

THE DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF BRITISH GUIANA

OFFICIAL REPORT

OF

PROCEEDINGS AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FOURTH
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 17TH MAY, 1950.

The Third Session of the Fourth Legislative Council of British Guiana was opened in the Council Chamber, Guiana Public Buildings, Georgetown, Demerara, at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 17th May, 1950, with customary formalities and ceremonies. The proceedings were broadcast by Station "ZFY".

PRESENT

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Campbell Woolley,
K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. PARKINSON (Acting)

„ „ the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. HOLDER, K.C.

„ „ the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDAVID,
C.M.G., C.B.E.

„ „ C. V. WIGHT O.B.E., (Western Essequibo).

„ „ Dr. J. B. SINGH, O.B.E., (Demerara-Essequibo).

„ „ Dr. J. A. NICHOLSON (Georgetown North).

„ „ T. LEE (Essequibo River).

„ „ V. ROTH (Nominated).

„ „ C. P. FERREIRA (Berbice River).

„ „ T. T. THOMPSON (Nominated).

„ „ G. A. C. FARNUM, O.B.E., (Nominated).

„ „ Capt. J. P. COGLAN (Demerara River).

„ „ D. P. DEBIDIN (Eastern Demerara).

„ „ J. FERNANDES (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. Dr. G. M. GONSALVES (Eastern Berbice).

" " Dr. G. M. GONSALVES (Eastern Berbice).

" „ Dr. C. JAGAN (Central Demerara).

" " W. O. R. KENDALL (New Amsterdam).

" " A. T. PETERS (Western Berbice).

" „ G. H. SMELLIE (Nominated).

" " F. E. MORRISH (Nominated).

Clerk of Council—Mr. A. I. Crum Ewing.

Official Reporters—Messrs. H. A. Grimshaw, F. A. Leubin and R. M. Holder.

His Grace the Archbishop of the West Indies read prayers.

PRESENTATIONS

M.B.E. for Mr. D. G. BRITTON

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Frank Bayliffe Henderson, by command of the King, conveyed to me by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, I present to you the Insignia of an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

You have lived in and identified yourself with British Guiana for the past 40 years, and you have rendered outstanding services in connection with the development of the Bauxite Industry in this country, particularly during the last war when every ton of bauxite we could produce was needed for war purposes. You have always taken great personal interest in the welfare of employees in the Industry and have been largely instrumental in bringing about great improvements in their conditions of employment. I have much pleasure in presenting you with this Insignia of the Order. (applause)

O.B.E. for Mr. F. B. HENDERSON

Mr. Denis George Britton, by command of His Majesty the King conveyed to me through His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, I present you with the Insignia of a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

This award has been made to you for meritorious service in the Colonial

Audit Department in West Africa and St. Helena, and we are very happy that it should have been conferred on one who is now our Director of Audit. I congratulate you. (applause).

PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

The PRESIDENT then addressed the Council as follows:—

Your Grace,

My Lord Bishop,

Your Honours,

Honourable Members of the
Legislative Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege and pleasure to address you once again and on the occasion of the opening of the Third Session of the Fourth Legislative Council. It has been customary in the past to take this opportunity to review the activities of the Government and of this Honourable Council during the previous financial year, but on this occasion that task has been made easier for me, and to some extent unnecessary, by the much earlier publication of the annual report on the Colony for 1949.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1949.

That report is being tabled this afternoon and I commend it to your notice. There has been justifiable complaint in this Council and

elsewhere that the publication of these reports and of annual departmental reports has been so long delayed, that the reports have lost a great deal both of their value and their interest, but so far as the 1949 annual report is concerned that complaint has, I think, been met. This is, I believe, the first time that the annual report of the preceding year has been presented in time for the opening of a new Session and my thanks are due to the Colonial Secretariat and to Heads of Departments for the special effort which has made this possible.

As is, I think, well reflected in this report, the policy of the Government and this Legislative Council has continued to be a progressive one. The keynotes of that policy are the development of all our resources, increased production and, wherever practicable, industrialisation—not primarily as aims in themselves but as a means and indeed the only means of successfully combatting the still unresolved economic crisis through which we are passing. In all my previous Addresses to you, and this one is but a link in the chain, I have emphasized in no uncertain terms the importance and, indeed, the vital need for unremitting effort to implement that policy if we are to survive the crisis, if unemployment is to be averted, and if the never-ceasing demands for improved standards of living and for social services are to be met even in part. If we had not previously fully realised the gravity of the situation, it was indeed brought home to us, and in no uncertain manner, by the devaluation of the pound sterling which took place in September last year. That measure was in no sense whatever a solution of our own or the mother country's difficulties; it was no more than a frank recognition of them, and a very stern reminder that the solution was only to be found in the direction I have indicated. How far have we gone in that direction?

Certainly not as far as we could have wished nor as far as we must.

While in certain fields there is much progress to mark up to 1949, the year in some respects, though by no means all, has perhaps been more noteworthy for preparation and planning to increase production rather than performance. The year opened with the publication of the Report of the Evans Commission and the approval by this Council of the Colony's Ten Year Development Plan now well under way. Then in the course of the year we received the Report of the Venn Commission after a most searching enquiry into conditions in our sugar industry. Our rice industry was also the subject of a special investigation by two specialists in rice from the United States, who completed their investigations towards the end of the year and a copy of whose report will be tabled this afternoon. Special consideration has also been given by Government to the coconut industry which is badly in need of re-organization. I shall refer later in my Address to the reports I have mentioned, and to the action which has been taken on them and which, subject to this Council's approval, it is proposed to take. Many people are apt to regard reports such as these as flowers of literature which more often than not bear no fruit, but for myself, I believe them to be most helpful contributions towards a solution of our very difficult problems and of great practical value to us in bringing about a new order of things in our industries. That is what in fact is needed and what in fact we are endeavouring to do. I say contributions towards a solution because these reports are no more than contributions. The indispensable balance has to be provided by us ourselves and by our own exertions.

One of the greatest obstacles, so it seems to me, to more rapid development in British Guiana, has been the lack of data and of basic surveys so necessary for sound plan-

ning and development, and it is the lack of such information that has so often stultified our efforts in the past; the collection of it and the detailed investigatory work which it involves is a slow and tedious business, but the absence of it has been a not unimportant reason for slower progress than we would wish and for our difficulty in attracting a greater flow of capital locally or from outside sources for new enterprises and expansion of existing industries. This deficiency is, I am glad to say, now being made good in all our spheres of activity—drainage and irrigation, agriculture, forestry, geology and land utilization generally, and, as we hope, by means of aerial surveys.

But before I go on to speak at greater length on all these matters, may I first say a little more about 1949.

COLONY'S FINANCIAL POSITION.

The financial situation of the Colony has already been exhaustively dealt with in the recent budget debate and there is little for me to add. Our revenue for 1949 amounted to approximately \$22,000,000 and our expenditure to just under \$21,000,000, including capital expenditure of some \$1,150,000 on various items provided for in the Development Plan or since agreed upon as necessary additions to that Plan. There was thus a balance of some \$1,000,000 to be carried to our accumulated surplus balances which at 31st December last stood in round figures at \$7½ million. This satisfactory result was, however, only achieved by taking to revenue a sinking fund amounting to \$2 180,000 and released by the conversion of the loan of \$5,000,000 raised in 1929. Excluding on the one hand this extraordinary receipt and on the other the Development Plan expenditure, our accounts for 1949 only just balanced. As you are aware, for this year our budget has been balanced without recourse to extra taxation but again only barely so, with an estimated excess of revenue over expenditure

at the end of 1950 of a mere \$300,000. This is close budgeting and, bearing in mind the meticulous care with which the estimates were prepared by the Financial Secretary, the meticulous scrutiny which they received at the hands of the Finance Committee and the future as we see it, we cannot expect this figure to be any greater. This, I would emphasize, means that any substantial supplementary expenditure during the current year due to unforeseen circumstances,—and some have already been revealed—must be met by inroads into our general surplus balances. Caution is therefore necessary, and we must reduce such expenditure to what is absolutely essential unless it can be shown to be in itself productive.

FLOOD RELIEF MEASURES.

The disastrous floods which marked the close of 1949, causing great losses of crops and livestock, damage to roads, drainage and irrigation works, and seriously affecting our sugar and other production, are an example of such unforeseen circumstances. As we now know, these floods will involve us in expenditure (for which there is no provision in this year's budget) of nearly \$1,000,000 in the form of relief works, assistance to farmers for rehabilitation of their fields and repairs to communications and drainage works. We may, however, take some small comfort from the fact that part of this heavy expenditure will serve to remedy many deficiencies of maintenance and secure improvements which would in any case have demanded attention and expense sooner or later. This is so particularly in the case of roads and drainage works for which both Government and Local Authorities are responsible. To this extent, therefore, the expenditure may be regarded in part as arrears of maintenance and not wholly attributable to flood damage. This year (as well as last year) our financial resources have been strained by the adoption of the

recommendations of the Commissions appointed in 1948 for a much overdue revision of the salaries and wages of all Government employees, employees in the Transport and Harbours Department, and all our teachers. The adoption of these recommendations has now added to the expenditure side of the budget a permanent recurrent charge of no less than 2½ million dollars, though truly, approximately one half of this increase was already being paid out in 1949 in the form of a temporary cost of living allowance which has now been absorbed in the new salaries and wages scales. The bulk of this increase in the remuneration of Government employees has necessarily gone to those in the lowest and middle-income groups, and it is noteworthy that the increases in payments to employees whose earnings are less than \$200 per month account for no less than \$2,200,000 of the total bill of \$2½ million.

As I have already said, there is need for caution if our financial stability is to be maintained, and it can only be maintained and strengthened if that policy to which I have so insistently referred is pursued with the utmost vigour.

TRADE — IMPORTS AND EXPORTS.

Trade statistics for 1949 have been reasonably satisfactory, bearing in mind present day abnormal conditions. The Colony's total exports and imports for that year amounted in round figures to \$46,257,000 and \$50,928,000 respectively. The point has been made that both these figures are an all time record, that is to say, that never before have our exports or our imports been so great in value; but let us not be deluded by these figures or allow them to breed any false sense of optimism. In these days of inflated prices they are of no great significance taken by themselves. What is more telling and a truer index of our prosperity or otherwise, is the volume of our

exports and imports, more particularly the former, and it is to this we must look if we are to draw sound conclusions.

While our exports in 1949 in volume were well maintained, they have hardly kept pace with the Colony's rising expenditure. Bauxite exports, as in 1948, again exceeded 1,700,000 tons. Rice exports at 26,000 tons were 50% more than in 1948. Sugar exports at 173,000 tons showed some increase but were still disappointingly low and far below the target of 225,000 tons set down in the Development Plan. Rum exports of 3,657,000 gallons showed an increase of nearly half a million gallons over 1948 and molasses exports rose from one and three-quarter million gallons to over four million gallons. There were no very marked differences in the quantities of any other of our exports of importance.

There are two aspects of our trade statistics on which some general comment is required. The first is that they disclose what is known as an adverse balance of trade, that is, a surplus of imports over exports of some 4½ million dollars. This is of course the reverse of the situation which prevailed in the pre-war period; in fact over the 25 years from 1920 to 1945 the Colony had on the average an export surplus of a little under \$1,700,000 a year. In the last few years, however, the tendency has been the other way about and we have been importing more than we have been exporting. Such a situation can hardly continue indefinitely, but it is not in itself a cause for alarm. In the present circumstances it represents largely the inflow of capital by British and North American mining and development undertakings working in the Colony, by Colonial Development and Welfare grants, and by the re-equipping or mechanization of our sugar, rice and other industries, which has been met by some drawing upon the Colony's overseas sterling assets which

accumulated very considerably during the war. It can in fact be seen directly in the imports of plant and machinery of various kinds which amounted to 7½ million dollars in 1949, and so long as this is the case I do not feel that in practice we need be unduly concerned about it. It is when an adverse balance is occasioned by excess imports for consumption or non-productive purposes that we need to scrutinize the situation with some care and review our policy.

The second point arising from the trend of trade statistics is that the increase in volume of imports and exports, which gives some rough indication of the trend in our real National Income, has not, as I have said, kept pace with the rise in the Colony's public expenditure. That we have been able to meet the latter, and at the same time to strengthen both our credit and our reserves, is of course attributable to the rise in prices which we have received for our exportable products. Here our exports to North America have received some benefit from sterling devaluation, while for our sugar we are receiving this year a further £3 per ton from His Majesty's Government which should be worth some 2½ million dollars a year to us. Again, the increases recently negotiated by the Rice Marketing Board in the export price of rice should add a further \$600,000 in a full year. It is of course these increases in prices which now, as in the past few years, have not merely assisted Government revenue but have also provided the funds for substantial increases in the incomes of workers in those industries and of rice growers. Concurrently with the rise in export prices there has also been, as we know only too well, an increase in import prices and, consequently, an increase in the cost of living, but the disadvantages accruing from the latter should not cause us to overlook the importance to the Colony of good export prices. Indeed what we require equally is a high and increasing physical volume

of production and also remunerative export prices. Both prices and production are essential factors not only to provide fair wages for the worker and to maintain our standards of living — to say nothing of improving them which we all desire — but also to provide the revenue to pay for the greatly increased burden of health, medical, educational and other essential public services which we have assumed in recent years. Neither factor is sufficient in itself, and we must not forget that any marked fall in export prices, even if accompanied by a fall in import prices and a reduction in the cost of living too, would, unless offset by substantial increases in physical output, mean difficulties for employers, workers and the Government finances alike.

Turning now to other matters, it is pleasing to record during 1949 a re-orientation of our Amerindian policy, and legislation to implement this new policy will be introduced during the present session. Not that we have been idle in the meantime — indeed, during the year more care and attention have, I think, been devoted to the welfare of the Amerindian community than ever before. A strikingly good piece of pioneer work has been done by Mr. Seggar, District Officer, in the establishment at the junction of the Kamarang and Mazaruni Rivers of a new centre for the Amerindians in the Pakarimas and the development of a sound agricultural economy among them. Equally good work has been done by Dr. Jones, Medical Officer Amerindian Areas, in carrying out a special survey of health conditions among the Amerindian people which incidentally was recommended by the West India Royal Commission some ten years ago. Mobile dispensary units both on river and land are now operating in the Amerindian areas, as well as a D.D.T. campaign which has met with the same remarkable results as on the coastal belt. Arrangements have also been put in train by the Director of Geological Surveys for the provision of

wells in the Amerindian villages in the Rupununi District which will give the villagers a pure and wholesome water supply. Several villages have been linked up by trails covering some 300 miles across the savannahs, and the villages are now accessible in dry weather by mechanical transport making intercommunication and administration far easier and more effective. In this connection I must pay tribute to the interest taken in this as well as in air strip development by Major Williams of B.G. Airways. Indeed both he and the other officers whom I have named certainly deserve a special "Mention in Despatches" for their good work in the interior. Health conditions among the Amerindians have been greatly improved despite a serious outbreak of epidemic measles during the year, and we may expect an appreciable increase in their population. They have been increasingly employed in our forestry and mining industries, and I have no doubt that in the course of time they will have a very valuable contribution to make to the development of the interior where they have always lived and had their being.

CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT.

Another very welcome and significant development during 1949 has been that of the Co-operative Movement. Born, or reborn shall I say, in 1948 by the enactment of Ordinance No. 12 of 1948, the Movement, under the wise leadership and counsel of Captain Cheesman, has now no less than 97 registered primary societies all of which are knit together under a central society, the British Guiana Co-operative Union Ltd. The funds of these newly registered societies on 31st December last amounted to over \$51,000 and during 1949, though still in their infancy, they were able to make loans to their members of some \$21,500. Among these 97 societies there are 46 Saving Societies, 11 Consumer Societies or Co-operative Shops and 36 Thrift and Credit

Societies, both rural and urban. There are also three Producer Societies and one embryo Land Settlement Society in Essequibo to which the Government has leased 5,000 acres of land. As an example of what has been achieved and what this Co-operative Movement means, let me tell you the story of the Bushlot Rice-growers' Co-operative Society. Twelve rice farmers got together in October, 1948, and in addition to their own land rented a further 141 acres at a rental of \$775 per annum. They turned themselves into a Co-operative Society and purchased a tractor, two ploughs (one of which was a failure), a harrow and a combine harvester from the Rice Marketing Board on the instalment plan. They ploughed together, sowed together and reaped together, and sold their paddy to the Mahaicony-Abary Rice Mill for something over \$8,000. After paying all their expenses, including the first instalment on the cost of the machinery, and allowing no less a sum than \$1,800 for its depreciation, their first year's working realized a surplus of profit of \$3,096. Of this sum they wisely put \$775 into a reserve fund, paid a dividend of 6% on their shares and allocated \$1,500 of their surplus as additional shares in the Society to their ten active members — a very creditable performance by a Society hardly a year old and an example in self help and co-operation for others to follow. The Movement has certainly taken root and, if it continues on the same sound lines on which it has started and sets its face against specious or spectacular expansion, I predict for it a great future and one that will be of untold benefit to this Colony. It will certainly continue to have my fullest support and, I hope, yours. Incidentally I might mention that I have suggested to the Mayor of Georgetown and his Committee that a substantial amount from the Flood Relief Fund might be allocated to assist in the establishment and development of Co-operative Societies in the flood-stricken areas, and I hope that they will find it

practical to do so. It will afford people in those areas some lasting rather than fleeting benefit which is what they really require.

BUILDING ACTIVITIES.

1949 has also been noteworthy for a resumption of building activity in the Colony and on an extensive scale. In Georgetown the work of the Georgetown Planning Commissioners in the area devastated by fire in 1945 has been almost completed, and there are now arising from the ashes several new and handsome commercial and other buildings to replace those destroyed in the fire. The foundations for our new Post Office and Telecommunications building have also been laid and good progress made with the new Cultural Centre, as I chose to call it, of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society. Good progress has also been made with the new Queen's College for secondary education and the new Technical College, both of which should be completed early next year. Apart from these two institutions, the Public Works Department building programme alone entailed an expenditure approaching half a million dollars during 1949. In Georgetown generally there is hardly a street where building construction of some kind or other is not taking place. The same is true in the rural areas. During the year no less than 1,445 new dwellings have been erected in the Colony, but of these only 142 in the urban areas where the housing situation is most acute. The remainder, including 400 new houses built on sugar estates and on lands leased by the estates, is spread over the rural areas where building has been greatly assisted by loans made by the Co-operative Credit Banks which amounted to \$133,000. Apart from new houses, structural alterations have been made to some 900 existing buildings in both urban and rural areas to provide additional accommodation.

CENTRAL HOUSING AND PLANNING AUTHORITY.

Even so the acute shortage of housing, particularly in Georgetown, remains and no impression has yet been made on slum clearance. The Central Housing and Planning Authority will, however, soon have completed its planning scheme for the whole of Georgetown and surrounding areas, and I hope that this Scheme will lay the foundation for the orderly and progressive development of Georgetown and its suburbs for many years to come, and that as a result we shall have a city of which we may well be proud and which will cater in the best possible way for both Commerce and Industry and for the health, comfort and well-being of all its inhabitants. The annual report of the Authority is also being tabled this afternoon; and I wish to bring it specially to your notice that you may better appreciate the magnitude of the problem and the praiseworthy efforts of the members of the Authority to find the proper solution to it.

As I have said before, there can be nothing more likely to bring general contentment to the community than good and sufficient housing, properly located and at rentals which it can afford, and there is nothing which gives rise to more discontent than the lack of proper housing of this kind and its attendant evils. I have also reminded you that the Government's financial contribution towards the solution of this great problem, namely \$1,000,000 for urban housing and \$650,000 for rural housing including sugar estates, to be provided under the Development Plan, is but a mere fraction of what is required if all needs are to be properly met. I trust that Government's efforts and its assistance will be supplemented by building societies and private enterprise and that they will contribute their share to the fullest degree.

To assist the Central Authority in giving early effect to its plans a Bill

will be introduced in this Council very shortly seeking your approval to the raising of a loan for the purchase of land for housing schemes at Campbellville, Bel Air Park, La Penitence and Ruimveldt. The Campbellville and Bel Air Park areas will be developed as building plots to be sold for the building of houses on approved plans by private enterprise. So long as the demand for these plots remains no one will be allowed more than one of them and that for his personal use. The La Penitence and Ruimveldt areas will be used in conjunction with slum clearance of Albouystown, the cost of building being assisted by Government from the Development and Welfare fund to the extent which its resources permit. Consideration is also being given to the removal of the Race Course from D'Urban Park to make that area available for housing and other amenities.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

Gratifying progress has also been made with our elementary school building programme, and new schools are indeed springing up all over the Colony. During the last four years 12,708 new places have been provided in the form of entirely new schools, replacements of condemned buildings and reconditioning and extensions to existing schools. The cost is approximately \$326,000 or \$26 a place, nearly all of which has been met from grants under the Colonial Development and Welfare organization. Such great progress would not, however, have been possible without the goodwill and the assistance so readily given of managers of schools, estate authorities and the people, for which I am very grateful. I would remind you, however, that 15,000 places have still to be provided in the next three years if all our children are to receive the benefits of elementary education. The programme for the current year, already well on its way, is to provide 4,602 additional places and includes 5 new schools, 9 replacements of existing buildings and three extensions.

This is in keeping with our intention to supply approximately 5,000 places each year until 1952. I hope that it will not now be very long before the law passed in 1876, over seventy years ago making elementary education compulsory in British Guiana, can be fully enforced.

ASSISTANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIES.

There is but one further matter to which I would refer in connection with the year 1949, and it is the continued assistance given by the Government with the full support and approval of this Council to help put into practice what I am continually preaching about increasing production.

To begin with, the policy of allowing the importation of agricultural and mining machinery, and indeed all industrial machinery from Commonwealth sources free of import duty, and of remitting the import duty on such machinery from foreign sources where it is not obtainable from Commonwealth sources, has been continued and will continue. The total remission of duty under this head during 1949, including full and partial remissions on gasoline, was approximately \$284,000. This is of course separate and distinct from the refunds of customs duty on imported foodstuffs, etc., designed to keep down the cost of living and which for last year and this year will amount to over a million dollars.

MECHANISATION OF RICE INDUSTRY.

The whole of the sum of \$450,000 provided in the Ten Year Development Plan for agricultural machinery has now been allocated to the Mahaicony-Abary Rice Scheme for its own use and for hiring purposes, and to the Cane Grove and Vergenoegen Land Settlement Schemes. Apart from this the Rice Marketing Board has imported machinery costing some \$1,000,000 for the rice industry, most of which has already

been issued to farmers on easy payment terms and is, I am informed, being operated by them with considerable success. We have now operating in our rice fields over 800 mechanical contrivances of the most modern kind for ploughing, harrowing and harvesting operations. While however, we have progressed and have gained considerable knowledge and experience in the use of such machinery for rice cultivation, there is still much for the rice farmers to learn, and both caution and care are still necessary in changing over to mechanization if the hoped for results are to be fully achieved.

AGRICULTURAL CREDIT.

As regards agricultural credit, public funds advanced to the 27 Co-operative Credit Banks now operating amounted at the end of 1949 to over \$400,000 and the loans made to members of the banks during 1949 amounted to over \$265,000. The sum of \$280,000 was also allocated to the Food Production Committee in 1949, of which \$238,000 was loaned to farmers, mainly for rice production; the balance was used for purchase of machinery, for bulk storage and processing, and for production and distribution of seedlings. Recoveries on all the loans to rice farmers have been most satisfactory and the farmer is, I think, beginning to realize that if he is efficient and meets his obligations promptly he need have no fear of not being able to get further credit when he wants it.

MARKETING ORGANIZATION

The Government's Marketing Organization which controls the marketing of agricultural produce, meat, livestock and milk, continued its services to the farming community during the year, purchasing over 3,000,000 pounds weight of ground provisions and plantains at guaranteed prices. The total turnover of the organization for 1949 reached a record figure of approximately \$1,600,000. The organization is badly in need of new premises

for the efficient handling and storage of produce, and I hope that it will be possible to provide new premises for it in the near future. Although in 1949 there was no significant loss on the actual trading operations of the Marketing Depot, the cost of providing this service for farmers and met from General Revenue, amounted to approximately \$80,000. The general policy in regard to the operation of the Marketing Depot, and of the Livestock and Milk Control Organization also, is now being reviewed.

LAND SETTLEMENTS.

There has been considerable development in the Government's six land settlement schemes which during 1949 produced some 413,000 bags of padi. This figure might easily have been 500,000 had the necessary mechanical equipment which is only now being supplied, been available earlier. Grants and loans made by Government to local authorities during 1949 for rural development purposes amounted to \$81,000 and \$41,000 respectively. The grants were made mainly as a form of subsidy to local authorities for maintenance of drainage and irrigation works. Here a new policy has been adopted of allowing local authorities to carry out the maintenance of these works. They contend that they can do so more efficiently and at less cost than the Drainage Board contractors. I hope they are right and will not be found wanting.

CONCESSIONS TO NEW INDUSTRIES.

To stimulate further new industries might I also refer to the provisions of the Income Tax Amendment Ordinance passed in 1949 in respect of forestry, mining and industrial development. This Ordinance provides special concessions to gold or diamond mining companies in the form of the writing off, over five years, of expenditure on exploration and development, and for special rates of income tax for five years of 20% instead of 40% for companies

of a wholly developmental and risk-bearing nature where such development is calculated to be beneficial to the colony. These concessions are substantial, but what seems to me to be most needed if there is to be any new appreciable commercial and industrial development in the colony is cheap power. Without it the processing of our raw materials, be they mineral or agricultural, is hardly a practicable proposition and it is for this reason that increasing attention is now being paid to the possibilities of developing hydro-electric power; while it will be a long time before the possibilities become known, we are leaving nothing undone that can be done to find the answer. It is a matter in which both the Demerara Bauxite Company and the Anaconda Gold Mining Company are vitally interested and the former as you know are co-operating fully with the Government in the investigations now being made. As to gold mining, cheap power would certainly appear to be necessary before any large scale and long term operations can be contemplated.

CONTROLS OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES.

Another obstacle to development has been the control imposed by the world supply position over distribution of essential commodities. Here we have now found it possible despite devaluation and the floods to remove control of distribution of all locally produced commodities including timber and, temporarily, coconut oil; and also to remove it on all imported commodities with the exception of four items, including corned beef, corrugated sheeting and white pine. This welcome step not only reflects an improved supply position but will also, I hope, facilitate further development.

TEN YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

I must now turn to the reports to which I referred at the opening of my address and, to begin with, the Colony's Ten Year Development

Plan. That Plan, prepared in 1946-47 and approved by this Council in March 1949, envisaged in the first five years capital expenditure of \$20,000,000 and in the second five years of a further \$6,000,000 although the latter figure never professed to be a complete forecast of what would appear to be necessary in and after 1952. The capital available from all sources to finance this Plan was estimated at the time at \$17¼ millions. Of this total however, \$2¾ millions had to be set aside for the long overdue rehabilitation of the Transport and Harbours Department thus leaving, in round figures \$15,000,000 for what I will call the Development Plan proper. Thus from the outset there was an uncovered balance of some five millions in the first five years, and another six millions in the second five years which we knew we would either have to find from revenue, or by borrowing additional money over and above the proposed ten million dollar loan. In addition, and this is a matter which is too often overlooked, the Plan was calculated to involve an increase in annually recurrent expenditure of no less than \$1,000,000 in the first five years and a further figure of about half that sum in the second period.

Our progress with the carrying out of this Plan has, I think, been as rapid as the availability of staff and materials have permitted, but it has been clear for some time that rising costs, both of materials and labour, would require revision and rearrangement of the priorities between the various schemes and probably the deferment of some until we can be sure that further funds will be available. As a typical example of increased costs I might mention the new Corentyne Road, which in the Plan was estimated to cost \$2.4 million but for which the revised estimate is now \$4.4 million. But the question of rising costs is not all: planning is a continuous and not a static process, and in the period intervening since

the Plan was made it has been necessary to consider new schemes and modify others. In brief, a re-examination of the whole Ten Year Plan has become necessary. To this end a preliminary review has been undertaken by the Development Commissioner in consultation with the various departments concerned. It would take too long for me to summarize here the full implications which appear from this review but the results of it will shortly be laid before Honourable Members. Where entirely new proposals are involved these should, I think, first be examined by the appropriate Legislative Council Advisory Committee. Thereafter I propose to invite the Council as a whole to complete the review and re-arrangement of the Plan in the light of the financial situation.

TORANI AND BONASIKA IRRIGATION SCHEMES

Nor is there time for me to catalogue all that has so far been accomplished under the Plan and all that is in progress, though I have referred to a good deal of what has been done in the course of my remarks.—more will be found in the Annual Report. I must however refer to two of the most important and costly developmental projects still under construction, namely, the Torani and the Bonasika Irrigation Schemes, both of which have caused us some concern. In the case of the Torani Scheme, the difference in levels of water in the Berbice and Canje Rivers on which the success of the whole scheme depends was found to be appreciably less than originally calculated and in the result doubt was expressed whether the twelve-mile canal which is to connect the two rivers would in fact deliver sufficient water to make the scheme workable. In the case of the Bonasika Scheme the head-works, after completion, were found to be in danger of being undermined. In these circumstances Government is bound to seek the expert advice of Consulting Engineers in London

on both schemes and their reports have now been received and considered. In the case of the Torani Scheme they have now advised us that despite the miscalculation to which I have referred, the canal should still in their opinion perform the main functions for which it was intended although the total discharge of water may not be as great as originally expected. They consider however that to ensure that the supply of water is sufficient control sluices or regulators will have to be constructed at both ends of the canal. They have now sent out another special engineer to make final recommendations regarding these sluices. These additions will, of course, involve further expenditure over and above that provided in the scheme. As to the Bonasika Scheme, the Consulting Engineers have advised on the protective measures to be taken to ensure that the head works are secured, but in the meantime Mr. Hutchinson, our Consulting Engineer, has put forward an alternative and much larger scheme to embrace an area of 113,000 acres as against the 40,000 acres included in the original scheme. Here again Government feels that further expert advice is necessary and the engineer now examining the Torani Scheme will also examine and advise on this question. These delays are to be regretted but the Council will agree with me that we must be entirely satisfied that these schemes will fulfil their object before any further considerable sums of money are expended upon them. I would add that nearly 8 miles of the 12 miles of the Torani Canal have now been completed, also the entire Bonasika Canal.

THE EVANS COMMISSION REPORT.

May I now tell you what so far has been done regarding the report of the Evans Commission. As you know the Settlement Commission virtually turned itself into a Development Commission, realizing that there was no room here for settlement of immigrants without large

scale development. They were enjoined to study the possibilities of settlement here and in British Honduras, of displaced persons from Europe and, more particularly, of people from the over-populated West Indian islands but to bear in mind the future needs of our own growing population, which must of course come first. That our own population is increasing very rapidly there is no doubt and it is increasing to an extent which makes the possibilities of large scale immigration, even if all the recommendations of the Commission can be implemented, certainly less than they were thought to be.

VITAL STATISTICS.

This will be better appreciated when I tell you that comparing the 1949 vital statistics figures with those for 1944 there has been a 44.7 per cent. increase in the birth rate in British Guiana, a 39.7 per cent. reduction in the over-all death rate and a 43.4 per cent. reduction in the infant mortality rate. The maternal mortality rate also fell from 13 per thousand to 5 per thousand. Our vital statistics for 1949 compare most favourably and creditably with those of any other Caribbean country and if we are to judge by them British Guiana is now, thanks to its health and welfare services, as healthy if not healthier than any of those countries. While we can take satisfaction in this progress it brings in its train new problems which will be apparent to you and makes the more relevant all else I have said to you this morning about increased production. The Evans Commission believed that if all their proposals proved practicable there might be room in British Guiana and British Honduras together for 100,000 immigrants. True, they made good allowance for local increases in population but the indications here now are, and we must bear them in mind, that our own population is now likely to increase by the above number in the next ten or fifteen years.

FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT.

First and foremost among the Commission's development proposals were the adaptation of our own for forestry in the Bartica Triangle, proposals which are now, broadly speaking, being implemented with the advent of the Colonial Development Corporation who are investing initial capital of some eight to nine million dollars in the Colony for the purpose. I am not unmindful of local criticism — some of it understandable—of the Corporation's approach to its task of developing our forestry resources for the benefit of the Colony, but I must counsel patience and I will only say this in reply to the main criticism which has been urged, that no one is more anxious than the Corporation itself to broaden the basis of its operations to the processing of timber products in addition to extraction and milling of timber as soon as it is satisfied that such operations are economic, sound and practicable. To embark upon them, unless they are, will do nobody any good, least of all British Guiana. To keep pace with this large scale development of our forests our Forestry Department has been built up so that it will be in a position to ensure that our new forestry policy is strictly observed. The value of this re-organization and expansion of the Department is already reflected in greatly increased forest revenues which now approach a quarter of a million dollars a year and which will be a great deal more when the Development Corporation gets into full production.

BANANAS.

The second proposal of the Evans Commission was the establishment of a banana industry in the Colony should the trials and investigations they recommended prove satisfactory. To this end the Government, with Messrs. Bookers and the Jamaica Banana Producers Association are now jointly carrying out experiments to meet the cost of which each party is contributing some \$24,000. A press communique

was issued a few days ago giving full particulars of the aims and objects of this interesting experiment, and there is nothing I can add at the moment save to wish it success.

COCOA.

The third important proposal by the Commission was the establishment of a cocoa industry south of the Bartica triangle and on the Mazaruni, should soil surveys in these areas prove satisfactory. In this connection preliminary soil examinations have been carried out by Professor Hardy of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and by Mr. Charter, who is an acknowledged expert on cocoa soils. The reports which we have received on the areas so far covered are, I am sorry to say, not very encouraging but more detailed investigation is needed and will be carried out before coming to any final conclusions. If the answer is in the negative we shall then have to adopt an entirely new line of approach to agricultural development in these areas.

JUTE.

Another matter touched upon by the Evans Commission was the possibility of growing jute in British Guiana. Several small scale experiments have already been made by the Agricultural Department and the results have been sufficient to justify further experimentation on a much larger scale. This, the Department will do as soon as sufficient seed can be obtained; we also hope to secure an experimental machine for the purpose of mechanical harvesting and retting of the jute. It will be two or three years before any definite conclusions can be reached but if we can establish a jute industry it would be of the greatest benefit to the Colony. The present difficulty in obtaining jute sacks for both our sugar and rice industries and the very high cost of them are indicative of the possibilities of such an industry.

Important as it is that we should have a more diversified economy by the establishment, if practicable, of new agricultural industries such as those I have just mentioned — and we have yet to find out if they are practical propositions — it is even more important if only for the needs of our growing population that we should develop and expand our existing industries and pay full attention to what we know will grow in the Colony and is in fact grown successfully.

RICE.

From this point of view development and expansion of our rice industry must be priority No. 1. The Evans Commission itself devoted much time and thought to this question and as an immediate step they endorsed the view of this Government that early action should be taken to bring under rice cultivation in the coastal belt an additional 15,000 acres which did not involve more than minor drainage and irrigation works of an internal nature. The areas to which they referred were Block III on the Corentyne, the Bloomfield — Whim area, Cane Grove, Vergenoegen and Mahaicony — Abary. We have already taken action to this end and these areas and others, amounting in all to some 24,000 acres, should be in full production by 1951 now that mechanical equipment is available. In the Commission's view also there is a real need in the industry for a rice development and marketing corporation which should be based initially on the Mahaicony-Abary scheme and should expand from there. They consider that such a corporation should, as is the case with Government at Mahaicony-Abary, direct its own rice acreage on a sufficient scale to guarantee essential minimum supplies of padi for its mills, co-operating with individual cultivators in the district for this purpose. It should also direct its own mills and marketing organization. Existing rice growers should be invited to join in with the

Corporation on a profit-sharing basis, thereby securing the benefits of improved milling of their padi and the prospects of more stable markets. At the same time the Commission was of the opinion that before entering on a development of this kind and before undertaking further costly work of empoldering and draining large areas for additional rice production, there was real need also for additional expert enquiry.

RICE MISSION.

This recommendation was taken up by Government and that enquiry also has now been completed by a Mission of the two American experts to whom I referred earlier. The task assigned to them was to recommend in which areas of British Guiana rice cultivation could be most economically extended and how best such areas could be developed. They were also asked to advise on the re-organization of milling facilities and possible future developments in mechanical cultivation of rice. Copies of their report which arrived last Monday are, as I have said, being tabled this afternoon. The Mission considers that the land potentially available for padi production in the Colony approximates some 368,000 acres, as compared with 77,000 acres now being utilized, but it is of opinion that before any accurate estimate can be made of the areas suitable for padi and other agricultural purposes, soil surveys must be made. Indeed, what we require is a thorough land utilization survey of the whole of the coastal belt and proposals for carrying it out are now being examined. Major and costly drainage and irrigation works will also be necessary. The Mission make suggestions for central mills in various parts of the Colony, priority to be given to an up to date rice mill in the Corentyne to cope with present production, to say nothing of increased production in that area. They also advocate as next choice a similar mill at Anna Regina in the Essequibo district. They also feel

with the Evans Commission that there should be attached to these central rice mills a sufficient rice acreage to guarantee essential minimum supplies of padi for the mills. They regard the operation of small mills in the Colony as practical but find that most of the 200 small mills at present being operated are as inefficient now as when Mr. Parker, a rice expert from Malaya, reported on them in 1939. They see room for both large and small mills and generally they emphasize that the milling industry of the Colony must be greatly improved and expanded immediately if any sizeable expansion in padi acreage is to take place. They do not regard mechanization by the small scale cultivator as a sound proposition or for any areas less than 100 to 150 acres worked as one unit. Here I have no doubt that they are right and that mechanization for the small cultivator can only become a practical proposition by the development of the Co-operative Movement in a manner of which I have already given an example.

This is but the briefest outline of the Mission's report which is now being actively considered by the Government, and I am anxious that decisions upon its far-reaching proposals should be made as soon as possible. In the meantime, Mr. Hutchinson our Consulting Engineer who was associated with the Mission, is busily occupied in preparing drainage and irrigation schemes for some of the most suitable areas for rice expansion, notably in the Mahaica and the Essequibo districts. He has been considerably handicapped in preparing these schemes by lack of contour surveys of these areas and other necessary data, which I have already deplored. We may expect his proposals to be long term, involving expenditure of many millions of dollars. The question of an up-to-date rice mill for the Courantyne for which the rice growers themselves in that area have repeatedly petitioned is, I feel, a matter of some urgency and should

be pressed forward; ways and means of making financial provision for it and for a similar mill at Anna Regina are now being studied by Government in consultation with the Secretary of State.

SUGAR INDUSTRY.

And now may I say a word or two about sugar, still the mainstay of our agricultural economy, and about the Venn Report. As I said earlier our exports for 1949 amounted to 173,000 tons and might well have been more but for the floods in December which brought cutting and grinding of cane almost to a standstill; this break continued throughout January of this year and will affect our exports for 1950, but with satisfactory weather and, as I hope, stable conditions otherwise, we should still be able to improve on last year's figure, an improvement to which I attach great importance for reasons which I will mention later.

REHABILITATION FUND.

Reconditioning and rehabilitation of our sugar factories and machinery therefor necessitated by war conditions, is proceeding apace and has been greatly facilitated by the Rehabilitation Fund established under Ordinance No. 20 of 1947. The total amount contributed to the Rehabilitation Fund up to date is some \$2.2 millions of which nearly \$1.7 million has been spent, leaving half a million dollars which is already earmarked to meet outstanding demands on the Fund. This rehabilitation programme itself should in course of time have a marked effect on production.

PRICE STABILIZATION FUND.

Then there is the Price Stabilization Fund which stands untouched at some \$2.7 million. This fund is in effect an Insurance Fund against serious falls in world prices. The wisdom of creating it and maintaining it intact is illustrated by the present day fears and anxieties

for the future of the industry which have given rise to the still continuing talks with His Majesty's Government and the final upshot of which is a matter of considerable moment to us. The present position is, briefly, that His Majesty's Government has guaranteed to buy all the sugar we can produce up to 1952; thereafter His Majesty's Government has offered to guarantee to all the Caribbean sugar producing colonies, including ourselves, the purchase, at least until 1957, of 640,000 tons a year which is about 90% of the present total exports and this at a remunerative price to be negotiated annually.

As to the remainder of our production, the West Indies and ourselves have been requested, and, in the interests of facilitating a renewal of the International Sugar Agreement, have agreed to accept an overall limitation of exports to 900,000 tons, the intention being that 85,000 tons of this should be sold in the United Kingdom and 175,000 tons in Canada at the world market price at the time plus the Imperial preference, which at the present is equivalent to £3.16s.8d. per ton in the United Kingdom and £7.8s.4½d per ton in Canada. Before the war, the sugar producing colonies never had any guarantee as to the price they would get for any part of their sugar and in this respect the offer of His Majesty's Government represents a very great advance in our favour. Nonetheless there is genuine anxiety in the industry and outside it, lest the world market price should fall so low, and the income from the 260,000 tons sold in the free market be so reduced, even allowing for the preference, that the industry would be unable to pay its way, notwithstanding His Majesty's Government's guarantee regarding the major portion of the output. That anxiety is very genuine, for in the absence of an assured remunerative market for the unguaranteed balance of the region's sugar ex-

ports, which it has been agreed should not exceed 260,000 tons a year, the industry might be unable to maintain equitable wage standards for its labour force, which constitutes so important a part of the total working population. The representatives of these colonies now in London are therefore asking His Majesty's Government to extend their guarantee by an amount of 85,000 tons, that is, to 725,000 tons, which is approximately the current export surplus of the region. This would give us greater security in what we regard as a vital matter.

Before I leave this question however, I must draw your attention and that of everybody connected with the industry to one implication of the proposals as they affect this colony, which does not appear to have received the notice which it should. Under the proposed restriction of the total sugar exports of the British Caribbean Colonies (excluding British Honduras) to a ceiling of 900,000 tons, our share would presumably be about 225,000 tons which corresponds to the modest target included in our Ten Year Plan. Against this however, the plain but unpalatable facts are, as I have already mentioned, that we exported no more than 173,000 tons last year, which is in fact less than we normally exported before the war. Then we were the largest exporter of sugar in the Caribbean; now we have sunk to second place, and the warning which these figures contain seems to me to be clear, that if we do not increase our output of sugar rapidly between now and 1952 we shall not be able even to claim that quota in the guaranteed market offered by His Majesty's Government to which on our evident capacity and previous performances we are certainly entitled. It would surely be a lasting reproach to the colony as well as a grave loss if we were unable to produce enough sugar to take full advantage of His Majesty's Government's guarantee particularly after

it has been described as inadequate. I know that we have our special difficulties apart from the floods, and they were recognised of course by the Venn Commission, but facts speak louder than words, and I appeal to all concerned in the sugar industry and who depend on it for their livelihood to spare no efforts to raise our production or exports by 50,000 tons in the next two or three years. There is no doubt that it can be done (and indeed there are welcome signs of an improvement this year already) provided we all pull together.

LABOUR WELFARE FUND.

I must also mention the third sugar industry fund, namely, the Labour Welfare Fund, which stands at present at just over a million dollars and is also intact, but I hope that the Committee responsible for its disbursement for the sole benefit of sugar workers, will shortly be in a position to put it to good use and in the main to assist in the rehousing of sugar workers.

VENN REPORT ON SUGAR INDUSTRY.

As to the Venn Report itself, you are already aware of its main recommendations which I would summarize as follows :

(a) that the Government should assume entire responsibility, financial and otherwise, for education, for hospitals and medical attention on sugar estates and for the housing of sugar workers, excepting nuclear employees.

(b) That the industry should be relieved of all taxation except income tax.

(c) That the industry should be subsidized by His Majesty's Government to the extent of 20/- per ton of sugar — a recommendation which has not been accepted. On the other hand, as I have already mentioned, we are receiving from His Majesty's Government this year, and in common with all other com-

monwealth producing countries, an additional £3 per ton for our sugar.

(d) Payment of special rates of pay or an incentive bonus for cane cutters working more than three days a week.

(e) A contributory pension scheme for sugar workers.

(f) Setting up of a Sugar Industry Wages Board.

There are several recommendations, perhaps smaller in themselves but equally important in the aggregate. All the recommendations have already been the subject of consultations between the Government with the industry and with the trade unions, and effect has already been given to certain of them by the sugar estates. As soon as these consultations are completed, as I hope they will be in a few weeks' time, I shall address a Message to the Council stating what action has been taken and the further action it is proposed to take. A resolution will thereafter be moved in the Council seeking its approval to the Government action proposed and providing the opportunity for a full debate on the Report. I will say no more about it at the moment save that I hope we shall find in it the means to bring about long term contentment in the industry which is so vitally important to the colony as a whole.

COCONUTS.

Finally, there is the coconut industry, which should be a far greater asset to the Colony than it is. Its reorganization has been the subject of examination by Government for some considerable time, and I hope that new legislation to facilitate that reorganization will be ready for presentation to Council at this Session. I have no doubt that our present production of coconuts could be doubled, and I have asked the Agricultural Department to embark on a coconut planting campaign without delay. My previous

appeals to coconut producers have not fallen on deaf ears and there has been very noticeable improvement on several plantations, but many are still untended and neglected, and little effort made either to harvest the whole of the crop or to replace old and worn out trees.

My theme today has been little different from what it was when I addressed you at the opening of the last Session, but I have felt that a great deal of what I then said needed re-saying and re-emphasizing if that brighter and happier future for British Guiana and her people, which is our common desire, is to become a reality. It certainly can be, if with head and heart and hand we courageously and selflessly devote ourselves to the tasks which lie ahead of us, difficult though they are, and made more difficult by the times in which we live. Might I also repeat to you what I said on the last occasion, namely, that important as was our economic development we wished to see going hand in hand with it not only a sturdy growth of a truly Guianese national spirit, unsullied by racial and communal differences, but also wise and beneficial measures of constitutional reform with self-government in the Commonwealth as the final goal. From this angle, that is the political angle, there are two vitally important matters to which I must draw your attention before I close.

✓ FEDERATION.

The first one is the report of the Standing Closer Association Committee advocating a British Caribbean Federation. Copies of it and the statement of the Secretary of State issued at the same time are already in your hands, and you will be asked in due course to give your verdict upon it. It is, I feel, particularly important that the far-reaching proposals in this report should be as widely publicised as possible, so as to ensure that the people of

British Guiana come to no final conclusions upon them under any misapprehension of what they are and what they mean. I am indeed indebted to the Press and also to the Bureau of Publicity and Information for the publicity which they have already given the report. We should neither accept it blindly nor reject it out of hand in any mood of splendid isolation. To my mind the common interests of the Caribbean territories, economically, commercially and socially, certainly call for closer association. This is common ground and the real question which I believe is exercising your minds is whether or not that closer association can best be brought about by political federation of the kind proposed. You have to ask yourselves and decide where, when all the pros and cons have been thrashed out, the balance of advantage and the true interests of British Guiana lie. As the Secretary of State has assured you, His Majesty's Government do not look upon federation as a means of avoiding its responsibilities or as in any way prejudicing development of self-government in individual territories.

REFORM OF CONSTITUTION.

The other vitally important issue is that of constitutional reform in British Guiana itself. May I remind you again of the special Commission which is to be appointed by His Majesty's Government very shortly to make recommendations on the franchise and the composition of the Legislative Council and related matters. The personnel of that Commission and its exact terms of reference are now being considered by the Secretary of State, and the Commission itself should, as I have already announced, arrive in British Guiana before the end of the year. In the meantime I trust that all concerned in the Colony will devote both time and serious thought to this matter and be ready to give the Commission

their considered views as to the form of Constitution which they frankly believe would, in our special circumstances, be in the best interests of the people of British Guiana and its future welfare.

The Council then adjourned to 2 o'clock.

AFTERNOON SESSION

At 2 p.m. the Council re-assembled with the following present:—

The Deputy President, the Hon. C. V. Wight, O.B.E. (in the Chair).

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

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

The Hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.M.G. C.B.E.

The Hon. Dr. J. B. Singh, O.B.E. (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. Dr. J. A. Nicholson (Georgetown North).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. Capt. J. P. Coghlan (Demerara River).

The Hon. D. P. Debidin (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. G. M. Gonsalves (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. C. Jagan (Central Demerara).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. A. T. Peters (Western Berbice).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie (Nominated).

The Hon. F. E. Morrish (Nominated).

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, 24th of March, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

W.I. UNIVERSITY EXHIBITION FUND

The COLONIAL SECRETARY communicated the following Message:—

MESSAGE No. 1.

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

I have the honour to inform you of a proposal by the Council of the University College of the West Indies whereby each Colony would set up, by means of annual contributions from revenue, an Exhibition Fund to be used to support exhibitioners coming from that Colony.

2. In making this proposal, the Council has stressed that the funds for the recurrent expenditure of the University College, at present being subsidised by the Caribbean Colonies in accordance with an agreement reached at Montego Bay and estimated at a minimum total of \$720,000 per annum, will not have their full effect on the development of the Caribbean Colonies unless provision can also be made to enable young people of promise to go to the University College even though their parents are unable to pay their fees.

3. While the Council of the University College has already created scholarships out of funds for recurrent expenditure, the number of scholarships is small. Three were awarded during 1949, and up to six have been advertised for 1950. The scholarship awards are also made by the Senate after competitive examination throughout the Caribbean

area, so that chances are limited for the most part to those few who possess exceptional talent. Exhibitions are therefore being proposed for those who, though not of such high intellectual quality as the open scholars, can nevertheless make good use of University education, but are unable to do so without financial assistance.

4. The method by which Exhibition Funds will be set up and operated is summarised as follows:—

(a) the Colonial Government will allocate from its revenue each year a sum of money to be paid in to the Exhibition Fund;

(b) the University College will award each year the maximum number of exhibitions which the state of the Fund permits. The number to be awarded will be announced in the general notice dealing with applicants for entry, usually published in November of any year;

(c) the selection will be made by the University College examiners who will set papers appropriate to the course of study which the applicants wish to pursue;

(d) after selection has been made, the Principal of the University College will enquire confidentially from the parents or guardians of those selected as to their income and commitments in the education of other children and other factors affecting their ability to contribute towards the education of their child;

(e) these facts will be considered by a Committee of the Senate of the University College and a decision reached as to the value of the annual grant which should be made towards the maintenance of the Exhibitioner during his time at the University College. In all cases the Exhibitioner would receive a sum to cover tuition fees, examination fees and other miscellaneous fees. If the parents' income makes it impossible for them to pay for board and lodging, a grant towards these expenses will be allocated which will be proportionate to the financial need.

The means tests to be applied as in (d) above, is a method universally adopted in scholarship awards in the United Kingdom and has been operated without difficulty by several Universities there for the past twenty years. It ensures the fairest distribution of public money. The enquiries made by the University College will not be detailed as in the case of

Income Tax assessment, since their object will simply be to evaluate whether the parent was in a position to make some contribution towards the educational cost. The system has been accepted already by Jamaica and the Leeward Islands, and has been put into operation for the award of Exhibitions by those Colonies during 1949.

5. The proposal has been considered by the Scholarship Selection Committee who agreed unanimously to recommend to Government that a contribution should be made from Colony revenue for the purpose of an Exhibition Fund. The Committee felt, however, that as it had been decided to create a Guiana Scholarship for girls and considerable sums were being spent on education generally, a start should be made with a contribution at the rate of \$6,000 a year.

6. Executive Council support the recommendation of the Scholarship Selection Committee. On the basis of figures supplied by Dr. Taylor, the sum of \$6,000 a year will maintain approximately six exhibitioners in residence at the University College at any one time, on the assumption that the parental contribution would be very small. The University College of the West Indies now have Faculties in Arts, Natural Science and Medicine. Their course in Natural Science leads to a General Degree of the University of London. As I have stressed in my Address to this Council at the opening of the past Session, there is an urgent need in this Colony for persons trained in the Natural Sciences and on these grounds alone there are strong reasons for assisting as many deserving Guianese as possible to get to the University College of the West Indies.

7. I accordingly invite Honourable Members to approve of the establishment of an Exhibition Fund for British Guiana as proposed and to undertake to provide the necessary funds.

C. C. WOOLLEY,
Governor.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana,
15th April, 1950.

GRATUITY TO FOREST RANGER

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER communicated the following Message:—

MESSAGE No. 2.

Honourable Members of the
Legislative Council,

By Resolution No. XXV dated 21st August, 1940, the Legislative Council approved of the payment of superannuation benefits to non-pensionable employees of this Government and of the conditions on which those payments should be made. One of those conditions is that to qualify for a gratuity an employee must have had at least 7 years continuous service.

2. Mr. Harold Josephus Weir, a Grade III Forest Ranger, had to be retired on medical grounds with effect from the 1st of December, 1949, but he is not eligible for a gratuity because his recent uninterrupted service amounts to only 5 years and 9 months.

3. Mr. Weir has, however, served this Government for a total of nearly 20 years at three different periods:

(a) as a Boathand in the Lands and Mines Department from 1931 when he was retrenched through no fault of his own.

He was not paid any gratuity on retrenchment.

(b) as a Boathand in the Lands and Mines Department from 1933 to 1934.

(c) as a Boathand and Ranger in the Lands and Mines Department from the 18th of July, 1941, to the 31st of May, 1943, when he resigned claiming that his health had been weakened as the result of his having been lost in the bush for 3 days while in the execution of his duty.

He received no award on this occasion either as his service had terminated by voluntary resignation.

(d) as a Forest Ranger from the 26th of January, 1948, to the 30th of November, 1949.

The final termination of Mr. Weir's services on medical grounds was made necessary because he was certified as having advanced tuberculous disease of his chest and the prognosis was reported to be very bad.

4. Mr. Weir's services have at all times been reported as satisfactory, and in view also of the fact that the

nature of his duties required that he should be continuously exposed to all kinds of weather conditions, which has probably contributed to his premature retirement, I invite Honourable Members to approve the *ex gratia* payment to Mr. Weir of a gratuity of \$864 which is the amount which would have been payable to him if his whole 20 years service had been continuous.

5. Mr. Weir is only 42 years of age. He is married and has two children aged 13 and 8 years.

C. C. WOOLLEY,
Governor.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana,
26th April, 1950.

PAPERS LAID

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the following:—

The Colonial Annual Report—
British Guiana, 1949.

The Report on the Post Office Savings Bank for 1948.

The Report of the Central Housing and planning Authority for 1949.

The Report on the Accounts of the Patoir Fund for 1949.

The Report of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer for the year 1949.

The Report on the Post Office Department for the year 1949.

The Report of the Geological Survey Department for the year 1949.

The Report of the Government Analyst for the year 1949.

The Report of the Director of Public Works for the year 1949.

The Report of the Registrar of Trade Unions for the year 1949.

The Report on the Deeds and Supreme Court Registry for the year 1949.

The Report on Mechanisation and Organisation of Rice Production in British Guiana.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER laid on the table the following:—

Statement of Loans from voted expenditure written off during the year ended 31st December, 1949.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

W.I. UNIVERSITY EXHIBITION FUND

The COLONIAL SECRETARY gave notice of the following motion:—

“That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor’s Message No. 1 of the 15th of April, 1950, this Council approves of the sum of \$6,000 being provided from Colony revenue to establish an Exhibition Fund for the benefit of Exhibitioners from this Colony at the University College of the West Indies.”

GRATUITY TO FOREST RANGER

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER gave notice of the following motion:—

“That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor’s Message No. 2 of the 26th of April, 1950, this Council approves of an *ex gratia* payment of \$864 to Mr. H. J. Weir, a Grade III Forest Ranger who has retired on medical grounds with effect from the 1st of December, 1949.”

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bills:—

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to amend the Housing Ordinance, 1946, to enable the Legislative Council to waive loan charges made in connection with the Wortmanville Housing Scheme.”

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to amend the Georgetown Improvement Works (Finance) Ordinance, 1932, with respect to payment by the Georgetown Town Council of its share of its liability for the cost of the sewerage works and for the cost of the Water Works.”

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Mr. PETERS gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bill:—

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to incorporate the Board of Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

in British Guiana; to vest therein certain property; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid."

ENQUIRY INTO JURY SYSTEM

Mr. ROTH gave notice of the following motion:—

"Whereas there is overwhelming evidence that the operation of the trial by jury system in recent years has forfeited the confidence of that section of the community which believes in the impartial administration of justice;

Be It Resolved that this Honourable Council recommend to Government the early appointment of a Commission to enquire into and report upon the present working of the said system and to make recommendations for the removal of the abuses from which it at present suffers, or for its temporary suspension and substitution by a system less open to such abuses."

COTTAGE HOSPITAL IN ESSEQUIBO ISLANDS

Mr. LEE gave notice of the following motions:—

"WHEREAS one of the recommendations in the Ten-Year Plan is for the erection of a cottage hospital for Leguan and Wakenaam;

AND WHEREAS among the buildings recently purchased from the United States Authorities is one measuring 180 feet by 31 feet which is suitable and can be converted for use as a hospital;

AND WHEREAS the erection of a hospital in that area is not only a necessity but is a matter of great urgency;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommend to Government that one of the buildings at the Base measuring 180 feet by 31 feet be converted and erected in the Essequibo Islands for use as a cottage hospital; and as the erection of a hospital in that area is a matter of paramount importance and urgency the conversion and erection of the buildings allocated should be given to a contractor."

RICE FARMERS (SECURITY OF TENURE) ORDINANCE

"WHEREAS the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Ordinance, 1945 (No. 10), has been renewed from time to time;

AND WHEREAS continuance of the said Ordinance on a permanent basis is desirable as it will be beneficial to rice growers;

AND WHEREAS for purposes of protection and security it is the general wish of rice growers that the Ordinance should be made permanent;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommend to Government that steps be taken for the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Ordinance 1945 (No. 10), to be placed on a permanent basis."

APPRECIATION OF PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dr. SINGH: Sir, before the Order of the Day is proceeded with I beg your permission to say that I should have replied to the Governor's speech this morning but owing to the sudden adjournment of the Council I did not have an opportunity to do so. I now desire, on behalf of hon. Members of this Council, to thank His Excellency for the very valuable and interesting Address he gave us this morning reviewing the activities of Government through the various Departments which are endeavouring to promote the interests of the Colony. In his Address His Excellency gave us an over-all picture of the Colony's affairs and of Government's policy, and it is for hon. Members of this Council to make our observations and arrive at our own conclusions on the matters dealt with in his Address.

I am very much interested in the Ten-Year Development Plan, having been one of the members of the Committee which considered it and made certain recommendations after deliberating for over 18 months. Of course our recommendations were not accepted by Government *in toto*, but those which were accepted we considered to be essential to the well being of the Colony, and they were given priority. Large sums of money have been allocated for the implementation of those projects decided upon, but things have changed since then and today those sums have proved to be inadequate. Funds will therefore have to be made available for the completion of those schemes which have been undertaken.

As His Excellency mentioned this morning, owing to the abnormal rainfall in December and January last several areas of the Colony were flooded, more especially on the East Coast where dams and roads were destroyed, cattle perished and farmers suffered serious loss of crops. His Excellency indicated in his Address that it would require about a million dollars to rehabilitate the farmers and the general condition of the areas affected. The flood has undoubtedly caused considerable distress among the people in the villages who are entitled to all the relief we can afford them.

I felt very hopeful this morning when His Excellency mentioned that a banana experiment will be carried out in this Colony, and if it proves successful and an export trade in bananas can be established I think such an industry should provide a bright future for the Colony.

I think hon. Members will agree with me that we can never forget the year 1949 which saw so many important events. In the first few months of the year we had the visit of the Evans Commission, the implementation of whose recommendations will involve this Colony in considerable expenditure of a recurrent nature. Then we had the Report of the Public Service Salaries and Wages Commission which has inflated our recurrent expenditure by a considerable sum. Then there was the announcement of the devaluation of the pound sterling, the effect of which on our domestic budget we can now appreciate, and we can only hope that it will not be permanent. Another event of 1949 was the closing of the Air Base at Atkinson Field and its sudden acquisition by Government which will make considerable inroads into our expenditure.

Then there was the decision to pursue a new policy as regards Amerindian welfare. I agree that the time has come when greater interest should be taken in the education of those people and an improvement of their standard of living.

There was also the question of Closer Association with the West Indian Colonies. It is a very delicate question which requires very serious consideration, and we

will have to be cautious about what attitude we may decide to adopt. In conclusion I ask that our thanks may be conveyed to His Excellency for the very interesting and informative Address he delivered this morning, and our desire that it will be printed and copies circulated for the information of Members.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I shall convey to His Excellency the thanks of this Council. The hon. the Colonial Secretary would like to make a statement to the Council before we adjourn.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do not know what the hon. the Colonial Secretary proposes to say but I would like to know whether this Council will be given an opportunity to discuss the very lucid and very important Address by His Excellency the Governor which raises so many vital issues. It deals with so many important matters that I feel every Member of the Council should have an opportunity to express his opinion on them.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The usual practice is that the Senior Member of the Council replies to the Address by the President and the Council adjourns, and opportunity is given for further discussion.

REMOVAL OF PRESS TABLE

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The matter to which I was going to refer is quite a minor one. It was merely to say what hon. Members will observe, that the members of the Press are now established on the western side of the Chamber, and to explain that it is a provisional arrangement. I received a deputation from the Press complaining of the difficulty they had in hearing where they were before, and asking if other arrangements could be made. We considered the possibility of some form of amplification but that seems to be out of the question. There are technical difficulties, and it is impossible to find any really satisfactory system, apart from the question of cost. In the circumstances I agreed that members of the Press should sit on the western side of the Chamber, but if hon. Members have

any views on the subject I would be glad if they would let me know. There will be a certain amount of congestion in their new position.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Before the Council adjourns I would like to suggest to those members of the Com-

mittee summoned for 3 o'clock that perhaps we could start immediately after the adjournment of the Council. The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer has also asked me to remind hon. Members of the meeting of Finance Committee on the 25th inst. Council will now adjourn until Friday, 26th Inst., at 2 p.m.