

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, 22ND APRIL, 1948.

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

PRESENT.

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

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. M. Duke (acting).

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.B.E.

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

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E., (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum (Nominated).

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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

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

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

The Hon. C. A. McDoom (Nominated).

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, the 17th March, 1948, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

REMISSION OF DUTY ON RUM

The COLONIAL TREASURER communicated the following Messages to the Council:—

MESSAGE No. 7

Honourable Members of Legislative Council,

I have to inform Honourable Members that consequent on the difficulty of obtaining supplies of new containers during the recent war, spirit distillers were forced to use second-hand packages and packages made of unseasoned wood, and also, in the case of high-proof spirit, drums made of metal of a low gauge which would not have been used in normal times. The use of these containers led, during transportation of consignments from the various distilleries to spirit warehouses in Georgetown, to losses of rum being frequently far in excess of the allowances permissible under Section 45 (3) of the Spirits Ordinance, Chapter 110, and applications were made to Government from time to time for remission of the duty chargeable on the additional spirit lost. This led to the enactment under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts, 1939 and 1940, of the Defence (Spirits Ordinance Amendment)

Regulations, 1945, by virtue of which the Governor in Council was empowered to remit the whole or part of the excise duty payable on deficiencies of rum in excess of the allowances provided under the Spirits Ordinance in instances where the Council was satisfied that such deficiencies were attributable to the faulty condition of containers.

2. Since the enactment of these Regulations, the Executive Council has granted applications for the remission of duty chargeable on excessive losses of rum in transit to Georgetown resulting from the use of inferior containers and the general basis on which remission was granted was to double the scale of allowances for deficiencies laid down under the Spirits Ordinance. In special circumstances however, where satisfactory evidence was available to show that the rum lost could not be collected but went instead to waste, the duty payable on the total deficiency was remitted. In each case the Executive Council was satisfied that losses over and above the prescribed allowances were due mainly, if not entirely, to leakage, and that none of the rum lost was likely to have gone into consumption.

3. It has now been brought to notice that the Defence (Spirits Ordinance Amendment) Regulations, 1945, were excluded from these Regulations which, by enactment of the Defence Regulations (Temporary Continuance) Order, 1946, were retained in operation after the expiration of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts. Consequently, the Defence (Spirits Ordinance Amendment) Regulations, 1945, ceased to have effect on the 24th of February, 1946, (the date on which the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts and the Regulations made under those Acts expired) and waiver by the Executive Council of the duty on rum losses since that date was therefore *ultra vires*.

4. Subsequent to the 24th of February, 1946, the Executive Council considered applications for the remission of duty on excessive losses of rum occurring during the period July, 1945 to December, 1946, and duty totalling \$2,411.75 was waived in respect of 438.5 proof gallons out of a total chargeable loss of 555.6 proof gallons. I have, therefore, to invite Honourable Members to signify covering approval of this action.

5. I have also to inform Honourable Members that on account of the continuing and unavoidable use of inferior containers, 102 casks of rum showed excessive losses during removal from various distilleries to Georgetown in 1947. After deduction of the allowances provided for under the Spirits Ordinance, there remains a loss of 92.3 proof gallons on which excise duty is

payable. The Executive Council is satisfied that loss in each case has been due mainly, if not entirely, to leakage, resulting from the use of old and defective packages, and that none of the rum is likely to have gone into consumption. It is considered equitable that remission of duty on a part of this excessive loss should be granted on the basis of paragraph 2 above, and, accordingly, I invite Honourable Members to approve the remission of duty payable on 68.0 proof gallons of rum at the rate of \$6.00 a proof gallon, in excess of the allowances specially provided for under the Spirits Ordinance; duty on the remaining 24.3 proof gallons will be collected.

C. C. WOOLLEY,
Governor.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana,
16th March, 1948.

INCREASE IN SALARY OF TOWN PLANNER

MESSAGE No. 8

Honourable Members of Legislative Council.

I have the honour to inform the Council that it has not been found possible to secure an officer to fill the post of Town Planner at the salary of \$5,760 (£1,200) per annum for which provision is made in the approved Estimates for 1948 under Head XVII A. Local Government Central Housing and Planning Authority. Efforts have been made over a long period to fill the post without success.

2. The Secretary of State has reported that he now has in view a most suitable candidate but in view of his wide knowledge and experience he would not be prepared to accept the appointment which will be on contract for three years at a salary of less than \$7,680 (£1,600) per annum. The officer is Mr. A. Coates, F.R.I.B.A. M.T.P.I., at present Provincial Town Planner to the Government of the Punjab, whose term of service with that Government will terminate on the expiration of his leave in May, 1948. Mr. Coates has had extensive previous experience in England and is recommended by the Secretary of State.

3. I have to inform the Council, in accordance with Rule 44(6) of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Council, that a proposal that the salary of the post should be increased to £1,600 per annum was considered by the Finance Committee of the Council at a meeting on 8th April, 1948 and was not approved by the Committee. I am strongly of opinion however, that the early appointment of a Town Planner is

vitaly important in the public interest and, with the advice of the Executive Council whom I have again consulted, I therefore submit the matter for the Council's consideration. I invite the Council to approve of the salary of the post of Town Planner being increased accordingly.

C. C. WOOLLEY,
Governor.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana.
16th April, 1948.

PAPERS LAID

The COLONIAL TREASURER on behalf of the Colonial Secretary laid on the table the following documents—

The Report of the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board for the period 1st April, 1946 to 30th September, 1946.

The Report of the Headmaster, Essequibo Boys' School for the year 1947.

The Report and Accounts of the Wortmanville Housing Scheme for the half year ended 31st December, 1947.

The Report of the Principal of Queen's College for the year 1947.

The Report of the Official Receiver and Public Trustee for the year 1947.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES:

QUARANTINE REGULATIONS

The ATTORNEY GENERAL gave notice of the following motion:—

"That, as provided under section 4 of the Quarantine Ordinance 1946 (No. 23 of 1946) this Council confirms the Quarantine (Amendment) Regulations, 1948, which were made by the Governor in Council on the 23rd of March, 1948".

REMISSION OF DUTY ON RUM

The COLONIAL TREASURER gave notice of the following motions:—

"That with reference to His Excellency the Governor's message No. 7 of the 16th March, 1948, this Council approves of the remission of duty on 68 proof gallons of rum at the rate of \$6 per gallon lost through leakage from defective containers."

SALARY OF TOWN PLANNER

"That with reference to His Excellency the Governor's message No. 8 of the 16th of April, 1948, this Council approves of the salary of the post of Town Planner being increased from

\$5,760 (£1,200) to \$7,680 (£1,600) per annum."

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

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

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make special provision for the partition of certain areas of land, for the re-allotment of holdings therein, for the issue of titles thereto, and to render the occupation thereof more beneficial."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the district lands partition and re-allotment ordinance with respect to petitions and appeals, and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the motor vehicles and road Traffic Ordinance, 1940, with respect to the licensing of motor cars and hire cars."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the rent Restriction Ordinance 1941, with respect to the standard rent of premises erected after or in course of erection on the eighth day of March, nineteen hundred and forty-one."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Cinematograph Ordinance by providing for the provisional grant of licences in respect of premises not constructed or completed and to exempt from the provisions of the ordinance exhibitions of non-inflammable sub standard films in premises approved for such purposes by the Commissioner of Police."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Ordinance with respect to the power of a court of summary jurisdiction to impose Corporal Punishment."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Juvenile Offenders Ordinance, 1931, by abolishing the power of a court to impose Corporal Punishment on a child or young person."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Whipping and Flogging Ordinance with respect to its application to children and young persons."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Prisons Ordinance with respect to Corporal Punishment."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance with respect to Hotels."

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

EASTERN DEMERARA DRAINAGE
CONDITIONS

Mr. DEBIDIN gave notice of the following motions:—

“Whereas the East Demerara Water Conservancy of an area of 221 square miles releases its waters in wet seasons through four sluices exclusively in the Mahaica river, and this volume of thousands of millions of cubic feet of water released per day is far in excess of what the river can discharge per day and would inevitably cause abnormal floodings of the lands not only on either bank of the Mahaica river but also of lands in the Mahaicony river districts and also aback of villages and other districts between Mahaicony and Golden Grove:

AND WHEREAS the aforesaid areas are most fertile and suitable for production in very large quantities of essential foodstuffs and have been in the past a source of very large supplies of rice, cattle, milk, poultry and eggs, coconuts and edible oil, ground provisions, etc.;

AND WHEREAS with the present rainfall there has been a most serious and heavy loss of such foodstuffs in the above referred to areas which would have a very adverse effect on the Colony's food supply and general economy and all this is likely to recur with every wet season:

AND WHEREAS the clearing by dredging of the Mahaica and Mahaicony river mouths would considerably improve the drainage of the above areas:

AND WHEREAS from the point of view of colonial development and the encouragement of peasant farming in the colony and the preservation and protection of the above areas which are largely settled upon and are already noted for large production as aforesaid, it is most desirable to improve the drainage conditions of the said areas;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Legislative Council recognising the great need for better drainage conditions in the colony approves and recommends that Government take immediate steps to have discharged all the water of the East Demerara Water Conservancy during the wet seasons exclusively into the Demerara river, and no longer into the Mahaica river, and in this respect and for better drainage of the above areas this Council approves and recommends the immediate undertaking and commencement by Government of the following works:—

- (a) The building of the necessary outlet or outlets for water from

the East Demerara Water Conservancy area to the Demerara river.

- (b) The dredging of the mouths of the Mahaica and Mahaicony rivers and the clearing of all overhanging trees and bushes at the various bends in these rivers and
- (c) The erection of another pumping unit within the area between Golden Grove Village, and Belfield on the East Coast Demerara.

CONDITION OF COLONY ROADS

WHEREAS the roads of the Colony are a disgrace and a standing indictment on the prestige of the Colony as a first class colony,

AND WHEREAS for generations the skill in road making and the kind of materials used leave very much to be desired and are largely responsible for the shocking condition of the main roads today—chiefly the Georgetown-Rosignol, New Amsterdam-Skeidon and East Bank roads,

AND WHEREAS the Georgetown-Rosignol road connects the two main cities and counties of the Colony and serves 69 miles of important villages and other populous districts; the New Amsterdam-Skeidon road is the only connection between these points and of the many villages, sugar estates, and rice areas in Berbice; and the East Bank road connects the city with the international aerodrome at Atkinson field and its bad condition would prejudice the minds of tourists;

AND WHEREAS these roads, chiefly the Georgetown-Rosignol road, have been so badly neglected and are in such bad state of disrepair that they are not only a danger to human lives but also destructive to all types of vehicles using them;

AND WHEREAS existing development plans do not or do not sufficiently provide for the immediate improvement of the roads of the Colony.

AND WHEREAS the Colony is rich in most of the essential materials for building first class roads, and first class all weather roads will reduce the present very heavy annual maintenance cost considerably;

BE IT RESOLVED—That this Council recognising the urgent need for better roads for the colony strongly recommends to Government its immediate embarkation upon the construction of first class all weather roads in the place of the

present burnt earth roads and for this purpose that Government immediately raise a loan to meet the necessary amount involved.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED—That priority in construction be given in the Georgetown-Rosignol, the New Amsterdam-Skeidon, and the Georgetown Atkinson Field roads.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED—That Government in the meantime undertake immediately and on a much wider scale the proper repair of all its roads even if this would mean exceeding the maintenance vote for the year.

LEVEL OF BERBICE RIVER.

Mr. ROTH gave notice of the following questions:—

1. Is Government satisfied as to the accuracy of the level of the Berbice River at the intake of the proposed canal at Torani and of the level of the outfall of the canal on the Canje River?

2. In view of the magnitude of the project and its estimated cost, have these levels been checked and rechecked?

PRIVATE SCHOOLS ORDINANCE AND REGULATIONS.

1. Is Government aware that for more than four years there have been lying in one of its pigeon-holes or file-drawers the draft of "The Private Schools (Primary and Secondary) Ordinance 1944" and Regulations proposed to be made thereunder, the said draft Ordinance having been published in the local Press on 6th January, 1944?

2. Does Government propose to proceed with the said Ordinance and Regulations?

3. If so, when?

4. If not, why?

GEORGETOWN PUBLIC FREE LIBRARY

Mr. RAATGEVER gave notice of the following question:—

1. Is Government aware that despite the facts that the Carnegie Corporation in 1934 made a grant of \$25,000 to build a second storey on the wings of the Georgetown Public Free Library for the purpose of exhibiting the Museum collections, and that since 1936 the Economic Science, Anthropological and Historical Section of the Museum has been occupying, free of rent, the said second storey for the purpose for which it was built, and the Georgetown Public Free Library

Committee is now insisting on the payment by the Museum of an annual rental of \$600 for the said occupation.

2. In view of the efforts now being made to resuscitate that portion of the Museum destroyed in the 1945 fire and the consequent urgent need of all the funds it can possibly acquire, does Government consider such action on the part of the said Committee an equitable one?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS DEPARTMENT STRIKE

The PRESIDENT: Honourable Members, before we proceed with the Order of the Day I would like to make a brief reference to the very unfortunate strike, which, as you know, took place last Saturday. In view of the fact that the strike had ended and the men had gone back to work and the Commission of Inquiry instituted as it was yesterday morning, I thought it would have been inappropriate for me to say anything more on the matter at the present stage.

I am extremely sorry, however, to inform Council that during the last hour another complication has arisen and that a good many of the men have again left work, according to information which I have received. The reason for it was that late this morning, Col. Teare, the General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department despite the fact that he is no longer administering the Department, appeared at the head office of the Department. He went there to get certain papers in connection with the inquiry, but the very fact of his presence there reacted immediately on the workmen and they got the impression, so I am informed, that despite the assurance which I personally had given, he was back there to administer the Department.

Well, perhaps, Honourable Members can understand that owing to the excitement and the feeling which was engendered in connection with this strike, that interpretation might well have arisen. I am very sorry indeed myself that Col. Teare did visit the Department, whatever his reason may have been, and for the reaction which it caused as far as the men are concerned.

Since I heard about it, which was less than an hour ago—and probably half an hour ago, — I got in touch with Col. Teare and told him that on no account was he to appear either in the head office or elsewhere in the Department's premises until the Commission of Inquiry had reported to me and until my decision was announced thereon. I have just a moment ago—and I must apologise to the Council that I have been rather late in coming in—spoken to representatives of the T.U.C. and the Transport Workers' Union who came to me to explain — and quite rightly came to me—and I told them what I had done in the matter. They asked me for a letter so that they could convey my personal assurance to the men in writing and I dictated that letter five minutes ago and I think I should read it to the Council so that there would be no misunderstanding whatever. That letter was addressed to the President of the British Guiana Trades Union Council and it read—

“Government House,
Georgetown.
22nd. April, 1948.

Sir,

It has been brought to my notice half an hour ago, that the General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department, Colonel Teare, had visited the Head Office this morning and that the impression gained by the men was that he was administering the Department. I am informed that he went there solely to get certain papers for use in connection with the Inquiry. It is most unfortunate that this should have occurred and given rise to misunderstanding. I give your Council and the men my personal assurance that Colonel Teare will not again visit either the Head Office or any other place in the Transport and Harbours Department until the Commission has sent its report to me and my decision thereon has been announced. I regret extremely that this unfortunate incident should have happened.

I have, etc.,
C. C. Woolley,
Governor.”

I have given that letter to representatives of the Union and asked them to go straight away and convey it to the men. I hope that as a result this further trouble will cease. I do not see myself what more I can do in the circumstances. In fact, during the whole of this matter, I have

done my utmost to bring about the resumption of work and I have given my solemn assurance to the men that this Commission of Inquiry would be set up. It has been set up and it commenced work yesterday morning. It will work three sessions a day until it is ended. I have given that assurance and I do not think I can do any more. I am sure Honourable members of this Council will join with me in hoping that as a result of this inquiry we shall see an end to the friction and the trouble in this Department.

ORDER OF THE DAY

NOMINATIONS TO LEGISLATURE, MUNICIPAL AND VILLAGE COUNCILS

Dr. JAGAN asked and the Colonial Secretary laid over replies to the following questions :—

Q. 1. Will Government state the names of persons, if any, who as defeated candidates were nominated to the Legislative, Municipal and Village Councils within the period of the past six months?

Ans. 1: **Legislative Council** — Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E.

Georgetown Municipality — nil
New Amsterdam Municipality — nil
Village Councils —
Berbice Administrative District
Sheet Anchor H. T. C. Read, Esq.
Letter Kenny — Bloomfield
G. Rahaman, Esq.
East Demerara Administrative District
Ann's Grove & Two Friends
B. Wilson, Esq.
Craig .. W. A. Weekes, Esq.
Plaisance .. L. A. Kennedy, Esq.
Sparendaam E. A. M. Linton, Esq.
West Demerara Administrative District
Stanleytown B. A. Petrie, Esq.

Q. 2. Will Government define its policy by which the making of such nominations is governed and state whether it will continue this practice in the future ?

Ans. 2: **Legislative Council**
Appointments of Nominated Members of the Legislative Council are made under Article 7 of the British Guiana (Constitution) Order-in-Council, 1928. The over-riding consideration in all such appointments is and always has been the public interest.
Georgetown Municipality
New Amsterdam Municipality

Appointments of Government nominees to the Georgetown and New Amsterdam Municipalities are made respectively in accordance with the proviso to section 6 of the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance (Chapter 86) and section 5 of the New Amsterdam Town Council Ordinance (Chapter 87). Government's policy has always been the appointment of suitable persons in what is considered to be the best interest of the City of Georgetown and Town of New Amsterdam respectively.

Village Councils — Appointments to Village Councils are made by the Local Government Board under the provisions of section 28 (3) of the Local Government Ordinance, 1945 (No. 14). The over-riding consideration in all such appointments by the Local Government Board is the general interest of the rural communities concerned.

COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCES

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move the following motion standing in my name as item No. 2 in the Order Paper:—

“That, with reference to Resolution No. XXXVIII of the 11th of July, 1947, this Council approves of the payment of cost of living allowances to Government employees during the year 1948 on the scale of rates authorised and in force in respect of the year 1947.”

As Hon. Members are aware, the Council has already approved of the necessary financial provision in the 1948 Estimates for the payment of cost of living allowance to Government employees. In anticipation of acceptance of this motion I sought and obtained the approval of the Finance Committee of payment of these allowances on the scale of rates which were in force in 1947. I thought at that time that this motion would have been merely a formality but, Sir, circumstances have since arisen which make it desirable that the Council should be invited to approve of some variation in these rates. I have circulated—and I think every Member has got a copy—a statement of the variations which are proposed in the form of an amendment to this motion. Hon. Members will recall that the rates of allowances which were payable in 1947 are 30 per cent. on the first \$720 per annum, 10 per cent. on the next \$720 per

annum, with a flat rate of \$24 per month on all salaries over \$1,440 per annum. It is now proposed, Sir, to ask the Council to modify that scale to the advantage solely of the lower paid wage earner and the subordinate employees. The modification proposed is that the rate should be 33 1/3% instead of 30% on the first \$720; 6 2/3% instead of 10% on the next \$720; and a flat rate of \$24 per month on all salaries over \$1,440 per annum to remain the same. Before I go further in this modification, I want to take this opportunity to communicate an important announcement in connection with wages since it is, of course, very closely associated with the subject-matter of this motion.

The Council will recall that the question of the minimum basic wage payable by the Government to unskilled workers has been discussed in this Council from time to time during the last year and more particularly in Finance Committee in February of this year. In the course of that discussion the members of Finance Committee—or shall I say the majority of them—strongly urged on Government that the time had come for an increase to be granted in these minimum basic wage rates and the decision of the Committee was that it should recommend to Government that the Advisory Committee of the Public Works Department should go into the matter and make a recommendation to Government. That, Sir, was done. The Committee recommended, in principle, that there should be an increase, but did not make any specific proposal. During the course of the discussion in Finance Committee certain suggestions were made by one or two Members in regard to what the rate should be, and I think that when I state what Government has decided it would be appreciated that the decision is more or less precisely in accordance with the recommendation made in Finance Committee. Since 1943, the minimum basic wage rate for unskilled workers employed by Government has been on the basis of 10 cents per hour for males, in Georgetown; and 8 cents per hour in the country districts, plus, of course, the current cost of living allowance. Government has now decided to bring into effect, as from May 1, new wage rates on the

basis of 12 cents per hour for males in Georgetown, and 10 cents per hour for males employed in rural districts, plus the cost of living allowance which, as I have already indicated, the Council is now being invited to approve at 33 1/3 per cent. It would be seen, therefore, that the effect of this decision if the cost of living proposal is approved, will be that the minimum rate of pay for the unskilled worker in Georgetown will be 12 cents plus 4 cents—or 16 cents per hour—and in the country districts it will be 10 cents plus 3 1/3 cents—or 13 1/3 cents per hour. As regards female workers it has been suggested that the rates current shall be increased proportionately. A definite decision has not yet been come to but I may say, Sir, as regards the Departments concerned, that I myself have agreed to recommend that the rates for women should be as follows: The present rate for women in Georgetown is 7 1/2 cents per hour, and in the country districts 6 cents per hour. We propose to recommend, Sir, that these rates should be increased to 9 cents per hour in Georgetown, and 7 1/2 cents per hour in the rural districts. That is to say, there will be an increase of 1 1/2 cents per hour in both Georgetown and the rural districts.

While it is a little difficult for me to explain in words, without circulating papers, the precise effect of these proposals, I can say this: As regards the wage rate for male unskilled workers in Georgetown, the final rate would become \$1.28 per day; and in the country districts it would be \$1.06 per day. That is, really, an increase of 1 shilling per day in Georgetown and 23 1/2 cents in the country districts. To put it approximately, it means that male workers would, on the average, get 1 shilling per day more. In the case of female workers, in Georgetown they would get 96 cents per day, and in the country districts they would get 80 cents per day. That represents an increase of 18 cents per day in Georgetown and 17.6 cents per day in the country districts, so that the basic rate would be increased by 18 cents per day for women. That, Sir, is, I think, a very important advance in our wage rates and I should like to say that it is some-

thing which Members of this Council have urged for a long time.

I would also like to say that the reasons which have influenced the Government to act at this time are three-fold. Firstly, Sir, Members will recall that we reduced the scope of our subsidisation measures in October last, and although the effect of that reduction in scope was not as great or as severe as we had feared, nevertheless, it has had an adverse effect. The next reason, Sir, might not be known to hon. Members. An *Official Gazette* appeared this morning which contains a new price order with regard to sugar—the price of sugar for domestic consumption. The effect of that price order is that the control price of D.C. sugar has been increased by 1/2 cent per lb. Sir, we have endeavoured to hold the price of sugar as low as possible ever since the war broke out. We have granted an increase on the original price but even so, at the present time sugar which is sold and used for local consumption is sold at a price which is below the cost of production, and even with the increase of 1/2 cent per lb. on D.C. sugar it would still be below the cost of production. What is more is that the price of such sugar in British Guiana is lower, even with this increase, than in any other part of the Caribbean area. To that extent the sugar industry has been contributing to the subsidisation of our food in this Colony. We—the Government—have reduced our bill for subsidisation and it is only fair that the sugar industry should be given some advance in that price to make up the deficiency between the local selling price and the cost of production. Just here, I would like to say that the sugar industry has agreed to surrender part of the proceeds from this increase in price towards a further increase in the wages paid to the very lowest category of their employees, and this increase is altogether outside of the scope of the increases which hon. Members may have seen announced in the newspapers today.

The third reason, Sir, is just this: that the comparison between the Government's wage rates and those of other employees have been up to now very unfavourable, and it is not advisable that Government should keep in that position.

Government is supposed to be a model employer and to lead the way and, consequently, though this motion may be considered a little belated, it is felt that this is the time to do it.

I will turn now to the main subject of the motion which is cost of living bonus. I should have mentioned that in the increased scale of wages which the sugar producers have agreed to grant as from May 1, hon. Members may have noticed that they themselves have agreed to advance their cost of living bonus from 30 to 33 1/3 per cent., up to \$60 per month. The effect of this new scale which Members see on the Order Paper is designed to give an advantage mainly to employees with wages and salaries under \$60 per month. May I illustrate that by just quoting a few examples from our monthly list? A clerk or employee whose salary is \$30 per month now gets a cost of living allowance of \$9 per month. Under this proposal his allowance will go up by \$1 to \$10 per month. A clerk with a salary of \$40 per month gets an allowance of \$12 per month which will go up by \$1.33 per month. On a salary of \$50 per month the present allowance is \$15 per month, which will be increased to \$16.66 per month, and on \$60 per month the present allowance of \$18 will be increased to \$20 per month. After \$60 per month the increase comes down gradually. On \$70 per month the increase is \$1.66; \$80 per month, \$1.33; \$90 per month, \$1; \$100 per month, 66 cents; on \$120 per month it is nothing. Of course, above \$120 there is no change at all; the same flat rate of \$24 per month will continue. Hon. Members will see that it is really an attempt to increase the cost of living allowance from 30 per cent. to 33 1/3 per cent., and give this slight benefit to the lowest paid wage earner. Those drawing salaries above \$60 per month will get a very slight increase, the main effect being towards the lowest income earners.

As regards the effect on Government's revenue, the cost of the increase in the minimum basic wage rates which I have spoken of is roughly estimated by the Public Works Department at about \$100,000 in a full year, and if, as I have said, it is applied from the 1st of May I

expect that the cost of that part of this proposal will be about \$70,000.

With regard to the cost of living allowance side of it, I have estimated that if made effective as from the 1st of May that would cost \$110,000, but applying it again on the increase in the basic wage I expect that the whole bill would be something like \$200,000, and when I gave the estimate just now I should like to remind Members that that includes the cost of its application to the employees of the Transport and Harbours Department. So that the additional bill we would have to face is \$200,000 this year.

Hon. Members will recall that at the last meeting of the Finance Committee I communicated a formal statement of the final Budget position for 1948. Members will remember that I was pleased to be able to report that our revision of the estimates of revenue indicated a possible increase in the yield of revenue, always subject, of course, to what the Customs produce, of some \$350,000. So that I am again pleased to be able to say that it is possible to meet this additional charge on the Budget without creating a deficiency for 1948. I do hope that Members will appreciate the reasons which have influenced Government in putting before the Council this variation in the rates of cost of living allowances, and I hope it will commend itself to all hon. Members.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

The PRESIDENT: May I interrupt the debate to ask the Colonial Secretary to take the Oath.

The Oath of Allegiance was then administered to Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., Colonial Secretary.

COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCES.

The debate on the motion was then resumed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I interpret the reluctance of other hon. Members to speak as

an indication of complete approval of the motion. I myself heartily support the motion but I wish to make certain observations. I almost said "reservations". I have no doubt—and I have had a full insight of it during consideration of the Estimates—that the Colony is in a very bad financial state, and I cannot subscribe to the last statement by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer who seemed to suggest that any increased expenditure would be met by additional taxation. The point I wish to make is that while I do not grudge this increase in cost of living allowances I think the people who, in my opinion, are the subscribers to the fund from which these cost of living allowances are paid are not considered in any way. I refer particularly to the people in the rural areas, the peasant farmers, labourers on the estates, and so forth. What is being done to assist those people to meet the increase in their cost of living? I venture to say that the answer will be very difficult indeed. From a recent survey I have been able to make I am satisfied that the people can hardly make two ends meet. The price of rice has been pegged, although I appreciate that there has been a recent increase in the price by the Rice Marketing Board. Peasant farmers need more than an increase in the prices of their produce. Their cost of living has also gone up considerably. Although the labourers on the sugar estates have been granted a cost of living allowance of 33 1/3 per cent., the same as is being granted by Government, they will not be in the same position as City workers because of the lower wages they received in the past and the higher cost of living in the rural areas. A person who gets \$40 or \$60 per month with a cost of living allowance of 33 1/3 per cent. is in a much better position than one who gets \$2.40 or \$3 per week with a similar allowance. Apart from that the farmers suffer materially through droughts and floods, and I trust that this Council will give sympathetic consideration to whatever measures are brought forward to assist them. There are two motions coming up which call for considerable expenditure on measures which would improve the lot of farmers, and I trust that they will receive the same favourable consideration from this Council.

Motion, as amended, put, and agreed to.

COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCES TO PENSIONERS.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move:

"That, with reference to Resolution No. 1 of the 19th of December, 1947, this Council approves of the payment of cost of living allowances to pensioners during the year 1948, on the scale of rates authorised and in force in respect of the year 1947."

On this occasion I am afraid I have not any good tidings for the pensioners. I find that the hon. Member for Demerara River (Capt. Coghlan) who has been a strong protagonist of the proposal that the rates of allowances to pensioners should be increased, is not here today. He did make a statement, and I think it was when the Council was considering the Estimates under the head "Pensions and Gratuities"—in which he indicated pretty extensively what his views were. He pressed Government on the subject but it is felt that it is not possible at the present time to increase this scale of allowances to pensioners. It is really something done to assist a pensioner to meet the hardship of the times. A pensioner is not in the Service, and it is felt that the Council would be well advised to approve of the payment of the rates which were in force last year—20 per cent. on pensions up to \$720 per annum, and a flat rate of \$12 per month on pensions exceeding \$720 per annum. It is a small allowance but nevertheless it is a compassionate grant in the present circumstances of increased cost of living. I formally move the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr. LEE: After all it is human that we should help the pensioners, and if we are to think of them as human beings I think that their cost of living allowance should also be increased to 33 1/3 per cent. They have served the Colony and they also suffer from the high cost of living. I do not think an additional 13 1/3 per cent. would in any way overburden the finances of the Colony. I am thinking more especially of the small pensioners.

Mr. ROTH: I am well aware from past experience, that it is absolutely hopeless to expect Government to consider any increase to pensioners at the first asking. Probably in three months' time we may be able to persuade Government to grant a small increase in the cost of living allowance to pensioners at the bottom of the scale.

Mr. THOMPSON: The hon. Member for Demerara River (Capt. Coghlan) made a definite motion on the subject. Wouldn't it be better to give him an opportunity to bring his motion forward?

Dr. JAGAN: I would like to support the last speaker's suggestion. The hon. Member who is absent today has been quite outspoken in this matter of pensions. As far as I recollect he merely suggested a variation of the rates being paid at present, and I would strongly urge that the hon. the Colonial Treasurer should defer his motion until the hon. Member is here to present his case, because I am sure he would not be satisfied with the existing rates. I do not think his proposal would involve any increase in the sum involved.

Mr. McDOOM: I would like to support the request made by the last speaker.

Mr. LEE: I would like to point out to the hon. Members who have just spoken that to defer the motion would mean that the pensioners would not get their allowances. I would suggest that the motion be approved, and if we are able to persuade Government to increase the rates, provision can be made in a supplementary estimate later.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There is this to be said in the matter. When it is suggested that the rate, which is now 20 per cent., should be increased to 33 1/3 per cent., Members must remember that there was a definite relationship between the two rates. That is to say that the rate for employees was 30 per cent. and that for pensioners was fixed at 20 per cent., which means that pensioners get two-thirds of the minimum rate for Government employees actually in the Service. So that it is rather a big jump to suggest that the minimum rate for

pensioners should be advanced to the full rate for employees. I heard one Member say that the proposal of the hon. Member for Demerara River (Capt. Coghlan) would not mean any increase in the expenditure. Of course it would. At the present moment there is no authorisation for the payment of any cost of living allowance to pensioners at all. We have been doing it on the tentative approval given by the Finance Committee pending the introduction of this motion. That is a situation which cannot continue. It must be brought formally before this Council. I suggest that the motion be adopted. If the hon. Member for Demerara River decides to pursue the matter further and actually puts a motion before the Council it can be debated again. I cannot guarantee that even if the motion is carried Government would see fit to adopt it. As Members well know, motions calling for expenditure or increased expenditure are taken in the form of recommendations which have to be carefully considered by the Executive, but there is nothing to suggest that that Member, or any other Member, cannot at a later date put forward a motion for an increase of the allowance. It could never be considered a completely closed book. I suggest that the motion form part of our budget, and should be passed because, without it, we are without proper authority to continue payment of any allowances whatever.

Motion put, and agreed to.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES BILL DEFERRED.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I ask that item 4 on the Order Paper (the Co-operative Societies Bill) be deferred until after consideration of the motion by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer—item 5.

Agreed to.

CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATION.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move:

“That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 3 dated the 12th of January, 1948, this

Council approves of the establishment of a Co-operative Organisation on the lines indicated in the Message and undertakes to vote the provision required for that purpose."

With your permission, Sir, I do not propose to do more than introduce this motion and leave it to Mr. Laing, the Commissioner of Local Government, to address the Council on this matter as he is, of course, more competent and more conversant with this particular subject than I can be. I would like to remind the Council, however, that there was some slight discussion of this matter at the last meeting of the Finance Committee on the 18th of April. At that meeting the question of the selection of an officer for appointment to this proposed new post of Registrar of Co-operative Societies came up, and Members took the opportunity to discuss this subject, not at great length, but they did indicate that it would be more desirable that the motion which I am now about to move be passed in this Council before the question of an appointment to the post was dealt with. However, after discussion the Finance Committee did approve of the acceptance by Government of a scheme approved by the Secretary of State under the Development and Welfare Act, giving a grant of £2,650 to pay the passages and salary of this officer for two years, on the condition that this Council would be prepared to vote the other expenses relative to the formation of the organisation. So that the position now is that the Council has agreed to accept this scheme, and I myself gathered the impression that Members were entirely in favour of it, but that they wished to consider and discuss in open Council many aspects of the matter which will arise on the motion itself, and more particularly on the Bill which the hon. the Attorney-General is to move.

I do not want to trespass on the matter at all, because I see the Commissioner of Local Government is here, and I prefer that he should speak first, and, if necessary, at the conclusion of the debate I would answer any points that may be raised on it. I therefore ask you, Sir, to permit the Commissioner of Local Government to address the Council.

Mr. M. B. LAING, C.M.G., O.B.E.,

(Commissioner of Local Government) : Your Excellency and gentlemen, the Co-operative Movement is a people's movement and therefore it is right, I think, for us to say whether the people of British Guiana are suited to co-operative work. That is, whether the people of British Guiana are able to work together, because that is the simple meaning of co-operation. The idea of the establishment of a Co-operative Movement in this Colony is not new. As far back as 1910 the then Governor, Sir Frederick Hodgson, appointed a Committee, the terms of reference of which were "to report on the advisability of establishing Agricultural Loan Banks in the Colony." The Committee considered the matter and rejected co-operation. The Governor himself, who was anxious at the time to see introduced what is known as the Raiffeisen system of Banks, was not satisfied with the decision of that Committee, and therefore appointed another Committee, because he said that he felt that co-operation should be the key-note of the whole scheme, otherwise the educational value, the teaching of self-reliance and thrift would be lost. That second Committee went to work, but while as a result of the work of that Committee, Banks were introduced, the whole system of co-operation was not at that time accepted. The Committee unanimously reported that Banks with unlimited liability were unsuitable for introduction in British Guiana, and they said that the people of British Guiana "are averse to checking and watching their neighbours' affairs, and would not take kindly to the responsibility of having to make good their neighbours' defaults." In effect it was a rejection again of co-operation. Later in 1942, Dr. Benham, the Economic Adviser to the Comptroller of Development and Welfare in the West Indies, in examining the position in regard to Co-operative Banks referred to the decision of the 1910 Committee in these words: "I am of opinion this is still true that anybody who advocates transforming the Banks into Mutual Help Societies is not facing reality."

Now I know the common report is that the people in British Guiana are unable to co-operate one with another both on account of the lack of trust and some degree of jealousy. It would be rash of

me to say that that is not true of some of the people of this Colony, but I would say most definitely it is not true of all. The fact is, that when you eliminate those who are unable to co-operate you still have a large percentage who will and do co-operate. It was because Government held this view, that Government's policy in regard to Social Welfare was based to a large extent on the development of Co-operative Societies. I have told you all that happened in the past, because I do not wish you to believe that we rushed in like enthusiastic amateurs where angels fear to tread. We knew the background, but we also knew and had a belief in the common man in this Colony, and we therefore started our work realising the difficulties of the task but believing in the practicability of establishing as far as possible extensive co-operative work in this Colony.

His Excellency the Governor has said in his message to this Council that valuable spadework has been done by my department. We appreciate your remarks, Your Excellency, and are grateful for the tribute paid to the Officers of my department who have done very good work in establishing the foundations of the Co-operative Movement in this Colony. Generosity and extravagance are very marked in the character of British Guianese, and it is my belief that co-operative work must remain rooted in thrift. It is therefore with this idea that we started the Co-operative Movement by educating the people in co-operative principles and establishing as many thrift societies and saving groups as possible. As a result of our efforts some 40 saving groups have been established, and the savings in those groups now amount to some \$12,000. When I refer to saving, I do not mean saving merely for the purpose of accumulating money, perhaps, to spend on some object which will produce no great benefit to the saver. The purpose of saving is to expand and develop the Co-operative Movement.

There are several ways in which the Co-operative Movement can be developed. There are Savings Unions or Credit Unions with the emphasis on thrift and self-help. There is the Co-operative Store, the Consumers' Co-operative, which has

been so successful in the United Kingdom but may not necessarily be suited or successful here. Then there is the Marketing Co-operative which aims at giving to the producer some greater part of the profits from his own work, cutting out where necessary the middleman. I say "where necessary" because some middlemen perform very useful functions, and a co-operative movement is not necessary where those functions are adequately performed. There are many other branches of co-operative work and many other ways in which the Co-operative Movement here can be expanded, but there is one thing the Co-operative Movement does not and cannot achieve, and that is spectacular results. Every step has to be carefully considered and patiently built up on broad foundations. Some people believe that spectacular results can be achieved, but we only have to refer to the experience of other Colonies to see just where that sort of work will lead us. If we are going to sacrifice quality then spectacular results and window-dressing can be achieved, but if we build co-operation on no foundation then the day will come when there will be a recession when these organisations will fail and irreparable harm will be done to the whole movement.

The position today is, that after a great deal of careful planning and hard work we have established through education the foundation of co-operative work. We do not believe that persons should be induced to take part in any co-operative movement unless they had been thoroughly educated in the principles of co-operation. The stage has been reached where expert guidance is essential to direct us in the proper way in which we should develop this Movement. We have not here in this Colony a man of sufficient experience. I know Your Excellency has great experience in co-operative work but you will not have the time to spare to direct the work personally. It is our great need now to have a man with a thorough knowledge and experience of co-operative work to guide us in the expansion of the Movement. Without such a man, I am satisfied that we can do nothing further to enlarge our work.

The hon. the Colonial Treasurer has told you of the generous grant made under the Colonial Development and Welfare to cover the salary of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies. The Registrar will be assisted in his work by local officers whom he will train during the time he is in the Colony under contract and, of course, he will have to be given a small clerical staff. In the districts he will be assisted by the District Welfare Officers who have received some training in co-operation and are now doing the preliminary work. It is essential, therefore, that we should have a well trained Registrar to guide us. I commend the motion with great confidence to this Council and trust that you will approve of it.

Dr. SINGH : I second the motion. Speaking broadly on the Co-operative Movement I would like to see these Co-operative Societies studded all over this Colony. I had some experience of the working of Co-operative Societies in India, and I can assure hon. Members that up to the time I was there in 1925 they had done very useful work and were very much enlarged in their scope and had brought much benefit to the members. With that in view, when I started my medical studies in Edinburgh my family became members of the St. Cuthbert Co-operative Society. We took a £5 share and bought everything that was possible for us to obtain from the Co-operative Stores. Only the things we could not purchase there we got from outside. But whatever articles were placed in those stores were of very good quality, and we co-operated fully with the Society with the result that when a dividend was declared—that was done every six months—before I left Scotland for this Colony I received a handsome cheque for £310 for all my expenditure there.

This is a good model from what I have seen, and I believe the people of this Colony should take it up. Once there is that spirit of co-operation especially among the rural people, we have the resources in the villages to be utilised, and on the whole I say it would be a useful society and the people should take advantage of it. I may say that when I returned to the Colony I tried this idea of

a co-operative society amongst the rice-farmers, but I did not succeed. Perhaps it was because I was not able to put it over to them in the right way or I did not get their support, but I know from what I have seen in Calcutta it is a very good thing to have.

Mr. LEE : The Co-operative Movement is very good, if conducted in a manner that the co-operatives themselves would pay the expenses of their establishment. But I notice from Your Excellency's Message in paragraph 5 it says:

"The estimated initial cost in setting up a small Co-operative Department of the nature referred to above is approximately \$20,000 (exclusive of the Registrar's salary)"

If it would only cost this Government \$20,000 per annum I would not mind, but my experience has been that as soon as a department starts within five years that department costs the Government sometimes ten times the amount it started with. What I would like to find out from Government is whether this \$20,000 is the initial cost and it is to be for how many years — 5 or 10 years according to the 10-year plan?

The COLONIAL TREASURER : Perhaps I may be allowed to rise to a point of explanation at this stage. I am not going to make a second speech. I had omitted to refer to a rather important point in my opening remarks, and that is the connection between this proposed new organisation and the organisation which is already in being and to which Mr. Laing referred—the Social Welfare Organisation. Hon. Members will remember that the Social Welfare Organisation is being carried up to the 30th June this year by a grant under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, and included in this Colony's Estimates for this year is the provision necessary to continue it for the second half of this year, the figure being \$68,316. At the time when it came before the Finance Committee there was some discussion about it in relation to the Co-operative Movement, and I undertook to ask Your Excellency to provide an opportunity to this Council to debate the whole question of the Social Welfare Organisation under

a specific motion inviting the Council to approve of its continuance as a permanent feature of our Estimates.

What I have risen to say is that the two things to a large extent go hand in hand. Some of the officers of the Social Welfare Organisation will undoubtedly be the Field Officers of the Co-operative Movement. There is a great connection between the two, and consequently in referring to the expenditure hon. Members may bear that in mind. I should have hoped the acceptance of this motion would itself indicate the approval of the Council towards the continuance of the Social Welfare Organisation, but if Members feel they require some more detailed information on that point as to how these two things fit in together, Mr. Laing would be pleased to supply it.

In answer to the hon. Member's question, to some extent the cost of the service of the Co-operative Movement will fall on the Social Welfare Organisation. That is to say, some of the officers under this Head will undoubtedly be engaged in carrying out the work of the Co-operative Movement as contemplated. So the hon. Member in considering his remarks would please bear that in mind. If he wishes further information I am sure Mr. Laing would be pleased to give it.

Mr. LEE: I would like further information because my idea about Co-operatives, as far as I have read about it, is that the Co-operative Movement is self-supporting. If this Government is going to spend \$20,000 per annum for five years, or 10 years, and after that period the Co-operative Movement in its different directions will be self-supporting, then I say it would be a good thing; if it is going to be as the Co-operative Credit Banks, the money from Government is to be spent to carry on something which, if properly organised and carried out, would pay its way, then I say it is a good thing to help it on, because I had the experience of the Rice Marketing Board which should be and had been in its initial stage a co-operative movement to bear its own cost. Thanks for the help that the war has given to the Rice Marketing Board and the control under which it is operated, it

has been able to pay its way but with what results to the producers? Every co-operative movement must give better results to the producers, as far as I understand it. That is why I say, if that is the aim of Government and if I am assured by Government that this will not cost Government after a certain number of years any money whatever, then I would say "Let us take the step and have this expert come out here and teach us."

But can we say in all earnestness that an expert will be able within that short period that he is seconded to be here to teach us, to initiate and train men and women sufficient to carry on the Co-operative Movement? I very much doubt that. However, if I get an assurance from you, Sir, that the Imperial Government is standing the expenses of this teacher and, if necessary, will continue the teaching, then I say it is a good thing and we in this Colony, I feel sure, will appreciate the gesture of the Imperial Government in sending someone to teach us until we get on our feet. But let us examine what is happening. If this Co-operative Movement is going to be attached to the Social Welfare Organisation or they are going to be intertwined, then we would be setting up a department in which this Co-operative Movement would be but the handle to turn the door for the Social Welfare Department. If that is so, I would like to know from Government what is to be the initial cost of this Social Welfare Department that is to be set up, whether it would be continued, and what would be the obligation of the Colony towards this Social Welfare Department. I do admit that Social Welfare is necessary, but at the same time if it is going to cause expenditure which this Colony cannot afford, then I would have to say "I cannot agree to it." I must repeat, if I can get an assurance from Government that if within the period that the Co-operative expert is coming here to teach us he finds that his task is not completed the Imperial Government would continue to let us get the full advantage of his knowledge, I would certainly agree to this Movement. But at the same time I say Co-operative Movement is essential in every democratic country, giving every citizen the freedom and right to get

together and with the assistance and protection of Government obtain for their products the best price and the best advantage for marketing their products. I have known that departments have been initiated at a small cost and when I did catch myself I found those departments costing Government a lot of money and they have to be carried on. Therefore I want to find out what will be the initial cost and for how long that will be, before I decide one way or the other.

Mr. ROTH: I am all in favour of the Co-operative Movement. Very many years ago I started the Movement in the State of Queensland where it helped to a great degree not only the small man but the man not so small. A fair amount of the prosperity of that State is due to the many Co-operatives which started originally with Government assistance. At this time, I know, it is an independent and very powerful organisation with not so much stress made on social welfare but more on industries, minor, and those not quite large. Even sugar was run on the co-operative basis, also dairy produce. I support this resolution fully.

Mr. FERNANDES: I have always supported Co-operatives, but I am afraid my friend, the hon. Member for Essequibo River, has a slightly wrong idea as to what this money is going to be spent for, because he made the remark that if at the end of that time the Co-operatives would be able to pay their way it would be quite all right to spend the money. As I know Co-operatives, they always have to pay their way and will not be dependent upon Government for any direct financial help. As I see it, this department is mainly to advise people, who want to start Co-operatives, how to start them and how to carry on and to govern those Co-operatives. That is, to see that they are carried on in the correct way and that honesty is one of their strong points. I am going to recommend to this Council very strongly that this motion be passed authorising the bringing into being of this department, because I feel sure that in another ten years everyone who did so would be pleased at the results.

Co-operatives encourage thrift and

something more than that. They encourage study and that study will help those who take part in it to educate themselves so as to be able to run their own affairs and to be far more responsible citizens than they are at present. I have no doubt whatever that the people of British Guiana—I am speaking now particularly of the low income group—are quite capable with a little bit of guidance to manage their own affairs in a co-operative way. I am not going to say much more than that, except to ask hon. Members to support this expenditure because it will only benefit the Colony and to tell my friend, the hon. Member for Essequibo River, that it is not something to be spent for a few years; it is something that will have to go on for all times and it is very advisable for Government to keep an eye on how these Co-operatives are being conducted and to see that they are kept on the right lines and only those who pin their faith on them reap the full benefits from them.

Mr. LEE: To a point of correction! I would like to correct my hon. friend's impression of what I meant. The Imperial Government will be sending out an expert for a number of years and is going to supply the funds whilst that expert is here on contract. What I would like to point out to my hon. friend is that within that short period the local people may not be able to learn sufficient, and in such an event is the Colony to continue the expense, as has happened in one or two instances of officers being sent out here?

The PRESIDENT: If the hon. Member read my message he would see that one of the duties I propose for this expert is to teach a Guianese to take over the job of Registrar., and the post of Registrar will be with us as long as the Co-operative Movement is with us. The Movement is not a thing that stops; it grows and grows forever and you see the room for its expansion. I will say to this Council that we will not require this department for three or four years, which I sincerely hope not. If that is so, then it means our Co-operative Movement would fail. We want it for all times, as long as there is scope for increasing the

number of societies and groups of societies.

If I may say a word on the whole question I am not posing as an expert in co-operation nor do I regard myself as being competent to be Registrar without further very intensive study of the principle. But I will say this: I have a tremendous lot of experience of it not in one or two places but in four different parts of the Empire in which I have served. I am not the one to say that because a thing works in one country it will work in another, and that because the people in one country are capable of co-operation on certain lines they are capable in another country. You will notice, those who have studied co-operation, that it operates differently in different countries. You will find its strong points in one country and its weak points in another. You will find in the United Kingdom, for an example, the strength of the Co-operative Movement is the Co-operative Wholesale Society which is wholly a Consumers' Movement. Incidentally, it is true in so far as those joining are concerned that they get their products cheaper. You have not in the United Kingdom to any great extent what is known as a Marketing Society, a Producing Society and the all-important Credit Society. You go to Holland where the scheme is very strong indeed. There it is the Marketing Society and that is the strength of the Movement there. You go to Ceylon which copied the credit system from India where this system is very strong. There the whole basis of it is a Thrift Society. That is to say, a society of farmers, peasants mostly, who know each other and are banded together; each of them only had a few dollars but put it all in a common fund. One man wanted to purchase lands from that common fund and they gave him a loan. The next year another wanted and so on. If they found they had more money than was immediately wanted for loans, which very often happened in a good season, they put that money aside for the bad season. It is well to have Co-operative Banks, That is an original form of Credit Society, but they want immovable property as security for loans. When you get a band will not succeed. There must be ab-

know the worth of each other, if one comes along and says he wants \$50 for a purpose they know he actually wants it; they know he is a responsible farmer who will work and repay the loan, and they do not worry about security. They trust him. That is where a credit of that kind is very much easier than it can be in a commercial bank or any form of central bank where you do not know the borrower. A society of that kind can do a tremendous lot. There again, with a society of that kind going, no one man can afford to buy a tractor to plough his land—in fact his farm is not large enough to keep a tractor going—but get them all together and they can get one or two tractors which they buy in common. There is the function of a Purchasers' Society.

Take the Marketing Society where men get together for the marketing of their produce. We have one or two examples here—eggs, milk. They get together, pool all their produce and find a market for it. They arrange with a purchaser in Georgetown for a price which they regard as fair and enter into a contract with him. But the success of a society of that kind will depend on two things—first, the reliability of its members to produce what they say they will produce, and then to produce it at the exact time and in the right quantity and quality. If they don't, their society must break down.

You get on from that kind of society to what is known as the Consumers' Society. That is to say, they have a shop which sells groceries, etc. One of the requisites if that shop is to be successful is to have a real businesslike manager. In business or commerce unless you have a competent staff, or manager, or shopkeeper it will never succeed. Then you have the consumer who is a member of that particular society. What does he contract to do? He is to obtain all the goods he can from that particular shop. They say to you "Cash; not only is that our system but we make the profits and you get a bonus". You get that system going and it sounds easy enough. It is a very attractive proposition, but you will find that unless your members are loyal it will not succeed. They must be ab-

solute loyalty and no going round the corner to get the goods a little bit cheaper. You will find people coming along and telling them "You come to me and I will give you a credit." A co-operative shop does not give credit, and so they desert the shop for that reason.

I just mention those things to you as illustrating some of the pitfalls that beset any attempt we make to establish Consumer Co-operatives in the Colony. In Ceylon there were societies run without any expert guidance and they got into a complete mess, and there had to be wound-up 300 or 400 of them. The societies were given loans by Government but they were given no directions whatever as to how to run them. They had to start the whole movement over again, and today from the last report I received it is a really tremendous movement there.

I have also had some experience in Cyprus. There was only an island population of 450,000 but for those people they had in that Island 360 Credit Societies which formed a network over the whole Island. There they grow wheat and barley instead of rice as here, and they use the same sort of agricultural implements as we do here. In certain respects as far as cereals cultivation is concerned their difficulties were met by mechanisation, but those Credit Societies when I left there had to their credit not less than \$15,000,000. They are peasant farmers and they are not any outstanding type of people. I never viewed them as a people who are outstanding examples, but once they got this idea that co-operation was a good thing it caught on like wild fire and, as I said, the societies grew up. They failed now and again, but the people stuck to them and they were considerably helped during the War as far as their finances were concerned because they were used as distributing centres or distributing agencies for their own commodities and were able to give a certain amount of service which was free. They knew that if they dealt in those commodities they would hardly make a loss but a profit. They made a little profit which they

added to their funds and that set them up on a really sound basis.

Now, you get every kind of society. In fact, there is no limit to the kind of society you can have but you must adopt the methods suitable to the people of the country. I will not say what has worked in any country will work here, it is a matter which requires a lot of study of the people, it requires men who have had experience in other countries and who are familiar with the principles of co-operation to come and explain to the people what they have to do. As Mr. Laing has told us, it is a people's movement—it is a people's society. A Co-operative Society is not a Government society. It is a people's society; this expenditure is merely to assist them. The name Registrar of Co-operative Societies is a misnomer because he is very much more than that. The name has come from India and has been adopted by many other countries, but does not really indicate the functions of the officer. He is the guide, philosopher and friend of the movement; his principal work is that of directing the people and inculcating in them the principles of co-operation. It is true that he will be given wide powers to inspect all co-operative societies with Inspectors—to look at their books and so on—but all those powers are not for Government's sake; they are for the sake of the societies themselves and for the protection of the members of the societies. I have also heard it asked why should we have a Registrar looking at the books, but I think experience has shown that we must have one. We want to know what is going on, and we are simply authorising him to see that things are done along proper lines. You have been told all these things here and that is the whole reason why you want the societies to follow a pattern, both as regards operation and as regards supervision. If a society gets into a mess the Registrar, in the interest of the members themselves—as you see in the Bill, but we need not discuss that now—will have the power to wind it up. You can sense usually, when a business or something else is going down the hill and the quicker you make some radical reorganisation the better.

I am not going to predict that this movement is going to be a thundering success; it is going to mean a lot of hard work and it will depend largely on the type of co-operation we get. I do hope, however, that we will get the right kind.

Mr. FARNUM: I would like to congratulate Government for bringing forward this motion for the appointment of this officer. I have no doubt whatever in my mind that this movement would bring about a new era for the people in the rural districts, especially the farmers. I believe, Sir, that co-operative societies under the guidance of an expert would enable the farmers to market their produce and to buy their necessities — tools, etc. — more economically than otherwise, as they would be able to buy in bulk. As regards the question of mechanical equipment, when they are working on a co-operative basis they would be able to purchase tractors and things of that kind. In Georgetown there is a form of co-operative in the Friendly Societies and I think improvements should be introduced in that direction. These societies have done very good work and I feel quite sure that with expert advice such as this officer would be able to give they would be able to extend their usefulness. I remember that some years ago a co-operative store was started in this City but it did not last very long. I do not think it lasted longer than six months and I attribute that to the fact that there was not that expert guidance which was necessary so it went under. I venture to think that with the appointment of an expert officer we would see many co-operative stores, etc., in Georgetown and also in the rural districts, for the benefit of the small man. Before taking my seat I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Laing for the interest he has taken in this matter, and I think he was rather modest when he referred to the work his Department is doing. I have seen many of these clubs in the country districts and I think they are also doing good work by way of encouraging handicraft among their members. I feel that our people are turning out work of a very high standard in this respect and I think the Movement is inculcating the principle that they should keep together in order to progress along industrial lines. I welcome very

cordially the decision to appoint this officer, because I am sure he is going to bring about a new era of progress for the small man both in the City and in the rural districts.

Dr. NICHOLSON: I am 100 per cent. behind this motion for the improvement of the lot of the small man. I have seen consumer co-operatives at work in the city of Edinburgh where there are co-operative stores, laundries, trains and so on, and the people are very keen on supporting them because they share in the profits; so much so that a housewife who has not got very much to spend would not receive a bone from the butcher for nothing, but would rather purchase it for two pence in order to get her voucher. It is my belief that if co-operative societies are started in British Guiana they would improve the standing of the small man. A man would be able to borrow money and improve his farm, and so on, thereby making more progress than he would otherwise have made. I am, therefore, 100 per cent. behind this motion.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think we are all agreed that the Co-operative Movement is a very good thing and that it would assist the people of the community very much indeed, but I am going to be one of those who are very pessimistic as regards embarking upon such a venture in this Colony at this particular time. I am sorry to find that when movements are initiated by Government they always raise a certain amount of doubt, but every such movement should have a great amount of plausibility in it. That seems to be appreciated by hon. Members and the result of all these movements is that the Colony is being burdened and burdened financially without any corresponding result. I say again that I am pessimistic, and there are good reasons why I am. In the first place, there is a great amount of instability in so far as economic conditions in this Colony are concerned and that is going to react strongly upon any Co-operative Movement. We should never be venturing upon such a movement as this — putting one foot forward towards development as it were. However much Government may say that a large percentage of the people are willing to co-operate with this movement, there is no

question whatever that a large percentage of our people are indigent and starving, and an indigent and starving people cannot co-operate.

There is no doubt whatever that throughout the rural areas of the Colony there is much fluctuation in the fortunes of the people and I am alarmed that Government and some hon. Members of this Council are thinking of taking this step which would cost something like \$38,000 per annum. if we are to include the expenditure of the Social Welfare Department. Who would be bearing this cost in the end, but the people themselves? Are we justified in incurring such a tremendous expenditure on what I regard as a bit of experimentation? I am pessimistic because a little later the movement will increase the expenditure on the Social Welfare Department which is also going to have a hand in it. I venture to think that social welfare work in this Colony has failed dismally. It is true that the Department concerned has spent—or mis-spent—money handed to it by the Colonial Development and Welfare Organisation, but although it was not our money we should be interested in results. At this moment I can only characterise that Department as a kiskadee—jumping from limb to limb—and it has done the Colony no good up to the present. We have had a Co-operative officer here from one of the islands but the sum total of the achievement of the Department in co-operative work has been one or two co-operative schemes, chiefly in respect of a motor launch service for the transportation of milk in the Mahaicony Creek. This was referred to by the Commissioner of Local Government, but what is the position of that undertaking today? At a public meeting which was held at Mahaicony on Sunday last it was disclosed that the whole scheme has fallen to the ground because of what I have already referred to as the fluctuating circumstances of the people. They are asking that representations be made for them to get free gasolent because they cannot afford to buy any for the transportation of only 50 gallons of milk which is all that is now being brought down the creek.

In Georgetown there is a co-operative movement but the members of that move-

ment cannot rest confident in their ability to support it because they cannot afford to buy cash on the hammer and they have to buy where they can get a little credit. Then again, they cannot get all their requirements from a consumer co-operative because it is limited to a certain number of items which could be got easily in the street. In the case of the rural areas where the population is thinned out, I cannot think of any consumer co-operative being able to compete with a well organised shop in any district. That is impossible because what could be done in the case of the shop might not be possible in the case of the co-operative although it may pay dividends. If a shop-owner loses on certain items or commodities he would make it back on others, but it might be difficult for a co-operative to do that because if it loses on an item it would interfere with the profits and the general efficiency. If you have a small population to depend on for support of a co-operative movement and some of them fail to do so for one cause or another, that would strike at the economy of the movement and what would happen to it? Universal co-operation is a vague quantity and cannot be relied on. If it would cost little or nothing to start these co-operatives I would say let us go ahead. I want to say that there is no room whatever for voluntary work as regards social welfare in this Colony, since no opportunity is being given for it to be done. That is due to the self-consciousness of the Social Welfare Department, and I have had personal experience of what I am saying.

Some years ago a 4-H club was started in this Colony by a man who knows four times more about it than any Government Social Welfare Officer. Exhibitions were held in the Town Hall and on one occasion the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Thompson, was present when high tribute was paid to the standard of the exhibits, but no member of the Social Welfare Department, attended that club. If they did, they did so surreptitiously. The Department, however, conceived the idea of going into the very thing in some sort of fashion, and I think that 4-H club organisation had men who would have been willing to take charge of the 4-H club work in the Colony. I speak because I was the President of that body and at a meeting

held — I think it was at the Y.M.C.A. — we issued printed rules for the extension of 4-H club work in the Colony, but the Department in its wisdom refused to register that body as part of the Youth Movement in British Guiana and to give it any representation. Eventually, the Department sent two men to Jamaica to study 4-H club work there for six months. They came back and by devious manoeuvrings they were able to get the 4-H clubs out of existence. I pointed out that 4-H club work was not intended to be carried on by only a few people in the Colony and that there should be clubs all over the country so that if some failed the others would succeed. Today the 4-H club work has failed and the officers from Jamaica are seeking other positions and have probably gone back to their substantive posts. That is why I stated that the Social Welfare Department was like a kiskadee—jumping from limb to limb. I am an enthusiast myself as regards social welfare work, because I see that the people are crying out for the right type of assistance in the country districts but their wishes are not being fulfilled.

There is wide dissatisfaction in this respect and there is lack of confidence in the Social Welfare Department. Are we to entrust the fortunes of this new venture in the hands of this Department? Although we may have an expert to guide the movement for the first two years, unless there will be something to compensate us for the expenditure we are going to undertake we would be placing a burden on the very people we would like to benefit. I think we should make room for voluntary work in this matter—get all the literature and so on that we can and let those in a position like the representatives of the people start social services among them, and if we find that the response is satisfactory we can ask for an expert to come to the Colony and give advice in order to round off the enthusiastic efforts. The Social Welfare Department has had years of opportunity, but what has it done up to now that we can be proud about. We should not permit the procedure to be as slow as it has been in the past, otherwise we would have to wait until the millenium to get successful co-operatives. There is cause for pessimism because, what is a resistance but an opportunity for co-operative work.

The rice industry which is an example in this respect has been nationalised, and the coconut industry has been also nationalised.

The PRESIDENT: Not nationalised.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is very near to being nationalised. As regards milk, the present distribution in the City may be an example that a proper Co-operative Movement is necessary, but that is a matter which is in the hands of the people themselves. What else there is? It is true there will be always opportunity for consumer co-operatives, but I have already pointed out that there is a thinning out of our population in the rural areas and there is fluctuation in the economic condition of the people. I think the only avenue which would produce something we can recommend to Government is a producer type of co-operative. I think that in cases where people like peasant farmers are unable to buy tractors and other equipment they should be given an opportunity to do so through producer co-operatives, but we would need a staff which would cost about \$20,000 per annum in order to run them. There are examples in other countries, however, to show that such a movement can be run with the maximum efficiency. Our Law Courts are not closed and such a co-operative is nothing more than a partnership business. There is an old saying that "a partnership is a leaky-ship" but if half a dozen farmers can get together in any community I think the urge to purchase equipment on a co-operative basis would arise without any exterior influence. I have been talking to some people in my constituency about the purchase of tractors and so on on a co-operative basis and I was faced with this poser: we have a definite season for planting rice and if we buy a harrow and a tractor for all of us the big question is going to be who must use it first and who must use it last; some of us are going to be squeezed out when we want to use it. That is one of the biggest problems as regards producer co-operatives, but it appears to me to be a very good movement. No one can gainsay that fact and Your Excellency who has had much experience in that respect has referred in your Message and in your speech to the value of co-operative movements. I say,

however, that at this time when we want money for better roads, better housing and other social conditions, we should not spend \$20,000 per annum on something which is a mere experiment and I would ask hon. Members to consider the matter in that light. I think also that the Advisory Committee to the Social Welfare Department should be consulted and let us hammer out this question of voluntary work in social welfare.

Mr. THOMPSON: I am sorry I have to follow in the wake of my friend. I am an optimist and I must say that this motion has not come forward a minute too early. I am a practical man. I have been going the country round, and when I make a statement I can stand by it. In 1934 I launched a Boys and Girls' Club, a 4-H Club, and we started with gardening. We did not get through, but that did not daunt me. I tried in various other ways to get my people to co-operate. I think it is very unfair to condemn wholesale a Department which is fairly young. I do not for one moment agree that the Social Welfare branch has done nothing. We have practical examples of the work it is doing. On the Coast there is egg pooling, and there are savings unions. A good many people who obtain loans from the Loan Banks simply squander that money. If those people were trained to pool their money they could make better use of it on a co-operative basis. Tractors could be obtained for ploughing, and by a pooling of effort the lot of the rice farmer would have been much better than it is today. If the Registrar of Co-operative Societies is prepared to go around the country and give a lead to the people I am sure they will benefit by this Co-operative Movement.

There is evidence of great wastage of fruit in the country districts, and with careful guidance the people could make better use of such things. It has been brought to my notice that some people who have got together in a commercial way are experiencing great difficulty in getting supplies. At Rose Hall some people have launched a very promising business on their own, but they are handicapped by lack of supplies. Several applications have been made to the Control Board but to no avail. In the creeks

where the people have their rice cultivations they cannot get supplies. Those are things which must be looked into.

The Registrar who is coming will be expected to train a certain number of young men to carry on the work when he has gone. We have Mr. Gordon who has come here and done very good work. Cold water is thrown on every new movement started in this Colony. I am against that sort of behaviour. I think that with experience some of the most vigorous critics will become converts. Let us try this Co-operative Movement and give it a chance. Under the direction of the Registrar I am positive that it will succeed. At Lichfield, West Coast, Berbice, there is a Union in which the farmers are pooling their money for the purpose of purchasing tractors. We must not think that the way is so dark that there is no good at all in British Guiana. I support the motion and promise every co-operation.

Dr. GONSALVES: As I am in agreement with the motion I thought I would remain quiet, but the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) has made one or two points which have prompted me to say something. One of the things he mentioned was that shops run on the co-operative system could not succeed against well organised shops. I do not agree with him. I know of many persons in my constituency who have already planned to work on co-operative lines, and in view of my experience abroad I will do all I can to encourage them along those lines. I first became acquainted with consumer co-operatives in the U.S.A., where I lived for some years. I saw numerous stores and did not know how they were operated. All I knew was that I was able to purchase goods there at much cheaper prices than I could at other stores. Next door to us in Trinidad I visited in 1931 a small office in which was carried on a Co-operative Bank started by Dr. McShine. That Bank progressed to such an extent that the Royal Bank of Canada offered to take over its shares. Today there are branches of that Bank in Barbados, and I should like Members of this Council to find out what that organisation stands for. I think that that is the sort of thing that