

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

FRIDAY, 15th DECEMBER, 1950.

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

-

PRESENT:

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

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. J. Gutch, O.B.E.

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

The Hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.M.G., C.B.E.

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

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E., (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. W. A. Phang (North Western District).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie (Nominated)

The Hon. J. Carter (Georgetown South).

The Hon. F. E. Morrish (Nominated).

The Hon. L. A. Luckhoo (Nominated)

The Clerk, (Mr. D. A. Farnum) read prayers.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES DEFERRED.

The PRESIDENT: Hon. Members, the Clerk of the Council (Mr. A. I. Crum Ewing) is indisposed and as a result the minutes of yesterday's meeting are not ready for confirmation. We will have to confirm them at the next meeting.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.**INTRODUCTION OF BILL.**

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intitled:

"An Ordinance further to amend the Tax Ordinance, 1939."

ORDER OF THE DAY.**CUSTOMS DUTY ON AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY.**

Mr. FARNUM asked, and the COLONIAL SECRETARY laid over replies to the following questions:—

Q. 1—Is it the case that all agricultural machinery is admitted into the Colony free of Customs and other duties?

A. 1—No. Agricultural machinery of British manufacture is admissible free of duty, while the foreign article is liable to duty at the rate of 5% *ad valorem*.

A Bill of Entry Tax of 3% *ad valorem* is chargeable in either case

It is the present policy of Government to waive the duty chargeable on agricultural machinery of foreign origin (under the authority of item 2 of the Fourth Schedule to the Customs Duties Ordinance) on application by the importer, provided that similar articles are unobtainable from British Empire sources.

Exemption from Bill of Entry Tax is not, however, granted.

Q. 2—Are agricultural implements used by the small farmer exempted from these imposts?

A. 2—Agricultural implements, such as forks, hoes, cutlasses, shovels and grass knives, of British origin are admissible free of duty, while those of foreign origin are liable to duty at 5% *ad valorem*.

A Bill of Entry Tax of 3% *ad valorem* is chargeable in either case.

Q. 3—If the answer to Question 1 is in the affirmative and Question 2 in the negative would the Government consider the abolition of Customs duties on agricultural implements used by small farmers in view of the high cost of such articles?

A. 3—Agricultural implements used by small farmers are normally imported from the United Kingdom and are consequently admitted free of duty. They are in good supply at prices lower than those from other sources. The removal of the 3% Bill of Entry Tax would have only a negligible effect on the retail prices of these articles to farmers.

BILLS — FIRST READING.

On motions by the ATTORNEY-GENERAL seconded by the COLONIAL SECRETARY the following Bills were read the first time:—

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to amend the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Ordinance, 1950.”

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance further to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, 1940.”

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to make provision for the good government of the Amerindian tribes of the Colony.”

PENSIONS (AMENDMENT NO. 4) BILL, 1950.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: At yesterday's meeting I gave notice of my intention to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rules and Order to enable me to take the Pensions (Amendment No. 4) Bill, 1950, through all its stages today. In pursuance of that I now

move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order for that purpose.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move the second reading of a Bill intituled:

“An Ordinance to amend the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Ordinance, 1950.”

When, on the 15th of September, this Council passed the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Ordinance, 1950, it was intended that section 2 of that Ordinance should enable all officers to whom the provisions of the Principal Ordinance apply, or to whom those provisions may subsequently apply, to exercise at the date of retirement an option to take a reduced pension with a gratuity instead of a full pension. It was also intended that section 4 of the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Ordinance should give all officers a further opportunity of accepting the provisions of the Principal Ordinance and of the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944. It is a question of wording, and in the result the intention of Government was not carried out. Consequently, this Bill seeks to correct what was an omission, and to enable that intention to be carried out.

It will be seen from clause 2 of the Bill that it is proposed to repeal subsection (1) of section 2 of the Principal Ordinance and substitute the following new sub-section.

“2. (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section twelve of the Principal Ordinance and of section six of the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944, any officer in the public service of the Colony or in other public service to whom the provisions of the Principal Ordinance apply may, not later than the date of his retirement, elect in the manner hereinafter prescribed to accept a reduced pension with a gratuity under the provisions of the Principal Ordinance.”

The words which are new are “or in other public service.”

Clause 3 of the Bill provides :

3. Section four of the Principal Ordinance is hereby repealed and the following section substituted therefor—

“4. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (II) of section twenty-one of the Principal Ordinance and of paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section six of the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944, the Principal Ordinance and the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944, shall apply—

(a) to any officer in the public service of the Colony at the commencement of this Ordinance, and

(b) to any officer transferred to other public service who at the commencement of this Ordinance is in other public service,

who, not later than the thirtieth day of April, nineteen hundred and fifty-one, intimates in writing to the Colonial Secretary that he desires that the provisions of the Principal Ordinance, and the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, 1944, shall apply to him.”

The time is extended to not later than the 30th of April, 1951. In other words, the 1933 Ordinance and the amending Ordinance of 1944, which increases the pension constant and at the same time permits retirement at the age of 55 years instead of at 60, will now enable an officer to exercise the right to come under that Ordinance and get the benefit of a pension constant of 1/600, and at the same time to retire at 55. I formally move that the Bill be read a second time.

Dr. NICHOLSON seconded.

Mr. DEBIDIN : I wish to take this opportunity of the second reading of this Bill to recall the motion I moved in this Council early this year asking for a revision of pensions of those who had retired from the Service. I remember that we had a very full debate, at the end of which the hon. the Financial Secretary gave an assurance, or promised that he would at a very early date go into the matters which were raised and adjust the pensions so as to provide pensioners with something extra to meet the high cost of living. It is with great regret that I observe that we are asked to pass another Bill dealing with pensions before

the promise made by the Financial Secretary has been implemented. As a matter of fact he made us understand that the matter would be dealt with before the Salaries and Wages Commission submitted its final report. We know that the final report of the Salaries and Wages Commission has been issued, but nothing has been said or done in regard to the pensioners of the Colony, in spite of the definite assurance that something would be done early. I, and I think other Members, have received a letter from the Pensioners' Association which, I believe, intends to take further action if nothing is done in the matter.

I do not know who are intended to benefit by this Bill, but one thing I understand from it is that a further opportunity will be given to civil servants to elect which of the procedures they will adopt in regard to the computation of their pensions on retirement from the Service. I know that there are many who would like to retire early—those who have very good chances of being employed somewhere else, or can do something to supplement their pensions to a greater advantage than if they retired at 60 when they are old and feeble and unable to work. It would benefit those people, but is it right to allow those who had exercised the option to recant? After all when a decision is made it should be a firm decision. I trust it does not mean that some people who are a little above 55 years will be given the right to elect again.

In respect of clause 4 of the Bill it seems to me to relate to some particular number of people, or perhaps to one person. Perhaps we may be told who are to benefit under clause 4, especially 4 (b). This Bill has been brought forward very urgently, and while I do not oppose its being taken through all its stages today I have not been in a position to inquire outside of this Council as to whom clause 4 will apply. I am at all times against the principle of legislation being passed to assist any particular person, or to give him undue preference over other civil servants. I would like to have some further explanation of clause 4 of the Bill.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: Sir, as no other hon. Member wishes to speak, may I be permitted to speak before the hon. the Attorney General replies? I am a bit surprised at the remarks of the hon. Member, because all this Bill seeks to do is to correct an error of draftsmanship. When the Ordinance was passed by this Council in September last what happened, as far as I can recall, was that the words "or in other public service" were omitted from the place where they should have been inserted, and also the amending Ordinance of 1944 was not specifically included in clause 4 of the Bill passed, thereby making it impossible to apply the Pensions Ordinance, 1933, correctly, because that Ordinance was amended by the Ordinance of 1944. So that all we are asked to do today is to correct what was an error in draftsmanship, by including in the one clause words to the effect that officers in other public service are dealt with, and also to specifically mention the Pensions Ordinance of 1944 which amended the Ordinance of 1933. No point of principle arises.

Quite a number of people may choose to take advantage of this particular Bill. About 40 or 50 of them still remain under the provisions of Chapter 204 for one reason or another. The point is that whenever some new principle has been introduced in a current Pensions Ordinance it is proper and fitting that those officers who have not elected to come under it should be given another opportunity to do so. Hon. Members will remember that in September this Council also passed legislation which amended the Ordinance of 1933 by introducing some further benefits. I cannot remember precisely what those benefits were but they relate mainly to accidents whilst on duty and a lump sum gratuity. However, there were some additional benefits introduced, and as I said, whenever that happens it is right and proper that officers who do not come under that Ordinance should be given a further opportunity to elect to do so. I may say that some officers will still not elect to do so; they prefer to remain under Chapter 204 because, under that Ordinance, they have the right to remain in service until age 60, and they

do not like to come under the law which gives Government the absolute right to retire them before 60. So that there will be a few officers who will not elect at all. There is, however, quite a number to whom this particular Bill will apply. There are one or two officers outside the Colony who should also be given an opportunity, provided they are still in public service. A few of them who are serving in other Colonies should be given a further opportunity.

As regards the other point mentioned by the hon. Member about the pensioners, I did not say at any time that the Public Service Salaries and Wages Commission would deal with the question. What I said was that I myself, after completing that task, would take the matter in hand and put up a proposal to Government, and thereafter I trust it would come before the Council. Let me repeat again what the difficulty is. First of all pensioners receive a cost of living allowance on a scale which was approved as far back as August, 1948. Thereafter, a scale which applied to public officers was introduced, but nothing was done for pensioners. Those pensioners feel, and I think rightly, that something should be done for them to improve the rate of cost of living allowance which they are now getting.

Then there is a second category of pensioners who retired after the 1st January, 1949, and whose pensions are computed on the revised salaries which they received after that date, and which do not give them as large a pension as they would have got had their pensions been computed on their unrevised salaries, and if they were also given a cost of living allowance. That is a difficult position to settle. I think the solution will have to be that the basis of computation should be altered so that in computing the average salary for the period of years it should include not only the substantive salary but also the cost of living allowance they were entitled to. It is not an easy matter to draft a form of resolution or law. The point is that it will need some extra financial provision, and I can say now that I will make specific reference to the matter in the Budget Statement

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

which I hope to present to the Council next week, and during the course of our deliberations on the estimates I will then have ready some formula approved by Government for submission to the Finance Committee or the Council which will benefit pensioners in the way I have suggested. It is not an easy matter, nor is it one which should be rushed. Although there has been a good deal of delay, for which I accept some responsibility, I have good excuse to offer for it. I would warn the Council that whatever is done will require additional money, and I suppose the Council will be willing, in view of what I have heard, to provide the necessary funds to meet it.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

The Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause

Clause 2—Repeal and re-enactment of subsection (1) of section 2 of the Principal Ordinance.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the marginal note "Election of Public Officers on retirement to accept reduced pension and gratuity" be inserted.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause passed as amended.

The Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: With the consent of the Council I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed

Dr. NICHOLSON seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

VENN COMMISSION REPORT.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the following motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY —

"That, this Council approves of the action taken and proposed on the

Report of the Venn Commission as indicated in His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 4 of the 26th September, 1950."

The CHAIRMAN: When we adjourned yesterday, we had reached Recommendation 12 on page 5 of the Message and, I think, the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member was speaking.

Recommendation 12 — *As soon as possible every estate, cum annexis should be required to provide shower baths, a changing (or drying) room and a canteen with cooking facilities. (Chapter IX, paras. 50 and 52 — Page 61 of Report).*

Mr. MORRISH: I do not think I have anything more to say on that subject, except that we are going to provide more baths.

Recommendation 12 approved.

Recommendation 13—*The Ordinances relating to compensation for accidents should be strengthened, e.g., by specifically according recognition to the claims of unmarried wives and of illegitimate children. (Chapter X, para. 64—Page 64 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: I regret to see that more consideration has not been given than what is stated here. It is true, and I have to admit the force of Your Excellency's argument yesterday when you said that such and such a Regulation has been referred to some other body, either a Committee or the Sugar Producers' Association, and so we can say no more than that it is receiving attention. But I do say that when we expect something definite should have been done, it is time to comment and say we are disappointed. That is the position in respect of Recommendation 13. Anyone considering this recommendation would realize immediately that every day that this matter is left open may be prejudicial to some wife or children of people who have been married under their religious and personal laws, such as Indians on sugar estates. They may not be entitled to compensation. Therefore I feel this is not a matter to be sent for consideration to another body. I feel this is a matter in respect of which I would have liked to

see a recommendation to the effect that the matter has been sent to the Attorney-General to formulate legislation immediately on this point. I cannot see—and that is my contention and I think Members would agree that it has merit — this is something a Committee must investigate. The facts are clear and patent.

The marriages of Hindu and Muslim Indians are not legal unless registered, and nearly all of these people are living in the eyes of the English Laws in concubinage. Therefore the wives are not entitled to compensation. In the circumstances, where the recommendation clearly makes a statement as what is to be done, we should do nothing else but implement it by legislation, regardless of whatever Committee has been appointed, as nothing the Committee has to consider and offer on this question except to amend the Workmen's Compensation Law so as to make it perfectly clear that for all purposes the wives and children of persons who have been married under their personal laws and religion shall be in the same position as those who are recognized as being married under the English Laws and the Laws of the Colony. I move that this Council disapproves of this recommendation by overnment and that it supports an amendment to the effect that immediate implementation be made of this particular recommendation by the Commission

The CHAIRMAN: I am rather surprised that the hon. Member advocates such precipitous action when often he has said in this Council that these things should not be rushed. Here we have a special Committee sitting on the Workmen's Compensation law. Surely the most proper method is to refer this particular question to that Committee. I agree with the hon. Member that it is a vitally important question but, as the hon. the Colonial Secretary remarked in this connection, Government hopes to have the Committee's Report very shortly. The hon. Member seems to suggest this is a simple matter — the Workmen's Compensation Act applying to unmarried wives and illegitimate children. I thought he would be the first to appreciate the complicated nature of a provision of that kind and the safe-

guards which have to be made before we can put it into law. I am sure the hon. Member knows far better than I the claims and spurious claims which might be made for Workmen's Compensation unless the machinery is very carefully set up on proper advice. The best way to do that is to refer the matter to the Committee, to advise this Committee on it.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I appreciate what Your Excellency says, but may I point out that we have an Immigration Ordinance in this Colony wherein we have a particular section embracing marriages by Asiatics which include the East Indian community. Is that to be affected by this recommendation?

The CHAIRMAN: There are lots of others affected, not only East Indians.

Mr. DEBIDIN: What I feel is, even if that is so, all that has to be done as far as I can see is to amend that particular section as to dependents and those entitled to claim under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. By reference to the Ordinance, which I have not before me, we will see how simple it is a matter just to include those who can claim and are entitled to claim. I do accept what you have said, that this matter will be decided very early and, I think, that will put an end to the matter. I am prepared to leave it there, but I hope very earnestly this will not be left open for too long a time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would just like to add two points to what Your Excellency has already said with regard to this matter which is a very complicated one. I understand — I speak subject to correction — that illegitimate children have, already to some extent been recognized under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. Another point is, two Ordinances — one relating to Hindu marriages and the other to Muslim marriages — will shortly be coming before this Council, and they will materially affect the position.

Recommendation 13 approved.

Recommendation 15 — *The initial degree of compensation in the case of workers in the sugar industry earning*

up to \$50 a month should be reduced from 100 per cent., to 75 per cent. In most other parts of the Caribbean the rate is 50 per cent., and we believe that nowhere else in the world are full wages taken as the initial basis for compensation. (Chapter X, para. 67—Page 65 of Report).

Dr. JAGAN: While this recommendation has been referred to the Workmen's Compensation Committee nevertheless I would like to make this comment here. In my opinion this is, indeed, a retrograde step to suggest that the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance be changed to give workers instead of 100 per cent., which they are now getting, 75 per cent. It may be true that in certain countries only 50 per cent., is given, but I do feel that what should be taken into consideration is the fact that when a person is injured his working capacity ceases but nevertheless his responsibilities to his family continue. Consequently I do not see why 100 per cent., should be reduced. 100 per cent., is what is necessary for the maintenance of a man's family, and I do not see the necessity for reducing that amount.

The CHAIRMAN: I think when the Bill comes up the hon. Member will be able to extend his argument further. All we are doing now is to endorse the action taken by Government.

Recommendation 15 approved.

Recommendation 16 — *Factory Inspectors should be appointed, whose duties would be to make reports upon all accident occurring on plantations and in factories. Although an enabling Ordinance makes this provision it has not generally been put into effect but, we understand, is likely to be proclaimed in the near future. We hope that one of H.M.'s Factory Inspectors may be seconded to lay the foundations for this policy in the Colony. (Chapter X, para. 69—Page 65 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: Who is to pay this Factory Inspector? Is it to be paid by Government or by Government and the Sugar Producers?

The CHAIRMAN: Surely by the Government. It relates to all factories and not only the sugar factories. That

seems to be lacking for a long time in this Colony.

Dr. JAGAN: With reference to this recommendation I would like to know when it is expected that this Ordinance will be proclaimed. I am sorry I had to speak very strongly at the Caribbean Conference on the question of factory and safety legislation. In a report reviewing the past two years' work it is stated with reference to safety legislation that in many of the territories information was gathered and in that information it was suggested that no help was necessary in drafting regulations or legislation. I am rather surprised to know that since 1947 this Council, or the Council previous to this one, had passed the Factories Ordinance and up to now it has not been proclaimed.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member is wrong.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: To a point of correction! The hon. Member is wrong. Many parts of the Factories Ordinance have already been proclaimed.

Dr. JAGAN: As far as I am aware the Regulations have not been published and therefore —

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Regulations are made under the Ordinance, but parts of the Ordinance have already been proclaimed. I admit that the Regulations are still to be made.

The CHAIRMAN: I may tell the hon. Member, I cannot say offhand which part of the Ordinance has been already proclaimed, but I know that a number of sections of the Ordinance have been proclaimed. The particular sections in relation to this question have not because we have been waiting to get a Factory Inspector. We want some person qualified to do the factory inspection before we can enforce the terms of the law. The hon. Member has been told that we hope to have the Factory Inspector appointed very shortly. There is actually before Government now a series of regulations under this law apart from the appointment of a Factory Inspector. I agree that the whole of that

Ordinance should be proclaimed as soon as possible.

Dr. JAGAN: Am I not to understand that some time ago a Labour Inspector, I think it was Mr. Wakefield, was brought here especially to work under this Ordinance, but because the Regulations were not published in time that officer's term of contract expired and he had to leave the Colony?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is not so. Mr. Wakefield went home on grounds of ill-health.

Mr. MORRISH: I would just like to remark at this stage that the sugar industry welcomes this long hoped-for Factory Inspector, and in passing I must mention Mr. Wakefield's name. I hope we would get someone who knows the business in the way he did. I believe Mr. Wakefield had considerable training in the Ford Works in America. When he visited the factories he was really very helpful, and we welcome any further help of that kind.

Dr. JAGAN: My information is, he was actually employed to undertake this same job.

The CHAIRMAN: We did our best to get Mr. Wakefield to come here as Factory Inspector. It is not easy to find a really trained Factory Inspector. We had hoped he would have come back to us, but on grounds of ill-health he could not. We hope to get someone else equally good.

Recommendation 18—*Although we do not propose any interference with "cut and load", which, as a form of piecework, leads both to a steady output and to relatively good earnings, elderly workers or those below average physique should not be employed upon these or similar operations. Planks, which should be of adequate width, ought to be freely available at the site and should not have to be carried by the workers to and from their homes. (Chapter XI, paras. 99—101, page 72 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is one of the recommendations with which I cannot

agree with the Venn Commission. I have been very much in the forefront after the shooting incident at Enmore in 1948 on this issue of the "cut and load". I had to make it a complete study in order to represent properly the relatives on whose behalf I appeared at the Shooting Enquiry in the Supreme Court. I have had to make a study of all the implications relating to that in respect of the sugar industry, and I say here very emphatically that "cut and load" is a wicked and pernicious system and is a type of work calculated only to benefit the sugar industry of the Colony. In saying that I wish to make a very large reservation, and that is sincerely and honestly said. We wish, and I wish, that the industry should prosper. I wish to see it attain its target and to see it developed so rapidly as to reach the stage where it will produce as much as it is hoped it will produce. In that respect I make this statement very openly. I do trust that all would be well with this industry, that no one or agency in this Colony would have any excuse for disrupting the programme for development of the industry or the production of its target figures. I say that very strongly. I feel everything should be done in the interest of the Colony. Having made that reservation, I make this statement: However much we may have that hope and desire that nothing be done to disrupt the sugar industry—I speak feelingly as one who descended from those who had to do with the industry in the very long years past—I would not stand either in this Council or outside this Council for anything to be done by the sugar industry which is going to grind the soul and body of those engaged in the industry. I want to make it perfectly clear where I stand. I am not championing this or condemning the Report for anything other than my own personal interest or human feeling for those engaged in the industry.

I wish to point out why I say I cannot agree with the Venn Commission in their acceptance of this system of work. It is in the first place objectionable for this reason: In so far as the sugar plantation workers are concerned a large number of those, who are even described in the recommendation of the Commission as "elderly workers and those below

average physique" are going to be displaced or put into a position where they cannot get ready or regular work. That is the first and most objectionable feature of this system. Before this we had various gangs which had to work in collaboration with each other in this work embracing "cut and load". That is, you had one gang cutting the canes, another gang loading the canes into the punts, and another gang conveying the loaded punts by mules to the factory. In other words, you had all these gangs operating from the moment the canes are cut until they reach the factory. When we consider one or two aspects of this old system we find the human angle plays an important part in it. First of all, the persons who cut the canes — it is no use bringing forward the excuse that there was always dispute as to how much they should get; that is no argument, as at all times people will try to get the most they can especially when things are being done under economic stress — when they are finished know how much they have earned. The worker is to say whether he is satisfied that he has done a day's work and has expended so much energy for so much money. Under this system even if that person has a tummy-ache or some physical ailment that cropped up in the course of his work, he has to remain until he has loaded his punt and until the weight of his canes has been determined in order to complete his work and to know how much he has earned. In other words, if he leaves the canes he has cut in the field, his work has only just commenced. He cannot leave it but has to get someone else to complete the work. That is something that cuts into the whole system and makes it somewhat very tedious and objectionable from the point of view of the human angle to those engaged in the industry.

In the old days the able-bodied workers cut the canes, and the others who could not do that were given the task to go and fetch the canes and load the punts. Consequently that type of worker of less physical capacity was able to get employment. At the time when this thing came up, I went to the Manager of Pln. Enmore with Mr. Lee in an effort to stop the strike which was then on and to bring about a settlement

before it went further. We approached the Manager and put some proposals before him and he said clearly "We are not going to go back to the old system. We want to have the canes brought to the factory as fast as possible. We want able-bodied men, and we rely on the able-bodied men. We have no place on this estate for other than able-bodied men." He made us to understand that the estate benefits greatly by that method. There is no doubt that we know that is so. We asked him if he has got enough punts, and his reply was "No". The supply of punts is not adequate and the people have to wait for hours for punts to load their canes. There are many other related objections to the whole system. It seems to me that the proposal put by the people in this matter should have been accepted by the Commission. It should have been left to the option of the people to take up one or the other system of work—those who like to do the single process of "cut and load" can do so, and those who want it divided can also do so. As it is now, there is only one system of work, that of "cut and load", and that is why I condemn the Commission wholeheartedly for leaving it solely to the one system of "cut and load", which is a method of exploiting the human physical effort and leads to premature old age of the people engaged in this particular industry. No one can tell, however much you argue it is for us to go and see, the effort made. When I went into the field on the estate, people other than those of the Indian race engaged in the industry said to me "Ahwe have to do it as we have nothing else. The only thing left is for ahwe to drop down here." There you have persons of the African race saying that, persons who are supposed to be stronger in physique than the Indian. When asked "Are you satisfied that this is the best system?" they said "No; we prefer the old system".

It is the only system to bring better profits and efficiency so far as profit-making is concerned. It is a system in which the able-bodied is exploited to the exclusion of the others. As long as that system remains there is always going to be a sore feeling in this matter. The Venn Commission did not take this matter up in public. Had they done so

and the people had heard the points advanced by the Sugar Producers' Association for the retention of this system of work, they would certainly have been able to reply to each point made by the Sugar Producers' Association and would have been able to satisfy the Commission as to the justice of their contention.

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. Member would read the report of the Venn Commission he would find six or seven pages devoted to the subject, in which all the complaints made against the system are recorded. For the hon. Member to suggest that the Commission made this recommendation solely on the representations of the sugar producers is to make one believe that he has not read the report. I ask him to read the report and he will see that both sides of the question were considered very completely and very painstakingly.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is quite easy to say that a person who does not agree with a recommendation has not read the report. It does not matter how many pages in the report deal with the question. The fact is that the Commission has accepted the recommendation of the Sugar Producers' Association on this point, and has put aside all the points made by the labourers. I wrote my memorandum to the Commission when I was at Durban, and I put forward all the points I am making today against this system of "cut and load", which I told them I had the opportunity of examining myself. The fact remains that the Commission has repudiated the merit of what I said, and has accepted the recommendation of the Sugar Producers' Association. It is no use telling us that the people earn more by the "cut and load" system. The battery in a torchlight burns brightest when it is new, but after some use we get a dim light. The labourers earn a good deal of money when they are young and are able to expend great energy, but after a number of years that energy is dissipated. Someone must have the courage to say at some time that the Commission is wrong, and that is my stand today. The "cut and load" system should have been made optional. If some of the labourers want to earn quick money and are prepared to expend

much energy they should be allowed to do so.

I am entirely opposed to this recommendation. We have to bear in mind that the tragic strike at Enmore was primarily due to this particular system of cane cutting. I hold no brief for anyone, and I can say that during my early meeting with the labourers on that occasion I found that their complaint against the system was a genuine one and not something that was injected into their minds by any individual. They actually showed me how difficult the work was. This relates to other recommendations by the Commission which will have the effect of putting people out of employment and reducing the number of wage earners in the future. I am opposed to this recommendation and I am asking that a vote be taken on it.

Mr. MORRISH: I have listened to the hon. Member and I must say it is difficult to understand, as Your Excellency has said, that he has thoroughly read the report of the Commission, because he suggests that the Commissioners are not honest in their findings, and that they have listened to only one side of the story.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would ask my friend to confine his remarks to this particular finding.

Mr. MORRISH: Reference was made largely to Enmore, and I understood the hon. Member to say that he had examined the work there. I too have examined the system in other places, and the astonishing thing is that there is only one estate in the Colony that I am aware of where there was any difficulty whatsoever in instituting this procedure, and that is at Enmore, where we all have reason to believe that a great many of the workers have been ill advised. To go further and suggest that there is additional hardship, and that the people are forced, is not correct. No worker in this Colony that I am aware of can be forced to do any job today if he does not wish to do it. I think everyone is aware that cane cutting is a job on a sugar plantation which the most robust people would take, and in this particular case the difference between

the old system of "cut and drop", as it was known, and the "cut and load" system which is now in operation, is a matter of three further steps in carrying a bundle of cane and throwing it into a punt instead of on the ground. I suggest that it is a gross exaggeration to describe that as a hardship, and as ruining people's lives, when it is a system of work on nearly every estate in the Colony. It has been suggested by the hon. Member that a man might have a "tummy" ache and be compelled to leave his task before it is completed. All those things are taken care of. In the rare event of a man being taken ill and having to leave his work before it is finished, his interests are looked after by the estate authorities.

Dr. GONSALVES: I would like to say just a few words, because the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) said he would call for a vote, and I would like to explain why I will not vote on the matter. During my election campaign this subject was a very controversial one, and at the time I championed the view that the "cut and load" system was very detrimental to the workers. That was my first impression. There are a few sugar estates in my constituency and there were quite a number of people who were opposed to that view. I therefore began to get the other side of the picture, because the younger people said they did not mind doing the job in that way. I have to agree with my friend that perhaps those were young and robust people who felt that they could make so much more money. I have had a peep into the records of the estates and have seen what some of them have been earning, and what benefits accrued to them, especially the two weeks' vacation with pay which has recently been instituted.

I am perfectly satisfied that while some people are opposed to the "cut and load" system it will be found that an equal number are in favour of it. In view of that fact I concluded that I did not know enough about the matter, therefore I went to Pln. Albion and saw the operation of the system in the cane fields. I therefore know what I am talking about, and I am satisfied that I

will offend certain people whichever way I vote. I am perfectly willing to accept what has been stated by the Venn Commission. The impression I got was that while some people were in favour of the "cut and load" system others were not. It seems to me that as the position is now, unless legislation is passed to abolish the "cut and load" system, I cannot do otherwise than accept the suggestions that those who are prepared to work under that system should be allowed to do so, because that is the impression I got from the people themselves.

Mr. CARTER: At the time of the strike I thought the leaders of the workers were making a mistake in a certain respect. I do not believe that the workers struck merely on the ground of the controversy over the "cut and load" and "cut and drop" systems, and I think the leaders of the workers made a mistake in underlining and emphasizing that as the reason why they should go on strike. I think the people struck and rioted because of years of living under certain undesirable conditions, and I think it was a mistake at the time that the leaders should have so focussed the attention of everyone on the "cut and load" issue that they forgot all the other reasons and took that as the sole reason. We know that when two countries go to war because an Archduke is assassinated there is a *casus belli*. "Cut and load" and "cut and drop" was just a *casus belli* — just the spark that set off the riots. For this reason I would like to read two paragraphs of the Venn Commission report. Paragraph 71 states:

"71. The "cut and load" versus "cut and drop" controversy has, we believe, been magnified beyond its true importance, but since we found it to be one of the chief real or imagined sources of discontent in the industry, we made a special investigation of the question and of the issues involved in it. We found that there was among many of the estate workers a misconception and misunderstanding about the introduction of "cut and load" which led them to think that it was something new "imposed" upon them. It should, therefore, first be emphasized that it is a method that has evolved naturally and for economic reasons from the "cut and drop" system.

Then there is paragraph 83 which states :

"83. In our enquiry we found it difficult to find the real root of complaint against "cut and load", for as we questioned many of our witnesses we felt strongly that, while some of their opposition was due to a real feeling of discontent, a good deal was born of misunderstanding and natural antipathy to innovation, and much more had been inspired by ambitious leaders of their opinion who had chosen to foment this mixture of discontent and mistrust and make a political issue of it. This made it hard to isolate the genuine causes of dissatisfaction from the many often quite minor complaints adduced by those who proclaimed themselves "agin" the system."

That, rightly or wrongly, was the view taken by the Venn Commission, and that is why I say that the leaders at the time made a mistake in emphasizing that one aspect of discontent and not emphasizing the better points of a good case which they had.

Mr. SMELLIE : As the last speaker has quoted from the report of the Venn Commission I should also like to quote from the preface to the report where it states :

"In the course of these visits we covered all the main plantations in the Colony. were shown over their factories, hospitals and housing, and talked individually and in groups to some 1,500 estate workers. We went a-back, by mule, launch, punt, estate train and on foot, and familiarized ourselves with every aspect of plantation life and work...."

I do not know how many of us sitting here in this Council have had an opportunity to do what they did, and linked with that I should like to draw attention to paragraph 102 of the report which deals with this question of "cut and load". It says :

"102. One last word. We should perhaps say that, though we have here been dealing at length with the grievances of those who were for one reason or another against the system of "cut and load", we have not been unaware of the many hundreds of men happily engaged in it. Discontent is always more vocal than contentment, and it was naturally more often our lot to listen to complaints than to com-

mendations, but we were by no means persuaded, from what we heard and our own observations, that there was that general reasoned opposition to "cut and load" throughout the Colony which certain of our witnesses would have wished us to believe."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I would like to make two points. First of all I would also like to quote from the report of the Commission itself. In Recommendation 18, with which we are dealing, the Commission deals with the subject in rather a negative way. They state :

"Although we do not propose any interference with "cut and load" which, as a form of piece work, leads both to a steady output and to relatively good earnings, elderly workers or those below average physique should not be employed upon these or similar operations."

In the report itself at paragraph 99, the Commissioners come out very much more definitely in favour of the "cut and load" system. They state :

"... we look forward to the time when "cut and load", which as a form of piece work leads to a steady output and relatively good earnings, will be in 100 per cent. use on the estates."

The second point I wish to make is that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) seems to have overlooked the note made in the Message on this recommendation, where it says that the recognized Unions are in agreement with it, and I have before me a letter from the B.G. Sugar Industry Joint Trade Union Committee in which that agreement is expressed. I think that disposes of the argument that the "cut and load" system has been introduced by the sugar producers in exploitation of the workers and against their will.

Mr. DEBIDIN : May I also be permitted to quote from the report? I think it is my turn to score a century, and I desire to quote paragraph 100 which states :

"100. We realize, however, that the operations of reaping are the most strenuous on the estate and we recommend that elderly workers or those below average physique should not be employed upon them. We consider too that there may well be an opportunity for the development of the partnership

system to make for speedier clearance of the field."

That is the gravamen of my speech. As regards the partnership system I know that on one occasion a paylist showed \$40 for a week's work, but that was a partnership earning. Now the paylists are showing what each man earns. I hope Members will appreciate what I am trying to point out, and it is clearly indicated by the report of the Commission in spite of the quotations which have been resorted to so freely. As the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) has said, the sugar estates are reducing the opportunities for alternative work. It is said that the devil quotes Scripture to suit his own purpose. I do not know who is the devil in this matter.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member should stick to the report.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is clear that this "cut and load" work can only be performed by one class of workers — the strong and able-bodied. I know that it benefits the estates, but I also know that the people who perform it will eventually be the devil in this matter.

Dr. JAGAN: I would like to support the argument of the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin), not by quoting from the report of the Commission but by quoting from the report prepared by Dr. Neumark for the West Indian Conference on "The Importance of Agriculture in Caribbean Economy with reference to the world market." On page 5 of his report he states:

"The social cost of the sugar industry — the seasonal employment of labour and the maintenance of a reserve army of sugar cane workers — does not enter into the sugar producers' cost account or into the consumer's price of sugar. It may therefore be a matter of some speculation whether, had these social costs been accounted for in the price of sugar, sugar would have figured so largely in the economy of many a cane-sugar producing region, including the Caribbean, or whether the value of cane land would have been so highly priced as it is at present."

That is an interesting and very pertinent observation, because no matter

how we turn it around we come back to the same issue that many persons are being discarded by one method or another, and have no other means of livelihood. Land is limited so far as they are concerned, therefore we must be careful to see to it that if in the name of efficiency the sugar industry has to employ certain methods of economy, that at the same time other methods are employed to protect people who will eventually be relegated to the scrap heap. We are relegating a large army of people to positions where they will produce nothing for their own benefit or for the benefit of the national income, but will just sit around the estates waiting to compete against their brethren when they go on strike for better wages.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I ask that a vote be taken on Recommendation 18.

The Committee divided on Recommendation 18 and voted:

For — Messrs. Luckhoo, Morrish, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Farnum, Roth, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 11.

Against — Dr. Jagan and Mr. Debidin — 2.

Did not vote — Dr. Nicholson — 1.

Recommendation 18 approved.

Recommendation 19. — *Whenever seasonal or other conditions require more continuity of effort rosters of male fieldworkers should be formed, whereby approximately half the total number employed would undertake to commence work on a Monday and the rest on a Thursday. For each fourth and fifth full consecutive week-day's employment (whether at piece, task or time rates) extra payment at the rate of 20 per cent., of the average of the first three days' earnings should be made. The two groups could, if desired, interchange their commencing days once a month or even fortnightly. This plan would eliminate the "traditional Monday" (when only a small proportion, sometimes as low as 20 per cent., of workers normally present themselves), would provide an additional monetary incentive, and would reduce fluctuations in e.g. cane-cutting*

operations, and therefore also infactory intake. (Chapter XII, para. 135—Pages 83 and 84 of Report).

Mr. DEBIDIN : I would like to make just one or two observations on recommendation 19. We have just accepted the previous recommendation. I am not going to condemn the decision actually made here, because I feel there is room for further consideration of this particular recommendation, but in view of what has been taking place and what we have said here today — and I wish the representatives of sugar in this Council today will take it back to those responsible for the running of the industry in the Colony — we feel they did not take into consideration these facts, viz. — mechanization is going to eliminate a large number of these workers; the “cut and load” system is going to eliminate a large number of those who are below the average physique, and in many other respects the growing population will not be taken into consideration. This “roster” system as suggested here may be considered in view of the fact that they have not got the entire estates to do “cut and load”, if they increase the acreage by 50 per cent. in order to achieve the target production. I am expressing a pious hope that all concerned will pass the message on that a recommendation of this kind should not be so slightly brushed aside and have substituted for it what I regard as a “whip lash” to exert the workers’ energy even more — the giving of an incentive bonus. The meaning of the word “incentive” is obvious. It is to encourage and goad the workers on to further effort in order to further the industry. It is a worthy aim, I admit, but as one human being considering the interest of other human beings in these days when malnutrition is marching apace as the result of economic stress, I feel sure that much cannot be relied upon when due regard is taken of these able-bodied people. This matter should be given further consideration so that a large number of people would come under employment under the “roster” system as recommended here. That is as much as I will say on this particular recommendation.

May I ask a question of the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member, whether in relation to the 20 per cent. which will be taken into consideration, the incentive bonus has any bearing. The recommendation speaks of “20 per cent. of the average of the first three days’ earnings should be made”. That is what has been given as a standard. I would like to know whether this incentive bonus bears any relation to that.

Mr. MORRISH : I do not quite understand the question. I would like to say that this incentive bonus has had a very good effect and it appears to become increasingly popular, as when it was first instituted in the early part of this year — I think at the Spring grinding — about 25 per cent. of those engaged on that particular type of work actually earned this incentive bonus. It is now well over 50 per cent. and is still growing and, therefore, it seems to be a very popular move and has definitely resulted in more regular cane supplies to the factory. There is still this difficulty, as the hon. Member has referred to the “roster” system, of the traditional Monday holiday on the sugar estate, but the effect of this incentive which applies to Saturday and Monday has altered the position.

Mr. DEBIDIN : My question has not been answered. I would like to know what percentage extra is given — extra payment referred to here additional to the days worked — as an incentive.

Mr. MORRISH : In actual money the amount is 20 cents per ton additional to the canes cut on those days to which the incentive applies.

Mr. DEBIDIN : How much per ton is paid now ?

Mr. MORRISH : I am speaking subject to correction. I think it is 90 cents, and this is 20 cents additional.

Mr. DEBIDIN : I am grateful for the answer.

Dr. JAGAN : There is one observation which I would like to make. It has just passed through my mind. The sugar

employers are always saying they do not make enough money. How then they are in a position to pay this extra incentive of 20 cents per ton, and how they can give two weeks' holiday with pay? I am just wondering how they are able to do that.

Mr. MORRISH: The answer is obvious. If as a result of the incentives the production is stepped up, the overhead expenses automatically become lower.

Recommendation 19 approved.

Recommendation 20 — *A single Wages Board (or Council) should be formed for the whole sugar industry (field and factory). It should consist of six (or eight) representatives of the employers, a similar number of the workers to be nominated by the Trade Unions, and of two neutral members appointed by Government. Its Chairman should in the first instance be ex-officio the Commissioner of Labour. Its duties would comprise the fixation of all weekly and piecework rates of remuneration (with powers of delegation, if suitable, to sub-committees, the granting, in special cases, of permits of exemption and of consideration of such matters as holidays with pay and of general conditions of labour. Apart from fixed quarterly meetings, the Board should be convened specially wherever a request to this effect is made by either side. Government should provide the necessary funds to cover its expenditure, including travelling and subsistence allowances and grants to meet workers' loss of time. Immediately after its formation the Board should review all then existing wage-rates. We note that Ordinance No. 2 of 1942 already provides for ad hoc committees to be set up in any local industry.*

We would take this opportunity of expressing our appreciation of the excellent work being performed by the Department of Labour and wish in particular to refer to the personal activities, often conducted in extremely difficult circumstances, of its Director, Mr. W. M. Bissell. (Chapter XII, paras. 142 and 144 — Page 86 of Report).

Mr. DEBIDIN: I have said sufficiently on this recommendation, so much so that I need not repeat myself, and I ask that a vote be taken on this. I certainly condemn all concerned for side-stepping this particular recommendation. We speak of a Factory Inspector to be

employed. We are thinking of an Agricultural Engineer to be employed. But this very important recommendation which speaks of the establishment of a Wages Board is being side-stepped. Why, I do not know. When the recommendations have been made and all are taken as a whole — I give credit to the Commission for that — they bear relationship to each other, and they all should be implemented to give complete control.

The CHAIRMAN: It has been said that all the recommendations should be accepted or none.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am not saying, that because one is excluded all should be excluded. I wish I could say so, because there are some recommendations which have been placed here and which are good, but at the same time I cannot conceive why a Wages Board should not be established when we know that the functions of that Wages Board would be on a much higher level than anything like a Joint Committee or even a meeting between the Unions and the sugar producers on any matter pertaining to wages. A Wages Board is something which has a definite function — to keep its mind on a particular aspect all the time. It takes into consideration all aspects, not only the way in which the labourers work but even the employers' case. That Wages Board is something which is a useful buttress to the sugar producers and the labourers. It is functioning in Great Britain and is something to be observed. It is something that must play an important part in this recommendation. The Commission realized that such a Board would eliminate disputes. It would eliminate the very seat of all the strikes — discontent over condition of wages. I am going to condemn strongly not the recommendation of the Commission, but the action of Government and the action of the sugar producers and others concerned for not accepting it.

The CHAIRMAN: The Trade Unions.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think that should not be brought up then. We have another recommendation dealing with recognition of the Trade Unions. It seems to me that

these Trade Unions which have been recognized have been recognized against what I will call good sense, and everything is thrown at them. Because the recognized unions say so, everything is agreeable and the sugar industry must accept what the recognised unions say. I think it is wrong, and it will not be argument at all to make use of that to say these recognized unions agree to something. I am going to move that the action taken on this particular recommendation be condemned.

The CHAIRMAN: Action has been taken. What do you mean — that the matter be reconsidered?

Mr. DEBIDIN: That is putting it in a very mild way, and I accept it — that this recommendation be reconsidered.

Dr. JAGAN: With reference to your comment on this recommendation:

“Adequate arrangements already exist in the sugar industry in British Guiana for the settlement of such matters by collective bargaining and an agreement between the employers and employees provides for the negotiation of wages from time to time. Neither the Sugar Producers' Association nor the Unions recognised by them consider the establishment of a Wages Board necessary....”

I may state that it raises a hornet's nest, because when we come to the question of recognition of Trade Unions, that is a different matter altogether. I was able to have introduced and passed at the West Indian Conference a resolution stating that in cases of dispute a poll should be taken by Government to determine which Union has the majority of members and the necessary legislation enacted. I do hope that when that recommendation comes before this Council we will enact such legislation and see to it that we do not have these kinds of Unions in which the people seem to have no confidence. I do not see why the employers should recognize those Unions. While the workers of this Colony, it is recognized, have the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining is denied them. Therefore I cannot agree with the comment appended to this recommendation. I cannot accept

the statement that the agreements which have been carried out by these recognized Unions represent the wishes of the majority of the people in this country. Therefore I agree with the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara that this recommendation is one of the most important ones in this whole Report, and to have dismissed it entirely is really going a very far way against the interest and welfare of the workers of this Colony. I do hope that this matter will be given reconsideration and that sooner or later a Wages Board will be set up not only in relation to the sugar industry but other industries.

We are always hearing complaints with reference to the next recommendation, the one dealing with a Contributory Pension Scheme. The sugar employers state they have not enough money and, therefore, cannot implement that recommendation. On the other hand I can prove that the sugar estates are making plenty of profits. From the figures I have, the rate of exploitation is about 142 per cent. In other words, a man working on the estate works approximately four hours for himself and six hours for nothing a day. So do not let them tell us they are not making any profits and, when it comes to the establishment of a Wages Board and a Contributory Pension Scheme, that they have not enough money or that the recognized Trade Unions say they do not see it is necessary. I feel that a Wages Board will be able to go into these matters very carefully and fully and to determine whether the people are making enough money or the estates can afford to meet increased wages from the demands of the workers.

There is one point we missed — I lost sight of it — that is in respect of the recent strike we had in the sugar estates. That strike was called by a non-recognized Trade Union, and at the end of that strike in the writings of the President of the Sugar Producers' Association we have had it that the workers lost a lot in wages. If the workers lost a lot in wages, it can also be said that the employers have lost in profits and the Colony has lost in taxes. But if this non-recognized Trade Union is able every month, or every six months, or every year, to call a strike, and a successful one at that, as

the sugar producers have admitted it was a successful strike —

Mr. MORRISH: I beg to differ!

Dr. JAGAN: If it was not a successful strike, I want to say that the sugar producers have come forward and said how many days' work was lost and how many dollars in wages were lost. If it was not a successful strike that is a matter of no one's concern. Let us be realistic. We want to meet the production target and we want to give the workers a decent standard of living. I feel that if we permit this suggestion to continue and allow these Unions still to say that the workers want so and so and they do not want a Wages Board, I feel there is going to be trouble and further trouble in the sugar industry.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I am afraid I cannot agree with the last two hon. Members. It is apparent that they have not studied the question of the Wages Board and the present system in operation.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think the hon. Member may confine his remarks to what he has done and not make disparaging remarks about others. He seems to be putting himself out of order in this respect.

The CHAIRMAN: I am to call the hon. Member to order. I do not think there is anything unparliamentary in what the hon. Member (Mr. Luckhoo) has said.

Mr. DEBIDIN: To a point of order! The hon. Member suggested I have not studied or was unable to understand the question

The CHAIRMAN: He was going on presumably to say why he thought so.

Mr. LUCKHOO: The creation of a new machinery is only of value if it can make a contribution which the present machinery or the present state of things does not provide. At the moment there is in existence between the recognized Unions — and there are five such unions, viz:— the Man Power Citizens' Association, the British Guiana Workers' League,

the Sugar Estates' Clerks' Association, the British West Indies Sugar Boilers' Union and the British Guiana Estates' Headmen's Union — and the Sugar Producers' Association a memorandum of agreement which provides for the avoidance and settlement of disputes, and in that agreement a working machinery is provided not only for matters concerning wages but all other matters connected with labour—matters affecting the employers and workers on the estates and their relation with the employers or the management. One of the first points in that agreement states: If there is any dispute arising, whether it concerns wages or some other matter affecting the labourer, three workmen shall approach the Manager and if a settlement is not effected then the matter is referred to a Joint Committee, which I will say a little more about later. This Joint Committee briefly consists of elected workers meeting with the Managers and discussing the points that are brought forward and that are in dispute. Should a settlement be not reached, whether it be wages or a matter affecting labour, then there is the right of the worker to go and report the matter to his Union, and the Union would then approach the management of the particular estate. Should that fail, then the Union would again approach no longer the management of the estate but the Sugar Producers' Association and request of them what is called a Joint Conference. This Joint Conference has been working for a number of years and has settled many matters which at first blush one would think difficult of settlement. Should that Joint Conference fail, there is yet another opportunity for further consideration of the matter, and that is an approach to the Commissioner of Labour who will sit as Chairman and go into the matter with representatives of the Union and representatives of the Sugar Producers' Association and as a last resort, even if that fails, there is the right to Arbitration.

I speak, Sir, with a certain amount of knowledge concerning the workings of that machinery, and I can say it has proved of great satisfaction to the Unions representing the labourers on the sugar estates. To introduce at this stage a Wages Board would be to offer confusion and

might be duplicating work which under this agreement has been found satisfactory. In addition to this memorandum of agreement for collective bargaining there is established quite recently — and I believe it has come as a result of the recommendations of the Venn Commission — a Joint Consultative body which comprises members of the five recognized Unions and members of the Sugar Producers' Association, and the Commissioner of Labour has acted as Chairman of that body on several occasions. Matters affecting the labourer have been considered by this Joint Consultative body, and questions like holidays with pay and other matters, such as a provident benefit scheme, have all been considered by this Joint Consultative body with the Commissioner of Labour as Chairman. We have found the recognized Unions have gone into those matters very carefully and, if they can see one good reason why this present system whereby they can appeal from the Manager to the Joint Committee, then to the Sugar Producers' Association, then to the Commissioner of Labour and then to Arbitration, should be displaced by some better scheme I have no doubt that the recognized Unions in the interest of the workers, because they do represent the workers, would be willing to consider and to ask that that particular recommendation of the Commission be implemented.

It was only during the course of the last unfortunate strike that one heard this Wages Board being proclaimed with loud and lucid voice. There can be no doubt that, maybe for the purpose of flaunting an ego, people would be content and prepared to lie — and the bigger the lie the more easily, perhaps, it is received — and they have in respect of this Wages Board created of it something which is entirely false and will give people the impression that there is salvation, and that if this were only brought into being their difficulties would be solved. That, Sir, has only been done, as I have said before, for the purpose of serving the interest of individuals and not of the people who are concerned with the workers and the interest of the workers. I repeat that the recognized Trade Unions have gone into this matter

and they have consulted their members on the several estates—and these estates are not confined to one particular area in the Colony but are to be found along the East Coast Demerara, along the Courantyne Coast and along the Banks of the Demerara River—and there was not a dissenting voice in respect of that decision. The present set up of collective bargaining and agreement which obtains at the moment — I say it with every deference to the Report which I laud very highly—is something even more in the interest of the workers than the Wages Board.

And, Sir, there are other difficulties which one would have to face if this agreement were to be placed aside and this Wages Board were set up. There we would have, I think, 6 or 8 representatives of the employers and a similar number of workers to be nominated by the Trade Unions, and in addition to that two neutral members and the Chairman. To consider questions of wages of a general nature, such a set up or machinery may be in order, just as the joint consultative body presently now is with members of the Unions and members of the Sugar Producers' Association acting under the chairmanship of the Commissioner of Labour. That will be in order. But where matters of wages affecting particular estates are concerned, it will be an impossible task for any organization of this type to regulate the rates of wages on individual estates. So often one gets complaints from the workers themselves that here is a job of work to be done and because of the nature of the soil, because of the difficulties encountered, they should be paid above the normal rate. What will happen to those people when they go to make representations? Now they can do so themselves; they can approach the Manager and have the matter settled, or they can go to the Joint Committee and a solution obtained there. A small matter affecting maybe 100 or 200 men would have to wait, if this machinery were set up, until they meet quarterly to consider a matter which affects a particular estate in one particular type of work. That is only one small difficulty. But here you have a machinery which every day is in operation, and the Joint Committees are doing

work which the Venn Commission in its report has praised.

This is not a matter in which a Board can meet at fixed intervals and decide to award a general increase all round. Each estate presents its own difficulties, and the workers are cognizant of that fact. They have their representatives on each estate who are capable of making representations to the management. They have a working arrangement which has been in operation for a number of years. As my friend has remarked, a *casus belli* has to be found when there is strife and discontent, and for that reason we heard so much about a Wages Board on the occasion of the last strike. I repeat that the present machinery offers more to the workers than they would achieve by the introduction of a Wages Board.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I be permitted to quote certain passages from the report of the Venn Commission. First of all I may say that I observe with a great deal of alarm the fact that the last speaker actually gave evidence before the Venn Commission, and the lengthy speech which he has just made evidently availed him nothing before the Commission, which has made a recommendation against his grandiose argument. In paragraph 143 of the report the Commission says:

"143. Despite the excellent work done by this Department in averting some of what are popularly called "labour troubles", and also the activities of the Estate Joint Committee there have nevertheless been too many failures on the part of the representatives of both sides to reach agreement over the perennial question of wages, with consequential human suffering and loss of material output...."

My friend represents the British Guiana Drivers' Association, and we know that the drivers lean towards the employers and not towards the labourers. We also know that of the five recognized Unions only one represents the labourers in the main who are working on sugar estates. In paragraph 144 the report of the Commission proceeds to state:

"144. Having heard the views of all concerned and being convinced that there exist no insurmountable local or technical difficulties, we strongly recommend that a Wages Board (or Coun-

cil) should, by Ordinance, be set up for the sugar industry to cover all employees upon the estates and in the factories...."

My friend, who must be a first cousin of Mr. Seel Coon, did not say anything about a Wages Board — what it stands for and what it means in England — but simply said that I had not studied it. I wish he would be more accurate.

The CHAIRMAN: He said he did not think the hon. Member understood the machinery that exists.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do not think you heard all he said, Sir. He said that we had not studied a Wages Board. I will proceed to read the rest of paragraph 144 of the report. It goes on to state:

"It should consist of 6 (or 8) representatives of the employers of a similar number of workers, and of two neutral members appointed by Government. Its Chairman should, certainly in the first instance, be *ex officio* the Commissioner of Labour; subsequent appointments might include, again *ex officio*, such an official as the Director of Agriculture. By analogy with experience at home we would expect the Sugar Producers' Association to nominate representatives of the estates, and the Trades Unions those of labour. After close examination of the situation and having made numerous enquiries in responsible local circles, we feel confident that it should be possible to secure as appointed members two persons having no present or past financial or other concern in the industry. The names of several suitable appointees were, indeed, given to us in confidence. Anticipating possible criticism directed against the head of the Labour Department being the first Chairman, we would stress Mr. Bissell's great experience of the work involved and also his personal knowledge of those with whom he would be in contact."

I said in my general remarks that the Joint Committee system was a farce and a failure. The main point about a Wages Board is that it would be a statutory body in which the interests of the workers would be better safeguarded. My championing of a Wages Board today is nothing new. I am only being consistent, because in my memorandum to the Venn Commission I stated very strongly that there should be some intermediate body to which an appeal might be made, such as

a Wages Board. I say with a great deal of pride that, my friend's speech notwithstanding, the Commission has considered the establishment of a Wages Board very important and expedient. I ask that the matter be reconsidered by Government and by the Sugar Producers' Association.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. the Sixth Nominated Member made a flowery speech in which he said that some of us are flaunting our personal ego with respect to the issue of a Wages Board and causing strife and disorder.

Mr. MORRISH: I must object to that. I never said anything of the kind.

Dr. JAGAN: I am sorry. I should have said the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member (Mr. Luckhoo).

The CHAIRMAN: I hope this debate is not going to develop on personal and acrimonious lines.

Dr. JAGAN: I hope that even though some of us may do that, at least we cannot be accused of looking for titles and such like. I want to point out that the hon. Member made particular reference to the question of machinery, but I want to tell him that the machinery he has pointed out to us is all well and good on paper, because I know that in other industries they have the same type of machinery for the settlement and avoidance of disputes, but the trouble is that the machinery has been clogged up by people who can be bought, and who do not represent the interests of the poor people. That is the trouble. I did not hear the hon. Member say that if there was a dispute today the Government should say which Union should be recognized by the employers.

The CHAIRMAN: Government does not do anything of the sort. All Unions are recognized by Government in so far as they are registered. Recognition is not recognition by the Government for the purpose of negotiation as between a Union and the employer.

Dr. JAGAN: It is in the hands of Government to introduce the necessary legislation to provide that the proper Unions should be recognized. That is the main point. By proper Unions I mean

those which the workers recognize — not those Unions which say they represent the sugar workers, but when you ask them to produce their books they have no members at all. What is the use of having all this elaborate machinery? In every industry today there is this machinery set up. In my own Union, the Sawmill Workers' Union, I know the game the employers have been playing. They have resorted to delaying tactics to break up the machinery which has been set up. I did not hear the hon. Nominated Member refer to the strike weapon. Of course he is not interested in strikes but only in law and order. That is good in itself, but on the other hand we want to be assured that he will look at things fairly and squarely, and if there is justice on the side of the workers he will give them credit also.

I have no feeling against the machinery. I agree with him that the Joint Committee system is a good thing, provided the basis for the setting up of Joint Committees is correct, but the present basis is not correct, and that is where the whole trouble lies. The machinery is clogged up with too many of those people who are hanging on there, like the wheel that turns around and grinds the people. I hope that in preserving the machinery he will take opportunity to see that the proper basis is laid, so that the right people will be selected to make it work.

Mr. MORRISH: I have one brief comment to make. It is obvious that some of the speakers have never seen the Joint Committee functioning, otherwise I think their remarks would have been very different. The important point about these allegedly grossly inefficient Unions which are recognized by the sugar industry is that they have been so inefficient that all they have managed to do is secure an increase in wages each year for the last five years. I suggest that instead of inefficiency it shows that they are working for their people.

Dr. JAGAN: That is an old explanation which does not hold water, because the people have always been agitating.

The CHAIRMAN: It seems to me that what is wanted is one trade union

for the whole industry, and it is up to the hon. Member and other Members to try to bring that about. It is not that the workers on the East Coast think differently from the workers in the rest of the Colony, but the leaders who think differently, and they will not combine and get together. Surely, for a big industry like the sugar industry there should be one trade union to put an end to squabbles and to individuals interfering and promoting strife. That is what is going on. No attempt apparently is being made to bring the workers together and to have one strong trade union for the whole industry. That is what is wanted. I am sure it is not a difference of opinion among the sugar workers themselves but a difference of opinion among individuals which is the cause of the trouble.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would not like that statement to go unchallenged. I have played a small part in trying to bring about an amalgamation of the recognized union with one that is not recognized by the sugar producers. They were nearly at that point. There were others who were more influential in that respect. I do not know whether there is some influence behind it, but there is always somebody operating politically in whom I find the labourers have no confidence. As a name is mentioned the whole idea falls to the ground like a castle in the sand. I share with Your Excellency the pious hope that they may yet come together and establish one big union. I would like to see one union representing the mass of workers in the sugar industry, and I feel sure that they all feel the same way.

Dr. SINGH: I have heard a good deal about the activities of the Joint Committees. They are doing good work, but in cases of disagreement I think that instead of the matter going to arbitration there should be in reserve a Wages Board to whom the matter could be referred.

The CHAIRMAN: An Arbitration Board has the same effect.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In spite of what the hon. Members for Eastern and Central Demerara have said

I still maintain the view which I expressed in my opening speech, that it would be a retrograde step to introduce a statutory Wages Board here and abandon all the work that has been done in setting up voluntary negotiating machinery. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has such a respect for statutory bodies, but I have also a great respect for voluntary effort, and I think where voluntary effort has produced something it would be a mistake to undermine it, and I am sure we would undermine it by resorting to a statutory Board. I think it is clear also from what the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member (Mr. Luckhoo) said, that the machinery which does exist is functioning in an adequate manner, and where statutory Wages Boards have been set up in other places it has been due to the fact that no adequate voluntary machinery existed. I should like to quote from the Trinidad Wages Council Ordinance passed as recently as 1949, from which it is quite clear that a Wages Council is only meant to take the place of voluntary machinery where such machinery does not exist, or is not functioning properly. Section 3 of the Ordinance read as follows:

"3. Subject to the provisions of this Part of this Ordinance, the Governor *in Council may by order (hereinafter in this Ordinance referred to as a "wages council order")* establish a wages council to perform, in relation to the workers described in the order and their employers, the functions specified in this Ordinance, in any case in which he is satisfied that no adequate machinery exists for the effective regulation of the remuneration of such workers, or that the existing machinery is likely to cease to exist or be adequate for that purpose, and that having regard to the remuneration existing among such workers, or any of them it is expedient that such a council be established."

In a later section which deals with proceedings on reference to commission of enquiry it is provided that a Commission can recommend the establishment of a Wages Council if the Commission is of the opinion "that machinery for regulating the remuneration and conditions of employment of those workers is not, and cannot, by any improvements which it is practicable to secure, be made

adequate for that purpose, or does not exist." It is true that Dr. Venn, the Chairman of the Commission, has had great experience of agricultural Wages Boards in England, but agricultural conditions in England are very different from conditions on the sugar estates in this Colony; the workers in agriculture in England are scattered over wide areas and are disorganized, and it is because it would be extremely difficult to organize them in such a way that they could obtain fair wages by ordinary trade union methods that resort was had to Wages Boards. I should like also to quote from the Hansard report of the remarks of the Minister of Agriculture in the House of Commons when the Bill for the establishment of Agricultural Wages Boards was introduced in England in 1924. In Vol. 174 at page 914 it is reported:

"To go a little further into the conditions, the main fact is the helplessness of the labourers, by collective bargaining, to get their rights. I cannot do better than quote one who is a veteran in this business, the Hon. Member for South Norfolk (Mr. G. Edwards) who put it in as few words as anyone could do. He said: 'Forty years experience has convinced me that the labourers cannot get a living wage by trade union methods alone. The difficulties of organisation are so great that we cannot get our organisation strong enough to enforce it.' There you have one of the main conditions."

I think it is clear from that that Agricultural Wages Boards were introduced in England because no one could do any better — because arrangements for voluntary negotiation by trade union methods could not be established owing to the particular type of work in which those people were engaged, but I do not think that is so in British Guiana on our sugar estates. It is quite clear from what we have heard this afternoon, that there is very elaborate machinery, and I personally have no doubt that it does work. The proposal for a Wages Board, on which there would be representatives of the employers and of the workers, with a Government nominated element, would inevitably mean that the Government nominated element would have to hold the scales between two extremes, and I think that would have extremely difficult results. I do not know why hon. Members

who have spoken in favour of a Wages Board have been so convinced that a Board with a Government nominated element in control would be a panacea for all ills including strikes. In the recent strike of Government employees statutory machinery did exist to which resort was had; nevertheless the employees resorted to a strike.

Mr. DEBIDIN: If I could get from Government and the spokesman for the Sugar Producers' Association an undertaking that the matter will be reconsidered I would leave it there and pass on to the next recommendation.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Council wishes the matter to be reconsidered by Government it would say so. A change in circumstances may render it necessary, but I hope we shall never have circumstances in which there cannot be any collective bargaining, and where a trade union cannot carry on its machinery. As the Colonial Secretary has said, conditions in England are entirely different. There is not this aggregation of labour; they are all individuals. There are dozens of farms in England with only one or two labourers on each, and with a labour force so widely dispersed it is extremely difficult for labourers to get together and assert their rights. That was the reason for the establishment of Agricultural Wages Boards in England, and, as we know, in Trinidad, for example.

The Colonial Secretary has referred to the law in that island, and I think I am right in saying that in Trinidad the trade unions are not effective; they do not function as ours do. They have not the powerful trade unions that we have to negotiate and make agreements with the employers. If that situation changes then the Governor can set up Wages Boards where he is satisfied that no other adequate machinery exists. If we reach the stage here where no adequate machinery exists, or does not operate, it would certainly be time for us to reconsider the matter. By that I do not mean that we would give it immediate consideration. My answer to all this is that the trade unions should get together and that this rivalry and antagonism amongst the leaders should cease. That is the

answer, and if hon. Members would advocate that and work towards that end we should not have to bother ourselves about this particular recommendation.

Recommendation 20 approved.

Recommendation 21. —

A contributory pension scheme should be introduced within a year of the establishment of the Wages Board.

- (a) *It should, after the lapse of one year's initial employment, cover all adult (viz. over 18 years old) male workers.*
- (b) *Contributions to be 5 per cent., of the weekly earnings (time, task or piece-work) by the employer and 2½ per cent., by the worker.*
- (c) *Benefits (either in the form of a lump sum payment or an annuity) to be secured on attaining the age of 50, provided that a minimum of 10 years' service has been rendered. Workers withdrawing or being discharged before 10 years have elapsed would receive back their own contributions (with accumulated interest) together with 10 per cent., of the employer's contributions, plus interest, for each year of completed service. Representatives of workers dying during the 10-year period to receive the full benefits (contributions plus interest) derivable from the two sides' contributions.*
- (d) *No contributions to be payable by either side in respect of any week in which a minimum of 40 hours, or three days' piece work task work or daily work has not been performed.*
- (e) *A Committee constituted of two representatives of the employers and of two workers should administer the trust funds involved. N. B.—This scheme would, at the current wage level and rate of employment, cost the employers about \$400,000 per annum, whilst the workers' contributions would be about \$200,000 or some \$9 for field-workers and \$12 for factory-workers. We expect that as a result of the setting up of the Wages Board there would be an increase in cash (and real wages) more than sufficient to offset the workers' share in this scheme. Although, since 1939, wage-rates have more than doubled and real earnings have risen, nevertheless in 1947 the average year's remuneration of a male field-worker was just under \$300 and of a factory-hand \$390-\$400. We also hope that if the earnings of the men*

are augmented a considerable reduction in the number of women workers will take place. Indeed, we look forward to a time not too far distant when it may be possible entirely to prohibit the employment of women on plantations. (Chapter XII, para. 150 — Page 88 of Report).

Mr. DEBIDIN: This whole idea of a contributory pension scheme is something which I am sure the Commission considered very carefully, and I say in appreciation of what the hon. the Colonial Secretary has said about a Wages Board, that this contributory pension scheme and the establishment of a Wages Board are two very important recommendations by the Commission. It is therefore with some degree of alarm that I find that these two most important recommendations have been more or less by-passed. The excuse given for not accepting the recommendation of a contributory pension scheme is that H.M. Government does not propose to implement the recommendation by the Commission of a special subsidy of £1 per ton for our sugar, and the sugar producers of the Colony would not be able to afford to introduce a contributory pension scheme of the type recommended.

I am not at all pleased with that explanation. I prefer the sugar producers to go into the merits of the scheme and say "It is a most excellent scheme; we will put it into operation as soon as we get some money or when we can see our way to do so". See how closely this is related to the other recommendations. Again I am repeating something I said before. This is undoubtedly intended to make provision for a large army of people who are going to be displaced after ten years' service. That is the reason for the recommendation of the contributory pension scheme. I see some wisdom in that ten years' service because it bears very close comparison with the period of indenture under which the people came to this Colony and worked on the sugar plantations—indentured for five years and continuance of work for another five years, and then they got a certificate of exemption from compulsory labour which permitted them to go to any other part of the Colony and pursue any

other kind of work. Just so this recommendation seems to presuppose a period of ten years at least to entitle a person to draw an annuity or to be given a lump sum. The whole theory is correct. I see a tremendous amount of wisdom in it, and I strongly feel this must be put into operation and the Wages Board. I will not say anything further on this Wages Board, but from the bottom of my heart I intend to bring a motion, if I think it is necessary, relying on the Venn Commission Report to support my argument.

I think some Member of this Council has moved some motion in this Council for certain social security schemes to be put into effect. This is, to my mind, a very necessary step in view of the previous recommendation (1) — “that draglines must be used to dredge and to clean 5,000 miles of canals which the sugar estates combined have.” That means a tremendous displacement of labour. Under the “cut and load” system — since that is accepted — the able-bodied worker will hardly go beyond ten years, and this contributory pension scheme will certainly meet that particular case—those people who at one stage or other in their lives when they reach 35 or 40 cannot continue that heavy work and will be relegated to that group of workers who are hardly able to do that work. That is the reason why this scheme should be accepted. According to the system, because the worker will be earning a tremendous income through the forced effort he is made to use, his annuity—his percentage and what the estate will have to give—will be very large as a result. He will come off at the end of ten years when he retires to a fair pension to live on. Why should he not? It seems, the sugar producers in not accepting this scheme are exploiting this extra energy of the worker for their advantage alone. If that were not so they would say to the worker; “You are giving us an advantage. We are going to give you a permanent advantage. If you work and give us so much earnings you would get it back in a contributory pension scheme. We will put up 5 per cent., and you 2½ per cent.” Just imagine the sugar employers, who pride themselves on the very liberal earnings of the workers in boosting this system of work, not accepting something which should

directly flow as the result of that very type of work! Let them conscientiously show the reasonableness of their non-acceptance of the scheme. If the estate contributes 5 per cent., of the worker's earnings and the worker himself 2½ per cent., certainly he would come off to something appreciable. It is only reasonable that when the labourer has reached that stage, as has been described in the other recommendation of the Commission, of being below the average physique, that is the time he wants this pension rather than to have to eke out a premature old age in working in some kitchen garden. That is what Mr. Venn and others thought. That is why I say the whole of this Report must be regarded as a complete whole to be implemented and not that one piece be taken here and one piece there. I am sure that they considered the Joint Committees, which are there to look after the affairs of the workers, not competent enough and so came to the conclusion to strongly recommend this scheme. Just as they have considered the human angle in all these recommendations which will have an adverse effect upon the people concerned, they too felt that from the human angle they must strongly recommend something which will make up for that. This, to my mind, is the compensating factor to all the other recommendations. In other words, put in a nutshell, having accepted the recommendations as to mechanization and “cut and load”, we must accept this contributory pension scheme and see to it that it is accepted and adopted by the sugar producers of the Colony.

I think it is reasonable for Members of this Council on this occasion to join with me in saying this is something useful, and that the whole theory of pension is accepted by every industry in every democratic country in the world. Here is the opportunity, here is to my mind an incentive to the people to work more and earn more, but the contributory pension scheme is brushed aside. I am sure no greater incentive could have been provided than by accepting this very useful recommendation for a contributory pension scheme which must benefit these people. One Member has said it, and I am going to say it now — it comes from my heart—the people of the sugar plant-

ations of this Colony have been living in sub-human conditions for a long time. They have been living, as one Member said, in squalor, in social conditions which cannot be a credit to anyone. I feel that the time has come when we must give them this benefit.

The CHAIRMAN: May I ask the hon. Member not to continue repeating his argument the whole afternoon. He said he would put his case in a nutshell and give it to us, and now he is off again. We all know what he feels and we know what he feels about the contributory pension scheme. I would suggest that he makes his remarks precise.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I appreciate Your Excellency stopping me at a time when I am bringing out the human angle of the matter. I have not referred before to sub-human conditions or the squalor in which the workers on the sugar estates live. This is the first time that I am saying that. I know it must hurt for me to say that, but I have every justification for saying it. My connection with the people on the sugar plantations is close, it is personal and, therefore, I must speak as I do. This feeling of mine is apart from any union. I do not belong to any of them, nor am I engaged in any of their activities. Therefore when I speak it should go with greater conviction than when other Members speak. The recommendation here is one which is, to my mind, acceptable and I do not know what you are going to do in the way of gaining our disapproval or non-acceptance of this, but I am going to move that this Council accepts Recommendation 21 of the Venn Commission and asks for its implementation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have already said that Government favours the scheme.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am glad to hear that and to know that!

Dr. JAGAN: I am very pleased to hear that Government is in favour of the implementation of this recommendation, because I feel it will go a long way in providing security for these unfortunate people and it will relieve Government of

a very big burden which it is now shouldering. I do not have the exact figures with me, but I do know the amount Government is presently paying towards Old Age Pension and Poor Relief is indeed a very large figure. I suppose it is in the vicinity of \$250,000. If the Government would have to bear the responsibility of such a large share, then I feel that we are only taking on a job which should have been undertaken by the sugar industry. If the industry got benefits from those people while they were strong, then the industry must also provide for those people when they become old and cannot work any more. I support the hon. Member when he suggests that if it is not possible to have the sugar producers implementing this recommendation an Ordinance be immediately drafted to give effect to this recommendation so that the sugar producers can be made to carry out this recommendation of the Venn Commission.

Mr. LUCKHOO: May I rise and say that I rather agree with the remarks made by the last two hon. Members in this respect—it seems to me that the benefit will go to those who are badly in need of some help at that stage of their lives when they are unable to work. I will, however, make this observation. There was a provident benefit scheme which for the last 10 or 12 months has been under consideration by the unions and the sugar producers. That scheme serves to offer benefit in case of illness, births and deaths to the workers, and the sugar producers are prepared to make a large contribution to it dependent on the amount of sugar produced and the amount of contribution made by the workers themselves. It seems that this particular pension scheme is something which should be given priority even over that provident benefit scheme, and I offer it as a suggestion. The provident benefit scheme has not as yet been placed in operation and is still in the stage where final arrangements have to be made and, maybe, consideration might be given to this particular recommendation made in the Venn Commission Report in preference to the particular provident benefit scheme, although the idea is to have both in operation. I offer it as a suggestion the

sugar producers may themselves consider.

Mr. CARTER: Sir, I think it is a sad commentary on the history of the sugar industry that 30 per cent., of the total number of old age pensioners should be ex-sugar workers. It shows that those people, who have given all their lives to the sugar industry when they reach the evening of their lives, have nothing they can fall back on. I think, if the Sugar Producers' Association find it possible to agree to this scheme they would be repaying in no small measure many of the ills of the past. I am in total agreement with this Contributory Pension Scheme and, I think, every effort should be made by this Government to encourage the Sugar Producers' Association to play their full part in implementing the recommendations of the Venn Commission.

Mr. MORRISH: Sir, it seems to be accepted generally that the sugar producers are entirely against this idea of a contributory pension scheme for the workers, and it is rather to my astonishment that such views are expressed. The Sugar Producers' Association, I think, intimated in no way that they were against such a scheme. All they said was, they cannot take a gallon out of a pint pot. One of the means whereby a gallon pot may have been substituted for the pint pot was suggested, but unfortunately His Majesty's Government turned the idea down and, therefore, the sugar industry in spite of the assurance I have heard this afternoon that it has so much money that it does not know what to do with it, I am sorry to say, has not got the money. In the comments relative to that particular Recommendation 21 reference has been made to the number of persons under the Government Old Age Pension Scheme at present and that about 2,600 or approximately 30 per cent., of the total number of old age pensioners are ex-sugar workers.

I think I am perfectly correct in saying that the sugar industry is the largest taxpayer in the Colony and, if that is accepted, therefore the sugar industry is paying not only pension to that 30 per cent., sugar workers but to a

great many other old age pensioners who may never have been associated with the industry in any way. It may interest hon. Members to know, that during last year in direct payments in pensions to old people on the estates over \$51,000 was expended. So to suggest that the sugar industry is heartless and makes no effort in this direction, I submit, is entirely wrong. The position is purely a financial one. I think, Sir, that possibly paragraph (c) at the very beginning of this Message may have created a wrong impression where it says:

"That the industry should be subsidised by His Majesty's Government to the extent of 20/- per ton of sugar—a recommendation which has not been accepted. On the other hand we are receiving from His Majesty's Government this year, and in common with all other Commonwealth producing countries, an additional £3 per ton for our sugar."

As worded, I am not sure it is not suggested in that paragraph that they will not give £1 per ton but will give £3 per ton instead. I must emphasize that £3 per ton was an increase granted by a very shrewd body of persons in London after very careful examination not only of the sugar industry's position in the Caribbean but in the Commonwealth as the minimum which they recognize they must increase the price by to ensure a reasonable return on the investment, and it is not as I think that particular paragraph I referred to suggests, but something even better than the £1 per ton that Dr. Venn suggested and recommended as a special subsidy, as he describes it, on account of the inherently higher cost of production than in the other areas in the Caribbean. But another thing too, has been forgotten, that due to continual rising cost the figure of \$400,000 which Dr. Venn then represented would today be very much higher and make it even more difficult to implement wages, etc., for the reason that the figure of \$400,000 would be very much too low.

In addition, Sir, it must be remembered too that in endeavouring to meet what Dr. Venn calls "social and other improvements and schemes", we have introduced a scheme last year which has cost a very large amount of money, and

that is holidays with pay, which this year alone will cost the industry some \$400,000. I suggest, therefore, that the industry is not wanting in trying to help the workers. Facts speak for themselves. I am speaking now personally, but what I am voicing is perfectly correct. There is no one in the industry who would not like to implement these things.

At this stage the Council resumed.

The PRESIDENT: The Council will adjourn to Thursday next at 2 p.m., when the hon. the Financial Secretary will introduce the Budget for 1951.

The Council adjourned until Thursday, 21st December, 1950, at 2 p.m.