

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 8TH MARCH, 1951.

The Council met at 2.00 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. Gutch, O.B.E.

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. W. J. Raatgever (Nominated).

The Hon. V. Roth, (Nominated).

The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).

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

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

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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. F. E. Morrish (Nominated).

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 7th of March, 1951, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID.

The following documents were laid on the table:—

The Report of the Superintendent, Fire Brigade, on the Georgetown Fire Brigade for the year 1950. — (The Colonial Secretary).

Amended Statement of Loans from voted expenditure written-off during the year ended 31st December, 1950. — (The Financial Secretary and Treasurer).

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

APPROPRIATION BILL

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to give notice of the introduction and first reading of a bill intitled —

“An Ordinance to appropriate the supplies granted in the current session of the Legislative Council”

and to inform Council that at the conclusion of the examination of the Estimates and the related resolution I shall move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order to enable me to proceed with the Bill covering the Estimates through all its stages. Copies of the Bill have been circulated to Members.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

ESTIMATES, 1951.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the draft Estimates for 1951 and the Report of the Finance Committee thereon.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Item 2 — Public Printing regulated by Contract, \$200,000

The CHAIRMAN: When we adjourned yesterday we had reached Head XXV—Miscellaneous—and the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer was speaking.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I had completed what I had to say.

Mr. SMELLIE: In connection with this Head which we were discussing yesterday, the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) is reported in the Press this morning to have said that "all the printing presses were practically owned by the same people". Not only he is wrongly reported, but the statement is not accurate. In the same paper the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer is reported as saying that "besides the **Chronicle** and **Argosy** there are two other tenders — **Graphic** and **Lithographic Co.**" That statement is also not correct. The **Graphic** did not tender.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: That is so. I did not say the **Graphic** had tendered.

The CHAIRMAN: There were a good many inaccuracies in the Press report of yesterday's proceedings but I do not intend to refer to them.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Speaking on the particular item under this Head which has been raised by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan), I wish to support him in his contention that the cost of printing is far more than seems reasonable. Personally I feel that it is a tremendous jump from \$70,000 to \$193,000 for printing, and it does not seem to be commensurate with the rise in the cost of materials as well as labour. We cannot

in this Council blow hot and cold, because at one time we had placed a particular measure to the rising cost of labour as well as so far as the cost of materials is concerned. It seems we have to stick to such terms. What is a measure for others should be a measure for even Government itself. It seems to me that wages could not have affected the cost of printing to the extent of three times what was previously estimated and tendered for. More than that, I have contended in Finance Committee that in a matter of such grave importance, where we are limited in the number of people or concerns who can properly tender to do the work, we should get proper costing or estimates revised by the Crown Agents or the Colonial Office so that we can be assured that what we are paying is reasonable.

Much has been made of the hon. Member's statement about Government being held up without a gun. Personally I feel that Government is in a position where it can hardly say "Yes" or "No", and that is extremely unfortunate for the Government in so far as its printing is concerned. If we have no alternative, it seems to me that it is a case of "Beggars are not choosers" and we have to choose the **Argosy** to do our printing. That is, therefore, a strong enough argument for either one of two things. One is, we should get an independent estimate from some concern abroad, even from the Government Printery in Trinidad or from somewhere in England. Apart from the whole question, in asking for some of our printing to be done outside the Colony we are not going to get more than what we do need. Secondly, it is also argument for the erection of a Government Printery here. If we had a Government Printery in this Colony it would take care of far more than just the printing for which tenders have been invited. I have noticed within recent times that the vote for stationery has gone up considerably and I think I have a fair enough idea of the volume of extra work that is being done and the volume of paper communication, inter-departmental and otherwise, in the Government Service. I know, too, there is in most of the Government Departments a duplicating machine

which is doing quite a lot of the work of Government. The minutes of the several Boards and Committees, many of which are very voluminous, have to be run off, and that is taken care of by these duplicating machines. If we have our own printery we could have a co-ordination of Government printing instead of asking for tenders for the printing of particular items. There are certain matters which must be printed — the Hansard, Government Reports, etc., — and printed properly. So I feel that the time has come when we must go into that, because it is no use telling us that Trinidad has a printery and it is being run at a loss. Even then something is not taken into account when the figures are given, and that is, Trinidad is a very big spending country; on one item alone — Social Services. The amount is almost as much as what we are budgeting for our Colony.

The CHAIRMAN: Question!

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is something like \$15 million for some particular department.

The CHAIRMAN: For all its Social Services — Education, etc.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think it is the Social Welfare Department.

The CHAIRMAN: The percentage is still lower than the percentage we are spending on Social Services.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It does indicate the volume of work they are doing. It is a bigger country in population and in Government expenditure, and correspondingly one expects the volume of printing be very much more than here. We have to realize that as far as trade, etc., with the West Indies is concerned they seem to be the central pivot for most of such activities. Trinidad is being made the centre of many other activities, even of an intercolonial nature. We cannot compare Trinidad with British Guiana and say their cost of printing is so high. I am going to urge strongly that this particular item be not passed until we have got something definitely stated as to the reasonableness of this item. I hate

to see Government mis-spending money I do not, however, say in this case Government is doing so or intends to do so, but I hate to think that any particular concern, because it is able to push ahead, should be able, by having a monopoly, to get more than it is entitled to.

I think it is a matter of grave significance to note — and we have already got sufficient from those who have spoken indicating what I am coming to—if the **Chronicle** were asked to tender and did not tender, or even if they did tender it was not accepted, it is a matter of some note to know that they are going to print some of the **Argosy's** work. It seems the **Argosy** must pay them something more than they themselves would be getting for the printing, unless they are so closely tied up one with the other as to do the printing at cost. The **Chronicle** are going to print for the **Argosy** and will not do so at a loss, I feel, as I have moved in Finance Committee, that this matter ought not to be passed until we have some revision by some authority, possibly the Crown Agents in London, who may go into the whole estimate of the printing of the Colony. Therefore I beg that my motion be accepted.

Mr. FERNANDES: This item of printing is a very important one. Government has very properly called for tenders and has accepted the lowest tender. I do not see how Government could have done otherwise, particularly when nearly three months of the year have already gone and quite a lot of printing has to be done. But the position, as has been disclosed to us in Finance Committee, is a very peculiar one and a dangerous one. Tenders were asked for. Three people tendered. One, we are told, only tendered for a small portion of the work but that tender was so high that it had to be discarded. The other two are two separate companies. They are entirely separate entities even if their shareholders are the same. Nevertheless, though the tender of one of those firms was cheaper than the other on certain groups of work, the contract was still given to the **Argosy** who will have to get the **Chronicle** to

print a portion of the work, that which the **Chronicle** had tendered for. This is wrong procedure, if the tenders were separate. I maintain that the contracts should have been awarded in accordance with the tenders and the **Chronicle** should have been awarded their share and the **Argosy** their share. But Government, I suppose, took into consideration that these two concerns are owned by the same people and, therefore, by some domestic arrangement the two tenders can be joined under one contract. That is where the danger lies — the only two concerns that have tendered being owned by one group. I am afraid that if the Government does not take the necessary steps to see that it is not exploited in the printing nothing would stop Government from being exploited, because Government would find itself in the position of having only one interest tendering. Even if the two do tender, in effect it remains one, and those two tenders must be correlated with the idea of getting the best they can from Government on future contracts.

I would like to speak particularly on the reasons why there were not more tenders. This printing contract of Government is a vast one and no concern can tender for the whole of it or any great portion of it on the off-chance of getting it, because it is obvious that all the present printing concerns in the Colony, with the exception of this group of two, would be forced to put in new machinery if they are to take care of Government printing, and naturally no concern would be unwise enough to order new machinery on the off-chance of being successful in getting the contract. If they put in new machinery and were not successful in obtaining the contract the machines would be useless to them, and if they got the contract and had not the machinery they would not be able to do the job. Therefore Government finds itself in the position of having to deal with one concern while the printing will be done by two concerns. It is a very dangerous position except steps are taken to see that Government is not exploited.

As regards this item on the Estimates, I have supported it in Finance Committee

and I am going to support it here, but that is so far as this session is concerned, because the printing has to be done, and it is too late to do anything else about it. But I would like to refer to the idea of a three-year contract at a fixed price. It is in my opinion a waste of time making a three-year contract with the **Argosy** at a fixed price, because if prices go up we are going to be called upon to vote more next year and, perhaps, still more the year following, as has happened in the past. When you have conditions like that I think it is definitely dangerous, and it is not in Government's interest to enter into any contract at a fixed figure when, if the cost of production goes up it has to be revised, and if the cost of production goes down the contract holds. If it goes up those people are going to come back to Government and ask that the position be reviewed, and this Council will be asked to vote more money again. I am asking Government not to enter into a contract for three years. I am going to vote in favour of the passing of the item on the Estimates for this year, and I hope Government will seriously consider the situation facing it in such a very important item as the printing of Government requirements.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: There is one point in the hon. Member's speech which I hope to explain further. I think he said that tenders were received from those two companies and the minimum tender would be allocated to that one of the two which had made that tender. That is not the case.

Mr. FERNANDES: To a point of correction! I did not say that. I said we were told in Finance Committee that the **Chronicle's** tender was cheaper in certain items and the **Argosy's** in others. That being so the **Chronicle** should have been awarded the contract for the items in which it was cheaper and the **Argosy** in like manner. That is exactly what I said. I think I am absolutely correct.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: That is what the hon. Member said and advised to be done, but what he did say that Government had done was to give the **Chronicle's** tender

to the **Argosy**. I had better say what has been done. What has been done is that the minimum tender in each case has been accepted, but that section of the work which was tendered for at the lower price does not necessarily go to the lower tenderer, but that the work would be divided by mutual agreement between the parties in such a way that the firm which is best able to do it will perform it. That is to say, supposing the **Chronicle** had tendered a lower figure for a certain section of the work then the contract would be for that lower figure, but it does not necessarily follow that the **Chronicle** would do that particular section of work if it is known that the **Argosy** can do it better. The lower figure is accepted in each case but the actual division of the work will be by mutual agreement in accordance with what is convenient and practicable, and which firm is best able to do that particular section of the work.

Of course it is all very well to say that Government is in a very dangerous position, because of the fact that there are only two Companies which are able to take part in this work, and as is now the case, those two Companies are in some way associated, but that has been the case for a very long time in British Guiana. I may say again that before the fire in 1945 the Government of British Guiana had been very adequately and satisfactorily served by the contracting firm of printers. We have been very proud of the **Argosy Co.** and of its relations with the Government of British Guiana. It is common knowledge that before the fire they maintained for us what we used to call a Government Department. They gave excellent service at the cheapest possible figure. Other Colonies, I believe, envied us our ability to secure printing so well done at such cheap rates and so efficiently by a private concern. The fire destroyed the **Argosy Coy's** establishment and they had to indulge in heavy capital expenditure, and when they tendered for the contract which is just about to expire they had no previous experience of costs. Consequently that contract was awarded and accepted at too low a price. Hon. Members have been consistently com-

paring the old contract price with the present one. I will repeat that the comparison one should make is with costs in other Caribbean Colonies. It is a fact that at the price put on the estimate we are \$100,000 less than it costs Trinidad to run its Government Printery. The last figure I saw for Jamaica's printing establishment was £75,000, and that figure does not include other ancillary charges. Consequently I feel pretty certain that on that basis the comparison is very much in British Guiana's favour.

In Finance Committee the hon. Member suggested that we should consult the Crown Agents, and that is going to be done. I feel sure that when they get down to it they will send us a complete report on the prices of the various items which are included in this contract, and we will try to get the Crown Agents' expert advice as to whether or not we have in this contract been charged excessive rates. I can tell Members the answer right away. They will be uprised that we have got it done so cheaply. We have no option but to enter into this contract. We cannot just go on giving out our work from day to day. It is a 3-year contract, and if during the next year we get this information and we find we have been excessively charged, then would be the time to consider whether we should think of embarking on a Government printery. I am perfectly satisfied from the figures themselves that we are not being unduly charged, and from the comparisons with costs in Trinidad and Jamaica it is clear that we get the benefit.

The hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) referred to the fixed price. Well, so it is. But there will be clauses which will give the contractors the right to ask for an increase in certain circumstances. For instance, if the price of paper increases above 5 per cent. of existing prices then the contractors would have the right to appeal for an increase. Similarly there will be a clause on the converse side which will allow Government to claim a decrease should the price of paper fall below 5 per cent. of the existing price. There will also be a clause about wages. I think if the wage

scales of the men employed in the contract department of the firm are increased with the approval of Government, then there may arise under the contract a case for an appeal for a revision. There will be provisions in the contract which will allow of variations. It is bound to be so at a time when costs are so uncertain.

I come back to the point that we must enter into a contract for our printing. I do not think it is unreasonable, and we will try to get the information from abroad in order to satisfy Members that the charges are far from being excessive.

Mr. FERNANDES: I do not want to prolong the debate, but I was very interested in the Financial Secretary's comparison with Trinidad because I am glad he did that. I am making the definite statement that Trinidad spends a very much smaller percentage of its total expenditure on public printing than British Guiana does, taking everything into consideration.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I do not deny that at all.

The CHAIRMAN: It proves nothing.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Personally I would be inclined to pass the amount for this year if I could have an undertaking that Government would not enter into a binding contract for three years. I think it was the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) who referred on a previous occasion to the sacredness of contracts. Lawyers do not speak of contracts as sacred but as having legal obligations which we cannot get out of. If the Crown Agents are to go into the figures Government ought not to enter into a binding agreement and possibly find that it has to revise the contract in the light of the information obtained. What is the use of having an investigation, which I feel is necessary, and entering into a contract? I will agree that the figures for this year be accepted on an undertaking that a contract would not be entered into until we are satisfied that the terms of the agreement are reasonable.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I did not for one moment suggest that we were going to make an inquiry in order to revise the figures of this contract. I said we would make the necessary inquiries which the hon. Member himself suggested, in order to satisfy him and any other Member who feels that the prices are excessive. I am afraid that we must have a contract. Members must realize that a contract is as much for the protection of Government as it is for the tenderer. Government would be guilty of a very serious offence if it permitted itself to be in a situation where it could not call upon the contractors to produce very necessary printed documents which every Administration must have, — for instance the **Official Gazette**. We must have a binding contract with some firm that they will produce the **Official Gazette**. Does the hon. Member realize what would happen if that broke down?

Mr. DEBIDIN: We have a year to determine whether we should enter into a contract for a further period. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) has made out a perfectly good case that we seem to be bound hand and foot to the Argosy Co. There is no difficulty whatever in entering into a contract for one year, on the understanding that if Government was satisfied with the prices it would extend the contract further.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. the Fifth nominated Member (Mr. Smellie) referred to a statement which I am supposed to have made—that I said that the same people owned the three newspapers.

Mr. SMELLIE: No, the printing presses.

Dr. JAGAN: I know that there are many small shareholders in these printing companies, but I was thinking about the major shareholders—the directors. It is a known fact that the Argosy Co. is practically owned and controlled by Mr. Percy Wight and his family, whereas the **Daily Chronicle** is practically owned and controlled by Mr. Wight and a few representatives of the Sugar Producers'

Association, not as members of the Association but individually, and certain members of the Chamber of Commerce. In the case of the **Graphic** we find the same members of the Chamber of Commerce and the Sugar Producers' Association are well represented. In fact there is an interlocking directorate. In the case of the **Argosy** the Wights are the directors; in the **Chronicle** there are the Wights and certain sugar people, and in the **Graphic**—

Mr. ROTH: To a point of correction. Only one member of the Wight family is a director of the **Chronicle**.

The CHAIRMAN: What has all this really got to do with the subject we are debating? What Members want to be assured about is that we are getting a square deal, no matter who owns the Company. What is the point the hon. Member is making?

Dr. JAGAN: I am only clarifying a point that was made here.

The CHAIRMAN: Let us get on to the subject under discussion.

Dr. JAGAN: The Financial Secretary said that the first contract was unfavourable to the Company. Assuming that it was, we have the figures given by Mr. Davies who carried out an investigation and reported that in one year the average price for doing 3/4ths of the Government printing according to the contract was \$66,509. So that if the Company did all the Government printing the price would be in the vicinity of \$83,000. It is not that I am comparing one figure with another. The only way we can arrive at an equitable figure is to consider costs—what it cost to do the printing in the past. We have figures supplied by a Government expert, therefore I do not consider the statement of the Financial Secretary really valid argument.

On the question of costs again I do not know if due consideration was given to the fact that the Argosy Co. also prints a daily newspaper. It is a known fact that the newspaper is run at a loss, and I am wondering whether the printing is

really subsidizing the newspaper. It is also a known fact that there is a lot of extravagance in that Company. We also know that recently its Manager was dismissed, and perhaps all those things tended to raise the cost of printing for the Government. Taking into consideration the extravagance and the loss which may be incurred in publishing a newspaper, Mr. Davies's figure of \$83,000 per annum cannot be thrown out of the window simply because Government wants to shut its eyes to those figures now. If the figure is \$83,000 per annum and we are to allow the Company 25 per cent. profit, which would not include wages and other charges, and then add another 25 per cent. for wages and materials, it still would not amount to \$200,000 per annum.

In the case of small people we are always talking about the inviolability of contracts and the good name of British Guiana. That was said in the case of the contracts between the Rice Marketing Board and the West Indian Colonies, but in the case of a large Company like this Government made a contract for five years and was very generous to the Company in giving them an advance of \$100,000 to buy equipment, and subsequently gave them an increase of 25 per cent. on the contract price. Now that the price is to be increased to such a great extent I agree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes), supported by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin), that as the time is so late Government would do well to enter into a temporary contract for one year or six months until the question of its printing is thoroughly investigated. If an investigation is to be made I can see no purpose in entering into a 3-year contract.

In these days we hear a lot about West Indian Federation, Closer Union, a Customs Union and unification of the Civil Services. The Financial Secretary has pointed out that the cost of printing in Jamaica and Trinidad is indeed very high. Why can't the Governments of the various territories consider the possibility of establishing a unified printing service? I can see that a good deal of money could

be saved in that way. It is true that certain people may become unemployed in British Guiana if a Government printery were set up in Trinidad or Jamaica, but I can see no difficulty in sending our printers there to work. The Financial Secretary has made great play of the cost incurred by the Jamaica and Trinidad Government in having their own printery, but I have visited the Government printery in Jamaica and seen the volume of work they do. They produce all kinds of statistical reports and other items which we do not handle in this Colony. We must also remember that Government has printing which is not under contract, and every year we spend large sums of money for printing under that head. Government also incurs additional expenditure in doing cyclostyle work of its own. All such work is done in Jamaica at the Government printery. When all these things are taken into consideration it will be seen that Government is paying too much for its printing. I do not know what is going to be Government's decision in this matter, but the only way I would agree to the passing of this item is if the contract will not be entered into for three years. Before the vote is taken I would like to know definitely whether a contract will be entered into.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I told the hon. Member before that a contract will be signed.

Dr. JAGAN: May I ask if an advertisement for tenders was published in the West Indies?

The CHAIRMAN: If it were proved after an investigation that it would be cheaper to have a Government printery we could not get that printery inside three years at least. I should say that it would be nearer five years, judging by the congestion there is in the printing world at present. The difficulty in printing documents is not only our experience but the experience in England ever since the war. There are tremendous arrears there. We find that we have to wait for six to nine months to have our Annual Reports printed. That is only one aspect. The other aspect is getting the machinery if we were satisfied that a Government

printery was the best thing. I am satisfied that the machinery could not be got for at least three years from the date we decided to place an order, because printing material is simply not available.

The Committee divided on item 2 and voted:

For Messrs. Morrish, Smellie, Peters, Fernandes, Farnum, Thompson, Ferreira, Roth, Raatgever, Lee Dr. Nicholson, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 15.

Against — Messrs. Phang, Kendail, Debidin, Dr. Jagan and Dr. Gonsalves—5.

Item passed at \$200,000.

Item 14 — *Wakenaam-Leguan Launch Service Subsidy*, \$538.

Mr. LEE: I have been calling the attention of the General Manager of the Transport & Harbours Department to this subsidized launch service for the past four months. Recently a woman and her child who were travelling from Georgetown to Wakenaam, found on arrival at Leguan that the launch was not working, and they had to seek lodging at Leguan overnight. I suggest that an investigation be made into this service, and if it is found that Mrs. Dey cannot carry out her contract it should be awarded to someone else. I speak very feelingly on this matter because the doctor travelling between the islands has to resort to a sailing boat which takes about an hour to get across, while the launch only takes about 20 minutes.

Mr. SMELLIE: The hon. Member is a member of the Transport Advisory Council. This item has been on the agenda of the Council for two meetings which the hon. Member was unable to attend. In his absence a depleted Council had to make a decision, and decided to continue this launch service under the present conditions, reinforced by the recommendation of the District Commissioner.

Mr. LEE: That is not my information. I spoke to the District Commissioner

who told me that the Department sent a minute to him asking whether the service could be carried on by the lady, and that he had given her 24 hours to give a definite answer. I am not talking about that. I am talking about my complaining for four months.

The CHAIRMAN: Cannot the hon. Member bring this matter up in the body of which he is a member? That body should consider it first and then bring it to Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The matter has been already dealt with. As far as I remember, the lady who runs this service, apparently for many years, has been given a period in which to put her launch in good condition and to assure us that she is going to carry out the service properly in future.

Item 20 — Tourist Bureau and advertisement of the Colony in Canada and elsewhere — \$10,000.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I beg to move the deletion of this item. I am not at all satisfied and happy that the Tourist Committee is performing its functions well enough. In the past year I spoke of tourism as something to be gingered up and something more realistic, and that the amount of \$10,000 should have been more usefully utilized. This year I want to make the point — and to my mind it is very important after certain statements have been made in public only a month or two ago — that a Committee of this kind ought to be reshuffled over and over again. I see a Member of this Council — not because he is a Nominated Member I am saying this — has been put at the head of this body. If it is going to be used as a commercial instrument, whatever is the nature of its tourist activity, and it is going to do the Colony good I would say it justifies this expenditure even though under a wrong head, because the Chairman of this Committee happened to be at one time President of the Chamber of Commerce. But when one has a close examination of what is taking place, the expenditure of sums outside of this Colony — I do not want to go into full details now especially in view of Your Excellency's appeal — Members

have over and over referred to that as being a very displeasing aspect of the whole of this question of tourism for the Colony and as money wasted. Then we find that the Tourist Committee is fast wedded to that particular way to spend a part of this money. Then we come to the whole question again of what is British Guiana doing for tourism. Are we trying to put it on some strong footing and to make full use of this \$10,000? It is to my mind inadequate if we are to go in for tourism properly, and to lay a foundation upon which year after year, with a further expenditure of \$10,000 each year, we would at some stage or other find tourism established and working to the advantage of British Guiana.

We have all the facilities for attraction to tourists in British Guiana, and yet we have found no attempt whatever, so far as this Committee is concerned, to put forward in a realistic way some movement in this Colony which will bring down this source of attraction not only to our own people here for local use but to tourists from the neighbouring West Indian Islands, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and anywhere else. We know there are in the Islands today corresponding bodies which are doing very healthy work. We know that on board ships — I am speaking with some amount of practical experience picked up while travelling in 1949 — there is evidence of this important subject of tourism. We find in the West Indian Islands a very nice building somewhere near to the harbour which is easily accessible. As soon as you land at the pier the first thing that catches the eye is a nice booth or office which specializes in tourist attraction. There you can find advice; there you can get what you want to buy, and things of that sort. But more than that, even when you are miles away from the particular Island you get a brochure advertising the possible places where you can get proper attention so far as visiting them and the number of hours involved. You can buy tickets for tours to attraction spots on the particular Island, and immediately you land without much ado and waste of time you get into a car and are taken to the beauty

spots of the Island. You see the Island in a short time and return fully appreciating the particular Island for what it had to show. What do we have as a counterpart here? We have a Tourist Committee. I have been to its place. I have taken a gentleman, who came here from America on his way to Puerto Rico, there to get some brochure or other on this Colony. When I went to the place the first thing that struck me was that it was tucked away like some commercial office more or less unattractive and with very little to offer. I had to ask where it was. There is one brochure printed and circulated and that is the sum total of the thousands of dollars spent. Then we found a girl trying objectively to meet people and to see that they are comfortable. Personally when that is advanced I do not think it is good reason for the expenditure of \$10,000, for it seems to me that when a person comes here he may as well meet the first taxi-driver and ask him where are the best places to be visited. I say this without any attempt at being discourteous or disrespectful to the person concerned, but it is what I have found when I travelled with about 60 persons, tourists from Canada, who had stayed over for a few days. All that is being done is a drinking orgy. I say that with a certain amount of enquiry into the matter. That is not what we want, to be sociable in that respect.

Tourists do not want to come and remain at the Park Hotel and drink or be entertained with a few swizzles. Tourism means to let them get to know the Colony. Let them go out. Send them to Kaitaur. On that particular voyage there were sixty odd people and I was trying to get them to organize air trips to Kaitaur. I think a cable was sent to British Guiana asking if arrangements could be made for the trip. They were very glad to know about it. The ship had not a copy of our brochure and I had to show around the one I had. The ship should have had so many copies of our brochure that those people could have had them and thus afforded sufficient opportunity of digesting some of the things that matter in British Guiana. But that had not been done, and when I arrived here I found

the whole question of those trips to Kaitaur had back-fired. What has been done is that some of them stayed in the hotel with the Tourist Committee having a good time. There was a young man named Vieira who actually had been planning a jungle trip. Many of them were glad to know about it and were very keen on the project, but some attempt was made to smash the idea of this youngster who, I know, is full of activity and ideas along those lines. We have only a few hotels and one had to be closed the other day. It seems to me the very closing of the Montrose Hotel is sufficient indication as to how far tourism has been developed in this Colony, for if it had been to any extent at all there would be the need for more hotels and not the closing down of that particular hotel. Nothing has been done to make an overland trip possible for those who come and spend a long time here even from the Islands. We find there is gravitation to Barbados, and nothing is done to attract Trinidadians, Barbadians and others to come and spend a week here and be taken on an overland trip to Kaitaur in which they are very interested when the proposal is put to them. Not the slightest thing is done. Spend this \$10,000 to repair the Potaro Road. Do something with the money which would be seen and would result in having an effective tourist department.

Put in a nutshell it seems to me that tourism is only an idea in British Guiana for which we are paying \$10,000. This is not the time to buy the idea for ourselves for \$10,000. This is the time either to spend enough money on tourism, beautify Bartica, get busy in getting proper services so that when tourists come here they can be taken to places where they can spend a holiday. Spend more money in the right direction, or spend nothing at all if we are going live on the idea we have at the moment. I say shuffle this Committee. At point it is convenient to make this I said that a Nominated Member of Council is at the head of the Committee. I think the time has come, because of what has been said before the Commission, when all Nominated Members ought to be removed as Chairmen

Advisory Committees and Elected Members be given the opportunity to equip themselves for the future Constitution of this Colony. That is the very thing that is expected of this Council — that its Committees should be the training ground, but that is far from being done, and rather we find that Nominated Members who only owe allegiance to the Governor of the Colony —

The CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. Member stick to the point and not raise that question again? No Nominated Member owes allegiance to me. I have stated that in this Council before. I wish I hear the last of that. It is wholly an untrue statement. The hon. Member knows as well as I do that that is not so. It sounds very nice to stand up here and say to the contrary.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is a matter for serious comments that so many of these Committees can only find wisdom in the Nominated Members. No wonder the statement is advanced that they are the only ones that have all the wisdom in this country, but that wisdom is wasted in the Tourist Committee. I do wish that other wisdom be brought to bear on this very vital idea, and so I am moving the deletion of this item, because I find the Committee is not capable of showing any imagination as to the question of tourism. We find that the whole question of tourism is not only static but something which is to my mind a detriment to the Colony, because something done badly is something better not attempted.

Dr. JAGAN: I wish to support the hon. Member in his motion to delete this item from the Estimates. What is passing through my mind is this: When I look at item 20 for the Tourist Bureau, and then at item 31 for the Fishing Industry Development, both of which are supposed to be development, I find that in the case of the fishing industry development \$2,500 is to be spent, and in the case of the Tourist Bureau the sum of \$10,000. It is a known fact that for years and years the people have been clamouring for development in this Colony. I am going to refer particularly to the fishing industry. What are

we doing about it? The people have to be squeezed into some wharf belonging to somebody, and that is supposed to be a fish market, without any facility placed at their disposal such as refrigeration or any other facility to benefit them and the fishing industry. That is something we can call development, but what we have in the Tourist Bureau is a waste of \$10,000 to this Colony.

Only yesterday the remark was made that we do not have enough surveyors. I take it that about 20 surveyors can be trained every year with that \$10,000, taking into consideration the very meagre salaries paid here. That is something being done. For so many years we heard an Anaesthetist was coming here, and while on the boat he got another job in the U.S.A. and he went there. No wonder British Guiana is in the position it is. It is because we are perpetually wasting money and this is one item, if it is not a waste, and if Government thinks so much of tourism, why not join the Central Tourist Bureau of the West Indies? We did not because we thought it costly. Why costly? Probably it is because we felt that we do not have enough here to attract tourists. If we had thought we had enough here, I submit that we would have paid our share to be in this central organization. Having not joined this central organisation in the Caribbean why waste \$10,000 on tourism?

I do want to say that the only people who can be encouraged to tour British Guiana are British Guianese themselves. By that I am referring to item 23—"Passages, Public Officers on transfer". We are spending about \$20,000 per annum on that aside from item 29—"Leave Passages, Public Officers, \$45,000". It seems to me the time has come when we must make Public Officers know what British Guiana looks like, know what the North-West District is like—I myself have never been to the North-West District. (laughter)—know where the Rupununi is, know the facilities in those areas, the potentialities of those areas. Those are the places where our Public Officers should go instead of speaking of the United Kingdom as "home", and most of them wanting to go back there and no

doubt enjoy the beautiful trip, etc. I would suggest in the present conditions, the present stage of development of British Guiana, when we compare conditions with the other West Indian territories—beautiful hotels, nice blue waters, good food, good scenery—we have nothing here to offer tourists to come here. We have Kaieteur, but when we remember the difficulties which are experienced in getting there we may well not encourage those people to come here at all. I would suggest, Sir, that item 20 be deleted, as the hon. Member suggested, and that \$10,000 be added to the amount for Fishing Industry Development. Let us build a market right away for the people in the fishing industry, with a proper refrigeration plant. We can get such a plant for \$10,000. So far as Leave Passages for Public Officers are concerned—

Mr. DEBIDIN: I ask for a ruling that each item be treated as a head and be discussed and decided upon.

The CHAIRMAN: The entire Head is open to discussion. Instead of the hon. Member getting up again he might get it all over at once.

Dr. JAGAN: That is my point. I want to save time and I want to show the relationship of one item with another. We are wasting money in one aspect of development, whereas in other aspects on which we should spend more money for development we are not doing so at the present time. I beg to suggest that the Tourist Bureau vote of \$10,000 be deleted.

Mr. LEE: Time and again for the many years I have been in this Council I have asked for the deletion of this item, because I see it is an unnecessary expenditure, and I feel this money could be better spent on a Borstal Institution which we need very much in this Colony.

Mr. PETERS: I am not going to support the motion to delete this vote on this occasion, but I am of the opinion that the Tourist Committee ought to show a little more aggressiveness in respect of places of historical interest in our own Colony. Take for instance a place like Fort Island where we have the old Dutch fort and the

old Court of Policy building, it is true that every now and then something is done to repair these structures, but when it comes to the question of letting tourists know that a place like that exists so as to attract them to visit there, as far as I know, very little is done in that respect. Places of historical interest like that should have a sort of rest house where folk can stay overnight. The only means of getting there is by the Transport and Harbours Department steamer which goes up that way on one day and comes down the next. Not only should there be a sort of rest house where people could go and look around the place, but if recreational devices and facilities were established there some people might want to stay longer than just having a look around. For that reason, I think, if the Tourist Bureau could develop a little aggressiveness about its activities certainly it would get the sympathy of mere folk that at present. I do hope this is the last hint to the Bureau or Committee which is carrying on that particular work in the Colony.

Mr. FERNANDES: As you have intimated, Sir, this is the time for one to speak on anything under this Head. I would just like to draw Members' attention and your attention to the Atkinson Field vote. This is something quite alarming. It started last year with an estimate of \$150,000, and this year we have an estimate of \$220,000. Along with this we have the horrible condition of the road and have to find over \$2 million to produce a good road to connect this airfield -- which incidentally does not belong to us -- with Georgetown. Some time ago, you will remember, I was rude enough to move a motion in this Council for Government to investigate the possibility of constructing an airfield near Georgetown. At that time I was forced to withdraw it, because it was obvious that the majority of Members did not see eye to eye with me. If I remember rightly, at that time you, Sir, promised to investigate the possibility of having suitable amphibian aircraft to do interior transportation. As far as I understand, no such machines are to be had in the world, and British Guiana will have to continue to rely on the land plane for interior transportation. We have no roads

and we are not likely to have any roads in the interior for a good while, because we are being told every day by the hon. the Financial Secretary who is in charge of our finances that British Guiana is in want; we want \$50 million for Drainage and Irrigation, and money for this and that. So the construction of roads to the interior does not seem to be of the same paramount importance, and for a number of years perhaps the balance of my lifetime, we will be deprived of air transport for the development of the interior. For that reason I would like to recommend to Government that every effort be made to investigate these possibilities, because I saw Atkinson Field a few months ago and I know it is deteriorating. I know this expenditure is going to be higher and higher as further deterioration takes place, and the Colony will have to face the expenditure in putting the field back into good condition. I know it is going to be a tremendous load on the country. The revenue from this field is \$32,000, and expenditure \$220,000 for this year. This is a big load which we did not have to carry until quite recently, and if we did not have to carry this load I am sure we would have been able to do many things which we are told we have no money for. I will once more recommend to Government to investigate the possibility of constructing an airfield near the City.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would ask that we take these sub-heads item by item and take decisions on them. I move that item 20 — Tourist Bureau and advertisement of the Colony in Canada and elsewhere, \$10,000 — be deleted.

The Committee divided on item 20 and voted:—

For Messrs Morrish Smellie, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Farnum, Thompson, Ferreira, Roth, Raatgever Dr. Nicholson, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 15.

Against — Dr. Jagan, Messrs. Debidin and Lee — 3.

Did not vote — Mr. Phang.

Item passed as printed at \$10,000.

Item 45 — Atkinson Field Maintenance and Operation — \$220,200.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do wish to say — and I think this is the time to say it and as forcefully as one can — that there are certain persons who seem always bent upon having their own way as regards the expenditure of our funds in this Colony. I say that the decision to acquire Atkinson Field for \$800,000 was a mistake, and at a time when there was a tender by a person who was willing to spend half a million dollars to construct an airstrip.

The CHAIRMAN: There was no firm tender of any kind.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I have discussed the project not only in Advisory Committee but in Council, and I have had the privilege of seeing the site on which an airstrip was intended to be erected near Georgetown. It has, in my opinion, the answer to many things. First of all it would have meant a lot to the Rupununi cattle business and quite a lot to the City. Instead of embarking upon this million dollar concern and having the burden of an annual maintenance charge of a quarter of a million dollars, I think we could have developed an airstrip near Georgetown into something sizable. I have seen obvious signs of deterioration of the runway at Atkinson Field. The whole place is undergoing a change. Bush is growing up, and it seems to me that before very long this Colony may have to spend about half a million dollars on the reconstruction of portions of the airfield. What is more, it seems to me that we have given an undertaking to the Pan-American Airways to maintain the airfield at a certain standard, and to fulfil other obligations that were entered into with our eyes wide open. We have had a very sad experience at the Mackenzie airfield, and I do not know why British Guiana should be so unfortunate in finding itself being imposed upon and saddled with expenditure such as this. It is something we have embarked upon in spite of opposition by B.G. Airways, Ltd.

If war should break out again I do not know what our position would be in so far as Atkinson Field is concerned. We may be told that we cannot operate civil aircraft there, and possibly we may have to remove or to be restricted to such an extent that our last state might be worse than the first. I feel that British Guiana has had a raw deal. The whole of this expenditure, as is the case with many other items throughout the budget, has developed like a snowball, and it seems to me that the Financial Secretary must be congratulated on his ability to push it through every time *nem con*, and in some cases without a division. It seems to me that the time has come when once the budget has been prepared by Government, it should be printed and passed without being put before Finance Committee or this Council, so long as it is signed by the Financial Secretary for the Government. We have items, such as provision for a Director of Civil Aviation, being introduced, but why they should find a place in our budget I do not know. Yet we are saddled with them and the same fine arguments will be put up. Of course the majority of Members will support them because they have come from the Financial Secretary. I feel that it is time for us to complain, and I entirely support the views of the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes),

Dr. JAGAN: On this question of Atkinson Field I referred the other day to the agreement which was made between Government and the U.S.A. authorities, and asked whether in that agreement it was stated that the employees who were to be retained by this Government were to be paid the then existing rates of wages. I would like to know whether the hon. the Financial Secretary is in a position now to answer that question.

The CHAIRMAN: Inquiries were made in the light of the hon. Member's question, but I cannot tell him what the answer was until I see the papers. However, I know that the matter is under consideration.

Dr. JAGAN: With respect to the operation and maintenance of the airfield at Atkinson Field I support the remarks

made by those hon. Members who have spoken, because I feel that the position has not been sufficiently clarified to Members of this Council. We do not know what the position will be in the future, because for all purposes it does appear that the base is still American territory, having been given on a 99-year lease to the American Government, and in the case of an emergency they can come back and take it over. Does it mean that we are to hold the baby, and when they choose to come back we are to hand it back to them in proper condition? It was because of the fact that we could not use the base for civil aviation during the war that Government spent nearly a million dollars to construct an airfield at Mackenzie.

Mr. ROTH: To a point of correction. I think it was Imperial Government money.

Dr. JAGAN: Whether it was Imperial Government money or not, it was a grant to this Government and had to be accounted for. I am not concerned at the moment as to whose money it was, but it was placed at the disposal of this Government and it was spent. The position is not clarified as far as I am concerned, and I would like to know the terms of the agreement. That is the whole trouble. Agreements are made but generally we do not see them. All we are told is that we should vote the money, and I think the hon. Member was right when he suggested that a great deal of time would be saved if the estimates were printed and passed without the formal approval of this Council. It does appear that the cost of maintaining the base is increasing year by year, and I think we should make certain decisions right now in the light of what the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) has said. If we find it is too expensive to maintain the entire base as a going concern I think it would be well if we gave up vast areas of it and confined ourselves merely to the portion which concerns the airfield.

I do not see the necessity for this large expenditure on the maintenance of the whole base. If there is no provision

for it in the agreement I think Government should ask the U.S. Government to bear at least half of the expenditure for the maintenance of the base. I am told that the base is not being maintained in proper condition as we are expected to do. If the U.S. Government has no interest in the base it should release this Government from the 99-year lease and hand over the base to this country, as has been done in other places. The present position is that the U.S. authorities still own the base and can return to it at any time.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I would just like to draw the attention of those Members who have spoken to the note on page 52 which says:

"Making provision for the maintenance of Atkinson Field — \$132,000 and for purchase of new Fire Engine, \$31,000."

If Members had taken the trouble to read that note they would have seen that the cost of maintenance has been reduced and not increased. The amount of \$31,000 asked for is for the purchase of a new fire engine, because the one at present at the base, which was left there by the Americans at no cost to the Colony, is useless for aircraft fires.

The Board of Control at Atkinson Field has done a good job (I say that although I am a member of the Board myself) in reducing the expenditure on the base. The expenditure asked for this year is less than what was spent last year, and next year it will be less again, because Members will remember that when Mr. Fletcher and Major Nicole attended the last meeting of Finance Committee to ask for \$40,000 for a new terminal building Members were told that the intention was to concentrate all the offices within as small a compass as possible in order to reduce the cost of maintenance. I do not think the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) was present at that meeting.

The taxiway is cracking up at the point where the terminal building is at present, and it is felt that it would be more economical to put a new terminal building near the main airfield which will be serviceable for many years to

come. There is no fear of the main airfield cracking up for quite a long time. If Members had listened when Mr. Fletcher was speaking they would have heard that, and there would have been no necessity for them to say that the airfield was cracking up and would cost a good deal of money to rebuild.

The buildings and equipment at the base which were bought by this Government at a cost of some \$800,000 will result in a profit to this Colony. Not one penny will be lost. We have already made a profit on the buildings which have been sold, and Members need not be afraid of any loss. All this was explained to Members in Finance Committee. It is a pity that Members will not take the necessary interest in what takes place in Finance Committee.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I must protest against the remarks of the hon. Member who has been flinging insults at other Members. I do take strong exception to the hon. Member saying "If Members had read or had listened." At no time has any Member who has spoken on this item made any reference to an increase in the expenditure. We are speaking of expenditure generally. The hon. Member has made use of language which is an insult to our intelligence, if not to his own.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: May I try to throw oil on troubled waters? It is a fact that the expenditure on the maintenance of Atkinson Field is very high and may be alarming, but one must recognize that it is also a fact that while this year we are asking the Council to approve of an expenditure of \$220,000, as the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, has pointed out, that figure includes a sum of \$31,000 for a new type of fire engine which is very necessary for aircraft fires. The fire engine which it will displace will be used elsewhere and become an asset to the Government. It may be used in Georgetown or elsewhere. It is a very good ordinary fire engine, but not the type required for aircraft fires. A sum of \$47,000 is also required for the change-over of the terminal building. It will be put near

the airfield so as to eliminate part of the area which it is no longer necessary to maintain.

The principal point I wish to make is that our continuance of the use of Atkinson Field will be on the basis of what is required for civil aviation purposes. That is to say, apart from certain fixed assets we are only going to be held under the agreement to maintain the airport at such a standard as is necessary for civil aviation purposes. Part of the heavy cost of operating Atkinson Field as a civil airport arises from the fact that it was not built for that purpose, but as a military base. It is scattered and has a power plant which is very much more powerful and more expensive to operate than is necessary for civil aviation, but nevertheless it has to be operated. It has miles of road which also have to be maintained. The hon. Member need not fear that the Colony is likely to accept the burden of maintaining Atkinson Field as a military base. A formal agreement has not yet been signed but Government has those points very much in mind, and will undoubtedly endeavour to see that our burden is limited to just what we ought to carry for civil aviation purposes, excluding any costs which would be necessary for maintaining it for military purposes. If that occurs we shall insist, as far as we can, on the cost falling elsewhere.

There is one curious point which is always made in comparison with an airfield near Georgetown. It seems to be assumed that when we build an airfield in Georgetown we get it for nothing, and that it costs nothing to maintain it. Members say that had we accepted the gesture — I can only call it a gesture — of the Dutchman who conceived the idea of constructing an airport near Georgetown it would have cost not half a million dollars but three million dollars before it was finished. It would cost something to maintain as well, and one could not say what the net saving would be, because the present airport on a capital basis is costing us very little. An airport in Georgetown would involve heavy expenditure because the soil is very different. It might necessitate

pumping and so forth, and it would cost a good deal to maintain it. It is perfectly true that the length of road necessary to connect Atkinson Field with Georgetown is much greater than we would ordinarily have to maintain, and that is where the additional expense lies. Our point in accepting Atkinson Field was that there it was, and to build one near Georgetown we would run into something very difficult, and it might in the end be more expensive. I do not know what the future will be. Let us hope that time will prove that Georgetown could have an airport reasonably near, but I doubt it myself. For the moment we must accept Atkinson Field and spend as little as we can to keep it going as a civil airport, and try to maintain the road in reasonably good condition.

Mr. FERNANDES: I am not going to allow myself to get ruffled by the remarks of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, or those of the hon. the Financial Secretary. First of all I know that the Financial Secretary was not referring to me when he said that some Members believe that an airport just drops like that, and that we do not pay anything for it, or that we can operate it without spending money. I think he knows that I have a little more intelligence than to think in that way. Therefore I will not accept his remarks as referring to me, even though perhaps he might have meant them to include me among others.

I am very pleased to hear the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, admit that one section of the airfield at Atkinson Field has already deteriorated so badly that the buildings have to be shifted around to the other airfield. He also believes that the airstrips of that section are more permanently built and therefore will not deteriorate, but I can assure this Council that they will deteriorate, no matter how permanently built they are. They are in a tropical country where they are exposed to extreme heat, rain and sun, and they are bound to deteriorate. I maintain that they have deteriorated since we have taken the base over. They have not deteriorated to a point where it is necess-

ary to spend money immediately, but we will have to spend money on those landing strips at some time in the near future, and it is going to be very expensive for us to do that. It is true that we were handed the airfield in good usable condition, therefore for the first year or two the cost of maintenance is bound to be small, but as we keep using it it must be obvious to anybody, even to me, that maintenance cost is bound to go up.

On the question of our not reading what is put before us in this Council I would say that there is one thing that I always read, and that is what this base is going to cost the Colony. I see it is going to cost us \$220,000 this year as against \$150,000 last year, and that the additional \$70,000 is being spent because Atkinson Field is where it is. It is far away from the City, and of course it is not possible for the fire-fighting equipment in the City to operate at Atkinson Field.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: Wherever our airfield is we would have to have a particular type of fire engine. Our fire-fighting equipment in Georgetown is not suitable for aircraft fires.

Mr. FERNANDES: I am sorry to hear that the American Government would run an air base without suitable fire-fighting equipment.

Mr. MORRISH: The Americans had the necessary equipment but they took it away with them.

Mr. FERNANDES: That is even worse, because the person who was responsible for taking over Atkinson Field should have seen to it that the Americans left fire-fighting equipment which was of use in dealing with aircraft fires. This point cannot be answered. I would like to tell the Financial Secretary that time will tell the tale when Atkinson Field is going to be a heavy load around our necks. We are going to be in the position of a man who starts a business with capital borrowed at an extraordinary rate of interest, with the result that no matter what profit he makes it is just

sufficient to pay the interest on the borrowed capital, so that he never owns anything. The occupation of Atkinson Field involves additional cost from all points of view. The construction of the road to Georgetown will cost 2½ million dollars, and everything that leaves Georgetown for the interior or *vice versa* will involve an additional cost for transport over 30 miles of road. As the Financial Secretary has said, Atkinson Field was designed for military purposes, so that the power plant is in one place and the water plant is somewhere else.

The total cost of the difference between maintaining an airfield with that set-up as against one that has everything and more efficient supervision—the cost of erecting an airfield near the City—cannot be far greater. We had a vote on tourism. I do not mind what you do, with that field you will always have to bring the tourists in from Atkinson Field to Georgetown along the East Bank road. If you had an airfield nearer the City you could drive them through the Botanical Gardens to their hotel in a more pleasant way, and they would be inclined to visit here more often.

Mr. MORRISH: The point that does not seem to be clear to many Members, and the hon. Member who has just taken his seat has referred to deterioration in the airfield, is this: It does not seem to be realized that the buildings put up by the Americans were placed alongside their temporary landing-slip which was never intended to be a permanent runway. In most cases the strip and parking site adjacent to it were not more than one inch thick, whereas the landing slips and parking ground we propose to construct now would be permanent, such as to be found in any airfield in the world.

Head passed as recommended by the Finance Committee.

MISCELLANEOUS—SUBVENTIONS, ETC., OTHER THAN MUNICIPAL.

Item 6—Contributions towards the Commonwealth Economic and Shipping Committees, \$758;

Item 8 — Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, \$2,357.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am going to ask for the deletion of these items, 6 and 8. I do not see why British Guiana must be saddled with this expenditure, for it seems to me that we are told to spend and we must spend. But why when we are finding it so difficult to make two ends meet, to make our Budget balance, we are to be told to contribute to something that we derive very little benefit from? I am moving the deletion of these two items because I feel that this is the time when we must apply the pruning-knife. When are we going to free ourselves from the little expenditure which, when added together, amount to a tremendous sum which can help us in a far more useful project. My friend, the hon. Member for Central Demerara, does not hesitate to find purposes for any amount of money recommended to be deleted. I think that is a useful method of approach. There are so many things we can do with the smallest amount of money saved. I think the time has come when we should start to cut out what to my mind are fancy appendices to our Budget. I am wondering whether the hon. the Financial Secretary can enlighten us on these items.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I cannot. We spent a lot of time in Finance Committee on these matters and those items were not questioned. The Heads of Departments were there and could have ably answered as to the value and benefits obtained from these items. As regards item 6, as far as I recall, there is an understanding agreed on in principle by the Finance Committee to vote it for three years. The Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, as far as I remember, is an organization which is recognized by all the Colonies in the Commonwealth and produces data, information, etc. I cannot remember exactly now, but I can get the information for hon. Members. I did not expect these items, which have been on the Estimates for years, would have been questioned in full Council like this.

Dr. JAGAN: I do want to support the hon. Member in the remarks just made. There is one other aspect I would like to raise here and that is in respect

of item 21 — “Grant to Beterverwagting Village Authority towards administrative expenses, \$180.” On the East Coast Demerara recently there have been increases in the cost of administration through drainage, etc. The people at Beterverwagting are being asked to pay an increase, I think, of about 50 per cent. on their drainage and irrigation costs. A great deal of work which was supposed to have been done was not carried out last year, and I am told there was misappropriation of funds by Village Officers, and the Government or the Local Government Board is now investigating the matter. I would ask the Government to increase the grant which is being given to some of these villages, particularly Beterverwagting. Because of the loss which was incurred last year the people are being asked to pay a larger amount of rates and taxes this year in order to carry out much of the work which should have been carried out last year, as only in that way the people would be able to carry out the necessary works in that area. That matter was recently brought to my attention.

*Item 55 — Subsidy to British Guiana
United Broadcasting Company,
Ltd., \$12,000*

Dr. JAGAN: With reference to item 55, when the new contract was signed some time ago between this Government and the Broadcasting Company it was said that the Company was not making any profits, or rather that the Company was not paying any dividends to its shareholders, and consequently the Government had to give a subsidy to the Company amounting to 90 per cent. of all licence fees collected. It is interesting to note, Sir, that the same Company was able to sell its shares to another Company, I believe the Radio Diffusion Company, for three times the book value of its assets. So while at certain times specious arguments are given in order to get this Government to increase either grants or subsidies, on the other hand we do find that all that is old to us is usually not a very clear and fair picture. In this one particular case, apparently, that was not the true story, because subsequently the Company, or the initial shareholders, trans-

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ferred their shares and got three times what they paid for them before. I speak again on this item because, when the contract was made, certain conditions were to be fulfilled. The Company agreed to set up listening stations in certain parts of the country in the same way as the Argosy Company, when we decided to pay \$70,000 as an additional grant, were supposed to bring all Government printing up to date. That was not done, and in this case these listening stations have not been established. I think when Government makes or enters into contracts it must see to it that the conditions of those contracts are specifically adhered to, because on the one hand it does appear that Government adheres to its contracts by paying what it has to pay, but the Companies do not adhere to their portion of the contracts. I hope this matter will receive serious attention and Government will urge on the Company to fulfil its part of the contract.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: The hon. Member has adopted a new word "specious". With regard to the purchase of shares of the Company by Radio Diffusion Limited I see nothing wrong about that. One of the chief points made at the time when the matter was discussed was that this Company should turn itself into a public company in order to enable shares to be purchased. That was done. I hope the hon. Member would become a shareholder himself. The Company has only just begun to initiate its obligations under this 15-year licence. Under that licence Members would remember that the Company has got to instal a new transmitter and to incur some other items of capital expenditure. I can assure hon. Members that Radio Diffusion Limited, by taking over the affairs of this Company would, with their expert knowledge and experience, permit the improvement which has to be made under that contract much more quickly than it could ever be done under local management.

As regards the other obligation of the contract, it is only two months ago that the Government has been able to appoint the Advisory Committee which

was to be set up under the terms of that contract and, I believe, the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara and the hon. Member for Western Berbice are members of that somewhat large body which is going to take charge of the oversight of the work of this Company in order to see that the obligations under the contract are probably carried out and in order to see that it conducts its affairs over the years in a proper manner. I do not know if these Members have attended any of the three meetings of the Committee held recently under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Ward. One of the first things that Committee is going to do is to determine where those receiving sets in the country districts are to be set up, and having done so, to invite Government or the Department concerned to assist in seeing they are put down. As far as I can remember, the idea now is to have them put in the various community centres of the rural areas, and even so, arrangements will have to be made for the proper servicing and renewal of batteries, etc. I can assure hon. Members that the Broadcasting Company are ready to carry out that particular term of their obligation as soon as the Committee and Government decide on the areas in which those sets are to be set up. But the most important thing of all is to get the improvement which the Company has got to institute, and that will certainly take place more effectively and efficiently than heretofore, now that expert experience and knowledge are brought to the Company by Radio Diffusion Limited.

Mr. FERNANDES: I think it is common knowledge that this Company is trying to find a suitable place for its studio. I understand it has applied for two premises but in both cases its application was turned down by the Town Planner or Town Planning Authority. The first thing is to obtain somewhere to place the studio. I have no doubt the Company will be able to find somewhere which the Town Planner approves.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do not know what has been decided with respect to items 6 and 8. I am not going to press for a

vote on it, but \$758 and \$2,357 for those two items are large enough sums to be wiped off from this particular Head in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: Those two votes are the subject of a special Message to this Council and have been a charge by this Council for three years in the first case, and five years in the second.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I notice from the marginal note that they have been passed by the Council. Where we have committed ourselves we have to stand by that

Item 13 — Contribution towards Imperial Forestry Institute, at Oxford \$576.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I refer to item 13 to make a remark? In the marginal note it is stated. "*At the request of the Secretary of State the contribution is to be continued for a further period of two years from 1st. August, 1950, on account of the expansion of the Bureau's activities.*" The remark I want to make is this: There are many cases in which I know the Secretary of State for the Colonies or the Colonial Office has been directing the Government of British Guiana.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the hon. Member is right. He just asked if we would do that. There is no direction from the Secretary of State at any time that we shall do this or that. It is all subject to the approval of this Council. He has certain powers may-be which he does not use.

Mr. DEBIDIN: What I know is that they have to a great extent arrogated to themselves the right to control the policy of Government, a right based on the very Constitution of Crown Colony Government, as it is usually called. I see them asking this Government to contribute such a small amount to something, which I doubt we will get any great benefit from and while we naturally pay respect to that request the principle is there. We have committed ourselves to subscribe to it and it seems we must, but the point I wish to make is, that the time has come when we should let the

Colonial Office know that they do not know, or care very little about the problems of British Guiana. I say that from what little knowledge I have. I have been there and have observed the way some officials in that office speak. They assume to know and control the development of British Guiana. What I do hope is that the future changes of our Constitution will remedy some of these difficulties indicated by this note I have read.

Item 48 — Subsidy to Canadian National Steamship Service, \$40,800.

Mr. DEBIDIN: There is an item to which I must offer objection. That is item 48—"Subsidy to the Canadian National Steamship Service." We have taken up this matter before and I am still to be convinced that we are deriving any great benefit from this. It is too high a premium to pay the Canadian National Steamship to come to this Colony. I know they are connected to the Canadian National Railways, a big concern — the C.P.N.R. in Canada. I happen to know that this Company is extremely wealthy, and I cannot see the wisdom of their imposing on these poor Colonies in the Caribbean a subsidy to come and do trade. Our contribution is the tidy sum of \$40,000. But I will make a departure this year from the old tune which has been sung here. I feel that the Chamber of Commerce, who are doing well from steamships coming to British Guiana, should bear, if not the whole, a substantial part of this sum. That body has, within recent times, shown a remarkable desire to dictate the policy of Government. I hope Government will not allow it. The thing that is quite annoying is that they assume to be powerful enough to do that.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chamber of Commerce is not under discussion.

Mr. DEBIDIN: This powerful body which is assuming so much, and is to my mind directly concerned with an item such as this, should be asked to bear the burden of this expenditure, because its members are the ones who are doing business with Canada. They are the ones who have many agencies in this Colony, many firms in Water Street

whether trading in flour, dry goods or merchandise; they are the ones who are getting the service of the Canadian National Steamships coming here and bringing and taking away goods; they should bear a large part of this amount. Is the Colony getting \$40,000 per annum profit by this expenditure? In what way are we deriving that much benefit in terms of cash? I say, Sir, this amount seems to be out of context with reason. I do not know why we should be made to accept this burden still further. I move the deletion, feeling quite confident that their steamships will still come here, and if they do not then the Chamber of Commerce can do something about it.

The CHAIRMAN: The Steamship Company said the other day that there is the danger of the service closing down completely unless they get more traffic. They were serious about that.

Mr. DEBIDIN: So we have to vote this at the point of a pistol. That is what it amounts to.

Item passed.

Item 62 — Contribution to Establishment of Post of Director General of Civil Aviation, \$7,944.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am moving the deletion of this item which shows an increase of \$933 on the previous year's figure. I do not know, reading it as it stands here, what minute has been placed against it, but it seems to me that we are closing in on something that has not been decided upon, and that is Federation. On the face of things I can only conjecture most of the time that if there is Federation then there might be some Air Force in the West Indies. But what I want to know is whether it indicates that. This Director General of Civil Aviation clearly does not indicate anything to do with militarism. Where is the benefit to British Guiana from this establishment? Is he coming here to tell us how to conduct airfields, how to buy amphibian planes? What is he doing for British Guiana? Why spend a considerable amount of money with which

we could send another boy or two on some scholarship? I think this is a wanton waste of the taxpayers' money, and I certainly would not like in answer to your appeal to take up further time in condemning what I feel is self-condemned by the mere fact that British Guiana, because it has an air system here, is not justified in entering into a bargain to pay such a considerable sum to keep any gentleman living in a cynosure position.

Item put and at the request of Mr. DEBIDIN and the Committee divided and voted as follows:—

For — Messrs. Luckhoo, Morrish, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Farnum, Thompson, Roth, Raatgever, Dr. Nicholson, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 16

Against — Mr. Debidin and Dr. Jagan — 2.

Item passed as recommended by the Finance Committee

Item 58 — Grant for running expenses of Georgetown Mariners' Club, \$2,500

Mr. DEBIDIN: This was a war-time measure. I would vote even more to do whatever could be done for these mariners coming to the country who were stranded or torpedoed or suffering from the rigours of war. They deserve to be made happy and some place provided for them to be comfortable. I agree that during the war they deserved to be made happy, and that some place should be found for them, but is it necessary to do that today and to spend \$2,500 on a Mariners' Club? Isn't this another gift to the steamship companies to induce them to bring their ships to this port?

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: The answer to the hon. Member's question is "Yes, it is desirable and necessary." When it is a time of war and sailors come here we treat them well; we give them a Club where they can go and have entertainment — dancing

and things like that, but if we accept the hon. Member's view, now that the war is over we should tell them we do not like them any more. It is the most ungenerous thing I have heard — that we provide a Club and amenities for seamen during war, and as soon as the emergency is over we say to them "Thank you, we have had enough, we do not want you any more."

Mr. DEBIDIN: These people are now working under peace-time conditions and for good salaries, and many of them may not have had anything to do with the war. They may have been afraid of their skins.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. Member asking that the item be put to the vote?

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like the Financial Secretary to take a toll of the sailors who come here and find out how many of them served in the last war.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry that the hon. Member thinks that seamen do not deserve any consideration at all. It is considered desirable that when sailors come to this port they should be provided with some decent place to go for entertainment and recreation, instead of running around the streets of Georgetown. I think it is very little to do for those who bring food and everything else here.

Dr. JAGAN: There is one comment I would like to make. During the time of the strike by Canadian seamen some of them were stranded in this Colony and I know that attempts were made to have them accommodated at this Club, but without success. It seems to me that those responsible for the running of the Club put restrictions on its use. I do not know if it is the practice, but on that occasion there was definitely restriction. Apparently, because those seamen were on strike they were not accepted at the Club. I do hope that as the taxpayers are paying to the extent of \$2,500 per annum to keep this Club going there will be no discrimination whatsoever, and that any sailor who is ashore and wants to have wholesome entertainment should be

given the facility to visit the Club and have a good time.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I know that all the clubs, and particularly the one of which I am a member, have always taken the trouble to invite teams from ships in port to play games and so on, and seamen are usually given a good time. There are clubs in Georgetown, and probably outside of Georgetown, which cater for the needs of seamen when they come here. I admit that the Mariners' Club can be useful, but we find that dancing is the sum total of the entertainment provided there.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not. If the hon. Member would visit the Club he would see that it is a place where a sailor can go and get a bed ashore if he wishes. It is not merely a dance hall.

Total of head \$443,761 as printed, increased by \$2,192 to \$445,953.

POLICE.

Dr. JAGAN: There are one or two matters I would like to raise under this head. One is in respect to the behaviour at some of the police stations. One finds that those in charge of many of these stations usually behave very gruffly towards members of the public who may find themselves there through one cause or another. I think Police Officers, whether they are non-commissioned or commissioned officers, should behave with decorum and set an example not only to their juniors but to the public. I have had complaints, and I have also had personal experience at the Brickdam Police Station of the type of behaviour to which I refer. I have a letter before me in which complaint is made of an Asst. Superintendent of Police treating persons in a most uncouth manner. I think copies of the letter have been sent to the Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Police, complaining about the behaviour of certain officers. The fact that they are police officers does not give them the right to behave as if they are gauliters or storm troopers towards members of the public.

Another matter which I desire to

bring to the notice of Government is the increasing powers which are being assumed by the Prescribed Authority. Recently there has come to my knowledge a case in which a person sought to get a licence for a small Ford van for the purpose of trading in ground provisions, eggs and so on. A licence was refused, probably on the ground that the roads were not in very good condition. It seems to me a very serious thing to prevent a person from earning a livelihood. In the case of a vehicle for hire I can quite understand a licence being refused on the ground that the applicant has a very bad record.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not desire to interrupt the hon. Member, but the law provides the procedure to be adopted in a case of this sort where an applicant feels aggrieved. The hon. Member is apparently suggesting that the Prescribed Authority should grant a licence to every person who comes along, but the law lays down how he should proceed.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. the Attorney-General is suggesting that an unsuccessful applicant has the right of appeal to a Magistrate, but we must appreciate the fact that it is a cumbersome procedure.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. Member that this Council insisted, against protest by myself, that an unsuccessful applicant for a licence should have a right of appeal to the Supreme Court. It is this Council that ordered that procedure, and I remember asking Members to consider very carefully what they were doing in providing that appeals of this kind should go right up to the Supreme Court.

Dr. JAGAN: I am not thinking of appeals at the moment; that is a different aspect. I can see the argument that it is no use appealing from Caesar to Caesar. I am not dealing with the question of appeal at all. I am talking about the principle of refusing a licence. Why should there be refusal in the first place?

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: The hon. Member might

well ask: why have a Prescribed Authority at all?

Dr. JAGAN: I will come to that later. What is the necessity for refusing to grant a licence for a vehicle for a person's personal use? If the roads are bad proper roads should be made.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member is referring to a particular case again, and all one-sidedly. The hon. Member has been told something of a case in which a particular individual has been refused a licence. We are hearing only one side of the question. We do not know the facts of the case, and I cannot accept the hon. Member's statement that there was no reason for refusal of the licence.

Dr. JAGAN: I am not referring to the individual case as such, but merely to refer to the principle involved. There were cases in Berbice in which persons wanted licences to use private trucks for the transportation of their padi. In cases of that kind I do not see why there should be any refusal of a licence.

There has now come upon the scene another addition to the powers of the Prescribed Authority. Only a few days ago the police interrupted a street meeting in Georgetown South to find out whether permission had been granted for the use of a loud speaker. The hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee), who was speaking at the time, was told that he would be prosecuted, and I believe that the Secretary of the T.U.C. has been informed officially by letter that loud speakers would only be allowed at public meetings on Bourda Green. I wonder how such decisions are made and who makes them. It seems to me that the Prescribed Authority, whether it is a Committee or the Commissioner of Police, is assuming more and more dictatorial powers in this Colony, and the sooner those powers are limited the quicker we will have more justice or better justice in this country.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The Commissioner of Police or the Prescribed Authority can only act within the framework of the laws of the Colony which are

passed by this Council. The hon. Member is seeking to criticise the powers which have been given to the Prescribed Authority by Statute.

Dr. JAGAN: I know that those laws are as wide as the ocean. Good faith and good government —

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think there is some mix-up here. The Prescribed Authority has nothing to do with the use of loud speakers. I think he functions in that case as Commissioner of Police.

Dr. JAGAN: The Commissioner of Police has a lot to do with the Prescribed Authority. At any rate I know that the laws under which the Commissioner of Police may be acting have been passed by a previous Legislative Council, but in many cases the clauses are so vague and inclusive that the Commissioner of Police can assume to himself powers such as those exercised by the Governor under the general clause of what is good faith and good government of the Colony.

The CHAIRMAN: But the Governor never does.

Dr. JAGAN: That is a good thing as far as the Governor is concerned but, unfortunately, the Commissioner of Police is not in the same position, because he is placing restrictions in every respect.

The CHAIRMAN: I may have done the same if I were the Commissioner of Police.

Dr. JAGAN: At any rate you appreciate that minor matters such as these can cause a great deal of irritation and trouble without doing anybody any good.

The CHAIRMAN: There have been complaints against the use of loud speakers at street corners and in houses, and if the hon. Member has suffered as I have done personally, he would agree that there was some reason to place some restriction on these street noises. They are an abomination. I could not hear my own household the other day because of one of those loud speakers about 100 yards away. We cannot have that sort of thing going on in the City. Every hon.

Member knows what a nuisance those things are becoming in Georgetown all day long. I am not referring to meetings at Bourda Green. If anybody wants to get a licence to use a loud speaker on Bourda Green he can get it all right.

Dr. JAGAN: The houses are so constructed that when my neighbour's radio is playing I cannot hear my own. We are touching on a very fundamental issue — the question of freedom of speech.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: We are not touching on freedom of speech but freedom to use a loud speaker so that you can be heard 300 or 400 yards away. One can speak very freely within the legal limitations.

Dr. JAGAN: Let us decide in this Council what type of loud speaker should be used and where it should be used. I do not think it should be within the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Police merely to state that every time one wants to hold a meeting one has to apply to him for permission to use a loud speaker. I do not think it is going to work satisfactorily in this Colony.

The CHAIRMAN: It depends on whether it is a nuisance, and the hon. Member knows that it can be a nuisance. If one came outside his house with a loud speaker and bellowed for about an hour the hon. Member would think that, after all, there was something to be said about it.

Dr. JAGAN: People have parties and dances which go on during all hours of the night.

Mr. FERNANDES: Those people have to get permission from the police. If they do not the police intervene in the same way. Of course, if a person wants to speak with his natural voice I daresay the Commissioner of Police would not object, although some people can speak loud enough to disturb a neighbourhood. As a matter of fact some people can make more noise with their voices than any loud speaker.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I wish to say something about the method of selection of

recruits for the Police Force. I am not satisfied that sufficient is done to get the best type of recruits into the Force. I think there should be some advertisement calling for applications, and that a proper selection should be made. As far as I understand the present method is that some person — maybe a sergeant or an ex-sergeant — submits the names of his relatives or friends, and at some time there is a call-up and a selection is made. To a certain extent the same holds good in respect of the Fire Brigade. I would urge that selection for the Force should be done on similarly strict lines to what obtains in the Civil Service. This is all the more necessary because salaries in the Force have been made more attractive, and there are educated young men who are prepared to take up service in the Force as a career. Service in the Police Force is no longer regarded as something obnoxious. I venture to say that today it is attractive to educated young men with perhaps Senior Cambridge certificates, and we should be able to get a better type of recruits.

I must observe that the Police vote is growing. It is now well on the way to \$2 million and is out of proportion to the money being spent on social welfare and even education. We must have order, but I would prefer to know that more money is being spent on education than on the Police Force. I would prefer to know that part of this money is spent on adult literacy work. If that were done we would find that there would be less necessity for this huge expenditure on the Police Force. It does not speak well for the Colony, and we must not anticipate that British Guiana is going to depart from the true and correct path of peace, orderliness and good citizenship.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Only yesterday the hon. Member was pleading for the retention of an uneconomic police station at Cane Grove.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am sorry that that should be dragged into it, because that is a small station with two or three men in a very large area where there is a great deal of cattle stealing.

Head passed as printed at \$1,625,887.

POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK.

Dr. JAGAN: The Financial Secretary gave us the information that a sum of 13½ million dollars is deposited with the Post Office Savings Bank, and we know that most of this money is invested abroad, at the disposition of the Secretary of State, I believe. In this country there is great need for financial assistance to the farmers in the rural areas. The Co-operative Credit Banks have a limited capital of about half a million dollars and cannot meet the demands of the farmers. I think provision should be made to utilize part of the money deposited at the Savings Bank for loans to farmers to enable them to increase their production. We know that no loss is incurred by the Co-operative Credit Banks if they are properly administered. Proper security is demanded before loans are given, and if the Banks were able to borrow a larger amount of money from Government to increase their capital they would be able to make larger loans to farmers and thereby reduce their working expenses. I think the time has come when we should utilize our own money in the form of savings by the people of the Colony for the development of this country. If an amendment of the Ordinance is necessary for the utilization of the funds deposited at the Post Office Savings Bank I think Government would do well to introduce it very soon, so that more money could be made available at the Co-operative Credit Banks.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council will resume and adjourn until 2 p.m. tomorrow when I hope we will be able to complete the consideration of the Estimates.