

# SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Constituted under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Orders in Council, 1953 and 1956).

*Thursday, 19th January, 1961*

*The Council met at 2 p.m.*

## PRESENT :

**Speaker, His Honour Sir Donald Jackson**

**Chief Secretary, Hon. D. M. Hedges**

**Attorney-General, Hon. A. M. I. Austin, Q.C.**

*ex officio*

**Financial Secretary, Hon. W. P. D'Andrade.**

The Honourable <b>Dr. C. B. Jagan</b>	—Member for <i>Eastern Berbice</i> (Minister of Trade and Industry)
„ „ <b>B. H. Benn</b>	—Member for <i>Essequibo River</i> (Minister of Natural Resources)
„ „ <b>Janet Jagan</b>	—Member for <i>Western Essequibo</i> (Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)
„ „ <b>Ram Karran</b>	—Member for <i>Demerara-Essequibo</i> (Minister of Communications and Works)
„ „ <b>B. S. Rai</b>	—Member for <i>Central Demerara</i> (Minister of Community Development and Education).
Mr. <b>R. B. Gajraj</b>	—Nominated Member
<b>W. O. R. Kendall</b>	—Member for <i>New Amsterdam</i>
„ <b>R. C. Tello</b>	—Nominated Member
„ <b>S. Campbell</b>	—Member for <i>North Western District</i>
„ <b>A. I. Jackson</b>	—Member for <i>Georgetown North</i>
„ <b>S. M. Saffee</b>	—Member for <i>Western Berbice</i>
„ <b>Ajodha Singh</b>	—Member for <i>Berbice River</i>
„ <b>Jai Narine Singh</b>	—Member for <i>Georgetown South</i>
„ <b>H. J. M. Hubbard</b>	—Nominated Member.
„ <b>A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.</b>	—Nominated Member

Mr. I. Crum Ewing—Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. E. V. Viapree—Assistant Clerk of the Legislature. \*

## ABSENT:

Mr. L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C. — Member for Georgetown Central.

Mr. E. B. Beharry — Member for Eastern Demerara.

Mr. F. Bowman — Member for Demerara River.

Mr. R. E. Davis — Nominated Member — on leave.

Mr. A. M. Fredericks — nominated Member.

The Clerk read prayers.

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 18th January, 1961, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

## COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

**The Minister of Trade and Industry** (Dr. Jagan): I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of a Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to amend the Companies Ordinance."

## ORDER OF THE DAY

## BILL — FIRST READING

The following Bill was read the First time:

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Companies Ordinance."

## AMERINDIAN (AMENDMENT) BILL

**The Chief Secretary** (Mr. Hedges): I move that Council resolve itself into Committee to resume consideration of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to amend the Amerindian Ordinance."

Question put, and agreed to.

## COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Clause 2. *Repeal and re-enactment of Section 1c of Chapter 58.*

**The Chief Secretary:** Last week the hon. Member for Georgetown Central suggested an Amendment to subsection (3) of Clause 2. The Attorney-General has looked into the matter and a proposed Amendment has been circulated. The purpose of the Amendment is to allow appeals that go to the Full

Court to pass on (other circumstances so allowing) to the Federal Supreme Court. The Amendment reads:

"(3) The Commissioner, the District Commissioner or an officer may, if necessary, appeal to any court having jurisdiction to hear an appeal against any decision arising out of proceedings instituted under this section, and may, for that purpose, retain the services of counsel, and in all respects take such steps on behalf of the Amerindian as he may think fit."

beg to move that Amendment.

**Mr. Campbell:** The Bill is not controversial at all; it is all right.

Amendment put, and agreed to.

Clause 2 passed as amended.

Clauses 3 to 5 passed as printed.

Council resumed.

**The Chief Secretary:** I have to report that the Bill to amend the Amerindian Ordinance was considered in Committee and passed with two Amendments. I, therefore, move that the Bill be now read the Third time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

## TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL

**Mr. Speaker:** Council will now resume consideration of the following Bill:

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Tax Ordinance".

think the Bill was read a Second time on the last occasion.

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

## COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Clause 1. — *Short Title.*

**The Financial Secretary** (Mr. D'Andrade): I beg to move that Clause 1 be amended in the second line by the deletion of "No. 3" and the substitution of "1961" for "1960" "The Ordinance may be cited as the Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 1961."

Question put, and agreed to.

**The Financial Secretary:** In Clause 1(2), in the second line, the figure "9" should be changed to "17"; so that this subsection should read:

"This Ordinance shall be deemed to have come into operation on the 17th December, 1960."

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 1 passed as amended.

Clause 2. — *Amendment to section 8A of Chapter 298.*

**Mr. Tello:** Mr. Chairman, I had hoped, on the last occasion, that I would have had an Amendment ready, but, after consulting with people who do not seem to make up their minds, I must apologize for detaining the Bill.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 passed as printed.

Council resumed.

**The Financial Secretary:** I have to report that the Tax (Amendment) Bill was considered in Committee and passed with two Amendments to Clause 1, and I now move that the Bill be read the Third time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

## MOTIONS

**Mr. Speaker:** Next item is a Motion standing in the name of the Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Burnham).

**Mr. Jackson:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member was indisposed yesterday and I think he is still indisposed. I am asking that the Motion be deferred for another day.

**Mr. Speaker:** I know that he communicated yesterday that he was ill, but I did not hear anything today.

**Mr. Jackson:** I assume he continues to be ill.

**Mr. Speaker:** There are two Motions. I think he should have let us know this morning that he continues to be ill.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have taken it this way — that he reported ill yesterday and he continues to be ill today.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry** (Dr. Jagan): Sir, on many occasions we find that complaints are being made that the Government does not want to discuss Members' Motions. I have no objection to deferring these Motions if the hon. Member is ill; but if, as I understand, he was in Court this morning, I think Council should take a serious view of this situation and not discuss these Motions again.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is entirely in the hands of Council.

**The Minister of Natural Resource** (Mr. Benn): I beg to move that Council proceed with the Motion in the name of the hon. Member for Georgetown Central.

**Mr. Speaker:** How can it proceed if somebody does not move the Motion?

**The Attorney-General** (Mr. Austin)  
Under the Standing Orders, has the hon. Member a written authority?

**Mr. Speaker:** It is entirely in Members' hands.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have seen Members of this Council before, having Motions tabled and put on the Order Paper, and in their absence those Motions have been deferred. The Member for Georgetown South, on more than one occasion, has had Motions put on the Order Paper, but he was not here when they were to be debated and nobody has taken that stand. [*Pause.*]

**Mr. Speaker:** If the Council cannot take any definite stand on it, I shall proceed with the other Motion. If Members feel it should not be discussed, it is entirely in their hands. [*Pause.*] The Member for Georgetown North is to move his Motion.

**Mr. Jackson:** Mr. Speaker, in moving this Motion which stands in my name, I am very conscious of the fact that I am not an expert on aeration nor am I an expert on milling. I am conscious, also, of the fact that there are several Members of this Council —

**Mr. Speaker:** I think I should read the Motion.

"Whereas it is known that all padi harvested mechanically is reaped before the grain has become completely matured and contains at least 24% moisture and which, if so stored, commences to deteriorate within seventy-two hours;

And whereas it has been proved that such moisture-laden padi could be successfully treated prior to storage by reducing the excess moisture through mechanical aeration or hot air drying;

And whereas there are at present only two plants for extracting moisture from padi reaped which are both installed in the valley of the Mahaicony River;

And whereas moisture extracting plants are of vital necessity in an expanding rice industry;

Be it resolved: That this Council recommends to Government early installation of drying and storage facilities as follows:—

- (1) One dryer and bond in the De-Hoop-Vygeval area (Mahaica).
- (2) One dryer and bond at Britannia West Coast, Berbice.
- (3) One dryer and bond at Warren, Corentyne.
- (4) One dryer and bond at Bush Lot, Corentyne.
- (5) One dryer and bond at No. 64, Corentyne."

**The Attorney-General:** On a point of order: We know what the position is with respect to the first Motion, which is No. 4, in Mr. Burnham's name, because it appears that when he was called on, he was not present and the Motion lapsed automatically.

**Mr. Speaker:** We are on another Motion now. You can raise that afterwards.

**The Attorney-General:** There is another Motion in Mr. Burnham's name which should be taken next. We have to take the matters on the Order Paper in the order in which they appear.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is clear as the noon-day sun, if there are two Motions, Nos. 4 and 5, whatever was said in relation to No. 4 would be the same in relation to No. 5.

**The Attorney-General:** The provision reads:

"(2) If a Member does not move a motion which stands in his name when he is called on, it shall lapse, unless some other Member, duly authorised by him in writing, moves it in his stead."

do not think he was called on with regard to the second Motion; but when he is called on, in the absence of a Motion, it should be that the debate should be deferred in his absence. We are not

clear of the position with regard to Motions 4 and 5, and I think we should get things clear before we proceed to Motion No. 6.

**Mr. Jackson:** That is a bit of nonsense, for I rose this afternoon and said that, as far as I am aware, the hon. Member is still indisposed. How can he be called upon to move his Motion, if he is still indisposed? I ask that the Motion be deferred. If you want me to do the same thing on Motion No. 5, I shall do so.

**The Attorney-General:** Move the Motion.

**Mr. Jackson:** I have seen in this Council on several occasions where Government business on the Order Paper was not dealt with. I have known the hon. Member for Georgetown South to be absent when he had several Motions on the Order Paper, and Council agreed to defer them.

**Mr. Speaker:** I said that I was entirely in the hands of the Council, and I asked whether hon. Members wanted the Motion struck out. Everybody remained mum. At this moment I am told by the hon. the Attorney-General who, probably, had been sleeping, that the position is not clear. If he wants to move a Motion he can do so.

**The Attorney-General,** On a point of explanation, Sir, I was not sleeping at that time; I was merely rising, with due respect to the Chair, to make a point of order.

**Mr. Jackson:** I beg to move that the Motion standing in the name of the hon. Member be deferred, because he is indisposed.

**Mr. Tello:** I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and Motion negatived.

## DRYING AND STORAGE OF RICE

**Mr. Jackson:** Sir, in moving the Motion standing in my name.

Whereas it is known that all padi harvested mechanically is reaped before the grain has become completely matured and contains at least 24% moisture and which, if so stored, commences to deteriorate within seventy-two hours;

And Whereas it has been proved that such moisture-laden padi could be successfully treated prior to storage by reducing the excess moisture through mechanical aeration or hot air drying;

And Whereas there are at present only two plants for extracting moisture from padi reaped which are both installed in the valley of the Mahaicony River;

And Whereas moisture extracting plants are of vital necessity in an expanding rice industry;

Be it resolved: That this Council recommends to Government early installation of drying and storage facilities as follows—

- (1) One dryer and bond in the De-Hoop-Vygeval area (Mahaica).
- (2) One dryer and bond at Brit-tannia, West Coast, Berbice.
- (3) One dryer and bond at Warren, Corentyne.
- (4) One dryer and bond at Bush Lot, Corentyne.
- (5) One dryer and bond at No. 64, Corentyne.

I am conscious of my limitations with respect to the rice industry. We are told of the dangers and difficulties which confront the rice industry when certain things are not done. I know that the Leader of the Government has, to a greater degree, more knowledge than I have about the rice industry, and I am convinced that he should give this Council the benefit of his knowledge. I am sure he will tell us what the experts in other parts of the world have said about the milling of padi into rice, and what damage will follow if certain things are not done.

[MR. JACKSON]

When this Motion was tabled I did not include the Essequibo Coast as one of the places where a dryer should be installed, but recent events have made it clear that, if the Government were to accept this Motion, the people on the Essequibo Coast, who are producing rice, should also be given some consideration.

Before the rice industry was mechanized, it was possible for padi to be reaped with as little moisture as possible. Even when padi was reaped by hand and there was moisture in the grain, it was still found that a great number of the grains fell into the fields and, subsequently, sprung up into other plants. In some respect people were able to reap a small crop of rice. It is alleged that this is, perhaps, responsible for the brown grains found in the rice when it is milled.

It is a fact that about seventy per cent. of the padi cultivation is now being milled by mechanical means. It is felt that, because of this method of reaping padi and the need to avoid grains falling in the fields the padi has to be reaped before it is free from moisture. It is understood that at the time the padi is reaped there is a moisture content of about twenty or more per cent.

All of us, who have grown up in this country where padi is planted, know that when padi remains in heat of any kind, it has the tendency to spring new plants and within two or three days the padi which contains a percentage of moisture will deteriorate quickly. In the circumstances, when the padi is milled there will be some degree of deterioration in the rice grains.

It is the practice of the Rice Marketing Board, I understand, to have agents going around on its behalf purchasing padi at about seven dollars and some cents per bag. The rice can be taken to the mills at Anna Regina

and Mahaicony—Abari where the proprietors are charged with the responsibility of milling the rice on behalf of the Rice Marketing Board. In the circumstances, very often when the rice is milled and sent to the R.M.B. to be exported, it is found that the rice is not up to the required quality. On several occasions the Board has to go through the trouble of having the rice re-milled. Very often the Board has to sell rice as inferior quality at a lower price.

We have been told in this Council that, as a result of Government's policy, there has been an increase in the production of every agricultural commodity in the country. We have also been told that there has been an increase in the cultivation of rice. If it is true that the padi which is harvested by mechanical means has a great deal of moisture in it, and if it is true that the padi deteriorates within a matter of 72 hours, then it seems to me that something ought to be done to prevent this from taking place.

There are only two mills in this country which are capable of providing the type of facility this Motion seeks to obtain for the rice industry: one at Anna Regina, and the other at Burma. I understand that there is a small dryer at Wakenaam which is owned by Messrs. Ramjohn Katoon & Sons. I also understand that this dryer is capable of producing 600 bags of rice per day. That is the information I have received, but I do not know whether it is correct.

I am informed that the annual production of padi is more than 200,000 tons. Since it is true that we have only two mills which are capable of drying or reducing the moisture content of the grains, it seems to me quite clear that there is need for the erection of dryers similar to those found at the Mahaicony —Abari Scheme, at Anna Regina and at Wakenaam.

I am informed that the Black Bush Polder area is also producing a great quantity of padi. When one looks at the distance between the Black Bush Polder, and the Mahaicony—Arary Scheme and Burma, it should not be expected that farmers would be able to transport their padi from that area to Mahaicony in order to take advantage of the facility of the dryer. I feel that these dryers should be installed in the interest of the rice industry and of the people living in those remote areas. The rice industry is now part and parcel of the economy of this country. Members of the Government have always said that they are grateful to the farmers for having responded to their appeals for increased production.

I am of the opinion that the rice industry should be given all necessary encouragement and assistance. I am not suggesting that it is not receiving assistance at the moment, but I feel that farmers, who are unable to provide drying facilities, should be assisted. It does appear to me that the industry could be streamlined to a greater degree than it is at the moment. I have no condemnation to make of those who have been responsible for the present standard, for the industry has indeed reached a very high level, but it seems to me that much more can be done to streamline the industry to bring it into line with what obtains in other countries, and thereby, perhaps, achieve a higher standard than is found in some parts of the world.

It is a fact that those people who reap their crops by mechanical means borrow heavily from the Banks to purchase their machines, and it is, perhaps, fair and right that we should encourage them to go in for bigger cultivation, so that their indebtedness could be cleared off in a shorter time than it now takes. If we are going to continue our present

policy of encouragement to the industry, then it is only right that as we increase our productivity we ought to examine the possibility of improvements all round.

I understand that in Bangkok there is a first stage of reducing the moisture content of the grain—that at some point of time the grain is dried up to about 17 per cent. of its moisture content (for milling into rice it is about 14 per cent.), so that at that point you will get your best grain, and your marketing possibilities would be better. I understand that the Jamaica market is largely one of white rice, and that it is likely that this will be the demand in the very near future from many other markets in the Caribbean, and perhaps, we ourselves may be willing to adopt the habit of eating white rice when we realize that, perhaps, we are getting better food value from white rice than we get from the rice at present on our market. I understand that in order to secure the best grains from our white rice, the padi which passes through the mill must have no more moisture content than 14 per cent.

So we have two aspects of this problem to which consideration should be given. One aspect is to prevent deterioration when the padi is reaped with about 24 per cent. moisture. In that state it appears to me that the farmer loses, and the industry as a whole will therefore lose. The other aspect is that when the padi is to be milled it should not have more than 14 per cent. moisture content, but I understand that because of the lack of adequate drying facilities padi goes into some of our small mills with as much as 24 per cent. moisture content, which is responsible for the bad odour which comes from rice on our meal table on some occasions. It is fortunate, however, that rice with that bad smell is not exported from this country. The Rice Marketing Board takes every precaution to make sure that only the best quality rice leaves this country.

[Mr. JACKSON]

I have seen that padi has been stacked under people's homes, in their houses and outside their houses. I understand that one of the reasons for this is that people believe they can get their padi milled much quicker than if it is sent to the mill when they are reaping. But when at their homes the padi must contain the amount of moisture to which I have referred. If dryers are installed it would make for speedier milling of all farmers' padi. Money would be quicker in circulation and the farmers would be happier if such facilities were provided for them. I think it is agreed that bad odour in rice springs from milling padi which is wet either by rainfall or moisture content in the grain.

The small mills have no modern facilities for drying padi; it is dried in the open where they rely upon the sun and its blessings to help them to get it dried to the point at which it can pass through the mill.

The provision of drying facilities will remove the hazards of the weather and make it possible for milling to be done under all weather conditions. I have seen workers hustling to gather up padi on the drying ground of a small mill in order to avoid wetting by rain. That is also one of the points in favour of the provision of proper drying facilities, such as the Motion seeks, in order that the rice farmer may be assured that his padi will not suffer deterioration because of heavy moisture content, with consequent loss of income to him.

It seems to me that milling facilities should also be improved, and that the Rice Marketing Board is in a very good position to extend the benefits of proper milling to the industry. I understand also that wherever padi or rice is stored the presence of rats creates a very grave problem, and it seems to me that if we advance to the stage of providing drying facilities we may be able to store our rice in large cans for ship-

ment in bulk instead of in bags, in the same way as sugar is being shipped now. I do not know whether that aspect of the matter has been given any consideration, but it appears to me that we can advance to a larger measure of economy by speedier milling than is possible at the moment, and by storing our milled rice in a different way from that which is done at the moment.

It would appear, therefore, that this higher development would be possible only when we have established proper drying facilities for our padi. I believe that the result would be a guaranteed market for every grain of rice produced, greater confidence to the farmers, and a quicker turn-over of money to them than is possible in the present circumstances. It is with this scrappy knowledge of the industry and the scrappy information on which I have made these points, that I have moved this Motion, hoping that it will be accepted by the Government, and that the farmers will be assured of better drying facilities for their padi and better returns from their labour.

**Mr. Kendall:** Mr. Speaker, in seconding this Motion, I would like to observe that the country has been confronted with some of the problems facing the rice farmers in view of the fact that they have been encouraged to increase their rice production; and the Government is spending millions of dollars in that direction only to find that after the farmers have produced the padi, there are inadequate storage and drying facilities.

This Motion should never have come from the other side of this Council, because the Government is always trying to make the rice farmers believe that it is very much interested in their welfare and would like to see them improve their standards of living. Today, in this country, there is a large amount of rice that cannot be sold in the West Indies because of the fact that the padi



from which that rice was produced was not stored in a manner to produce the good quality rice that is needed in the West Indian market; so we find the Rice Marketing Board appealing to the rice farmers to co-operate by waiting a bit. Due to the fact that there are inadequate drying and storage facilities, we cannot sell the rice we have, because the demand on the market today is for better quality rice.

Take for example, the Corentyne, Mr. Speaker: When the members of this Government went around calling on the rice farmers to increase their produce, the farmers who sold padi to the Mahaicony/Abary Scheme were told that the Scheme would continue to purchase their padi. As soon as production reached a stage where the Government felt it was all right, a circular was sent to the farmers stating that no more padi would be bought from the farmers on the East Coast and East Bank of Berbice. A few farmers and large producers of padi then had to resort to building their own mills. That is one of the things we find with a Government that is not able to plan ahead on many of its projects.

Many of those rice farmers who have spent enormous sums of money to mechanize their way of farming are in a bad way today. Some have milled their rice and the Rice Marketing Board is unable to buy it. I hope that this Motion, coming at this stage, would make the Government realize its responsibilities and stop politicking and look after the interests of the people. If these dryers and bonds are placed in those areas, they would go a far way in producing the type of rice needed by the West Indian islands, the largest market; and also giving the farmers a better price for their rice, and so assisting them to pay the enormous debts they incur in purchasing their machines. I hope Government, in its saner moment, would appreciate that this Motion has come from the other side of

the Table and approach it in an objective manner—forget the person who moved it and support it.

**Mr. Campbell:** It is very interesting to deal with the question of rice in this Council. I thought that the rice industry was one of the most highly organized industries in British Guiana. We have heard so much about rice lands and all sorts of things about rice, that I was under the impression that every aspect of the industry was well taken care of. This Motion implies that all is not well in the industry. That has been a surprise to me. I did not expect to hear that in the Corentyne area, which happens to be the constituency of the Leader of the Majority Party in power, there were no machinery or arrangement for drying and storing rice. Perhaps the 24 per cent. moisture found in the grain, to which the Mover of the Motion referred, is responsible for the bad smelling rice which is sold in this country.

I would support this Motion because, if the industry really suffers from the lack of bonds and machinery, the sooner those facilities as set out in the Motion are provided, the better it would be for the industry.

Once more I say I am surprised to hear that the rice industry is not running along the lines it ought to—with the necessary facilities for drying and storing. There are elaborate facilities at the Rice Marketing Board where we hear millions of dollars are being spent. The people interested in the affairs of the rice industry should see that the moisture in the padi is reduced to about 14 per cent. in order to produce the best quality rice both for export and local consumption. I would urge those in charge of the industry to look into the matter.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan):** I think that the hon. Member who has moved this Motion

[DR. JAGAN]

should be congratulated, at least, for his idea of thinking in the interest of the rice producers and the rice industry; but, unfortunately, while he should be congratulated for the idea, he has not studied the problem very carefully, with the result, he has come up with what we regard as an impractical solution to this big problem.

We know that padi reaped, particularly by mechanical means, has a high moisture content reaching sometimes from 18 per cent. to 30 per cent., and if padi is stored with this content, say, at an average figure of 25 per cent., then one finds that destruction of this padi takes place very quickly. We were told by the experts that padi should be stored with about 14½ per cent. moisture content and, therefore, it should be the aim of the industry to achieve this figure of 14½ per cent. before referring to storage either in bins, bonds or rice mills.

The hon. Member has proposed that the Government should embark on establishing dryers at different points in the country—one in the De Hoop-Vygeval area (Mahaica); one at Britannia, West Coast, Berbice; one at Warren, Corentyne; one at Bush Lot, Corentyne; and one at No. 64, Corentyne. But, Sir, if we were to look at this situation more closely, we will find that to set up these dryers will be quite an expensive proposition, for not only does one have to set up drying equipment: one has to set up cleaning equipment also, because we know that padi reaped mechanically is not only padi, but has rice stalks and bits of mud and other impurities along with it.

And generally one finds that the impurities—mud and stuff—are of a higher moisture content. It is necessary, to set up cleaning equipment as well as drying equipment. It is also necessary to construct storage bonds, which will entail the provision for elevators and conveyors. It is not an easy or simple matter to set up equipment to take care of adequate drying.

I have been told by the Manager of the Rice Development Company, who should know what he is talking about, that to handle about 5,000 bags of padi a day and store about 100,000 bags of rice at any one of these centres will require equipment which I have already mentioned at a value of about \$300,000. If one were to consider the depreciation and interest charges on this sum of \$300,000, one will find that the average cost per bag will be about 18 cents, after providing for depreciation and interest. One also has to consider operating costs.

The Rice Development Company, which has done some of this work and has experience with mechanical dryers, has found that the average cost per bag is in the vicinity of 19½ cents. Therefore there will be 18 cents for depreciation and interest plus 19½ cents, for operating costs. If we are operating on a small scale as we will probably do, at one of these points, or even if we are operating on a large scale of 100,000 bags, we will have to bear in mind that we are dealing not with one producer, as in the case of the Rice Development Company at Mahaicony-Abary, but with several small producers whose production may range from yields from 2 acres to 50 acres. In other words, there will not be a continuous flow of padi, and it will be necessary to deal with each farmer separately. There will be interrupted operation, and it is likely that the cost of 19½ cents, which was given by the Rice Development Company as its own operation cost, will be increased.

In addition to this there will be the factor of additional handling, because the mills will not be sited in those places. We assume that these are merely to be drying and storage centres. After the padi has been stored and dried, it will have to be transported to some other place for milling. That will mean additional cost for handling which is very expensive.

While the motive of the hon. Member who moved the Motion is laudable, in practice, if this proposal were to be implemented and drying facilities were set up at various points in the country, it would result in an increase in the cost of production. In the end the farmers would get less than they are receiving at the moment.

What, therefore, is the solution? It is not in the interest of the farmers to have padi stored with moisture ranging from 18 per cent. to 30 per cent. Therefore the padi must be dried. If the suggestion made by the hon. Member is not practical, then we will have to find other means. Both the Manager of the Rice Development Company and the Director of Agriculture have been consulted on this matter, and they have both indicated that these proposals are impracticable. They have expressed the view that a better solution would be for the private millers to embark on additional drying facilities, and for the farmers themselves to form co-operative groups in order to establish small drying units.

We know that in this country, traditionally, drying has been done on what is called a "concrete floor", utilizing the sun. As long as there is good weather, this is the cheapest form of drying today. The farmer utilizes his own labour when working on the concrete floor; he lays out the padi, moves it about, and bags it himself.

Quite recently attempts have been made on the East Coast of Demerara to hold meetings among the farmers in order to encourage them to establish, jointly, certain drying floors near the area of cultivation. Some of the big farmers who cultivate large holdings were able to provide their own drying floors.

What about the millers? We know that this country is studded with many small mills dotted throughout the length and breadth of the country. Over 200 of these are concentrated in various parts of British Guiana. Quite recently a meeting was held with all the millers on the East Coast of Demerara. They were told that both the Government and the Rice Marketing Board will be prepared to give them credit and other facilities so that they can extend their drying facilities. Many of these people have already embarked on increasing their concrete drying floors. I have seen one myself in the Mahaicony area. Others have been told that they will be provided with loans, so that they can embark on establishing drying facilities plus the expansion of their concrete floors. I understand that several of them have already received loans from the Credit Corporation.

I may mention that discussion with the World Bank centred primarily on the provision of loans for agricultural equipment of this nature. From what the experts say, it appears that the most economic way of going about this matter is for either the millers themselves to go in for increased drying operation, or for the farmers themselves to embark on cleaning and drying equipment, after which they can either sell the padi, as they do in certain areas, or mill the padi in co-operative mills. On the other hand, they can mill it in privately-owned mills on their own account.

The Government is at the moment encouraging the farmers to establish co-operative mills. There is a proposal to set up one at Cane Grove. There is another proposal to set up one at Leguan. Four mills co-operatively-owned are to be established in the Black Bush Polder. We do not want to isolate the drying operation from the milling operation if possible. On the other hand, we do not want to add to the farmer the increased cost of production when he can undertake this activity himself and save money.

[Dr. JAGAN]

Some hon. Members may not know this, but on the Corentyne Coast and other areas the farmers take their padi to the mill; soak it in the soaking-tanks themselves; dry it and mill it themselves, providing their own labour. Why is this done? Because we are told by the experts that rice is a seasonable crop and provides employment for a farmer who owns an acre of padi for about 20 man-days. In other words, during a certain period of the year the farmer finds himself unoccupied and earning very little because he has a small holding and he must obtain other employment. The more the farmer can do for himself with respect to drying, milling and so on, the better it will be for him because his income becomes greater.

Dr. O'Loughlin, who made a very close study of the rice industry, pointed out that the net income of the farmer on a bag of padi is very negligible in rice cultivation, and she suggested that everything should be done to assist the farmer in reducing the cost of production.

Economists have told us that in countries like British Guiana where we have a great deal of under-employment and disguised unemployment, attempts should be made to mobilize the idle labour time of the people and not perpetually depend on machines to do what can, in many cases, be done by hand. In a country with full employment, it may be wise to employ more machinery so that productivity may be increased and the return to the individual may become greater. But in this country we have to adopt ways and means which will be in the interest of the producer. It is laudable to have dried padi, but it can be done in other ways than as suggested by the Mover of the Motion. The method he suggests will only put a further burden on the producers, therefore, however laudable his motive may be, Government cannot agree to the implementation of his proposal.

The last speaker referred to the poor quality of our padi, hence the poor quality of our rice and limited exports to the West Indies. I think he is mistaken. It is not a question of poor quality of our rice that limits exports to the West Indies. Indeed we find that in the small islands, because of the poverty of the people, they are not interested at all in rice of a high quality. They want the lowest quality rice we can offer them, so that they can purchase rice at a price within their means. In some of the larger islands they require rice of high quality. It all depends upon the income of the people. Jamaica, for instance, buys the highest grade, and so does Trinidad, but the smaller islands buy the lowest quality of rice that we produce. It is not because of the poor quality of our padi, the poor milling into rice that we are not selling more rice to the West Indies. Consumption of rice in the West Indies is limited not only by the income *per capita* in the area but also by the fact that some of those territories have other commodities which they produce at some periods in surplus, and which they have to utilize.

I would suggest to the hon. Member that the Government is very conscious of this problem of increasing our drying facilities, particularly in certain parts of the country where mechanical harvesting is now being used. The Rice Development Company has put up a proposition for the purchase of \$2 million worth of additional equipment for the Mahaicony and the Anna Regina rice mills, cleaning and drying equipment and so forth. So that I can assure the hon. Member that we have this matter fully before us. Government is now considering how it could procure this equipment, and in addition to this the Credit Corporation is prepared at all times to consider sympathetically any requests for loans both by co-operative societies and by millers, for the extension or establishment of drying facilities on a proper basis.

**Mr. Tello:** It is very enlightening to listen to the Minister of Trade and Industry speaking on this subject, but I observed that he went out of his way to contradict the Minister of Natural Resources who had sought to justify subsidies, especially in the agricultural sector. I could not support my friend's Motion yesterday because I think these subsidies, as supported by the Minister of Natural Resources, are quite in order in the modern concept of things. Today the Minister of Trade and Industry says that if the farmers and millers need dryers so as to ensure their crops they must go deep down into their pockets. We are talking about the second largest agricultural industry in this country, the most important peasant industry, and I cannot understand this swerving from Government's firm policy as declared by the Minister of Natural Resources.

Both in Canada and the U.S.A. the farmers received substantial assistance from the Government in providing wheat dryers, and possibly those farmers were in a better financial position to assist themselves than are our rice farmers. Our peasant rice farmers have not the money, and to talk of sending them back to the drying floor is unkind. It is exactly what they are scared about, because the Minister himself says "when the weather permits", and we know that the mechanical harvesters have been racing the weather, a procedure which is primarily responsible for the high moisture content in padi today. I have worked with the Rice Development Company at Mahaicony-Abary specially to operate the dryers, and we discovered that we either had to leave the padi in the field or reap it with the moisture. After experiments it was found that it was better business to harvest the padi even with a moisture content of 30 per cent.

Everyone knows that between September and December there is a short

rainy season. Where are the farmers going to dry their padi? While working at Mahaicony-Abary I have seen concrete floors not being used for weeks, and the Company would not have produced one bag of rice during that period if the artificial dryer was not in operation. We have seen farmers drying hundreds of bags of padi on the drying floors, and before the night was over it had acquired another 6 per cent. of moisture from overnight rain. As soon as rain soaks padi it deteriorates. Our peasant farmers have not the wherewithal to install artificial dryers.

I would ask the Minister to give serious consideration to the Motion. He said it is a laudable Motion and I agree with him. I think the matter deserves much more sympathetic consideration. I have no doubt that some of the millers may be able to obtain heavy loans to install mechanical dryers, but that will carry up the cost of production which will have to be borne by the poor peasants.

Today, as soon as a rice farmer reaps his padi he tries to get it to the nearest mill which may be 20 or 30 miles away. If he had drying facilities on the spot he could make sure that he delivers properly dried padi to the mill. At the Mahaicony-Abary mill the farmers' padi is tested for moisture when delivered, and they are not paid for excess moisture over 14 per cent. I doubt whether it would be economical to build a dryer to deal with 5, 10 or 20 bags of padi, and I am sure that those peasants who are now clamouring for artificial dryers know that, and they expect that once Government is interested in it they would be treated with impartiality and justice, and some proper form of testing the moisture content in padi and dealing fairly with them would be introduced.

I would have liked to suggest to the Mover of the Motion that he should go a little further. We do not want

[MR. TELLO]

only drying facilities for the peasant farmers. I think that if Government is going to take some hand in it we should go through the whole process. What has been a handicap to many small mills is their drying floors, for the time taken to process 1,000 or 5,000 bags of rice depends upon the weather which Nature is kind enough to provide. If a farmer knows that he can reap his padi and get it dried and delivered to the mill within a given time, he would know exactly when he could receive his cash for it. The same thing applies to the millers, and those engaged in the rice industry would be in the position of the sugar industry, to reap in February and mill in June.

That is the position we want to see in the rice industry. Government should subsidize this great agricultural industry and let the subsidy be apparent and a real contribution to the prosperity of the industry. I do not see the problems which the Minister sees. Of course, he has advice from the right people, and possibly we have to accept such advice. I feel that if there is any sincere desire to assist the farmers, ways and means can be found. I think Government should try out two dryers, one in Essequibo and the other on the Corentyne, and from the results shown it could decide whether it should embark upon them as a campaign.

I feel this is a great chance to show a real interest in rice. We remember they said that they had democratized the Rice Marketing Board. Starting at the bottom, this will be a great contribution to the industry, and it will show that it is not only political talk and political campaigning you are interested in, but you actually want to —

**Mr. Speaker:** I did not want to say anything, but Members are frequently going outside, leaving the Council without a quorum. [*Several Members returned to their seats.*]

**Mr. Tello:** I would like to conclude by saying that I have no doubt that the Motion is sincere. The reason behind its introduction is to give certain Members an opportunity to speak for the people who are not here. I also believe that the Government is willing to assist but is not quite certain of the best ways to do it. I say, here is an opportunity; let us select one or two areas and implement the Motion; and if it proves a failure, it would not be the first "white elephant" established. At least, it would be a "white elephant" established to assist the people. But, as I said, it will be a success. Possibly, Government may be sorry that the Motion was not introduced before.

I want to ask Government, at least on this one occasion, to agree that a useful suggestion is being made by this side of the Table, and at least co-operate by implementing the Motion in the interest of the peasants.

**Mr. Gajraj:** In 1957, when the Rice Conference was held in British Guiana, I recall that the then Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, opening that Conference — [*Council without a quorum.*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I think you had better wait. [*Several Members returned to their seats.*]

**Mr. Gajraj:** I was saying: In 1957, when the Rice Conference was being held in British Guiana, the then Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, opening that Conference referred to rice as a political subject. I am very happy today to see that we have embarked on a new era in this country in that rice is coming wholly into its own; for we find that the needs of the rice industry have been expounded from both sides of this Council. It is clear, therefore, that whatever is needed in order to make this, the second largest agricultural industry of British Guiana, more efficient and more economic to the country as a whole and

return greater profits to those who toil for it, would receive full support from both sides.

I feel sure that my hon. Friend and Colleague, the Mover of the Motion, must feel happy in his mind to find that congratulations have come his way for having thought of this matter—for having put before the Council the losses which occur at times to the rice farmers on account of bad weather conditions, as the padi is not able to be dried to a sufficient extent to permit its safe storage and, therefore, give the farmer the best return for his labour.

There is no doubt, whatever, that the problem which has been spoken of is not of today's making. We have had the problem of storing padi with a high moisture content right down the years. Of course, the problem is becoming of larger proportions since we have placed more lands under the plough and since mechanized cultivation has enabled the same number of people to cultivate a larger portion of land and have considerably larger quantities of padi to be reaped at the end of a period — that is, at harvest time. But while it is true that hand reaping does mean that there is, at times, less moisture in the grain than there is in mechanical reaping, a great deal depends upon the weather at the time. It is no point telling this Council, or the rice farmer himself who knows better, that the padi that is reaped mechanically contains more moisture than that cut by hand because at the time of cutting, whether a machine or a grass cutter is used, the moisture is the same.

When one cuts by hand, one cuts the stalk as well as the grain and at normal times the stalks are stuck in the fields and remain there for 24 or 36 hours. With the mechanical process, a great deal of moisture which is kept in the grain during the period of growth is unable to dry off, thereby leaving an

intolerable percentage of moisture in the grain to enable it to be stored prior to coming into the mill. By the time it reaches the mill, in normal circumstances, it should have the right percentage for normal storage. But where, of course, the padi is reaped mechanically that period of drying does not take place because from the machine the grains go direct into the bag.

My hon. Friend speaks of installing a certain number of dryers or moisture-extracting plants. Of course, one gets the impression that he is telling Government that, out of public funds, they are to install these extracting plants in various parts of the country; so it would indicate to me that the hon. Member is anxious to see Government take some active and direct part in providing facilities for the rice farmers. It would be very difficult, in my humble opinion, for us to continue spending money on things like these. It would seem to me that the hon. Member must be thinking in terms of Government taking over all stages of the rice industry.

At one time we hear that we should let private millers continue to carry out their traditional contribution to the industry, and at another time we hear that because of the mechanical means of reaping rice another thing has happened as a result, and Government must come in and use public funds in order to prevent any further losses. Where does private enterprise come in? If the mills that are being run by private enterprise are to continue — and I, for one, would like to see them expand in order to take care of the increased cultivation—then they must also take their share of responsibility for seeing that the grains which are going to pass through their mills are in a fit condition to be stored for long periods of time; so that the result of their processing should be rice of the best quality.

[MR. GAJRAJ]

If we were to put up these things at public expense—let the hon. Member appreciate this—the rice farmer is going to feel that because the moisture-extracting plants are owned by the Government, this facility for removing moisture from his grain should be given to him free of cost. I noticed my hon. Friend and Colleague, Mr. Tello, is in favour of further agricultural subsidies. Apparently, he means that we should concentrate on the expenditure of the general taxpayers' funds. If that is so, where are we going to end? It was said that we should try to get our people self-reliant. How are we going to build them into this strong nation if they are going to depend on the Government to provide things which, in the ordinary circumstances, they are able to work out a means for doing themselves?

The hon. Minister of Trade and Industry has indicated to us, from the best information which he has been able to get, the cost which such a venture would entail; and we must not forget that if we decide to put up these centres, that we have to borrow money to buy the equipment, install and operate them. Therefore, if we have to borrow, we have to pay back; so that in every one of these ventures, we must take into consideration the interest charges so that over a period of time we should be able to pay for the equipment that we install.

Who has to pay? If the farmer is to be saved by drying his padi, thereby giving him a higher return for that padi, it is reasonable to assume that he should pay for the cost of drying it as well as his share of the cost of putting down the equipment. I happen to remember that not longer than two or three years ago the people at Burma were complaining very bitterly on being called upon to pay 4 cents. or 6 cents. per bag for the cost of drying the surplus moisture out of their padi. There is another argument about it. They say:

"We have brought in our padi and whatever you have to do with it is your business. If they did not want to pay 4 cents. or 6 cents. per bag in order to dry their padi, would they be prepared to pay 37 cents. per bag at these centres to dry their padi?"

It must be recalled that whilst science has advanced at a level that man can use it, nevertheless, what nature offers to us is in most cases the cheapest way in which we can do a particular job. Take transportation in all parts of the world for instance. Where water transportation is available it works out to be the cheapest form, and commerce will always make use of water transportation as against the higher cost of building roads and using vehicles on them.

The rice industry gives a return on a subsistence level. As rice is cultivated on the plantation scale like sugar cane, it will not be able to pay for the cost of each operation—the costs when added together will be greater than the return you receive for the grain. Rice in all parts of the world—except in some areas in the United States of America, which is in itself a protective area with a protective market—is a peasant industry cultivated by a peasant who uses his own labour as well as that of his family in order to keep down costs.

I, in my association with people in the industry, have been assured that, so long as there is sunshine available, drying on the concrete floor is the cheapest form of drying and that the resultant rice which is milled from concrete dried padi is clearer in colour than that which is dried mechanically. Many old millers who have installed in their mills steam dryers, which they use whenever rain falls and they cannot dry their padi on the ground, have always complained that the rice which was milled from mechanically-dried padi was always darker than that dried by the sun. I accept their word for that. Therefore when one continues searching one's mind



to find out what one can do in this matter, one is led inevitably to the conclusion that if we had installed mechanical dryers at the various points to take care of such periods of time when rain falls and people cannot dry their padi by nature's sunlight, that the cost to the whole country will be extremely high. From the statistics we do not find that rain falls at reaping time every year. If my memory serves me right, it is about 1 in 7. Therefore for six years the dryers will hardly be used, because people will not use them if they have to pay the cost of the dryers. It would be necessary to make provision for interest, sinking fund, depreciation and maintenance during the six years the dryers are not being used. In other words, the cost in one year when the weather is bad will not be worthwhile to carry on this expensive equipment.

The average farmer is not going to give up a free means of drying during these six years, in order to make use of this expensive equipment which will be installed at various points in the country. We have to give very careful consideration to this matter. Whilst it is most desirable that every pound of padi reaped should be brought to perfection, will the cost be worthwhile? Will the other circumstances which I have related indicate a sense of urgency for us to install these machines? I would say no. We want to see every phase of the rice industry so developed that there will be no loss.

We have to deal, first of all, with production and then the question of processing. My hon. Friend the Mover of the Motion said that one of the advantages to be derived from having these moisture-extracting plants all over the country is that they will prevent any let up in milling, and that rice would be produced from the mills at a greater rate than we are producing at the moment. If we were to do that, then we

would upset and completely outbalance another section of the industry. We would have to find a considerable amount of space for storing the rice, and we would place the Rice Marketing Board in a worse position than it has been over the last year and up to this moment. Only this week the Rice Marketing Board made a declaration that it would not be able to receive any more rice in its bonds, because of lack of space.

The Rice Marketing Board is saying that because of good weather conditions the millers have milled at a higher rate than they have milled before, and that the rice delivered to the Board is more than it is able to store at the moment. If we increase the milling of rice, we will find that within a few months we have milled the entire year's crop.

Weevil infestation is one means of destroying the value of our product, and no less a person than Mr. L. D. Cleare, who has been working as a Government Entomologist on the question of weevil infestation, has made it clear that it is better to store our rice crop in the form of padi for a long period than to store it in the form of rice, because the rice grains become infested much faster. Even if the weevils were to infest the padi at the time of milling they would be killed and the resultant loss would be less. It is not a very simple matter; it is not one which can be solved merely by saying that equipment should be installed; that is only one segment of the whole problem of rice production in British Guiana.

We must not forget that rice is a crop that merely gives people a living at a subsistence level. If we increase the cost for the grain as reaped and before it is sold, then automatically the farmer is going to get less for his product. The final return to him will be less than he is getting now. We must expect that when the rain falls; when there is difficulty in

[MR. GAJRAJ]

getting padi dried, the people will be taxed for having their padi dried mechanically. It is human nature for them to grumble. If they did not, we would want to know if they were not breathing.

In agriculture one has to budget for a certain percentage of loss in the same way as in any other form of business. One has to budget for thefts from the business, and for losses one cannot trace. Similarly in agriculture one has to budget for acts of nature. When rain falls for a long time, it is an act of nature; if there is a flood, typhoon or hurricane—all of these things are controlled by the Almighty, and we poor mortals cannot prevent them from happening. We can make efforts, but we cannot altogether get rid of these acts to which we are subjected from time to time. I dare say that they are to remind us that He is there. Perhaps, during the course of our work and relations with one another we seem to forget Him, and something happens to make us realize that He is still there. I would like to—

**Mr. Speaker:** We will have to wait for a quorum.

[At this stage several Members returned to the Chamber.]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed; we have a quorum now.

**Mr. Gairaj:** The hon. Mover of the Motion has said that it is necessary to streamline the industry some more. I dare say that he means dovetailing one aspect into another so that there will be no overlapping. I agree with that, but in an industry like this, which is constantly up and down, it will be necessary to keep things constantly under review in order to keep the machinery moving as smoothly as it should.

There are, of course, two points which the hon. Mover of the Motion made, and which I think I should correct. I admit that the hon. Member did say that he was not sufficiently ac-

quainted with many aspects of the industry, and was relying to a great extent on what has been told to him. He mentioned that the Island of Jamaica buys a larger quantity of white rice than parboiled rice. He also mentioned that in seeking additional markets the tendency might well be that we should produce white rice for such markets.

There is a larger demand the world over for white rice than parboiled rice, but what struck me as being completely uninformed is when the hon. Member said that it is possible that the people in this country may wish to turn to white rice rather than parboiled rice when they find its proper food value.

That is the point which we in British Guiana have been hammering on the rest of our markets for many decades. We have been saying that our parboiled rice contains more food value and is better for the human body than white rice is. We have produced pamphlets to show that by the very process of parboiling the vitamin B1 complex is transferred from the shell of the padi and goes right into the grain itself, because medical authorities have proved that the use of white rice by many of the Eastern nations has contributed to the deficiency disease known as beriberi. I am sure the hon. Member does not wish that the people of British Guiana should find themselves plagued by deficiency disease of that kind.

I wanted to correct that because I would not like a statement like that, coming from the Mover of the Motion, perhaps in his capacity as a member of a particular party which is allied to the West Indies, to find its way to the West Indies—that in the Legislative Council we have said that white rice contains better food value than parboiled rice. Yes, we are selling white rice to Jamaica, and we shall sell it to whoever wants it. If they want white rice and will not buy our parboiled rice in the quantities we wish to sell it, we shall sell them white

rice. That is part of business. In commerce, if people say they want something else we shall produce it so long as we make a profit from it. But what I do say is that in this Council we should not let it go abroad that white rice has more food value than parboiled rice. It is absolutely wrong.

The other point made by the hon. Member out of his ignorance of the subject, was that the bad odour that one gets from rice at the table is due in large measure to the moisture which is allowed to remain in the padi at reaping time. If moisture remains in padi at reaping time a great deal of heat is set up in the padi. The grain itself is decayed to such an extent that when it is milled you do not get a white grain; it is either red or black in colour, and it is not fit for human consumption after that. Such padi is sold for stock feed and not for human consumption.

What causes bad odour in rice is when the padi is soaked in the soaking tanks and the water is used over and over again, and in some cases, because of poor drying weather, the padi is not thrown on the concrete floor and putrefaction sets up to some extent. It is a chemical reaction which causes the bad odour. There is no excuse now for bad odour in rice because a Guianese scientist in the Department of Agriculture a few years ago discovered a means of treating the rice by the introduction of commercial quality glacial acetic acid into the water used for soaking the padi. Fermentation is arrested, and when the padi is finally milled there is no odour. It is only those mills which refuse to spend a few cents to treat the water at that time find that they have some bad rice. That is a fact which is backed up by scientific knowledge which one can get from the millers themselves or from the Rice Marketing Board. So we have to be careful when

advocating things which are desirable, that we do not at the same time make statements which can damage our industry and the future of our second agricultural crop.

There is one point which the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Kendall) made, on which I may comment. He said that one of the reasons, possibly, why the Rice Marketing Board cannot take any more rice is because it has a large quantity of rice on hand which cannot be sold. I am not a member of the Board at the present time, but I do know that it has lost none of its markets. It still has the West Indies markets and an additional market in Jamaica for white rice. Therefore it is not correct to say that it has rice which it cannot sell. What has been claimed by the Manager of the Board is that more rice has been received by the Board during a fixed period of time than has been normal, and as a result of that the storage space is blocked. That is why the Board, in its wisdom, decided to halt receiving rice for a period and to try to make arrangements for rice to be stored in the mills. I think it is the best thing to make use of the best facilities which the industry has been able to provide. Why give up the covered storage in the mill and bring rice to Georgetown to be stored in the open? I think they are right.

The question for us always to bear in mind is that the rice farmer and the rice producer must indeed be very much heartened when he learns of this debate, because he has not to worry any more, as far as I can see, when charges are made that we should not plant so much rice and put so many of our eggs into one basket. In other words, with the expansion of the industry we shall have very much to make conditions better for the rice farmer so that everything will go well for this second largest agricultural industry.

**The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Benn):** There are one or two points I would like to make in order to clear up some misrepresentation or mis-statements which have been made. First of all, I should say that if the Motion had been moved by my absent friend, the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, I would have been able to say that it was moved by somebody who knows everything about the rice industry. The Mover of the Motion is no doubt sincere, but he is deluded, because he really does not know enough about the rice industry. But if he had paid careful attention to the statements by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, and the Minister of Trade and Industry he would have gained quite a lot of knowledge for the first time concerning the rice industry.

It is very encouraging to Members on this side to see that Members of the "Opposition", who have always opposed the Government spending more money in the rice sector, are now making proposals for spending more money in that sector. But as the Minister of Trade and Industry has said, the proposal in the Motion may be laudable but it is impracticable; the Mover may be sincere but deluded. I hope that this new interest in the rice farmers at this important time — near the General Election — will continue even after the next election.

The point I particularly want to refer to is that made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, who said that the Minister of Trade and Industry contradicted me, in that yesterday I suggested in my speech that we should continue to subsidize the rice farmers, and that today the Minister of Trade and Industry has suggested that we should not subsidize them any more. I should not like that statement to go out without a reply, because the hon. Member has suggested that Government does not want to subsidize the rice farmer or

give him any financial assistance. The Minister of Trade and Industry did not contradict me. He said that the proposal in the Motion was impracticable, which does not indicate that there is no desire on the part of the Government not to assist the rice farmer.

For the information of the hon. Member, who perhaps has not read the Estimates which were passed by this Council a few weeks ago, I should point out that Government spends large sums of money in subsidizing the supply of pure line seed padi to rice farmers; that drainage and irrigation is subsidized to the extent of between 20 and 50 per cent, to the benefit of rice farmers; that Government purchased pumps which were supplied to the Rice Producers Association, and that both the R.P.A. and the Rice Marketing Board have purchased pumps to assist the farmers when there is a shortage of water. In addition to this there is the Hire Pool machinery which the farmers use to put their lands into beneficial occupation and to improve their cultivations. The cost of such machinery to the farmers is subsidized by Government. Rice farmers also have the facility of duty-free gasoline for use in machinery for the cultivation of their crops.

In addition to this the rice farmers have been generously assisted by Government over the years through the aided self-help scheme which is conducted by the Ministry of Community Development and Education, for the construction of kokers and dams to protect their rice crops and to provide access to their rice cultivations. There is under consideration a proposal for the building, by aided self-help, of a road to facilitate the farmers on the West Coast, Berbice, to get through to the Abary River, and only a few days ago the Minister of Communications and Works declared open a koker at Caledonia which was built by aided self-help by farmers who had ap-

pealed to Government for assistance to protect their cultivations. I have just said this to clear the air of the suggestion made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, who I think has bowled a bumper to this side of the Council; and I hope I have treated it with the respect it deserves.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I think I should make some contribution to this debate because the subject is one with which I am familiar. My knowledge on it is profound. I think the Motion should state "before all the grains" and not "before the grain" because when the machines go into the fields there is easily 20 per cent. or 25 per cent. of the grains which is not completely matured; whereas 75 per cent. is completely matured. And if the farmer has to wait for the other 25 per cent. to get matured, every grain would practically drop off in the field. Therefore, he is compelled, by circumstances, if he has to reap by machine, to see that there is partial maturity.

What I would have expected the hon. Mover of the Motion or the Government to suggest is that steps should be taken by the rice millers themselves to put into operation some form of dryer because, speaking from a purely practical point of view, it would take a considerable amount of handling to remove a bond and dryer from one place to another for milling purposes. But this is a matter of sufficient importance for the Government to take into consideration, especially since such areas are coming into cultivation and where the mechanical form of reaping is going to be put into operation.

I saw the other day Messrs. Sandbach Parker and Company, Limited, brought about 20 or 40 machines, each capable of reaping 300 or 400 bags of padi a day. An alternative to this artificial drying, of course, would be to subsidize the various areas so that the

farmers can dry their padi on the concrete, which would mean additional labour; but I do not think it is a matter of weather at all. The weather does not play any major part in mechanical cultivation. That is the main theme of the Motion. The weather is usually good. In the month of September there are three inches of rainfall, and in October there are about three inches to four inches of rainfall; and in the second week of November, about 10 inches. We have at least three months of dry weather for the big crop — from the half of August to the half of November. The main problem is not the weather, but more and more there is the inclination to use the mechanical system of reaping; and to reap by machine costs the farmer 1/3 of what it costs to reap by hand. Of course, when you reap by hand every grain—after it is reaped it is allowed to wilt on the ground for a couple of days and then taken to the place of threshing—is dried; consequently, there is no great necessity for drying.

There is merit, as well, in what the hon. Member has said. It will ease the process of milling if there was this system of drying. If all the padi were taken to the mills and kept there, whether the Rice Marketing Board is willing to take it or not, the farmer would easily, without overtime work or without waiting on good weather, be able to mill his padi whenever he chooses, and that would keep the mills constantly rolling, and there would be no question of storage. If the Rice Marketing Board does not want to take the rice, it can be stored at the mills themselves. I feel the measure commends itself to Government, and Government should study ways and means of finding a practical solution. But I, personally, do not agree with the Motion as put—that these various drying stations, as it were, should be set up. If Government subsidizes the millers, the millers can put drying machines in their mills themselves and that would facilitate a considerable amount of stor-

[MR. JAI NARINE SINGH]

age. It is not so much a matter of where production is in the hands of the peasants. Rice production is getting out of the hands of the peasants.

Padi mechanically reaped is caught directly in bags and from the bags to the mill. Within 48 hours or thereabout, the padi that is stored in those bags becomes heated and the grains are destroyed within seven or eight days; so that is a problem which should be looked into. The question of the artificial drying of mechanically reaped padi should be a matter of very great concern to the Government because I understand, quite rightly, the Government wishes to take in that area that is in and around the Abary. That is a vast area of rice land; and if Government does make it available to rice farmers, it would be a matter of necessity that some form of drying facility should be provided for the people.

As I said, I do not think this question of small farmers arises at all. The difficulty arises where he uses a machine for reaping; and I think the Government should work out some system whereby these people can be helped to have their padi dried as soon as it goes to the mills.

**Mr. Jackson:** (replying): Sir, at no point of time in my address on the introduction of this Motion have I made any statement which indicates that I want Government to take over the rice industry. I make this point because the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, asked the question whether, in view of this Motion, it was my intention that Government should take over the industry. Be it far from that, for it is not part of my concept that the Government or the State must own industry in its entirety or at all times. It is part of my concept that where the Government can assist industry, it should do so for the benefit of the industry and of the country as a whole. It is part of my concept that the free enterprise to which he referred,

should also have a hand in the economy of the country; so that it is somewhat unfortunate that he should have construed what I said to mean that Government should take over the industry, or that I intend that that should be the ultimate end of the situation.

I should like to tell him that my interest in this Motion and in the industry does not spring from any of the ideas or concepts he has envisaged. I should like to tell him and other Members—perhaps, the Minister of Natural Resources—that whenever a subsidy is given to any industry by the State, that subsidy is something to which I have made a contribution by reason of the fact that I am part of the community and tax-paying public and, therefore, it is part of my duty and responsibility to endeavour to bring about a fuller use of that which is subsidized. It is rather significant that every Member who spoke on this matter agrees that there is a certain percentage of moisture on the grain which is reaped mechanically. That point has not been challenged by anyone. It is true that different reasons have been given by each Member. For instance, the hon. Member for Georgetown South has been very clear on the point that the peasant farmer cannot suffer as much as the farmer who is reaping his padi by mechanical means. That is in opposition to what has been said by his colleague on his left (Mr. Gajraj).

The rice industry is primarily a peasant industry. Time was when that was the case; when  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre or 2 acres of land were cultivated by almost every farmer in this country. With the introduction of the combine and the policy of increased production the cultivation of rice has turned away from a peasant industry to a large scale industry — a large scale economy has to be patterned. It is now a plantation economy.

Even though you can find people cultivating 15 or 20 acres of rice land,

the time may come when they will have to form themselves into large co-operatives. The system of peasant farming is passed, and we are rapidly passing on to the stage of growing rice on a large scale. We are now introducing the plantation system for our rice industry.

From the outset I admitted that I was no expert in this matter. It is for that reason that I have not taken very much objection to the view expressed by Mr. Gajraj that parboiled rice has a greater food value than white rice. That is a matter of opinion, because many persons in other countries have not yet accepted the view that parboiled rice has a greater food value than white rice. For example, not so long ago Venezuela was short of rice, but they did not buy our parboiled rice. They preferred to buy our padi. They eat white rice instead of parboiled rice. Unless we can produce white rice to meet their requirements we will not be able to sell rice to Venezuela.

In the Phillipines it has been said that you get beriberi from rice manufactured by multi-stage mills, and that a process to re-vitaminize it has to be carried out. We are saying that parboiled rice has a greater food value than white rice, but people in other parts of the world do not accept it. It is still a matter of opinion, but that is not the point of contention in this Motion. I said that Jamaica is buying our white rice, and we should take steps to produce enough white rice to hold this market, or any market which needs white rice.

It is a fact that the Rice Marketing Board has had experience of rice being paid for on its behalf, but when the rice is shipped to Georgetown it turns out to be below the quality for exportation. Is it true that first-grade rice was sold to Gaudeloupe as second-grade rice because of its low quality due to the moisture content of padi which could not be dried off by any means? It is a fact, as far as I have been told.

I understand that the Rice Marketing Board pays \$7.30 per bag of padi. It costs \$3.00 for milling two bags of padi into a bag of rice; 50 cents has to be paid for each empty bag. Add to these the cost of transporting the rice from where it is milled to the Rice Marketing Board in Georgetown. That entails a greater amount of money than if the padi is processed by the Rice Marketing Board. If the rice sent down as first-grade quality has to be sold to Gaudeloupe as second-grade quality, then the industry is suffering a loss of money as well as name.

It has been admitted by the Minister of Trade and Industry and by others that the padi reaped by mechanical means has a very high moisture content. The difference between us on this point is one of application. The Minister of Trade and Industry has indicated in his closing remarks that the Rice Development Company has agreed to the erection of drying facilities to the extent of \$2M for the Mahaicony-Abary Scheme. If his figures are correct, then the cost of erecting one storage and dryer would be about \$300,000. That is what I am asking for in my Motion. I said that one should be established at De Hoop-Vygeval; one at Britannia, West Coast, Berbice; one at Warren, Corentyne, one at Bush Lot, Corentyne, one at No. 64, Corentyne. I also mentioned that it may be necessary to install one at Essequibo.

So far as the Motion is concerned, if five dryers and bonds are put up at a figure of \$300,000 each it would mean a total amount of \$1,500,000. If we include Essequibo the amount will be \$1,800,000, less than the \$2M which the Rice Development Company is now willing to spend on one centre.

I am not saying that this problem is one which does not need a great deal of consideration. It is one which cannot be done without a great deal of planning; it is something which might appear to be very difficult. Are not difficulties

[Mr. JACKSON]

there for men to overcome? Mr. Gajraj says that some of the difficulties are caused by nature, but I am not convinced that these difficulties cannot be overcome.

I accept the view of the Minister of Trade and Industry that it is necessary to have cleaning facilities; that it is better to have the padi free from foreign matter at the time it is reaped than at the time when the rice reaches the Rice Marketing Board. It may be a means of reducing the cost to the Rice Marketing Board. Whatever is done, one can still find foreign matter in rice, which is supposed to be A I quality, sent from the Rice Marketing Board. You will have to consider whether it would not be a better policy to have the foreign matter extracted at the point of production of the raw material than to have it extracted at the time where you are making the finished product when it must be re-milled and re-cleaned.

I do not agree with the Minister of Trade and Industry when he refers to the difficulties as the reason this Motion cannot be accepted. If the R.D.C. is going to spend \$2M in order to establish such facilities at Burma, then why shouldn't the necessary facilities be established at the Corentyne Coast, the Black Bush Polder and so on? One of the co-operatives in the Black Bush Polder has already started reaping padi, and there is no room for storing what has been reaped. Something should be done in this matter, because such a situation should not be allowed to continue.

I am not accusing anybody; I am taking this opportunity to bring to light what ought to be done to assist or im-

prove the rice industry. There is no doubt that with the increased production of padi and rice this industry will be taken to its highest point in the economy of this Colony. In this respect there is no difference of opinion between myself and those who are not prepared to support my Motion. Sir, it is now five o'clock, and I have very much more to say in reply to the remarks made by the various Members.

#### TELEGRAM RECEIVED FROM MR. DAVIS

**Mr. Speaker:** The Clerk of the Legislature has received a telegram from the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. R. E. Davis, asking that his presence this afternoon be excused. I must say in fairness to Mr. Davis that his telegram was handed in at the Mahaicony Post Office at 12.32 p.m., and it has only reached the Georgetown Post Office at 3.56 p.m.—four minutes to four. The telegram was received here after 4.00 p.m. I merely mention this to indicate that Mr. Davis had handed in the telegram in time to reach here before the meeting commenced.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I am sorry about the delay, Sir.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Chief Secretary:** I beg to move that this Council adjourn until next Wednesday at two o'clock.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Council is adjourned until Wednesday, 25th January, 1961, at 2 p.m.

*Council adjourned accordingly, at 5.02 p.m.*