

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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WEDNESDAY, 30TH MARCH, 1951.

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. C. V. Wight, C.B.E., (Western Essequibo).

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

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth, (Nominated).

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

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

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

The Hon. Capt. J. P. Coghlan (Demerara River).

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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. J. Carter (Georgetown South)

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, the 29th of March, 1951, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

BILLS — FIRST READING

The following Bills were read the first time :—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to confer power to raise by loan or loans a sum not exceeding three million pounds and the costs of issue; and for matters connected therewith." (The Financial Secretary and Treasurer).

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the duration of the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, 1900."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Income Tax Ordinance with respect to the imposition and evasion of income tax."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Civil Aviation (Births, Deaths and Missing Persons) Ordinance, 1950." (The Attorney-General).

PROVISION FOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN SERVICES.

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion by the FINANCIAL SECRETARY and TREASURER :—

"That, this Council approves of the Schedule of Provision required during 1951 for Development Plan Services to be met from Surplus Balances and from Advances pending the raising of a Development Loan, which has been laid on the table."

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) was speaking when the Council adjourned yesterday afternoon.

Mr. FERNANDES: I did ask for some information which I take it the hon. the Financial Secretary will give us now. I have a list of the machinery to be purchased, but that is not exactly what I asked for, and I conveyed that to the Financial Secretary. What I wanted to get at was what is the land going to be used for, and whether it is going to be run at a loss, thereby causing recurrent expenditure to the Colony.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I do not think I can do better than quote from the memorandum by the Director of Agriculture summarizing the position, which I think I read when this matter was in Finance Committee, at a meeting when the hon. Member was unfortunately absent. The Director states in this short summary that the reasons for acquiring Lima were fully stated in a previous memorandum. In general it is proposed to develop the whole of the 997 acres in rice cultivation, enabling the existing tenants on the property to have increased areas, and using the remainder for additional tenants from the neighbourhood.

It is proposed that each tenant will be leased 10 acres, a unit area which is now found satisfactory at Anna Regina both in regard to the area of rice he can handle and to the use of mechanised ploughing. The addition of Lima will result in the Anna Regina group of estates being an economic unit from an administrative point of view. The Director went on to state that in addition to funds required for the purchase of Lima, funds will be required for the development of the area of 997 acres, of which only 340 are now planted in rice by tenants. The estimated cost of this work is \$27,000.

In addition it will be necessary to purchase certain mechanical equipment, and the Director recommends that a D.6 bulldozer be purchased at an estimated cost of \$21,600. This equipment will be used for clearing additional lands in the neighbourhood once the work on Lima is included, and it could also be used for bringing Devonshire Castle and Walton Hall into condition if and when these properties are acquired. As hon. Members know, that particular proposition is still under consideration. In addition certain equipment is required to assist the tenants on a commercial hire basis with their ploughing and reaping. This equipment will be used with the equipment now available at Anna Regina, and used over the whole group of estates. The summary of the financial position is the purchase of Lima for \$23,500; cost of reconditioning for rice production, \$27,000; special mechanical equipment—bulldozer, \$21,600; and special ploughing and reaping equipment for hire to tenants, \$69,120, a grand total of \$141,220.

The reasons are really to add an adjoining estate to Anna Regina, thus making it possible for the group of estates to be worked as a more economical unit, and also to afford expansion and additional scope for tenant farmers in that area on a rather more economical basis than at present by providing a larger unit farm of 10 acres. I hope I have explained what the hon. Member wanted.

Mr. FERNANDES: I have got all the information I required and I am very pleased to hear that the addition of this plantation will make Anna Regina an economic proposition. I hope that in the not too distant future we will see the annual deficit in respect of that settlement disappear. That would be a very pleasant feature, but it is just as I thought—that what appears in the Schedule does not present the true picture. That is to say that the \$117,000 includes the purchase of agricultural machinery intended for use at Anna Regina as well as at Pln. Lima, and that is why it naturally looked a bit on the high side to me, and not having had this information before I naturally could not let it

pass without asking for particulars. Now that I have got that information, and despite the fact that it is not strictly speaking under the correct heading, I agree that the money will be well spent, and in view of the assurance that it is going to make the whole outfit — Anna Regina and Lima — an economic unit, I am going to support the spending of this money even though I was not present at the time when it was passed by Finance Committee.

Dr. JAGAN: There is one point I would like to add with reference to the running operations on Pln. Lima. At the present time it is almost exclusively used for the planting of rice. If it is to be run exclusively as a rice estate by Government, as in the case of the Mahaicony|Abary scheme, I would have no objection to that at all, but since most of the rice is being planted by peasant farmers it seems to me that a better policy would be to reserve a certain block for different crops—ground provisions coconuts, and so forth. If a farmer is given 10 acres of land for rice planting alone he would be idle for some time during the year owing to the seasonal nature of rice cultivation. Consequently we find many of the farmers complaining for a long time that they do not have enough land for the growing of ground provisions and the rearing of cattle.

The PRESIDENT: Have they complained to the hon. Member to that effect? Is it a fact?

Dr. JAGAN: Yes, sir.

The PRESIDENT: I am not aware. Is it a fact?

Dr. JAGAN: I took the matter up with the Director of Agriculture some time ago. I do not know whether it was brought to your attention, sir, but it is a valid complaint of the people there. I hope that some attention will be given to the matter.

The PRESIDENT: I think there is something in what the hon. Member has said. I have been to Anna Regina myself two or three times but I am not

aware of any complaint that the farmers have not sufficient land for ground provisions. In fact there were lots of ground provisions being grown, and we have at Anna Regina not only rice cultivation but jute experiments and a livestock station. The Agricultural Department has just set up a citrus experiment on the plantation which we hope very shortly will be able to supply citrus plants for distribution in the area. That is the actual position. I agree that if there is any shortage of ground provisions in the area we should try to make some provision to meet it, but personally I was not aware that there was any shortage. On the contrary I gathered that there was an ample supply of ground provisions in the district.

Dr. JAGAN: I was not really speaking of a shortage in that particular district, but in terms of land being available to persons who are working on the scheme planting rice. I remember that when the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) was Chairman of the Agricultural Advisory Committee this matter was brought up. The whole point is that the people want to have some amount of land under the scheme itself so that they could plant ground provisions and rear cattle.

The PRESIDENT: We will note the point.

PUBLIC WORKS — EXTRAORDINARY
Item 8—Technical Institute—(b)—Erection of 3 quarters for staff, \$21,000.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I desire to make some observations on item 8 (b) on page 5 of the Schedule—Erection of 3 quarters for the staff of the B.G. Technical Institute, \$21,000. This item was not included in the original Schedule.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: To a point of correction. They are not free quarters.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I said "three." As I was saying before I was interrupted unnecessarily by the Financial Secretary, this item was not on the original Schedule. I was not present at the meeting

of Finance Committee and therefore I am not aware whether this item, among others, was moved in then, but I am opposed to it unless an economic rental will be charged for these quarters. It seems to me that during the last two or three years Government has been building quarters for officers at the expense of the taxpayers of this Colony. In other words, the officers have been given additional salaries by way of subsidy by having quarters built for them. I know it is difficult to get officers to come to the Colony unless they are assured of getting houses to rent. I am in favour of houses being provided, but I am against uneconomic rentals being charged for those houses. It is not fair to the taxpayers of the Colony or to the unfortunate citizens who have to rent or build their own houses, to have Government officials being further subsidized in addition to increased salaries and cost of living allowances on those salaries, by providing them with quarters at rentals much below economic rates. I feel that the time has come when all houses rented to Government officials should be rented at economic rates, and the taxpayer should not be called upon to put his hand into his pocket any longer to subsidize the rentals of Government officials.

When the Public Service Salaries and Wages Commission considered this matter and recommended that 10 per cent. or \$50 per month, whichever was less, should be charged Government officials for unfurnished quarters, hon. Members felt then that it would be confined to those officers who had been occupying quarters at that time, but it was never intended that those facilities should be extended on a whole scale, I therefore ask you, sir, to give an undertaking that economic rents will be charged for all houses built or purchased by Government for Government officials, otherwise I should have to oppose this item and ask hon. Members to support me in opposing it.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I formally move that the Council resolve itself into Committee to consider the Schedule.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Council in Committee.

Dr. JAGAN: When the report of the Salaries Commission was considered we gave substantial increases to public officers, and the comment at the time was—and even the Chamber of Commerce took it up—that the rentals which were charged public officers were very low in comparison with what the working class people have to pay for housing accommodation in these days. It was pointed out at that time that the rentals charged public officers were 10 per cent. of their income to a maximum of \$40 per month for an unfurnished house, and for a furnished house 12 per cent. of their income. I believe those are the correct figures. An officer earning \$300 per month, who is charged 10 per cent. of his salary for rent, only pays \$30 per month. It seems to me most unfair to charge an individual drawing \$300 per month only \$30 per month as rent when, in view of the cost of the house, the rent should be between \$40 and \$60 per month. The buildings which have been constructed at the Decanting Centre are very commodious, but when we consider that ordinary working people will be living there we find that indeed a large percentage of their incomes will be paid in rent. I understand that \$18 per month will be charged for each of the apartments.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I rise to a point of order. I am sure this extension of the debate to a question of rental of Government houses is going a bit far. The item under discussion is merely the construction of quarters. I do not suggest that the debate should cease, but we might go too far if we go into the details of rentals of Government houses.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member may be allowed to make his point.

Dr. JAGAN: The point I am making is that if it is the policy of Government to provide houses, whether for the working people or Officers, some yardstick should

be used as to what is a fair rental. Even though the rental charged for the Ruimveldt Decanting Centre may be considered quite reasonable in comparison with what is demanded by private landlords outside, nevertheless in relation to the income of those individuals occupying those buildings we find the rental is anywhere between 25 and 30 per cent. of their income. Those people can hardly afford to pay such a great percentage of their income, whereas an individual who is earning \$300 or \$200 per month can better afford to pay 10 per cent. of his income. But as applied now the highest paid officials are only made to pay 10 per cent. of their income. I feel that Government should first of all determine what it costs to build those buildings. I am not against the policy of building houses for public officers, but I feel that if these buildings are built for public officers due consideration should be given to the cost of those buildings and to the income which those officers are earning. I do not think it is fair to fix a static percentage, but due consideration must be given to some percentage according to the person's earnings, whether it be \$700 per month or \$200 per month, or it be \$11 or \$12 per week by a working class person. I too would like to support the hon. Member. I opposed this matter when it came up in Finance Committee, because I felt that most of the houses which are being built by Government for public officers at a very high cost are being rented at too low a charge. If the Government intends to revise upwards the rental charge for its houses I would agree that these houses be constructed.

The **FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER**: The hon. the Second Nominated Member is fond of correcting Members of this Council. In the course of his remarks he said the Salaries and Wages Commission intended that the scale fixed by them was to apply only to those officers who were then occupants of Government houses. That is not true. Either intended or expressed, the scale fixed and recommended by the Salaries and Wages Commission is 10 per cent. of salary for an unfurnished house, and 12½ per cent. for a furnished house. The

position in regard to housing at present is this: In Georgetown, apart from a specific number of senior Government Officials holding executive posts and a few others, Government houses are not available for public officers. As some Members are aware, the officials for whom houses are provided are the three Official Members of this Council, who are living in houses attached to their offices, and the Judges of the Supreme Court who have houses attached to their post. We now have a Fourth Judge, and it is hoped we shall be able to provide residence for him. The idea in providing houses for these officials is well known. It is considered to be right and proper that these officials occupying positions of some responsibility ought to be free of the embarrassment, if it can be avoided, of renting private houses. For a very long time that has been recognized. These officials, as I said, pay 10 per cent. of their income or a maximum of \$50 per month for an unfurnished house, or 12½ per cent. or a maximum of \$60 per month for a furnished house. At one time it may have been uneconomical. I occupied a house for a long number of years. At one time the rental paid was higher than the market value of the house, but the wheel has turned, and I am now getting the benefit of it. That was the wonderful time, so long past, when a house at all times could be got at a reasonably cheap rental in Georgetown.

Houses may be regarded as institutional houses for the occupation of officers who fill posts attached to Institutions. They are for the Principal of the Technical Institute and two Instructors and, as I explained in Finance Committee when this matter was discussed, it is most desirable that at least three members of the staff should be housed on the premises, and certainly the Principal. That Institute is going to function for long hours every day and practically every night, and at the same time at least two members of the staff will always have to be there for a very long time. We hope that a large number of the Instructors will be local men trained abroad, but the kind of training required of them will take five years. Therefore, for some time a large number of the staff will be people

coming from abroad, and as they are attached to the Institute we ought to provide residence, for them. Apart from that, the other housing is for officials in out-stations, and I can assure hon. Members it is quite right that as far as possible we should provide houses in the districts outside of Georgetown for them. Sometimes it is almost impossible to find housing accommodation for officers transferred to districts, and we find difficulty even now in the town of New Amsterdam although we should not. When officers are transferred to the districts it is quite right that Government should them in, and that these rates should them in and that these rates should apply.

As regards the fact that this item was not in the original schedule circulated in Finance Committee, I think the hon. the Second Nominated Member is aware that the matter was discussed on Wednesday last in Executive Council, and it was decided that this item should be included, and on the following day that was done. The matter was fully discussed at the meeting of Finance Committee, and the record of the meeting which has not yet been circulated to Members reads:

"The item was approved with Dr. Gonsalves, Dr. Jagan and Mr. Debidin asking that their dissent be recorded. I as Chairman stated that the construction of at least one of the three houses would be undertaken by the trainees of the Institute as part of their training."

I hope I have made this point clear. It is very desirable that at least three houses be erected as part of the equipment of this Institute.

Mr. RAATGEVER: The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer was at pains to point out that it is necessary to have houses in the out-stations for officers. I never objected to that. I said it is desirable to have houses for officers, but they must be rented at an economic rental. That is the point I made and still make. To my knowledge houses put up in Berbice are occupied by officials as a rental which is not economic. Further, the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer attempts to correct me as regards the recommenda-

tion of the Salaries and Wages Commission. I did not say anything that was incorrect. The Commissioners felt that on the termination of the appointments of certain officers occupying free quarters the new appointees should not be given the same facility but should pay a rental. Other Members present, I am sure, can get up and support what I say. The whole point is this: I am against officers who were not given these facilities previously receiving them today. I made that perfectly clear. We decided in the Salaries and Wages Commission that officers occupying houses should continue on the basis recommended, but we never intended that new houses were to be built for others on the same basis.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: And that is quite incorrect.

Mr. FERNANDES: I am going to support the hon. the Second Nominated Member in this matter, that housing of this kind should be economical. The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer was at pains to read to us the record of the minutes of Finance Committee. It was very regrettable that a Finance Committee meeting as important as this one, should have been held on the day on which it was held. It is true, Sir, that Members of this Council are being paid \$150 per month to attend these meetings and, therefore, should be there at all of them. But last Thursday was a very difficult day for people who are in commerce, and even more difficult for me.

As the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer is aware, before I applied for leave to proceed to Trinidad as the leader of the Rice Delegation to negotiate prices, I asked that certain important matters should either be taken before I left British Guiana or held back until I returned. I left here on Sunday night and arrived in Trinidad at one o'clock the next morning. I worked continuously until Tuesday evening. The first plane available to bring me back was one leaving Friday morning, and on my return I found that lots of matters on which I would have liked to express my opinion were passed through Finance Committee during those days when I was absent from the Colony. Of course that

will teach me a lesson. It will mean that on future occasions, if I am called upon to go on a delegation of that kind, I would have perforce to refuse to do so as long as there are going to be meetings of this Council or the Finance Committee taking place during my absence from the Colony. At this moment I should have been in Barbados attending the annual meeting of the West Indies Schooner Owners' Association, an organization in which this Colony has some money invested, but because of what happened last week, and because I do not intend missing more of these meetings than is absolutely necessary, I had to send a substitute to attend that meeting so that I could be here yesterday to say what I desired on the Campbellville issue, and also today to say what I think on this matter.

I think the time has come when any expenditure of public funds for matters of this kind should be entirely on an economic basis, and should not cause any further burden to be thrown on the taxpayers of British Guiana. A short while ago we were asked in Finance Committee to vote an increase in the salary scale of the Principal of this Institute in order to retain his service. He is a very fine man, and though I had a little misgivings I voted that increase in the salary scale. Now I find I have to go a little further and subsidize his house. I do not know in what other matter Government may consider in future giving some other subsidy to officials. I am not against Government building houses, but I would like to see the houses Government builds for people who can afford to pay being rented to them on an economic basis.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I consider the remarks of the hon. Member particularly unfair. When he was leaving the Colony he asked me to make quite sure that one particular matter in which he was very interested should not reach the Council until he was able to attend, and that matter was the Income Tax (In Aid of Industries) Bill. That has been done. The meeting of the Finance Committee which was held on Thursday last was the

regular meeting held on the fourth Thursday of every month. Surely the absence of the hon. Member from the Colony should not act as a brake on the holding of the regular meetings of Finance Committee. I would say that had I known he wanted this particular item held over I would have asked permission to hold it over. Nevertheless he is here now and the item is before Council for approval. Why I attack his remarks is, because there may be some slight implication that this matter was rushed in order to get it through in his absence. That is not true. It came on in the ordinary course.

On the question of uneconomic rent I did not deal with that. I do not believe, with building costs so high, it is time with building costs so high it is possible to build houses for Government Officers who are entitled to them and rent them at what may be called an economic rent. That is to say, a rent to cover all charges and expenses and interest on capital. I do not think so. One has to choose between two evils. There are more individuals for whom we should provide some means of housing. That is the policy. We have provided houses for some of the Masters of Queen's College. We have just decided to provide a house for the Mistress of the Bishops' High School. We have provided houses for the Mistress and Deputy Mistress of the Carnegie Trade Centre. By no means — I say so quite definitely — can we expect that at the present time, with the present cost, these houses can be rented at an economic rental. If that is to be so we would have to stop building houses, and then we run the other risk of not being able to attract the officials we would like to get.

In the Report of the Salaries and Wages Commission — I remember it very well because I wrote that report myself — we went to a great deal of trouble to emphasize the necessity for providing houses for public officers, and the hon. the Second Nominated Member has forgotten the paragraph in the report which strongly urged Government to build more houses for public officers. There is a paragraph which points out that one

of the difficulties in attracting and keeping the services of officers was the difficulty of housing, and the Commission, since one of its terms of reference was to advise on how that particular difficulty can be remedied, went to the trouble of recommending a house-building programme for Government Officers, and fixed the scale of rental charges. After the Commission's Report we put up a scheme for building a few houses for public officers but it did not go through because we could not find the necessary funds. Apart from the Salaries and Wages Commission wanting to limit the scope of officers' housing they definitely and strongly urged Government to undertake a building programme. That is the position. We have strayed very far from the point, which is the necessity or otherwise to have three quarters built in connection with our Technical Institute — one for the Principal and two for two of the Instructors. I know that it is very desirable that at least three of these Masters should be resident on the spot. That is the position.

Mr. FERNANDES: Nothing that I have said, I am sure, can convey to anyone that it was my desire, whenever I have to leave British Guiana for any purpose, that the work of this Council should be held up. I never suggested that. What I said was distinct—that I shall not leave British Guiana when I know anything is going to be under discussion in future because I do not want to hold up the work of this Council. I have two schedules in my hands and both start with the same item. Both came from the Clerk of this Council or the Clerk of Finance Committee. The first one starts with a refrigeration plant, and this one was passed by Finance Committee. The other one carries two additional pages. It has an item on one of those pages I am speaking about. I am not being fairly treated — to use the hon. the Financial Secretary's words — when he suggests that I would expect the ordinary business of this Council to be held up if I am absent. I know I am not one-fiftieth as important as all that, but I maintain that except you, Sir., on behalf of Government, or the hon. the Financial Secretary make the statement that these buildings

are going to be rented on an economic basis I will be forced to oppose it, and that is not the whole picture as far as I am concerned.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. Mover of the motion suggested that if we do not build houses in future we would not attract those individuals whom we desire to come into the country. Yesterday we bought Campbellville. I suggest that we have a lot of land there, and if those individuals want they can go to the Building Society and get a loan on the land which would be sold to them, and with the loan from the Society at 6 per cent. they can build their houses there. I do not see any difficulty in that. Therefore I am moving the deletion of the item.

Mr. WIGHT: In Finance Committee I expressed the opinion that there was a division of opinion on this particular item. I am under the impression — I may be wrong — that there was a suggestion that this be put to the Committee which considers the question of priority of housing. It has come with surprise to me when just before Council sat one hon. Member informed me that one of the Instructors of this Institute is practically — if I may say so — redundant in this Colony. He is doing a job that can be performed by several tradesmen in this Colony. That information was to a certain extent disconcerting to me. If that information is correct, probably we would have this officer housed unnecessarily. It may seem that we do not want all these houses. But it also transpires from what the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer has said, that at least two of these houses will be occupied by members of the staff of this Institute, at least for five years. I do not know to whom that house will be allocated. Therefore it seems advisable to send this to that Committee which considers priority of building houses. It may be that at the end of five years these three houses, if not occupied by members of the staff of the Institute, may be occupied by Ministers of State of this Council if the Constitution is changed. In occupying these houses the Ministers of State may

find that to occupy them at an economic rent they will have to get extra emoluments. The hon. Member for Central Demerara may consider that, as he seems to have in his mind that he will be returning to this Council.

A point which is also agitating my mind is the future of a Bill which I have seen with regard to income tax of people occupying these houses. I am wondering now whether taxation for income tax purpose would apply on the rentals, as they do not own the houses, if you are going to use the analogy of owners of houses occupying their houses and charging themselves a rental, because it seems that they will either have to pay on the assessed value in the books of the Georgetown Town Council or on the rental they are actually paying to Government. It seems to me that the assessed value in the books of the Town Council would be automatically higher than the rental which they would be paying. I am pleased that my friend, the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer finds himself in the position of occupying a salubrious house in a salubrious district at such a normal rental. Perhaps in that respect I may appeal to the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara to give us some more of his rhetoric on this City of Georgetown as he did yesterday. Perhaps the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer may find himself sited in what is one of the best spots. It does seem as if the hon. Member feels that the rent should be economical and not subsidized as in most of the cases of Government-owned properties rented to Government Officials.

It may well be that consideration of priority may go to this Committee which would be in a position to say how much a house may be rented for, the period of time allocated, and if it becomes vacant, to whom it may be rented. It may be suggested that as Queen's College is adjacent to the Institute, if these houses become vacant they may be rented to the Masters of Queen's College. We have started on that scheme and it therefore seems to me that it would con-

form to the functions of that particular Committee. I do not know whether they are all officials on it. It is true we have to build houses to accommodate officers who are coming to this Colony. As the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer said, the Fourth Judge is now without a house, and it is not advisable, especially in the case of the Judiciary, for a Judge to be occupying a house owned by any private individual in the Colony.

Mr. LEE: I am going to appeal to hon. Members in this instance, and I would like them to view this matter in this light. I may be wrong. The Technical Institute will be having evening classes and, therefore, the teachers should be resident in the compound so as to be available at all times. The supervision of the students should be under their care at all times. I am not saying that that is the major reason, but at the moment it would give a fillip to the students to have their teachers available to them at all times. The second reason is this. Let us assume that the policy is to send our boys away to qualify, and that when they come back after five years these houses will be made available to them. I admit that the principle enunciated by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, is the correct one, but what else can we do? We want these men for the Technical Institute and they are demanding this accommodation. Are we going to allow this little subsidy to prevent us from getting these men?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would like to confirm what the hon. Member who spoke last has said. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. Wight) seems to be under the impression that these three quarters will be available for allocation by some Committee—or he hopes they will be. I imagine he was referring to the Committee of which I am Chairman, which does allocate, according to certain priorities, such quarters as become available. These three quarters will be attached to the Technical Institute. They are going to be built on the premises, so to speak, and one of the main objects is that the Instructors will be required to live in them and they

will be on duty there. Night classes will be one of the main features of the Technical Institute's programme. Therefore it would not be convenient for these Instructors to live somewhere at Campbellville, as one hon. Member suggested. At least some of them must be on the premises.

I should also like to confirm that when, as we hope, these Instructors from abroad are replaced by local people, for whose training arrangements have been made, the quarters will naturally be occupied by them. The quarters will be attached to the Institute and will be occupied by Instructors whether they come from abroad or are replaced in the not very distant future by local men.

Mr. RAATGEVER: There seems to be some misunderstanding about what I said. I am not against the building of these three quarters for the staff of the Institute. What I am against is the principle of providing them at subsidized rentals. In other words the taxpayers have to meet the current expenditure for houses built for people who will occupy them at uneconomic rents. I say that it is unsatisfactory in view of the very high taxation in the Colony, and in view of the efforts being made to further taxation by this amendment of the Income Tax Ordinance, to which I am opposed tooth and nail. I agree that these quarters should be built, but should be rented at economic rentals so as not to cast any further burden on the already over-taxed taxpayers of this Colony.

Mr. LEE: The hon. Member must remember the principle laid down, that an officer must pay 10 per cent. of his income for an unfurnished house and 12½ per cent. for a furnished house. If we are going to alter that principle in this case we would have to do it in all cases.

The CHAIRMAN: Do away with our Rent Restriction Ordinance! If we are going to talk about economic rents, then people should pay economic rents, but at the present inflated prices they cannot afford to do so.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am puzzled to see this item under "Public Works Extra-

ordinary", because I remember the discussion when the item came up at a meeting of the Education Advisory Committee. In view of the fact that I was in the minority so far as certain views were expressed on that occasion, I feel I am at liberty to express those views again, the matter having been raised here, and one Member having moved that the item be deleted. But for that I might not have spoken on the matter. I expressed the view on the Advisory Committee, that in view of the present financial situation of the Colony we ought to save as much money as possible for important projects. I suggested that Government should avoid any large capital expenditure in building houses by adopting the alternative method of renting houses for its officers, which would involve a very small recurrent expenditure as compared with a capital expenditure of \$91,000 under this head for the erection of quarters for Government officers. This is not the only project. At Queen's College three or more buildings have been erected, and I believe there is a building programme afoot.

I agree with one hon. Member who spoke about the Judges being provided with quarters independently, because there is need to have them free from any obligation to anyone. That is a very important point, but apart from that I do not see why Government should indulge in heavy capital expenditure in building houses for people who come from abroad. There are certain houses which are still available, as I see from advertisements in the Press, and in the case of the Technical Institute I know that some of the members of the staff who are coming are bachelors, and some of them have already secured accommodation at hotels in Georgetown. Having regard to the fact that this sum of money is really coming out of the allocation for Education I am opposed to it. I do not know if I am right in saying it, but I think this item ought not to be under the head "Public Works Extraordinary". If I am right in concluding that it is part of the allocation of \$425,000 for Education I think this is a deliberate attempt to disguise this item.

I object to any sum of money being

spent out of that allocation on the Technical Institute, because it does not supply the real educational needs of our Colony. I do not want to be uncharitable, or to rehash what has been said before, but the Institute has certainly gone far away from the intention of providing pre-vocational training for our youths, and I am certainly opposed to this item on that score. I am asking that this building programme be cancelled, and I think that those who are coming to take up jobs at the Institute should be able to get housing accommodation in the usual way that anyone in the Service has to do. I cannot see much in the point that these three officers, by living near the Institute, will be of any greater assistance, because I am sure they will have certain hours for tuition and, with so many small cars available today, they would be able to go to and from their workplace and give the same tuition and supervision as they would if they were living on the premises. I am in favour of saving \$91,000.

Mr. FERNANDES: While I agree that officers should pay economic rent I cannot see why houses should be provided for the holders of comparatively junior posts when officers like the Director of Public Works and the Deputy Director of Public Works are not provided with houses. We also find the Asst. Medical Superintendent at the Public Hospital, Berbice, the Chief Educational Officer, New Amsterdam, the Assistant District Commissioner, and the Director of Education not provided with houses. This Institute is now coming into existence, yet we find houses being provided for the staff. Why are they being so favoured when we have officers doing important jobs who are not provided with houses? I think there should be some better method of arriving at decisions as to who should be granted priority, and that priority should be given to those who hold more senior and more important posts.

Mr. FARNUM: I take it that these officers are coming to the Technical Institute under contract. I would like to know whether there is provision in their contracts that they should be provided with quarters, and if so, at what rental?

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: Their contracts of service do say that they would be provided with houses at the rates prescribed under the Regulations, which is 10 per cent. of their salaries with a maximum of \$50.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In the absence of quarters such officers are given rent allowances.

Mr. RAATGEVER: May I ask what are the rent allowances given those officers?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am afraid I cannot answer that question off-hand. I understand it is \$480 per annum.

Mr. THOMPSON: May I ask who are the officers exempted from paying rent?

The CHAIRMAN: I think that in certain institutions officers are given free quarters. There are officers attached to institutions who are provided with quarters because they are compelled to live on the compounds. For example, the Medical Officers in charge of the Mahaica Hospital and the Best Sanitorium. There must be doctors on the spot. Hon. Members will find on the Supplementary Estimates provision for the erection of three blocks of flats at the Georgetown Hospital, because we insist on the doctors living within the compound. This Technical Institute is more or less in the same category. We want to have at least two or three officers on the spot, because they will not only work by day but have to conduct evening classes.

This question of rent is part of the conditions of service. You say their salary is so much, but in these days it is not the salary that counts so much. Certain officers have to be provided with quarters for which they are charged rent to the extent of 10 per cent. of their salaries. We must not lose perspective at the present moment in dealing with this question when rents are extremely high. Officers who have their own houses and have had them for years do not feel the pinch so much, but the rent question affects other people. That is the reason for the Rent Restriction Ordinance.

At present we are finding it extremely difficult to get officers whom we need to come to British Guiana. I pointed out the other day that we were seven Masters short at Queen's College. If we put up the rents for the houses at present occupied at Queen's College we would not make the situation easier but harder. I think one has to consider the matter in the light of the officer's salary and his general conditions of service. I agree that he should be asked to pay a reasonable rent, but I would not say that he should pay an economic rent. How are we going to calculate that? As the Financial Secretary has said—and I know because I have seen it done in other Colonies time and again — Government rent is fixed. It is fixed at 10 per cent, and we have had cases of officers being compelled to live in Government houses and pay 10 per cent. of their salaries as rent, although they could rent other houses cheaper. I am told that you had that problem in Georgetown years ago when the rent charged was such that you could not get Government officers to live in Government houses. As the Financial Secretary has said, the wheel has turned, and Government officers are now in an advantageous position, but not more so than other people who benefit from the Rent Restriction Ordinance.

I do not know what the various Government houses cost to build; a good many of them have been up for 20 years or more. If you are going to base the rent on what it cost to build those houses then the officers are probably paying economic rents, but on the high cost of building houses today, if an officer has to pay an economic rent you will find that he would be paying a rent out of all proportion to his salary, and it might well be that it would inflict a hardship on him. It is not easy to assess these things. We must look at it from the officer's conditions of service generally. I know that in the past Government officers have said that they do not want to live in Government houses and we have told them that it is a condition of their service, and that they should pay a certain rent. The matter is not an easy one, and if we were to isolate these three quarters and tell the officers they must

pay an economic rent I do not know how that would work, I do not suppose any Member knows how it would work out. We do not know what these particular quarters are going to cost. As a matter of fact the students themselves are going to build them. It may be that there is a vote for them, but if the students build them we may be able to put them up at less cost. With building costs as high as they are today, if we tell those officers that they are to pay economic rent we may be doing them an injustice.

I suggest that we should not make too much of this matter, and I would remind hon. Members again of the extreme difficulty we have in getting officers. No one wants to get local men more than I do but, as I have said, we are seven Masters short at Queen's College. We want nine Medical Officers, four Mistresses at the Bishops' High School, and the Bishops' High School, and three or three or four Engineers, but we cannot get them, and simply because our terms are not sufficiently attractive. That is the position we are in, and it is a position which is causing me a considerable amount of concern. We talk about development and our irrigation works, and so on, but I am not going to embark upon such works unless I have a really efficient and competent staff, and I could not recommend to this Council that we should embark on these schemes which will cost millions of dollars, unless we really have efficient staff to carry them out. Otherwise we know what would happen. They will muddle and waste money. For want of a little extra money we allow efficient officers to pass us over time and again. That is the position we are in, and I suggest that we should not quibble so much about the actual rent of one or two quarters, and whether it is an economic rent in an inflated market.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I do appreciate what you have said, sir, but with all due respect we have to make a start to cut down this heavy recurrent expenditure which is more than the taxpayers should rightly bear. Only the other day income tax on companies was increased by 5 per cent., which means that the income of the shareholders will be reduced by 5 per

cent. We find Government officers getting increased salaries and cost of living allowances which have to be provided by increased taxation. We must consider the general taxpayers and the poor people in the street who have to carry this heavy burden, and unless we make a start at reducing expenditure increased taxation will never stop.

Mr. WIGHT: Did I understand the hon. the Financial Secretary to say that the contract with these officers states that they will be provided with quarters at a rental not exceeding \$50 per month? Is it proposed to charge them that rental?

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I said that their contract state that they will be provided with quarters at rentals which are prescribed by Regulations, and those Regulations provide that they have to pay 10 per cent. of their salary as rent, to a maximum of \$50.

Mr. WIGHT: Therefore I take it that we can do nothing. We are bound to honour the contracts under which they were brought here.

Capt. COGLAN: Your Excellency has said that it is a question of condition of service, and if these officers have been employed under certain conditions with respect to quarters there is no need for us to go any further into that matter. There is, however, another aspect of the matter to which I would like to draw attention, and it is that while Judges and other senior officers are compelled to pay 10 or 12½ per cent. of their salaries for rent of the houses in which they live, there are certain other Government officers, such as District Commissioners, Social Welfare Officers, and others who have free quarters which, at the time of their employment, were not part of the conditions of their service. I think there should be one definite and final policy—that there should be no such thing as free quarters for certain officers if they are not applicable to all senior officers in the Service. In other words there should be no discrimination for any particular officers to enjoy free quarters, while other senior officers have to pay rent. There-

fore, if the District Commissioners and other officers who are at present enjoying free quarters were made to pay 10 or 12½ per cent. of their salaries as rent I think it would be quite fair.

I know that during the last five or six years the Magistrate's house at Pouderoyen has not been lived in for more than one or two years. I also know that a year or two ago a sum in the vicinity of \$4,000 was spent in reconditioning and reappointing that house, but nobody has lived in it for over two years, except those people who go in through the back door at night, because I sometimes see a candle light from my house. Government also built a house at Pouderoyen for the Asst. District Commissioner, on which green paper roofing was placed over unseasoned lumber, and as the lumber became cured the paper roofing burst. So that during the last two or three years nobody has lived in that house except unauthorised persons who go there at night, because one could see lights moving about at night. I think those houses should be put in proper condition and the officers for whom they were built be made to live in them. I would like to know for what periods have the Magistrate and the Asst. District Commissioner lived in their houses at Pouderoyen during the last six or seven years; how much rent they have paid, and how much money has been spent on the reconditioning of those houses. I could mention other similar cases. It is far more important than the question of an economic rent which we are now talking about. In the cases I have mentioned the houses are provided, but no rent is being paid at all.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Following upon the remark by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. Wight) that there is little room for argument because Government is bound to stick to its agreement with the officers, I observe that some Members of the Executive Council seem to be unaware of the particular terms of employment of members of the staff of the Technical Institute. I feel very strongly about this matter. I feel that we have too long been treated as mere automatons for the purpose of voting funds for expendi-

ture. I have said in Finance Committee—and that is one of the things which induced me to say so at one time—the Committee is a farce. We are there just to receive information and education on that Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the hon. Member to stick to the particular point. If the hon. Member read the Report of the Salaries and Wages Commission he would find that provision is made for quarters to be provided, and that report was approved by this Council. The hon. Member cannot stand up here and say that this Council is not aware and does not know; that it is an automaton, only listening as an aftermath, when the facts have been publicly made known inside this Council in the Salaries and Wages Commission Report which was adopted by this Council.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is very good debate, and I notice Your Excellency is putting forward points which, in some cases, are very telling. In this particular case, as far I remember, there is nothing in that Report which refers to the Technical Institute or the terms of appointment of the staff of that Technical Institute. It is something being established now, and we do not know to what the difficulties apply. The hon. Member for Demerara River has recently raised the point that there are officers in the Service not receiving benefits in accordance with whatever terms there are in that Report, and so the whole thing seems not to be regular and requires to be regularized. I agree with him on that. What I feel is this: I would prefer to know that a person is employed in this Colony at a salary which would induce him to come here. All we know is what is the substantive salary, and when everything is regularized something is put in by some advice, such as payment of a reduced rental.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not payment at a reduced rental. The officer is told when he is appointed that the rental would be 10 per cent. of his income for an unfurnished house or 12½ per cent. for a furnished house, as the case may be, when the post is advertised. Those are the conditions laid down at present. Whether they should be altered or not is

a different question. I think there is a lot to be said for abolishing free quarters. I am against free quarters, except in very exceptional circumstances, such as institutions—the Leper Asylum, the T.B. Sanatorium, etc. It must not be forgotten that in your advertisement you say the salary is so much, and quarters are provided free. If you want to cut out free quarters add to the salary and say the officer will have to pay rent. You say it must be an economic rent, but you have a different rent for other people in the Colony.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do appreciate the fact that if these posts had been advertised with the open condition that a certain percentage of the salary has to be paid as rent, then there is no answer, no argument. But what I have got up to say is that there should be some system by which the whole of the Service should be put on a level basis. It is unsatisfactory, and what I am feeling at this moment in respect of one particular aspect of the expenditure is that large sums of money are being spent year by year, or quarter by quarter, in the purchase of buildings. One was purchased at Bartica, then one at Cove and John, and here, there and everywhere we have certain sums of money being spent for certain officers when, as we are told by the hon. Member for Berbice River, there are dozens of others more entitled to greater priority but nothing is done for them as we have done in the employment of those people. When we see the nature of their employment and the wrong advertisement in that respect, we see that we have created for ourselves the difficulty which we are now facing. I feel that who has been advising the method of employment might have made a different choice. Suppose the Colony is unable to put forward the necessary funds—\$100,000—for erecting these buildings, what would be the position? As soon as you give the condition of payment of rent on a percentage basis, it means that you have to control the erection of that house; you have to build the houses and not leave it to the general landlords of the Colony. That presupposes that Government has to build, and if it is unable to build one sees the difficulty.

I feel that whoever is responsible is wrong in putting that as a condition for employment, and I hope that some other means he found of keeping the general membership of this Council *au fait* with certain objectives which we will have to come up against in the voting of money. We must be specially interested and alarmed that expenditure rises whenever there is increased revenue. That is the reason why we have to be worried, because next year we might be told that as X.Y.Z. have been given quarters the Colony must, from a moral angle, give quarters to A.B.C. That is where we have to continue providing these things to the great disadvantage of the spending powers of the Colony.

Dr. NICHOLSON : I am afraid I find myself at variance with the other Members who have already spoken. As a member of the Advisory Committee on Education I recommended the item. In Finance Committee I also recommended that three houses should be provided for those officers. I am surprised after listening to certain Members around this table, because they know as well as I do how difficult it is to secure personnel in the higher brackets for the several Departments. It is quite a different thing for a man coming here as a stranger to work, to find housing accommodation than for a man who is born here. I have no grudge against a civil servant obtaining a house at what you may call an economic rental, which may be regarded as the little perquisites of the post. How would you like to find yourself in a position like this? A medical officer comes here to work bringing his wife and a child. He takes up quarters in one of our hotels, and at the end of the month he hands over his cheque to the hotel-keeper and gets no change. I do not think you can envy a man in such a position.

I know also of teachers at B.H.S. — ladies coming here and moving from hotel to hotel and boarding house in order to acquire decent accommodation, and having to part with a very handsome portion of their salaries too, to acquire apartments which are really undignified, with unsuitable food and things of that kind. I know of officers

who came here. They liked the country and their jobs very well, but they had to leave because they could not get proper accommodation. I am certain that some of us who have spoken are acquainted with these facts. I say again that I am surprised after listening to the arguments put forward. I am supporting the item.

Mr. RAATGEVER : In view of the fact that it is now disclosed that the Government of this Colony has committed itself without the knowledge of the Executive Council, as a Member of the Executive Council I say that I know absolutely nothing of this contract. I am no party to it, otherwise I would not have spoken here. People have a mistaken idea that everything is discussed in the Executive Council. We are blamed for lots of things that we know nothing about. As Government has committed itself, I withdraw my opposition, but I would like an undertaking from Government that a Committee will be appointed to consider this matter and decide what is to be done in future. As far as the remarks of my good friend, the hon. Member for Georgetown North, are concerned, I do not propose to say anything. I leave him to the voters in his constituency.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I should like to repeat that Members are under a misapprehension when they seem to think that Government has committed itself to building these houses. It is not so. The position is that these people are engaged on contract which as Your Excellency has said, provides that if quarters are provided they are to pay the rental laid down under Government policy. They are entitled to accommodation if accommodation is available and provided they pay at the rate provided for other Government Officers, which is laid down at present at 10 per cent. for an unfurnished house. If quarters are not available they get a house allowance, in lieu, of \$480 a year. I think that is quite clear.

The CHAIRMAN : We have been discussing the matter for an hour and three-quarters !

Mr. PETERS: We have simply been drawing new blood from an old bruise. The whole of this discussion has meant that. The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer will certainly remember that at one of our Finance Committee meetings certain pointed questions were put to him about the magnifying and supplementing of the original idea in respect of a technical school, which took a number of the Members of the Committee by surprise. There is no doubt that when this idea was first projected the general feeling of Members of this Council was that we needed a sort of post-graduate institution to carry on with the higher and, if you care to say, vocational training of our boys and girls leaving our primary schools. That matter was left to be dealt with under the guidance and advice of Major Darlington. But when the worm came out of its chrysalis state we were looking for a butterfly but we got an eagle. That is what has made all the trouble here today.

For instance, if we had thought that our projecting the idea of a Technical Institute as a post-graduate institution to deal with our boys and girls of the primary school meant the setting up of an institution of the proportions and pretensions of another Queen's College we might have given it a second thought, or the matter might have engaged our attention a longer time, so that we might come to a concerted opinion as to what to do. But when the whole matter came back to us, I must confess that I was simply shocked at the turn of events. Eventually we had to commit ourselves to a project which we never envisaged when the whole idea was mooted in the first instance. There is no doubt, that if we are going to project such a colossal scheme, which may indeed be laudable, that was not the idea we had in mind. If we are going to have such an Institute then it is going to call for expenses beyond what we anticipated in the first instance. That is the cause of the whole trouble behind this protracted debate today, and which we are experiencing here from time to time. Ideas are mooted in certain ways and they pass through the crucible, but when they come

back to us they are often ideas which were never intended originally.

It is very significant that simultaneously with this idea of having three houses for the Instructors of the Technical Institute, we have this proposed Bill in respect of Income Tax on private houses. We surprise ourselves by seeking to establish colossal ideas sometimes beyond our dreams, and then when those ideas are put into operation, sometimes with the reluctant assent of a number of Members, we find the result of it is the moving of a Bill, intended to raise taxes in many instances which seem to be very burdensome to our people. If today we have a rather protracted discussion on this matter we have ourselves to blame. It has been said that Government has committed itself already to what has been done. That is usual in respect of matters of this kind, and so far as I am concerned I would not ask that we recede from that position, but certainly what is happening today should be a warning to Government or to whoever may be the person or persons responsible: that is to say, when ideas are mooted, they must be the same when they come out of the chrysalis. Let us have what we thought of in the first instance.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: The hon. Member has changed the whole trend of the discussion now into Government policy with respect to the Technical Institute; but I cannot allow his speech to go without correcting it. He is perfectly correct in his statement that when we first mooted this project we were thinking of a junior technical school, but we waited until we got the advice of an expert, and I think Members agreed that Major Darlington is an expert. Before his arrival we got another expert who came from the C.D. and W. Organization. He put forward a scheme not for a junior school but for a technical college, something like what the hon. Member referred to as another ideal with a higher academic level altogether. Major Darlington projected the proposition for a trade school. I am surprised that any Member did not know what it was all about. Before the foundation-stone was laid we came to this Coun-

cil with a sheaf of memoranda which set out the whole idea. It is true that details were lacking when Major Darlington appeared before Finance Committee, but no one should be guilty of not understanding that what we wanted in this country were trained tradesmen in a variety of trades. I agree that we did not understand, but after everyone had listened to Major Darlington and had read what he had written, we came to the conclusion that he was right. We are going to try at that Institute to turn out, not boys with a trade bias but real tradesmen. I had no idea that we would have a trivial discussion over three houses to house three instructors of the Institute. I am sorry that has come up and I have to speak to let that go on record.

Mr. DEBIDIN: To a point of enquiry! Did I hear the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer say that this is a trivial discussion? I do trust that he will withdraw his statement. This is not a trivial matter.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I said "trivial discussion" because we have spent nearly two hours discussing whether or not we should include \$21,000 as an item for three houses for the Technical Institute. I do not suggest that Members have not the right to discuss it but, Sir, in dealing with this schedule we have spent a very large proportion of our time on this small item. I am not prepared to take that back.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I too take strong objection to the remarks of the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the remarks are unparliamentary, or out of order. The hon. Member is entitled to take strong objection to them.

Mr. KENDALL: This trivial discussion has brought out a very important principle. It is this: I think the time is ripe when Government should review that regulation which gives an officer the right to live in a house by paying 10 per cent. of his salary. I think it should be reviewed, and in view of the present circumstances the prices of things are not

going down but up for everybody. If Government has a building programme then it must be done in a manner that officers who are living in these houses should pay an economic rent. I think that 10 per cent. should be increased to 20 per cent., and that for a furnished house should be doubled also. That is the only way we would be able to assist the programme. I do not know whether Government officers would have to pay under this proposal we have as regards Income Tax on owner-occupiers of houses if they are given free houses. I think we are doing too much for these officers. I hope the regulation will be amended shortly, even before we discuss this Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, so that officers would pay more than 10 per cent. of their salaries as the rental for houses owned by Government and occupied by them.

Mr. DEBIDIN: We are in Committee and I have risen to protest strongly against the remarks made by the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer in the course of this debate. I protest because this is a matter of some importance and involves more than one principle of great importance to this Council and to the Colony. I feel, Sir, that it is remarks like that which lead Members of this Council to suspect strongly that Government is taking advantage of its power to bring forward measures knowing fully well it has the ability to do what it likes. That is a suspicion prevailing, and I think, an effort should be made to remove that. When a senior officer of Government gets up here and says this is a trivial discussion it only shows the way in which we are regarded in this Council. It gives us our right status in the public eye, and the public has the greatest criticisms to offer this Council, if the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer does not know. It is remarks such as these which, to a very great extent, cause unwarranted criticism of this Council. This is something which does not make for goodwill and proper debate in this Council which ought never to be stilled in the matter of the taxing of the people of this Colony.

Mr. RAATGEVER: It is not often I find myself in agreement with the re-

marks made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara, but on this occasion I wholeheartedly support everything he has said. I join with him in condemning the attitude of the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer in insulting Members of this Council by saying that this is a trivial discussion. No matter is trivial that affects the inhabitants and taxpayers of this Colony. We are here, whether Nominated or Elected Members, as representatives of the people of this Colony, and respect must be shown us. I call upon you, Sir, to instruct the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer to withdraw his remarks.

Dr. JAGAN: I think, Sir, the hon. the Colonial Secretary has clarified the whole issue by saying that if free quarters were to be provided they would pay a statutory percentage of their income, but if not then the sum of \$480 per annum is provided in lieu of the house. Since we have not built houses and we have not the quarters available I propose to move the deletion of this Head and ask that Government recompense these individuals by the payment of \$480 per annum to them so that they can find quarters for themselves.

Mr. WIGHT: The hon. the Colonial Secretary could not have said, if there were free quarters the officers have to pay 10 per cent. of their income. If there are free quarters one cannot pay 10 per cent.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like to have it very definite. Is there a slight diversity? Is it that free quarters would be provided or quarters would be provided at a percentage rental which has been advertised for the purpose of the employment of these people? I would like to have a definite answer.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: These people are entitled to accommodation. If they occupy Government quarters then they pay a rental at the rates laid down for Government officers. If on the other hand no quarters are provided then they get \$480 per annum instead.

Capt. COGHLAN: The hon. the Colonial Secretary said they get \$480 per

annum instead. That is \$40 per month. Taking into account that they may not be able to rent quarters for less than \$80 per month, where is the balance to come from if they were told already that they would be provided with free quarters?

The CHAIRMAN: It is either quarters or a house allowance in lieu of quarters.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: There are two circumstances — one is providing accommodation or an allowance in lieu of that. The main consideration of this item is the desirability of having at least three quarters on the premises. I do not want Members to feel that we are already committed because of the contract. The contract does say that if quarters are available so much rent, otherwise this allowance. Therefore, there is an implication that quarters would be provided, but there is no commitment or undertaking on the part of Government to do so. The main objective here, apart from that, is the provision of three quarters at the Institute. That is the point.

Mr. FERNANDES: The whole of this debate seems to hinge on the Report of the Salaries and Wages Commission of which I was a member. I would not like to debate the item without making this point very clear. When the Salaries and Wages Commission recommended these rates they did not for one moment think (I am speaking and I defy the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer to correct me) that all senior jobs in future would be advertised on the condition that houses would be provided on scale of rental when there were no houses existing at the time they made their report. That report was made on the understanding that all Government houses in existence then would carry a more or less uniform rental. I can assure this Council that it was never the intention of the Commission that that system of rental should apply to new buildings, nor did they ever dream that that was going to be the condition which would be held out to people who were coming to British Guiana to take up posts of this kind. If

those were the conditions under which Government entered into contracts to employ those people then we will have to decide on one of two things — either to give them an allowance of \$40 per month or to provide the houses at a rental of \$25 or \$30 per month, or 10 per cent. of their salaries.

In the case of Major Darlington it is going to be higher than that. If Government erected those houses it would collect 10 per cent. of the officers' salaries and, in view of the terms of the contract, would be saving \$40 per month. If Government did not build those houses the amount it would have to pay in allowances would be more than the economic rent of the buildings. In the circumstances I have no option but to support the item of \$21,000 in view of the conditions of employment of the officers, but they are conditions of which I had no knowledge when I spoke for the first time, and I would like to put it on record that it was never my intention, and I feel certain it was not the intention of the majority of the members of the Commission, that that scale of rental should be the basis on which all future appointments should be made.

Your Excellency has referred to the vacancies at B.H.S. As far back as 1947 an Honours graduate with a teacher's diploma applied to the Colonial Office for an appointment of that kind in British Guiana and was told definitely that British Guiana does not need people of that type. I have referred to this matter to show what is happening on the other side and operating against British Guiana getting the necessary staff we need. I have referred to it before, and I have given the names and the occasions. I am going to refer to it again so that Members may know that it is not only the question of providing houses for these people that has prevented us from getting the necessary staff. There are lots of other things which are operating against us. I have not been able to get to the bottom of it but one day I will.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: Since the Report of the Public Service Salaries and Wages Com-

mission is signed by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, may I read this extract from the paragraph in question (13) :

"We are convinced, however, that no solution of this problem will be fully effective unless and until suitable housing accommodation at reasonable rentals in relation to salary is made available more particularly for officers recruited from overseas. It is admitted that conditions in this respect are at present intolerable and we urge that Government should accept the responsibility and take all practicable measures to secure an immediate improvement. We shall refer to the question of rates of rentals for occupation of Government houses later in this report."

Later the Commission recommended certain fixed percentages of salaries as rentals for unfurnished and furnished houses or quarters provided by Government. I am sorry if Members who signed that report did not read the paragraph I have quoted.

Mr. FERNANDES: I took the precaution when the Report of the Commission was being considered by this Council to refer to exactly what happened, and it is on record that I gave the hon. the Financial Secretary full credit for the part he took in writing that report. It is also on record that I said that it was read to us at dictation speed once before I signed it.

Mr. RAATGEVER: The hon. Member is quite correct. It was read to us at dictation speed and we were asked to sign it.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think this is the time to bring that up. Hon. Members should not have signed it. Having signed it they should not come here a year later and raise objections.

Mr. THOMPSON: As a member of the Advisory Committee I am not going to say all that happened at the meeting. Briefly I will say that we found that the expenditure was mounting at such a rate

that something had to be done. The figures regarding the Technical Institute were gone into thoroughly and we decided to limit the cost to \$300,000. The question of the three quarters came up in Finance Committee where I supported it, and I am going to support it here.

The Committee divided on the item and voted :

For Messrs. Morrish, Carter, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Debidin, Farnum, Thompson, Raatgever, Lee, Wight, Dr. Nicholson, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 17.

Against — Dr. Jagan — 1.

Item carried.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — EXTRAORDINARY

Item 17G — Acquisition of and re-conditioning of lands at Leguan Island for housing scheme, \$8,656.

Mr. DEBIDIN: There is one point I would like to raise under this item. I desire to make reference to the general policy which seems to be that suitable lands are being purchased by Government and reconditioned for housing purposes. I take it that in places which are outside urban areas portions of those lands may even be devoted to farming to some extent. To such a policy I would give my hearty support. It is something which is necessary, and as I have said before, Government should purchase suitable lands, lay them out in lots and sell them to people on easy payment terms, as has been done in the case of Campbellville.

I wish to draw attention to a very unhappy situation which has arisen at Vigilance, on the East Coast, where large numbers of people have been living for nearly 80 years and have good holdings, carrying on extensive farming, including cattle rearing. The estate belongs to a Mr. Parker and has been rented to the Enmore Estates, Ltd. The people paid rent to the estate for their holdings and were encouraged to settle and develop their holdings for a long number of years.

Recently the land was sold to an East Indian, and I trust that Government will acquire the land, compulsorily if necessary, in the interests of the people who have settled there. It is an extremely fine settlement, extending from Buxton to Strathspey, and as has been done at Leguan, the land should be purchased by Government and reconditioned for re-sale to the people on easy terms. I feel that a great service would thus be rendered those people in accordance with the policy suggested by this item.

Mr. LEE: I sincerely hope that Government will give this work at Leguan priority. The ranges on the estate are dilapidated and have been condemned by the Health Department, and it is absolutely necessary that the lands be laid out at once so that the people may purchase them from Government.

Schedule approved.

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 of September, 1950.”

Recommendation 29. — *Clearance of all ranges and re-housing of occupants by the end of 1953.*

Mr. DEBIDIN: It will be recalled that I moved that this Recommendation be re-committed.

The CHAIRMAN: Re-committed for a vote to be taken; not for further debate. A vote has been taken on it. If the hon. Member wants a re-vote I would agree, but I would not agree to any further debate on it.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Yes, I remember that, but I am asking you to allow me to speak on the motion for a re-committal.

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am asking you to put my amendment first—that Recom-

mendation 29 be accepted and not Government's action on it.

The CHAIRMAN : If the hon. Member does not agree to Government's action he can vote against it. If the majority of Members vote against it I will put his amendment.

Mr. DEBIDIN : The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) has raised the point that there would be nothing on the record to show—

The CHAIRMAN : If the hon. Member wishes to call for a division he can do so. The hon. Member's amendment can be recorded in the minutes. Does he wish it recorded in the minutes?

Mr. DEBIDIN : Yes, Sir. I move that Recommendation 29 be accepted by this Council and not the action taken by Government as outlined in Your Excellency's Message. I think my amendment should be put first.

The CHAIRMAN : I will put the original motion that Government's action be approved.

The Committee divided and voted :—

For—Messrs. Morrish, Peters, Fernandes, Farnum, Raatgever, Lee, Wight, Dr. Nicholson, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—12.

Against—Dr. Jagan and Mr. Debidin—2.

Motion carried.

Recommendation 33—

33. *A Welfare Officer should be appointed for each estate. (Chapter XVIII, para. 80 — Page 135 of Report).*

The Sugar Producers' Association have accepted this recommendation in respect of each large estate, but were unable to agree to contribute towards the cost of training Welfare Officers. As you are aware, the Finance Committee of Council has now approved provision for training 12 Welfare Officers (whom the sugar estates have agreed to employ) in the United Kingdom at a cost of \$30 000, to be borne

equally by Government and the Labour Welfare Fund. Two candidates have already been selected and have left to attend a Y.M.C.A. course on welfare work in England starting at the beginning of October.

Mr. DEBIDIN : This matter came up in Finance Committee where we had a long discussion on it. A plan was outlined by the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Morrish) for the selection of suitable persons to be trained as Welfare Officers, but up to the present I understand that only two have been selected. I made a strong appeal then, and I renew it now, that women should be selected for training at the Y.W.C.A. in the same way as men are being selected for training at the Y.M.C.A., because I feel that social welfare work is more necessary among the female folk than among the male, and if community centres are built they would be catering more for men than for women. It is necessary that women should be trained in social welfare work so as to be able to teach other women how to conduct themselves, train their children, and provide the necessary sanitary arrangements and improvement of general social conditions. I feel that it is a point which might very easily be overlooked, and that is why I am emphasizing it here. I trust that those who will make the selection will cater very largely for the women folk. I suggested in Finance Committee that the selection should be on a 50-50 basis.

Social welfare work is voluntary work and has to depend a great deal on voluntary assistance in the area. I feel that if a woman is sufficiently trained in the requirements of social welfare work and the needs of a sugar plantation she would be able to secure the necessary assistance from the male element, and I do urge that all trainees be selected early, so that if people have to leave the sugar estates as a result of mechanization they would have the necessary foundation for making themselves good citizens in other areas where they may go.

The CHAIRMAN : I agree with what the hon. Member has said about women and social welfare work, and his point will be given consideration.

The Committee approved of the

action taken in respect of Recommendation 33

Recommendation 34—

34. *All rum-shops upon estates should, by means of the existing licensing regulations, be closed. (Chapter XVIII, para. 38 — Page 136 of Report).*

It is considered that the implementation of this recommendation would merely lead to an increase in the illicit trade of spirits and neither the Sugar Producers' Association nor Government have felt able to accept it.

The question, however, of reducing the hours during which retail spirit shops on sugar estates may remain open is receiving consideration.

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is a matter which has been given further impetus by this Recommendation, and I hope to hear the hon. Member for Demerara—Essequibo (Dr. Singh) speak on it. We have not yet heard him speak on the Report of the Venn Commission. I know that the Commissioner for India in the West Indies has been very alarmed about the rum drinking that takes place on the sugar plantations and throughout the rural districts of this Colony. I know from my own knowledge that it is not only dissipating the health of the people but also a large proportion of their income, and no doubt leads them to strike and appeal for more wages. I feel that the rumshop proprietors may be told to go beyond the courida bush on the seashore and, if possible, be washed away by the sea. They certainly do not deserve to be on the sugar plantations and to be a loadstone. Their very presence is an inducement to the people to indulge in excessive rum drinking.

Mr. WIGHT: I cannot agree with the hon. Member. I think that Government's action on the Recommendation is sound. The hon. Member knows full well of the existence of "bush" rum; he comes up against it perhaps more often than I do. Can we say that because the manufacturer of "bush" rum is prohibited nobody drinks it? We will always have "bush" rum, and whether it is palatable or not people drink it. The mere prohibition of its manufacture is not going

to kill the industry. The mere removal of rumshops from one place to another is not going to prevent a man from drinking rum if he wants to. I personally feel that the closing of rumshops or restricting their hours has no effect on the drinking capacity of the community. The position, as it seems to me and as set out in the Recommendations, is, I think, quite reasonable. I suggest to hon. Members that we have one of the biggest examples in one of the biggest countries of the world — the U.S.A. — where they started prohibition. They drove the use of genuine alcohol to the use of wood alcohol, and what happened? It created blindness and all sorts of physical disabilities. Similarly here, if the people want to drink, rather than making it inaccessible to them it would be better to teach them and give them something else to do. There is no doubt that this policy of creating centres for games, recreation and literary clubs, recreation halls, may enable them to occupy their time in other than sitting around a rum bottle. We have our own department — the Transport and Harbours Department — and are you going to tell me that with all those facilities for the employees there they do not want to drink? I commend to hon. Members and Government this Recommendation of the Venn Commission as one we should accept.

Dr. SINGH: The question of rumshops was very uppermost in our minds when we considered this Recommendation, and we thought that if we removed all rumshops from sugar estates the result would be that the people would buy not bottles but gallons of rum from the shops in the neighbouring villages. We thought as a further step we should adopt limiting the number of hours of opening of the rumshops and schooling the people so as to see what would take place. We were unanimous that rumshops should continue on sugar estates, but the hours of opening should be lessened.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: May I explain that when I moved this motion I said the proposal, which it is intended to put before this Council in the form of a Bill, is that the morning hours of opening of retail rumshops from 6.30 to 10.30 should be cut out except on Wednesdays

and public holidays. This is to apply in all rural areas without exception but not to Georgetown and New Amsterdam. It will therefore not interfere with the hon. Member's need for refreshment.

Mr. WIGHT: I am sorry I was not here. I am afraid I cannot agree to those hours

The CHAIRMAN: They are coming up in a Bill before this Council.

Mr. MORRISH: As the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara said, there is undoubtedly a lot of rum drinking, and no one but the sugar estates would welcome any measure which would check that. But I do fear, as has also been suggested, that should the rumshops on sugar estates be closed entirely rather than be controlled, there would be an immediate increase of indulgence in bush rum drinking. On enquiry from the Police I was told that within five miles of Georgetown during last year at least three bush rum stills were found inside the cane-fields of sugar estates.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Sir I do not agree that it follows, that if you have a rumshop on an estate a fellow who has a few shillings in his pocket or in his house would have greater temptation to spend that money in drinking. If a person is an addict there is no help for him and easy access to a rumshop is what would ruin him, but if he has to travel long distances to get that bottle he would not consider his taste above the effort to go for it. That is the whole point about it. There is this aspect to be considered. The people on sugar plantations because they are illiterate to the extent, I believe, of 80 per cent. at least — I am speaking of Pln. Enmore where I could get only 80 persons registered as voters for the last election — cannot devote their time to reading and profitable things of that sort. There are two things which I find among the youths on the sugar plantations — the tendency to drinking and to immorality. Not only on the sugar estates but in the rural districts where you have a large population, we have to be serious about helping them by changing their psychological outlook, by suggestions and not only by education

of one kind or another and by religious influences but by removing those things which would have an evil effect on them. Just as we remove something that is dangerous from the reach of a young baby, so we have to treat them. That is why I approve of the action that has been taken.

When I first studied this Message of yours I put in the margin this note. "This is certainly begging the question". That is how I regard the action taken by Government. It is begging the question by saying that it would result in the increase of the illicit trade of spirits if rumshops are removed. I do not think that is sufficient argument at all. I may mention in respect of the Indian Commissioner that he has begged a few of us to get together and try and go into these districts and form temperance clubs. Already it has worked very useful in one place up to now. I feel it is a job that I am going to apply myself personally to — starting these temperance clubs in every place in order to give the youths a chance of knowing what is good and to adjust their social set up in the light of drinking and immorality and those things which tend to sap their vitality and exchequer. I feel I can do no more. Just as has been done in the case of wiping out the literacy work in this Colony similarly in this case action such as this taken by Government not to implement this Recommendation of the Venn Commission, which is of a very salutary nature, challenges people like myself to go like apostles or disciples doing what is necessary and good in helping the people, and we challenge the Government by saying we are going to do what Government has not done for them. I am going to take up that challenge where literacy is concerned. I shall try to see what voluntary assistance I can get in that matter, and so will I do in his case. I am going to ask for a division on this. I am moving an amendment "That this Council accepts the recommendation of the Venn Commission and rejects the action taken by Government".

Mr. PETERS: I think that on an issue like this a word from me is very necessary. I have very little patience

with a drunken man. A man who was drunk once came into my chambers with a case and I told him to go out and come back when he is sober. You are never sure what sort of case he has when he comes drunk. I have also had the experience of living in the U.S.A. and pastoring there in the days of prohibition. A very drastic measure it was. It came into being during the First World War. I know that the people who found it difficult to get alcohol on account of the stringency of the law were "cooking" the stuff — as they called it — in their own homes and made what the hon. Member for Western Essequibo spoke of — wood alcohol. I know wood alcohol has sent folk crazy. Those using it for the genuine alcohol stuff were very much upset by it, and in the long run the Federal Government saw the wisdom of an amendment of the law and eventually went back on its original decision and so made the country a "wet" country again and made temperance take care of the situation.

When it comes to rum drinking on the sugar plantations I, too, feel it would have been a fine thing if one could wisely hope for effective and salutary results by removing the rumshops from the sugar plantations, but in the face of two evils, if we should be wise, we should choose the lesser. There is the danger of the folk, having smelt the aroma of the alcohol where it is being distilled in the factory during the day and having the desire to solace their palate at some times if they cannot get it in the vicinity they would most likely go and manufacture it in the bush around. I may say that one of the things by which the bush rum industry thrives is its nearness to the bush. You are not going to get rid of the bush rum industry until you get rid of the bush, where the illicit manufacture of it is done. Whether it is inimical to their health or not, the way they enjoy it they would bring it into the estate. If we have to choose between the two evils. I say, let the rumshops remain and, if we have to bring into vogue any regulations by which we can discourage the use of alcohol or minimize the use of it on the estate, let us do that. I am pretty well certain that if we dare to remove the rumshops from the sugar

plantations it would create a larger evil and the time may come when the children seeing their parents "cooking" it would follow suit. That is what happened in the U.S.A. When the children began to see their parents manufacturing wood alcohol they did so too. I think Government's recommendation is very wise.

Mr. MORRISH: It seems to be the old story. Forbid something and the more people are determined to get it. Some Members who have been here a long time would remember when there was prohibition in the U.S.A. The port of Georgetown was overrun with rum running schooners buying all the rum they could take to the U.S.A.

The action proposed by Government on Recommendation 34 was put, and the Committee divided and voted as follows:—

For — Messrs. Morrish, Peters, Fernandes, Farnum, Thompson, Raatgever, and Wight, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 11;

Against — Mr. Debidin — 1;

Did not vote — Dr. Jagan. — 1.

Government's action approved.

Recommendation 36 Estates should be encouraged to extend the practice of providing plots of land to regular workers for — (1) ground provision, and (2) rice-growing. The latter plots should be of at least one acre in extent, whilst the former, on grounds of health and sanitation, should not be allowed in close proximity to houses. (Chapter XVIII, para. 98 — Page 140 of Report).

Government is in sympathy with this recommendation provided that it can be implemented without prejudice to the need for increasing sugar production up to the target of 230,000 tons.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do not intend to raise a long controversy over this "three day" labour a week and the balance of time devoted to work to implement wages", but there is that to it and I am seeking this opportunity to make a few observations, because as a politician, according to the Commissioner of Labour,

I cannot be engaged in Union activities, but because I am so extremely concerned with the fortunes of these people on the sugar plantations I have to make my observations here. I know, Sir, that when this Recommendation was made it was done with the primary object of bringing down the cost of living as well as allowing these people in some form to implement the wages which they earn on the sugar plantations. It seems to me to be very important that they do have this opportunity, and much as I do agree and will heartily support the movement to attain the target figure for the sugar industry I feel that the sugar industry must not, because of that desire, deprive these people of this particular ambition of theirs in the past. I say it is an ambition because I know how industrious they are with their private farms; they like to know that they own something even if it is a cultivation on lease land. I do hope lands will be made available to them and that the sugar plantations do not put up the case that if these lands are made available it would mean less days of work on the sugar plantations by those who own farms. Sundays are used by these people to work on their farms, and it is a form of recreation for some of these people. I happen to have lived on a sugar plantation and I know how on Sunday mornings they regard going to their farms as picnics. They get their children and neighbours to go with them to their farms and do as much weeding and forking as possible, and they cook on the farms.

I do not know whether the sugar plantations have reduced the area given to the workers to produce their necessary foodstuffs on their farms. I know the hon. Member for Central Demerara has been saying things like that in the past, but I will not give myself the liberty to say that, because I have not examined that aspect of the situation. I know, however, there are considerable lands at the back of the plantations and if those lands are not taken up — I am speaking particularly of the estates on the East Coast Demerara — in cane cultivation, which I would like to see extended to the Conservancy, I would ask that those lands be made suitable for ground provisions cultivation because they are lying

idle. They are swamp lands it is true, but they are lands which can be drained by the sugar plantations, which have their own drainage system, and made suitable for cultivation of one kind or another. This point I am raising is not unreasonable or impractical because, if the sugar plantations are engaged in a form of efficient production which involves mechanization, then it seems to me that a certain quantity of labour would be released. There is no doubt about that and, coupled with the fact that the population is increasing even on the plantation, it seems that some alternative form of absorbing this extra population and labour should be provided.

I do trust that the vast areas of land which can be made suitable and available to workers will be done in the spirit of co-operation which exists between the sugar plantation employers and residents on the estates and that there will be no fear that if these lands are given to them they would give up working on the estate for the sake of their farms, and that the spirit of co-operation will result in not only better living for these people in their getting that necessary extra perquisite but in getting their own houses. Even if it does not balance the budget of the house, it is something extra and he should have it to buy clothing or something extra. I feel this spirit of co-operation will result in mutual benefit to employers and employees on the sugar plantations. I say that because I have a suspicion that the giving of land to the people will be curtailed on the excuse that the land available in the past is going to be taken up for the planting of cane and there is no more land available to give them. I would ask that the idle lands be made suitable and available. The little cost involved can be recouped by a certain charge being made for rental. I know that has always been very small on the sugar plantations, but some special charge may be made to recoup the cost of drainage of the area aback. I make this appeal in the hope that it will reach the Sugar Producers' Association and the sugar employers in general.

Dr. JAGAN: I, too, would like to support the hon. Member in his request

that Government should do something to see that all the lands which are controlled by the Sugar Producers' Association are properly used both for the good of themselves and the good of the inhabitants of this country. The figures, which were given in reply to my questions some time ago in this Legislative Council, reveal that the sugar estates own approximately 89,000 acres of land whereas about 90,000 acres are leased from Government. The Venn Commission Report has revealed that the sugar estates were only growing canes at one time on 60,000 acres with about 20,000 acres under flood fallow. In any one year the aggregate holding was 80,000 acres which is equivalent to their freehold share of all the lands controlled by them. But what is being done with the 90,000 acres leased from Government? When we examine these things we see how much land is being kept idle at the present time.

So far as ground provisions and rice lands are concerned, in 1943 only approximately 11,500 acres were under rice and in 1947 that was reduced to approximately 9,500 acres. Under ground provisions there was a total of approximately 3,500 acres in 1943, which was reduced in 1947 to approximately 2,500 acres. If we take the 1947 figures we would find about 12,000 acres of land under rice and ground provisions. We know also that the estates keep some cattle and allow cattle to be agisted by the workers. In 1947 only 12,000 head of cattle approximately were agisted on sugar estates. So, therefore, from these figures alone it can be shown or it is revealed that there are large holdings which today for one reason or another are not being utilized either for cane, rice and ground provisions cultivation or for agisting cattle. Sir, I submitted a memorandum to the Venn Commission and with your permission I would like to read one relevant section dealing with this. After an examination of my own constituency revealed certain figures I went to the Lands and Mines Department and got the returns made by the sugar estates of their land holdings. I quote from my memorandum:

"Acreage Tax Returns for the first six months of 1948 indicate that for Le

Ressouvenir Estates, comprising a total area of 8,667.1 acres 2,395.26 acres or approximately 28 per cent. were returned as waste land, dams and trenches. Much of this area can be utilised if made available to the workers residing in the estates and adjoining villages. Ogle Estates, Ltd., consisting of 6,500 acres, have 2,132 acres or approximately 33 per cent. returned as grazing."

These figures are only for two estates, but the same picture can be presented for most estates in this country. Lots of the lands held by the estates are lying idle, and some of us have the suspicion after we have studied the reports, and Government Reports too, that this is a deliberate policy to keep the people from becoming too independent. We do know that in 1947 a Government Committee headed by Mr. King reported:

"The reason why available work is not fully taken up is because resident workers find it more profitable to work on their own rice fields and farms, and some non-residents have left working on the fields on the estates for more profitable occupation."

Perhaps, that is the reason why this acreage allocated in 1943 for the cultivation of rice and ground provisions was reduced in 1947. Is it fair, if the workers find it more profitable to work on their farms and rice fields, to withhold the lands from them? I am speaking in the sense of justice not only to the workers but to the economy of the country. It is true that we have a target of 230,000 tons of sugar, but at the same time we must look at the total picture and see to the interest of the Colony as a whole. Sugar will not always be in the fortunate position it is today. We have heard and read of the British Government's negotiation with the Cuban Government in so far as sugar is concerned. We do not know what will come out of that. We do not know what will be the picture five years from now in respect of sugar and, I feel, it is a dangerous policy to put all our eggs in one basket; and the quicker we get down to a diversified economy and give the people land so that they can produce what is profitable to them and in the best interest of the Colony the better it will be for us. That is not being done at the present time, and that is why I feel the Security of Land

Tenure Ordinance where the rice farmers are concerned should apply also to the sugar estates. It is said that the sugar estates want to meet their quota. That can be done without taking away any lands from the rice farmers who are workers on the estates. The sugar estates have a large acreage at the present time not being used, and also we know that the sugar estates at all times are trying not only to extend their cultivation, not only to have an extensive production of canes, but to have an intensive production, and that is to produce from each acre more canes. They are doing that every day either by research or mechanization. Therefore all this extra land which is being held by them can easily be given to the rice farmers or workers on the estates who want to plant rice or ground provisions or set up a dairy farm industry.

I do not think it is enough to give these people merely one acre of rice lands and possibly a half or quarter acre of ground provisions lands. That may be quite good merely to keep them from being disgruntled as the result of not getting enough work or employment on the estates and from being desirous of getting away from the estates. I do not think it is a sound policy and should not be pursued further. I have said with reference to housing that it is a dangerous policy especially in respect of the "extra nuclear" workers to tie them around the estates.

Mr. WIGHT: I see in the Venn Commission Report that they have made their recommendation apparently on the basis of 40 per cent. Income Tax. However, on this particular point I would have expected the hon. Member for one brief moment to suggest the nationalization of this industry and the taking away of these lands and handing them over free, gratis and for nothing to the labourers and others on the sugar estates. As he has not done that, perhaps, we need not discuss that. What I would like to point out to the hon. Member and hon. Members generally in this Council is, we talk glibly of the interest of the worker, and yet those very persons who talk so glibly about the economy of the country

and the interest of the workers are those who are inciting these workers, who are creating disturbances and who are disturbing the economy of the Colony by calling upon the people to strike and stop production and so interfere with the economy of the Colony and the interests of the people of the Colony. The sooner the people and the masses of this Colony realize that those who cause them to strike and stop production in one of the main industries of the Colony are not friends but enemies to themselves, to them and to the country which gave them birth, the better it would be for all concerned. If we are considering the economy of our country we should be inducing the people to work and to achieve the target which, the hon. Member suggests, must be achieved. When we get these strikes, who suffers but the poor unfortunate labourer? When he is out on strike for weeks he earns nothing. Who gives him money, who supports him in the interim, not these agitators, not these inciters, not those who pretend they are working in the interest of the Colony? Do they take their money out of their own pockets, even money which may be sent to them, even money which they may be obtaining from outside the Colony or inside the Colony, and distribute it among those people and say to them "You have not earned anything and those earnings you have lost I am replacing out of my own pocket or a fund which has been sent to me to relieve you in these circumstances when you are not working"? No, Sir, they do not.

They take the sugar industry, one of our main industries, and pillory it, and yet they tell the people "You are going to achieve the production target because the persons concerned are just bleeding you and making you economic slaves". Is there not more economic slavery in the rice industry which is run by whom? Do we have strikes on the other estates? All we hear about is the sugar estates, and that is because they are at the moment one of the main pillars of the economic structure of this Colony. What do we see taking place? We see parades, demonstrations amounting to masquerading in the rural areas, calling upon the people not to benefit their economic con-

dition, not to work in their own interest, but to hamper every effort that is made to benefit their own welfare. It seems to me that the sooner action, and strong action, is taken to the approach by some of these elements in the community this Colony has a very dim future. Hon. Members of this Council will remember only recently that we sent a deputation away in joining with the other Colonies in asking His Majesty's Government to put these Colonies in the same position as the Dominions, to assist the sugar industry and to see that the people are given full employment. Yet we have elements here, these masquerades — I can use much stronger language but I will not; I hope to have an opportunity of using much stronger language in the hustings in regard to these elements existing in our community — agitating against every step that is made to increase the wages of the people. The sooner the people of this Colony realize who their friends are and who their enemies are and that it is much preferable, whether the Government of the United Kingdom is Labour or Liberal, or Socialist or Conservative or anything at all, to be under that Flag as they are better off than under the Flag of a foreign nation, and the sooner they realize their welfare is much better off under that Flag, the better it will be for them.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. Member seems to have digressed from the issue and to initiate a general discussion on strike leaders. While he is harping on the people who protect the workers, he seems to protect the shareholders and the people who make profits on the sugar estates. As a shareholder of Schoon Ord estates he knows that in 1949 they made \$34,500 in profits

Mr. WIGHT: May I rise to a point of order? The hon. Member has been gyrating into my financial position in regard to Versailles and Schoon Ord shares. I would like to tell him the number is about five and I do not remember receiving \$10 in interest. They had to be reorganized and the shareholders entered into another company, and they have not paid dividends for two years because of some of the activities of the hon. Member.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. Member is making a statement here that is not true. He says the company has not made any profits. I would like to show the statement of this gentleman, who is supposed to be Deputy President of this Council, is wrong and erroneous. He is trying to mislead the people when he says the company has not paid dividends for a long time. The 1949 accounts show not only that profits of \$34,500 were made but the Directors recommended a dividend of 6 per cent. free of tax and the transfer of \$10,000 from Profit and Loss Account to the General Fund. The dividend has been declared and it is there awaiting the hon. Member.

Mr. WIGHT: As I have pointed out, the company has only been paying within the last three years since the reorganization. For years none of the local shareholders was paid a dividend but suffered loss. The company had to amalgamate and reorganize before it could be made to pay

Mr. MORRISH: A lot of statements had been made regarding the amount of land held and occupied by the sugar estates. We are dealing with the Report of the Venn Commission. Certain figures quoted refer to some replies to questions in this Council — I have a copy of these replies before me — and I am quite convinced and satisfied that the figures are entirely wrong. For example, one of the estates owned by my own company is shown here to have 565 acres freehold and 525 acres under lease.

This statement is quite wrong and, therefore, I assume there are many

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member refers to Government replies as being incorrect.

Mr. MORRISH: Yes, Sir. It is incorrect to the extent of over 450 acres. This estate only holds about 26 acres under lease. I suggest that it is quite possible that there may be similar errors in the others.

If you refer to page 172 of the Venn Commission Report and add up the acre-

age of the Sugar Estates of the Colony given there it will be seen that the total is 149,445 acres as against the total of 171,078 shown by Government — a difference of some 22,633 acres. It is obviously clear that there is a big error. I would point out that the figures given on page 172 of the Venn Commission Report are those registered in the Lands and Mines Department. There is another very important point that people have forgotten, but those of us who have lived here many years know only too well that the original boundaries and a very large portion of the first depth of the freehold parts of the estates are somewhere in the sea and, therefore, the acreages given as existing today are hopelessly wrong. Furthermore, a lot has been said of sugar estates holding a great deal of land. If Members would look at this map which is attached to the Report and which represents half of the coastland of British Guiana, they will see dotted here and there a few patches which represent the very small portion of the coastland of this Colony occupied by the sugar estates. As I say, this map represents half of the coastland of this Colony, and the area occupied by sugar estates (shown in

blue) appears ridiculously small. Why is there this anxiety to take away lands from the sugar estates when there are huge blank areas asking to be developed? I need not go very much further with that.

Reference has been made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara, who was appealing that it be brought to the attention of the proper interests, that we should do all we can to assist the growing of ground provisions and of rice. I think the hon. Member need have no fear on that score. There is no intention on the part of the sugar industry to take away all these lands from the people. But I will point out to him that last year 1,359 acres of land available for rice and ground provisions cultivation were not taken up.

Question "That the action proposed in the Governor's Message on Recommendation 36 be approved" put, and agreed to.

The Council resumed and adjourned to Wednesday, 4th April, 1951, at 2 p.m.