

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 6th NOVEMBER, 1946.

The Council met at 10 a.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 Lethem, K.C.M.G.

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

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

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

The Hon. H. Rahaman (Nominated).

The Hon. J. A. Veerasawmy (Nominated).

The Lord Bishop of Guiana read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 1st November, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

The PRESIDENT: Hon. Members of Council! We have reached the last day of our five years' association, an association which has been happy to me and on which you too, gentlemen, I most sincerely hope, will be able to look back with some common feeling of not unsatisfactory achievement. I am on the moment of departure not only from Guiana, but also I am going—quite unlike almost all my predecessors, demitting this Governorship to take up another—going into retirement from active association with Colonial administration. For it would seem probable that in a few weeks I shall have entered into a new way of life in my own country and may be no more than a spectator on the sidelines of the activities of the service in which I have spent now thirty-six years.

You will forgive me if I do not speak to you this morning so much on the immediate businesses of the Colony and of this Council, but rather with some personal reference on what I feel may be worth saying and which has been greatly in my mind and influencing my relations with the affairs of this country and with you and with the people of Guiana.

On retirement after varied service, one is often asked or asks oneself which have been the happiest years. My five years here have been happy if also difficult and they have given me, in satisfaction in work, a great sum of personal pleasure and pride in the post I have had the honour to hold. But the happiest years of my Colonial service were beyond question those I spent, not as a Governor or a Senior Officer at the head of the machine, but rather as a simple District Officer living in close and most intimate contact with the rural peoples in the countryside of those lands in which I first served. Progressing from apprenticeship in the learning of new languages and the new ways of new peoples, the time very soon came when I found myself immersed in the joys and sadnesses and hopes of those amongst whom I lived. From such knowledge and sympathy, learn-

ing what mattered to these people, learning the import of their festivals and religion, and even at the bedside of the dying, the time came when I felt my fingers really between the leaves of the human book of life of these simple people amongst whom I was called to live and to serve, and a peculiar and complete happiness in service was won.

I can remember even as yesterday a little old mud-brick town in an ancient part of Africa, a little place on the shores of that inland sea Lake Chad, where one seemed to look back centuries in the life of early peoples. I had had certain difficult administrative duties to carry through. I was called one evening to the bedside of an old lady reputed to be a hundred and ten years old, or certainly a hundred. She told me she was the last living person who had received the blessing by laying on of hands of one of these Sheikhs in Islam, teachers in Islam, who had from a religious leader become conqueror with an all-powerful influence over a great region and whose name was still held, after a hundred years, in the deepest veneration. The old lady said that she wished to pass on that blessing to me and laid her old hands on my head. And I felt then—a youngster early in the service, in the impressionable years, at the bedside of that old African lady about to die—that a life dedicated in the spirit of service to those simple peoples was no unworthy life work.

Since those days I have felt in fact nothing but profound happiness whenever engaged in the active field work of Colonial Administration, and this has given the tolerance and patience which help in meeting the continuous irritations and trivialities of an administrative officer's life. For it is not only or even chiefly in economics, in the rigidities and regimentations of political and economic affairs that we are or should be concerned, but also, and greatly, in the advancement of good human relations and human sympathy amongst all peoples as the leaven in all our actions.

It is such things that have coloured my whole outlook on life in these countries since—a profound sympathy with the great

mass of the population who are, in the great majority agricultural and rural—an outlook which has not left me as a senior officer or a Governor. Such a sense has been moreover a principal theme of the oldest of the humanists. It came home to me perhaps first with impressive effect in the marvellous and beautiful words of Greek poets such as Sophocles who wrote of the spirit which moved :

"in huts in the fields where poor men lie" *en t'agronomais aulais.*

or a little later in Euripides :

"Love thou the day and the night

"And be glad of the dark and the light

"And avert thine eyes from the lore of the wise

"That have honour in proud men's sight.

"The simple nameless herd of humanity

"Hath deeds and faith that are truth enough for me."

"What else is wisdom ?

"What of man's endeavour

"Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great "

It is such a sense that has followed me from the long years spent in district service amongst the people, and not, if I may say so with some mild amusement, as a highly efficient Secretariat Officer, that has followed me into Governorships, first in the Indian Ocean and later in the Caribbean.

I do not think I will be accused of looking at the West Indies or Guiana with the eyes of prejudice from previous service elsewhere, such as in Africa. In fact I think I have most fully appreciated the immense differences, and I have appreciated the immense difference between things in Guiana and in the West Indian islands. But there is a most notable fundamental factor which concerns any rural and agricultural population, differing though its history and effect may be. It is the tenure of the land itself. In those countries in which I served there were large indigenous populations living their

own life in their own way, with their own traditions and laws, and above all, on their own land. In Guiana we have the picture of the two great main elements of the population, as things are now, who were uprooted from their own country, their own way of life, their own land. They have been brought here — under conditions which modern opinion can only deplore—to serve economic interests of industries managed for the profit of a more powerful community, commercial interests in Europe and in the European settled plantations of America and the Caribbean. And we have been faced in recent decades with a condition that that community and these industries have been unable adequately to support the resulting population. Nor have these peoples been given adequately their first natural recompense—in land. They have had to develop and struggle upwards in a country in which they have not been owners or holders of land, and where they have acquired it it has been under difficulties and handicaps, and they have had to struggle up without that essential and first foundation right of their life. That they have struggled up in so large a degree is to their immense credit. The Africans have graduated not only to ownership of land but into professions with marked success. The East Indian community has developed a second main industry for Guiana. Both are now in no small degree holders of land, though under a system which I cannot regard as approaching the ideal.

It is against this background that I feel bound to view Guiana. The picture should not be regarded as entirely black. The great fact of emancipation alone by Britain, so much in advance of most other powers, stands out as an eternal credit to that community which conceived it and carried it through. There have been the great humanising influences of the churches and of the schools and those which flow from the leadership and example of people of all races. In the Islands I once read with immense interest of such actions as those of the English doctor, born in an island, who after finishing his education and professional qualifications in England returned quite deliberately with the one purpose of emancipating

his family slaves and settling them on his land. Or of the Quaker company which after emancipation deliberately let out much of its estates in small-holding and freehold property desiring to establish that the emancipated negro could make good on his own. The picture is redeemed in many places but there is a heavy burden of obligation still to meet.

There is no need to indulge in extravagant phrases and empty rhetoric about the black spots of Empire. But we should be realists and look with an open eye on these things, and see there is still that immense obligation which Government and industry—which has at times made large money—have yet to discharge, and this not only in justice but as an essential step in the road to economic prosperity. My view, moreover, is that this obligation lies especially heavy upon us in Guiana, where, though our efforts are real and sincere, the handicaps that face us are peculiar and heavy. It is my view that the discharge of this obligation should colour all Government policy and all our planning of development. There should run throughout our planning the aim to make available sooner or later—it may take a generation—good and conditioned lands on which our rural population—so many of whom must somehow stand on their own feet and cannot, from mere numbers, be supported by Government or capitalistic industry—should have the assurance of being able to plant and reap and to sell the product of their efforts at reasonable life-supporting prices.

It is often said and written that what these countries require is not political advance or social change, but that the first need is material economic improvement and such things as industrialisation. I am not contesting the importance of such economic improvement. But there must still be solved the fundamental problem of human relations, for without these being on a satisfactory footing — and that means mostly the settlement of the agrarian problems of the countryside for the working producer—without these in order there

can be no united action or just and equitable economic advance.

On these things relating to politics I shall have little to say, except that on the establishment of happy human relations between our various sections the whole future depends. It is not necessary to have uniformity, there is no reason why an African should not remain an African, and even, as some few do, look back to Africa sometimes. There is no reason why an East Indian should not look back to Mother India and maintain his affection for traditional languages and religion. That is often man's natural and sound urge to retain his individuality. Anything that will make a better man of him will also make a better citizen of him, provided — and it is of the first importance—there is also the determination to live together with others in a common citizenship in the land in which he finds himself. I met an African in the Islands who, much to my astonishment, was a keen student of an African language which it happened I spoke fluently. He was none the less a good West Indian. Myself as a Scot and a most ardent student of the history and traditions of my country may yet, I think, be still the better citizen of King George's Commonwealth for that.

Of human relations in Government I can remember once speaking of the need more to humanise administration and the public services. I would say it again. Of human relations in industry and as between capital and labour, I would like to preface anything I say by emphasising how very greatly these have improved and have been finding the way to further improvement in these short five years. I would wish to say that first, before speaking somewhat frankly on what I once found. I would like here to pay tribute to what I believe are the excellent intentions of many of our employer interests, chief of which is sugar, and of the spirit which leaders are bringing to this task. And I am glad to know that leadership in labour also does progress, no matter what faults we may observe, progress in sense of responsibility and readiness to see more than one narrow point of view.

I think that we can flatter ourselves that we have had a solid achievement behind

us in these five years, in that we have passed through these difficult years of the war with but a limited degree of the troubles which have been so notable in some other countries in this region. But I look back with amazement when I realise what I found in 1941, and it requires to be remembered if we are to view correctly this achievement, and this five years in Guiana. A personage of the very highest position who had then recently visited the Colony gave me no happy picture, in fact rather clearly indicated that it was almost impossible to expect to avoid serious trouble. I was amazed to find an attitude on the employing side in London, in Canada and here, which seemed to regard it as Government's first and principal business to protect and support industrial production against upset and to use all means — meaning strong means—to do so. I was approached by employers who spoke of their fear of violence and riots. I found numerous indications of threats of disturbance, of sabotage. I found that bauxite as a war-need industry seemed to expect almost exemption from the ordinary operation of civil government in these things and that the Commissioner of Labour was indeed prohibited from visiting Mackenzie lest he be a disturbing influence: this being Mr. M. B. Laing, a man whose sense of fairness and balance of judgment is unquestioned in this country. I found that there was no labour legislation of the kind passed in almost all other colonies of our standing, and when it was introduced into this Council certain classes tried hard to stall it off. At the same time we had a serious strike in our docks and police and military had to be employed to keep shipping arrangements going. Some of the leadership in labour—not, let me say, all—showed grievous faults and deficiencies, and worse.

I say all that very frankly now because it is all past and done with, but it is on that background that I must, quite inevitably, look back. I think we can all of us say here that we have learned not a little in these years and have the satisfaction of knowing that we have brought the country through not too badly from a diffi-

cult situation. I can only wish on leaving it that the better spirit now evident will not dim, that capital and labour and Government will co-operate with mutual appreciation of each other's place and part in the future progress of our country. We have fairly tried out in these years the better and democratic ways of free discussion and of give and take, and have, as I have just said, reason to feel some pride in our war achievement in this regard. There will be difficulties enough in all conscience. There will be the difficulty of that constant enemy to our best interests, racial suspicion, against which we will have to keep most vigilant guard. It is at least true that all our leaders know that, and I believe can be relied upon to combat it.

It is with this background of improved and, I hope, improving relations in these last five years that we surely believe, as I fain would do, that Guiana can make a success of its new political future. In increasing association and sharing the responsibilities of public affairs amongst all our sections, which I trust has been true of these last five years, we have known what is the best of all training grounds. There will be the difficulty of leadership, faults of leadership no doubt, mistakes in popular choice, yet I cannot really doubt the ability of a country which has a municipal and village and district authority system such as ours, and so many persons of sane public spirit as do now man it, I cannot doubt but that such a country can, if it cares, bring forward sooner or later adequate and true popular representatives. As you know, I have not infrequently said that to base your legislature on your municipal and rural and country authorities might be a very wise device.

No doubt the people may be misled sometimes, and perhaps most at first, by shallow demagogues filled with windy promises and projects. When I look back over these five years I am often amazed to record in my mind the extraordinary amount of wishful thinking that has been poured into my ears, mostly by persons who talk in our capital city and are filled with the best of

intentions but generally without any real personal experience of that of which they talked, and hopelessly and completely impractical. I do most earnestly hope that Guiana will choose wisely next year. It is, however, on this existing Council that I have leaned so heavily in these years for co-operation in Government work. I find it difficult adequately to express my full debt. We are told we are a moribund and unrepresentative body. It is very true that I think we would have been wise to dissolve, say three years ago, and I myself have said it here. I need not go into reasons which prevented such a step, the war, its preoccupations, the late completion of our constitutional change in 1943, and the belief that the new franchise would have materialised long since. This Council, I think I am right in saying, in almost all its members, has preferred to see these things through without dissolving and I did not wish dictatorially to force any other course upon it. The course we have followed has had many solid advantages.

Let me say this too. This Council has been a home of sanity and balance. When I have been rueful at some of the gross failings that I have often had to note in my dealings with some people in this country, the fantastic projects glibly but apparently seriously put forward by would-be publicists on which I have just commented, the screaming overstatement in written and spoken word, the shrill insistence on some craze, the grotesque and overweening vanity of the irresponsible critic, the denigration, the blackening of their own country by Guianese, so unfortunately common, the spiteful and damaging jealousies and personal intrigues, things which are such a reflection on the ability of Guiana to rule itself—when I see all these things so often in front of me in one way or another, I think of this Council as it has been as one home at least of sanity and balance, and I thank you for it.

I would again say that I find it difficult adequately to express my personal appreciation. I have endeavoured to take this Council and its members collectively and individually more and more into the active execution of Government work, and

some of you have been good enough to express your appreciation of that. I think our embryo ministry system for example has been a notable achievement. I would again say, though it seems little realised in London and elsewhere, that in this kind of thing we were in 1943 in advance of most legislatures of our kind. Might I also express my deepest appreciation of the high quality of public spirit which has distinguished the Chairmen of Committees.

I do not attempt to make any review of material accomplishments in these five years. I might remind Members, if they would do me the favour of looking back, that five years ago I said in my first address to Council that in this time of war I could not anticipate great material achievement. I quote from that address:—

“A Governor's limit of service, according to my letter of appointment, is but five years, and I am under no illusion that that period can see more than limited achievement.....”

and again :

“I would repeat that I have no illusion that that period will see more, at the best, than a beginning of achievement towards a better Guiana. Even that will demand patience and tolerance and continuous hard work and will not be obtained without discomfort felt, yes, and dislike aroused”.

That last prophecy has proved true enough. The quotation goes on :—

“I can only hope that the influence of responsible opinion through this Council and others will be able to hold this Colony to a practical realization that the need for effort and adjustment to new ways lies on all persons and all sections of the community”.

I shall not attempt to speak on very many of the things which have been very near to my heart and interest and I must pass them by today. I might say however here that it has been an especial pleasure to have seen some beginning with the development of the interior, and doubly a regret that just when we have got the team together and the pitch cleared I must retire myself to the grandstand or even farther out of sight. I would mention too the steps taken to give

the maximum opportunity to the local officers in the highest places of responsibility in the state. That they have shown themselves so fitted in my time has been no small source of gratification to know. There is still some way to go in those professions and scientific and technical activities which the sons of Guiana have not yet fully tackled, but I am quite sure they have the ability to do so. While I have met much cynical pessimism and even defeatism in this country, I have been rather impressed by, and I have expressed it here and elsewhere—it has been expressed also by more than one authoritative visitor—the buoyant eagerness which distinguishes many of the younger people, and which is a real earnest of the advance of Guiana. There is need of a little more toughness of fibre: it is too often expected that the path be made easy.

I need not again speak here on a subject I have set out so fully in a long series of despatches, mostly published. In these despatches I have expressed some very definite and strong views on Drainage and Irrigation, and, on re-reading now, I would most certainly stand and advise that at whatever cost in time and in application there should be carried out a steady programme over perhaps a full generation. Nor can I speak at length on the development plans and the extreme difficulty with which you are faced in discriminating as to what is possible within available means. My own emphasis has been, as I said here last May, on the imperative need of the actual production of wealth as the one foundation on which we can build a better Guiana. If we want to hold up our head we must above all work, and produce and pay our way. We cannot sit back and rely on automatic effects of high prices, of wages, of Government schemes and controls. The slump, greater or less, will hit us sooner or later, and it will only be met by our own hard efforts. There is a great deal of leisure in this country, a fantastic amount of time spent in idleness or in play. Perhaps there are some reasons and let me but repeat that if we are to carry the standards to which we aspire in this next period

of years, it will mean combined and individual effort and let me repeat, willingness to work. I would warn you moreover most sincerely, to heed the lesson of the flaws in your past and present economy, which has led to that very strong statement made about all these Caribbean countries that I once quoted, that in such a country as this, which should above all be a producing country, there is too large a class which has

“fattened.....in spite of the mass of “poverty-stricken citizens.....existing “on imports from which the merchant “importers have gleaned an easy harvest through percentage, commission “and profits.....”

I have seen that cloven hoof far too evident in these war years. I would emphasise again that it is on the production of real wealth with hand and machine that alone you can rise to better standards. I spoke too only last May of the imperative need of putting the financial house in order after the blitz of the war, in these next two or three years, and before the so much prophesied slump hits us. You will have that before you soon, and with the memoranda of the Economic Adviser to which I have myself given much attention. We have not done badly in the war years and have time to turn round. The difficulties have been foreseen and when they come there is no need to panic into retrenchment and stagnation. We must, if we want progress, take some risks. But we must do all with our eyes open and a clear view of the courses open to us which these memoranda will give.

I have already expressed my good wishes for Guiana's new constitution. Let me say again what I have said before, that there is one lesson that has been borne in on me in these recent years, and that is the imperative necessity to push forward with our professed policy of self-government of colonial units, the reality of local control and responsibility, limited only where there is some Commonwealth or international obligation and responsibility which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom must carry. I know it

is quite easy to talk about the dangers of premature political advance. I, personally, believe that the greater danger is in deferment, in stalling off this progress. Such advance is practical politics in view of the burden as now centralised under our present system which can no longer carry the present mass of detail it attempts. But still more is it a matter of the plain principle and political wisdom. If the members of the Commonwealth are to remain in happy family association they must be given their real share of liberty within the family. We will not have ideally administered colonial units, let us admit it. But Britain, like any wise parent, must take the risks and be tolerant and helpful to her offspring coming out of the leading strings. While beyond question the intention is liberal, yet I confess I am frequently not happy at what looks so often like the imposition of more and more bureaucratic control from outside the individual colonies themselves.

The same applies to federation and those other movements of which we hear so much. There are immense advantages to be secured by Caribbean federation or regionalism or whatever it may be, provided it is kept within the limits of helpful common guidance, but for the great mass of administrative action there should be the maximum decentralisation. Some of the greater countries of the world are even now suffering from the excessive bureaucracy of central controls, exaggerated—almost into a mental disease in some of its executives—during these years of war. Moreover, federation or regionalism need not be confined only within precise national limits. I hope that Guiana will not forget her continental status, and her neighbours of the other four Guianas, Dutch, French, Brazilian and Venezuelan, and her notable similarities in so many aspects of country and people to some of these. I might record with pleasure the very co-operative friendliness which has marked our relations with our two closest neighbours, Surinam and Brazil. With the latter we have had in fact a quite new accord. Guiana is presently and in its future a much greater country than most

colonial units in this region can ever be. Let us believe in its future.

I have already expressed my gratitude to this Council as a body and it might be invidious to mention names. But I do not think I should let this opportunity pass without recording my deep gratitude to the Deputy Prsident, Mr. Woolford, not only in relieving me of what is a considerable burden, the sitting in the Chair on the *qui vive* for many hours of public business, but also—and it has been a most notable feature of this Council—for the manner in which time and again by poise and dignity and with wise words coming from long experience, he has raised the standard of our proceedings to one which need not fear comparison with that of any legislative body. Might I quote my own words of November 1941 :—

“I would express my sincere hope that “my own relations with this Council in “so far as they may continue with me as “President, will be distinguished by mutual “respect and regard for each other’s actions “and motives, and have that dignity and “etiquette which is, or should be, the in- “heritance of our colonial legislature”.

I think that hope has been fulfilled.

There are three members not here present today and whose names therefore I may with the more propriety mention. Mr. McDavid, one of the very ablest Colonial Service officers with whom it has been my privilege to serve, and a son of Guiana. Mr. Seaford gives to this Council and to Government an immense share of his time and gives a volume of practical service which it would be impossible to evaluate. Mr. Edun has given us in this Council and the public outside many rodomontades and I have been his critic publicly and to him privately, but he has said very many things indeed which have required to be said and his contribution to this Council and through it to Guiana has been considerable. For myself as President of this Council and as Governor I do feel that I have not shirked my part, and I have realised very clearly what the Deputy President has said to me more than once, that very often it is the Governor’s personal stimulus that is all important in achieving reasonably quick results. That is a heavy

burden to put on anybody, and I do most sincerely hope and believe that some of the dispositions we have made in these years and those which follow, I hope very soon, will mean a greater sharing of this burden.

I would also wish to say this. I have at all times endeavoured to be not only His Majesty’s representative and spokesman of the Government in the United Kingdom to this country, but rather have I tried also to identify myself with the interests, the sentiments, the ideals of the people of Guiana. I think that is one of the great duties of a Governor. In one of the numerous addresses to me in recent weeks one phrase stood out to me : “The Governor has tried to make himself a citizen of Guiana”. I was indeed proud to receive that compliment.

Again, speaking in this beautiful and seemly chamber which will be a lasting memory to me, let me thank my colleagues of this Council, the three official members, the Colonial Secretary, to whom I hand over the Government today with complete confidence, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Treasurer, and my unofficial colleagues, for these years of association on which I shall look back with so much satisfaction. That satisfaction or any other that I take with me from this country will be nevertheless qualified by intense regrets over those many things which I might have done and have not done, inside this Council and outside it. Not so much in larger issues for which time and means set limits, but in the smaller everyday things, those missed opportunities, those failures to take the right action or say the right word at the right time, failure to have taken some action, sometimes involving no great sacrifice of time or trouble, which might have done some good or prevented some error later emerging. Intuition has often not jumped quickly enough, I am very well aware. The number of such failures can be fully known only to me. For these deficiencies I would crave your indulgence.

Had I had the opportunity of service here under peace conditions and less pre-occupied with the innumerable major and minor cares of wartime administration I

should have hoped to do some of these very many things that I have for one reason or another—pressure of business or personal fault—not done. It has perhaps been my misfortune to have served here only under the extraordinary conditions of war-time and its consequences. I recall that I assumed office only four weeks before the war entered its most anxious period in this area. It will nevertheless be my lasting satisfaction to have had some share in seeing Guiana successfully through these difficult years just past.

In these coming years I shall remain I hope a most sincere and sympathetic spectator and well wisher. It is no empty phrase when I say that I shall pray for the blessing of God on all the six peoples of this land, the blessing of the one God who moves and has his being in the faith of the Christian, of Islam, of our Hindu brethren and of all who acknowledge the Divine spirit in man. I would say here from the bottom of my heart "God Bless Guiana".

I have been given to understand that certain Members would like to make a few remarks and, I think, we have time for that before I slip away necessarily for the Ramp

Mr. WOOLFORD: Sir, on no previous occasion in my capacity as your Deputy in this Council have I had to perform a duty which is more painful than the one I have risen to discharge, accentuated as it is with the knowledge of which I am truthfully conscious: that the address which you have just delivered is the last one we shall hear from your lips as President of this Council and indeed as Governor of this Colony, which has endeared itself to you as all of us are aware. I find it very difficult to speak after your kind personal reference to me, but as I am to be allowed to discharge my duties as I have done to the best of my ability, I cannot fail to seize this opportunity to thank you for the honour you have conferred on me by appointing me your Deputy in this Council

The occasion on which we have met today is a most memorable one in the history of our Parliamentary assemblies. It

has never happened that any Governor or Administrator has thought it not beneath the high dignity of his office, and not inconsistent with his duty, to have convened a special sitting of the Legislative Council and to thank Members as you have done for their labours in the conduct of public affairs in this Chamber. (Applause).

We are deeply grateful to you for the consideration and respect you have shown, for the position of responsibility which we occupy and which is characteristic of those happy relations that existed between Members of the Council and yourself during your regime. I would like in return to convey to you, perhaps inadequately, our gratitude to you for the spirit which informed your guidance and advice to us in the performance of your public duties. And I hope, Sir, that the recollection of these proceedings today will long be cherished by members of this Council all of whom, notwithstanding their political faith or their inclinations, hold you in very high esteem.

I should like myself to refer in just a few words to what I consider the most notable achievements of your service in this Colony. If I had to single out any particular achievement of yours, it is the one to which you yourself had felt it your duty to refer. I consider that your efforts for the promotion of goodwill and co-operation between employer and labour the most significant of any one particular thing that you have accomplished. I also think that the Colony owes you a debt of gratitude for smothering what does appear to me to have been a great tendency before your arrival here of the creation of what may have resulted in serious factional and sectional interests between the races which comprise this Colony. I hope that your advice will be taken in the spirit in which you gave it, and that the races of this Colony will live together in peace and harmony notwithstanding their natural aspirations.

Before resuming my seat I would like on behalf of Members of this Council and the constituencies which we represent to thank you for the interest you have displayed throughout the Colony in awakening persons in the various country districts

especially to a sense of duty not only to themselves but to the Government of this Colony. They must take an interest in public affairs and in the deliberations of this Council if they are to be conversant with matters which I should say are of great importance to us all from time to time. I know of no individual whatever his position in this Colony who has been so useful in heightening the respect in which this Government should be held by every person in this community, whatever opinion he may have as to the wisdom of the policy of any particular Governor or Administrator. And I think we ought in some way or other, in a more tangible way and other than we can do today, to express our appreciation of the wonderful way in which you have enhanced the reputation of the Administration in this Colony with the neighbouring territories, especially with those to whom you have referred.

There are other speakers who would like to make some contribution today and I have just received a telegram from the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Mr. E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.F.). It reads :

“New Amsterdam, Berbice,

To :—Hon. E. G. Woolford, K.C.

Please convey to His Excellency on behalf of residents of Eastern Berbice and myself our sincere wishes for a pleasant and peaceful retirement trusting that far away in his homeland he will cherish the happy knowledge that in the hearts of this community there live the very best wishes for his welfare, health and happiness. He has won our affection by his kindness and sympathy, our esteem by his sincerity and earnestness of purpose and above all our gratitude for the humanity of his administration.”

In conclusion I would like to express the hope which I know is shared by every member that you will have a long and happy retirement and that it will be accompanied with enjoyment of good health and prosperity”. At this stage Mr. Woolford broke down and ended by saying, “I am sorry, Sir, if my feelings do not allow me to say more”.

Mr. de AGUIAR : Your Excellency, the hon. Member for New Amsterdam, who

has just taken his seat, spoke not only in his own behalf but in his capacity as Deputy President of this Council, and his remarks included the Unofficial Members of this Council. But I have risen, sir, to add a few words to what he has said in my own behalf. Lest it be misunderstood that the words that fell from the hon. Member's lips were not fully representative of the entire Council I wish to repeat, Sir, that all he has said here this morning is the wish of every Member of the Council that I see around this table. Sir, I recall distinctly the first occasion when Your Excellency visited this Council soon after your arrival in this Colony. I listened to your words at that time and as a regular attendant at meetings of this Council I can say I have had the distinct pleasure of listening to you on almost every occasion that you spoke in this Council. But, Sir, all the addresses and speeches you have made in this Council before have been put, to my mind, in the shade as the result of what you have told us here this morning. I am sure that the words you have uttered today will long be remembered by all of us. In fact, I think that many of the things you have spoken can well be taken to heart and handed down as a guide to those of us who remain in the Council and even to those who may succeed us hereafter.

As President of this Council, there can be no doubt, you have always exercised a great deal of patience, tolerance, zeal and energy in the work we have had to carry out in these last few years. As you referred to it, Sir, the work in particular during the first four years of your administration and even until now has been exceedingly heavy, and I have no doubt that we have been able to pull through as the result of that fire and spirit you have always endeavoured to imbue Members of this Council with. Members will always remember that zeal and energy you have displayed on the occasions to which I refer. It is, as I have said before, that zeal and energy that you have put forward that have been a source of encouragement to every single Member of this Council. Now, Sir, it is almost impossible for an individual Member to assess the work that you have done since you assumed the governorship of this Colony except to make passing refer-

ence to it. I think, it is a task that may, perhaps, be well left to the historian. But, Sir, there is one thing that I think should not be allowed to pass unnoticed—I do not think it is unnoticed—and it is the fact that during your stay in this Colony and your administration of this Colony your main interest was the welfare of every inhabitant who resides here. (Applause). Your visits to the country districts in particular, your desire to see the hinterland developed, are only a few of the things that will redound to Your Excellency's credit. You leave us to-day, perhaps within the hour, for your home and in a very short while, we hope, you will be in the bosom of your family. We will not forget that even although at this late hour, although you are as it were on the point of leaving us, you have decided to leave with us for a little while your daughter, Dr. Mary Lethem. For that we shall always be grateful. There only now remains for me to say that when you leave this Council Chamber this morning you are taking the very best and heartiest wishes of every Member of this Council, and we wish you Godspeed in your journey home. (Applause).

Mr. FERREIRA: Your Excellency, we have met this morning to bid you farewell, and it is only fitting that Members should be given an opportunity to express publicly from the floor of this honourable Council Chamber the feelings which fill our hearts on this occasion. Leave-taking of one's friends is always difficult, and with all due respect—the respect that is due to you as Governor and His Majesty's Representative—I will not be expressing finer sentiments when I refer to you as a friend of the people, a friendship which you gained by your solicitude and your thoughts for the welfare of the people of Guiana. And so when I say we are losing a friend I realize fully that we are losing someone who always had the best interest of Guiana at heart. (Applause).

You came to Guiana in the dark days of war and at a time when victory seemed ever so remote and far away and when the enemies of freedom had almost visualized a vanquished country and a broken Empire. Those are the times in which you

came. In those difficult days when we were faced with the problems of food shortage, rising prices, social welfare; housing, shortage and labour disturbances, you came to this Colony and did not shirk your responsibilities. You faced up to them. You resolutely set about them in a manly way and a way of which we are all proud. It is not my intention to indulge in what I may describe as idle adulation, but at the same time I cannot easily cast aside the good work you have done for my country and of which I am justly proud. From the outset of your regime you set about to know the country, to know and to understand the people. In that you have succeeded and in that lay your success. The man at the bottom in the economic machinery, the forgotten man, was in your consideration. You met him in the ricefield hard at work, you met him on his own ground and you listened to his views and, I daresay, to his advice, and he appreciated that for he realized as never before that the part he played, humble though it was, was essential to our economic machinery.

I recall your first visit to my home town a very few days after your arrival in this Colony. If I remember rightly, when you came you used a phrase which certainly tickled the populace of New Amsterdam. On that occasion, Sir, it was my honour and privilege to address you as President of the Berbice Chamber of Commerce. I think my remarks were regarded as possibly cautious and suspicious, but I was surprised, and so was every Berbician, that so early after your arrival in the Colony you should have paid a visit to our county. At the time we thought we would see little of you for the remainder of your regime, but this has not been so for we saw you often. You seemed to have realized what we already knew—the potential wealth of the Corentyne—for you regarded it, as we have always done, as the granary of Guiana. Your interest in Berbice was not confined to that particular area. On the contrary you got to know its entire length and breadth as you travelled around it. It was my privilege and pleasure to accompany you on more than one occasion on your visits to my constituency. You saw the site of Fort Nassau where some 326 years ago

the gallant Dutch fought and established the town of New Amsterdam and at the same time established another fort. You travelled around by plane, on horseback, by corial, launch, motor lorry and on foot. You never complained; you never hesitated. You undertook those journeys and I had to do it too with you, yet I regret to say I did hesitate and did complain because I am not a horseman and even the thought of it makes me sore. It was in that way you saw conditions for yourself. In that way you gained the admiration and confidence of the people.

As you leave these shores today, it cannot be gainsaid that you carry with you a knowledge of our country, of our people and of our problems, surpassed by few. You have constantly told us to have faith in Guiana. I have faith in Guiana for I know that Guiana will go forward and find her rightful place among her bigger brothers of the Empire. I would like to say this: When the time comes, when at some future day the history of Guiana is being written your name will be linked with that of that famous and illustrious Governor of a former day, Laurens Storm Van Gravesande. Your name will stand out and dominate the history of British Guiana, for a personality such as yours does not easily fade away.

You have told us it is your intention to return to Bonnie Scotland and spend your days of retirement in the peaceful pursuit of sheep farming. I trust in that you will find peace and happiness and all that you desire in this life. But if I do know you—and I think I do—I cannot imagine that one so full of vitality and driving force can for long be satisfied to roam the hills of beautiful Scotland. Rather would it seem to me that as you gaze into the beautiful cold and misty hills of Scotland a vision of Guiana will appear before you, luminous and clear, and you will recall, I hope, the rolling savannahs of Ebini Downs with the black faced Persian sheep grazing, as in Scotland, contentedly and unconcernedly, and in your mind's eye the scene shifts to the coastland strip of Guiana where waving ricefields and fields of cane proclaim the fertility of Guiana's land. And as the mist clears you will no doubt see old Kai (Kaieteur) beckoning

you to return to the land of many waters. As surely as you eat of the labba and drink of the refreshing waters of our creeks—I know you know the legend of Guiana—you must naturally pay the price of returning to the bosom of Guiana. Should you, Sir, at some future time return to these shores I can assure you that throughout the length and breadth of Guiana you will find a warm welcome awaiting you.

I would like before concluding to give you this assurance for myself and, I think, every Member of this Council that we will pass on to the Officer Administering the Government and to your successor when he arrives our whole-hearted support. May I wish you and your family all the best of happiness, and may you in the days to come look back on Guiana with cherished memories and think of the people who live in South America and the people of a very grateful Guiana. (Applause).

Mr. VEERASAWMY: May it please Your Excellency, it is a great honour to me, Sir, to be afforded this opportunity to join in this ceremony—a ceremony which will be handed down to posterity, of an unprecedented gathering of the peoples of this Colony, representative of various races and creeds—to pay tribute to one of the most remarkable Governors of whom history and personal experience can bear testimony that this Colony has ever been privileged to have to guide its destiny for an allotted span of five years. When it was announced that you were appointed Governor of this Colony, you were described as "a Labour Man". Whatever that meant, I interpreted it to mean that your activities might endanger the prestige of some people in this Colony. But, Sir, shortly after your arrival that thought was soon dispelled, as you showed you were a veteran, a man ripe in wisdom due to the knowledge and experience gained in other parts of the British Empire. You not only upheld that prestige, but you removed bars and barriers and raised the prestige of all other peoples, irrespective of race or creed.

Your first outstanding act was the closing of the "back door" and the opening of the "front door". You listened to all who wanted to come to you with their grievances. You inspired the masses of

this Colony from the outset with confidence as to your honesty of purpose. You displayed a character that was unusual and unique. You showed especial interest at all times in the cause of the masses. Owing to certain circumstances you enjoyed power that your predecessors were never privileged to enjoy, and you never failed to use that power for the advancement of the peoples of this Colony and for the advancement of the Colony as a whole. (Applause). Slavery and indentureship had long been abolished before your advent to this Colony, but there was left behind something far worse in the form of economic slavery coupled with fear of victimization. You can feel proud, Sir, that the dawn of freedom from economic slavery and fear of victimization will be recorded in the history of this Colony as having taken place during your regime as Governor. (Applause).

Your enthusiasm, zeal and love of work was boundless. Your open-mindedness, your fearlessness, courage, devotion to duty and the energy you displayed in all your undertakings made men wonder with amazement. Your charming manner and control of temper at all times won for you the respect of all who may have differed with any view or action of yours. Only those of material interest lacking in vision and foresight can dare to condemn any act of yours during the period of your Governorship. It has been said, Sir, that some local influence has been the cause of your not remaining with us for a longer term. I do not now believe that that is true, but if it were, then I have no doubt that some day soon we shall see exhibited in the Museum of this Colony "the thirty pieces of silver". Your efforts to promote the interest of the masses and peoples of this Colony will cause your name to be handed down to generations to come. Governments may confer honours, sometimes on those who have served well, sometimes on those who served ill, but no honour can be as great as that which has been bestowed upon you by the voice of the people throughout the length and breadth of this Colony. (Applause).

You will be leaving behind you a 'heap' of problems (Laughter) and also a 'heap' of experience. The future will be no bed of roses for we already know it will be a

'woolley' one (Laughter). I wish you, Sir, and your family long life, health and prosperity. Happiness will certainly be yours because you never betrayed the sacred trust that was imposed upon you of doing unto those people over whom you governed as you would have had them do unto you, if you were in their place. Your happiness will be all the greater because at all times you showed from your tolerance, humility and charity that the spirit of God dwelt within you. May Almighty God continue to bless you and yours for all that you have done for the peoples of this Colony and especially for the joy and comfort and solace that you have not only as Governor and representative upon earth of the Divine Being, but as an ordinary individual, brought to the hearts of the masses and especially to the poor and needy of this Colony. (Applause).

Mr. C.V. WIGHT : Sir, it has been my pleasure to bid you farewell on several occasions recently, but I do not think, however, I should allow this opportunity to pass without saying a few words as Mayor of the City on behalf of the citizens of Georgetown, and also as a Member of this Council on behalf of those persons whom I have the privilege to represent here. It is with a great feeling of regret that we have today to bid you farewell. One only wishes that it would be adieu. We feel, however, you will be with us again, that you will return and that we will hear your voice again even if it is to be over the B.B.C. May I be permitted again to refer—and I think that sums up all that I would like to say this morning—to your address in which you have made reference to the fact—and it seems to me all-embracing—that you have tried to serve the Colony faithfully and to be a citizen of this Colony. One can venture even a little further and say that but for your ardent desire to return to your homeland, Scotland, you might have taken out naturalization papers and remained in this Colony.

Sir, you have taught each and every one of us around this Council table that unselfish service with enthusiasm and energy is what this Colony needs, and it is the only way this Colony can and will progress. You have given us your blessing. May I ask you to convey on behalf of this

Colony to your good spouse, Lady Lethem, our best wishes and hope that some day we will see her accompanying you to these shores. We wish you Godspeed. We bid you farewell. I wish that you did not have to leave these shores so early, but we do feel that you will be with us in spirit, and that we will carry on in that spirit with which you have endowed us. To your family and to yourself we wish everything this world brings to one of your character. (Applause).

Mr. CRITCHLOW : Sir, on behalf of Labour I feel that I would be wanting in my duty if I do not add a few words in appreciation of Your Excellency's service to this Colony. I would like to tell you that the reason why Labour has had confidence in you is this : Soon after your arrival here we had a dispute with our employers and your words then to us were "Return to work and I will appoint a Committee and your grievances will be investigated, and from the time you return to work you will be paid whatever is decided upon." We remembered that one of your predecessors, Sir Graeme Thomson, had made a similar promise in 1924 and after we returned to work the employers refused to give us anything more, much more to pay us what we had been asking for. We thought that you would have been like Sir Graeme Thomson, but I advised the workers to return to work and to print handbills stating that the labourers will get the increased pay from the time they returned to work. After the Committee was appointed and it was decided that we should get increased wages, the majority of the Committee recommended that we must not get the increase from the day we returned to work but from the date of the decision. We approached you and told you what had happened, and you, Sir, stood to your word. You ruled that the employers must pay the increase from the day we returned to work and the 1st August was fixed for the money to be paid. We do not know why that day was fixed. Some workers were very suspicious and interpreted it to mean that as slavery was abolished on the 1st August that day was fixed for the payment of the increase. From then the labourers had confidence in Your Excellency.

I can assure you, Sir, that we appreciate that most of the labour legislation passed in this Colony was during your regime and also the relationship between employer and employee has been much better in this Colony in your regime than hitherto. You must have noticed that of late the women have been very active, and that puts me in mind of what a Scotsman once told me. He said : "When God made man he rested; but when God made woman neither God nor man rested." (Laughter). "I notice that the women in our midst are raising all sorts of political questions. I notice that it is your intention to leave your daughter, Dr. Mary Lethem, behind. I am wondering whether it is because the women feel they can carry on the government better than men and are looking forward that some day they will have Dr. Lethem as Governor of this Colony ?" (Laughter). I sincerely wish you Godspeed and everything good that you wish for yourself. I join with the others in bidding you farewell. (Applause).

Mr. FARNUM : May it please Your Excellency, I bring a message from the rural districts, and that is to express gratitude for what you have done for the people of the rural districts and especially the farmers. Your Excellency, when you assumed the administration of this Colony the farmer's lot was a very difficult one. He could never rely on reaping his crops because that was at the mercy of the weather. Your Excellency went among the farmers, talked with them, got to know their problems, their troubles and their difficulties, and there and then you set about bringing them relief. That relief took the form of the Grow More Food Campaign, by which they were assisted in various directions to plant and do various other things. Your Excellency went further. You fixed the price for the farmers' products, and in addition to that you established a market for their goods. So today the farmer's position is very much better than when Your Excellency assumed the administration of this Colony.

The people of the rural districts also feel, Sir, that the development of the interior will also help them considerably because the labour drawn by the hinterland industries is from the village districts, and they

feel that is another direction in which their position is better now than when you assumed the administration of this Colony. I think, Sir, you have the satisfaction of knowing that. I recall that some time ago Your Excellency made a comparison between the City of Georgetown and the rural districts and you pointed out that Georgetown was on the champagne standard and the rural districts on the ginger beer standard. I am glad to say—and I think you will be glad to know—that whilst the rural districts have not risen to the champagne standard they have risen above the ginger beer standard, and we hope the time is not far off when they will get to the whisky standard.

Finally I have been asked to wish you Godspeed and God's blessing on everything you may do, and to offer the best wishes to Lady Lethem and Dr. Mary Lethem.

Dr. SINGH : I desire also to take this opportunity of saying a few words. We have met here this morning to say good-bye to you, and on behalf of the people whom I represent in this Council I say farewell to you. We in this Council are going to miss you. The people in this Colony are also going to miss you, because you have been a friend to them. You have always found time to listen to their grievances; you were always able to allay doubts and fears, and by your intuition you were able to prevent brewing and mounting trouble. British Guiana has varied and complicated problems. By your extensive and vast travels in this Colony, by dint of hard work, you have acquired an intimate knowledge of this country, and you should have been given another term of office for at least one or two years because you understand its needs and its problems and will be able to smooth the way for your successor to find it very easy to carry on. But it has happened that Downing Street has ruled otherwise and you and your experience and knowledge will be lost to us, and the benefit of the money spent on your travels about the country will be also lost to us. Your successor will have to cover all those grounds again and that will take him about twelve months in extensive travels to gain your experience.

The masses of this Colony are not able to be with you at the Ramp, but I feel, Sir, in spirit from every hamlet, every range on the estates, every tenement room they bid you Godspeed, *bon voyage* and farewell. I wish you a long and pleasant retirement in the company of your relatives and friends.

Mr. THOMPSON : Sir, it has always been my custom to bring up the rear and in so doing it is always my misfortune to have my thunder stolen. That has been done this morning by my hon. friend on my left (Mr. Farnum). In supporting the encomiums showered upon you this morning I want to say on behalf of the rural areas that we also send you off on the crest of the waves. It is due to the popularity you enjoy as a result of your vision, your human relationship, your statesmanlike attitude as well as your democracy, and for that we thank you. When you leave Guiana this morning you leave some smiling faces behind. I have in mind the children. They are happy this morning because they stand as vigorous beneficiaries of the Grow More Food Campaign and you are leaving them with food. You have not only done that, but you have made their lot happy by giving them teachers who are contented as their salaries have been improved and as a consequence they can do their work with very much more contentment.

You are leaving this Colony this morning with the rural areas first and foremost rejuvenated by your having sanctioned Old Age Pensions despite the fact that we clamour for more. However, we are thankful for the little that has been done, and as time rolls on we hope it will be improved so that the recipients will be happier. The farmers in the rural areas look forward with much more satisfaction to the future, as they now enter their fields less fearful of drought as well as flood which had made them so very discontented in the past. Everybody looks forward to the future with much more happiness now because of the Drainage Schemes envisaged and by which we sincerely hope conditions will be very much improved and the farmers' lot will be very much better. I dare not recount this morning the very many things you have done

for the Colony. All I can say is God bless you. May you have peace in your domestic domain and continue to give a helping hand to Guiana, the country dear to your heart. May your retirement be full of contentment; may your days be many and pleasant. May Lady Lethem so help to build you up that life will be a pleasure for you and it will be prolonged. I say thanks for all that you have done, and may you have a safe voyage home. God bless you.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Your Excellency, I thank you for giving me permission to speak on this occasion and I speak for the Official Members of this Council. We have all listened to the very eloquent, the very sincere, the very good speeches of Members this morning in praise of Your Excellency's Administration. It is not for me, a Government Officer, to say any more about that; but, Sir, I can with all sincerity say that for nearly three years I have sat in this Council under your Presidency and I have gained great experience and education which I hope will serve me well in the ensuing months (Applause).

Your patience has been mentioned by all, but I would like to say that your very able and quick grasp of the essential factors in debate has been quite remarkable, as well as Your Excellency's impartiality in the Chair. When a Government measure has been moved and cogent and good arguments are advanced against it even though, naturally, Your Excellency must have desired to pass the motion you have never hesitated either to suspend action or to make further inquiries and show absolute impartiality throughout. (Applause).

I thank the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) who says that he hopes Members will give all support to the Officer Administering the Government. Believe me, I agree with the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member, Mr. Veerasawmy. I shall want it. I ask Members to give me that support in the next few months and I know that I shall get it from the heads of Government Departments. As I have stated once before — and I will say it again—as far as it lies in my power during the time I am administering the

Government I will loyally follow Your Excellency's policy. (Applause).

The Officials of this Council join with the Unofficials in their profound regret at your departure and their best wishes to you, Sir, on your retirement.

The PRESIDENT : Hon. Deputy President, Colonial Secretary and my colleagues in this Council—It would be difficult and perhaps invidious for me to reply *seriatim* to the numerous speeches made this morning by Members of Council. We have beaten all records. It is remarkable. The effulgence of oratory leaves me with the knowledge that for the first time on record at a formal meeting of this Council, Unofficial Members have had more to say than the Governor. (Laughter). When I think of the terrific columns of our Hansard filled with expositions of the President, I go away with a lot of joy remembering that at this last meeting the Unofficial Members have more columns in the Hansard than myself. It is particularly touching for me to receive these kind tributes and wishes from Members of this Council, but you will excuse me if I do not attempt to deal with them one by one. I think it would do me justice to realize that from my assumption of duty here I have regarded this Council as an important and democratic body which is the touchstone of everything else in this Colony. I had intended in my remarks to say something of this Council as a whole after having listened to something that is not so sane and balanced outside, and I take this opportunity of saying so here. I have insisted that whatever is said outside, whatever is urged on Government, it is only this Council, the Sovereign Body, which has to make the decision and the Governor cannot commit himself or the Government to action until he has consulted this Council.

Again Mr. Deputy President, let me thank you particularly for the personal service you have given me, and the Colonial Secretary for the very kind words in closing, and let me also thank those other Members for their kind references. In speaking to my successor—I hope to see Sir Charles Woolley at Christmas time—I will tell him that in going to Guiana he will find the

Legislative Council with traditions second to none.

I only wish I could have dealt with the various questions touching each individual Member here. I can only take up the challenge of the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) and remember how tolerant I was in speaking of the manner in which he accompanied me in the backlands. I was tempted to offer a gold cup for competition among the Members of the Legislative Council, the handicap to

be weight for age. That is to say, the greater the waist measurement in this country the lesser the weight. With that I would come off fairly well and have a chance of getting that gold cup. Perhaps on my happy return we may seek to proceed in some way with it. Whether that is possible or not, it will be a particular joy to me to return and find the same happy atmosphere in which we are saying goodbye today. (Applause). I now declare the Council adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.