

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Friday, 8th February, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT:

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G.

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

The Hon. the Attorney-General (Acting), Mr. F. W. Holder.

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

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).

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

The Hon. F. Dias, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E. (Georgetown South).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North-Western District).

The Hon. A. G. King (Demerara River).

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. A. M. Edun (Nominated).

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 7th February, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL.

The PRESIDENT: With regard to the public business today, the Colonial Secretary who is to move the motion with regard to the duty on skimmed milk has asked me to suggest that we take that motion, if possible, as the first piece of business. It is the second item on the Order of the Day. The first item is the Rice Marketing Board Bill. If Members are agreeable we will dispose of the motion dealing with the duty on skimmed milk and take whatever action is necessary.

PAPERS LAID.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Heape) laid on the table the following documents:—

Report of the Commissioners of Currency for the year 1944.

Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for 1945.

ORDER OF THE DAY.**REDUCTION OF DUTY ON SKIMMED MILK.**

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion by the Colonial Secretary:—

That, with reference to Governor's Message No 15 dated the 17th of January, 1946, this Council approves of the introduction in Legislative Council of a Bill to amend the Customs Duties Ordinance 1935, to provide for a reduction of the duty on skimmed milk.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member for North-Western District was speaking at the close of yesterday's proceedings.

Mr. JACOB: The hon. Mover of this motion has made very few references to the position as it stands at present. I was a little disappointed that he did not give us some more details of the 1935 Ordinance. Looking at the Ordinance I find that evaporated and powdered milk which in the opinion of the Government Analyst has been prepared entirely from whole milk, is duty free under the British Preferential Tariff while under the General Tariff the duty is 50 cents per 100 lbs. On milk prepared wholly or in part from skimmed milk the duty is \$10 per 100 lbs. under the Preferential Tariff and \$30 under the General Tariff. On condensed milk prepared wholly or in part from skimmed milk the duty is \$10 per 100 lbs. Preferential Tariff and \$30 per 100 lbs. General Tariff. In the case of condensed milk prepared from whole milk the duty under the Preferential Tariff is 5% and under the General Tariff 15%, as fixed by Ordinance 25 of 1944.

The object of this motion is to remove the preferential duty of 10 cents per lb. on skimmed milk and to admit it duty free. I am a little surprised that Government should at this time introduce this motion to remove the preferential duty on skimmed

milk. This Legislature rejected a similar proposal in 1935. What is the reason for bringing this motion at this time? I have been trying to find out but it is almost impossible for me to think of a reason. Certain suggestions have been made as to the reason but I am not worrying about them. All I wish to say is that I find it difficult at this time to remove this protective duty in relation to our cow's milk. In Your Excellency's Message it is stated:

"Subsequently, the Secretary of State in commenting on the Customs Duties (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944, observed that this Ordinance reduced the duties on evaporated and powdered milk, prepared entirely from whole milk but that prohibitive duties were still maintained on powders prepared from skimmed milk. The Secretary of State went on to say that, in view of the high nutritive value of skimmed milk and especially as the supply of local milk might not always be maintained in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the whole population, the prohibitive duty on skimmed milk powders might be removed at least to the level of the duties on other kinds of imported milk powders."

I do not think that the Secretary of State was informed of the correct facts in this Colony when he arrived at this decision. I say so because I have been able to discover serious discrepancies in the recent broadcast by Dr. Nicholson, the School Medical Officer, and if I can find such serious discrepancies in a statement by the Medical Officer I am bound to come to the conclusion that the matter was not properly considered. I am not going to touch on Dr. Nicholson's statement just yet; I just want to say that it would be most unwise at this time to remove this prohibitive duty on skimmed milk. I have often heard hon. Members say that we should import as little as possible, particularly as there is so great a shortage of food and other essentials in Europe and other parts of the world. If skimmed milk is of such high nutritive value why should we be so anxious to import it at this time when we are

told there is a great shortage of food and other essentials in the United Kingdom and other European countries? I do not know where this skimmed milk is going to come from but I say it is most unwise to bring forward such a proposition in this Colony at this stage.

I understood the hon. Mover to say that the cost of this skimmed milk would be 5½ cents per lb.—milk that has no butter fat content. At present in certain parts of this Colony one can buy milk with butter fat content at 5, 6 and 7 cents per lb., but it is suggested that skimmed milk, which the experts now say is of such high nutritive value, should be imported into this Colony when there are places to which it can be sent far more conveniently—the European countries which are short of food. We must be generous to those people who are starving in those parts of the world, and I say that this Legislature would be acting most unwisely at the present time in removing this duty. We have been most generous in other things. We are not importing the quantities of butter, cheese, fats and substitutes that this Colony requires. We are told that Canada has allotted us a certain quantity of butter and other things, but it would appear that that country has so much of this skimmed milk (I take it that it will come from Canada or the United States) that it can afford to supply us. I say that the time is most inopportune. This is not the time to rob the starving people in other countries of this valuable article and bring it into this country where we can do better. Whether the price will be 5½ cents per lb. to the consumer I do not know. Let us assume that it will be so. I say that it is most unwise to bring in skimmed milk when we can get fresh milk in this country at 5, 6 and 7 cents per pint.

That is one of the main reasons why this prohibitive duty on imported

milk should not be removed. Another reason is that we must improve our milk supply and dairying methods in this country. I understand that in Essequibo there has been or is going to be set up a ghee making plant. What will be done with the residue after the fat is extracted from the milk in Essequibo? Perhaps Government is going to throw it away. Some steps should be taken to put that residue in some form so as to avoid importing skimmed milk. I do not like to refer to the very distant past, but at times it becomes necessary. Of course Government will not assume the responsibility when certain things are stated and when certain facts are presented. I have often heard the reply: "Oh no, that was not in my time; I do not know anything about it." I have been looking at some of my records and I found a clipping in my bag from the *Daily Argosy* of June 9, 1935, with the following headlines:—

"Milk for Government Contracts"—
"Chamber to Urge Greater Use of Local Article"—"Cruel to Import When Thrown Away"—"Retail Price Twelve cents Per Gallon"—"Wider Scope For Local Merchants Generally."

At my instigation the Chamber of Commerce considered the question of making greater use of fresh milk in this Colony when milk was being sold at Mahaicony and Mahaica at 10 cents per gallon, and most of it was being thrown away. We have been told that the Secretary of State has stated that it may not always be possible to maintain an adequate supply of local milk. What justification have we got for believing that that is true? In 1935 we were throwing away large quantities of fresh milk in this Colony. Milk was then being sold at less than 2 cents per pint, and at Mahaica, Mahaicony and in Essequibo it was being thrown away, yet 10 years later the Secretary of State says, on advice no doubt from this Government, that the supply of local milk might not always be maintained in sufficient quantity to

meet the needs of the whole population. Perhaps the methods that we used in keeping the area between Mahaica and the Abary continually flooded during the last 10 or 15 years might still be used, and that is why we will not have large flocks of cattle to give us milk. Perhaps some other methods would be used which would result in our not having sufficient milk for the local population. Government ought to transport milk from Essequibo to Georgetown and other districts where the supply is short. We have the experts; I see the Director of Agriculture present; I do not know whether he has come especially for this purpose. I think some effort should be made to bring milk from those parts of the Colony where there is a surplus. If 10 years ago we were throwing milk away and selling at less than 2 cents per pint, in another few years, if proper steps are taken, we ought to be able to obtain milk at 3 or 4 cents per pint and have an adequate supply for the whole population of the Colony.

In 1938, when I went to England, the milk situation in this Colony was just as bad as it is today. I wrote a large firm of milk manufacturers in Holland and went over there to see what could be done as regards the manufacture of condensed milk in this Colony. I spent some time there and I went over one of the largest milk factories. My firm was then importing condensed milk from Holland at 10/- per case c.i.f. British Guiana and Trinidad, and it was being sold in this Colony at 9 and 10 cents per tin. Today the price is double that figure in some places. After seeing how condensed milk was being manufactured, I returned to the Colony and introduced a motion in this Council that a Committee be set up to consider the question of establishing one or more dairy products factories in this Colony. The motion was accepted unanimously and a Committee was set up, but fortunately or unfortunately the Director of Agriculture was appointed

Chairman. The other members of the Committee were the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. de Aguiar), one or two other Members of this Council, and the Government Veterinary Surgeon. Like most Committees that Committee presented a report against the erection of dairy products factories. The Director of Agriculture and the Government Veterinary Surgeon were entirely opposed to the proposition and the result was that British Guiana did nothing when we had large quantities of milk available.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I do not know if the hon. Member is referring to a Committee on which he and I sat. He has omitted to mention my name, whether wilfully or otherwise I do not know. I know that he and I wrote minority reports suggesting that these factories should be set up, but he has not said that.

Mr. JACOB: Perhaps the hon. Member wanted me to say that he was in agreement with me. I have not got the report; I did not bother to look it up. I stated then that factories should be set up in Essequibo, and the hon. Member supported me. The fact is that Government refused to do anything. At the same time Jamaica was considering the question, and has established one or more factories. I am certain of one, and when I mentioned to the Committee what Jamaica was doing I was told that we must look after our own business as in the past. The result is that we have no factory here. The position has become so bad now that we have to import huge quantities of condensed milk and remove protective duties on imported milk of varying quality.

I am not going to say that Dr. Platt does not know his business. I would not go as far as that, but I am doubtful whether this skimmed milk will be of value to the people of this Colony and will serve the purpose for which it is to be brought in. I have

taken a lot of trouble in this matter. Dr. Platt spoke to us on several matters—milk, yeast, and other things. I interviewed him at the Park Hotel and told him that I did not believe in those new-fangled ideas, and that I was very doubtful whether he could do anything as regards yeast. He told us that we could put yeast in your bread, but the whole thing was so impractical. I have not seen any proposal about that yet. During the discussion Dr. Nicholson came in and he said he was an expert as regards the health of school children. Frankly, I was not impressed by either of them. I am not impressed by Dr. Nicholson at the present time. I am sorry to say it. I read the Supplement issued by the B.P.I. dated 2nd February, 1946, in which there is an article headed "Skim Milk is Cheap and Good For You" (By Dr. C. C. Nicholson, School Medical Officer). The article began:

"Milk is a key foodstuff. Since it is one of the best of all foods its use in liberal quantities is most desirable."

The doctor is right there, and I think every sensible individual would know that that is correct. But we are talking about milk; we are not talking about milk from which all the butter fat has been extracted. We are talking about good wholesome cow's milk from healthy cattle. Dr. Nicholson went further to state:

"I am going to suggest that one of the chief reasons for this gross shortage in our milk supplies is the fact that people here, as they are the world over, are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of milk in the dietary, and it is probable that even if we were to double up or even treble up on our milk production, supply will fail to meet demand."

What utter nonsense is that? I am a practical man, not an expert. If we doubled our milk supply we would more than meet the demand. Dr. Nicholson goes on to say that the obvious thing is importation. We are importing large quantities. I have no

objection to our importing large quantities of condensed milk of not less than 8% of butter fat content, which is the Government standard. We want fat in our milk, and it is necessary to import as much milk as possible so long as there is an acute shortage. We want some of the tinned milk for the interior, but I say that Dr. Nicholson greatly exaggerated the position when he says that even if we doubled or trebled our production of milk we would not be able to meet the demand. After writing a lot about skimmed milk Dr. Nicholson goes on to say:

"Butter fat which is prepared from milk fats also contains vitamins, A and D. None of these two vitamins is left back in the skimmed milk. Fortunately, we in British Guiana do not need the fat in milk for our local nutritional needs, for in my recent surveys there was not a single home whose dietary showed a shortage of fat. In fact, fat in diets was very ample because the poorest families of five were purchasing at least two to three and a half pints of Fryol per week."

Where Dr. Nicholson got that information from only Heaven knows. I know the position regarding Fryol, milk, and a few things. I do not claim to know everything. I have found out from the Publicity Officer who is here and I have official figures. The production of Fryol last year was approximately 205,000 gallons, and taking Dr. Nicholson's statement and his figures it is absolutely impossible for families of five to obtain even 2½ pints of Fryol per week. Those are the experts we have advising us; those are the gentlemen—local people I am sorry to say—who will not go into things properly. Sometimes they are unable to calculate or too lazy to go into things properly. Dr. Nicholson has been advising that world famous scientist who has advised the Secretary of State that the people of British Guiana have a lot of fat to live on. In fact they have too much fat and they want other things in their diet, therefore skimmed milk would be a useful thing.

When experts, however world-famed they are, base their calculations on false premises, what can we expect?

Here we have Dr. Nicholson's statement of the poorest people living on a certain quantity of fats, and when you calculate the figures you get five times more than the production of the article which he says is consumed. I trust these figures are convincing enough to cancel this whole business and leave us as we should.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am very interested in the hon. Member's point, but he has not put it very clearly. Does he not think it fair to assume that Dr. Nicholson took into account the crude coconut oil which is very largely used by the vast majority of people?

Mr. JACOB: Government's financial expert is an expert on several matters. I was coming to that. But is this expert on rice, an expert no doubt on coconut cultivation and production, copra, etc., going to tell this Council that we have sufficient coconuts in this Colony to manufacture 1,187,500 gallons of oil? What nonsense! It is preposterous. Mr. Treasurer, to suggest that Dr. Nicholson did not say that. When experts want to say convincing things and to write them, they must be specifically clear in what they write otherwise you have to discredit their whole story. That is what I have been preaching here, especially for the last five years. We have experts in this Colony—Members of this Council I am referring to—who get up and make all kinds of wild statements and then accuse me of making wild statements and giving wrong figures though I always quote figures from Government records. I may make a mistake in quoting figures here and there. Here we have the hon. the Colonial Treasurer attempting to suggest to this Council that not only Fryol but coconut oil is used. Let us admit that the word "Fryol" in this pamphlet

issued by the B.P.I. is wrong and that it means "oil". I am submitting that is most impracticable. You cannot produce 1½ million gallons of oil from coconuts and from the factory that produces Fryol. It is true that a certain quantity was imported. I have the record here. In 1945 there was imported 191 gallons of soya bean oil.

The PRESIDENT: Let us get on with milk!

Mr. JACOB: If Your Excellency promises to throw the whole motion overboard, I would sit down, but I cannot as a Member of this Council allow experts—and experts of doubtful reputation too—to come into this Colony and after spending a few days and meeting other so-called experts here and getting facts and figures make pronouncements. I say I consider Dr. Platt an expert of doubtful reputation. Let me emphasize that. If he is an expert of good reputation he would endeavour to find out whether the facts and figures given him are correct; if he does not check them and uses them, then I say he is an expert of doubtful reputation. He must verify the facts as he has to base his reasoning on those facts. Surely if Dr. Nicholson has given such wrong information as regards the supply of oil and the consumption of oil, the expert's findings cannot be correct. I am not going to worry with the other statements which are obviously wrong. I have given two convincing proofs why this B.P.I. pamphlet with Dr. Nicholson's statement should be withdrawn. I suggest to the Publicity Officer to withdraw this pamphlet, because it has created a wrong impression and probably will be there on record to create a wrong impression at a later stage. I think this thing should be withdrawn.

I am not attempting to waste the time of this Council on a matter of no importance. I think it is a matter of great importance concerning not only

the health of babies, not only the health of children but the health of the whole population. I understand—I do not know if it is true—that when milk is used in the U.S.A. particularly and the butter fat extracted, the residue is given to the pigs; it is not used except in certain parts where the commercial men step in and make something out of it. I do not know what commercial interest is behind this proposition. I had no time to enquire. It does seem grossly wrong to attempt to bring this milk into this Colony when the product from which this milk will be manufactured is in most cases used for the feeding of pigs and animals. Maybe animal feed is good for human consumption. Probably the people of British Guiana have reached that stage where we are starving, have no initiative and cannot do anything for ourselves. We have reached the stage where we must go hat in hand and beg for this thing for the population. So far as I am concerned, as a Member of this Council I shall strenuously oppose this motion. If I happen to be here when the Bill comes up, should this motion be passed, I shall oppose it again and again until this iniquitous measure is not put on our Statute Books.

I think, I have said enough to get the majority support of Members of this Council. I do not think the Government will withdraw this motion, but I have said enough to get hon. Members of this Council to vote against this proposition and not do what this Council refused to do five years ago. This Council has set up certain prohibitive tariffs embodied in Ordinance, No. 35 of 1939, and unless for very good reasons this Council should not attempt to undo what it did five or six years ago. If it is thought that this skimmed milk is such a wonderful proposition, such a huge proposition, let Government bring it in as an experiment and subsidize it. Perhaps the best way is to let it be circulated in certain parts of the Colony where fresh milk and condensed milk are not available.

I cannot take my seat without referring to an actual fact in my constituency. I referred this matter to the Education Committee some time ago. I suggest that Dr. Nicholson should go to the country districts and find out certain things, and that he should go to the North-Western District. When I was there six months ago I was told that the children there could not get butter, oil or fat of any kind in any appreciable quantity and at certain times no fat at all. How does that fit in with Dr. Nicholson's statement that the poorest family buys two and a half pints of oil per week? I was told: "Maybe tears will come out of your eyes when you see what some of the children have to eat before leaving home for school in the morning and when they return home in the afternoon. They have to eat food without any kind of meat, fish or fat." I stated this on the Education Advisory Committee. My hon. friend, the Third Nominated Member and, I think, the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member, who are members of that Committee, can bear me out. I think Dr. Nicholson should be very careful when making statements. He is a local man and is probably learning. He must be very careful when he attempts to make statements of this kind or to write them or have them published by the Publicity Officer. Taking all the circumstances into consideration, I consider that this motion should not be carried. Let us go on as we are going and try to improve the local milk industry so as to obtain sufficient to export rather than to import skimmed milk of doubtful quality.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I rise also to oppose this motion. I am opposing it on the same grounds as when it was opposed in 1939, viz.:—its competition with the local milk industry and its low fat content. Further there is a third reason—the bringing in of this milk duty free will completely frustrate the controlling of milk in this City and

even in the country districts where it is anticipated that milk control will be extended. I disagree with the reasons given by the hon. Mover of the motion that the survey has disclosed that we are a long way off in meeting local requirements. There are certain times when the supply falls and there is not sufficient to meet the demands, but there are other times when the production is more than the requirements and also at some times the supply meets the requirements. If it was the idea of this Government to import a certain quantity of this milk and hand it over to the Controller of Milk to be used to meet the requirements at such times as there are short supplies, I could have seen the wisdom of this motion; but to import this milk free of duty to compete throughout the Colony with the local product, I do not think, sir, any Member can conscientiously support a motion of this kind for the importation of milk or any other article to compete to any extent with the local article.

We were endeavouring and are still endeavouring to bring up our short supplies, not in one item only, to our full requirements. But here is a step that will frustrate that plan upon which we have embarked. I do not know if Government has looked upon it in that light. If it has, then it has fallen short in the proper exercise of its wisdom in the protection of the local industry. I do not think I need say anything more in opposition to this motion save that, as it always happens, when the experts disagree the patient suffers.

Dr. SINGH: I am supporting this motion as a temporary measure. There is no doubt that skimmed milk will be the best substitute for fresh milk in our present crisis of an extreme shortage of fresh milk. What is feared is that when skimmed milk is imported *ad lib.* the tendency of the people after acquiring a taste for skimmed milk

will prefer it to whole milk, because it is in powdered form and can be easily mixed and administered in any form one likes. What I am suggesting is that as the local milk supply improves we should devise some process of diminishing this supply of skimmed milk. I think that will meet the crisis.

Mr. EDUN: I must truly confess that I do not comprehend the inconsistencies in the policy of Government. I have been hearing of late Your Excellency's own views regarding a balanced economy and protective tariff in support of local industries. Yet here I am seeing an attempt to go against that well-considered policy which carried us so successfully throughout the war years. My first reaction in a matter of this kind is to ask: "Has milk control failed?" There was so much fuss in attempting to control milk. I can remember very well, sir, that I opposed the control of milk at a certain period because I felt that the law of supply and demand would rectify itself. But in this motion I see a determined effort to break away from a policy which Your Excellency has been advocating. What is the use preaching about balanced economy when we can always come to this Legislature and undo what we have already done in a practical way? I remember very well indeed that the local suppliers of milk have been prosecuted and made to pay heavy fines for supplying milk which is deficient in fat. No one in this Council can dispute that fact. Heavy penalties are being inflicted on them by the Courts because they sell skimmed milk to consumers, and here it is this Government is endeavouring to perpetuate that wrong. Will those who may sell this skimmed milk to consumers be liable to a penalty in the Courts? I ask Government seriously to examine the situation.

I now come to this wonderful idea of the expert. I remember very well

indeed that I questioned Dr. Platt as to whether he would not change his opinion within a few years, and he said: "Well experts do change their opinions periodically in view of certain circumstances." That is the essence of his reply to my question. However, in my own opinion, I think this question of deficiency in fat is not so serious as this bigger problem of self-sufficiency in milk, but it appears to me that because certain people are the principal producers of milk in this Colony this measure is being adopted in order to retard their progress. I hate to think that this is an attempt to do such a thing. I do not want even to suggest that some importer, or agent or merchant is interested in this business. I remember, sir, reading an article in a magazine styled "Life and Health" on Food and was very much impressed with the reference made to an article of food known as "Whole Milk" which has created quite a craze in the U.S.A. Whole milk is an article of diet which is extensively used in the Balkans. I would suggest that that article be read by Dr. Nicholson, as I am sure that if he does so he would change his opinion as regards giving the people skimmed milk in order to cope with the malnutrition reported as existing here. Dr. Nicholson himself states:

"Skimmed milk is a milk from which the cream or fatty part of the milk has been taken out to make butter."

That is in a sense what he says. What are the circumstances which Government has found to make it bring this measure to the fore-front? Is it because of malnutrition? Yet if we are to take the experts at the value of their expression we have the statement of Dr. Platt to us in this Council at a meeting with Members of this Council that there is no serious condition of malnutrition among the children in this Colony. I agree with him because from my own observation I have not seen our children in such a poor state of health

as I have seen in other parts of the world. That is something to be proud about and, therefore, if there is no serious condition of malnutrition here why should we think of importing skimmed milk for the sale of which this Government has been inflicting heavy penalties on people? I am opposed to this motion because I feel if Government has a policy that policy must be followed consistently and persistently. If there are mistakes and blunders in the carrying out of that policy, then those mistakes and blunders should be rectified by experience. What should be done is this: We should endeavour to see the production of fresh milk increased, and that should be done by way of subsidy to the producers rather than by the importation of a milk of doubtful quality which, I am sure, would not be to the benefit of the health of the people of this Colony. With those observations I definitely oppose this motion because I want this Government to be consistent in its policy, especially when this idea of balanced economy is to be followed.

Mr. THOMPSON: I rise wholeheartedly to support the motion before the Council. I have been listening patiently as the various speakers went along. My observation is that we have before the Council the question of a shortage of milk. That, I think, is what the motion clearly puts forward. I am thinking too, sir, that in these days when we are anxious to balance our budget, we may well save the large sums that are being paid in making use of the experts we have in this country, as I have found that in the hon. Member for North-Western District we have an expert on every possible subject. Why then do we worry to go outside the country to find an expert? It is somewhat alarming.

Mr. JACOB: May I rise to a point of correction? I am not paid by this Government. I do not know how the budget balances.

Mr. THOMPSON: Even gratuitously we can have his services. I am puzzled to think the hon. Member for North-Western District in such an alarming state of affairs in so far as the lack of nutritive quality of food is concerned can sit here and make no effort to improve that condition. He leaves it alone and comes to this Council and criticizes everything that is brought up. My idea is "Physician heal thyself." The proposal will meet our case, I think, very admirably. I find in the rural areas that often there is a shortage of milk. The hon. Member made the point that with improved drainage and irrigation the people have taken to other avenues of employment. It is because most of the land used for keeping their cattle has been put under rice, and consequently as soon as the rice planting season has started all the animals are shifted further away and the people have no time to get a satisfactory collection of milk. There is definitely a shortage of milk to be expected, and with the importation of this substitute our condition will be improved considerably.

Dr. Nicholson has been doing very successful work. He has visited the district where I live and we have nothing to complain about. A project should not be criticized in its infancy, and because the importation of skimmed milk will rob the hon. Member of a certain amount of commission is no reason why he should oppose its entry into the country. I consider that a very narrow view to take. I think the importation of this skimmed milk will help us considerably. On the West Coast of Berbice we suffer sometimes very much from a shortage of milk. During the rice planting season we cannot get milk because the people have no time to collect it. At harvesting time there is also a definite shortage of milk. Therefore I am of the opinion that the importation of this substitute would help the situation a long way. I support the motion wholeheartedly.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, has made the statement that persons have been prosecuted in the City for selling skimmed milk. That is not correct. Section 6 of the Sale of Food and Drugs Ordinance, Chapter 102, prohibits the sale to the prejudice of the purchaser of any article unless it is up to the standard of purity required, and there is a provision in the First Schedule setting out what that standard is. Therefore a person could sell skimmed milk if it was legibly marked "Skimmed milk" and the purchaser knew that he was buying skimmed milk. Therefore it is incorrect to say that people were skimming milk and selling it. If they sold it as milk they would be liable to prosecution.

Mr. EDUN: Would the hon. Member say that milk vendors have not been prosecuted and fined for selling milk deficient in fat?

Mr. WIGHT: That is an entirely different thing. You cannot sell any article, milk or otherwise, which does not come up to the standard set out in the Schedule to the Ordinance. The milk vendors were fined because they added water to the milk and were selling milk deficient in fat according to the standard required by the Ordinance.

As regards the supply of milk, it is indisputable that there is a shortage in the City. As Chairman of the Milk Joint Control Board which is now about to report to Government, I crave your indulgence, sir, to refer to the question of the shortage of milk in the City as reported to the Board. Milk is produced in certain areas of the Colony, and between 1,200 and 2,800 gallons are brought into the City daily, but we have found that 2,500 gallons of milk are required in Georgetown daily. That quantity of milk is only available for about two months of the year, so that for 10 months of the year the demand for milk exceeds the supply. To overcome

this shortage it is recommended that condensed or skimmed milk should be imported into the Colony, and that the skimmed milk powder should be reconstituted by means of a mechanical mixer so as to produce liquid milk, which is to be kept separate and sold as reconstituted milk. The sale of that milk would be under the control of the Board because it would be very difficult and dangerous to allow the powdered milk to be sold indiscriminately by everybody.

We have also recommended to Government the reduction of the prohibitive duty on skimmed milk which is said to be of high nutritional value. That, however, is doubted by the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob), but he is not an expert although he has been so described by the hon. Member who has just taken his seat. It is impossible even for a genius to be an expert on every subject. The experts have told us that this skimmed milk is of high nutritional value, and if it can be imported at the price stated by the hon. the Colonial Secretary then we would be able to overcome the shortage of fresh milk in the Colony.

Mr. JACOB: May I ask who is going to import this skimmed milk for the Board?

Mr. WIGHT: That is a matter of detail which the Board has not yet considered. The Board will not charge any commission. If we find that our supply of fresh milk has increased then the prohibitive duty on the importation of milk would be reimposed. I have always been an ardent advocate of the use of fresh milk, and I see no reason to change my view, but I cannot see that the necessity for the importation of skimmed milk involves a reversal of that policy. Government is not attempting any wholesale importation but only where the necessity arises. That seems to be a sound economic policy advocated by Government.

Mr. A. G. KING: While I have no desire to lengthen this debate unduly I would like my position made quite clear. In supporting this motion I do so on the understanding that Government is only introducing this measure to make up the insufficiency in the supply of milk in the Colony at present. I am aware that Government is faced with a very difficult problem, but I trust that it does not think the solution of that problem is the importation of powdered skimmed milk. As I see it, the only solution would be the establishment of dairy farms in various parts of the Colony. One of the greatest difficulties in supplying the City with milk is undoubtedly the lack of proper transportation. I know it is very expensive and worrying to the Controller of Milk. Considerable quantities of milk go bad every day on account of the distance it has to travel, and the time it takes to transport it to the City. A long-term view must be taken of this matter. Our stock of cattle has improved to an amazing extent as a result of the importation of cows. The stock at Mackenzie has been increased and improved by importations, and is a credit to the Demerara Bauxite Co. I think it would be a very useful object lesson for the people of the Colony to see what can be done with a little expenditure and a little courage and enthusiasm so far as a milk supply is concerned.

It is not impossible to establish in this Colony dairy farms capable of supplying the inhabitants with pure fresh milk. It is not a dream; it can be done and I appeal to Government to do something about it, even if I have to go to the extent of suggesting the appointment of a Committee to consider and recommend some long-term plan for the establishment of refrigeration plants in the various parts of the Colony where milk is produced. The cost would be heavy but it will pay good dividends in the improvement of the health of the people if they could

rely on a supply of pure fresh milk every day. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) stated that the requirements of Georgetown are 2,500 gallons of milk per day. I do not know where he got his figures but that would mean that each individual would get less than one-third of a pint per day. That is not my idea of the quantity of milk required by an individual each day. I think every person should drink at least a pint of milk per day.

While I support the proposal to import skimmed milk in order to relieve the shortage of fresh milk I am very suspicious of food that is interfered with by man. I am suspicious of dehydrated food of any kind. I have had the misfortune to have to eat such food and I cannot imagine anything more tasteless. In spite of what the experts say I do not believe in interfering with Nature, whether by dehydrating food or skimming milk and drying it and then adding water to it. I have been told by a very prominent dentist in this City that the skimmed milk it is proposed to import is deficient of certain salts which are necessary for the preservation of one's teeth.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am grateful to the hon. Member for the points he has raised but I would like to point out that skimmed milk loses nothing except its fat, but it gains in protein, carbohydrates, calcium, phosphates and iron. I have the figures here.

Mr. KING: I have the utmost respect for that authority but I say that it is impossible to dry milk, put water back into it and say it has regained the substances that Nature put into it. Only a cow and the female of the human species can produce milk. Scientists cannot produce milk. Professor Dash, as Head of the Department of Agriculture, has devoted a very great

part of his time to the improvement of the cattle industry of the Colony with the support of Mr. Webb, the Livestock Officer, who has certainly done a great deal in the short time he has been here to improve the stocks in the Colony, but I feel that something further should be done. It is not sufficient to import pedigree animals and sell them to farmers in the hope that they will be developed in the way they should be. I am sorry to say that the average farmer takes very little interest in caring his stock in the way they should be cared for. A great effort has been made by the Department of Agriculture to improve the breed of our cattle but greater efforts are still needed if we are really sincere in our endeavour to produce sufficient milk to supply the needs of the people.

There is the danger, at least among the poorer classes of people in the Colony, that this skimmed milk powder will not be mixed to the quality recommended by the makers. They are going to thin it out so as to make it go as far as it possibly can, adding as much water as they can, so long as they keep a semblance of the colour of milk. If the skimmed milk is properly mixed it would undoubtedly have a far greater food value than if water is added *ad lib.* I have spoken on this matter because I believe that there is no real substitute for good fresh milk. I support the motion more or less as a temporary measure to relieve the undoubted shortage of fresh milk that exists, especially in the City. The supply varies according to the weather, and in every dry weather the insufficiency is even more pronounced. I support the motion because I feel it is a necessity.

Mr. GONSALVES: We have had quite a long debate on this matter and I do not wish to prolong it much longer. We seem to be travelling this afternoon along a milky way and I hope we will soon get to the end of it. The

figures which were given by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) were supplied to the Milk Control Board by the Controller of Milk who has gone into the question of milk supply very keenly. There can be no doubt that there is a shortage of milk in the City, the reasons for which are well known. It has been said that the shortage of supply is very often due to the fact that people in the country districts take time off at certain periods to look after their rice cultivation, and it is rice and not milk at those times. That is nothing new. Therefore some means must be found to relieve the shortage of milk at such periods.

I have said it years ago and I repeat it again that this City cannot rely on getting a proper milk supply unless dairy farms are established in the Colony. What the hon. Member on my left (Mr. King) has said this afternoon is what I have said before—that if private enterprise is not disposed to embark on dairy farms then it is a matter which Government should undertake. I have always thought that there should be one in Essequibo. The shortage of milk is not confined to Georgetown. I remember that three or four years ago when a Committee was inquiring into the question evidence was taken and the people from the country districts spoke of a shortage of milk.

I have previously advocated that the sugar estate proprietors might make it part of their business to establish dairy farms on their plantations. Such farms should be established on the East and West Coasts of Demerara, in Berbice and on the Essequibo Coast, and if the sugar estates decide to establish such an industry they should be given every encouragement. There is no special analysis of the milk at its sources of supply. The only analysis taken is after the milk has

reached Georgetown. Unless there is some proper system by which the milk is analysed at the source from which it comes, there will always be the question arising as to its quality. I am compelled to support the motion at the present time on account of what exists, and I am supporting it like other Members as a temporary measure with the view that Government would seriously go into the matter of the establishment of dairy farms either by private enterprise or subventions or Government itself undertaking to do so.

The PRESIDENT: I will now call on the Director of Agriculture, who is present, to say something about the progress and conditions touching the livestock industry. The hon. Member said we had been going the milky way. I would not like to refer to that specifically, but it is the first thing I have been seeing these last six weeks. Incidentally I rode across the Savannah at Abary and Ebini. It was interesting, but what I did see and what is germane to this discussion is the lamentable situation on the Corentyne where there is not enough adequate and suitable pasture for the cattle now despite what people think and say. That is constantly producing the quarrel between rice and cattle owners. There is not enough room. That is why I have put up that very large scheme for the Corentyne. It is to give adequate room for sugar and rice and cattle. That scheme promises in its first stage on which we are now engaged an extra 27,000 acres for pasture, and ultimately it will go through to 140,000 acres. That is the very first need we have.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture): I do not think it is necessary to take up too much time in dealing with this question, as the matter has been thrashed out very fully; but I just want to make one or two references to some features of the debate. In the first instance there is

no question that greater knowledge of the question of nutrition has been accumulated since the matter was first brought before this Council. I myself was a little nervous about the motion because I felt that there might be discriminate use of this milk and that it might be used generally. As it is cheap people would use it in preference to what is called "whole cream" milk. Not only abroad but even here, I think it is true to say, nutrition education has progressed enormously, and people everywhere are beginning to know about proper feeding and to be food conscious. We want the people here to be milk conscious. It may be that the introduction of this measure may help us to get people more milk conscious, provided always that our nutrition education can be fixed in that direction. Do not let the people think they can use skimmed milk for babies.

I do not know if hon. Members are aware of it, but my hon. friend, the Member for North-Western District, rather suggested that a lot of this skimmed milk goes to feed pigs. At one time, I think that was so, but not since the value of skimmed milk has been fully realized. Today a tremendous quantity of skimmed milk is used for cooking and large quantities go to areas abroad that are devastated. Actually I do not think there will be any difficulty in getting supplies, as we want them from Canada or even the United Kingdom as time goes on. Certainly at this stage it does constitute a useful addition to our diet. Reference has been made to the question of fats and to what Dr. Platt has said. There can be no doubt that fats are easier to get than protein and minerals. I do not think we need worry that there may be a shortage of fats, as we have Fryol and coconut oil and other sources of fats. But we do know there is a shortage of minerals in the dietary and that skimmed milk is laden with minerals. That is one strong point in its

favour. I do not think we need worry that our people will be worse off from the viewpoint of nutrition. They will be better off.

I share the view expressed by one or two hon. Members that this is not a permanent thing. Surely it can be used only as the occasion arises. I would not like to think that we have to import skimmed milk altogether. So if we bear that point of view in mind and can control the supply, there is no reason why it should not come in. Always remember that we cannot allow the people to think that skimmed milk is just as good as whole cream milk or fresh milk.

My hon. friend, Mr. Thompson, placed his finger on the point and it was followed up by one other Member. The supply of milk in this Colony has always fluctuated, and it will continue to fluctuate until we understand what we are after. The position is that your rice industry had so expanded—that was strongly brought out in the report of the Committee to which the hon. Member for North-Western District referred—that we could not at the time recommend factorization or factory development for milk because of that particular point—the pasture areas were decreasing rapidly and our milk supplies were going up and down. When we have a factory it has to be regularly supplied. Then there is the question of transportation and the addition of overhead cost to be considered. We cannot just put down a factory merely because during a couple of months we have a large supply while for the rest of the year we have a poor supply. We will not get that position improved until, as Your Excellency has pointed out, we get plenty of pastures which, as hon. Members know, are deteriorating very rapidly. We could have got further with this development if this Council had supported the recommendation originally made as far back as 1927-28. At that time we were not animal conscious enough to

see that our industries are developed on industrial lines. The only way we can get a continuous supply of milk is by intensive forage and improvement of the breed of our animals. All those points the hon. Member for Demerara River brought up.

I heartily agree that we want development of dairies in this country. Government made a good effort to get pure bred bulls to improve our livestock. We are doing our best in getting the peasants educated as to how to handle cows. They do not multiply like rabbits. It takes time, and it is enterprise wants to take up this question of dairies. One hon. Member referred to the sugar estates. Certainly they have good conditions, but I do not know that on the sugar estates during the last few years this question of dairies has made considerable strides. I have been discussing this matter with the sugar estates now over a considerable period, and some excellent progress has been made. I figured it out that if all the sugar estates had 400 dairy cows each they would be able to supply the whole population of the estates with one pint of milk a day. I am hoping for that time to come.

So far as Essequibo is concerned, reference has been made to conditions there. As hon. Members know, we have a ghee plant there. We figured it out at the time and found then that the price of imported ghee was so low that our business would have had to accept a very low price for it. We therefore had to give up the idea. Conditions have since improved and we have been able since then to put up the ghee plant, but we cannot get a supply of milk to make a start. Mr. Webb, the Livestock Officer, to whom reference has been made, is just waiting to be told that we have the milk supply to get a move on. The advantage about our ghee plant is that it is a small unit and can be developed at any spot where you have a surplus of milk.

You separate the cream, process your ghee and you have the skimmed milk to return to the people free, gratis and for nothing. We will try to educate them to use it in their homes. If it is not used in their homes, then some other use will have to be found for it. I would like to think that in the long run we would get this surplus supply and instead of a condensed milk plant we can get a powdered milk plant.

There is much more I can say about Livestock and Dairy. I do wish that this Council would realize that we have the conditions here for rearing cattle, pigs and other stock, and no effort should be spared, financial or otherwise, in order to put that industry on a real substantial footing. Some years ago I made out a complete estimate of all the requirements for the whole of these projects, yet I got no interest to be taken in it. Not only we were able to get money and convincing recognition from the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme, but we have not been able to get on with the job as fast as we would like. There are a great many difficulties in the way, but I am satisfied that we are making progress. If all goes well and more areas are better drained—that is essential—when conditions improve and our food situation improves, there is no reason why in the next five or six years we should not be self-supporting in milk and milk commodities.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I desire to thank those hon. Members who have supported this motion, and the Director of Agriculture for his adequate reply to any suggestion that Government is not taking every possible step to improve the dairy industry in this Colony. I would just like to answer very shortly the points I have noted which have been brought out by the opposition. As regards the question of riding over starving peo-

ple, as suggested by the hon. Member for North-Western District and others, that is really not to be taken seriously. The whole of our allocation would be under the control of our combined Food Board, and I do not think we should have more than that. As regards the question that this Government is advised by unworthy experts, I do not agree with the hon. Member for North-Western District, and will ask him if he has ever read the report on "Nutrition in the Colonial Empire." Appendix III of that report deals entirely with skimmed milk. I can give him it to read after this meeting. That answers a great many of his points. While there is deficiency of fat, as the Director of Agriculture said, it is ample in proteins and other factors essential to our diet—phosphates, calcium, etc. We know that skimmed milk is deficient in fats but it has many other ingredients which make it very useful.

As regards the point made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, that milk control has failed, I think the hon. Member for Western Essequibo has answered fairly adequately what the Milk Control has done and the present Milk Control Board as constituted is doing. I would like to tell the hon. Member really in one sentence that we are asking this Council to approve of the importation now of skimmed milk which will be largely used by the people of low incomes who at present are consuming either no milk at all or in inadequate quantities.

As regards the question of whether or not we should encourage the importation of milk powders, the surveys show, as recorded in my files, that the consumption of milk in the Colony averages one-fifth of a pint per person per day. I think the hon. Member for Demerara River quoted that figure, but it is obvious that is inadequate. The more fresh milk is consumed the better the country will be.

As regards the point raised by the hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo and other Members, I hope this will only be a temporary measure. It can always be adjusted. My own personal opinion is that whenever you get a supply of good whole cream milk at a reasonable price, the situation will adjust itself because the consumer will much prefer to drink whole cream milk than skimmed milk powders if he can get it. But he cannot get it now. We want this amendment of the Customs Ordinance in order to increase the supply of milk in this country.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I would be grateful if the hon. the Colonial Secretary explain, as it will influence my vote one way or the other, whether this milk supply will be placed under the control of the Controller of Milk or it will be in the open market to be sold by everybody.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As far as I know—I have not yet seen the recommendation of the new Milk Board—it is intended to be imported and sold by anybody.

Question put and the Council divided and voted as follows:

For: Messrs. Thompson, Jackson, King, Gonsalves, Austin, Dr. Singh, Critchlow, C. V. Wight, Seaford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—12.

Against: Messrs. Edun, Jacob and Peer Bacchus—3

Motion adopted.

↓ RICE MARKETING BILL

The Council resumed the debate on the second reading of the following Bill:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to provide for the establishment, constitution, powers, duties and functions of the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid."

MR. EDUN: Your Excellency, when the Council adjourned on Friday last I was endeavouring to point out to this Council that what the hon. Mover had stated regarding the democratic structure of the Bill was no concern. Before I proceed further with my arguments I would like just to bring to the attention of the Council what the hon. the Colonial Treasurer said. It is a statement made by him which he did not support in any form. I wish to refer to that statement which reads as follows:—

“From what I have been told by members, they say that they have talked it over with producers.”

That was in reply to my query as to whether members of the Central Rice Committee or members of the Rice Marketing Board had consulted the producers in the districts. In view of the importance of the hon. the Colonial Treasurer's statement which was published in the Press, I received many letters from all over the Colony refuting that statement, and I would bring to the attention of this Council one particular letter from the Berbice Rice Farmers' Association signed by Jas. A. Sookie, hony. Secretary. That letter reads as follows:—

“Dear Mr. Edun: In the report of the debate of the Rice Marketing Board Bill in the Daily Chronicle of Monday, 4th, we read where the hon. Colonial Treasurer said he was informed by members of the Central Rice Committee that they had discussed the Bill with the Rice Producers. I am directed by this Association to tell you that nothing of the kind took place in this area.”

That is the Eastern Berbice District. Now there are several other letters which definitely maintain that no such meetings had taken place in the districts.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I never for one moment suggested that meetings took place. I said they had talked it over,

Mr. EDUN: Because of that statement it is very very important that it should be refuted. I know as a matter of fact that no meeting was held at Vreed-en-Hoop, Windsor Forest La Jalousie, Hague, Vergenoegen, Leguan, Wakenaam,, Essequibo Mahaica, Mahaicony, Cotton Tree and the Eastern Berbice Districts.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: For the hon. Member's information I may say that one was held at Cotton Tree.

Mr. EDUN: That is not my information. None was held at Crabwood Creek. Now I particularly want this statement to be incorporated in the debate because I shall no doubt ask the President of this Council to refer the whole debate to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, and I will endeavour to see that the whole report be sent to that Minister. That is so far as that statement is concerned. I remember, sir, when I had intimated that I was going to speak further and that I was not halfway in my speech, the hon. Member for Georgetown North (Mr. Seaford) made a statement. He said:

“Well Members would see, perhaps, that there would be no quorum on the subsequent day of the meeting of the Council.”

That will suit me very well indeed if every day I have to speak on this Bill I come here and find no quorum, because I wish help sometimes in order to place before the democratic authorities in England the whole case of the rice producers. Apart from that, perhaps, the hon. Member knows very well that after the General Elections he may be relieved of coming here and wasting his time. Let him take a note of that. That will suit me well.

Mr. SEAFORD: Perhaps I may interrupt the hon. Member to say that he should not pursue the subject. I suggest that he should try and come here with a sense of humour,

Mr. EDUN: I will undertake to do that. I must take note of that. In any case I for one have pleaded in this Council that we should understand each other, but I am prepared at any time to make a rejoinder of any Member.

I was forcibly struck by Your Excellency's observations that very day and I asked the Clerk of the Council for a verbatim report of your remarks so that I might examine them, but unfortunately I could not get that report because the Reporters were very busy, and I sympathize with them. In effect, Your Excellency said that you believed in a co-operative movement but it was a matter of slow growth, a gradual evolutionary process, and that even if we secured an expert he could not come here and say "Hey presto" and get the job done. That is the essence of Your Excellency's observations, and I am thankful for those observations because they help the cause of the producers but here it is, Government wants to do the job by using the very words "Hey presto" and passing this Bill. With due deference to Your Excellency, I hope you will pardon me if I remind you that Hitler had often used the same expression—that democracy was of slow growth; it was a humbug to progress and should be scrapped. Those were the sentiments of Hitler and Mussolini—that the co-operative movement was something of a slow, painful and tedious growth. It is not that I feel that Your Excellency is sentimentally a Fascist. Oh no, but if I were in your place occupying the position of the Head of this Administration I might have acted in the same manner in order to see that the Administration is carried on effectively.

This measure concerns the very lives of the vast majority of the producers, and this Government happens to be a democratic one. We therefore expect it to follow democratic procedure in every case. Having examined the hon. Mover's conception of

what he calls "a co-operative organization of a democratic character", I want Members of this Council to appreciate the technique of that expression. I am fully conscious of the strength of that expression in a case like this, because the hon. mover knows full well that as a delegate from this Colony to the first Anglo-American Caribbean Conference he endorsed certain declarations at that Conference based on co-operative movements, and that in trying to paint this Bill as one of a co-operative nature and democratic character he did so purposely in order to mislead the public in this Colony. I am going to prove to this Council, and I hope conclusively, that it is an inherent characteristic of British democracy that the right to choose one's occupation is never tampered with. This Bill, which I propose to examine from one end to the other, is designed to defeat the principle of economic democracy and that inherent characteristic of British democracy. This Government has taken what I should term a wrong step, and having taken that step it has landed itself in an international issue. I shall endeavour in this Council to raise that international issue and thus save—at least I hope I will be able to — the rice producers of this Colony from being shackled within the periphery of an organization which will lead them on to economic serfdom.

Having disposed of the point that this Bill has not the slightest element of democracy in it; that it does not propose to set up a co-operative organization of a democratic character, the hon. mover stands in the position of violating an endorsement given by himself at the West Indian Conference and subsequently ratified by this Council. I shall give the dates of that ratification in due course. I think I have mentioned certain fundamentals of voluntary co-operation by extracts from the booklet on "The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain," which the hon. mover will not

be able to refute. He will either have to stand by his endorsement at the West Indian Conference or admit that the Bill does not contain any element of a voluntary co-operative organization or association.

Forty-four nations met at Hot Springs between the 18th May and the 3rd June, 1943, to determine policy with respect to food and agriculture. Those 44 nations made certain declarations among which is declaration XVII, the full text of which I propose to read with your permission, sir, in order that it may be incorporated in the report of this debate and read by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Rt. Hon. George Hall. Declaration XVII reads:

"XVII CO-OPERATIVE
MOVEMENTS."

Whereas:

1. The co-operative movement has been of very great importance in many countries, both to urban and rural populations, especially in agricultural districts where farming is based on small units and in urban areas of low-income families;

2. The proper functioning of co-operative societies may facilitate adjustments of agricultural production and distribution, as members have confidence in the recommendations and guidance of their own co-operative organizations, which they know operate in the interests of their members and of society in general;

3. The democratic control and educational programmes, which are features of the co-operative movement, can play a vital part in the training of good democratic citizens, and assist in inducing a sound conception of economic matters;

The United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture Recommends:

1. That, in order to make it possible for people to help themselves in lowering costs of production and costs of distribution and marketing:

possibilities of the further establish-
(a) All countries study the

ment of producer and consumer co-operative societies in order to render necessary production, marketing, purchasing, finance, and other services;

(b) Each nation examine its laws, regulations, and institutions to determine if legal or institutional obstacles to co-operative development exist, in order to make desirable adjustments;

(c) Full information as to the present development of co-operatives in different countries be made available through the permanent organization recommended in "Resolution II."

I am asking this depleted Council to take particular note of Recommendation (b) which says that all nations should examine its laws, regulations, and institutions to see whether any legal or institutional obstacles to co-operative development exist and to remove such obstacles if they exist. Of course there was no delegate from British Guiana at the Hot Springs Conference. Perhaps we are such an infinitesimal unit of the British Empire, that we could not think of putting our noses there, but this Legislature of British Guiana did ratify all the Resolutions passed at that Conference. I want to bring that fact to the attention of this Council in order to save it from directly contravening a treaty, to save Members being termed violators of a pledge. That is what I am endeavouring to do.

It was on the 20th September, 1943, that this Council by Resolution No. 24 accepted the decisions of Hot Springs Conference. As a matter of fact those decisions were ratified here, and I, as a Member of this Council carry no hostile remembrance of that day when I was precluded from speaking on the subject. I was then fully conscious of the fact that we were being asked to ratify something we knew nothing about, and I was endeavouring to make the point when the hon. Deputy President actually heckled me in this Council, and the Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) was interrupted over and over again. I have the Hansard report

of the debate here which I wish Your Excellency to peruse. We were precluded from making our points. As a matter of fact, a motion "that the question be now put" was moved by no less a person than the hon. Mr. M. B. G. Austin and it was carried unanimously. Every Member of this Council, from the Deputy President down to the Seventh Nominated Member, was committed to the ratification by virtue of the democratic procedure. The Governor's Message, No. 12, was dated 20th September, 1943, and the ratification took place on the 28th October, 1943.

The matter did not end there. The West Indian Conference was held at Barbados between the 21st and 30th March, 1944, and at the beginning of its session it endorsed the declarations made at the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture held at Hot Springs in 1943. The hon. Mover of this Bill (the Colonial Treasurer) attended that Conference as a delegate of this Government and this Council, but I do not think this Council was consulted about the position of the delegates. In my case, I accept the principle that the delegates represented not only the Legislature but the people of British Guiana, and this is what is recorded in the report of the West Indian Conference:

"We endorse the Declarations made by the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture held at Hot Springs in 1943."

It is well known that the British Parliament subsequently ratified the Declarations made at Hot Springs, so that every citizen of the British Empire must accept the decisions made at Hot Springs. I have here a photograph of the hon. E. F. McDavid, C.B.E., and I also have the report of his speech in which he expressed the view that the East Indian population was supplanting the Negroes in the ownership of land in the coastal areas. There was a hullabaloo about that statement, but I did not take any

notice of it because it was not a matter about which we should hang our heads in shame. It is unfortunate that the East Indians are supplanting the Africans, because I want both races to be landowners and to become independent peasants; they are the "Siamese twins" of this Colony. Without them we cannot get on at all; on their backs the whole of our economic structure rests. The fact that the East Indians are supplanting the Africans as landowners is the result of our faulty educational system, but I do not want to go into that aspect of the question.

Coming back to this pledge of a high international character, where forty-four Nations met together at Hot Springs and made a pledge which was ratified subsequently by the British Guiana Government, Legislative Council and peoples and endorsed by all the Caribbean Colonies, that if there are any laws which are an obstacle to co-operative movement desirable adjustment must be made and that each nation by common obligation examine its laws. Here we are examining our laws to see where there are defects, legal or incidental, against co-operative development. We are advocating in principle a co-operative movement by bringing a Bill of this nature, a Bill that not only clogs the idea of voluntary association but wants the rice producers of this Colony to be hemmed in within the vicious circle of a Government sponsored Rice Producers' Association to be financed by the Rice Marketing Board. I do not know whether any of the Members of this Council had an opportunity to examine the Fascist system for "Gaulitiers". There were Trade Unions in Germany, but those Trade Unions were financed by the Nazi Party in power.

The same idea creeps in here now. All the rice producers will be hemmed within a Rice Producers' Association sponsored by the Govern-

ment and financed by the Rice Marketing Board. Can you tell me anything more preposterous in the history of this Colony? The idea is nauseating, and when I found that I was fully supported in my assumption that the statement by the hon. Mover was only to mislead and, when Your Excellency made the observation you did last Friday, I thanked my stars because I could have read right through the minds of this Council on this Bill. The whole idea is to have it from the top going down right to the bottom instead of having an organisation from the bottom and going up to the top, as expressed in this model book which emphasizes that the co-operative movement is a movement from the bottom and not from the top. That is the opinion of the Rt. Hon. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty.

It is a very serious thing indeed to go against one's pledge. There is no question of the signatures of the delegates to that conference. Perhaps there was. Each member delegate of the forty-four Nations may have had to put his signature to the declarations. I do not know that any of us here knows, but what I wish to lay emphasis on is this: Having accepted those declarations, having ratified them and subsequently endorsed them, is it right for this Government at this time of the day, when the struggling small nations are clamouring for self determination, to go against this pledge simply because it wants to hold on to the produce of the rice farmers of this Colony? It is a dangerous thing to do, and I am pleading with Your Excellency that this will create no confidence in the British Guiana Government. Apart from that, this Government will not be able to demand due respect from abroad if it breaks its pledge. It is easy to think, sir, that a pledge is nothing. Why worry with a pledge? But this thing may have international repercussion. I am sure it will have, for it is the intention of

the rice growers—I have it from them—to proceed to England and interview His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies and seek the assistance of Labour Members of Parliament, those who are in sympathy with their struggles, in order that this Government should be saved from this iniquitous task of breaking its pledge. If it were a pledge to ourselves, to the rice producers, why break it? Perhaps we will stand the tyranny of fate. This was a pledge given wide publicity throughout the whole world. Do you want to tell me that a small infinitesimal unit like ourselves will dare at this time of the day to commit such an act without repercussion? My whole pleading is based on this one particular note of saving one man in whom somehow I still have implicit faith and confidence—the Administrator of this Colony at the moment. It will go down in history against the regime of so brilliant an Administrator at this time of the day, and I want you, sir, to think a hundred times before you proceed with this Bill.

I have hitherto been adducing instances and arguments in support of my cause for the rejection of this Bill and for it to go to a Select Committee of this Council. I give you my word that, perhaps, this Bill may be a little more moderate than it is and it will be acceptable. If it is acceptable then the idea of the pledge goes by the board, but I cannot accept the statement made by the hon. Mover that members of the Central Rice Committee consulted anybody or discussed this Bill with anybody. I want to examine the members of the Central Rice Committee and the members of the Rice Marketing Board, and to ask this Council whether Members can believe that those persons are capable of going out into the districts and asking the producers what they think about the Bill. I am sure the majority of them do not understand the Bill. I hope you will bear with me, sir. The present members of the Rice Marketing

Board are the Hon. E. F. McDavid, Chairman; Professor J. S. Dash —

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I hope the hon. Member is not drawing another inference on what I said. All I said in interpolation to his remark was that I was informed by some of the members of the Rice Committee that they had talked it over with their colleagues in their area. I hope the hon. Member does not infer that the members held meetings. I never said that meetings were held either by members of the Board or members of the Rice Committee.

Mr. EDUN: I accept the statement as it stands—they consulted the producers. Perhaps the hon. Mover would tell us what is the total number of rice producers in this Colony and how it was possible to consult everyone of them. Can it be done by just going around to everyone and discussing the Bill with him? That is impracticable. So when the hon. Mover has made that statement it has a far reaching consequence, very far indeed, because when the Secretary of State for the Colonies sees it he will say that the producers have been consulted. It is an easy thing to say that the people have been consulted. When Your Excellency tells him that in a despatch he will accept it against my word. The Administrative Head of this country has certain prestige and standing, and when he says a thing as the Representative of the King the Colonial Office accepts it. We in this Colony can only trust in his grace and gentlemanship — if I can use that term—to put both sides of the story as expressed in this Council.

I was endeavouring, sir, to examine the members of this Board and the members of the Central Rice Committee one by one. I will be able to bring home forcibly to this Council whether it was possible for those gentlemen to go around and consult every rice farmer in the districts. The Chairman, the Hon. E. F. McDavid, is one of the busiest Officers of

Government in this City, a man on whom we have to depend for the finances of the Colony. I think his whole time ought to be devoted to stabilizing our finances in order that we can offset a deficit in the future, and I for one would relieve him of this post of Chairman of a co-operative organization which he intends to build for the people. Why should he worry about that? Let us educate the people to manage their own affairs. Give them complete domination of their own affairs of life. But no; the hon. the Colonial Treasurer is the present President of the Board. Can any Member visualize him going about the producers at Vreed-en-Hoop and consulting them about what they think of this Bill? No the hon. the Colonial Treasurer has no time for that sort of thing, but perhaps the politician has.

Professor J. S. Dash! I know him to be a very fluent speaker. I have heard him several times in this Council and hon. Members have heard him just recently, about fifteen minutes ago, and I am sure he did not go out into the districts and consult anybody about the purport of the Rice Marketing Board Bill.

Then we have Mr. Abdool Rayman, J. P. of Vreed-en Hoop, rice-miller and landlord. Somehow I happen to be residing in that district. I know the gentleman very well indeed. I know what large interests he has in the rice industry, but I know more than that. I know what large interests the farmers on those estates have in the rice industry, and I know further that he never consulted any of them at all, not even his own son, about the Bill. Mr. Rayman has no time to be going around and talking about the Bill. Perhaps I might have heard him telling me something about the Bill while we were crossing the ferry in the steamer. But apart from that, this genial gentleman will not harm a fly though the farmers are not satisfied with his

administration. He did not consult them in his dual capacity as a member of the Rice Marketing Board and a member of the Central Rice Committee. If he did not consult the farmers as a landlord and a miller he had a right as a member of the Board to do so. If not, then as a nominated member of the Central Rice Committee like myself he should have consulted the people at Vreed-en-Hoop, which is a very important rice area, just as important as Windsor Forest, Mahaicony or Essequibo. But he did not take the opportunity to do so.

Then you have the Hon. Peer Bacchus. He has just told you—

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member has spoken for 2 hrs. 12 mins. and the debate has been in progress about six and a half hours of which the hon. Mover took considerably less than one and a half hours. I do not want to check the hon. Member at all, but I think it is time someone else has a little bit of a say in the matter. As I cannot come up from Berbice every week to attend these debates and I do not anticipate being here for the next meeting, I will take this opportunity before adjourning to say a word or two on particular points and particularly on points I mentioned on the adjournment last Friday.

I said last Friday that the question largely divided itself into two — one was the establishment of an efficient marketing organisation, and the second was the co-operation of the growers and the industry in the step being taken—and I tried to distinguish these two things. Now the hon. Member who has just spoken seems to me to completely confuse the two, and a great deal of what he has said is really irrelevant to the Ordinance. That is intended to create an efficient marketing organisation. He has allowed

himself to be completely run away with an idea, an ideology as he calls it himself, with which we may have a great deal of sympathy, but it has little enough to do with the actual constitution of the marketing organisation. What I did try to say last Friday was the first objective is to create an efficient, businesslike marketing organisation which can take action, and take action quickly, and this is the first objective we have to put before ourselves in passing an Ordinance of this kind.

Now, one of the things to go with that must be a balance in its composition. It seems to me that however democratic in ideology our sympathies may be, we must remember that every Government has to be, on its executive side, efficient and businesslike. When we create a democratic constitution it is primarily by franchise and establishment of a legislature on a democratic principle. We are trying to bring that about and I have tried. But the Legislature in setting up its executive machinery must take care to make it efficient. You will see that rule in most democratic countries in the world like the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia, perhaps particularly and even totalitarian in Russia. That is why the balance in composition of our Board matters a great deal. You cannot have a thing like a Parliament or a Legislative Council or even a Town Council or a Local Authority to do the business marketing of a staple crop. That is the first point I tried to get across on Friday.

Another point I wish to make now and which I would like to mention as I might not be here for the next debate by Members, is as to whether such marketing organisation is really opposed by the industry and the growers throughout this country. I was asked to send telegrams to Mr. Hall and the Colonial Office as the hon. Member has just said, using the

words "widespread and universal dissatisfaction." Now is that true? I was surprised to hear that allegation because I knew just how much trouble had been taken by officers of Government, by many, not just one, to satisfy themselves that in going forward with this organisation we have a reasonable mandate from the industry, or from a great many people in it. Therefore I was surprised to hear this statement about widespread and universal dissatisfaction. It is quite easy to say the Central Rice Committee is a hand-picked Committee of "yes-men." It is easy to say that, and yet I do not entirely distrust my officers' ability to get a representative cross-section of the rice industry or feel that they can completely fail to get some people who can readily speak for the industry. At any rate it shows there may be a considerable difference of opinion, and not widespread and universal dissatisfaction.

I have had handed in to me another resolution—a resolution from the Growers' Sub-Committee of the Central Rice Committee. It reads:—

"That this Sub-Committee of representatives of the growers of padi from various parts of the Colony, wishes to dissociate itself from the resolution passed at a meeting held in the Town Hall, Georgetown, on 6th January, 1946, protesting against the introduction of the Rice Marketing Bill, and asks that the Bill as published be proceeded with in the Legislative Council as early as possible."

You cannot just dismiss that and say that there is widespread and universal dissatisfaction. At least there is a considerable degree of difference of opinion.

Now the hon. Member made a good point in a number of points, as to whether the officers concerned had taken action in trying to get the opinion of rice growers. As it happened, I made some attempt myself.

I had quite a good opportunity in the last five weeks on the Corentyne, and I have been right in the middle of the rice fields, travelling miles by canoe, by horseback, by mule, on foot, right to the very back of the empolderment, and have been accompanied by considerable numbers of people from the spot—rice growers on the spot. It is quite easy to say that to anything I ask they will tell me what they think I wish. It is easy to say the Governor has a certain prestige and they make replies to what he asks to please him. I am not so green as to be always taken in. I asked a number of people of some standing, but when we were asking these questions we had twenty, thirty, scores of people with us, many more, and individual rice farmers, in their own fields where I was asking these questions, and I really cannot believe they were incapable of expressing their own opinions but would be telling me only what I wanted to hear.

I have seen enough people in this Colony to know that if they feel strongly on anything, the presence of the Governor does not stop them saying it. The hon. Member for Essequibo River can tell you of the vocal representations made to me in Leguan and Wakenaam. My presence did not deter those people from bringing them up. And I have had people, rice farmers and East Indians, shaking a bottle of dirty water before my face, and asking me to smell a calabash of water, and saying "This is the water Government gives us to drink". I will not believe that if I asked questions among those rice farmers none of them would be prepared to say there was widespread and universal dissatisfaction if that was the case, but on the contrary.

I would just like to say this too. The hon. Member talked about the Berbice Rice Farmers' Association. I heard from one of my informants that he and other rice farmers had asked members of the Central Commit-

tee to meet them and talk it out. The meeting did not come off. But the next thing he said was that he supported the Bill and the Rice Marketing Board, and wanted to see the thing go through. I agree there had not been public meetings. My informant said he was a grower of rice; I think he said also he was not a public speaker but he supported the Bill. Crabwood Creek was mentioned by the hon. Member. I met at least 100 people there, and we talked about the Rice Marketing Board. There were criticisms. I have made criticisms myself, and should like quite a number of things corrected. The man of whom I spoke pressed that he wanted to see decentralised action in Berbice, that peasants wanted to get their money quickly, and so on. I entirely agree with him, and if I can put anything in the Bill to make decentralisation possible I will do so. At Crabwood Creek there was nothing to stop any person from saying what he wanted to say. I have been there several times, and I have had very small persons several times get up and say something in the face of others.

I certainly cannot doubt the impression that the great mass of rice producers as a whole are very thankful for the operations of the Rice Marketing Board. From this they have got price, stability, and security. I quote from a paper.

"The mass of small rice farmers generally are anxious that the functions of the Board should continue because, under its operations, they have become much more independent of the landlords and millers while the latter are themselves no longer dependent upon merchants and middlemen who formerly took a large share of the proceeds of the marketing of the product both for domestic consumption and for export."

I cannot doubt that that is the general feeling of the mass of the small padi producers. Of course I have heard criticism on the Bill,

even on particular provisions of the Bill, and I called up the Attorney-General and told him what they were. One gentleman saw the phrase "perpetual succession" and thought the Rice Marketing Board must go on forever and forever. I said that was a legal phrase put in for certain reasons of law. I had objections put up about our clauses and so on. We can consider those in committee. But by and large the impression I got is as I have said.

I did hear the idea of the question that was raised by the hon. Member himself. That is ideology of a popular kind, that everything should be broad-based from the bottom up and so on. It seemed rather strange to me that one gentleman who spoke to me on these lines, who was not a rice producer in any sense, had clearly these academic ideas also and I certainly have sympathy with them. But I did not regard them as of practical value in creating a marketing organisation.

If it is a question of encouraging co-operation among rice producers, a great many of the Members here will have the utmost sympathy with it. Anything we can bring in of that too in regard to the Rice Marketing Board, let us do it. "Co-operation" with proper development on a financial basis and so on is of slow growth and we cannot produce it to order. But I would say that if rice producers are able anywhere to create a rice producers' association a genuine one, then we should welcome it and try and adapt it into our legislation. The matter goes further because, as I said here in this Council before, the future agricultural development with machines and so on needs developed co-operation between peasant growers; without it they will not be able to reach the necessary standards. I say again we should have the greatest sympathy with that.

Further, if anybody tells me that the soil for that is not here in Guiana, I again refer them to what I have just seen on the Corentyne. What I had gone chiefly myself to see was that need of the future, as I see it, in the bigger framework we are trying to create to take care of the expansion which is coming. But I did see something extraordinarily interesting of the past. That was, as one can see it, first the little settlement on the road, and then in a few years the settlers push back a bit. Those growers have got together and pushed back their dam perhaps two hundred or three hundred or more rods back. They have cleared the bush and made clean land where before there was nothing but sodden swamps. I had with me an officer who told me how many of them did it themselves, pushed back gradually their cultivation. Many of them have taken money from

Government and repaid it. I was very pleased indeed to see it and I pay a tribute here to these East Indian farmers, as others have done, for what is so immensely to their credit. Let us develop that in every possible way we can.

But I do say and come back to my first comment that if we are going to get an organisation to market our product effectively, we have got to give our first attention to practical businesslike efficiency and try and secure that.

I have said these things now because I may not have an opportunity of being present next time when, I take it, the hon. Member will wish to continue.

I adjourn the Council to Thursday, the 14th February, at 2 p.m.