

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 19th October, 1944.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, the Hon. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., President in the Chair.

PRESENT:

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary (Acting) Mr. M. B. Laing, O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C., K.C.

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

The Hon. J. A. Luckhoo, K.C. (Nominated).

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

The Hon. J. I. de Aguiar (Central Demerara).

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

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

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

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

MINUTES AMENDED

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 18th October, 1944, as printed and circulated, were amended as follows on motions by the hon. the Attorney-General:

On page 1, line 13 of the Order of the Day the words "with Mr. Roth's consent the motion was deferred" were deleted and the following substituted therefor "Mr. Roth asked leave to withdraw the motion."

Between lines 13 and 14 the following words were inserted: "Leave granted and motion withdrawn."

On page 2, line 14 the words "the following motion:—

That this Council recommends....." were deleted and the following substituted therefore "the following amendment:

That all words after the word "recommends" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:"

On page 2, line 20 the words "Mr Critchlow withdrew the motion and" were deleted and the word "his" substituted for the word "the" in line 21.

On page 37 the words "as amended" were added after the words "Motion passed."

The minutes as amended were then taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

The PRESIDENT: I fixed the hour of two o'clock with the idea of continuing the debate on the hon. the Colonial Treasurer's motion and then adjourn to Finance Committee. I hope it will be possible to have the Finance Committee meeting and to finish the business by 4 o'clock this afternoon, as some of us desire to go to a funeral immediately afterwards.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

RICE EXPANSION SCHEMES.

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion:-

THAT, with reference to the Officer Administering the Government's Message No. 6 of the 2nd of August, 1944, this Council approves of the acceptance of funds provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, 1940, to meet the cost of the following rice expansion schemes:-

Crabwood Creek	\$170,000
Lots 63-74, Corentyne Coast	73,600
Weldaad, West Coast, Berbice	42,600
Mahaicony-Abary	275,000
Perth Canal	18,000
Mahaicony Rice Mill	20,000
Anna Regina Rice Mill	32,000
	<u>\$632,000 = £131,667</u>

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I have a similar complaint as the hon. Member for Central Georgetown and that is in so far as item 3 — "Weldaad, West Coast, Berbice, \$42,600"—is concerned. The empoldering dam has been done by the Rice Expansion Committee of the district, but the work has not been finished and another vote has been proposed by this Government. That work should have been started late last year.

The PRESIDENT: Is that the Mahaicony-Abary area?

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: No, sir; it is the third item on the list of schemes enumerated in the motion. Owing to certain difficulties the work was not started then, and it has been decided that the continuation of the empoldering dam should have been commenced during last year. It is very peculiar that just before the work was to be started there was a conference at which it was decided to postpone the continuation of that dam until the major scheme of drainage for Western Berbice was completed. If those responsible for that decision had known the conditions as they existed on the Coast, I doubt very much whether they would have arrived at that decision. I wrote and enquired about it and I asked that the work be started, and I was told that the decision was arrived at by a meeting. I was not even informed which meeting, or by whom it was held, or whose decision it was. I urge that Government consider the carrying out of that work. It is essential to the welfare of that portion of the district. The continuation and completion of this Weldaad empoldering dam will not interfere with the major drainage scheme for the whole coast; in fact it will co-operate with such a scheme. Maybe having one portion of the district not empoldered, I fear the people will continue to suffer because they may not be able to start the major drainage scheme within another few years, and to delay the completion of this dam will be delaying the progress of that portion of the district for another few years. I happen to know there is a 50-50 grant in so far as a welfare scheme for the residential area of that Coast is concerned. Without an empoldering dam at the back of those places it will render improvement of the residential area uneffective. The work that is done now will not be effective as the overflowing water will go into the residential area and the money spent on the welfare scheme in that area will not be of much use at all. Therefore I am asking that the Committee should reconsider its decision. This work has been considered by the Irrigation and Drainage Board and it was decided to

start it. That would have been done had it not been for the decision of this other Committee. I feel that decision should be reconsidered and the work done as early as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think it is correct to say the work was postponed on the decision of any Committee. Without the papers before me and subject to correction, I think the work has been deferred on the recommendation of the Director of Public Works due to shortage of staff. I give the assurance that I will go into the matter. I do not think it is the decision of a Committee. I may be wrong.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I have a written reply from the Commissioner of Local Government to the effect that it has been decided at a meeting. What meeting I do not know.

The PRESIDENT: I will go into it.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I happen to know that other arrangement had been made by the Public Works Department to commence that work when the decision was taken. There is not the question as to whether the labour can be found to finish the work within the next rainy season, and so far as mechanical equipment is concerned it is just a vote of \$15,000.

Relative to the Mahaicony-Abary Scheme I will begin by saying that I share the view of the hon. Member for North-Western District in so far as the grant or grant in loan for that scheme is concerned. Bearing in mind that this Government was asked to increase the production of rice especially by the Home Government, I think it is only fair and right that the scheme should be at the entire expense of the Home Government. The only controlling feature is that it is a war effort, and if we can contribute that much by carrying out such a scheme which will eventually lead to the bene-

fit of the inhabitants of the Colony, I think we should be proud to make such a contribution.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. Mc David): I do not want to interrupt, but is the hon. Member suggesting that the cost of the Mahaicony-Abary scheme will not be fully met from the grant? That is the case subject to the conditions set out in the Message. It is intended that it shall be a free grant, and anything recovered by means of a special tax on improvement of the land will go to this Government. It is a free grant.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I take it then that it is not the very condition as in the case of the Boerasirie grant which will be a free loan until such time as the position is reviewed. If I am mistaken, then I beg to withdraw the statement.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The Message puts it very clearly:

"The Secretary of State has further intimated that the funds will be provided as a loan without interest in the first instance, but that consideration will be given to the conversion of a loan into a free grant when action has been taken to implement the conditions laid down."

That action is something we can take within a reasonable time. When that action is taken we have got authority to regard the loan as a free grant.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I wish to make myself perfectly clear that so far as other works are concerned I am in entire agreement with the conditions, but so far as the Mahaicony-Abary scheme is concerned I say that scheme has been devised for increased production of rice especially at the request of the Secretary of State, and that should have been altogether a different consideration from other loans granted for constructional drainage and irrigation works. That is the point I am making.

The PRESIDENT: Is it your suggestion that because the Secretary of State instructed us to do this work we must have a free grant?

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: That is exactly what we are going to have.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: That may not be the decision.

The PRESIDENT: That is what we think.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: We can only hope that may be the decision, but I am saying it should be clear from the inception. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer is fully aware of my view in so far as that is concerned. Comment has been made by the hon. Member for North-Western District that the scheme is badly constructed and not properly designed. I am not an engineer, but I have had practical experience and I am a bit disappointed at his knowledge of construction and design as a layman. I take it that if he had knowledge as a layman of drainage and irrigation works he would not have come to that conclusion. I fear, though, that he had not visited the scheme and made careful observation. Of course that is not unlikely of the hon. Member for North-Western District. He said he travelled in mud throughout the scheme, and I was just thinking whether he took a week to get through the scheme, because it is an area of 12,000 acres. If it is all mud it would not take him less than a week to get through the scheme. He complains about the river dam which is supposed to keep out the flood water from the scheme and states that the excavation from the trench should have been thrown on one side. I would have more fully understood his argument if he had said that the river defence at some spots was very low and should be raised, but not that the excavation should not be thrown on both sides of the trench. He said he visited the place and therefore he

must have seen that the first and second depths of that area have been empoldered. The first depth is where the river trench is being constructed. As a layman who is supposed to have so much knowledge of drainage and irrigation, I would like to know from him how he expects to drain or irrigate effectively a cultivation area which is situated two depths away from this trench without having a dam on both sides of the trench. It is but obvious to the ordinary layman that if there is only one dam to the trench the entire first and second depths owned by leaseholders have to be drained first by them whether they wish the water there or not, because there is no dam to impound the water in that area and the only way to have an independent and separate trench for each section is that you must be able to control the water within the trench and drain and different sections, as you would like, to suit the cultivation. I think on reflection the hon. Member will agree that either he did not observe the work or did not go far enough to make such an observation.

The hon. Member complains the other way about when he comes to the cross trenches. Similar conditions should exist in the cross trenches, but he did not attempt to say whether the cross trenches are to be used for drainage or irrigation, or whether they are to be used for navigation. If they are to be used for drainage it will require a dam on one side of the cross trench; if they are to be used for irrigation it will require a dam on both sides of the cross trench. These cross trenches have been put in the middle of the cultivation and the same conditions will apply as to the facade trench and river dam when it comes to drainage. He complains again that there is no dam. I am just thinking if he visited that area before the scheme was started, as there were no dams before the scheme was started.

Mr. JACOB: May I intervene on a point of explanation? Is the hon. Member telling this Council that you should

have a drainage trench, an irrigation trench and a navigation trench, three different trenches, or that navigation is included in the drainage or irrigation trench and the one trench made to serve a dual purpose?

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: For the information of the hon. Member I am not suggesting either. I was making the observation from his comments, but to have a perfect lay out of any scheme I, as a layman, will say that a drainage trench should be separate altogether from an irrigation trench, but there is no harm using one trench for a dual purpose and all the more for that reason you should have an embankment on both sides of the trench. The hon. Member for North-Western District did not see any dam on the scheme. I happened to have been there before the scheme was constructed and again a few weeks ago, and I am happy to tell the hon. Member that I got around with a tractor on the dam pulling a punt in the trench. I went through one half of the scheme and even with that tractor I could not get through the entire scheme. If he had commented that no doubt a little more internal drainage is required, I might have agreed with him because so far as internal drainage is concerned I do not think it is fully completed and that has to be done according to experience gained throughout the cultivation in that area. I think it is the first time I have heard that land or road transport is preferable to water transport where water transport is available. I think the hon. Member for North-Western District complained that there should be roads built maybe to take the crops off and that transport by river is a very slow method. I happen to know there is the idea of constructing a road to adjoin the public road and that there is difference of opinion as to which is preferable. For the information of the hon. Member, if he has not observed that, I may state that bonds have been constructed under the scheme wherein the padi will be stored during the crop season and then taken therefrom to the place of

milling. I think the hon. Member should bear in mind that river transport is far cheaper and faster than road transport. He must bear in mind that so far as river transport is concerned there are two rivers in the area of the scheme—the Abary and the Mahaicony Rivers. One pleasing feature of the hon. Member's comments yesterday is that he supported the motion wholeheartedly and felt that Government is going too slowly so far as mechanization is concerned in the growing of rice. I hope the time may not be long when he will be able to give the benefit of his knowledge so that we may progress faster and reach the crop return we intend so as to be able to supply the entire Caribbean area.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I do not propose to embark on a lecture on the various means of constructing drainage and irrigation trenches, but I do wish to say that from the remarks made by the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) one point has emerged, and that is that there seems to be some sharp difference of opinion between two local experts on the subject, which is not very often the case. Disagreement usually arises between the imported man and the local man.

I have really risen to lend my support to the motion and to make one or two points in connection with it. I have not the fear which I have heard expressed by certain hon. Members regarding the conditions attached to this grant, unless, of course, I interpret their fears to mean that when the time comes for this Government to take action to implement the proposals there may be a certain amount of opposition to it. Speaking for myself I do not see what form that opposition will take. As a matter of fact I do not see how it could be justified because, after all, the conditions are quite clear and simple, and I believe they are conditions which no one can object to. Surely if I am the owner of a piece of land which I have not been able to use

beneficially for a number of years, and as a result of some public work carried out on that land I am able to beneficially occupy and use it, it is only right and proper that I should pay annual maintenance charges in order to occupy that land. Similarly, if I had a piece of land which was of no use to myself or anybody, the value of that land must be negligible. Land which cannot be beneficially occupied is of no value, but if value goes up as a result of these works it is only right and proper that an assessment should be made on the enhanced value of that land. I therefore cannot see any justification for the fears expressed by those hon. Members in respect of those two conditions.

Let us assume that a proper case can be made out against the levy of a charge for improvement of the land, or against the levy of a rate for maintenance of these works. Can anyone refuse to make such payments when he realizes that he is only contributing to the Colony's economic position? Are we going to continue preaching in this Council that we should get things for nothing? Time and again when suggestions are put forward for an increase of income tax certain Members get up and laud those proposals to the sky, but in this case they express fear. I am sorry to have to criticize those two hon. Members because they are commercial men like myself, but they have expressed fears that instead of being grants these sums of money will remain as loans. I have no fears at all about that.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I rise to a point of correction. I thought I had made myself perfectly clear that my remarks with regard to that condition were applicable only to the Mahaicony-Abary scheme. So far as that scheme is concerned I think the hon. Member is quite aware that the lands are neither under the control nor in the possession of lease holders. They are under the control of the Rice Expansion Committee. Therefore it is not

a question of their benefiting now and should pay something for it. They have no control or possession. The scheme has been undertaken at the specific request of the Secretary of State.

Mr. deAGUAIR: My remarks were not addressed particularly to the hon. Member who has risen to a point of explanation. I think he is trying to obtain some further information which he has been seeking for a long time. The only answer I can give him is that with a little more patience he will probably hear something more about the Mahaicony-Abary scheme.

I would oppose very vigorously any attempt that might be made by any Member of this Council when the time comes for taking action in connection with this scheme, to frustrate the whole scheme by opposing the conditions attached hereto. After all this is a very serious attempt being made to expand the rice industry in this Colony. It is true that the whole question arose out of the request that was made during the very dark days of 1942, for increased production of rice in this Colony in order to provide food for the West Indies, but as the mover said yesterday, it has developed further than that. It is not now merely a question of increasing production for the purpose required in 1942; it is really a serious attempt being made to increase and expand our present rice industry, and I am one of those who feel that we should be exceedingly grateful, first of all for the urge that was made upon us to increase production, and finally for the assistance that is promised us from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to provide funds for these schemes. I would like to have it placed on record so far as I am concerned at any rate—and I think I speak with a certain amount of authority—that this Colony is exceedingly grateful not only for the financial

assistance but the urge that was put upon us to expand this industry. I have no fear whatever about converting what now appears to be a loan into a free grant when the time comes. I am positive that it will be possible for us to take the necessary action in order to fulfil the conditions attached to what now appears to be a loan. If my mind is clear on the question I am prepared to look upon it, for the present at any rate, and this money is being provided by way of a free grant.

I do not wish to speak on the scheme itself to-day (I think Members will be provided with other opportunities to do so) except to say that I am one of those who had the good fortune to visit the Mahaicony-Abary area, and nothing I can say here or elsewhere can express how proud I am of the work that has been performed there. I do not think I can praise too highly those persons who are responsible for the work, commencing from the Chairman of the Rice Expansion Committee, Mr. Seaford, to whom reference was made yesterday, the hon. mover of the motion, who was very modest in his remarks about Mr. Seaford, and the hon. Member for Demerara River (Mr. King) who made reference to the work done by the mover of the motion. I am in a position to tell this Council that I am personally aware of the time and the labour devoted to the work by those two gentlemen.

What bothers me about the whole of this matter is that I have two very important points to make. What I would like this Council to do is to let the people of this country know what Government is trying to do in order to expand the rice industry so that they might take full advantage of the benefits that have now been afforded them, and take up land, beneficially occupy it and develop the industry. I have heard a lot of nice talk in this Council and elsewhere about giving people land, and that they

would make use of it and expand the rice industry and other industries. I am not a pessimist but I feel a certain amount of concern in this matter. I know that up to the present the people concerned are not taking full advantage of these facilities that have been afforded them as the result of the work that has been carried out on this scheme, and I speak in respect of more than one of the areas referred to in this motion. I do hope that certain hon. Members will take that interest in the matter and let the people know that these lands are available and urge them to take them up. The lands should not be allowed to remain idle because, if they remain so far any length of time, the work that has been carried out will be lost, and it would be impossible for any maintenance charges to be levied in order to maintain those lands in the condition they are in now. That is a point of considerable importance and I think too much publicity cannot be given to these schemes. I am urging Government to take steps to bring these schemes more forcibly to the attention of the people, so that they will get on the lands and occupy them.

It may be said that my second point will destroy the argument in the first. I do not think so. It is merely a thought which has occurred to me and I would like to express it. I know that something is being done but nevertheless I think the need is very great, and perhaps urgent steps ought to be taken to get it put through. It is no good our talking about expanding the rice industry if by doing so we are going to impose too great a strain which might result in the breaking down of our milling facilities. I am a little bit sceptical at the moment about the milling facilities existing in the Colony being adequate when these schemes are in full operation. As a matter of fact I am somewhat doubtful even of the immediate facilities. I know that steps are being taken

to get down a mill but I must confess that progress on that is somewhat slow. It is not Government's fault, but I am worried about the situation and I would like to know whether there is anything more that can be done in order to have that mill arriving in the Colony within the next couple of months. I think it would go a long way towards relieving some of my fears at any rate regarding the expansion of the industry. It is no use waiting until the time is upon us to discover that we have not got sufficient milling facilities here. It is a matter which I know is engaging the attention of certain people, and I hope it is not being lost sight of. I do wish to emphasize it to-day. Let us face it and express our views in no uncertain terms. In conclusion I repeat that the motion will have my support.

Mr. EDUN: I have listened carefully to the various speeches which have been made on this very important matter. First of all I am thinking whether this is the time to claim success for the scheme at all. I have listened to two versions of the same story. That of the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) was a desultory kind of story, one of gloom and despondency. No worse picture could have been painted. On the other hand the hon. Member for Demerara River (Mr. King) spoke in terms of great optimism—I should say superoptimism. He painted a very roseate picture and I am beginning to wonder whom I should believe. Both of them visited the localities and I have listened time and again to the various prophecies of the hon. Member for North Western District, some of which have come true strangely enough. In this case, as a Member of the Council, it is my duty to examine critically whether he is expressing a competent opinion on this scheme, on which depends the future of the rice industry.

A vast sum of money is involved in this scheme—\$632,000. I am not concerned about whether it is a grant or

a loan. That is a matter which will be determined in due course. What I am concerned about is whether this country is taking a leap in the dark so far as mechanization is concerned in the rice industry. I have read these despatches and frankly I am a bit perturbed about the doubts expressed by Sir Frank Stockdale. On page 10, par. 3 it is stated:—

“ . . . Sir Frank Stockdale, while expressing some doubt that mechanisation would prove practicable and satisfactory in British Guiana, agreed that it was necessary and desirable to try it out, and undertook to assist in furthering the project.”

Now Sir Frank Stockdale is a man of vast experience, and having travelled perhaps in the East and studied the problems of mechanization versus the peasant system I am sure that his expression of doubt is based on certain definite experiences. We in this Colony have had our own experience. I myself have seen tractors and ploughs lying and rotting on the sugar estates of this Colony. At one time it was thought that the labour problem would have been solved by mechanization but I have lived to see those machines rotting on the sugar estates. I can show any Member of the Council some of them now. I do not wish anybody to feel that I am against mechanization of any industry, but studying the problems of human life and what is involved in the pursuit to happiness I fear that this mechanization system will eventually lead to the plantation system whereby the Government of the Colony would become the employers and have people working under slave conditions. You, sir, have said so yourself in your despatch.

The PRESIDENT: I was not aware of it.

Mr. EDUN: I shall read it. On page 14, par. 7, you state:—

“It is clear that the operation of an undertaking of this size is beyond the capacity of individual small farmers or

even of the holders of larger blocks of land. The Committee and the Board therefore propose that the central block of the area should be developed and operated on plantation lines."

That is an implication.

The PRESIDENT: I do not see any reference to slave labour. I would suggest to the hon. Member that if he has any differences of opinion with the two previous speakers, the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) and the hon. Member for Demerara River (Mr. King), he should go and see the scheme himself.

Mr. EDUN: I am prepared to go and see the scheme myself. I have never been invited to go there. I have just recently been invited by the Publicity Officer to go there on Saturday, but whether I should take the opportunity I do not know. But for the indication that this scheme is to be worked on the plantation system I might have passed it unnoticed.

In the details of the scheme I see provision for 6 cottages for foremen, 20 cottages for permanent labour, and 3 bungalows for the supervisory staff. My mind then began to be suspicious. What is it? What has happened? Has the peasant system broken down?

Mr. FERREIRA: I rise to a point of explanation. I would like to ask if the speaker is accusing Government of attempting to introduce Communism? I think we are quite satisfied it is a Democratic system.

Mr. EDUN: My friend does not seem to follow the trend of my argument. Perhaps he is concerned about the development of State industry as against what is known as private capitalism. This is an experiment, a wise one indeed. I am in favour of State ownership of everything. The railways are State owned, and if we are to have

rice plantations all well and good. Then we may further progress and have State ownership of the sugar industry, and perhaps the bauxite industry. Don't you see we are progressing gradually towards State ownership and Socialism? That is why I am examining this scheme critically, so that it should not fail, because I shall ask this Council one of these days to let Government have a chance to own another industry in this Colony.

This is a very interesting motion, so interesting that the hon. Member for North Western District (perhaps I should give him the designation of the stormy petrel of this Council) took nearly an hour and a half to criticize it, and another Member addressed what at times seemed fulsome praise. I want to give some praise too. I think in due course when we are examining this scheme and find that it is a success I will be able to praise some people, but first of all let us be frank. If we have to praise anybody at all for the expansion of the rice industry, perhaps that 2,500 acres, we must thank "Mr. War Exigencies." We have not to thank anyone else because I can remember that just before the Great War, 1914-18, there was a slump in the rice situation and many of the rice millers and proprietors began to feel very pessimistic about the industry. The war came and suddenly the rice industry jumped up. 29,000 tons of rice were exported in a year and there was prosperity on the Corentyne Coast, at Mahaicony and Mahaica on the East Coast Demerara and in the county of Essequibo. The Banks gave all facilities in financing the industry. During the war and a few years after those conditions continued, and then the slump came. Several members of the commercial community thought they should get together and endeavour to fight the issue with the Burma product.

Many schemes were formulated. There was to be a single-seller organization, but eventually the Rice Marketing Board came into being. It began with good zeal and enthusiasm, but it could not cope at all with the London Brokers. It was a matter of the British Guiana peasants' product versus the interests of the Brokers in London, and eventually the Burma product kept out the British Guiana product altogether with the result that the rice industry of the Colony dwindled practically to nothing and the peasant-farmers had to get back on the sugar estates. Suddenly when everybody felt there would have been some kind of financial catastrophe for the industry September, 1939, came and Hitler and his hordes were on the march. As soon as the Japanese captured Burma the situation changed. Rice became such an essential staple diet in this country and the West Indies that the Secretary of State for the Colonies said: "Look here, we will give all the money you want. See that your rice production is expanded in the interest of the British Possessions in the West Indies." From that nucleus I see this big and wide plantation system is being created. I am thinking, sir, that when the slump comes on again and if we happen to capture Burma and the Burma product is produced as cheap as can be and is allowed to come in and capture these markets without restriction any expansion will go by the board. Will there be then competition between the Government plantation system and the peasants of this Colony? That is the question I want hon. Members of Council to ask themselves. So you see we have to be ultra-cautious in trying to expand the rice industry without guaranteed markets. Here I will give credit to any genius, if we can produce him, to offset the London Broker. Let the Colonial Office assist us; let us have reciprocal markets. If that is secured I would sit down feeling assured that this scheme will benefit this country.

We have made excellent experiments so far as Government estates are concerned — Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague. We have invested money there and, I think, they will be excellent propositions for the future of Government in fostering the peasant system. It is all very good to speak of experiments, but I rather see results, a little bit of illustration of what we are producing and Government selling those things. Rice cultivation in this Colony has proved a success because it is a peasant industry. Let us take the wider experience of the world. Sir Frank Stockdale had made his comparison. Nowhere in this world, not even America with its vast industrial potentialities, can compete with its machinery in the production of rice against Burma, China and India. That is an accepted fact. If they could have succeeded they would have, but the fact remains that up to now no nation has been able to challenge the East in the production of this staple food. That is why Sir Frank Stockdale expressed his doubt, and having visited sugar estates he knows how they are worked. So far as mechanization is concerned he expresses his doubt and I agree with him.

I want to take this opportunity to express gratitude on behalf of this Council and on behalf of those people whom I happen to represent for all the money we have been getting from the Imperial Government in spite of the destruction which is going on. I would be a traitor to this country and to the Mother Country if I see that we are wasting this money in futile experiments and not say anything about it. I warn Government to go cautiously. It is the first time I have heard land is available to peasants, and I will expect it to be given to the peasants. I have no fear about it. In certain respects we want to creep, then walk and then run, but in this respect we want to creep and then run. We do

not want to walk at all. We just take the opportunity of a few years between war conditions and when a slump is on to make experimentation. No one has touched on the cost of production per acre. I do not want to make anyone feel that this experiment should not continue. I wish for a maximum export of 100,000 tons of rice, but let us be practical. What about the lean days? Will the hon. the Colonial Treasurer as Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board tells us what they are doing about reciprocal arrangements in the West Indies in respect of the rice trade? That is the crux of the problem. I think this Council ought to say: "We have taken the cue from the Colonial Office and extended our rice production and you, sir, should see the West Indian Governments and make arrangements for reciprocity between us." There is where I feel we have to be strong. We ought to be considered more than the question of the London Brokers and the Poor of British Guiana. Therefore, I think, we should go cautiously.

I have been told definitely by the acting Colonial Secretary that arrangement is being made to put the rice industry on a co-operative basis in the future. I think that is the best way to go about it. I agree we should have something like the Rangoon Mills, but do not let the Government of British Guiana begin by having a plantation. Let us not begin to feel that we are out of the bush as yet. Let us be cautious. I trust and hope that with this gesture of goodwill and nucleus and the pooling of our resources together we will be able to say to the Islands: "We have the product, send the ships."

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I have never yet been able to get in direct terms from the hon. the Colonial Treasurer a statement as to whether this expansion of the Anna Regina Rice mill is ever to take the place of the proposed Central Rice Mill which the hon. Member for

North-Western District referred to, when he said Mr. Parker visited the Colony and advised the erection of a central rice mill in that district. It seems this is the time when Government should make a direct pronouncement on that score as to the policy it proposes pursuing in that line. It will be necessary to decide whether we are going to have several central rice mills which, I suppose, are for the purpose of furthering the scheme.

I could not quite follow the question of Government plantation system with *cum annexis* slavery. It became so involved that after a certain time I gave up the struggle. I would like to find out from the hon. Member, as he definitely stated he is in favour of State ownership of everything which means he recognizes or follows the Communist doctrine, how is such going to be built, a Government plantation system, with the idea of peasant farming. He knows fully well the system advocated was always that of communal farming where the State that he referred to commandeered the produce of the farm, but that caused a considerable amount of friction and unrest, and so that system whittled down considerably to a system of private ownership. Is he going around the districts to tell persons so that he can get persons to go under this Government plantation system? I defy him to say that the statement he made to-day about Government plantation system is not against peasant farming. I think he should withdraw it if he has any interest in the scheme. We are under a democratic system and do not want what he advocates.

The hon. Member talked about mechanization. This is an attempt to do so. Is he afraid it is going to absorb the farmers to which he referred or that it may take the productive side of the industry to where peasant farming will expand as quickly as it can? Those are two views he should bring to bear

on the subject. If the hon. Member is going to give me the answer then we may ask for a grant for this central rice mill in Essequibo.

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: I was not here yesterday when the debate on this motion began, but I have listened with interest to the several speakers who have spoken this afternoon on the motion. Apart from the hon. Member for Central Demerara who spoke so lucidly on this question, I have been unable to follow the inconsistent suggestions and views put forward by some of the speakers especially those by the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member of the Council. I do not know whether he desires us to harken back to the old way of tilling the land by means of the ordinary agricultural forking in order to produce rice to compete with Burma when the time comes. Government has been accused over and over in this Chamber that it favours only the expansion of the sugar industry and nothing has been done for the rice industry. I think that has been the cry of the hon. Member for North-Western District for many long years. Now Government is endeavouring to expand the rice industry there is the complaint from him that it will be a failure. I do not know what process one's thinking seems to take on. At times it presents us in the figure of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. There should be no fear that if the people of this Colony put their shoulders together what looks now as a loan would be converted into a grant. In other words, this is put forward in writing in the nature of a loan, but if we take full advantage of the opportunity which the Secretary of State has offered then it is to be a grant. I think it would be a mistake if we do not take this opportunity in respect of these development schemes which will mean prosperity for this country in the long run.

In these modern times in order to compete with other countries you have to employ the same methods for production as they. I think that without

that form of industrialization we will be unable to build up an industry which will compete later on with Burma and other places in the production of rice. If we want to make reciprocal treaties with other people, we must be able to compete with other countries so far as cost is concerned and to treat with them. I think this is an opportunity which has come to us to put ourselves in the position to make these treaties with other people and so supply the West Indies with the produce we can get from this country. The motion ought to find favour with every Member of this Council, if he has the interest of the Colony at heart. I know, sir, that this afternoon's sitting will be somewhat curtailed because of a very unfortunate occurrence yesterday, the demise of the late Colonial Auditor, and I do not think it needs any further implementation of words on my part to record my hearty support in favour of the motion before the Council.

Mr. FERREIRA: I would like to associate myself entirely with the remarks of the last speaker and to congratulate Government on making a serious attempt to provide means of developing not only the Rice Industry but the Colony at the same time. I do not think it is worthwhile dealing with all the remarks made by the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Edun). I think he should bear in mind that the rates of wages in Burma would hardly be accepted in this Colony, and I hardly think we will ever drop to that standard. These schemes have been criticized because of waste and over-expenditure in such schemes. You must have abuse, and there have been abuses I have been told. I do not think we should hesitate to support schemes such as these. It is absurd in these days to talk of going back to the ancient form of tillage. We should realize that mechanization is the only solution to the successful expansion of the rice industry.

There can be no other means with the limited labour available. I have seen the efforts made by the Rice Marketing Board with mechanization, and I am perfectly satisfied we are proceeding in the right direction.

There is one thing I may mention and that is, Members of this Council should be invited and given an opportunity to see these schemes. I can assure you, sir, that had all Members of Council been invited and taken over the schemes instead of our spending two days on this debate we would have concluded it yesterday.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: This debate has ranged over a somewhat wider field than is perhaps justified by the terms of the motion. Many hon. Members have spoken in detail on the rice cultivation scheme at Mahaicony, the scheme for mechanical equipment, and even on the scheme for the provision of new rice mills. These three schemes are not embodied in the terms of the motion before the Council to-day, but nevertheless they are included in the despatches which have been laid before hon. Members in a Council Paper. Consequently I think hon. Members were within their rights in covering the ground as much as they had done, and I for one rather welcome the opportunity of hearing in advance their views on the subject. Nevertheless I contemplate with a certain amount of alarm the possibility of hearing those speeches all over again when I have, as is my duty, to bring a motion before the Council with respect to the grant for those particular schemes. They are not embodied in the motion now before the Council.

Perhaps the most important speech came from the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Edun). I regret to say that I was not quite clear as to whether he was supporting some of the things or whether he was opposing, but there were one or two points to

which I would like to reply. He seized upon a comment quoted in one of the despatches as emanating from Sir Frank Stockdale. Sir Frank Stockdale did say at a conference in this Colony that he had some doubts about the use of mechanical equipment here for rice cultivation, but, as I remarked when I interjected during yesterday's debate, he was not referring to the use of mechanical equipment as a matter of policy; he was referring to doubts in regard to its successful use physically on our particular soils and particular lay-out-drains, cross drains and so on. He was referring to its use in regard to the reaping of the particular kind of rice we grow here, and whether it would stand up to mechanical treatment, and so on. The hon. Member has used that doubt expressed by Sir Frank Stockdale in quite a different way. He has thought fit to suggest that he was referring to mechanization as inimical to the cultivation of rice by peasants. That is not the case at all.

Mr. EDUN: Nô, I did not say it was inimical but generally he feels that mechanization would not be successful.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The inference I drew, which I think the Council drew from the hon. Member's remarks, was that Sir Frank Stockdale doubted it from the point of view of policy. That is not the case.

The hon. Member went on to talk about the wicked London brokers and the competition from the East in the past and what we may expect in the future. He also wanted us to assure him that efforts would be made to secure our rice against that competition, at least in the West Indian markets. Well, the first thing we have to do before we can overcome that competition is to have the rice. Our main difficulty in selling rice to the West Indies, particularly to our neighbour Trinidad, has been that we did not have

the full amount of rice they required. We had part of it. Similarly in Jamaica, and with the whole field—unless and until we can assure ourselves that we have the rice, we cannot go with open hands to them and beg or demand a firm market in the West Indies.

The primary object of all these schemes, at the stage they have now reached, is to ensure that we shall have the rice to sell, and we can go to those markets and say: "Do not look to India for any part of what you require because we have it to sell."

As regards the steps we are taking to assure the market, apart from the production of the product itself, hon. Members may have read something about the Anglo-American Caribbean Conference held at Barbados. In one of the reports of the Committees an important recommendation is that the West Indies should be regarded as a single unit for the sale of produce obtained within their respective fields, and action is going ahead along that line of policy. I was very pleased to find that it has reached London, and that steps are now being taken to investigate the possibility of a Customs Union. It is a very big subject but steps are being taken along those lines, and coupled with our own steps with regard to the production of the rice I am sure that some good result will be achieved very quickly.

In the course of his remarks the hon. Member also talked about the wonderful way in which the Eastern countries, Burma, India, etc., will be able to compete with the rice produced in the Western Hemisphere. Surely the hon. Member must know that the real reason for that is the appallingly low standard of living of the people who produce it. It is not due to the fact that we have not mechanization. The sole reason why we in this Colony could not compete with India, or the main reason was that our people here have a higher standard of living and demand and ought to get a better price.

Mr. JACOB: May I enquire whether it is a low standard of living in the East or a high standard of living in this Colony, or the low cost of living? There is a difference between a low standard of living and a low cost of living. If the hon. Member says that the standard of living in the East is low as against the standard of living among the peasants here being high I do not agree with him.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am not going to split hairs. I meant both. I have never been to India but I have read a lot about it. I have never been to Burma or China, but most of us know what the standard of living is there, and we do not want to see it reproduced here or anywhere else. ("Hear, hear").

The hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) made the longest speech, but I have very little to say about it. It was one of the most peevish criticisms I have ever heard from him in this Council. He charged Government and those officers concerned with this work with not doing the very things which this motion and these despatches say we are attempting to do. We are trying to do three things. We are trying to produce properly drained and irrigated lands in addition to those we already have; we are trying to produce mechanization, which is something he himself says ought to have been done long ago, and we are trying to improve milling facilities. A strange thing happened in the course of his remarks. He said two things but although in one instance he retracted his statement I am bound to refer to it in my reply because he said he desired a record of this debate to be sent to the Colonial Office. He referred to the Committee that sat in 1930 in regard to the provision of central mills, and said I was not a member of that Committee. As it happened, of course, not only was I a member but I produced the scheme which was accepted by the Committee and embodied in their report.

Mr. JACOB: May I explain? I was appointed to that Committee and I left the Colony in June for England, returning to the Colony in September or October. That is how I made the mistake. I think it is improper for the hon. Member to stress the point because immediately after the report of the Committee was presented I withdrew the statement. It is strange too that a member of the Committee and not the Chairman prepared the report.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It sometimes happens. It happened that I was very interested and I prepared the scheme which was submitted, accepted and embodied as a recommendation of the Committee.

The hon. Member criticized the plans for rice mills. He said we had an expert, Mr. Parker, but we are not following his advice; we were not doing the things he said we should do. That is we are not going in for mechanical drying. That is just the thing he did not say; he said exactly the opposite. I have his report here and he emphasizes that we should continue the sun drying process because it is cheaper. He was dealing with a recommendation for a mill to produce an output of 30 bags of rice per hour. We have gone much further: we are going to import and actually have on order a large mill capable of producing 5 tons of rice per hour. If we can get a mechanical drier we should be very much better off.

The remarks by the hon. Member about the conditions attached to these loan grants have already been dealt with so well by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. de Aguiar) that I should not trouble myself to say anything more on the subject. All we have to do is to declare the various areas Drainage Areas under the Ordinance, see that rates are levied so that they should be properly maintained and the money not wasted, and last of all we should see that no private property which benefits as a result of this expeu-

diture gets a larger share of that benefit than it should. That is to say a tax should be levied so that some of the products of the work should go into the general revenue. Those are the conditions, and as soon as we can get the necessary legislative action we should be able to represent to the Colonial Office a case for having the loan transferred.

I am not going to deal with the question of the Mahaicony-Abary scheme itself. It is a rather technical question which the hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Peer Bacchus) certainly answered very well indeed. I can only say with him that if the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) did visit that place he must have got in by the back door, because I cannot see how he could possibly have gone there and said some of the things he has said about the scheme.

The hon. Member for Essequibo (Mr. Lee) referred to the use of mechanical equipment by the peasants themselves. As has been publicly announced over and over again, the mechanical units we have now were obtained for use on the Mahaicony-Abary scheme itself, but they came before they were ready for use, and as an experiment the Rice Marketing Board arranged to have them taken through the country and hired for use by the peasants. The peasants saw they were valuable and so good were the results that we obtained permission to order another 20 units of the various types at once, and when they arrive we hope to have distinct hire service quite apart from the machinery that is going to be used on the scheme.

I should have mentioned in connection with the remarks by the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Edun) that he is quite right in expressing his hesitation about the development of the industry on plantation lines. There is

no such intention at all. The Mahaicony scheme is a thing by itself. It is a large block of land which we want to develop as an experiment to go along with these schemes, and it cannot be done except we use those harsh words "on plantation lines." We have no intention whatever of repeating that throughout the countryside. This is the only scheme it is contemplated to do in that way, and for a special purpose. The hon. Member is quite right in saying that recent schemes are not being taken advantage of to the extent they should. The Crabwood Creek scheme, a very valuable scheme on which money is being spent, is not being taken up to the extent we expected, so much so that a recommendation has now come to Government that we should stop doing the entire work to the full extent originally contemplated, because it would be a waste of money to do those works if the land is not being taken up. It would not only be a waste of money but it would impose a burden on those who are making use of some of the land. I agree that every effort should be made by all concerned to get those lands taken up.

The hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) referred to the question of the rice mill. It is quite true that the original idea of the Committee to which I referred was that the first central rice mill in the Colony should go to Essequibo. The position does not really justify a new mill at the present time. Not only has the Government mill at Anna Regina been reconditioned but other mills on the Coast are in tolerably good condition and quite capable of dealing with the crop on the Essequibo Coast. This week the first of these two mills will be set up elsewhere, probably in the heart of the Mahaicony scheme.

I think I have covered the ground as far as I would like in the very short time at our disposal. I would just like to end by thanking the hon. Member for Demerara River (Mr. King) for his

commendation of Mr. Seaford, Mr. Gadd and myself. I in my turn would like to pay tribute to the two public officers concerned. I think they are wholeheartedly in this scheme in particular. I say again that I am grateful that this debate has taken place because it has given us an opportunity of hearing the general views of Members on matters which are not imperative to this motion. I ask that the question be now put.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: I spoke first and said very little. I referred to the Sarah-Mahaicony scheme for which money was voted some years ago. The scheme has not been started and I made certain remarks which you were good enough to say the Colonial Treasurer would answer. The matter has evidently slipped him. I do not think he would have treated it with contempt after what you said.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: have little to say about it. It is perfectly true that a resolution was passed some time in October, 1943, authorizing an expenditure of \$23,000 on the execution of works for the improvement of what is known as the Sarah-Mahaicony canal. Since that time we have had another report from the Consulting Engineer in which he suggests that a further sum of \$15,000 will be required to do the work. The question is whether the work is justified. I am not sure what the answer will be. The matter is now under consideration. It is true that a very small amount of work has been done. I find that \$700 was expended on preliminary work, and in view of the very greatly enhanced cost it is a question for serious consideration whether the work will be justified. However, it has no relation whatever to the works referred to in this particular motion.

Mr. JACOB: Worded as this motion is I am afraid—

The PRESIDENT: I think it is unusual to speak twice.

Mr. JACOB: Worded as the motion is I will have to vote against it because the conditions, particularly those in paragraphs (b) and (c) of the Message, are not what I may call very good. I have in mind particularly--

The PRESIDENT: I am afraid we cannot have another speech from the hon. Member.

Mr. JACOB: Very well, I will vote against it, sir.

The PRESIDENT: The motion has been moved and debated by nearly every Member. I think it has been well ventilated, and I now put the question

The Council divided and voted:—

For— Messrs. Ferreira, Edun, Jackson, Peer Bacchus, Percy C. Wight, Critchlow, de Aguiar, C. V. Wight, J. A. Luckhoo, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney General and the Colonial Secretary.—12.

Against—Mr. Jacob—

Motion carried.

The PRESIDENT: There is no other item on the Order Paper and I therefore suggest that the Council adjourn *sine die*. The Colonial Treasurer would like to hold a meeting of the Finance Committee next Thursday at 2 p.m.