

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Constituted under the British Guiana
(Constitution) (Temporary Provisions)
Order in Council, 1953)

FRIDAY, 11TH MARCH, 1955

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

His Honour the Speaker, Sir
Eustace Gordon Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C.

Ex-Officio Members :

The Hon. the Chief Secretary
Mr. F. D. Jakeway, O.B.E.

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

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,
Mr. W. O. Fraser, O.B.E.

Nominated Members of Executive Council :

The Hon. Sir Frank McDavid,
C.M.G., C.B.E. (Member for Agriculture,
Forests, Lands and Mines).

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Member
for Labour, Health and Housing).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (Member
for Communications and works).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.
(Member for Local Government, Social
Welfare and Co-operative Development).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie.

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj

The Hon. R. C. Tello.

Deputy Speaker :

Mr. W. J. Raatgever, C.B.E.

Nominated Officials:

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

Nominated Unofficials :

Mr. T. Lee.

Mr. W. A. Phang.

Mr. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.

Mr. C. A. Carter.

~ Rev. D. C. J. Bobb.

Mr. H. Rahaman.

Miss Gertie H. Collins.

Mrs. Esther E. Dey.

Dr. H. A. Fraser.

Lt. Col. E. J. Haywood, M.B.E., T.D.

Mr. R. B. Jailal.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.

Clerk of the Legislature—

Mr. I. Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. E. V. Viapree (acting).

Absent :—

Mr. E. F. Correia—on leave.

The Speaker read prayers.

MINUTES AMENDED

Mr. Speaker: I must apologise for being a little late and for having just circulated an amendment to the Minutes of our last meeting, held yesterday. On page 3 of those Minutes, under the heading "Private Members' Business", I have substituted the amendment which has been circulated, and it is intended to cover the words:

"Questions as to the admissibility of the motion were raised and the Speaker ruled that the motion should be proceeded with." (in the first paragraph).

It is important that the Minutes should, in a matter of this kind, be as full as possible and as accurate as possible. I propose to put the confirmation of the Minutes as amended.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 10th March, 1955, were confirmed as amended, the amendment reading as follows:

"Questions were raised by the Deputy Speaker as to the competency of the mover to move the motion, as permission to do so had not previously been signified or sanctioned by His Excellency the Governor in pursuance of the provisions of Section 48(2) of the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953, and by Messrs. Sugrim Singh and L. A. Luckhoo as to the form and terms of the motion itself, but the objections were over-ruled by the Speaker."

Mr. Speaker : It will be noticed that I have not mentioned in the amendment anything about the reply by the hon. the Attorney General to the objections raised, but those objections have been recorded.

The Attorney General: That is so, Your Honour; it will appear in *Hansard*.

ANNOUNCEMENT

EARLY ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker : Several Members have asked that this meeting be adjourned somewhat early in view of certain funeral and other engagements, and I propose, subject to their wishes, to adjourn at a quarter to four (3.45 p.m.)

ORDER OF THE DAY

BILLS DEFERRED

Mr. Speaker: Item 1 on the Order Paper is a motion by the Attorney General for the second reading of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance further to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Appeals) Ordinance."

The Attorney General : I do not propose to proceed with this Bill today, Your Honour, for reasons which I gave yesterday.

Bill deferred.

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mr. Speaker : The next item is a motion by the hon. Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines for the second reading of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance further to amend the Drainage and Irrigation Ordinance, 1940."

Sir Frank McDavid: I too would be glad if this Bill is deferred, Your Honour.

Bill deferred.

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development): I should also like to ask that consideration of the

following Bills standing in my name on the Order Paper be deferred.

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Georgetown Council Ordinance with respect to the payment of a gratuity where an officer or servant dies in the service of the Georgetown Town Council."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Gambling Law (Offences) Ordinance."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Gambling Prevention Ordinance."

Bills deferred.

BRITISH CARIBBEAN FEDERATION

Council resumed the debate on the following motion by the Rev. Mr. Bobb:

"That this Council, having noted the steps which are being taken by other Caribbean Governments and by Her Majesty's Government towards the creation of a British Caribbean Federation, and the statement of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Parliament to the effect that the constitutional instruments will provide that British Guiana and other territories which might care to do so will be quite free to join the Federation, is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined.

"This Council further prays His Excellency the Governor to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding towards the setting up of the Federation and to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation."

Mr. Speaker: I think the hon. Mr. Sugrim Singh was speaking when the adjournment was taken yesterday, and he may continue today.

Mr. Gajraj : I should like to interrupt the hon. Member at this stage if you will permit me, Sir, in order to

mention that I shall be leaving the Colony for Trinidad tomorrow on a very important mission—to attend the Conference relating to this question of Federation—and I shall be grateful if the hon. Member's remarks could be restricted as regards time.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think you can ask that a Member should be restricted in his representation here, but you may have some indication from the hon. Member as to how long he would be. Perhaps the hon. Member (Mr. Gajraj) himself might say how long he expects to be.

Mr. Gajraj: I do not think I would be longer than half an hour, Your Honour.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think Mr. Sugrim Singh would be any longer than that.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Your Honour, there are some things over which I have control, but there are others over which I have no control. Among the things over which I have no control is the length of time it would take me to develop these points. We have a formidable opposition and—

Mr. Gajraj : I thought the hon. Member was the "opposition", Sir.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: "Opposition" is a relative term, Sir.

Mr. Speaker : The hon. Member may proceed.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : Yesterday afternoon when this Council was adjourned, I was developing the point as to what is the attitude, specifically, of the island of Trinidad towards British Guiana in this proposed British Caribbean Federation. You will recall, Sir, that I actually referred to two amendments which were moved in the Trinidad Legislature during the debate on December 10 last, when that Legislature threw out any suggestion of in-

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viting or in any way calling upon British Guiana to join in this Federation. I gave the figures as to how the voting went, and I also referred to another paragraph of the amendment in which the Trinidad Legislature, in its attempt to protect Trinidadians — an urge which they have been displaying for some time—decided to fix a period of 10 years on the questions of immigration, emigration and deportation. I shall return to that subject later, but hon. Members will recall that I am of the view that this Interim Government, legally constituted, has got all the powers any Government has got. But, Sir, the Rance Report itself states in clear and categorical terms that no decision should be taken in any colonial unit of the proposed Federation unless the people had been actually consulted upon it.

That is tantamount to this: An Interim Government could not be regarded as the people's Government; it was a creature of statute, and should not bind this Colony in any Federation. There should be no participation by any colonial unit in a Federation unless the people are actually a part of it and have agreed solidly on it. Further, I shall refer to the words of Lord Halifax, and my contention is that while this Interim Government can commit British Guiana to almost anything legally, yet, in view of this statement by the authors of this Report, any attempt on our part to enter into this proposed Federation would be unconstitutional.

I share the opinion that it would be unconstitutional, from the point of the Closer Association Committee, that this Interim Government should claim to be regarded as a people's Government and as a creature of statute that could bind this Colony in this vital question of Federation.

Yesterday, my venerable friends, the mover of this motion—and this is the only time since we teamed up in this Interim Government that I have had the occasion to part company with him—spoke, and you will recall, Sir, that only a week ago we stood on the same platform to serve the interest of British Guiana. I want to emphasise that British Guiana is my primary concern and, I daresay, the concern of every Member of this Council. It is an established principle that opposition is welcome in Democracy as we know it in this British Commonwealth of Nations. The British Government actually spends money from its Exchequer to encourage opposition, and in that sense, I hope that we do not have any fanatical federalists in this Council.

The federalists are becoming anxious, but I am asking them in all seriousness to keep an open mind and not be like the Rock of Gibraltar—feeling that they could never be changed. I would ask them to listen to the facts, not only from me, because there are other Members of this Council who will contribute to the debate. I hope that having listened to them, these federalists will reconsider their views in the best interest of the Colony and fall in line with the idea that the time is not ripe for this Colony of ours, with all its natural resources untapped, due to no fault of ours, to join in Federation. I wish to draw a distinction between British Guiana as a Colony, and the Administration from time to time. It is not the fault of the Colony if the Administration has failed or has not been vigilant enough to tap the resources of the Colony. Whose fault is it?

I move on to my next point—What is Federation? I may be carrying coal to Newcastle, and I say it without any apology, but I do not wish to be pedantic. Very few people in this

Colony (I say it without fear of con-tradiction) have really studied the subject of Federation or have under- stood in all its aspects. That is abundantly proved by the writings and speeches in high places. I do not wish to suggest that any Member of this Council falls within that category, but it is my experience that even intelli- gent people have not yet followed it. Firstly, what is Federation, and secondly, what is the type of Federation suggested? There are several defini- tions of Federation, and here I wish to ask Your Honour and hon. Members

to bear with me. It is not the rule but rather the exception for Members to read authorities in this Council, but in a debate of this kind, tackling a subject of such complexity, I crave the indulgence of Members if from time to time I do make brief reference to accepted authorities on this very im- portant subject. The definition of Federation I wish to put before the Council is that which has been given by Professor C. E. M. Joad in his boo! on "Federal Union" under the heading "What Federation Means." This "is the definition he gives of Federal States: living in a particular area should take the same step as the Swiss cantons took in 1848, and the States of Northern America in 1787, and submit themselves to a government which represents all of them and is in control of them."

I repeat that — "and is in control of all of them". A certain writer says that repetition which adds emphasis is not like a bird flapping its wings use- lessly in the air, but like a blacksmith repeating his blows on an anvil. That definition, to my mind, covers the en- tire connotation of the term "Federation". Let us look at the most impor- tant Federal Governments on the face of the earth, particularly the one whose pattern is suggested for the British Caribbean Federation—Australia. In the United States of America,

while the individual units have their State laws, is it not a fact that the Federal Government is in Central? Let us consider the position in Australia from the time of the Commonwealth Act of 1901. Is not the Federal Gov- ernment in control? I will not be like the ostrich and stick my head in the sand. I live in a world of realities— not dreams. Here we have some ex- amples, the pattern of which we pro- pose to follow, yet we want to say that the proposed Federal Government will not have control over each auton- omous Government or federal unit in the proposed Federation.

We heard from the hon. Mr. Smellie a very interesting coverage of the sequence of events in connection with the very important subject of British Caribbean Federation. He fixed the beginning of the idea of Federation as around 1922, and I think he referred to the visit of Lord Halifax to the West Indies and British Guiana, but with respect I say that the idea of Federation of the West Indies started very many years before 1922. As far back as 1705 there was Federation of the Leeward Islands. Then we had the people of Barbados, Tobago, St. Vincent and St. Lucia put under one Governor. I speak subject to correc- tion, and I should be grateful for the hon. the Attorney-General's guidance in this matter, as I do not wish to mislead the Council. Then we had the anti-federation riots in the Caribbean around 1870, and that is how poor Bar- bados (I use the epithet without any implication — not that the island is poor. I use the term figuratively) managed to extricate itself from that mix-up.

Then we had the visit of Lord Halifax who made it perfectly clear that if there was going to be Federa- tion it must come from the people of the respective units. Here I wish, with your indulgence, Sir, to refer to a well known authority on Federa-

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tion — Professor K. C. Wheare, of Oxford University, who around 1947 was actually invited to give a series of talks over the B.B.C. on "West Indian Federation". This is what Professor Wheare says:

"The capacity of states to work a federal union is also greatly influenced by their size. It is undesirable that one or two units should be so powerful that they can overrule the other and bend the will of the federal government to themselves. The example of Prussia in the German Empire shows how this factor can transform even a confederation into a unitary state. On the other hand, some divergence in size between the units is almost certain to be present before federal union is desired. It is this divergence which leads the poorer or less populous states to desire federal rather than unitary government for in it they see a safeguard for their independence."

I have quoted figures showing that Barbados has a population of 1296.2 to the square mile, Grenada 601.9 to the square mile, British Guiana 5.26 to the square mile, and British Honduras 8.19 to the square mile. Both British Guiana and British Honduras are keeping out of Federation for obvious reasons.

Professor Wheare goes on to say:

"A problem in the working of federal government is bound to be therefore the harmonizing of the conflicting interests of these differing units. But the essential is, as John Stuart Mill says, "that there should not be any one State so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. If there be such a one, and only one, it will insist on being master of the joint deliberations: if there be two, they will be irresistible when they agree; and whenever they differ everything will be decided by a struggle for ascendancy between the rivals!"

It is an established principle of Federation that there must be geographical contiguity and propinquity along with other factors. That is one of the

essentials of federation. Jamaica is 8,000 miles from St. Kitts; Kingston the capital of Jamaica, is 755 miles from Belize, the capital of British Honduras, and 1,500 miles from our capital city of Georgetown; and Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados, 1,950 miles from Belize. I am just discussing the peculiar situation of the West Indies, and that is manifested in the fact that for years, except for the B.G. Airways, there has been some difficulty in establishing a Caribbean shipping.

The Attorney General: What about Canada?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I hear the hon. the Attorney General say something like Canada. How can you put modern Canada with treble the waterways in the West Indies? How many of our own ships have we got in our waters but one? I speak subject to correction. For that one ship this Colony contributes though it does not condescend to call at our historic port of Georgetown. That is the position.

I come now to the type of Federation suggested in the West Indies. To some Members of this Council I may be carrying coal to Newcastle, but for the purpose of my point I must repeat. The type proposed is the type which obtains in Australia, where we have what is called in the report "Exclusive Lists of Functions" and referred to in Australia as a "Fixed List". Here I speak subject to correction. In the "Exclusive List" there are 19 items listed, and we have the current list in which there are 40 items listed in this proposed West Indian Federation. In Australia, in the U.S.A. and in this proposed Caribbean Federation the set-up is that the Federal Government will control the "Exclusive List", and the Residuary List—whatever remains — goes to each autonomous Government or unit of the Federation. In Canada the position is the reverse. In

the Federation of Canada the Federal Government—I speak subject to correction, as I would not like at any time to mislead this Council—has the Residuary list, and a specified number of spheres go to the individual administrative units of the Federation.

What is happening in the proposed Federation of the West Indies. Let us examine what is the “Exclusive List” of this proposed Federation. I respectfully submit, Sir, that this Colony would be deprived of some of its most important sources of income and national integrity. We would become like Members of a County Council. Our jurisdiction would be considerably reduced as, having joined this Federation, *ipso facto* we would be bound to abide by the decision of the Federal Government in matters which have been fixed. At the London Conference what was the position of Barbados? Barbados at that Conference was most eloquent on the question that Immigration should be on the “Exclusive List”. In other words, the Federal Government must be entrusted and charged with the question of Immigration. That is, Immigration, Emigration and Deportation or the movement of individuals within the Federal area.

But what does Trinidad say about this? Trinidad, perhaps, being in a better position—and here I wish to refer again to the debate in the Trinidad Legislature—has as its primary concern this question of Immigration, and where the Federal Capital is going to be. I may relieve the anxiety of my hon. friend, Mr. Gajraj, who is well aware of the views in Trinidad. I agree with him that the Trinidad Government has not probable accepted Federation, but is it unreasonable to conclude from the actual expressions of the people’s representatives, outstanding politicians, in their

Legislative Council, that they do not want British Guiana in the Federation?

Mr. Ramphal: Question!

Mr. Sugrim Singh: My hon. friend says “Question”. I shall stand firm in this debate. I desire to refer my hon. friend again to the amendment and to read it for his satisfaction.

Mr. Gajraj : If the hon. Member wishes to give that information to this Council he should certainly read the motion as well as the amendment, so that we can all see what the amendment seeks to do.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I have regard for the patience and industry of the Members of this Council inasmuch that I would like to accommodate the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj. But I want to make my point clear. My point is, that Federation was accepted in principle in this same debate but when the amendment to include British Guiana was brought forward it was thrown out, seven saying “aye” and those against the inclusion were 13. Thirteen representatives of the Trinidad Legislature said “No”. Am I not logically entitled to conclude that they do not want us?

Sir Frank McDavid: Most illogical!

Mr. Sugrim Singh : My point is that that is an indication of what Trinidad thinks about British Guiana. I move on.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member allow me to see the copy of *Hansard* if he is finished with it? (Copy submitted).

Mr. Sugrim Singh: As Your Honour will see from that *Hansard*, the point I am making is that at the London Conference Barbados wanted to make sure that this question of Immigration, or movement of the people in the Carib

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bean, was left on the "Exclusive List" for the Federal Government and that no individual autonomous Government should have any say in it. I respectfully submit that the only reason for such a stand by Barbados is that Barbados, being a densely populated unit of the Federation, the people being very prolific — I speak subject to correction—with a meteoric rise in its birth rate, is justified in thinking of what is to happen to its increasing population in the very near future, and in making sure that that assurance was given at the London Conference. But, Sir, not only did Barbados advocate but he saw to it that the delegates of the different units of the Federation — and here I speak subject to correction; the hon. Member, Mr. Smellie, is fully aware of this fact—signed to it. But only one of the Trinidad delegates signed to it, the mighty Albert Gomes. The other delegate, Mr. Hannays, refused to sign.

Sir Frank McDavid : The hon. Member is not correct. Both delegates signed at the London Conference — Mr. Albert Gomes and Mr. Hannays — but Mr. Hannays had a reservation as to the place of the Federal Capital and items on the Exclusive List.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I am very grateful to the hon. Member. Now that he has spoken I am refreshed. I accept his statement. There was a reservation on the part of Mr. Hannays as to where the capital of the Federal Government should be. I say, subject to correction, that the original discussion was to fix the Federal Capital in Grenada but eventually the Trinidadians moved in the matter, as they always do, and it is suggested that the Federal Capital should be at Trinidad. But let us move on. In this very debate in Trinidad what do we find ? The entire Legislative Council of Trinidad came down vigorously on the Hon. Mr. Albert Gomes for having tied up and committed Trinidad at the Lon-

don Conference by signing the document to reserve this question of Immigration and Emigration and Deportation on the "Exclusive List". What is the motive behind that? Let us leave alone the reports and documents and approach this matter in a commonsense way. Barbados is anxious to join the Federation but makes sure that her excess population is protected. Trinidad, better placed economically, says "no" to this. "You stay where you are for a period of ten years until such time as Her Majesty's Government lifts you from your down-trodden state to our level." That is exactly what it is, and I respectfully submit that that strikes at the very foundation of Federation. Federation stands squarely on two pillars — freedom of movement within the federal area, and freedom of trade within the federal area. I wish to refer hon. Members to an accepted authority, "Law of the Constitution" by Dicey, at page 136:

"A federal state requires for its formation two conditions. There must exist, in the first place, a body of countries such as the Cantons of Switzerland, the Colonies of America, or the Provinces of Canada, so closely connected by locality, by history, by race, or the like, as to be capable of bearing in the eyes of their inhabitants, an impress of common nationality. It will also be generally found (if we appeal to experience) that lands which now form part of a federal state were at some stage of their existence bound together by close alliance or by subjection to a common sovereign. It was going further than facts warrant to assert that this earlier connection is essential to the formation of a federal state. But it is certain that where federalism flourishes it is in general the slowly-matured fruit of some earlier and looser connection.

A second condition absolutely essential to the founding of a federal system is the existence of a very peculiar sentiment among the inhabitants of the countries which it is proposed to unite. They must desire union, and must not desire unity.

If there be no desire to unite, there is clearly no basis for federalism . . .”

The attitude of the Trinidad Government is manifestly, as every student of constitutional history will agree, one of reluctance to come into this Federation since, actually, Trinidad is proceeding to destroy one of the fundamental pillars of federation, and that is, freedom of movement within the area.

In Barbados it is “Barbados for the Barbadians,” in Trinidad it is “Trinidad for the Trinidadians.” In British Guiana what do we find? Lip service about “Guiana for the Guianese.” As a result of the persuasions of West Indian parliamentarians we have ignominiously succumbed to this idea of linking this country of erstwhile importance with Federation. But what have we to gain?

This is an historic occasion. We are called upon on this momentous occasion to decide the destiny of this Colony in which we have hitherto gone along fairly well. The constitution of any country is a growth and not a creation, says Dicey. British Guiana had moved along from the days of the College of Kiezers to a constitution which was the best in the West Indies, until recently. If the Commissioners were not satisfied that this Colony was politically mature, its economic resources good, its outlook stable, were they going to grant this Colony what was known as the Waddington Constitution? The fact that this glorious constitution was brought down to the dust is quite another matter.

And here I may make another point, from the time Federation was first discussed in this Council, to the time of the constitutional crisis, I have kept my ears to the ground. The people are frustrated, disappointed and disgusted at the way in which the constitution was handled, and a trend of thought is arising among quite a few people that there should be a change and we should

all join the Federation band-waggon. The fact that that constitution failed is not the fault of British Guiana. It is the fault of a political ideology, and while I do not apologise for, or commend in any way the attitude of some of the people concerned, I regard what happened to be part of the political evolution of the Colony. In many countries in the world there have been labyrinthic roads on which politicians have had to tread. In some cases there has been blood-shed. At one time Guy Fawkes in his famous plot wanted to blow up the entire Parliament buildings, in England.

I say, with some knowledge of public opinion, that this Colony, constitutionally and politically, has turned the corner. I shall not burden this Council or tax its ingenuity by mentioning specific acts which have occurred in this Colony and are relative to my point. In saying that British Guiana has ‘turned the corner,’ I borrow the words of the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and to those who would like to have this Colony join the Federation with no other object than to have West Indians of sober views come here and neutralise any feeling of ill-will which may exist in our society, I say that they will be very sadly disillusioned, for there is more venom in the West Indies than has seen the light of day. I would also say that if we feel we are going to have here an influx of missionaries, morally-straight people, and people loyal to the Commonwealth, we will be disillusioned.

We are all proud of the British way of life. We have six races in this Colony, and all of us have our respective traditions, our respective religion, our respective culture, but still we are proud to follow the British way of life. Britain today, (and I say this without fear of contradiction) leads the world in Democracy. She may not be as enterprising as some other countries in the world in lapping up new

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ideologies, but she has stood firm like the rock of Gibraltar—where the waters wash but the rock remains the same.

If there was ever a country where its people fought for political independence and home rule, it is India. And what did India do after achieving independence? She voluntarily — she was not asked by anyone—chose to remain within the British Commonwealth. Why? Its Prime Minister has been to prison 13 times, but the view of the individual must be sacrificed for the good of the whole.

Federation has been put on the shelf these many years, but recently a few of my honourable friends took their excursions to Trinidad and were there injected with this federal spirit. They were most inarticulate on this subject before they visited Trinidad. In order to further their political careers certain people have expressed views contrary to the acceptance of Federation. Of course, it is quite possible, in order to provide election material digestible to the stomach of the electorate, that views might be expressed which, quite possibly, might be changed, after a period of five or six years but the point that strikes me is that there was lethargy, and nothing at all was said about Federation by certain people until these excursions came along. Trinidad has been talking about this great Utopia of the Caribbean that Federation will bring, but, with due respect to the hon. Member, Mr. Smellie, I am not worried about 'missing the tide.'

I move on to the next point. Why do the small islands want to federate? I have already mentioned in this Council the question of population in those islands. They want to protect their growing population and to find pastures new for their people in the field of agriculture, which they cannot find in the

crammed and limited land space at their disposal. It is a patent fact that Jamaica has the largest number of unemployed people in the West Indies.—I speak subject to correction, and I would be grateful if the hon. Member, who is also Commissioner of Labour (Mr. Ramphal) would supply me with comparative statistics of the West Indian unemployed. How often do we not pick up the newspapers and read of the shiploads of Jamaicans flocking to England? For what? Employment. Actually Her Majesty's Government is loath to introduce immigration restrictions to check West Indians from flowing there. But let us check how many West Indians are on the dole in England, actually living on the charity of the British public, and let us also see how many of them are Guianese.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member allow me to remind him that the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, has to leave the Colony tomorrow and will not be returning before the debate is over? I wonder if the hon. Member will give way to him now so as to let him speak.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Again my syllogism has been disturbed. I am willing to accommodate the hon. Member because he has a very onerous duty to perform as an observer at the Conference in Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker: Will you give way?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Very well, Sir.

Mr. Gajraj: I must first of all express my thanks to the hon. Member (Mr. Sugrim Singh) for having given way to me, so that I could speak before I leave the Colony tomorrow. I am desired also by the hon. Capt. Smellie to thank the hon. Member for having permitted him to speak yesterday as well. The debate on the motion before the Council was prefaced yesterday by a very interesting discussion questioning the constitutional right of

this Legislature to consider the issue. This was followed up by questioning the propriety of the motion itself. I shall not dwell on those aspects of the matter since you, Sir, have done so, but I do wish to assure Your Honour that your ruling has shown, unmistakably, that you possess a great reservoir of tolerance and a profound respect for the traditional and inherent rights of the Legislature. The tremendous value of your rich and long experience of, and association with Legislatures and with legislative processes, was amply illustrated in the careful and considered opinion upon which your ruling was based. I am sure that my colleagues in this Council would wish to join with me in expressing our appreciation of the guidance you offer us from time to time.

The motion before the Council is, in my opinion, simple to understand and, as was pointed out yesterday, easily divisible in four parts—(a) asking the Council to express the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation; (b) that the question of this country's participation in such a Federation should be re-examined; (c) that His Excellency the Governor be asked to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding; and (d) to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation.

In dealing with the first of these it is necessary to consider the historical background, and in this connection I feel that we are all grateful to the hon. Mover of the motion for having dealt rather extensively with it, and also to the hon. Capt. Smellie for having illuminated that background with some very interesting details. I do not propose, therefore, to traverse the same ground, except to re-state, where necessary, points essential to the consideration of the proposal before the Council. It is an uncontrovertible fact that the

idea of Federation of the British Colonies in this region is not new. We heard from the hon. Capt. Smellie yesterday how far back in his memory the matter went. The hon. Member, Mr. Sugrim Singh, has taken us back a further century this afternoon, in telling us that the idea of Federation in the British Caribbean took place longer than what we heard yesterday. But, particularly since 1922 when Lord Halifax had expressed the opinion, the idea was considered, and it was left to the Colonies themselves to develop that idea of creating in the area a demand which would lead to its fulfilment. At the end of World War II His Majesty's Government gave the desired lead and a series of conferences took place.

Mr. Macnie: To a point of order! Is the hon. Member reading his speech, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot say; I have not seen him doing that.

Mr. Gajraj: I am making use of notes, Your Honour. I think that has been done in this Council from time immemorial. I have seen Members myself doing so, and have actually seen the hon. Member himself reading from notes in this Council.

Mr. Macnie: Only for the use of quotations and figures.

Mr. Speaker: So long as a Member does not hold up his notes and make it appear that he is reading, one cannot say that he is reading his speech. I have seen Members of Parliament, and even Cabinet Ministers using notes. They all do it.

Mr. Gajraj: Thank you, Sir. I am prepared to accept Your Honour's expression of opinion in this Council. As time is not with us I hope I will be allowed to proceed without any further interruption.

[Mr. Gajraj]

I was saying that at the end of World War II, following the lead given by H.M. Government, a series of conferences took place between representatives of the Caribbean Islands, British Guiana and British Honduras, when the whole question of Federation was considered. I did make mention that the hon. mover referred yesterday in great detail to these conferences. Then, I was going to say that it is a fact that this Colony's Legislature took part in or was represented at every one of those conferences.

Mr. Lee: To a point of correction! They were only observers. I attended as such on one occasion.

Mr. Gajraj: I did not say that this Colony did not have observers. The meaning of my words is quite clear; I said that "this Colony's Legislature took part in, or was represented at every one of those conferences." Although the Fourth Legislative Council, in January, 1952, rejected a motion which was moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North, it is reasonable to conclude that it was considered desirable that we should not dissociate ourselves completely from the plans and progress made by our neighbours in the British Caribbean area. For although there is a division of opinion in this Council, and indeed in the country itself, as to the desirability of federating with our neighbours, it cannot be denied that there is in this country also a very strong body of opinion which considers, as I do, that it is in the interest of British Guiana that we should embark upon Federation.

Mr. Lee: On what terms?

Mr. Gajraj: The hon. Member is very anxious to know on what terms. He has himself sat in with the other leaders of the West Indies when the question of Federation was being considered. Surely the hon. Member had

it in his power at that time to negotiate, even if it was through the back door, for terms which might have been acceptable to him.

Mr. Raatgever : To a point of correction! The hon. Mr. Lee was an observer; he could not speak. He was a dummy.

Mr. Gajraj: I do not know if the Member cannot appreciate the fine point of difference that I drew when I spoke of negotiating, even if it was done through the back door, because the hon. Mr. Lee could only negotiate if he was a delegate.

Sir Frank McDavid : They are mentioned as members of the Committee in the list of names in the Report. Observers attended from the Cayman Islands and the Virgin Islands.

Mr. Speaker : I have known of observers being allowed to speak.

Mr. Gajraj: In clarifying the point whether the hon. Member went as a delegate or as an observer we must have regard to the document which is considered to be official. I was making the point that there is a strong body of opinion in this Colony which does not favour the idea of Federation, and it is therefore necessary, indeed it is obligatory upon this Government to keep that body of opinion informed of what is happening in all matters appertaining to Federation before the final step of Federation is taken. So it is that the third part of the hon. Member's motion comes for our scrutiny at this stage.

I would like to say right now that I feel very much privileged and honoured to have been chosen to represent this Government at the Freedom of Movement Conference

which will take place in Trinidad next week. My position will be that of an observer and I shall of course do my very best within the framework of my portfolio (if I may use that term) in order to bring back to the Government of this country as much information as I can, particularly regarding the feeling of the other territories in the matter of our going into the Federation. I am grateful, particularly to my colleague, Mr. Smellie, who yesterday offered congratulations to me in this Council on my selection, and I am also very deeply appreciative of the very warm reception with which that was received by Members of the Council.

May I return to the first part of the motion. It has been made clear that in debating this motion Members cannot claim to have the support of the people of any particular electoral constituency in this Colony, therefore the opinions expressed must be regarded technically as being their own. I do not dispute that view, and I do feel that it lends weight to the argument that this motion should be accepted, since it will not only express the feeling of this Council but will provide an opportunity for ascertaining the state of opinion in the minds of the people of the Colony at the present time.

The question to be asked of ourselves is: Should we federate or should we not? That question has exercised the minds of the people of this Colony for some considerable time, and within the last few weeks we have seen expressions of opinion by various people appearing in the Press. As we have noticed, there is no unanimity between them. There are some who feel, as I do, that we have a great deal to gain from Federation with our Caribbean neigh-

hours, and thus bring to fruition those schemes for closer association in which we have shared, and which were all stepping-stones leading to the citadel of Federation. There are also those who, for various reasons, and perhaps in some cases for no reason at all, declaim the idea of Federation. That opposition again is as it should be. No community has ever embarked upon the sea of such close co-operation as Federation is, without some group or groups doubting the wisdom of such a step.

An Opposition is a very necessary element in the constitutional process of Legislatures patterned on the British system, and it was therefore very refreshing to hear the hon. Member, Mr. Sugrim Singh, speak of himself as being of the Opposition. But I would like to remind the hon. Member that these are times in the affairs of one's country when the Opposition, realising that the proposals of the Government are in the common interest, join in making sure that such proposals are adopted, and thus share in the credit for having the courage to put the interest of the country before that of their Party, or of their group. I realise, of course, that this is a private Member's motion, but the hon. the Chief Secretary has already indicated that Government will accept the motion.

It has been emphasised in the course of this debate that British Guiana has already sensibly taken steps to contribute to certain joint efforts with the Colonies of the British Caribbean, and that this Government, and through it the people of this country, are contributing out of our general revenue sums of money each year to support such joint efforts. We have interests in the joint programme of trade and commerce of the region by being members of the Regional Economic Committee, a very important body indeed, on which the

[Mr. Gajraj]

hon. the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Raatgever) has had the honour to represent this Colony from its inception until the 1953 Constitution came into force. I feel sure that the hon. Member will strongly affirm that during that period he held his own against the best of the men sent by the West Indian Islands, proving beyond doubt that we in this country, if we choose the right people and send the right representatives (and there is no doubt in my mind that we have got them) they can bring to bear upon the deliberations of the problems affecting the entire region not only the points of view of individual territories but also a proper picture of the whole nation. We are particularly suited to take that role, when we consider the large land areas of British Guiana—to which reference was made—the vastness of our forests, the immense volumes of water flowing down our rivers. We see it in such vast contrast to the smallness of the Islands of the Caribbean. That, in my opinion, ought to create in the minds of our representatives such a wide breadth of vision that, if properly expressed, will in time destroy the narrow insularity with which we are prone to charge our Island neighbours.

I have referred to the Regional Economic Committee, but may I remind this Council that through that body this Colony contributes to the cost and is associated with the Trade Commissioner Service of the British Caribbean area located in the United Kingdom and in Canada. May I also remind this Council of the very gratifying results of the joint—I would like to repeat the word “joint”—efforts of the British Caribbean Governments through the Regional Economic Committee, in convincing the United Kingdom Government, after great difficulty, that in reviewing the conditions of G.A.T.T., the short term for General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, it is imperative that some pro-

vision be included giving the United Kingdom Government the right to assist the industries of the British Caribbean by way of increased subsidies, the imposition of quantitative restrictions on imports from foreign countries, and in other ways. It was a most difficult and very tedious task.

Mine was the good fortune to represent this Colony as an Adviser to the Hon. Albert Gomes, of Trinidad and the Hon. W. A. Bustamante, of Jamaica, in London at the Conference known as the Commonwealth review of G.A.T.T., and I can assure hon. Members of this Council that it was not an easy task. Our job was, firstly, to convince the Colonial Office of the justness of our claim; secondly, we had to convince the British Government on the particular outlook of its Trade Department, and finally we had to win support from the representatives of all the Commonwealth countries attending that Conference. The last battle was fought at Geneva where all the countries adhering to the Agreement were represented and, as I said earlier, the results were most gratifying to us in these parts.

That is an example of what can be achieved by the closest co-operation, by mutual trust, and it is because, when we go forward to do a job of this kind we are motivated by the same ideals. I am sure that no hon. Member would suggest that this country should withdraw from membership of the R.E.C. I think that we all realize how great is the benefit we have derived in the past, how great is the value of our continuing presence and how urgently necessary in our own interest—call it selfish interest if you will, but nevertheless in our own interest—it is for us to be there in the future.

But I venture to suggest that were we to refuse to consider joining in the proposed Federation of these Colonies we would almost if not entirely, be

putting ourselves out of court, so to speak. Let me be frank and say that in my opinion, and in the expressions of opinion I have heard from some of the West Indian leaders, the Regional Economic Committee is looked upon as a pre-federation organization which will almost entirely be absorbed in one of the departments of the Federation. When that takes place, if it does, where will we be? Will we be able to stand alone in the fields covered by the R.E.C.? At the present time, perhaps, there will be some people who will say that we can stand out and still benefit from what the Federation is able to accomplish. That is very improbable, but even if it were probable, such an attitude can hardly be considered fair and reasonable. Would that be the way in which any self-respecting nation or government should act? The answer is clear. If we want to continue to benefit from economic association with our neighbours in the Caribbean, then I say quite straightforwardly we must federate.

I have only referred to one aspect of our need for joining this Federation. But we know only too well that we are contributing from the funds of this Colony to the cost of running many institutions in the West Indies. The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture is one at which our Agricultural Superintendents are trained. Then we contribute to the University College of the West Indies, from which an increasing flow of our doctors, scientists and educationists will come. We have joined in the Air Transport Control of the entire Caribbean area. We have been able to protect our oils and fats industry from outside competition and from almost certain ruination in a period of time through our membership of the Oils and Fats Agreement. We are partners in the scheme for a Unified West Indian Currency, in which sphere British Guiana was the prime mover. Great gratitude must go to the hon. Member for Agriculture (Sir

Frank McDavid) who was at that time our Financial Secretary, and was able to impress his colleagues in the West Indies; and the scheme was brought into being. Today the same currency that is legal tender in British Guiana is also legal tender in every one of the West Indian Islands.

Now I want to say that those individual schemes, based upon our own needs and integrated into a common purpose, have succeeded very well. As schemes in themselves they have succeeded, but to me what is more important is that they have demonstrated beyond any doubt that the people of the British Caribbean area and the people of British Guiana can work together, can plan together and can produce results together without animus, without recrimination and without hostility. That, in my opinion, is a great achievement, and more than anything else it lays a very solid foundation for the Federal Government.

I wish to invite the Members of the Council to consider for a moment the purpose and the functions of these schemes of co-operative enterprise between the Island Governments and ourselves, and to ask themselves whether these schemes can logically and economically continue in existence as separate entities after there is Federation. Perhaps Unified Currency might, because this is based upon special legislation in each individual territory, and certainly the University College will. But it seems clear that others will have to be absorbed in the functions of the Federation. I make this point because I want to impress upon my colleagues the realistic view that all these individual schemes were but stepping-stones to the larger and ultimately more important need for federating the units into a political whole.

So much for the steps which we have taken—steps which, whether we were conscious of it at the time or not,

[Mr. Gajraj]

were steps leading to the front door of Federation. I feel we must press on. We cannot at this stage retrace those steps; it would be foolish, it would be cowardly.

There will be those who will say that, admitting there is a strong case for us to keep outside of Federation, why should we accept inferiority in the number of seats allowed to us in the Rance Report? My answer is: we are not accepting that position if we accept this motion which is before the Council, for the second part of the motion asks specifically that the question of this country's participation be re-examined. I take that to imply that the whole question of the terms on which we should join the Federation should be gone into, and all questions including that of the allocation of seats to British Guiana would be most thoroughly investigated.

I believe I can assure Members that I am one of those who feel very strongly that the number of seats for B.G. in the Federal Legislature must be revised upwards, and I believe we shall find a sympathetic response from our neighbours, but in any case I do wish to assure hon. Members that if indeed they pass this motion, this is not the last time that they will have the opportunity of discussing this subject, for, whatever the result of such negotiations, those proposals will have to be brought before this Council for a decision. Of course, that takes into account that if this motion is accepted we should go on ascertaining what is the public's opinion and so long as public opinion is in favour of it, and bring forward all these proposals which might arise out of these negotiations. We here have a right to discuss this matter from time to time throughout every stage of its development and evolution so far as British Guiana is concerned,

The hon. Member, Mr. Sugrim Singh, yesterday afternoon expressed a fear — a fear which is very unfortunately prevalent among opponents of Federation—that the small islands will combine and outvote British Guiana. It is, to my mind, unfortunate that an honourable Member of this Council places such a low value upon the ability of the people of this Colony and of its Government from time to time—whatever Government it may be—to suggest that at all times the people of the islands will combine to outvote British Guiana. Does it suggest that British Guiana will always be sitting on the Federal Council in opposition to what might be considered in the general interest of the federal area as a whole? Do we not have men of ability, men of integrity, men of sincerity who can take the lead to initiate, conduct and finalize projects through the Federal Legislature? Can we not attract at any time the support of the federal units? If we cannot do so, then either our propositions are unsound, or our representatives need to be changed.

For my part, I do say in all sincerity I do not share the fears of the hon. Member. Perhaps I have had more opportunity than he has had in assessing the reactions of island leaders in matters affecting the area as a whole. Indeed, over the past year I have had several opportunities of sitting with them in earnest deliberations over matters vital to the whole future of this area, and I can assure hon. Members that at no time was I made to feel an intruder, or that I was inferior, or that I was unwanted, or that there was no interest in what I had to say for and on behalf of my country. Instead, I feel it incumbent upon me, in view of the remarks that were made, to say that I was treated with the greatest respect, with full cordiality and with untrammelled equality.

Mr. Speaker: I promised to adjourn at a quarter to four.

Mr. Gajraj: I shall take only two minutes more, if Your Honour will grant me that time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member will have to be careful to make it two minutes.

Mr. Gajraj: British Guiana, in my opinion, has no reason to engross itself in the fears to which the hon. Member has given expression, and if my own experience counts for anything, I am of the opinion that in a full Federation British Guiana will, before long, emerge among the leaders; and bearing all things in mind — our land space, our potential resources and the vast scope for development—I see no reason why this much self-maligned country of ours should not take an important part in the affairs of the Federation.

I can go on, but in view of the shortness of time at my disposal I shall have to stop, and I shall not be able to resume on Tuesday when the Council meets. But I want to say with all the force at my command, that I am in favour of the motion before the Council, and I feel that Federation is a good thing for British Guiana, for the six peoples of British Guiana, collective-

ly and individually. I am sorry I do not have the time to deal with some of the objections which I have not heard in this Council, but which are current outside, because I feel that in some respects I am in a position, as Members of this Council will expect, to throw light on and give interpretation to some of the views held outside. But I do say in all firmness, that we must have faith in our future and faith in the plans before us.

I notice the hon. Member, the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Raatgever) is not here, but in his comments on Federation in the newspapers he concluded with certain words which call for faith in the future. These words were also used by our late King, and by His Excellency the Governor when he arrived here, and in conclusion I will use them as well.

“And I said to the man who stood at the gate, ‘Give me a light that I may go forth into the night,’ and he replied: ‘Put your hand into the hand of God and go forth into the darkness in the sure knowledge that He will be to you better than any light, and a more sure way than any known path.’”

Mr. Speaker: Council will now adjourn until Tuesday next at 2 p.m.