

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Friday, 3rd June, 1938.

The Council met at 10.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR WILFRID JACKSON, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, (Acting) (Major W. Bain Gray, C.B.E.).

The Hon. the Attorney-General, (Mr. J. H. B. Nihill, K.C., M.C.).

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

The Hon. J. S. Dash, Director of Agriculture.

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, K.C., (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. E. F. McDavid, M.B.E., Colonial Treasurer.

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

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

The Hon. M. B. Laing, Commissioner, of Labour and Local Government.

The Hon. G. O. Case, Director of Public Works and Sea Defences.

The Hon. B. N. V. Wase-Bailey, Surgeon-General (Acting).

The Hon. B. R. Wood, Conservator of Forests.

The Hon. F. O. Richards, Comptroller of Customs (Acting).

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E., (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. H. C. Humphrys (Eastern Demerara).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequebo River).

DEATH OF SIR EDWARD DENHAM.

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure that Hon. Members of Council and the people of the Colony generally have been shocked and profoundly grieved at the news which was received yesterday evening of the sudden death of Sir Edward Denham in Jamaica. He has been cut off in the full tide of vigour of a forceful personality and at a moment when his loss will be especially felt in the Colony under his Government.

My own acquaintance with Sir Edward Denham was of the slightest and it is not for me to speak of his services to this Colony especially in this house where he is a familiar figure to members generally. But I am sure the Council will wish to give expression to the deep feelings of sorrow and sympathy which this sad event has called forth, and with the consent of Council I will ask the Colonial Secretary to move a resolution in that sense.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Major Bain Gray): Sir, I beg to move the following resolution:—

That this Council having learnt with profound regret of the death of Sir Edward Denham, be now adjourned as a mark of respect and directs that there should be recorded on its minutes an expression of its high appreciation of Sir Edward Denham's services to this Colony and its deep sympathy with Lady Denham and her children.

Sir, as you have already said, I am sure that it will be the wish of all members of this Council that we should pause in the course of our normal duties, on the occasion of receiving the news of Sir Edward Denham's death. It has come as a great shock to us, following so quickly as it did, on the first intimation of his illness. It is eight years now, almost to a day, since Sir Edward Denham assumed the Governorship of this Colony, an office which he held for four years before proceeding to Jamaica where he has since been for the remaining period. The time of his service here was a period of acute financial depression and it was in this very difficult atmosphere of curtailment of the normal expenditure of Government,

that he was called on to administer this Colony. To compensate for such curtailment, it was his constant and successful effort to represent to the Imperial Government the needs of the Colony for special financial assistance, and to this task he brought what was one of his most striking and constant characteristics—a determined optimism which nothing could shake. This characteristic was rooted in what was perhaps his deepest personal characteristic—his abundant physical energy. There seemed to be no limit to that energy, which provided a reservoir from which his constant and untiring diligence and industry were unfailingly drawn. That energy was reflected in every official act, either in speech or writing, and he presented a model of industry which few of us can hope to imitate successfully.

In all his work here he had the constant assistance of Lady Denham, whose name was associated with so many good causes in the life of this Colony. I am sure that all of us are thinking of her now and that it is the desire of the Council that our feelings towards Sir Edward, and Lady Denham and her children should be recorded, and conveyed to Lady Denham on behalf of the Council and the Colony as a whole.

I beg to move the motion, copies of which have been laid before hon. Members.

Mr. DIAS: I crave your leave, sir, to second the motion and to associate myself with every word that has been expressed by the mover. As was pointed out by him, Sir Edward Denham came to this Colony when we were in great difficulty, but with that untiring energy of his, he sought to place the Colony on a much better footing than it was. Most of us here know of the energy he displayed in the discharge of his duties and of the fruit his efforts bore. I once described him in this Chamber as a champion beggar—and he was—because he never at any time failed to approach the Imperial Government for financial assistance for the Colony and, I venture to think, it must have been on very few occasions that he failed in his efforts.

As a Governor, he has left impressions that most of us will recollect. There is

no doubt that he governed well and earned the confidence of the entire community. No man is perfect, but Sir Edward's imperfections were obscured by those good and sterling qualities which, as a Governor, he displayed. It is with great regret that I speak on this matter. Little did I think that yesterday would have brought news of the sudden death of a man, who in the discharge of his duties was outstanding in the Civil Service.

Our sympathy goes out to Lady Denham. One can well picture her distress at this moment, and the least this Council can do is to express to her and her children its deep regret at the irreparable loss they have suffered. I join in requesting that the Council be adjourned as a mark of respect to one who has served this colony so faithfully and so well.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Sir, I crave the indulgence of this Council to express the deep regret that I feel at the death of our late Governor, Sir Edward Denham. Sir Edward Denham was a great man—great in every way, great in his ideals, great in his purpose and great in his energy. His character, sir, stands as high as the predominant purity of motive and unselfishness can place him. He, sir, was always brimful of the milk of human kindness and that overflowed continuously to all who came into relation with him—those associated with him in the Government as well as others with whom he came in contact.

Sir Edward while Governor of this colony was always in and out of season solicitous for the well being of the entire community. I once had to refer to him in this Council, as a descendant of Henry IV. of France who had wished he could see a fowl in the pot of every peasant in the country. Sir Edward Denham's goodness as a man exceeded his power as a Governor.

I, sir, will miss him profoundly as an individual, because he has never ceased through all the years since he left this colony to find time to drop me a letter of encouragement in my work in this Council. In one of his letters he wrote to say that if British Guiana can only keep the sea out and succeed in getting the storm water off the land prosperity would begin.

He was thinking with the experience he gained here that drainage of the coastlands was a necessity and even in Jamaica he would write me about it. I shall miss him because of these encouraging words from time to time. But, sir, there is after all some compensation because death is common to all. Few men have had the opportunity of seeing their own epitaph erected. God permitted him not only to see it in this country but he lived to erect it himself. I well remember the day when we stood on Denham Bridge and I saw him in his usual style step up to the ribbon which was drawn across the bridge and snap it with a pair of golden scissors.

He is no more and we deplore the loss. The news that Sir Edward Denham is dead is news to British Guiana and I think, sir, it is news to the world, especially the Colonial Empire of His Majesty the King. I was inclined, sir, to

the belief, and I still feel so, that even in this great sorrow there is some pleasure because it serves to bring out the love and esteem which a man can get in a way that no ordinary event gives. I endorse the words said by the two previous speakers and I join in asking Government to forward to Lady Denham for whom we have the greatest sympathy, love and esteem, our great regret in her great sorrow.

Motion was carried unanimously, all members standing.

THE PRESIDENT: I will forthwith communicate the terms of this motion to the Government of Jamaica and the Secretary of State for the Colonies for communication to Lady Denham.

The Council adjourned until Tuesday, 7th June, at 11 o'clock.