

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 19TH JUNE, 1952.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., President, in the Chair.

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. J. L. Fletcher, O.B.E., T.D. (Acting).

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

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

The Hon. C. V. Wight, C.B.E. (Western Essequibo).

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, O.B.E. (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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

The Hon. Dr. C. Jagan (Central Demerara).

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

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

The Hon. W. A. Phang (North-Western District).

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

The Hon. J. Carter (Georgetown South).

The Hon. L. A. Luckhoo (Nominated).

The Hon. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E., (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 13th of June, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT

GRATUITY AND PENSION TO MR. MELVILLE'S WIDOW.

The Colonial Secretary (Mr. Fletcher, Acting) communicated the following Message to the Council:—

MESSAGE No. 6

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

You will recollect with deep regret that on the 25th of November last Mr. A. H. P. Melville, aged 24 years, a supernumerary Surveyor, Public Works Department, was shot and killed while on duty in the field by a subordinate employee of the survey party of which he was in charge.

2. As the post held by the late Mr. Melville was non-pensionable, and as his service with Government was less than the 7 years required to qualify for a

gratuity, his widow is not eligible for a death gratuity.

3. In view of the tragic circumstances in which Mr. Melville met his death, I feel and the Executive Council agrees that his widow should be granted the same superannuation benefits as she would have enjoyed had her late husband been a pensionable officer, and I therefore invite Honourable Members to approve, *ex gratia*, of the grant to her of a gratuity of \$1,920 (the equivalent of one year's pay) calculated in accordance with section 19 of the Pensions Ordinance 1933 (No. 20), as amended by the Pensions (Death Gratuities) Ordinance, 1936 (No. 14), as well as a pension at the rate of \$320 per annum while she remains unmarried, computed in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Pensions Ordinance, 1933 (No. 20), as amended by section 3 of the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1941 (No. 20).

C. C. WOOLLEY,
Governor.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana,
17th June, 1952.

TABLED REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS.

The President : In connection with the tabling of Reports—I think it was raised by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan)—I have, as promised, made some enquiry. It was during the debate on a motion by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) in which reference was made to the Report on Land Settlements, and I think the hon. Member said he had not seen the Report and rather complained that hon. Members had not received reports for some weeks after they were tabled. I promptly looked into the matter. As far as that Report is concerned it was circulated to all Members on the 20th February last. As regards reports generally, all reports laid on the table are circulated to hon. Members on the same day on which they are tabled, the only exception is that of the Annual Departmental Reports. Some Members may remember there was a complaint here about the delay in tabling these

particular reports. They are not tabled until they are printed and the printing takes some six or even more months to do, and we arranged in that case that the manuscript copy be tabled and any Member who wishes to see any Departmental Report can ask the Clerk of Council for it. That is the actual position. If any hon. Member has not received a copy of any document on the day on which it was tabled by the Colonial Secretary, I would ask that he communicate with the Clerk.

GOVERNMENT NOTICE.

GRATUITY AND PENSION TO MR. MELVILLE'S WIDOW

The Colonial Secretary gave notice of the following motion:—

That, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 6 of the 16th of June, 1952, this Council approves of the grant of a gratuity of \$1,920 to the widow of the late Mr. A. H. P. Melville, calculated in accordance with the provisions of the Pensions Ordinance, 1933 (No. 20) as amended by the Pensions (Death Gratuities) Ordinance, 1936 (No. 14), as well as a pension at the rate of \$320 per annum while unmarried, computed in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Pensions Ordinance 1933 (No. 20) as amended by section 3 of the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1941 (No. 20).

NOTICE OF QUESTION.

RATES AND WORKING CONDITIONS AT ATKINSON FIELD.

Dr. Jagan gave notice of the following question:—

Will Government state whether there is a clause in the document signed by the American and British Guiana Governments on the transfer of the Base to the B.G. Government to the effect that all labour and staff taken over by the B.G. Government from the Americans would be paid the prevailing rates as at date of being taken over? If so, will Government state why rates have been reduced and working conditions changed?

ORDER OF THE DAY.

DENIAL OF ENTRY TO UNDESIRABLE
BRITISHERS.

Dr. Jagan asked and the Colonial Secretary replied to the following questions:—

Q.—Will Government stage what action the recent decision to ban the entry into British Guiana of Messrs. William Strachan and Ferdinand Smith, Jamaica-born British Subjects?

A.—The Governor in Council was satisfied in terms of section 3(3) (b) of the Immigration Ordinance, 1947 (No. 42 of 1947), that Messrs. Strachan and Smith were undesirable as visitors to the Colony.

FREEHOLD TITLE FOR ESTATE—OWNED
HOUSE LANDS.

Q.—Will Government state what action has been taken with regards to a motion passed by the Legislative Council on 5th July, 1951, that "...this Council recommend that Government enter negotiations with the Sugar Producers' Association with the view of obtaining freehold title to estate owned lands on which extra-nuclear houses are to be built in exchange for absolute grants of equivalent areas of land now leased?"

A.—Joint Committee consisting of representatives of the Local Government Board and the British Guiana Sugar Producers' Association has recently been appointed with the following terms of reference:

"To review at half-yearly intervals the question of establishing at the appropriate time in each case Local Authorities in extra-nuclear housing settlements, having regard to the degree of development attained in such settlements."

The question of title to the lands will be dealt with by the Committee at the appropriate time.

BILLS—FIRST READING.

On a motion by the Attorney-General seconded by Dr. Nicholson the

following Bills were read a first time intitled—

"An Ordinance to amend the Tax Ordinance, No. 43 of 1939."

"An Ordinance to make provision as to the application and modification of Ordinances in relation to Mandates of the League of Nations and the Trusteeship System of the United Nations."

UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE FOR
MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE ELECTIONS.

Dr. Jagan: I beg to move the following motion:—

"Be it resolved that this Council recommends to Government the introduction and enactment of legislation to provide for universal adult suffrage as the basis of elections to all councils—central, municipal and village."

Before I speak on this motion with your permission, Sir, I would like to delete the word "central" in the fourth line so that the two—municipal and village—can be taken separately by placing "(a)" before the word "municipal" and "(b)" before the word "village".

The President: "Central" must be deleted as it is provided for under the new Constitution.

Alteration put, and agreed to.

Motion amended accordingly.

Dr. Jagan: I move this motion because I feel at this moment when we are embarking upon a new Constitution we should try to experiment with the democratic process not only in the Central Legislature but also in the lower Authorities of this Colony. At the moment, Sir, in the Municipal Councils we have the franchise based on property and rental. In Georgetown, for instance, there is property qualification in addition to a rental qualification of \$6 per month. In New Amsterdam there is a similar provision for property and rental qualifications. In the Village Authorities on the other hand we have no provision whatsoever made for

any rental qualification, the franchise being based on property qualification only. Now that we have had universal adult suffrage granted for the Central Legislature with no property or rental qualification, it seems to me that if there is to be adult suffrage for the highest legislative body in this Colony then it follows that we should experiment with this same type of franchise for the village and municipal councils. We are told from time to time that democracy must start from the bottom, that the leaders must be drawn from the bottom and work their way up until they reach the central legislature. In view of that I feel it would be best if we were to adopt one system or type of franchise for the whole Colony in relation to the various types of councils that we may have.

I would like to point out to hon. Members of this Council some of the facts with reference to figures as relating to the Georgetown Municipality particularly, so as to let hon. Members have an idea as to how many persons are enfranchised at the present moment because of the property and rental qualifications as against what the possible number can be under universal adult suffrage. The last Census figure for the whole population of Georgetown is 73,509 persons, but we know that since then there has been an increase and the figure is now anywhere between 88 and 90,000, if not more. If we examine the Voters' List for the Municipality of Georgetown we find that out of that population there is a total of 4,884 according to the unrevised Voters' List for this year, 1952, but out of that number a total of 250 were struck off leaving a total of 4,634, out of a total of nearly 90,000 residents of the City of Georgetown. That is certainly a very small proportion not only of the whole population but of the adult population of the City of Georgetown, because if we take an average of two adults per family and there are about four or five persons to the family, then we can cer-

tainly say that 20 to 25 per cent. of the population of Georgetown are eligible to vote under universal adult suffrage. I arrive at that from the fact that when the Cost of Living Survey was made in Georgetown in 1942 it was found that the average family had 4.6 persons and every family had an average of 1.5 adults, that is, a man and possibly his wife or some elderly person.

If we make a rough estimation we should have anywhere between 16 and 20,000 people eligible to vote under universal adult suffrage in the City of Georgetown, but the actual figure is only 4,634 voters. If we take the separate wards we find that Kingston out of a total population of 3,076 persons has only 281 voters according to the unrevised list for this year. That is approximately 9 per cent. of the population of that ward. That is the highest percentage I have been able to ascertain. In Stabroek the percentage is as low as 2 per cent. What is alarming about that ward is, there are only 50 voters in that ward out of a total population of 2,269. This matter calls for another thing which should be considered by this Council, and that is the question of the redistribution of the various wards, because we have Wortmanville and Werk-en-Rust with over 1,000 voters as against 50 for Stabroek. I point out these figures to convince hon. Members that at the moment actually a very small percentage of the people of Georgetown are voting for the election of the City Fathers.

In the case of the rural authorities the position is even worse, because only property-owners can vote. Those who pay rent either in respect of land or house are not allowed to vote. Something of note is the fact that in the rural areas the question of literacy does not matter at all. A person can vote whether he is literate or illiterate, whereas in the Municipalities the literacy qualification comes in. So that we have various requirements for the franchise in respect of the various councils—legislative, municipal and village. I feel that it will be simple to adopt the practice in vogue in France and

many other countries where one list is prepared for the central legislature and it is used for the various other councils. The simple test in such a case is the question of residence. That would have to be done if we take the Legislative Council List for use for the Georgetown Town Council. We would simply take all the people residing in Georgetown and divide them according to the various wards in which they would be entitled to vote. The same thing can be done in respect of the Village Councils in the rural areas. I want to point out that this practice has now been adopted by the United Kingdom in relation to the various County Councils and local councils. I have a book here entitled "Your Local Authority" from which, with Your Excellency's permission, I would like to make a quotation. The author is Charles Barratt and it was printed in England. At page 60 it says:

"To the question who is entitled to appear on the register of electors there is now a simple answer. A Statute of 1945 has assimilated the parliamentary and local government franchise, so that to all intents there is now universal adult suffrage for both parliamentary and local government elections. Previously there had been an occupation test, which generally prevented such people as adult sons and daughters living at home with their parents and lodgers from possessing the local government vote, although, provided the husband occupied property, the wife living with him was given the local government vote (and vice versa, if the husband were fortunate enough to have a wife who paid the rates)." *✓*

Our position with respect to the local authorities is the same as was in the United Kingdom before the Statute of 1945, and I feel that now that we are going to be placed on the same footing for the central legislature opportunity should be taken to do the same here for the local councils. I need not speak any longer on this matter, because I feel it is a very simple issue and the matter is really self-evident. I think there should be no dispute about it whatsoever. I do know there is this argument that the people in the rural areas, for instance, do not contribute any rates and taxes—

those who do not own any property—and consequently they should have no voice in the rural council. But the fact must be remembered, Sir, that there are many individuals who lease the land on which they erect their own houses or they rent the houses from others. In the same way as in Georgetown if an increase is made in the rates and taxes that increase is passed on to the tenants. The tenants usually have to bear the burden of increased taxes and rates, so in the rural areas whatever increases in taxes that may be levied are passed on to the persons who are paying rentals for land or house, and so in the long run the people who pay rent should have a voice because they are contributing to the revenue of the local council. Then there is the additional fact that many individuals reside in the same house which is either owned or rented, and consequently those persons must also be given an opportunity to express their pleasure in respect of the administration of the local authority. I do hope that hon. Members will accept this motion, and I would ask that in taking the division municipal and village authorities be taken separately. *✓*

Dr. Gonsalves: I second the motion for discussion.

Mr. Fernandes: The motion as amended seeks to do what is tantamount to giving every adult the right to vote at a municipal or a village election. This is something which I do not agree is right. I agree entirely with the hon. Member when he said that people in the country districts are denied the right to vote even when they pay rent. I entirely agree that any person who pays rent should have a voice in the election of members either of the City council or a village council. In the City that right is already there. A limit is fixed, it is true, in the amount of rental qualification, but that limit is so low that no one who pays rent is denied the privilege of registration as a voter. But, to say that every person who lives in an area must decide who is to represent that area, is

tantamount to saying that every person on the street must have a voice in the election of the directors of such establishments as the Building Society or an Insurance Company. In order to select persons to represent a business or an organisation, that selection must be made by persons who have something at stake in it. In that case the money to be spent would be their own and if it is badly spent they would be responsible. In the case of a person who pays rent the money is also theirs because whenever taxation increases their rent goes up accordingly, and if they are going to pay any part of the Bill it is only right and just that they should have a voice in saying who should manage the business because they are shareholders and would have to contribute towards the loss if there is any.

I cannot agree, however, that someone who has absolutely nothing at stake and cannot be affected one way or another has any right to say who should manage the city or a village. I would have supported the motion—particularly the second part—if the hon. Member had moved that people who pay either Crown rent or house rent in villages should be given the right to vote at elections of village councils, but he has not done that. I am afraid that I cannot support a motion of this kind because, as I have said before, I cannot agree to give to persons who have absolutely nothing at stake the right to elect the manager of any business or organisation. This is entirely a different matter even where employers are concerned. In modern times employees have a certain amount of say as regards management, because if the management is not efficient the business would suffer. In this case, whether the management of a village is efficient or not many of the voters would have nothing at stake and they should not dictate to those who pay the rates and taxes or otherwise contribute to the revenue of the village.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I should like to say, if I may, a few words on this motion. With your permission, Sir I gave evidence pri-

vately before the Constitution Commissioners when they were in this Colony and one of the things I strongly emphasized as my own personal wish was that universal adult suffrage should be instituted in this Colony for elections to the Legislature. Some time afterwards I learnt to my surprise that my statement—my name—was included in a debate by the Town Council in Georgetown on this particular point. What I then said before the Commission was used as an argument for universal adult suffrage in the case of the municipal franchise. I am extremely surprised and disappointed because I never intended anything of the sort and I was forced on that account to write a personal letter to the then Mayor explaining what my position was. And, this is doubtless an opportunity to correct any impression which might have got around, that from that public debate I, personally, supported universal adult suffrage for the Municipality.

I wrote at the time to the Mayor and I pointed out that the conditions of elections are completely different between the central Legislature and the Municipality, especially the Municipality in this part of the world. We must not forget that the Municipality, as we know it, is not a law-making body at all. There are, of course, a few exceptions, but the Municipality is a purely managerial body. They manage the city's affairs for the citizens of the town and are trustees for them; and more particularly of course, for those who contribute and pay the rates and taxes for the upkeep of the town. Of course, the hon. Member is quite correct when he said that in England property-owners pay rates and, obviously, the tenants contribute largely through their rents. Therefore, they ought certainly to be included in Municipal franchise over there. In Georgetown we find that the franchise extends not only to property-owners, but to tenants with as low a rental as \$6 per month. Consequently, with that franchise and with the level of rent as it is today, I feel sure that nearly everyone

who contributes in the smallest degree has got the right in Georgetown to have his name entered on the Municipal voters' list. If we were to have adult suffrage in Georgetown it might very well result in a very large number of people who pay no rent at all and, therefore, have very little stake in the affairs of the town, being put on the Municipal voters' list, and, eventually, they might be found controlling the destiny of the City. Therefore, I come back to my point that the Municipality in this part of the world is purely a managerial body and ought to be constituted by the votes of those who contribute to its funds.

There is another point also which I desire to make and that is, the Government of the Colony, in Georgetown particularly, is the largest Municipal taxpayer and one can well imagine the whole destiny of the town and its management being controlled by those who have no stake in it, when Government has the right to nominate members to that Town Council who might have no say in its affairs. As I have said, I only rose to take this opportunity to make what I might say is a public explanation of my own personal position. I said publicly what I thought to the Constitution Commission and I hope I have cleared up the misconception that resulted. I feel very strongly myself against extending the Municipal franchise in Georgetown, as it is at the moment. I was interested in the opening remarks by the mover of this motion. He used the words "experiment with" and I can hardly conceive of any phrase less calculated to induce the Members of this Council to accept his motion in so far as it relates to the Georgetown Municipality. We, of course, are about to undertake a very large experiment. We are all looking forward to it and hope it would be a success—this experiment of adult suffrage—and hope it would lead to a large measure of self-determination in this Colony. Yet, before we have tackled or begun that experiment the hon. Member wants to have a further experi-

ment, and that is to place the destiny of this City in what I would call "untried hands".

Mr. Farnum: I do not intend to touch upon the question of Municipal voters, but I should certainly like to speak about the voters in the villages of this Colony. I think there is quite a large number of persons who speak without much experience of residents in the country districts. It seems that if adult suffrage is introduced these persons would get the vote although they contribute nothing whatever to the upkeep of the villages, and that I do not think would be right. The next point I desire to make is that in villages both houses and land are assessed for taxation although the land might be held by one person and the building by another person. Both persons would be entitled to vote, because the minute one puts a building on any land he or she would be entitled to vote. I do not agree that those persons who contribute nothing whatever to the upkeep of a village should be able to say how the money of those people who contribute must be spent.

Mr. Peters: One cannot but commend my hon. Colleague on my left (Dr. Jagan) for the exuberance of his solicitude for the welfare of our people throughout this land, but one certainly, desiring to be wise, would not embark upon the experiment—and I am using his own word—of having a situation wherein one might see something like the tail being called upon to wag the dog. I make bold to say that if we accept this motion as moved by my hon. Friend we would be embarking upon a very dangerous and ridiculous experiment as the tail would be wagging the dog. So far as I am concerned, I am not prepared to lead myself to that sort of experiment.

The Attorney-General: As the hon. Mover has already pointed out, provision is made in the law with respect to the qualification of voters of the municipi-

palities and also of the various authorities, and I need hardly refer to that here. The position, as at present pertaining in this Colony, is totally different from that which pertains in the United Kingdom. As the hon. Member pointed out when he referred to.....—and I am quoting from *Local Authorities* by James Bell—in 1895 the right to vote... ..It will be agreed that this was proper and appropriate so long as the greater part of the local authorities' revenue was derived from the rates, but that no longer obtains, because of the functions which the local bodies perform and also because of the sources of their revenue. The Representation of the People's Act, in 1945, carried out certain recommendations which were made at the Speakers' Conference of 1944, and extended to Parliamentary electors, as such, the right to be registered and to vote as local government electors. Therefore, the position was that when one secured registration as a Parliamentary elector he was given the right to vote at a local government election, and where an elector held property in a local government district he would also have the right to elect him.

In the United Kingdom there are four principal sources of revenue so far as local government is concerned, and these include rates and taxes from the Central Government and from local authorities loans and fees charged, and income from trading undertakings and from societies. The powers and duties of County Councils are very much wider than anything we have. They relate to highways and roads in rural districts, education, public assistance, Police, special health and agricultural services. The assistance given by Government to local authorities in this Colony cannot be compared to that which is given to those in Great Britain. Their functions are wider than ours and they are more heavily subsidised by the Central Government. As hon. Members are aware at the

present time Government makes a grant towards the administration expenses of local authorities and special assistance is given as regards drainage rates payable to the Drainage and Irrigation Board. Grants are frequently made to local authorities to meet their expenses, particularly in respect of drainage works, as hon. Members will appreciate. Loans have also been made from time to time for special purposes. Therefore, the position so far as local authorities in this Colony are concerned, is somewhat different from that obtaining in England; as I said, Sir, both with regard to their functions and with regard to their sources of revenue. In the United Kingdom the local government franchise is compiled on the same basis as the Parliamentary franchise—that is, universal adult franchise—but the position is different in this Colony. As the hon. Member has pointed out with regard to rental in the village districts the position is different from that which obtains in the Municipality of Georgetown.

As I have said before, the functions of the local authorities in England are wider than those of the local authorities in British Guiana and they are more heavily subsidized by the Central Government there. The functions of those local authorities are for the benefit of the general taxpayer as against that of the ratepayer in the case of our local authorities, and on the basis of the well-known maxim "no taxation no representation," I think it is evident that the hon. Member has not made out a case in support of his motion. I would point out that, as the hon. the Financial Secretary has emphasized, we have just had a recommendation by the Constitution Commission—and this Council has accepted that recommendation with regard to universal adult suffrage. We are now embarking on the preparation of the Register of Voters and I suggest to hon. Members that it is somewhat premature to take

a step forward in connection with municipal franchise as has been taken with regard to franchise for the Central Government. It has to be borne in mind that universal adult suffrage was recommended in England in 1929 and that it was only in 1945—after they had had experience so far as the working of the Central Government on the basis of universal adult suffrage was concerned—that they extended universal adult suffrage to local governments over there. Therefore, I suggest to hon. Members that the suggestion put forward by the hon. Mover of the motion—that we should embark upon an experiment at the present time and have a universal type of government by permitting voters of the lesser bodies—the local authorities—to be put on the same basis as the voters of the Central Government—should not be entertained. The position in this Colony does not approximate what obtains in England at the present time. As soon as we have had experience with regard to the improvements and advances made in the Central Government by way of recommendations which this Council has adopted and which we hope would be of immense benefit to the Colony—then this matter should be considered in the light of the experience gained and in the light of other changes.

The President: As no other Member wishes to speak, I will call upon the hon. Mover of the motion to reply.

Dr. Jagan: I cannot but observe that nearly all the hon. Members present have expressed disapproval of this motion. Their line of argument fell into two categories — (1), that while adult suffrage is a good thing for the local authorities, they are not yet ready for it. The hon. the Attorney-General has taken the other point of view and that is, while in England there is one type of franchise for all types of councils, we, in British Guiana, have not had the experience and the time-lapse that they have had over there, from 1929 to 1945. I will deal

with both of these lines of argument to show how fallacious they are. In the first place, I do not think it is consistent with any law of reasoning to say that the people of this Colony are ready to vote for the election of Members of this Legislative Council—the highest Council in the land — but they are not ready to vote for the election of members to municipal councils and local authorities. It is true that the municipal councils, as the hon. the Financial Secretary has said, have different functions from those of the Legislative Council to perform, these being managerial functions — acting as trustees of the voters concerned — and, in the same way, the local authorities and village councils might be considered to be trustees acting under the Local Government Board Ordinance. The point, however, is that these councils — the municipal and village councils — are all working within certain Ordinances passed by this Legislative Council. If we argue that they are acting in the position of managers, we can say that this Legislative Council is also acting in the position of managers — for Her Majesty's Government—because everything done in this Council has to be approved by Her before it becomes law.

The President: That is not quite so; I assent to the laws of this Colony. The position is that they can be disallowed through the Secretary of State, but Her Majesty does not approve the laws of this Colony. The Secretary of State advises Her Majesty that the powers of disallowance should not be exercised.

Dr. Jagan: I may have explained the position in wrong words.

The President: There is a distinction.

Dr. Jagan: We have in this Council a sort of superior authority, and that is the point I wanted to make in

reply to the hon. the Financial Secretary. The hon. Member for Georgetown Central has made the point that if the motion was framed in such a way that the villagers would have been allowed to vote on the basis of rental qualification he would have supported it. That is why I asked what is the rental to be fixed and suggested that he should fix it. If the decision is left to the members of the Town Council they would say "we do not want the rental qualification fixed at \$4, \$5 or \$6 per month, we want it fixed at \$16 per month." Obviously, they would want \$16 because in that way they would be able to preserve the *status quo* and keep the register of voters restricted. Then we come to the question as to whether we should drop the rental qualification from its present figure and what the actual figures should be. The hon. the Financial Secretary has stated that the rental figure is so low at present—\$6 per month—that practically everyone can become a voter. If that is so, why not withdraw it altogether? Of course, the argument has been adduced that an individual must contribute something towards the upkeep of the Town Council if he wants to be a voter. If we argue it that way, then I can say that if I contribute ten times as much as another ratepayer I should have ten times his number of votes.

The other point—that the rental qualification is low, \$6 per month—I know from personal knowledge, though that is the case, there are many persons who cannot register because they do not pay as much as \$6 per month rent. That is because of the Rent Restriction Ordinance and the dilapidated ranges in many of the wards of the City. The point, which must be borne in mind and which is constantly being overlooked by those Members, who spoke against the motion and who insist that the qualification for a voter must be on a property or rental basis, is that every person in a household is contributing to that rental

whether it is paid by one or more persons. If we have two persons in a family—a man and his wife—living in a house, the man may be the only wage-earner and he may be paying \$6 or \$8 per month as rent. If he is paying \$12 per month as rent they can go through the process of 'splitting the rental value between them, as we know some Town Councillors get their qualification that way. The man and his wife can then have a vote each on that rental, but if the rental is lower than \$12 what happens is the man's wife is deprived of a vote although she to all intents and purposes is contributing towards that rental. One cannot say that because a wife does not pay rental actually in her name she has not contributed to that rental. That is why I assume—and I think it is self evident to anyone resident in the City—the mere fact of residence means that some contribution is made in one way or another, directly or indirectly, to the revenue of the municipality, and consequently I see no justification whatever that those people who are not paying any rental should be debarred from exercising the vote. Consequently, Sir, I suggest that those hon. Members who spoke against the motion should look at it in the light of those facts and reconsider their stand in relation to this motion.

In relation to what the hon. the Attorney-General said a moment ago—that in this Colony we are now embarking upon universal adult suffrage for the first time for the central legislature, whereas in England they had adult suffrage over a long period of time but it was only in 1945 that the local authorities accepted universal adult suffrage—I would like to point out to the hon. Member this fact: Most of these democratic reforms which took place in England took place under the Labour Government or what was considered a liberal government in terms of the conservative form of government. The 1911 reform was brought

about by the Liberals as against the Tory's reform of 1929. It was a question of who was constituting the Government. That was why there was this time lag. I would like to point out to the hon. Member that the argument he has adduced is not really sound, because he said that in the United Kingdom you have the County and other Councils having wide functions and a large amount of money to handle. That may be true, but that does not affect in any way the question of the franchise. In fact the argument should be the opposite way. If they have to deal with a greater amount of money and exercise wider functions, then why give them adult suffrage? Why not retain the qualification they had before? It is all the more reason because of the limited functions and limited amount of money to be spent for allowing a little bit of responsibility in the village and municipality councils.

But I do not agree that there will be responsibility because the people are allowed to vote *ipso facto* it is the responsibility of the Council. It is true that the amount of money handled by the County Councils in England is much greater, and it is true that their functions are entirely different because they have a different system of local government. They have the County Council system as against our system of domination by the Local Government Board over the Village Councils. But the question has nothing to do with the functions or how much money is being spent by the local authority, and so far as embarking upon an experiment is concerned I feel that if this Council can embark upon this so-called experiment of universal adult suffrage there is no reason why the other local bodies which are supervised by this Council should not have the same universal adult suffrage to elect their officers and leaders to carry on their business. Anything done by the Village Councils can be counteracted by the authority of the Local Government Board. The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer knows that very well.

I do not see there is any valid argument for opposing this motion at this moment. I do not think we should go by stages, as the hon. the Attorney-General is suggesting. Not because something took so many years to happen in the United Kingdom that we must take so many years to achieve that in this Colony; not because there was a gap between the introduction of universal adult suffrage in the central government and in local government in the United Kingdom we should adopt that practice in this Colony. If we have become ripe to get universal adult suffrage for the central legislature, then we are ripe enough to get universal adult suffrage for the local councils. *L*

The President: I shall put the motion in two parts—the first is “Universal adult suffrage as the basis of elections for the municipal councils”.

Question put, and the Council divided and voted as follows:—

For—Dr. Jagan—1.

Against—Messrs. Macnie, Luckhoo, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Farnum, Roth, Wight, Dr. Gonsalves, Capt. Coghlan, Dr. Singh, Dr. Nicholson, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—17.

First part of motion lost.

The President: I shall now put the second part of the motion “Universal adult suffrage as the basis of elections for the village councils”.

Question put, and the Council divided and voted as follows:—

For—Dr. Jagan—1.

Against—Messrs. Macnie, Luckhoo, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Farnum, Roth, Wight, Dr. Gonsalves, Capt. Coghlan, Dr. Singh, Dr. Nicholson, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—14.

Second part of motion lost.

BERBICE LICENSING BOARD (SPECIAL MEETING) BILL.

Mr. Peters: I beg to move the second reading of the following Bill intituled —

"An Ordinance to make special provision for the consideration by the Licensing Board for the County of Berbice, of certain applications for the renewal of spirit shop licences and for matters connected therewith."

In rising to move the second reading of this Bill I make no apology for spearheading this Bill so that folk on the West Coast Berbice and on the East Coast Berbice, who were denied because of legal provisions the privilege of having their licences renewed owing to the fact that they had made application for that renewal out of time, can obtain that privilege. This portion of the law inflicted great inconvenience upon folk who failed to have their licences renewed and, of course, as I said just now, considerable hardship was inflicted upon them accordingly. There is no doubt that, so far as our Government and the people of this land are concerned, there is no desire on our part to see that undue hardship is endured by folk who, because of circumstances beyond their control, failed at the right time to have their licences renewed, and it is with this in my mind that this Bill has been put forward looking towards its enactment so that relief will be brought to those parties on both sides of the Berbice River and so that they will be able to reopen their spirit shops and to do business as heretofore. The purpose of this Bill is rather simple, and so I am not going to belabour the Council with many words, but will ask this Body to be gracious enough to grant the relief so far as this Bill is concerned.

Mr. Fernandes: I second the motion for the second reading of this Bill. I am not going to say anything on it except to point out to hon. Members that while everyone should apply for his licence in the prescribed time, in this case my information is there was a

widow involved. She knew nothing about the time-limit until it was too late. Even if this relief is given now and the licences are renewed for 1952 these persons will have to pay the full annual licence fee while they will only be permitted to trade from the date of renewal and, therefore, that in itself is a penalty, the licence for the country districts being \$240. Speaking subject to correction, as I have no experience of these licences, by the time this goes through and everything is fixed six months will have elapsed and these people will have to lose half of the value of their annual licence. That, I think hon. Members will agree, is sufficient penalty for not putting their application in at the right time.

Dr. Gonsalves: In further support of the second reading of this Bill, though it seems to me that all the points I may have made have been fully covered, I particularly wish to stress the point made by the hon. Secunder that the penalty that will be inflicted on these people, while I am not supporting the tardiness of their application by any means, is sufficient lesson for them to avoid any such recurrence because they will have to pay the full amount of the licence for the year but will only be operating for half of the year. As regards the reasons given by the persons in my district I have not been fully satisfied that is good enough excuse, but once they realise what the whole thing costs them they will be careful the next time. Particularly the case in which a widow is involved I would be very glad if the Bill is passed and the relief granted which the Bill seeks. I support the Bill.

Mr. Roth: Before I can support this motion I shall ask the hon. Mover in his reply to explain to the Council what were the circumstances under which these people did not apply for their licences in time. It is all very well for the people doing business but it is a very bad precedent, and unless the hon. Mover satisfies this Council that there was good and just cause for such de-

lay I will not be able to accept the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 2—Interpretation.

Mr. Roth : I rise to move the deletion of this clause and I am prepared to bring forward quite a few reasons therefor. It has been generally accepted in the past that greenheart is in a class by itself.

Mr. Fernandes : To a point of order! We are not considering the Greenheart Bill, we are on the Spirit Shop Licences Bill.

Mr. Roth : I am sorry.

Clause 4—Special meeting of Licensing Board.

Mr. Peters : I beg to move that the words "eighteenth" be inserted between the words "the" and "day" in the fourth line and the word "July" between the words "of" and "nineteen" in the same line.

Clause as amended put, and agreed to.

Clause 6—Authority of District Commissioner to issue Licence.

Mr. Peters : In subclause (2) I move that the word "May" in the fourth line be deleted and the word "July" substituted therefor.

Clause as amended put, and agreed to.

Clause 8—Saving the rights of the Crown.

Mr. Peters : I move that in the last line the word "and" be deleted and the word "or" substituted therefor.

Clause as amended put, and agreed to.

The Council resumed.

Mr. Peters : I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed.

Mr. Fernandes seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the third time and passed.

CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Attorney-General : With regard to the next item on the Order Paper—*Council to consider in Committee the Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Customs Duties Ordinance, 1935"—I ask leave to defer consideration for further enquiry.

Question put, and agreed to.

Consideration of Bill deferred.

REVIVAL OF TOWING LAW

Mr. Lee : May I be permitted to withdraw the following motion standing in my name.

WHEREAS the bus routes in the City of Georgetown are becoming congested by the vehicular traffic;

AND WHEREAS it is essential for the protection of human lives that the towing of adults by adults be prohibited, i.e. persons over the age of 14 years, and of the towing of children by children;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Council recommends to Government that the towing law be proclaimed, i.e. the towing of adults by adults and children by children, be restricted on the bus routes, in the City of Georgetown.

The President : If the Council agrees.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion withdrawn.

SALE OF DRUGS AND POISONS

Mr. Farnum: I ask permission to postpone discussion of the following motion standing in my name on the Order Paper:—

WHEREAS Ordinance No. 30 of 1951 being an "Ordinance further to amend the Tax Ordinance, 1939" was passed in the Legislative Council on the 15th of June, 1951, making provision for the granting, upon application, of licences for selling drugs and poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, Chapter No. 103;

AND WHEREAS during the debate on the said Ordinance there were expressions of deep concern and sympathy for a number of persons in a particular category; to wit, those having had over 20 years' experience, either as Sicknurses and Dispensers attached to estate hospitals or who have been practising under qualified Druggists and Medical Practitioners continuously for over 20 years; since such persons might be refused a licence to sell drugs and poisons;

AND WHEREAS this class of persons number about 12 and are in charge of and/or are proprietors of Drug Stores in various parts of the Colony and have been rendering humanitarian service to the community where their drug stores are situated;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommend to Government the early introduction of such legislative measures as would permit the aforesaid class of persons to sell drugs and poisons under all of the Schedules to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, Chap. 103.

I only had notification that it would come up today on Tuesday afternoon and I had not the time to collect all the information desired.

The President: I think a little more time may be given to the hon. Member.

Consideration of motion deferred.

GRATUITY AND PENSION TO MR. MELVILLE'S WIDOW.

The Colonial Secretary: I move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order in order to enable me to move the motion standing in my name on the Schedule to the Order Paper notice of which was given earlier in the day.

Dr. Singh seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Rule and Order suspended.

The Colonial Secretary: Hon. Members have read the Message, No. 6, giving particulars of the very sad death of Mr. A. H. P. Melville, supernumerary Surveyor, Public Works Department, who was shot and killed while on duty. Mr. Melville had been in the Government Service for less than 7 years. He was not a permanent civil servant and his post was non-pensionable. Because of his being in the Government Service for less than 7 years his widow is not eligible for gratuity on his death. His Excellency feels and the Executive Council entirely agree that Mr. Melville's widow should be accorded the same benefits which she would have received had her husband been a member of the permanent and pensionable Civil Service. In the circumstances hon. Members are asked to approve of the payment of a gratuity of \$1,920, the equivalent of one year's pay calculated in accordance with section 19 of the Pensions Ordinance, No. 20 of 1933, as well as a pension at the rate of \$320 per annum while she remains unmarried, computed in accordance with section 20 of the Pensions Ordinance, No. 20 of 1933. I commend this motion to hon. Members and trust that this Council will approve of it while expressing our very deep sorrow to Mrs. Melville.

Dr. Singh seconded.

Mr. Fernandes: I would just like to express my appreciation of Gov-

ernment's action in this matter. There is no question about it, a very great hardship and misfortune has befallen Mrs. Melville and I am very glad to see that Government has afforded her some relief, even though I do not quite agree that the words "while unmarried" should have been included in the motion. Nevertheless, I am going to accept the motion, for it is better for her to get something than nothing at all. I do not agree with the inclusion of the words "while unmarried" because if the amount is given on that condition it might cause such persons to remain unmarried although they might be married otherwise.

The President: That is in accordance with the law.

Mr. Fernandes: I agree with that, Sir, but I am still in disagreement with it.

Dr. Gonsalves: I would also like to express my appreciation of this very

fine gesture on the part of Government. It is very pleasing that Government has seen fit to act in this manner owing to the circumstances of this particular case. Mrs. Melville's husband died in very sad and tragic circumstances and although he was not on the pensionable establishment she is really deserving of the very sympathetic consideration that has been given her by Your Excellency and the Executive Council. It must be admitted that the pension granted is small, but I am sure it will be appreciated. I do not know whether Mrs. Melville will remain unmarried because she is quite a young woman, but I know that this pension will be gratefully accepted and I desire to express appreciation on her behalf.

Motion put and agreed to.

The President: There being no further business, Council will now adjourn until 2 p.m., on Friday next, June 27.