

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 27th NOVEMBER, 1946.

The Council met at 2.30 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT :

The President, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson (acting).

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder, K.C.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C. (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. J. I. de Aguiar (Central Demerara).

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E. (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E. (Georgetown South).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North Western District).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Hon. T. T. Thompson (Nominated).

The Hon. W. J. Raatgever (Nominated).

The Hon. H. Rahaman (Nominated).

The Hon. J. A. Veerasawmy (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 22nd Novem-

ber, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

K.C. FOR MR. HOLDER

The PRESIDENT : I have pleasure in announcing that His Majesty the King has been pleased to give directions for the appointment of Mr. F. W. Holder, Attorney-General, to be one of His Majesty's Counsel for the Colony of British Guiana. I am sure all of us here wish to congratulate Mr. Holder and I offer my very best congratulations to him. (Applause).

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Thank you, Your Excellency.

The PRESIDENT : I have no other official announcement to make today, but I shall probably be able to make some interesting announcements tomorrow, if we meet.

ORDER OF THE DAY

(GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1946.

Council resumed the debate on the second reading of a Bill intitled—

“An Ordinance to amend the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance in certain particulars.”

The PRESIDENT : Under the Order of the Day I propose that we resume the debate on the second reading of the Bill to amend the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance. I asked hon. Members to defer the voting on the second reading in order to give Members who were not present on the last occasion an opportunity of speaking before we put it to the vote.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : We are still on the second reading and the debate continues.

The PRESIDENT : The speakers, so far as I recollect, were the hon. Member for North Western District, the Deputy President, the hon. Mr. Critchlow, the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, the hon. Member for Georgetown South, the hon. Member for Essequibo River, and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Thompson. Is there any other Member here today who would like to address the Council on the Bill? As no other Member wishes to speak, I will call on the Attorney-General to reply to the speeches made.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: As I tried to point out when moving the motion for the second reading, this matter is particularly one for the Town Council which body, I assume, has gone very carefully into the various aspects and submitted its recommendations in the form of a draft Bill. Of course, the onus rests and remains on this Legislative Council to determine the various issues raised in any Bill for the purpose of accepting it as an Ordinance. So far as the principles of this Bill are concerned, there are two, and one is the qualification for election as a Councillor. The other is the qualification which an elector should have. I venture to say that it is the opinion of all the Members of this Council that there should be a reduction in regard to both of these matters, and that is what we are dealing with at the present time—when we decide as to the second reading or not. It is, I submit, desirable that there should be a reduction so far as the qualification for election to the position of a Councillor is concerned, and that point, I suggest to hon. Members, is a detail which could be gone into when the Bill is in the Committee stage. That applies with equal force to the question of the qualification of voters.

The situation therefore resolves itself into this: At the present time all hon. Members are agreed that there should be a reduction so far as the qualification of (a)—Councillors—and (b)—those who are to be voters—is concerned. If that is agreed upon, I take it that the second reading of the Bill would be passed. The hon. Member for North Western District suggested that he would oppose or would not vote for the second reading because the Bill does not set out what the hon. Member wishes, and that is that there should be full adult franchise in so far as Municipal elections go. But that is a question for examination of details when the Bill is in Committee stage. I do not intend to reply at greater length until the Committee stage is reached to the various Members who have had different views in so far as the qualification of Councillors is concerned, and also in so far as the qualification of voters is concerned. Some consider that there should be a free franchise—without any limita-

tion whatever—but I suggest that that is a matter which should be gone into later.

There is one point to which I would like to refer at this stage, and it is this: In the Bill as it appears, there is a provision in clause 4 (2)—I mentioned this in the course of my remarks in moving the second reading of the Bill—with regard to the question of aliens being given the right to vote. From what has appeared in the Press and also from a communication which Government has received, this matter was fully discussed at a meeting of the Town Council and they have communicated the view that the provision should not be allowed to stand in the Bill at all. One of the first associations for the enjoyment of civic rights was the Parliamentary Franchise Association for the benefit of British subjects. The fact is that a person who is a non-British subject or an alien may own property so as to have the right to vote, and the suggestion is that one should not take the risk of owning property without having civic rights. An alien could very easily make application and take the necessary steps to become a naturalized British subject, and that is done all the time.

The advice I wish to convey to hon. Members is that that part of the Bill should not be allowed—the part dealing with this question of aliens having a right to vote. Under the Common Law of England the inability to vote at Parliamentary elections was a disability to Aldermen, and in the Representation of the People's Act of 1918 this disability remains, and it also remains so far as local elections are concerned. Speaking from my place in this Legislative Council, I say that this matter is one of great Constitutional importance and I will advise hon. Members that that part of the Bill should not be pursued and should not be allowed. Subject to any further observations, I think I have made the position perfectly clear. In so far as the remaining portions of the Bill go, I suggest that this Bill should receive the second reading as a very necessary and forward step in Municipal life and development.

Motion for the second reading put, the Council dividing and voting as follows:—

For: Messrs. Veerasawmy, Rahaman, Raatgever, Thompson, Ferreira, Peer

Bacchus, Percy C. Wight, Critchlow, C. V. Wight, Woolford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General, and the Colonial Secretary—13.

Against : Mr. Jacob—1.

Did not Vote : Mr. Lee—1.

Motion carried.

Bill read a second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Clause 1—Short Title.

Mr. JACOB : I beg to move the deletion of this clause. I want first of all to reply, if I may, to the questions raised by the hon. the Deputy President—the Member for New Amsterdam—and one or two other Members including the hon. Member for Georgetown South who is not here at present, under this clause, because I might not have the opportunity to reply under any other clause. This is a very important measure touching very important principles relating to self-government in this Colony, and I think it is the wish of every Member in this Council that this matter should be ventilated in a very wide manner. I want first of all to express my apology to this Council for having spoken here for nearly three quarters of an hour yesterday, and that I found it necessary to leave my seat in order to answer a call in connection with this very Bill. One or two hon. Members thought I was discourteous in leaving my seat to go to the office of the Commissioner of Local Government, and I would like to read from the *Daily Argosy* of last Saturday's date what the hon. Member for Georgetown South is reported to have said about the matter. It says:—

“The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E., remarked that Mr. Jacob indulged in remarks and references that made one think he had only to open his mouth and let words flow out of it. He referred to Mr. Jacob leaving the Chamber when the Deputy President was saying something of interest that might have helped his intelligence as regards the quality and capacity of the Town Council.”

Well, sir, I am going to deal with the question the capacity of the Town Council and my intelligence a little later. My object at the moment is to express regret that I found it necessary to leave this Council when a Member who is not passively or actively interested in this Bill was speaking. As I had an appointment with the Commissioner of Labour at his office, I thought it best to leave and speak to him. I wanted to hear the hon. Member for Georgetown South and also the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, and I am sorry they are not here at present. I think that Members of this Council must make it a point to come to this Council every day when it is sitting. As a rule I come here and stay all the time; I do not have to go out for a smoke or a drink at any time. I sit here and listen to every Member who speaks, and if on this occasion I am to be accused of being discourteous to the Chair, then I shall ask Your Excellency to rule that no Member should leave this Council Chamber during the course of a debate. I think I can say that without exception every Member of this Council leaves for a while and then comes back. Some go and have a drink even, but I do not. I sometimes take a drink of water, but I do not have to leave in order to do that.

The CHAIRMAN : I suggest that the hon. Member has expressed his regret.

Mr. JACOB : I was a little embarrassed when Your Excellency said that I left the Council Chamber without hearing the hon. Member for New Amsterdam. Your Excellency knows that it is very difficult to sit at this part of the Chamber and hear that hon. Member.

The CHAIRMAN : You have made your point and I shall ask you to carry on.

Mr. JACOB : I was just explaining how very difficult it is to listen from this part of the Chamber to—

The CHAIRMAN : I hope the hon. Member would listen to the Chair. I have already suggested that you have made your point, and therefore I must ask you to carry on.

Mr. JACOB : That is not very satisfactory, but I will carry on. I am a Public

servant and I give service willingly and conscientiously, and I hope every Member of this Council would do likewise. I come here sometimes at great inconvenience to myself, but I do not think many other Members can say the same thing. Perhaps—

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : I rise to a point of order. I must say, sir, you are giving a lot of latitude to some Members here and I wish to object to the kind of remarks being made by the hon. Member. I do not think this sort of thing should be continued.

The CHAIRMAN : I think myself that the hon. Member should not continue in that way. I said I agreed that the hon. Member had made his point expressing regret, and it is important that we get on with the debate as formally as possible. I hope that if hon. Members find it necessary to reply to any point they would avoid, as much as possible, reference to anything that is irrelevant to the point they wish to make. I do not see why hon. Members should indulge in personalities, and the hon. Member for North Western District must not interrupt our progress in that way. I appeal to hon. Members that when we are in Committee stage if we are going to do things with reasonable speed, no useful purpose would be served by going over and over again a point which we have already debated.

Mr. JACOB : I am not going over the point. I am referring to the matter because I was shocked at what I read on this Bill.

The CHAIRMAN : You need not read over the speech again.

Mr. JACOB : I am not reading over the speech; I am only reading over a particular phrase.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : I would ask you to give me a little latitude too, please, sir. I was, unfortunately, absent from the last meeting, but I have received several unsigned letters about the statements made in relation to Percy Claude Wight and I would like to know whether the hon. Member is going to correct them.

The CHAIRMAN : You must give me a particular reference.

Mr. JACOB : The hon. Member for New Amsterdam said "Municipal Councillors". The franchise was passed on the assumption and with the approval of the Corporation. I have it from the highest authority that in England every *bona fide* resident of a city is entitled to exercise the vote. That was all I asked for when the second reading was being debated—that every property-owner, every tenant and sub-tenant, and every lodger should be entitled to vote. That is what I call universal adult suffrage. The hon. Member for New Amsterdam is so clever; he was not listening during the whole of my speech and so possibly he was unable to understand what I was saying.

Mr. WOOLFORD : I rise to a point of order ! The hon. Member had advocated universal municipal franchise and I am entitled to state that the system of municipal franchise here only admits of resident-occupier qualification and qualification on the ownership of property. What happens in England is not at all applicable.

Mr. JACOB : Perhaps the newspaper—

Mr. WOOLFORD : I am rising to a point of correction ! In the first place the hon. Member has no right to quote from a newspaper without permission, but he can quote from the Hansard. The President allowed him and no one objected. What the hon. Member imputed is that when I was speaking I was not aware of the extended franchise in Great Britain. He is labouring under a delusion, and to say that what happens in England should obtain here is exactly the point at issue. I wish the hon. Member would understand that. The hon. Member wants universal municipal franchise in the City of Georgetown, and that is what I have taken exception to. I say it is open to question whether such a franchise should be for the City of Georgetown. Surely I am entitled to my opinion.

Mr. JACOB : Your Excellency, I do not want to say that I am a student of Parliamentary procedure, but I think I should be allowed to make my point and then the hon. the Deputy President can speak. He made a speech just now. I had asked for permission to read and to refer to this matter and permission was not

refused me. I can quite understand the anxiety of the hon. Member that I should read from the Hansard. The Hansard is not ready for two or three years and so I must wait until then. I am stating as a matter of fact that the hon. the Deputy President will not understand. He accused me of not learning. I am suggesting that the Deputy President will not understand anything. He is so imbued with his own wishes and desires that he wants to impose them on this Council. I am afraid he is given far too much latitude. The hon. the Deputy President cannot be heard at all times. Unless I refer to the particular words he would say he never spoke them. From this newspaper it is reported he said :

“Until it is properly understood that democracy means the advancement of ideals which the people sought and the people asked for there would be people in the community saying it was Government’s duty to impose democracy.....”

I understood it to be within the authority of this Council, which is the supreme authority, to impose its will and not for the Town Council to say we have approved of this and ask you to accept it, and Government must blindly follow the Town Council. This is the supreme body for making legislation, and whatever this body decides the Town Council must accept.

The CHAIRMAN : I entirely agree with what the hon. Member says. This is the sovereign body that makes legislation. This is the body that has the responsibility, let us therefore get on with the work.

Mr. JACOB : One other point. The hon. the Deputy President with all his wisdom said no Government should do that and then went on to say “How can we allow every Tom, Dick and Harry to vote and to sit in the Council ?” That is the kind of thing that will create, I hope not, trouble in this Colony. A tenant, sub-tenant and a lodger must be termed “Tom, Dick and Harry” and have no voice in the administration of the affairs of the City of Georgetown. The Deputy President went on to say that Georgetown is very well administered. I am just going to show in a minute how Georgetown is very well administered. We have got the housing problem very well looked after, the drain-

age problem very well looked after, the pure water supply problem very well looked after, the roads very well looked after. That is how the City is being administered, and that is how the majority of the Members of this Council will, I hope, view the position—as the majority of the people view it. I hope that this Council is going agree with me that this Bill should be thrown out. Perhaps I am asking too much. I hope they would agree that the short title be delayed so that Members would be given an opportunity to have another Bill brought in here with some of the things I suggested.

The CHAIRMAN : Does any other Member wish to speak on clause 1 ?

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 1 passed.

Clause 3—Qualification of elected councillors.

Mr. LEE : I forwarded certain amendments to this clause to the hon. the Attorney-General, and I do not know whether hon. Members have been supplied with copies. I am moving the deletion of section 7 (1) (b) and (c) and the substitution of the following therefor :

- “(b) if during the six months immediately preceding the day of nomination he resided continuously in the City of Georgetown; or
- (c) If he can read and write in English.”

I respectfully submit that if we are to progress in this Colony and if the intention of this Government is to promote that progress and extend it from the City of Georgetown to the villages and to the Colony as a whole by granting universal adult suffrage, this is the proper time to try it out in Georgetown. If the City is granted universal adult suffrage, any person who registers himself as a voter and has resided continuously for six months preceding the day of nomination and who can read and write in English should be entitled to be elected by the majority of the people as a councillor for any ward in Georgetown. Let me say this : There are two schools of thought—one desires progress and the other desires to remain as we are in the City of Georgetown without proper ameni-

ties, etc. One desires slum clearing and other necessities for a proper city, and the other is satisfied with present conditions. Any person visiting Georgetown for the first time and seeing the dilapidated buildings, the slums and the various necessities which are not provided by the Town Council will be able to say whether we are a progressive people or not. The fact cannot be denied that when universal adult suffrage was urged in respect of the Legislative Council it was said that there were too many illiterate people in the country who would not be able to reason well and to vote for the proper persons to be on that Council. But can that be said of Georgetown? Can anyone say the inhabitants of Georgetown are in any way so illiterate? If they can say that, let them expound it here and let us see whether the people would agree with them.

The next point is with regard to universal adult suffrage. It is said that the majority of the inhabitants of certain constituencies are of a certain race and that it will predominate in the Legislative Council. Can that be said of the City? If anyone can say that, I would bow to him. I feel that if we are to follow the Parliamentary progress in other cities abroad, we have to take a step forward and Georgetown is the proper place to begin with. I feel that the majority of the people in Georgetown know what they want and can demand what they want. If they find that the City is not being conducted in a proper way by the councillors whom they have put on the Council, they know what to do. How many times has not the City seen demonstrations demanding so and so? Cannot the residents of Georgetown do that and demand the resignation of the councillors for not conducting the affairs of the City properly? Surely that can be done. There will spring up a political consciousness and the people will keep in touch with every act done by the members of the Municipality. But if we are dominated by mortgages and debts to the several moneyed people in Georgetown, then of course we cannot voice our opinion and obtain a majority opinion in the City.

We want the majority opinion to rule, as it should do in a democratic country.

I therefore ask you, sir, and the Members of this Council to consider carefully, if it is required that the majority voice should be the voice of the people, and let it be started in Georgetown. I do feel that for the protection of the Council against—let me use the words of hon. Member for New Amsterdam—Tom, Dick and Harry being elected to a seat on the Council, there should be a requirement as in the case of the Legislative Council for a deposit of \$240 which would be forfeited in the event of a candidate not securing 15 per cent. of the votes polled. It is up to the Government, if this suggestion is accepted, to introduce such an amendment. I will vote for it as thereby we will prevent every Tom, Dick and Harry seeking to get on the Council. I can assure you, however, that some of these people who are referred to as Tom, Dick and Harry will make better councillors than many of the present ones.

Mr. WOOLFORD : May I ask what is the hon. Member's amendment? Has he a copy of it?

Mr. LEE : I handed it to the hon. the Attorney-General who has passed it on to the President. I have read it, and perhaps when I was doing so the hon. Member was not paying attention.

The CHAIRMAN : This clause deals with period and the other point can be dealt with better under another clause. Would the hon. Member like to substitute "six months" for "twelve months"?

Mr. LEE : It deals with both.

The CHAIRMAN : Is the hon. Member speaking on (c)?

Mr. LEE : I am dealing with both (b) and (c). I was trying to point out to my hon. Friends in this Council that, if they preach the democratic principle of the majority voice, they should adhere to it and let it be the starting point in this Bill. Let us assume for argument's sake that they do not agree to that, and let us assume that at the next General Elections for the Legislative Council universal adult suffrage is introduced, what would the public of Georgetown say? They would say that on the greater Council, the law-

making body, you have men who agree with the progressive idea of universal adult suffrage and on the Georgetown Town Council you have old fogies afraid of their shadows. A man who can come forward and get the majority votes of the people is the better man. If the Town Councillors think they are superior beings why should they be afraid of their shadow? There must be some reason for that, and I want to wipe out that reason so that they can see every other man as a man of equal standing in a democratic country eligible to hold the best post in that country and to direct and rule, if necessary, the State in that way.

Mr. JACOB : It is no use our wasting time in this Council. I see the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Gonsalves) has just come in. He has a mandate from his Ward and he seems uncertain about it. We will probably hear about that mandate from another institution. I would certainly like to hear what the hon. Member for Georgetown South has to say, because I have been told the Citizens' Civic and Political Association of South Georgetown have instructed the hon. Member for Georgetown South to ask for the things the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) stated just now. That is a mandate, a specific request, of the hon. Member's electors to him.

The CHAIRMAN : I do not think it is up to any Member to ask another Member to speak. It is up to that Member to speak if he wishes. Does the hon. Member wish to add anything to what the hon. Member for Essequibo River has said?

Mr. CRITCHLOW : The Trades Union Council has asked me to move an amendment, but I am between the devil and the deep sea because the Labour Party has agreed on universal adult suffrage and the Trades Union Council is pressing me to move this amendment to clause 3 (c)—Substitution of the word "six" for the word "twelve" and the word "eight" for the word "twenty-five."

Mr. GONSALVES : I have risen to speak not because of the words which have fallen from the mouth of the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob), but I propose to adhere to your

request, sir, lest it is thought I am afraid to come out personally in this matter. I do not propose to say one word to the hon. Member in respect of his alarm at my silence in connection with this Bill at this stage. I think the hon. Member appreciates that we all cannot rise to speak at the same time. Since I always give preference of first speech to others, I think I should follow on now. I have received a letter and a circular. The circular is signed by individuals but the letter is signed by the Secretary of an Association. The concluding paragraph of the letter reads :

"My committee will be glad if you will place before the Legislative Council the views of my Association for the earnest consideration of the Council."

That is the request which has been made of me in this letter. That Association had a meeting recently—on Monday, 25th inst.—and suggested by resolution which I think was passed, that—

- "1. Universal Adult Suffrage, viz :
(a) Property Owners, (b) Tenants and (c) *bona fide* Lodgers.
2. A person should be eligible to be registered if that person has resided in Georgetown during six months preceding his application for registration. If that person has resided in several wards during this period he should be eligible to be registered in the ward in which he resides at the time of his application.
3. That a sum of not less than \$120 be deposited by each candidate accepting nomination as a Town Councillor which sum shall be forfeited if less than 15 per cent. of the total number of votes polled are recorded in his favour."

They do not say anything about qualification.

Mr. LEE : It is a presupposition that with universal adult suffrage they would be entitled to be elected councillors.

Mr. GONSALVES : I understand from another letter that a copy of this letter has been sent to the Attorney-General on the question of municipal franchise. Rather than there should be any doubt that such a letter was not sent or received, I ask permission to lay over

this letter as Representative of Georgetown South.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I have risen with a certain amount of hesitancy to speak on this matter, because in the first place I regard it as a domestic matter. It is true that this Government has a certain amount of responsibility when legislation comes before the Council. On the other hand, it seems to me that one should not allow personal views to decide the issue. As I understand the position, this matter has been under consideration by the Georgetown Town Council for some time. If I mistake not, the decision which formed the subject of this Bill was made by the Town Council some time back. It seems rather curious to find at this late stage so much talk about mandate and fear. The hon. Member for Essequibo River referred to fear of a shadow. I do not know what the fear is; he has not told us. I do not know who is in the shadow. I would like to tell him that I regard the decision arrived at by the Mayor and Town Council of Georgetown as a proper one, and I am prepared to support it. If the Town Councillors met, considered the matter from various angles in that Council on which there is a representative of every ward of the City and arrived at a decision which does not find favour with the ratepayers, it is a matter for the ratepayers to decide what to do with those Councillors. There is much talk about democracy. The fact remains that there you have a democratic composition of that body. It represents a large majority of the ratepayers and the Government on the other hand which has a certain amount of responsibility and also owns a considerable amount of property in the city. That body arrived at a decision and asked Government to introduce it by way of a Bill.

Mr. JACOB : May I rise to a point of correction ? The Georgetown Town Council is not a wholly elected body as stated by the hon. Member.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I cannot speak in any other language to make the hon. Member understand. I have already stated that the Georgetown Town Council represents a large body of ratepayers, and I have also stated that the Government owns a considerable amount of property

and has Nominated members on the Council. I do not know when the hon. Member will understand me. If he cannot, I am afraid I cannot help him further. I do claim that the City Corporation as presently constituted is a fully democratic one in the true sense of the word, and if Members of this Council are prepared to brush aside lightly any representation which is being made by such a responsible body in this City, it seems they are abusing the privilege they have in this Council. It is sheer nonsense to rise in this Council and talk about teaching people about universal adult suffrage and to select the Georgetown Town Council as the starting point. Why don't you begin in the villages ? Can the hon. Member say they have a similar system in the villages as the one he is advocating here ? The answer is "No".

I am one of those who believe that if we want to progress we must begin from the bottom up and not from the centre. On the other hand, I am quite prepared to excuse those Members who, overcome by zeal and with ideals, advocate what they feel, but for them to come here and speak glibly saying that they represent the wishes of the majority of the people is, in my view, begging the question. What is the mandate to which the hon. Member for North Western District refers ? I have listened to the hon. Member for Georgetown South and if it is a mandate I do not regard it as such. I do not know where it came from. Is a thing considered by a committee of an association going to influence me to feel that it is the representation of the people of the ward ? I cannot believe it. It is true that the Committee of an association may have executive powers, but it cannot, in my opinion, express an opinion on this subject merely by sitting in committee and attempting to vary the view of the Georgetown Town Council which is comprised of representatives of the people of all the wards. No committee of an association, unless it calls the ratepayers together and asks them to express an opinion, can express an opinion as to what the ratepayers want. They are in a different position from the Georgetown Town Council which arrived at the decision which is the subject of this Bill. As far as I am

concerned I do not propose to support the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Essequibo River.

Mr. LEE : To a point of information, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Central Demerara ! The number of voters for the City of Georgetown is 1,452 and the population is 73,541.

Mr. de AGUIAR : May I say in reply to that, the number of Councillors on the Town Council is twelve.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : I propose to move a further amendment to that of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Critchlow. I agree that six months should be substituted for twelve months, but instead of \$25 I ask that \$20 be the figure. Viewing it in the most reasonable light, I think, Members cannot grudge that reduction from \$25 to \$20.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I think that the Colonial Office reads our Hansard report every year and takes no notice of it. We have been told that the Georgetown Town Council is not a wholly elected body; neither is this Council. We have been told that this is the sovereign body. Is it entirely sovereign or is it subject to Downing Street ? Let us consider that very carefully. If we want self-government and adult suffrage that is one point to be considered constitutionally. Let us turn to the point made by the hon. Member for Essequibo River in a most eloquent speech. At the moment the Georgetown Town Council is awaiting the raising of a loan of over \$100,000 to put the roads in order. We cannot get stone. We have only \$30,000 to spend on the roads and we have to raise a loan which we have refrained from doing until we have to spend the money, as we do not want to pay much interest. That is the administrative side in respect of which it is being advocated other members should come in and do at once.

We will then turn to the potable water scheme. The Colonial Development and Welfare has lent us money, but we are awaiting materials. We are progressing as far as we can. As regards housing, we have no funds to do that. We were told that we were going to get the money from

the Colonial Development and Welfare, but we have got very little. Hon. Members know how difficult it is to obtain that. We are waiting until next year to raise a loan to obtain the necessary funds. As regards the fear of a shadow, undoubtedly the hon. Member for Essequibo River has not attempted to get into the Council to eradicate these ills. Is it the pride of a Guianese to say to those who have come from abroad these things about the City ? On several occasions we have seen the City and its inhabitants praised in the Press. Is it the pride of the Guianese to stand in this Council and say what has been said about us—that we are a wrong lot in this City ? It seems that that is what some Members advocate by making such references. Lastly, let me say that these amenities we speak glibly about and want are produced indirectly by the revenue derived from the property-owners who are taxed. I do not know who is to pay for the amenities we are to provide above our resources. What will be the consequence ? The small property-owner in the City—and there is a large number of them, particularly widows who eke out an existence on their properties—is going to be overburdened. To give the desired amenities you will have to raise the taxes and so allow the bigger people with capital to come along and purchase these people's properties at execution sale. Are we not here to encourage the small property-owner to build a small property-owner class ? That is what we should endeavour to do and not as the hon. Member says, to spend money in such a way as to affect those people who have staked everything in a little house. I do hope our friends at Downing Street would read the Hansard reports instead of the multifarious pamphlets sent them by Members of this Council.

Mr. LEE : I would like to point out to the members of the Town Council that if they have found that several widows eke out an existence through their properties, they should have the brains and commonsense to reduce the rate of taxes so that these people can make some money. I say they have not, however.

The CHAIRMAN : It seems to me that hon. Members should appreciate the fact that everyone around this table approves

in principle of a widening of the franchise for the Georgetown Town Council, but there are different notions as to how it should be done. The difficulty is that there is real urgency in this matter. If this Bill or another amending Bill is not passed, then the elections will have to take place on December 15 on the existing qualifications—a thing which no Member around this table wants and which no member of the public wants. Therefore, the responsibility of the Members of the Legislative Council is grave and is indeed urgent. I have been talking the matter over with the Attorney-General and I think a sensible thing to do would be to refer this Bill immediately to a Select Committee and let that Committee iron out the details. I will take good care of the question of representation on that Committee—I will see that everybody is fairly represented—and if the Attorney-General moves it I will appoint the Committee immediately.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that this Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

Mr. JACOB : I beg to second that. I was just going to move the same thing because too many amendments have been made.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that this Council resumes and reports that further consideration of this Bill has been postponed.

Motion put and agreed to.

Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move, formally, that a Select Committee be appointed by the President to go into the details of this Bill.

Mr. de AGUIAR : The practice is that whenever a Select Committee is appointed the composition of the Committee is announced.

The PRESIDENT : I am going to announce it immediately, if it is decided that the Bill should go to a Select Committee. I think hon. Members should appreciate the fact that it is not the principle that is going to a Select Committee.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : That is so, sir.

The PRESIDENT : I am happy to appoint the hon. C. V. Wight, Jacob, Gonslaves, Lee, Farnum and Veerasawmy to be members of the Select Committee under the Chairmanship of the Attorney-General.

Mr. JACOB : I take it, sir, that the Committee will meet immediately.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I can assure the hon. Member for North Western District that the matter requires expedition and I hope all the members will attend.

TRADES UNIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1946.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move the second reading of the following Bill :—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Trades Unions Ordinance, Chapter 57, with respect to the audit of accounts of Trade Unions."

Hon. Members will recollect that this matter came before the Council in a different form earlier in the year, but the Bill was withdrawn after certain comments were made in the course of the debate and it was then suggested that this question of audit should be done without expense to the Trade Unions. As will be seen from the Objects and Reasons relating to this Bill, auditors appointed under the provisions of the Trades Union Ordinance (Cap. 57) to audit the accounts of the unions are remunerated in accordance with a scale set out in the Third Schedule to the Ordinance. In the case of each union Government pays one moiety of the fee and the union the other. Experience has shown that the fees so paid are not adequate for the volume of the work entailed.

A proposal to increase the scale of fees has been met by representations on behalf of the unions that Government should not only bear the whole of the increased payments that would be so occasioned, but that in the spirit of the recommendations of the West India Royal Commission,

Government should relieve the unions of payment of that portion of the fees which they are now required to make. It is considered more economical to increase the staff of the Audit Department by one officer and undertake the auditing of the unions' accounts by the Government Auditor, than that Government alone should pay all the fees entailed by private auditing. The object of this Bill is to repeal those provisions relating to private auditing and to provide for the auditing of trade union accounts by the Government Auditor."

I take it that this would meet the expressions of opinion by Members of this Council, and particularly those who were strenuous in their views and criticisms of the Bill which was presented to the Council earlier in the year. The hon. Member for Essequibo River made certain observations when this matter came up last week and I venture to say that Government is carrying out the wish he expressed and what is a very desirable procedure in the objects of trade unions. I beg to move that this Bill be read now a second time.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

The PRESIDENT: Does any other Member wish to speak on the principle of the Bill? As no other Member wishes to speak, I will put the question that the Bill be read the second time.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Clause 3—Amendment of section 17 of the Principal Ordinance, No. 8 of 1943.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move the deletion of the reference "Cap. 200" in the margin to the words substituted, because it would appear to form part of this Bill but it does not.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, passed.

Title and enacting clause.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move an amendment for a correction in the spelling of the word "respect".

Amendment put and agreed to.

Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: With the consent of the Council, I beg to move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

The PRESIDENT: We will not meet tomorrow; the Select Committee relating to the Town Council Bill will meet tomorrow and I hope all the members will attend. We have actually worked through all November and we have the Estimates for 1947 and some more Bills to get through, but the trouble is that we cannot get them printed. We have a Bill in draft to introduce at our next meeting, however, on the subject of Rent Restriction. We have also a Bill in progress to extend the life of the Council, and then we have a Bill for extending the time for the general elections, which is a short Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I will have that ready at the same time as the Estimates.

The PRESIDENT: I have given my promise to the Council that we will introduce the Landlord and Tenants Bill as soon as we get it from the printers. I cannot announce the date of our next meeting but I shall do so as soon as possible—as soon as we get the Bills from the printers—so we will have to adjourn *sine die*. We will adjourn *sine die* on the understanding that I shall have to call you early.