in each *pālata* to see that these people do not get an opportunity to make money in that way.

In the dry zone today there is great distress owing to failure of crops. Relief has been given, but it has been given at the expense of cultivation for the next season. The peasant cannot live on relief work alone. He must be given a chance to cultivate his chenas for the next season. The clearing of chenas starts during the dry season. Today the cultivator has no time to go to his chena and clear it. He has either to go and obtain relief work for his daily subsistence, or he has to forgo that and work on his chena. He cannot afford to forego the wages he gets for relief work.

I would ask the Minister to look into this, and see whether these men cannot be allowed to work half the day on their chenas and half the day on Government relief work.

Some time ago I brought to the notice of this House that relief workers are paid only Re. 1 a day. The Minister without Portfolio was emphatic that they were paid Re. 1.50 a day. I hope he will intervene and see that the men are paid Re. 1.50 a day. The Minister of Labour will bear me out when I say that they are paid only Re. 1 a day at present.

The hon. Member for Galle rightly said that there should be no distinction between people working on one side of the road and people working on the other side. People employed on State Farms are paid more than those engaged on relief works. I would ask the Minister to consider the question of paying these people at least Re. 1.50 a day.

Mr. L. Rajapaksa (Hambantota): I have a few remarks to make on this vote for relief of distress. There have been a number of failures of crops in my electorate, and there is great distress. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture will testify to that

fact. Not very long ago they were in my constituency, and they would have seen for themselves the poverty-stricken people in that area.

I wish to know from the Minister of Labour how much of this vote will go to the Hambantota constituency. The last time he visited Hambantota, the Minister said that he would do everything possible for Hambantota, but I say that he has done nothing for Hambantota. He was only concerned in making statements to the effect that Hambantota "would soon be in safe hands." May I assure the Minister that Hambantota is now in very safe hands.

I want to know on what principle this money voted for relief of distress is spent. I speak with great feeling today, because the people of my constituency are dying of starvation. There is hunger in my constituency, and I urge the Minister to look into the matter immediately and see that steps are taken for the immediate relief of distress. The Minister should do that, and not merely nod his head.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: I want to say a few words about the plight of the poor cultivators on the banks of the Kelani Ganga, especially the poor vegetable growers. When they start cultivating vegetables—

The Chairman: The Member mentioned that a few days ago.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: These cultivators get advances from the Pettah dealers against their crops. When one crop fails they have no means of raising another crop. The Minister should look into the matter and give these vegetable cultivators some form of relief.

Mr. A. Reginald Perera: I want to ask the Minister, in reference to the undertaking he gave that Members of Parliament would be consulted in these matters, whether we could re-examine last year's work on flood relief and call for information regarding relief given to flood victims. The people who should have received relief did not get it. Did the Minister's statement have reference only to the future, or can we go back to our villages and examine the people and report to the Minister?

The Chairman: Next year.

Mr. A. Sinnalebbe (Batticaloa): In my area only one member of a family is given relief work, and that too only for four days in the week. The wage paid, Re. 1 a day, is not sufficient for a family of three or four people. I would request the Minister to increase the rate to Re 1.50 a day for an adult, and also to increase the number of days from four to five days a week.

Mr. Ivan T. Dasanaikie (Wariyapola): We have been discussing these problems for some time now. So far as my own electorate is concerned, I have to point out that the Forwarding Agent—I am sorry, the Government Agent—has not carried out the instructions given by the Minister. At a conference held at Wariyapola the Government Agent was told to render relief to the poverty-stricken people of my electorate.

This vote is for the "Relief of distress due to failure of crops, floods, and other exceptional causes." Three-fourths of my electorate is semi-wanni, and sometimes two or three crops fail in succession. In a recent directive issued by the Director of Social Services, he says relief should be rendered only in cases of widespread distress.* I do not understand what is meant by that term. When the Government Agent told me that there was no distress in my electorate, I told him that I was prepared to prove that there was distress, and I invited him to accompany me to the area. He agreed and I took him along. We visited several villages. In one place, Tudawewa, we found people eating manioc skins (*manioca lella*). Up to date nothing has been done to afford relief to these people in spite of the fact that the Government Agent himself submitted a report on the subject.

My hon. Friend who represents the adjoining electorate, Nikaweratiya, says that he is quite happy. He has good reason to be happy. I thank the Minister for giving the hon. Member what he wanted, in spite of the fact that he has joined the Opposition Party. It is that Member today who is thanking the Government, not the Member

[Mr. Dasanaike.] who is at the back of the Cabinet and is supporting them. I appeal to the Minister to see that there is no procrastination, no half-heartedness, in getting this job through. He must see that something is done for the poor people who are suffering. As the Member for Galle said, by the time the Minister is ready to execute his schemes, the people at the other end may all be dead! I hope the Minister will give due consideration to this matter and leave no room for Members who support the Government, owing to the delay, to say, "No, thank you".

Dr. Colvin R. de Silva: Having been responsible for a brick I think I should also be responsible for a bouquet. I assure the Minister that there will be no thorns inside the roses!

I took the trouble to read through a circular issued by the new Adviser on Social Services, a Mr. Grandison, who, I believe, comes from New Zealand, and I noted that on the principles underlying the instruction he has laid down, there are two factors which he brings into play. On the one hand, he stresses the importance of being early in the field in anticipating the causes and operation of distress and generosity in the handing out of any relief to it, and on the other, he insists on the principles of private local charity where the distress is not supposed to be socially widespread.

6.15 P.M.

Now, if I may say so, those are very excellent principles, and especially the principle that one should discern the situation in its development early. And once we have decided on relief, to be generous in the hand-out, is absolutely correct, if I may say so with respect to him. But on the question of leaving what he thinks is less widespread distress to private local charity, I think he should carry in mind, since the Hon. Minister will have to depend upon him to a degree in the day to day administration, that the conditions which prevail in the country-side in Ceylon are not comparable with the conditions in New Zealand. Distress to be relieved by local charity demands that there should be a sufficient volume of the

well-to-do who can spare precisely in times of distress. That is a difficulty which I think all charitable institutions, private as well as Government, in trying to canalize private charity, have constantly come across. I would therefore suggest that with regard to that aspect of the matter, the great stress that seems to be underlying this officer's idea in respect of private charity should be modified as far as the Government-sponsored schemes in relation to relief of distress are concerned.

Mr. Keuneman: There is just one point on which I would like to get information from the Hon. Minister about this question of relief of distress. It was also mentioned, in passing, by the hon. Member for Hambantota (Mr. L. Rajapaksa).

It is, I think, the duty of the Hon. Minister to inform this House how exactly he works out the proportion of money that he gives these people. No one seems to know. With the little experience I have had in this matter, there seems to be a thoroughly haphazard and crazy policy followed by the Government. In the case of the Gampola floods, for instance, I have spoken to several victims and I found that people who had suffered losses going up to several thousand rupees were given only Rs. 200 in compensation, whereas I often come across cases where people who had suffered considerably less had got much more. Nobody seems to be able to make head or tail of the policy of the Hon. Minister. So I think it is a very good thing for all concerned, even if they never receive the full compensation which the Hon. Minister has promised them from time to time, to know that at least he would go into this matter and decide on the principle on which this compensation is to be disbursed.

Dr. Perera: On Sub-head 8—

The Chairman: I think we have discussed it enough.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: The hon. Member spoke on it once.

Dr. Perera: I got here the details of which the Hon. Minister spoke, the Circular No. 200 which he talks about. Everywhere, if you look up the circular,

the reference is to the Government Agent or the Assistant Government Agent. The person who is responsible for considering all these matters—the amount of relief to be given, whether there is acute distress or not—is the Government Agent. But that is not the position taken up by the Hon. Minister—

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: What about the District Advisory Committees?

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: The Government Agent is the executive officer.

Dr. Perera: That is precisely what I said earlier, and the Hon. Minister said no. He said that these officers of his work independently.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: They are independent.

Dr. Perera: Surely, if the Government Agent is going to provide all the details, if he is going to decide about the existence of distress, about the extent of the relief that is necessary, whose reports is he going to depend on? Surely, he is going to depend upon the headmen. That is my complaint.

The Chairman: What the Hon. Minister said was that the Inspectors are meant to check up the details when they are sent by the headmen to the Government Agent.

Mr. Dasanaik: That does not happen.

Dr. Perera: The personal instructions are based upon the circular. It is the same old thing. Perhaps now you get in black and white what was originally sent as a circular through the Department.

One thing we noted during the last floods is, that every Kachcheri was thoroughly unprepared for an eventuality of that nature. We want to have in advance in the various kachcheries a working scheme, so that in any eventuality that scheme can be put into execution. We found this awkward position in Kegalla; nobody knew the

extent of the houses damaged. The original estimate was that about 2,000 houses had been damaged, but actually when the officers went from house to house, over 4,000 houses were enumerated as having been damaged. I would certainly like the Hon. Minister to consider utilizing his Inspectors more. I am not quite satisfied that the present system permits the utilization of these Inspectors at all.

One or two other points—

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: The hon. Member spoke on Sub-head 8 once.

Dr. Perera: No, I did not. We are not due to finish this Vote until tomorrow—

The Chairman: That is no reason why we should waste time.

Dr. Perera: Are you suggesting seriously that we are wasting time?

The Chairman: Yes. We are discussing the same point over and over again.

Dr. Perera: All that we can say is that we are not given adequate answers.

The Chairman: Well, the answers that can be given are given. It is very difficult to satisfy hon. Members. I am not satisfied, and the hon. Member is not satisfied.

Dr. Perera: There is a simple rule for making a supply—

The Chairman: The hon. Member is completely mistaken in thinking that the procedure elsewhere is the procedure here.

Dr. Perera: I hope I am wrong, but I think it is an elementary right that Members have.

The Chairman: It is not an elementary right to repeat the same thing over and over again.

Dr. Perera: It so happens that we come from various constituencies, and we cannot help mentioning our grievances.

The Chairman: Hon. Members must organize themselves and help me to see that no time is wasted. I am asking hon. Members to organize themselves to help me to conduct the business of the House expeditiously. However much I may dislike it, I have to stop repetitions.

Dr. Perera: On the whole, you will agree, we have made very good progress on this Supply Bill.

The Chairman: We did to start with, quite right.

Dr. Perera: I think we are well on time.

The Chairman: It is not a question of being within time.

Dr. Perera: I do not think we want deliberately to waste time, if we can help it.

The Chairman: The hon. Member and the Chief Whip drew up a time-table.

Dr. Perera: There is a misunderstanding about that. I would like to explain the position with regard to that.

The Chairman: It is of no use. The hon. Member can go on.

Dr. Perera: I do not think there was any agreement with the Whip at all, no question of any agreement at all. It is a right that belongs to the Opposition.

The Chairman: There, again, I do not agree with the hon. Member.

Dr. Perera: Let us discuss it in the Standing Orders Committee and get it clarified, because I do not think the position is as the Chief Whip would like to make out.

Anyway, what I was trying to impress on the Minister was this. There is in this Vote a reference made to failure of crops. You found it also in last year's Estimates. But as hon. Members know, no money has been paid in respect of the last failure of crops. Now that the Minister has got special Inspectors

to go round and verify the extent of the damage done, and so on, he should be able to grant this relief without delay. There has been distress though perhaps not taken collectively and by and large, but there have been individual cases, where as a result of failure of crops, people are still unable to get on to their feet. Surely, that question should be reviewed. Take the whole of Kegalla.

The Chairman: The Kegalla District?

Dr. Perera: Does the Minister intend to station an Inspector in the Kegalla District, or does he expect the Inspector at Ratnapura to carry out this work in the whole of the Sabaragamuwa Province? As a result of the last floods, there is still dissatisfaction. Letters are still coming in. If the Inspector will visit those areas and make a fair estimate, the people will be satisfied. Is it too late now?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: It is too late.

Dr. Perera: In the Gampola court there was an investigation made into a complaint made by certain people. I think the Inspector sent in a report. There were very severe strictures passed on the headman of the area, and I hope the Hon. Minister will follow that up and do something about it. It is very difficult to catch these people when they do wrong, and when they are caught I do hope the Hon. Minister will see to it that they are adequately punished so that it may serve as a lesson to others. The position in Gampola is so bad that I would urge the Minister to mete out exemplary punishment to some of the headmen, if these things are not to be repeated in the future.

T. B. Poholiyadde Dissawa (Horowupotana): Sir, I have risen several times to my feet to speak a few words—

The Chairman: My eye is seldom on that side.

Poholiyadde Dissawa: I hope the Hon. Speaker will have his eye on this side too.

The Chairman: Sometimes my eyes do not see.

Poholiyadde Dissawa: I would congratulate the Hon. Minister on all the work he has done in the North-Central Province. I think ours is the biggest relief area at present. I think we have had the best attention, and if there has been any delay, it is not due to his fault, but due to the fault of the Revenue Officers at the other end. What I want to point out is that, whilst relief work is being given to all those people who are in distress, there is a certain class of people who are suffering in silence, that is, the poor Muslim women. I am told that it is not the custom of these people to mix with other communities either in relief work or in any other work, and as such they keep out of these relief works and—

Gate Mudaliyar M. S. Kariapper (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Home Affairs): They are dying of starvation.

Poholiyadde Dissawa: I have made several attempts to get them to join other people and work, but they do not like to do so; nor are their males willing to allow them to go and work with others. There is a very easy way of solving this problem, because I do not think it is fair on our part to let these people suffer to this extent. I would suggest that the Hon. Minister give them separate working centres with overseers and supervisors of their own community. I know personally that there are a large number of widows who are maintaining their children with very great difficulty and undergoing a great deal of hardship owing to this drawback in the relief work provided. I have tried more than once to induce the local authorities to get separate work arrangements for them, but I do not think anything has been done so far, and unless some sort of suggestion goes from the Ministry, I do not think anything will be done. I think it is nothing but fair on the part of the Hon. Minister that some arrangements should be made as regards relief work for these people in keeping with the customs and habits of their community.

6.30 P.M.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: I have a grouse against the Hon. Minister. I heard that he went to the Southern Province

and I also heard that he went to the Eastern Province to open a boutique. But he has not come to the Northern Province to find out things for himself and to get first hand information of the conditions of the people there.

I wish to have some clarification with regard to the item "Public Assistance". On page 342 of the Estimates, under "Public Assistance", is an item, "State Homes for the Aged, Rs. 300,000." In some places the Hon. Minister gives allowances for orphanages.

The Chairman: We have passed sub-head 4. We are now on sub-head 8. The hon. Member cannot go back.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: I do not want to go back. With regard to sub-head 8, "Relief of distress due to failure of crops, floods and other exceptional causes, Rs. 6,250,000", I brought to the notice of the Hon. Minister the drought in the district of Pooneryn. I wrote a letter to him and I also sent him telegrams, but, I regret to state that no concrete steps have been taken to meet the situation. Some of the Revenue Officers are possessed of peculiar ideas. I informed a certain Revenue Officer of the acute shortage of water, and asked him what he could do to help. To my utter surprise, he turned round and asked me how we faced the situation in the past. That, I say, is not at all a proper way of meeting a demand. After all, these difficulties occur, and they must be tackled as they arise. It is no use saying that in the past a certain thing happened and so it must continue. Why should the country suffer for ever? You will be surprised to hear that in certain remote districts the water shortage has been so acute that people were compelled to use buffalo urine to quench their thirst.

The Chairman: The hon. Member is exaggerating.

Mr. Kumaraswamy: I am not exaggerating. When I mentioned about buffaloes the Hon. Minister of Commerce and Trade was amazed. I am not exaggerating; I myself have been a victim.

Mr. Herat: May I remind the Hon. Minister that during his visit to my electorate in connection with flood relief, I suggested that 50 acres of land be acquired from a certain estate just adjoining a village which goes under flood annually. He gave me the promise that he would acquire those 50 acres. May I know what has happened?

The Chairman: That matter comes under some other Ministry.

Mr. Herat: I only want to know whether the Hon. Minister would implement the promise he made.

Mrs. Florence Senanayake (Kiriella): Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw the attention of the Hon. Minister to the question of flood relief in my area. He was good enough to appoint an officer to assess the damage caused by the 1947 floods, but I regret to state that that officer, rather the Inspector, was not instructed to assess the damage caused to the crops. The people of the area are eagerly waiting to see the fulfilment of the promise of the Hon. Minister. He wrote to the Government Agent on November 6, 1947, that he would consider the granting of compensation for loss. Quite apart from that, I brought to the notice of the Hon. Minister that there was Crown land in Kiriella, and I asked him whether, if there was any Crown land available, he would acquire it for the rehabilitation of the flood victims. May I know what he proposes to do?

Mr. S. A. Silva: As hon. Members know, Agalawatte is an area where there is the heaviest rainfall in the Island. This place, which is in my electorate, is subject to floods. Houses have been damaged to a large extent. There are houses that have been completely damaged but the village headmen have not reported a number of cases of such damage to the Government Agent with the result that the victims of the floods have not yet got any kind of relief.

I have seen a number of applications which have been made to the Hon. Minister. May I earnestly request the Hon. Minister not to pass these applications to the Government Agent again

because he would, in turn, request the headmen of the area to report on the situation. There are a number of headmen against whom I have received reports. People state that some headmen demand money, and that only if money is given they report that the houses are damaged. There are also cases in that area which have been brought to my notice where houses have not been damaged but people have been recommended for relief and have got relief. So, if an Inspector of the Social Services Department will visit the area, I am sure he will give an accurate estimate of the damage caused and make known the utter neglect of duty by the headmen and the Vidane Arachchi of that area.

I should also like to speak a few words on the question of workmen's compensation.

The Chairman: That item has not been taken up yet.

Mr. Dahanayake: I want the Hon. Minister to tell us whether he has made any provision for the rehabilitation of flood victims under this Head. I do not see any provision made. I recall a visit which the Hon. Minister paid to the Gampola electorate some time ago when he promised the flood victims there that they would soon have safer and better homes in places which would not be subject to floods. I ask, where is the provision for such rehabilitation?

The Chairman: Under Loan Funds.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: Study the Budget.

Mr. Dahanayake: Does it come under the votes of the Minister of Agriculture or under Loan Funds?

The Chairman: There is an Amendment to be moved by the Hon. Minister of Finance under Loan Funds.

*Sub-head 4.—Public Assistance,
Rs. 8,037,400.*

The Hon. Mr. Jayewardene: I move, "That the Vote be increased by Rs. 17,000 in respect of sub-head 4, New items, (1) Grant to the Jayasekera

Home for Women and Children; (2) Grant to the Child Protection Society'".

Question put, and agreed to.

Gate Mudaliyar Kariapper: I should like to make a few comments on this sub-head. After all, I myself have a constituency.

First of all, I propose to associate myself with the hon. Member for Horowupotana in congratulating the Hon. Minister, but for a different reason. That is for resisting the torrential flood of words that flowed from Mt. Lavinia. My own knowledge and common experience of the Hon. Minister is that he is the "Stonewall Jackson" of the Cabinet. I want to bring to the notice of the Hon. Minister that when he visited my constituency he was kind enough to order the commencement of relief works at once. The relief works went on for about two weeks, and, suddenly, a shower of rain came and all relief work was stopped. I brought that matter to the notice of the Hon. Minister. A sum of over Rs. 50,000 has been spent on the construction of the foundation of Beach road, with relief labour. All that money will be wasted unless the Hon. Minister would be kind enough to investigate the matter and take suitable action, by way of completing it to ensure that my constituency is benefited by this road, which is of the utmost utility to the fishing industry and to hygienic living.

Dr. Perera: There is provision for the Homes for the Aged in a sum of Rs. 300,000. Will the Hon. Minister give us some information about the idea he has in view?

Mr. Keuneman: With regard to sub-head 9, will the Hon. Minister inform us how many officers have been sent out on training to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Pakeman: With regard to sub-head 10, may I enquire from the Hon. Minister whether these social surveys are going to be undertaken by the Department itself or whether they will be done by certain social service minded organizations? Many of these institutions are run by women, and I shall be grateful to the Hon. Minister if he could give some explanation, precisely, as to what sub-head 10 refers to.

Mr. Dahanayake: Are the surveys to be made to the extent to which socialism has advanced?

Mr. Spencer: I wish to ask the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Services whether he is in a position to give us some idea of how the sum of Rs. 2,400,000 is to be spent under sub-head 11, "Unemployment Relief."

Mr. Keuneman: Can we have a reply to the earlier questions? I have asked for information on two points.

The Chairman: Let the Hon. Minister reply on sub-heads 1 to 10.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I propose to reply in general terms to the questions that have been asked of me. The hon. Member should not forget that the Department of Social Services was created only in February this year. So that, when the hon. Member for Ruwanwella referred to what happened last year, he would concede that naturally the conditions were not quite satisfactory. In the meantime, owing to the change as a result of the creation of a new department, the improvements suggested have been carried out to a great extent.

6.45 P.M.

You will see that we have spent a great deal on relief work. I know that there is a tendency in this connection to attack the conduct of headmen. But after all just because there are a few bad headmen we should not forget those who are giving of their best. We know that there is a good deal of work and that in some cases they have to work long hours sacrificing leisure for the sake of this work. We must not forget that it is somewhat difficult to carry out this sort of work without their co-operation.

Now you see the amount we have spent in this connection. In Kurunegala District, regarding which we heard so much—I am sorry some of the Members who complained so much are not here—we spent up to June this year Rs. 361,194.82. That is not a small amount.

Dr. Perera: How many people were relieved?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: 11,300 persons. I thought things were quite satisfactory at Batticaloa; there we have spent Rs. 415,255.08; there we perhaps employed 5,461 men for a longer period than in Kurunegala. It was said that we spent nothing at Kegalla. Hon. Members will be surprised to hear that we spent at Kegalla Rs. 486,907.86.

Dr. Perera: What was that for?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Flood relief, compensation for failure of crops—

Dr. Perera: It is only flood relief that you find. Not a single cent was paid for failure of crops.

Mr. Dahanayake: All those items are grouped under sub-head 8. We want to know exactly what was spent under the different items.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The hon. Member for Anuradhapura was satisfied with what has been done. We spent there Rs. 277,560.22, and we employed 21,921 people.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: What about flood relief and compensation for failure of crops in the Colombo District?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: We spent in the Colombo District Rs. 851,877.50 on flood relief. I do not have the figures here in respect of the relief given for failure of crops.

The Chairman: Something is being done.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Everywhere something is being done, and I can tell the hon. Member for Hambantota that he was absent when a meeting was held there and, in spite of his absence, definite measures were undertaken, and we spent Rs. 16,087.16 for relief works at Hambantota. Owing to the scarcity of water in that District we propose to spend another Rs. 5,080. If this is nothing, I do not know what the hon. Member has in mind.

Mr. Dahanayake: Galle District please. Will the Hon. Minister table the figures relating to all the Districts?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I have no objection.

A question was raised by the hon. Member for Wellawatta-Galkissa regarding the policy towards private charity. After all, when we had the malaria epidemic and the floods in 1947 we found in some cases that prompt relief was not given. Some people depended too much on Government. The Government does not want to shirk its responsibility. Where relief is needed that is forthcoming. We do not want to deprive the more well-to-do of the opportunity of making themselves useful to society. That is why we are resorting to private charity. I think there is nothing more to which I should refer.

Mr. Dahanayake: What about the failure of crops?

Dr. Perera: What about Gampola?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: There are altogether ten homes for the aged run by individual societies, and the Government is giving them a grant.

Dr. Perera: But there is a State home for the aged.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: The State is going to start a home for the aged.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: We propose to start new homes for the aged wherever necessary. In the meantime we have offers from three public-spirited gentlemen of three different areas to put up homes for the aged and hand them over to the State for the State to run them. If there are more offers, the Government will only be too pleased to run them.

Mr. Dahanayake: Will you say where they are?

Dr. Perera: Have you decided on the places where you are going to have these homes?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: They will be State homes for the aged.

Mr. Dahanayake: Where are they going to be situated?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: With regard to social surveys, we propose to select certain defined areas and find out the extent of destitution that prevails in such areas—the number of destitutes and others. That will enable us to carry out the work more expeditiously.

Mr. Motha: The whole position of the country will be reflected in the choice of the areas for survey. On what principle is the survey going to be carried out? Social surveys must reflect the position of the whole country or of the most depressed areas. That is very important.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Naturally this will be done in conjunction with the University for the purpose of research. To begin with, these surveys will be undertaken in certain selected areas. They might extend over the whole Island, if necessary.

Mr. Keuneman: What about information on sub-head 9? How many officers have been sent to England?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Two officers have been sent, and they are attached to the National Insurance Department, and they are studying national insurance.

Mr. Dasanaik: The Hon. Minister said that the Government spent about Rs. 300,000 in the Kurunegala District. I want to know whether that includes Wariyapola area also.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Not according to constituency but according to district.

Mr. Dahanayake: He has given no information on sub-head 10.

The Chairman: He has answered.

Dr. Perera: His answer is very inadequate. With Rs. 5,000 you cannot make a social survey of the whole Island.

The Chairman: He is just starting. He said that he would be having surveys in one or two places.

Poholiyadde Dissawa: May I know from the Hon. Minister whether he would consider my suggestions?

Dr. Perera: What about the question of unemployment relief?

The Chairman: I hope it will not interfere with the Motion in the Order Book by the hon. Member for Galle.

Dr. Perera: What I want to know is some details regarding the Government scheme at the moment. What I would like to have from the Hon. Minister is some information regarding the provision of Rs. 2,400,000 for the various schemes that he has in mind. I presume that there is the Bloemendhal scheme on which he is spending money. What other schemes has he in mind?

Apart from that, I know that the Hon. Minister has had a series of conferences with the Colombo Municipality and that they have put forward certain tentative proposals. I would like to know at what stage these conversations are at the present moment. I also would like to know when it is proposed to start some of these schemes. I think about five schemes have been put forward to the Hon. Minister, particularly with regard to unemployment in Colombo.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: The Municipality wants all the work done at Government expense.

Dr. Perera: Relief of unemployment must be considered a State responsibility. I do not think the Hon. Minister can say that the responsibility for relieving unemployment can be shifted to local authorities.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: We do not say that.

Dr. Perera: Out of the five schemes I want to know which one they intend to take up first. There is a scheme to fill up the swamps involving about 192 acres providing work for 2,000 workers. There is the other scheme for widening streets.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: They are being examined.

Mr. Dahanayake: I thought that unemployment relief as against measures for increasing employment means the granting of assistance to the unemployed. Is that the position? We see that the question of unemployment is dealt with under two Heads—Heads 110 and 111. Under Head 110, which is in the charge of the Commissioner of Labour, provision has been made for measures for increasing employment. That is to say, under Head 110 all kinds of schemes will be undertaken into which those who are at present unemployed will be absorbed. If that is the position, it is a bit of wishful thinking on my part. I hope that the provision under Head 111 which is styled unemployment relief really refers to relief that will be granted to those who ask for employment and to whom the State is unable to give a satisfactory answer.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: No. Relief of distress.

Mr. Dahanayake: In that case we want a very clear definition of how, in what way, and in what schemes the sum of Rs. 2,400,000 will be spent as against expenditure under the previous Head. We want a very clear statement from the Hon. Minister.

The Chairman: He was going to give the information, but you would not allow him.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: I want to reiterate the complaint that I made during the Second Reading Debate regarding two schemes that have been put up to the Hon. Minister. I am not blaming the Hon. Minister but I am blaming the provincial administration.

The Chairman: Unemployment relief?

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: It has taken very nearly three months.

The Chairman: I said that I cannot allow that to be discussed because we are already having a Resolution in the Order Book in the name of the hon. Member for Galle.

Mr. Wilmot A. Perera: If the Hon. Minister is having his Inspectors of Social Services in those areas, and if the Assistant Government Agents have too much work to attend to, then cannot we get the Inspectors of Social Services to look into these matters?

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: I want to know whether the unemployed people of an area where relief work is carried on, will be given preference over outsiders.

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: That is the accepted policy.

The Chairman: The hon. Member asked the same question before.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: He has not given an answer.

The Chairman: He was about to give the answer.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I was about to say that we had prepared definite schemes in regard to the first work that was undertaken—Bloemendhal scheme—where we had to employ a certain number of unemployed. Relief was considered very necessary at that time, and had to be given.

7.0 P.M.

Thereafter we had the schemes at Ratmalana and Mahara, and later, we have undertaken a scheme at Attidiya and then the Kelaniya embankment scheme. We are now examining other schemes, such as the Mutturajawela and Kolonnawa schemes. It looks as if we will succeed taking over the land at Kolonnawa and levelling it for the purpose of a good housing scheme, and we might be able to absorb practically about 8,000 of the unemployed. We have several other schemes. The Municipality of Colombo is also coming to our rescue, although it will take some time for them to do so. They are trying to clear the fire gaps, and already work has been started. About a hundred men have already been employed. And there are several other schemes. Even in Colombo we want to acquire lands near about Maligawatte and Wanathamulla.

These things cannot be done in a day. The Municipalities tell us that they cannot manage it. They confess their inability to administer the Poor Law. They say that conditions are so bad that they cannot allow the people to suffer. They say either we must get the law amended or give relief to those who are affected by this law.

So, Sir, we are considering some of these schemes, but we want to make sure, in view of the seriousness of the situation, that there is a definite vote so that we need not come here again, and have the schemes ready by October next year.

Mr. Keuneman: Are we to understand from the Hon. Minister that this vote is to be used only for schemes providing employment and not for granting funds for the unemployed.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I have already said that the question of poor relief law is being considered. If you think it absolutely necessary that some sort of relief should be granted to relieve the difficulties of the people in these three municipalities, certainly it will be done, but we have to examine the whole position.

Mr. Bauddhasara: The Hon. Minister has not mentioned any schemes for places like Galle, Kandy, Kurunegala, and so on.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: Work has already been started in some of those places. We have spent about Rs. 80,000.

Mr. D. B. R. Gunawardena: I want to know whether the people of the area will be employed to do relief work in that particular area.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: In the first place the people of the area will be given employment. What is the use of bringing in people, Sir? We must first have the people registered. Somebody will bring in 100 people and say they are ready for employment. Then the whole scheme will be upset. Unfor-

tunately, the hon. Member went to the Exchange and found that he could not establish the position he took up.

Dr. Perera: What is this item "Regional Offices" under sub-head 12?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: They are to be in different parts of the Island, like Galle, Badulla, Jaffna, and so on.

Dr. Perera: Is it proposed to have these offices used as employment exchanges? Or are you proposing to use them for social service work?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: For social service work.

The Chairman: Anything else?

Mr. Keuneman: Yes, Sir, sub-head 13. Apparently, the Hon. Minister is introducing a Health Insurance Scheme. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the token vote that he is seeking is going to be used for social service work for this country, or whether he is going to make any changes in those schemes. Some comments by the Hon. Minister on this token vote would be very welcome.

Dr. Perera: I am at a loss to know why this token vote is being introduced for items that are already estimated. I should also like to know from the Hon. Minister what is the particular idea he had in his mind when he included the words "Workmen's Compensation and Maternity" in that item. Does the Hon. Minister intend to amend the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance; and is the Minister aware that this Ordinance is defective in many respects, firstly about the amount that is granted and secondly about the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance itself? There are various other defects like that. The operation of the Ordinance has been delayed. Is the Hon. Minister contemplating amending the Ordinance?

Mr. Dahanayake: I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the manner in which some of the estate

[Mr. Dahanayake.]

owners of this country and other employers evade payment of maternity benefits. Certain instances have come to my notice in which the records that are required to be kept under the Maternity Benefits Ordinance are not being kept.

The Chairman: This is entirely a new thing and has nothing to do with that Ordinance. This is Health Insurance. This does not come under any of the subjects you speak of.

Mr. Dahanayake: When I wanted to speak on Head 110, you asked me to wait.

The Chairman: Maternity Benefits do not come under this Head or any other Head under the Minister of Labour and Social Services. They come under the Minister of Health and Local Government. This is Health Insurance.

Mr. Dahanayake: The Maternity Benefits Ordinance comes under the Minister of Labour.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: That is under the previous Constitution.

Mr. Dahanayake: Then, may I know what this new provision is that is being asked for—"Health Insurance including Workmen's Compensation"? When the question of maternity benefits is considered I want the Minister to note that, as the law stands today, the owners of estates avoid the payment of these maternity benefits. They avoid it, Sir, by not maintaining proper records. They avoid it by marking the check-rolls falsely. In some estates the attendance is marked not daily according to the manner in which the worker attends work, but the worker is expected to do a certain quantity of work for a day and when that quantity is completed, one day is marked against his name. A sort of piece work system exists in those estates and the poor workers have to put up with exploitative methods or else get out of employment altogether. I want the Department to create new legislation in order to prevent estate owners from depriving mothers of these maternity benefits.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: What is this "maternity benefit" which the Hon. Member speaks of? Is it twins, or singles, or what?

Mr. Dahanayake: The Hon. Prime Minister is dealing with an important subject very light-heartedly. The Senanayake Cabinet keeps on quibbling, Sir. That accusation is correct.

I was referring to the fact that I know personally of a very large number of instances in which mothers have been deprived of these maternity benefits, and this is the new point which I wanted to stress. When complaints are made to the Labour Department, the Department merely refers the matter to the Superintendent of the estate, looks up the false record provided by the Superintendent and sends to the aggrieved party a formal reply. That is not what we want the Labour Department to do. We want the Labour Department to go to the spot and hold a first-hand inquiry to permit the aggrieved party to produce evidence to show that he had worked for a certain number of days in the estate and that the check-roll had been marked in a different way. I am insisting that this matter be looked into very carefully.

The Chairman: The Hon. Member is out of Order. I have already said that this subject of Maternity Benefits comes under the Minister of Health and Local Government and has nothing to do with this Ministry.

Mr. Dahanayake: I ask for new legislation to be created—

The Chairman: This is not the proper authority from whom that can be asked. Because the word "maternity" is there, the hon. Member thinks that this relates to maternity benefits. It is not so.

Mr. Dahanayake. "Maternity"—what is the noun for that adjective? I want the Hon. Minister to supply the missing word in the phrase: "including Workmen's Compensation and Maternity". May I know from the Hon. Minister what is the missing word in that phrase?

The Chairman: Put in any words you like, the "Maternity" in this case has nothing to do with the estates. Maternity Benefits come under the Medical Wants Ordinance, which is under the Minister of Health and Local Government. This is Health Insurance; the hon. Member is speaking all about estates.

Mr. Dahanayake: I only speak about the owners of various engineering firms—

The Chairman: The hon. Member has already spoken for five minutes. I have explained the position to the hon. Member, but he continues to speak. Do you want me to call for Order? When I point out under what Head you are to speak, you do not listen. You say something else. Is it fair? I ask. You are taking advantage of the indulgence of the other members of this House.

Mr. J. C. T. Kotalawela: Mr. Chairman, the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance needs immediate revision. In fact, I fully support the remarks made by the hon. Member for Ruwanwella. In the case of temporary disablement, a worker has to wait for days to receive his monthly payment, and that too after much agitation. Even under normal conditions he does not receive it in two or three days; whereas in England the payments are made within two or three days.

7.15 P.M.

Coming to the question of any injury which does not result in the total or partial disablement of a worker for a period exceeding seven days, the workers are not paid any compensation.

Another matter which I would like to mention is in regard to the medical opinion which doctors are called upon to express regarding the ability of an injured person to work in a particular industry. That means that the doctor is expected to know something about the industry itself. Surely that is too much to expect from a doctor? Therefore, I would appeal to the Hon. Minister to get the advice at least of his expert from abroad.

The Chairman: When he brings the scheme forward.

Mr. J. C. T. Kotalawela: I believe this was mentioned last year when the Estimates came up, but no steps have been taken by the Minister.

Mr. S. A. Silva: With regard to Workmen's Compensation, now that legislation is to be introduced, I would point out to the Hon. Minister the desirability of introducing a clause making it compulsory on the part of the employer to take steps to pay compensation where workers are injured while at work.

I say this, Sir, because we come across many instances where the injured person is not given any help. There was a particular case in my area where a worker injured his eyes while breaking metal. He stayed in the Eye Hospital for a number of months, but he has completely lost his sight and no compensation has been paid to the man. This matter has been reported to the Labour Department, but nothing has been done.

The Chairman: Hon. Members must realize that this Vote is not for the payment of compensation.

Mr. S. A. Silva: With the introduction of this new legislation I want to have it made compulsory for the employers to take all steps to pay compensation and also have a penalty imposed on them if it is not done.

Mr. Spencer: Mr. Chairman, arising from the remarks of the hon. Third Member for Colombo Central (Mr. Keuneman), I want to ask the Hon. Minister if he can tell us whether the House will be given an opportunity of discussing the position of those interests which are already running provident funds, when the combined contributory scheme mentioned in the Report of the Commissioners of Social Services is being considered.

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: This is a token Vote in connection with the introduction of this far-reaching scheme. I thought

[Hon. Mr. Jayah.]
it would be welcome news to hon. Members. We were even ready with the details of the scheme, but we wanted to make sure that this scheme is carefully examined before launching it. We are getting down two experts from the International Labour Organization one of whom is an actuary, so that all the details we have got together can be closely examined by these experts. Once we are satisfied with the scheme, we will consult all interests, including the interests mentioned by the hon. Appointed Member, Mr. Spencer, and when the necessary legislation is introduced hon. Members will have an opportunity of dealing with the whole subject. That is why we are asking for a token vote. We are at present not sure whether the Rs. 5,000,000 which we intend asking for when introducing this legislation will be enough to work the scheme. We now have the scheme in outline.

Mr. Dahanayake: What is the scheme?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: The scheme covers health insurance, unemployment insurance and a national provident fund.

Mr. Dahanayake: Where does the word "maternity" come in?

The Chairman: I have already answered that.

Major J. W. Oldfield (Appointed Member): How do you expect these investigators to arrive?

The Hon. Mr. Jayah: I will have to introduce a supplementary Vote to spend Rs. 20,000 for the cost of their passages. They will stay here till they finish the work, and after that they will leave.

Major Oldfield: Will that be done under this token vote?

The Chairman: Yes.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 14,726,891 for Head 111, Vote No. 1, be inserted in the Schedule," put, and agreed to.

Head 111, Vote 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 116.—Minister of Commerce and Trade

Vote No. 1.—Salaries and Expenses of office of the Minister of Commerce and Trade, Rs. 205,768.

Dr. Perera: I have a few observations to make on this Vote. We would like the Hon. Minister to give us some idea of what he has done. The Hon. Minister has now started a new fashion of speaking in riddles. I do not think that is satisfactory from the point of view of this House. I think the Hon. Minister should make a specific statement as to the present position with regard to copra prices as well as the various other floor prices. The Hon. Minister was very keen during a stage on these floor prices. Notwithstanding certain differences of opinion—I think there were some Members who were not too keen about it—the Hon. Minister was very keen, and his keenness apparently supervened and floor prices were maintained. Then, suddenly for some reason, the floor prices were given up, or he was asked to give them up, or, shall I say, he was constrained to give them up.

Now, Sir, this House was not consulted one bit even when a fundamental change of policy took place. This House had no idea as to the reasons which actuated the Hon. Minister to change that policy. It may be true that he did not agree with that change of policy; yet I think he was in duty bound to inform this House of the reasons which prompted him to make that change in policy. There are some of us, Sir, who feel that the continuance of the floor prices are justified. Some of us feel that today by the removal of the floor prices we have played into the hands of the shippers—that, in fact, the tune is being called by the shippers.

Before the Hon. Minister departed, he told this country that although there were statements that the floor prices were to be given up, that although there was a to-do about it in the Cabinet, still, legally, the floor prices were in operation. The Hon. Minister made a hasty departure to England, and hey, presto! floor prices vanished.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: No, Sir.

Dr. Perera: The floor prices vanished with the coming of the new Minister of Trade and Commerce into the saddle, and new machinery was set up apparently consisting of millers in the case of desiccated coconut and shippers. The producers were not represented.

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: The producers were also represented.

Dr. Perera: They were not represented, and to date I do not think they are represented in that machinery. Now, however, the new idea of a fair price has been fixed apparently by the parties concerned, that is the shippers and the millers.

Now, Sir, we would like to know why those changes have taken place—why this shift from one thing to another without an indication to this House? Surely, Sir, the hon. Members of this House—the representative assembly in this House—is entitled to have some information about these economic gyrations, if not political gyrations.

The Hon. Minister must, I think, take this House into greater confidence. He must be prepared to discuss in this House whatever difficulties he has with the shippers. It is fairly well known, Sir, that today the shippers have a controlling voice in international prices, and the country is entitled to know to what extent we have succumbed to the influence of the shippers. I have good reason to believe that the shippers are calling the tune at the present moment.

The Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member has now said that twice.

Dr. Perera: Even if I were to say it a hundred times, Sir, it would not be enough, judging by the results.

The Chairman: You are repeating the same thing.

Dr. Perera: Only, Sir, you have to look at it from various angles. On the question of the rubber prices, the Commissioner was asked to give up the idea

of buying rubber. Was that again not done at the demand of the shippers? Surely, therefore we, particularly on this side of the House, are entitled to know what precisely is the position of the Hon. Minister with regard to his Department. We would also like to know from the Hon. Minister the position with regard to the commercial side of his Department.

The Chairman: That is under a separate Head.

Dr. Perera: I will take it up in a detailed way when we come to the question of Commerce, but I think—

The Chairman: The hon. Member has asked a very important question, and I think he should let the Hon. Minister reply.

Major Oldfield: There is one little item under "Personal Emoluments" which I should like to mention. You will note that the Permanent Secretary is described as a C. C. S. officer in the Super Grade, but we were told last year that there was no such thing as a Super Grade in the Ceylon Civil Service.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for the opportunity given me by the Leader of the Opposition—

The Hon. Mr. Goonesinha: He is not the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Oh, not appointed yet!

I am grateful for the opportunity given me by the hon. Member for Ruwanwella to remove the misunderstandings, the doubts and misgivings which exist in the country on this question of floor prices. I am not surprised that there should be these doubts, misgivings and misunderstandings in the country at large, when they are so dominant in the mind of a learned Doctor like the hon. Member for Ruwanwella.

What, Sir, is the position? The system of floor prices was introduced soon after this Government was born, in order to secure the best prices for Ceylon

[Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam.]

Hon. Members will remember that on the occasion of the last Debate on the Budget I did refer in specific terms to what I then considered to be the stranglehold on this country's trade by a body of shippers. But I must say, in all fairness, in all justice, that the shippers have responded to my policy in a way which I never anticipated. I must thank them most sincerely, and I must pay my tribute to them for having in the last few months served Ceylon in a way that has brought credit to Ceylon and benefit to Ceylonese.

7.30 P.M.

It is necessary that we should know the facts. This measure was introduced to meet a particular emergency. When I assumed the duties of my office, I found desiccated coconut being sold at Re. 1.05 a lb. When I asked for the reason, I was told that the quota allowed under the copra contract had been practically exhausted, that there was a shortage of supply, that there was a persistent demand, and that therefore the prices had shot up.

The simple remedy was to issue more desiccated coconut. We applied for permission to the Ministry of Food in England, and they most magnanimously gave us permission to go outside the terms of the contract and utilize about 2,500 tons of desiccated coconut.

When that permission was obtained, in fact in anticipation of that permission being obtained, prices slumped down from Re. 1.05 to 70 or 80 cents a lb. When we went into the causes we felt that it was due to some action taken by the shippers, probably under pressure from buyers abroad, and therefore, to resist this action on the part of buyers abroad, we thought it necessary to introduce floor prices. Those prices were introduced after close and careful consultation with every section of the industry.

In the desiccated coconut industry, there are two sets of people, shippers and millers. The hon. Member says there are producers also. I do not understand the statement that there is a third party called the "producers of desiccated coconut" —

Dr. Perera: Producers of coconuts.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: They are the coconut producers. The miller is the man who buys the raw product, the coconut, and turns it into desiccated coconut. Let there be no splitting of hairs. I repeat, that the producer of desiccated coconut is the miller —

Dr. Perera: The Prime Minister says the producers are represented —

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake: Yes.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Yes.

Dr. Perera: You denied it.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Certainly not. I am not interested in scoring debating points. I take the facts as they are.

The millers who are the producers can use any raw material for the purpose. They bought coconuts at their own rates; that is their look-out. They are producers of desiccated coconut, and they as producers and the shippers were consulted, and floor prices fixed.

What happened? There was a reaction, a temporary reaction, but the market went down. The shippers and the millers both played their game, and played it well! What was the result? When we came to the year 1948, when we released 10,000 tons of desiccated coconut under the quota, we found that 52 millers had been given a net profit of over Rs. 6,000,000, while the revenue gained at the rate of 30 cents a lb., until quite recently when for certain reasons we reduced the duty to 20 cents a lb.

Here are the results of five months' operation of the floor prices, from January to May, 1948. I am sorry I could not get the figures up to the end of June, 1948, because I expected this vote to be taken up tomorrow.

During the five months up to the end of May, 1948, Ceylon sold 156,975 cwts. for Rs. 17,276,118, at an average f.o.b. Colombo price of Re. 1.04. Compare that with the sales for the corresponding period of 1947, of 115,108 cwts. for Rs. 9,149,654, or 71 cents per lb.

In other words, there has been an increase of 36 per cent. in the quantity sold, about 90 per cent. in the value received and 47 per cent. in the prices realized.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Ruwanwella suggest that my Chief has gone and abolished the floor prices?

Dr. Perera: He has.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Of course not. All that he has done is this. He has, I think quite rightly, polished the "floor" and made it "fair"! What he has done is this—

Dr. Perera: Call it a fair price?

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Not merely that. It is not prudent on the part of the Government to intervene in the fixation of floor prices, even after close consultation with the interests concerned. It is more desirable for the interests themselves to fix the prices.

Dr. Perera: That is a reversal of policy.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: No.

Take a typical case. In the cocoa trade we had the same system introduced. We had floor prices. The Prime Minister, in his inimitable, diplomatic way said, "Gentlemen, you are sending me all kinds of complaints about the floor prices. Very well. Here you are: Please decide your prices. Tell us what to do, and we will do it. Consult your committees or boards. Let us have your Producers' Board; let us have your Shippers' Board. You can meet together if you like. Please decide for yourselves".

They met together, and what did they decide? "These prices shall be the minimum fair prices". And what are those "fair" prices? The same floor prices, exactly the same! There has not been a change in the system, nor a change in the practice, nor in the values received.

But there has been one change: Polish the "floor" and make it "fair."

Mr. Dahanayake: "Polish" or "abolish"?

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Polish.

I can multiply instances. It will please my hon. Friends to hear that during my visit to England, in the past three weeks, we have had occasion to talk about this system. The London Baltic Exchange were taken up by this system in relation to our economy.

We not only had the "floor price" system, but we had the "fair price" system, and in that system we allowed competition; we called for tenders. That is also repeated now by the same producers and shippers. They say, "This is a fair price which this country should obtain: Now you people want all this stuff; you want to compete to get this stuff. Well, then, compete just as much as you like, and the man who pays the highest price will have the right to export."

If you examine the prices of cocoa particularly, you will find that in the whole history of the cocoa trade, never has this country, nor any country in the world, realized the prices that we have realized to such great advantage.

I trust that it will not be said hereafter that there has been a change of policy: there has been only a change in diplomatic skill.

Dr. Perera: The position taken up by the Minister of Commerce and Trade is that, instead of his Department fixing the prices, the Government has, by changing the word "floor" into "fair", handed the work over to, as he calls them, "the parties concerned", who will fix the prices—

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: That is democracy!

Dr. Perera: It is strange that this concept of "democracy" should have dawned upon the Minister only after six months—

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Quite right: We all make mistakes!

Dr. Perera: I am glad he admits that he made a mistake, but we are of opinion that in the first instance he did not make a mistake. We feel that if he

[Dr. Perera.]

had continued on the lines he originally adopted all would have been well. He has fixed these so-called fair prices, but is he satisfied with the present situation? Apparently not, because the Minister has had to change the tax—the export duty on desiccated coconut has been reduced—

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: That was done long ago, for different reasons.

Dr. Perera: I know the reasons. There is a Motion on that subject. All that I need say on that point now is that we are not convinced that the situation may not arise when you may have to revert to the “floor prices” system, instead of the present “fair prices” system. The system of “fair” prices may operate satisfactorily in the case of desiccated coconut, because the millers are also the shippers, and therefore, for the present, it may suit those concerned to continue the present system. The time will come, however, when, after they have entrenched themselves, they will want to exploit the situation.

That applies also to the other trades. They want a Board under which they could operate “floor prices”——

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: No.

Dr. Perera: We are still experiencing the aftermath of those floor prices, and we shall feel the repercussions of the new prices only six or eight months hence.

The Minister was keen on the “floor prices” at one stage. Does he now seriously tell this House that when he introduced the floor prices he was not aware of the possibility of carrying on with “fair prices” fixed on the same basis? He was not prepared to trust the shippers, or to allow them to have their own way. The Minister must consider the future, and not merely the needs of the immediate moment.

The Minister is now prepared to trust the shippers. This country has had a good deal of experience of the manner in which shippers have treated this country and its producers. We have

not forgotten it. We have no reason to believe that the shippers will prove to be any different in the future; when it suits their purpose they will exploit this country, and the House will not be surprised to hear that the Minister has had to change his mind again. He has changed his mind once.

Mr. Dahanayake: Sir, the Minister of Commerce and Trade is cleverer in what he conceals than in what he reveals. Who are the people, which is the party that squealed against floor prices? Why did they protest against floor prices? As I understand it from the layman's angle, the floor prices ensure a reasonable and equitable price to the producer. I take it that it was the middleman that squealed——

7.45 P.M.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: No.

Mr. Dahanayake: Then who squealed? Was it you who squealed, or was it your Prime Minister?

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: You squealed.

Mr. Dahanayake: I am squealing now against your injustice. I am squealing now against the fact that you are not placing all your cards on the table. And it is my duty to squeal against your irresponsibility.

I ask the Hon. Minister of Commerce and Trade to disclose to us the representations that he or the Prime Minister, behind the back of the Minister of Commerce and Trade, received, and from whom. Those representations came from the shippers, and those representations were directed towards one end, and one end only, and that is to see that that continuity of a reasonable price was avoided. I think the Hon. Minister will agree that within a system of competitive trade, we should ensure a fair and equitable price to the producer by a system of restriction, and the floor price system was after all a system of restriction that affected the trade, and it benefited the producer.

I ask the Hon. Minister, finally, to tell us on what date the floor was polished and abolished, and what have been the

results thereafter. From what we have heard, many things took place between the sudden and dramatic flight of the Hon. Minister of Commerce and Trade to England and his advent today. That polishing took place in the Hon. Minister's absence, and he has polished himself anew to the task of answering his critics on this side of the House. We, on this side of the House, are really concerned with the producer of not merely the desiccated products but of the product itself. The Hon. Minister tried to draw a distinction between the producer of the nut, and the miller who produced the desiccated product. I say that we, on this side, are not prepared to accept that distinction for purposes of trade relations and trade agreements and for purposes of balancing prices. We are primarily concerned with giving a fair price to the man who first handles the product, to the producer from our standpoint. Secondly, we are concerned, as far as possible with the elimination of the middleman. Today the Hon. Minister's proposals will tend to give a further lease of life to the shippers, and a further opportunity for the shippers to amass an untold fortune. Let the Minister reply.

Mr. H. de Z. Siriwardana (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industries, Industrial Research and Fisheries): I wish to know from the Hon. Minister when he fixed the floor price whether he did not consult the shippers and the producers.

The Chairman: The Hon. Minister said that he did.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: I said there was close and careful consultation.

I do earnestly hope that the hon. Member for Galle will realize that I am not here to protect any person against the producer of Ceylon produce in Ceylon. The hon. Member spoke about the producer of coconuts, and he thought that I was trying to quibble between the producer of desiccated coconut and the producer of coconuts. As far as the producer of coconuts is concerned the price he gets for his produce is determined by very many factors: by the man who buys fresh

coconuts for export to the Middle East and India, by the man who buys it for manufacturing desiccated coconut, by the man who wants to convert it into copra, by the man who wants to convert it into edible copra [*Interruption*].—

The Chairman: Do not interrupt please! The Hon. Minister did not interrupt others.

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Out of all these cases, the best returns have been obtained from desiccated coconut, and the best prices have been paid by the millers to the producers of coconut. While the ordinary man who buys coconut to convert it into copra pays eight to nine cents, even seven cents, no desiccated miller has been known to pay less than ten cents, sometimes even, eleven, twelve and thirteen cents. So that, from the point of view of the producer of coconuts itself, the desiccated miller is the man who pays the highest price. He is able to pay the highest price, because his cost of production is very carefully examined and the floor price is fixed in relation to his cost of production; he gets a good margin of profit and he pays the best price in view of the world demand. The world demand was a prime factor till quite recently, when the Philippines came into production of desiccated coconut, so that as far as we are concerned, the desiccated coconut producer is the miller.

The hon. Member for Galle asked on what date the floor price was abolished. "You made a hasty departure to England and in your absence this polishing took place", he said. Sir, the decision to abolish the floor price was made by the Cabinet when I was present. That took place before I went to England.

Mr. Dahanayake: Was that put into effect before you went away?

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam: Put into effect in what way? Not to affect the producer adversely, not to contract his income. Instead of having Government interference, we said, "Let the producer and the shipper come together, discuss it, work it out

[Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam.]
and arrive at a price which they consider a minimum fair price." What is important is that the floor price has not been altered by a cent [*Interruption.*] It is one thing for me to consult the people, and quite another for me to take a responsible decision. It would have been an undemocratic decision if I had not taken this step. But here the two parties get together and decide for themselves. Does my hon. Friend think that the producer is such a foolish person as to walk into the trap of the shippers. No, that is not so. When these parties are functioning together, the producers have sufficient skill and sufficient experience to know what is their due. I may also say this. Fortunately, at present a number of shippers are Ceylonese—

Mr. Dahanayake: Nevertheless they are middlemen!

The Chairman: Order, please!

The Hon. Mr. Suntharalingam:

I am sorry the hon. Member does not want to be convinced. There is none so blind as those who will not see.

Question, "That the sum of Rs. 205,768, for Head 116, Vote No. 1 be inserted in the Schedule", put, and agreed to.

Head 116, Vote 1, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

It being 8 p.m., the Chairman left the Chair to report Progress.

Committee report Progress; to sit again Tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved: "That this House do now adjourn."—[*Hon. Mr. Goonesinha.*]

Adjourned accordingly at 8.0 P.M., until 10 A.M. on Thursday, August 12, 1948, pursuant to the Resolution of the House of August 6, 1948.

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