

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 4TH JULY, 1951.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. John Gutch, O.B.E., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT

The President, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. John Gutch, O.B.E.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson, O.B.E., (Acting).

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

The Hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (Acting).

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. V. Roth, O.B.E., (Nominated).

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

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. A. T. Peters (Western Berbice).

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj (Nominated).

The Hon. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E., (Nominated).

The Hon. D. C. J. Bobb (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E., took the Oath of Allegiance and his seat as a Nominated Member.

The PRESIDENT: I feel sure that hon. Members wish to join with me in welcoming Mr. Macnie to this Council. (Applause).

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 29th of June, 1951, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT**REVISED ALLOWANCES TO NON-PENSIONABLE EMPLOYEES.**

The COLONIAL SECRETARY communicated the following Message:

MESSAGE NO. 11.

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

Reference is invited to Legislative Council Resolution No. XXV of the 21st August, 1940, authorizing payment of superannuation allowances and gratuities to non-pensionable employees,

2. It is now desired to amend the conditions governing the grant of these allowances for the benefit of such employees.

3. For ease of reference, the conditions approved by Resolution No. XXV of 21st August, 1940, as amended, are furnished below together with new conditions which it is proposed should supersede them.

4. It is not possible to state definitely what the new proposals will cost, but it is estimated that they will involve additional expenditure of approximately \$5,000 per annum.

Provisions now in force

Proposed revised provisions

A— (i) Annual allowances will be granted to employees who have served satisfactorily in approved appointments for 20 years or over.

No change.

(ii) The rate of allowance will be two-thirds of the normal pension payable under the Pensions Ordinance, 1933.

No change.

(iii) Approved appointments are those declared by the Governor in Council as such.

No change.

B — An employee holding an approved appointment who serves for seven continuous years or more, but less than 20 years, will be eligible for a gratuity calculated at the rate of 1/18th of a month's pay for each month of service, with a maximum of one year's pay.

An employee who has been employed for seven continuous years or more, who retires from an approved appointment after having served for less than 20 years in an approved appointment, will be eligible for a gratuity calculated at the rate of 1/18th of a month's pay for each month of service, with a maximum of one year's pay.

C— (i) An employee not holding an approved appointment who has served for at least 7 continuous years will be eligible for a gratuity calculated at the rate of 1/26th of a year's pay for each year of service, with a maximum of one year's pay.

No change.

(ii) In the case of employees paid at daily, weekly, or fortnightly rates, the number of working days in any calendar year to constitute a year's service will be taken as 225 days, including public holidays and days on paid leave or sick leave, but not Sundays; the following rules to apply as regards broken service:—

In the case of employees paid at daily, weekly, or fortnightly rates, the number of working days in any calendar year to constitute one year's service will be taken as 225 days including public holidays and days on paid leave or sick leave but not Sundays. Provided that where an employee's service is less than 225 days in each of any two consecutive calendar years, such service shall constitute one year's service if aggregating 225 days or more; and when there is no official record of any part of an employee's service, the Colonial Secretary may, on being satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt that such service was given, approve of such service being admitted for the purposes of gratuity.

The following rules shall apply as regards broken service—

Provisions now in force

Account shall not be taken of—

- (a) any service previous to an interval of three years, or more in which there was no service; i.e., service prior to a break of three years or more during which there was no service whatever, shall be excluded in computing the gratuity payable;
- (b) any service previous to an interval of three or more consecutive calendar years in which there was no service of which account is to be taken; i.e., service prior to a break of three or more years, during each year of each break there has been service of less than 225 days, including public holidays and days on paid leave or sick leave, but not Sundays (hereinafter referred to as non-effective years), shall be excluded in computing the gratuity payable;
- (c) any service previous to the last of seven calendar years in all in which there was no service of which account is to be taken; i.e. an aggregate of seven non-effective years shall be a bar to the inclusion of any year of service prior to the earliest of the non-effective years making up such aggregate;
- (d) any service previous to the end of any period of service which was terminated by resignation, or dismissal for misconduct; i.e. any previous service terminated by resignation or dismissal for misconduct shall be excluded in computing the gratuity payable.

D An allowance or gratuity will be paid only in respect of service after the age of 20 years and, on retirement on account of ill-health, incapacity, on attaining age 60 years or on voluntary retirement at age 55 years or inefficiency or abolition of post.

E The dependents of an employee who dies in service after qualifying for an allowance or gratuity will be eligible for a gratuity equivalent to that which would have been payable to the employee in respect of his service up to the date of his death; provided

Proposed revised provisions

Account shall not be taken of—

- (a) any service (under 55 years of age) previous to an interval of three years or more in which there was no service whatever, shall be excluded in computing the gratuity payable, unless an employee subsequently serves for a period of three consecutive years prior to retirement;
- (b) any service previous to the end of any period of service which was terminated by resignation or dismissal for misconduct.

Deleted

Deleted.

An allowance or gratuity will be paid only in respect of service after the age of 20 years and, on retirement on account of ill-health, incapacity, inefficiency, or voluntary retirement on or after the age of 55 years, or on abolition of post.

The dependents or Legal Personal Representative of the Estate of an employee who dies in service after qualifying for (a) an allowance, or (b) a gratuity, will be eligible, in respect of (a), for a gratuity equivalent to one year's pay; and in respect of (b), for a gratuity equal to the amount which would

Provisions now in force

that such gratuity shall not in any case exceed one year's pay of the deceased.

G — Payment of superannuation benefits to part-time employees of Government to be on the same scale for non-pensionable Government employees.

5. Honourable Members are now invited to approve of the adoption of the new proposals set out above for the payment of superannuation allowances and gratuities to non-pensionable employees of Government.

Government House,
British Guiana,
20th June, 1951.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS
AND DOCUMENTS

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY
AND TREASURER laid on the table
the following:—

The Minutes of the meeting of Finance Committee of the Legislative Council held on Thursday, the 28th of June, 1951.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

REVISED ALLOWANCES TO NON-
PENSIONABLE EMPLOYEES.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY
AND TREASURER gave notice of
the following motion:—

That, with reference to the Officer Administering the Government's Message No. 11 of the 30th of June, this Council approves of the payment, from and after the date hereof, to non-pensionable Government employees, of allowances and gratuities at the rates and on the conditions set out in the Officer Administering the Government's Message, and undertakes to provide the necessary funds for this purpose.

Proposed revised provisions.

have been payable to the employee in respect of his service up to the date of his death, provided that such gratuity shall not in any case exceed one year's pay of the deceased.

At the discretion of the Governor in Council, payment may be made to non-pensionable employees whose services are terminated on the ground of inefficiency, of allowances or gratuities, subject to such reduction as the Governor in Council may consider just and proper in any particular case.

Part-time employees (other than Postal Agents) shall be eligible for superannuation benefits under the Resolution on the same basis as whole-time employees.

JOHN GUTCH,

Officer Administering the Government.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

RICE FOR INDIA FAMINE RELIEF

Mr. FARNUM gave notice of the following motion:—

Whereas a famine exists in the State of Bihar, India, causing much suffering;

And Whereas a large section of the population of British Guiana has family ties in that District;

And Whereas the local Indian population comprises forty per cent. of our population:

And Whereas a Relief Fund has been organised to make a gift of 5,000 bags of rice to the Government of India;

Be it Resolved that this Honourable Council, out of sympathy to the particular state of Bihar, donates at least 500 bags of rice to the Relief Fund which has been organised to aid the sufferers.

PETITION

Mr. ROTH, on behalf of Mr. Wight presented a petition on behalf of Frederick Alexander Millard, an ex-employee of the Public Works Department.

ASSISTANCE FOR FARQUHARSON
EXHIBITIONER

Mr. FERNANDES: Sir, before we proceed to the Order of the Day I crave your indulgence to refer to a very simple motion of which I gave notice on June 15, and to ask leave to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order in order to move the motion at a convenient stage today. My reason for doing so is that if the motion is not dealt with before the Council goes into recess the whole idea behind it would fail, because it is a motion asking for some monetary assistance for a student at the Bishops' High School who has been awarded a Farquharson Memorial Exhibition at the University College of the West Indies, which has to be taken up before the end of August.

FLOODING OF CANALS POLDER

Mr. FARNUM: Sir, I crave your indulgence to refer to a matter which I consider of grave importance. I refer to the flooding of the Canals Polder. My information is that the lands are again flooded, and that farmers are losing their crops of ground provisions. They claim that, despite the advice of the Consulting Engineer to Government to the contrary, they will never be able to get relief unless the canals are re-dug. They point out that the conservancy dam over which the water flows at certain times is not being overflowed at the present time, but in spite of that the land is inundated, clearly pointing to the fact that the canals require re-digging. I think you will admit, Sir that it is a very sad position for those poor people. This trouble has been going on year after year, and I would be glad if you would look into the matter. I

know that the matter has been brought to your attention already but I hope you will give some further attention to it.

The PRESIDENT: I am well aware of the matter to which the hon. Member has referred. It has been under debate for many years—I think about 13 years.

ORDER OF THE DAY

DECONTROL OF PRICE OF CRUDE OIL
AND COCONUTS.

Council resumed the debate on the following motion by Mr. DEBIDIN:—

Whereas there is an acute shortage of cooking oil in the Colony which will be intensified by the rainy weather;

And Whereas coconut producers will be able to do more intensive picking of nuts and over 200 crude oil manufacturers can manufacture at least 50,000 gallons of crude oil per week, if a more attractive price is paid for the nuts to the producers;

And Whereas this can be achieved if both the price of crude oil and of coconuts be decontrolled for a short period until the situation is improved;

Be it resolved that this Council recommend to Government the immediate decontrol of the price of crude oil and of the price of coconuts for a short period in the discretion of the Government.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER (Mr. W. O. Fraser, Acting): Sir, the motion which has been moved by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) asks for the decontrol of coconuts and crude coconut oil, which is contrary to the report made by the Sub-Committee of the Food Production Committee. I would like to explain that the coconut industry of the Colony is at the moment passing through the transitional period in its development. It is passing from the old to the new, and with the pressure of world shortages of edible oils and fats, together with the advent to the Colony of greater mining facilities, it is suffering the pangs almost of re-birth.

The Sub-Committee to which I have referred found that the set-up in the coconut industry left much to be desired, and that to establish it on a proper basis it is necessary that there should be a more complete utilization of the products of the industry and the elimination of waste. It must be explained that there are two processes of making oil in this Colony. One is from coconuts and the other is from copra. The oil made from coconuts is obtained by means of boiling, whereas the oil manufactured from copra is secured by special expelling machinery. In regard to the two processes I should like to read an extract from the report of the Sub-Committee relating to the evidence given by the Chemist of the Department of Agriculture. The report states:

"Mr. Paul, Chemist of the Department of Agriculture, gave evidence on the manufacture of this oil. From him the Committee learnt that the process of extracting oil from the coconut leaves much to be desired, that technically its methods are primitive and that a yield of only 60% oil is obtained, compared with a yield by copra mills of 88%."

Going further into the matter the Committee found that the crude oil makers made little profit from oil making, and that their profits were derived from pigs which they fed on the residuary feed after boiling and prassing. On the evidence of the percentages of extraction I should like to quote some statistics prepared by the Controller of Supplies and Prices. According to those statistics 98 per cent. of the Colony's coconut production went into the hands of the crude oil makers. The figures show that in 1950 they manufactured 470,000 gallons of crude oil. On the basis of the percentages of extraction it will be seen that the Colony lost nearly 225,000 gallons of oil which did not go on the market. To remedy that situation the Committee's plan is to endeavour to get the total coconut production of the Colony converted first into copra. That production amounts to 50 million nuts. The evidence given on the subject before the Sub-Committee was to the effect

that if this were done the Colony would be able to produce a sufficient quantity of oil to meet its edible oil requirements as well as the requirements of the soap industry. In addition there would be a surplus of animal food in the form of copra meal. It was estimated that on the basis of food available it would be possible to establish a sizeable pig industry with export possibilities in hams, bacon, and other pig products, but the Sub-Committee found that standing in the way of this desirable development was the crude oil maker who, by his obsolete methods, was feeding a large quantity of oil to pigs which did the pigs no good.

The Sub-Committee's proposal is that the crude oil maker should be eliminated from the coconut industry. In this regard I should explain that the crude oil maker is a small man who stands with one foot in the coconut industry and the other in the pig industry, and that the purpose of the recommendation of the Sub-Committee is that he should be discouraged from making oil on account of his inefficiency, and set up in the pig industry to grow pigs on a better system of management, and thus be able to make a much better livelihood than he is now making.

I do not find in the motion anything new. These shortages in edible oil have been occurring for some time, and will continue to occur so long as the present set-up lasts. A curious thing about the motion is that the hon. Member is asking this Council to do something which would in effect accentuate rather than lessen the shortage of edible oil. It would also have the effect of putting up the cost of living, and it does seem to me, in the circumstances, that the motion must fail through its own lack of substance.

Mr. ROTH: In view of the very lucid explanation by the acting Financial Secretary I do not think any reasonable Member can see his way to support this motion. I will take this opportunity to bring to Government's notice the necessity of seeing that the drums in which coconuts are sold are

not cut down, as I am reliably informed is the case by a very large buyer.

Mr. WIGHT: It would seem that this motion might very well have been debated as part of another motion listed on the Order Paper. It seems to me very premature at this stage to treat one aspect of control or decontrol entirely separate from the general question of control. If we are to have a debate on control and decontrol it seems to me that it would be much better to have it set out in one context. The motion in my name on the Order Paper is one for decontrol, and naturally the hon. Member's motion should have my sympathy, but in matters of this kind we have to take a realistic view, and it does seem to me that this motion might very well have been dealt with in the overall motion which I propose to move because I intend to deal generally with the question of decontrol of all locally produced articles. At this stage I am not prepared to support the hon. Member's motion as it stands, without relating it to other aspects of decontrol with which I am in sympathy.

Dr. JAGAN: This matter of coconut and coconut oil shortage is a problem which has been recurring over a long number of years. I remember that a few years ago very precious hard currency had to be spent on soya bean oil from Canada. Last year we were supposed to have had a surplus of crude oil and refined oil, and supplies were shipped to the West Indies as surplus oil. I recall that at the time when that matter was being discussed someone queried whether it would affect the oil situation in this Colony, and we were told it would not. We were told that the export of oil last year would not in any way affect the quantities available this year. I do not know why the oil was exported last year. Perhaps one reason may have been that we did not have enough containers for the crude oil and refined oil being produced in the Colony. While we are running from one place to another attempting to solve this recurrent problem of oil shortage it seems to me that unless

we get down to the root of the problem we will never be able to solve it. It is a question of production of an adequate supply of coconuts. I know that a few weeks ago a campaign was launched to grow more coconuts, but I do not know whether that campaign will be successful in view of the nature of land holdings in this Colony.

In the report on the coconut situation which was written by the Agricultural Economist some time ago we find that most of the coconuts produced in this Colony are grown on large estates, and we have to depend upon the owners of those estates for supplies of copra or coconuts from which crude oil is made. The result is that if at any time those individuals holding those large estates decide to demand excessive prices, all they have to do is simply to refrain from picking the nuts, and there is a shortage of copra and oil in the Colony. That has been happening all the time. In Mr. Ferrer's report on the coconut situation it is clearly stated that if all the coconuts were gathered from the trees in this Colony we would have enough nuts to supply us with all the oil we need. Apparently, the large coconut producers in this Colony, for one reason or another, are not picking the nuts. Some of them are saying that it is too costly—labour costs have gone up very greatly—and consequently they are not worrying with the nuts; they prefer to leave the estates abandoned.

We are in this desperate plight of having to depend on these large producers simply because in this Colony, as a whole, we do not find the small peasants producing any appreciable quantity of coconuts. If we make a tour of this Colony we would find, generally speaking, that people do not go in for coconut cultivation because they are afraid that if they put coconut trees on land of which they are tenants on short-term leases, when the time comes for giving up their tenancy they would also have to give up the coconut trees they planted

on the land. It is unfortunate, I think, that we have not got legislation in this Colony to give compensation for improvement of the land. I think I am correct in saying that English legislation provides for such compensation, and I think Government should consider that question very seriously because nobody would plant coconuts unless they are certain that they would not have to give up the land shortly afterwards or that they would be properly compensated for the trees.

As I see it, the question of land reform is a matter of vital necessity in this Colony. Until we can get farmers owning their own land or getting such long-term leases as would more or less guarantee them holdings in perpetuity, we would not be able to solve this coconut oil shortage. I do hope Government would look into this matter very shortly—the whole question of land-holding in this Colony. If anyone visits the Essequibo Coast he would find that in such a big area of the Colony with the exception of Pomeroon where there are some large estates, nearly all the peasant farmers plant rice and the reason why they do not go in for coconut cultivation is because they do not have any real security as regards the land.

I have listened to the remarks of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, and there is no doubt that a great deal of what he has said is true. I myself have sat on the Committee which was examining the copra situation, and it is true that more oil can be extracted from copra, and in the long run we would get not only more oil if it went through proper extraction in the large mills, but we would also get what is known as copra meal which would help to give pig rearers a more balanced diet for their pigs. That argument sounds very good on paper, but when we examine the situation as it stands today we still have to ask why is it that we cannot get enough refined oil and are also not getting copra meal. If the people are not purchasing the copra to produce enough refined oil or copra meal, then it means that they

are producing crude oil. But there again there is a bottleneck, since they are not even producing the crude oil properly. Some solution has to be found for this problem, however.

I can see some difficulty arising from this motion as it stands, because the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer might say that if we decontrol the price of crude oil then no one would want to make any copra, but if we follow the argument a little further we would find that the percentage which is now allowed on copra-making is still very high so that those people who want to produce it can still do so at a profit. But, looking at the picture completely, it does appear that the coconut producers do not want to sell their nuts or to make either crude oil or copra. That, apparently, is the situation at the present time. If they were giving their nuts for the making of either crude oil or copra, we would not have had this oil shortage at the present time. How are we to meet this urgent and pressing problem? There are two ways; one is to produce more coconuts, but we cannot do so overnight. Can we go and pick the coconuts from the trees? I do not know if Government would want to requisition the plantations, telling the owners that they want the nuts and would pay for picking them because we want crude oil. I do not think Government would do anything like that in this Colony; they would prefer to let the nuts stay on the trees.

There seems to be only one solution to this problem, and that is to decontrol the price of crude oil and let the people pay what they want for it. Government would have to give the producers a higher price or take over the estates and pay for the picking of the nuts. That is a possible solution also, but I know from the way Government operates in this Colony that this latter course would not be adopted and that is why I am supporting the motion. I feel that that is the only other way we can solve the problem at this moment. We cannot afford to import oil because there is a shortage through-

out the world and if we have to import we would, no doubt, have to pay hard currency for it—soya bean oil from Canada.

Reference has been made to the poor extraction of copra meal and of refined oil from copra, and that is the reason why it is being felt that the coconut producers should convert their nuts into copra. It is also being said that the people who are making crude oil now are making it not so much for the profit which they derive from the oil as such, but for the remains which are left and which are used for feeding pigs. In other words, the argument was put forward that it is not profitable to make crude oil but that the profit is in the by-products which are used for feeding pigs since the profit is really in the pigs. It has also been said that the by-products have too great an oil content and, consequently, do not form a balanced food for the pigs. On the other hand, it is said the copra, when mixed with other foods, makes a balanced diet for the pigs if it can be had.

I have had to go to the Controller of Supplies recently and make representations on behalf of some people at Beterverwagting and Plaisance. These people have to leave their homes at 4 o'clock in the morning and travel to the City and get in a queue in order to buy feed for their pigs. The situation has resolved itself into one of survival of the fittest—the strongest remain in line and the weakest fall by the wayside. Even then, those who remain in line can only get a quarter bag per week. If we are to look at the economics of the pig rearer, we must ask ourselves whether in the long run it is not more profitable for him to convert his nuts or copra into pig feed rather than having to leave his home at 4 a.m. and come to the Control Board and waste a whole day in order to get a quarter bag of stuff to go back and feed his pigs.

Many of the suggestions made appear to be quite feasible, but when we examine the practical side and see in what way these controls and these policies are going to operate we find all kinds of difficulties. I know that this problem is a very difficult one but, as I have said before, I think the hon. Member's motion seeks to find a solution to it and I feel that it is going to help in some measure. I do hope that hon. Members will support this motion as it stands.

Mr. FERNANDES: If I thought for one moment that the decontrol of coconuts and crude oil would solve the problem we have before us I would support the motion wholeheartedly, but I can assure hon. Members of this Council that it would do no such thing because crude oil is not the only oil on the market. We have edible oil and crude oil, and to decontrol one without decontrolling the other is going to lead up to a situation in which everyone who can get his hand on edible oil would mix it with crude oil and cause it to fall below the standard of refined oil, and then he would market it at whatever price he chooses to charge. Then the little bit of edible oil on the market would gradually disappear and the whole thing would be tantamount to decontrol.

I intend to deal with the question of control and decontrol under item 4 on the Order Paper. I would like to say that the headache we are facing today is one we would have to face for a long time to come except Government realises now that there are certain items produced in British Guiana which are not only badly needed for our own consumption but which carry an unlimited export market at the moment and are likely to do so for a long time. I have said in this Council in and out of season that the Department of Agriculture should concentrate its efforts on those articles which we know can be produced economically in this Colony and of which coconuts happen

to be one. Instead of that what do we find? We see nice pictures in the newspapers about 7-hand bunches of bananas, and then we read on the other side that an export duty has been put on so that the price, when one is ready to ship, would not be what he had hoped for. It might be good for us to encourage the production of bananas in British Guiana but, first and foremost, we must concentrate on those articles which we need for our own consumption today and which we would need more so if war comes along. At present we are getting from abroad some margarine and soap and so on which we would not be able to get in case of war. The present situation makes us realise that if the Department of Agriculture had concentrated on the production of coconuts five or 10 years ago we would have been better off today.

We need very badly all the things we can produce in order to be able to increase our exports and thereby improve our economic position. I think every Member of this Council knows that the export price of copra is at the moment tremendous in comparison to the local price, therefore every additional pound of copra we can produce over and above what we need for our own requirements would raise the level and the value of our coconuts. I would like to see British Guiana in the not too distant future exporting large quantities of coconuts and other products—sugar, rice, beef and everything else. We are increasing our exports in rice and sugar, and if the Department of Agriculture would concentrate on all these items I am sure that the \$800,000 a year that the taxpayers are being called upon to pay for this Department would give better returns to the Colony than what we are getting at present. I am bound to oppose this motion because, as I have already remarked, I do not think it would solve the problem in question but rather make it worse. I will reserve my other remarks with regard to control

and decontrol until we get to item 4 on the Order Paper.

Mr. GAJRAJ: The first clause in the preamble to this motion states what is a fact — that there is an acute shortage of cooking oil in the Colony and that this shortage would be intensified by the rainy weather. The purpose of the hon. Mover's motion, as I see it, is to provide some solution for this problem—a problem which he has referred to in his opening remarks as a crisis so far as oil needed for cooking purposes by the people of this Colony is concerned. I am not convinced, however, that the opinion expressed in the second preamble to the motion is correct. That is, that if the price of coconuts and crude oil is decontrolled there would be such an increase in the quantity of dried nuts picked and such an increase in the quantity of crude oil manufactured, that that alone would solve the problem with which we are faced at the present time.

I have been making enquiries of my own and I have found that whatever we do we would be faced in this country—in the same way as people in other parts of the world are faced—with a shortage of oil and oil-products. We have had it from the hon. Member for Georgetown Central in his speech just now, that we cannot hope to import edible oil into this country because there is also a shortage of that commodity in other parts of the world. If we lay the blame on control or to the low price fixed by the Controller for coconuts—saying that is the reason why we are short of oil at this time—the same charge should be laid against those responsible in other countries where they produce oil and where there is also a shortage. As a matter of fact, there is a world shortage of oil and that is why we find that conferences were held in the West Indian islands and other places whereby the quantity available could be properly allocated to the Colonies concerned.

I have been told by people who own coconut trees, some in small numbers

and others in large numbers, that the trees are more or less starved of dried nuts and that no matter what they do they cannot get a substantial increase in those nuts unless the trees are rested, but in the present crisis where we need as much oil as we can get and therefore as many nuts as we can get, the trees cannot be rested. The owners have to pluck them of every single dried nut they can get in order to convert the nuts into refined or crude oil. The hon. Member for Georgetown Central has made the point very clearly that if we were to decontrol the price of coconuts and the price of crude oil—just two items in the coconut industry—the price of crude oil and other things would increase automatically. As a matter of fact, the price of crude oil would increase to such an extent that the manufacturers of copra would find it more beneficial to make crude oil than to dry the nuts and make copra. So we find that we might increase the quantity of crude oil to the detriment of the increased production of refined oil. And if what we are told is correct, the position would be worse than it is at present, because in producing crude oil in the manner in which it is done today we would get a poorer extraction from the nuts than what we get from the copra.

There is no doubt also that, in my opinion, a great deal of the desire to produce crude oil comes from those who rear pigs and I think the hon. Member for Central Demerara is quite correct when he referred to a statement made both in and out of this Council — that the manufacturer of crude oil looks more at the profit he makes from pig-rearing than from the manufacture of the oil itself. It has been also stated that if producers were made to pick their nuts more frequently than they are doing now, the small man would be able to make his own crude oil for domestic use and be able to feed his pigs with the by-products. But, if I understand the purpose of this motion clearly, it is to increase the quantity of crude

oil to such an extent that there would be a surplus over and above what is needed for his domestic use so that the crude oil manufacturer would be able to alleviate the shortage not only in the City, but also in the urban areas. The people in the City are not in a position to make crude oil, and when one takes the population of Georgetown and puts it with that of New Amsterdam he would find that there is a very large number of persons to be catered for by way of edible oil for domestic use. Therefore, it seems that the decontrol of coconuts and crude oil would not help the situation as much as we would like to see.

Another point that strikes me is this: When the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara moved the motion, I thought he intended to suggest that in order to assist the present situation we should recommend the decontrol of not only coconuts and crude oil, but decontrol right down the line. It seems to me logical that if we are going to talk about decontrol to bring about greater production, we should decontrol the entire industry. If we decontrol one portion and leave the other untouched because it is felt that the price of copra and refined oil is good enough, then we would bring about a most disastrous situation for those who are going to use coconuts. I do not say I would agree to the decontrol of the entire industry and, like the hon. Member for Georgetown Central, I feel that the whole question of decontrol would come up when another motion is considered by this Council. But, as we are now dealing with the oil situation it seems to me that this Council should express its view on the motion before us. That is, our deep concern over the shortage of oil, but we cannot accept the suggestion made in the resolve clause of the motion, otherwise we would find ourselves in greater chaos than we are in at the present time. I reiterate that our main trouble is not prices, as has been stated. It is that we do not have a sufficiency of dried nuts, but what we are planting at the mo-

ment should give us all the oil we need. Our main trouble is not, as has been said, the question of price. It is that we do not have a sufficient supply of dried nuts on our plantations at the moment to give us all the oil we need. I am unable to support the motion but I do express my deep concern and my hope that something can be done to help everyone in this country to make more oil available for the general population, but it seems at the moment that we are up against rather a thick wall. I trust, however, that the Committee which is at present going into the matter will be able to put forward recommendations to Government whereby we may be able to reconsider the problem in a different light and thus bring about what we all hope for—a greater flow of oil for the benefit of citizens.

Mr. PETERS: There is no doubt that in the light of the fact that the entire Colony is suffering from this acute shortage of edible oil we have been brought face to face with the fact that it is absolutely necessary for us to get about the business of producing more coconuts or planting more coconut trees. It is therefore a matter for great satisfaction and encouragement to see that the Department of Agriculture has been busy within the last few weeks encouraging school children and others to carry on as intensively as possible the planting of coconuts, so that the shortage we are suffering today may be avoided in the days to come.

I wish to commend the hon. Member for his vigilance and alertness in trying to see that something is done to improve the situation, but I am not altogether sure that his way out of the situation is the happiest one. My fear is that by decontrolling the price of coconuts and crude oil we would create another serious evil which, probably in the long run, might prove to be more disastrous than that with which we are now faced. I refer to the evil of blackmarketing, because when people know that they are free from control they will hang on to their nuts and sell only to those who are prepared to

pay the highest price. People would have coconuts to do what they like with them, and the middlemen would come in and make large profits.

I heartily commend the Department of Agriculture for what it is trying to do, and I hope that in the long run we will find that its wisdom has been very much justified by the fact that in process of time the possibility of a shortage will be very far removed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. D. J. Parkinson, O.B.E., Acting): I think most of the main points have been thoroughly discussed in the course of this debate, but there are one or two particular observations I should like to make. First of all, reference has been made by several speakers to last year's surplus of oil, a quantity of which was exported. I think it is generally recognized that that surplus was the result of quite unusual conditions which followed the floods. The number of coconuts picked up after being flooded out of the bush where they would otherwise have rotted, was vastly in excess of the usual coconut harvest, and as a result the quantity of oil which came on to the market was also vastly in excess of the usual amount, and also in excess of the demand. Unfortunately, it was not possible to store all this surplus oil because drums were not available to do that, therefore, the only economic alternative was to export it, and I do not think that Government can be fairly criticised for having agreed to permit the export of oil which would not in any case have been available to alleviate the shortage this year.

While the floods last year produced a surplus of coconuts and oil we must also, to a certain extent, blame the floods for the shortage, the particularly acute shortage, of coconuts and oil this year. I say "particularly acute," because the figures with respect to the production of copra and crude oil show that there always is a seasonal shortage about this time of the year—in April, May and June, and particularly in June—a shortage due, I understand,

partly to the fact that farmers are busy planting rice at this time, and partly to the rains. This year the shortage was aggravated by the aftermath of the floods which affected the harvest in any case. I do not think we can underestimate the influence of the forces of Nature in bringing about this shortage, and I do not think it can be cured in any way by juggling with the price of coconuts, crude oil or copra. That there is a shortage no one can deny, but on the facts this year it was really unavoidable.

The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) said that the coconut producers did not appear to be selling their coconuts either to the crude oil makers or to the copra producers. Well, it seems to me that one way of bringing the coconuts back on to the market would be to dispose of this motion as quickly as possible because, as long as there is a motion before this Council recommending the removal of price control, it seems to me highly probable that the coconut producer is going to hold on to his coconuts in the hope of getting a higher price.

The important basic question of copra against crude oil has been fairly thoroughly discussed, I think. It certainly is the policy of Government to encourage the production of copra rather than crude oil, because it is undoubtedly more efficient. I understand that in Jamaica the production of crude oil is prohibited entirely, and that in Trinidad it is in effect prohibited. I appreciate the difficulties referred to by the hon. Member for Central Demerara about the supply of copra meal which is essential because, if there is no "cuss-cuss" to feed to the pigs there must be some alternative feed. Supplies of copra meal have been short. That is very largely the result of the general shortage of coconuts. But the Committee which is at present considering the organization of the coconut industry and its various branches, has given special consideration to this question. The Committee, I think, met a deputation of crude oil makers

and discussed the problem with them, and it has made the practical suggestion that the Department of Agriculture, in co-operation with the Controller of Supplies and Prices, should guarantee to supply to any crude oil producer who manufactures copra, and who maintains pigs, the equivalent in copra meal for the copra he supplies. In other words, he would be guaranteed his pig feed supply, and it seems to me that that is a constructive and practical suggestion. Of course, unless they get the copra they cannot get the copra meal from which to make the pig feed, and it is something of a vicious circle.

I would only say in conclusion that this is an extremely complex and difficult problem. There are so many branches—coconuts, crude oil, copra, edible oil, copra meal, margarine and soap—which are all affected, and it is very difficult to tell what the results are going to be throughout those various branches, of any action we may take with regard to a specific commodity. If we lift the price here we may have results we do not expect somewhere else in the other branches, and if we lift control in one place we may probably have to lift it right through, or else we may upset the whole balance of the industry. This we have already experienced in the past. Col. Spencer investigated this industry very thoroughly while he was here, and on one occasion a recommendation was made and accepted—an alteration of the price which produced results quite unexpected, and we had to restore the *status quo*.

Because of the complexity of the problem I submit that it is most desirable to consider it comprehensively and gradually in detail, which is exactly what the Committee is doing at the moment. I hope that that Committee will be able to expedite its work and reach early conclusions which will be put forward as recommendations for a long-term policy, which I hope will result in our being able to avoid the sort of shortage with which we are faced today, and about which I do not

think we can hope to do very much in the immediate future, although I understand from the Department of Agriculture that fairly soon we may expect the situation to right itself, because there will be more coconuts ripening on the trees, apart from any question of price.

I do urge that we should leave it to the Committee, and that we should be very careful indeed about recommending any changes here and now which may have quite unexpected results on the different branches of the industry. As the hon. Mover is well aware, he was himself urging not long ago that price control should be removed, and it was removed, but within two or three weeks we had to put it back again. I am afraid, therefore, that I must oppose this motion, and I suggest to the Council that we await the recommendations of the representative Committee which has been considering this problem, as it must be considered comprehensively and in detail.

Dr. SINGH: We know that there is a shortage of oil at the present time, and one section of the community who do not use lard, or anything containing lard, are very uneasy about the whole situation, because they only use edible oil or ghee, which is very expensive at the present time. I know it is a very big problem, and if we decontrol the price of crude oil and coconuts we must decontrol the price of edible oil as well. If those three items were decontrolled the position would be that the hucksters would have the whole show, because they are buying coconuts at about 8 cents each, and although there may be some understanding between the miller and the coconut grower the huckster will always be in the position of being able to offer something more to the coconut grower for his coconuts. That is where the snag comes in. As I see it, the only thing Government can decontrol is the price of crude coconut oil. I was a member of the Committee that considered this oil question, and I

pointed out then that the snag was the crude coconut oil. This shortage of edible oil has been occurring too often, and as the hon. the Colonial Secretary has said, I hope the Sub-Committee will go into all phases of the question and recommend some method of preventing any further shortage. One section of the community is affected very seriously because of its religion.

Mr. MACNIE: I am sorry I could not be here when the hon. Mover introduced the motion now under discussion. I am sorry because I was born amongst coconuts, and I have grown up amongst them. I am sorry because, for a good many years, I have had experience in this difficult business of control of coconuts in this Colony. I am yet to be convinced that the solution to this problem is to decontrol the price of coconuts and crude oil. I am in entire agreement with those speakers who have questioned the wisdom of such action, and I feel that it would only make the present very serious situation worse than it is at the moment. At the same time I do feel that the hon. Mover of the motion is to be commended for having brought it before the Council and ventilated the seriousness of the present situation. There can be no doubt whatever that the situation is serious.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Once again, within a matter of a week, I have to comment on the fact that Members of this Council have argued away from a very simple issue. The issue here is not the permanent decontrol of the prices of coconuts and crude oil. The issue is the removal of control for a short period so as to allow the market to be kept open for the producers of coconuts to be able to sell at a price at which the crude oil makers would be able to purchase from them. If the crude oil makers have to purchase coconuts at \$25 per 1,000, which is roughly the price of copra today, they would be faced with the difficulty that they would not be able to make any profit if they have to sell their crude oil at \$1.28 per gallon. If they have to

pay more than \$18 per 1,000 for coconuts, how can they sell their crude oil at the controlled price of \$1.28 per gallon? It is impossible. All that the motion asks is that the price of coconuts and crude oil be decontrolled for a short period so that the crude oil makers may be able to sell their oil at a price which would enable them to recoup their outlay on the purchase of coconuts and make some profit. It is impossible for the crude oil maker to sell his oil at a higher price than that of Fryol.

It has been pointed out that there is a motion on the Order Paper dealing with the question of control, and that my motion should be considered in the general question of the removal of controls, but when one examines it one sees the insincerity of that line of argument. Here is a motion asking that a Committee be appointed to go into the whole question of controls in the Colony. God help us if the people of the Colony are to await the results of that investigation. It is a tremendous subject. When would such a Committee be able to report so as to ease the situation that exists today? How sad it is to hear that line of argument used to get out of a debate! Another argument is that the producers of crude oil would mix it with Fryol. Again my intelligence has been insulted. If the price of crude oil is left at \$1.28 per gallon wouldn't that be a greater incentive to the producers of crude oil to mix it with Fryol and indulge in blackmarketing? I challenge the hon. Member to say that if the price of crude oil was raised a little that the makers would want to mix it with Fryol.

Mr. FERNANDES: That was not the argument I used, because if any person attempted to mix one with the other he could be prosecuted and convicted under the law, because the mixture would not be up to standard.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am glad the hon. Member is making an effort to get out of the spurious point he made. With

the price of crude oil fixed at \$1.28 per gallon today there is a greater urge or possibility of blackmarketing by blending crude oil with refined oil. I have gone into this whole situation very thoroughly within recent times, so thoroughly that I accompanied a deputation to the Sub-Committee which is now sitting, and we were able to outpoint them in discussion and argument, so much so that we had the complete sympathy of the members. I do not know whether the challenge which was put forward will be accepted, but it was claimed that a crude oil maker would take 1,000 coconuts out of a pool of 2,000 nuts and manufacture more crude oil from those nuts than a copra miller would be able to make from the remaining 1,000 coconuts if they were converted into copra. The copra mills have to make crude oil before edible oil is produced. Both the crude oil maker and the copra miller make crude oil first. That is something which some hon. Members do not appreciate.

A point which should also be borne in mind is that in converting crude oil into edible oil 10 per cent. of the oil is lost in the process. That has been accepted by the Committee. A certain percentage of oil is also lost in the preparation of copra, especially when the coconut is sun dried, and during the present weather it cannot be sun dried; it has to be baked in an oven, and a portion of the oil is baked out of the copra. This causes the ovens to be filled with oil and they frequently flare up. That has just taken place at Cove and John, and it happens very frequently. One hon. Member speaks about the question of there not being a sufficiency of dried nuts, but I think that hon. Member does not know the subject or what he is talking about. I know that there are hundreds of thousands of nuts waiting to be picked at the present time. Some are falling off the trees and, as a matter of fact, some producers are only using the fallen nuts. I am in a coconut district every day and I see the trees as I pass. Many of the proprietors cannot get pickers

for their nuts, but if the price is raised and the manufacturers of coconut oil left to go and buy them at a fixed price—not the price fixed by Government—there would be a distinct improvement in the situation. At present, the producer is getting \$25 per thousand for his nuts from people who buy to make copra: Would they sell at \$18 per thousand to people who want to make crude oil? That is why this motion has been brought—so that people would be able to compete with the copra producers. It is felt that 50,000 gallons of crude oil could be made per week if the motion is adopted.

The hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo spoke sympathetically at first about a certain section of the community and I think he was so solicitous of its welfare that, according to one hearer, he has thrown the bucket down and spilled the oil. What he should see and tell this Council is that a section of the community is using crude oil but cannot get it at the present time, because the mills do not sell their crude oil. They continue their operations and go right through from copra to refined oil. The people in the rural districts depend on the crude oil made by crude oil manufacturers, firstly because it is cheaper and, secondly, because it is better. Only today I read in the newspapers that the cost-of-living of the people in the country districts has gone up and is higher than that of the people in Georgetown. Yet the hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo does not think that these people should get a chance. On Tuesday last I was at Mahaica, and later in the week I went to Enmore and Non Pareil where I had very large meetings with the people. Among the things we discussed was this oil situation. Quite recently the Orderly at the Law Courts ran up to me and said: "Sir, I know that you have influence in a certain place; can you help me to get a bottle of edible oil? The situation is serious."

I have given all these instances in order to show how serious and urgent this motion really is. I have done my

duty to the people and the responsibility now rests entirely with this Council. As I have said before, the day of reckoning is coming—certainly coming. We regard this Council as a large Committee after all—a large Committee which should tackle this question—and we also realize from the speech of the Financial Secretary and Treasurer that it is the intention of Government to run the manufacturers of crude oil out of business—241 of them. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr Roth, referred to the Treasurer's speech as being a lucid one, but it is only lucid so far as Government is concerned. Recently we saw published a long list of public health requirements, which would make it impossible for these people to carry on with their present mills which cost between \$1,000 and \$2,000 each. This step was designed especially to run the mills out of operation and, finally, Government has now increased the price of copra, while the price of Fryol has also been increased from \$1.60 to \$1.81 per gallon—leaving crude oil at \$1.28 per gallon.

What have the manufacturers of crude oil done? They sent through me a deputation to the Colonial Secretary asking for assistance, but what did we find? The Colonial Secretary said that a Committee would sit and report on this serious question but, as I have said before, it was a mere discussion and it was useless to ask that Committee to take care of our case. That Committee is comprised of members who would report in favour of the mills in Georgetown. From the discussion it was patently clear that the crude oil makers could not hope for one iota of sympathy or assistance from that Committee. Therefore, I took the sure step of coming to this Council—to men of the world on whom the responsibility for this Government rests—but what are they doing. I am suggesting a simple, temporary measure to see how it would work. Blackmarketing has been going on before, but it is worse now because the situation is unsolved. If the coconut producers are allowed to sell at a better price, the very manu-

facturers of crude oil would help them to find pickers for the nuts. But that is only one side of the picture.

The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer spoke about the control of nuts and gave figures from the Controller of Supplies and also from the Journal of the Department of Agriculture, but those are wide figures. I repeat that 241 families must go out of existence if conditions are allowed to remain as they are. What is the *dictum*? We are telling the people: "Don't go into the industry," but how can we expect to drive them out when they have been in it for the last 40 years or more. A certain man came back from the first World War and started an industry which has been going well for over 30 years, and every drum of oil he makes helps his people to maintain some 30 or 40 pigs. He makes an average of two drums per day.

It was pointed out before the Committee that a certain plantation had taken up pig-rearing recently, but had to close down because they could not carry on successfully. There was also a large industry being carried on in the Demerara River district by a group of people, but the Company decided that it could not carry on pig-rearing any longer owing to the high cost of materials and foodstuff. The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer ought to have told us about that. For some 40 years the people to whom I have referred were carrying on successfully and making a livelihood by manufacturing crude oil and rearing pigs and poultry. This motion would not assist them alone; it is designed to assist the poor man in general, but again I shall see if the poor man's voice will be ignored in this Council. If it is being urged that this is a complex question then, for God's sake, give us a temporary measure whereby the price of the nuts from which crude oil is made would be increased, and in that case there would be no black-marketing as exists at present. These poor people have nothing to eat—the residents in the districts to which I have already

referred—and if the price of the nuts and the crude oil is increased they would find people to pick the nuts. Even if they pay \$27 per thousand for the nuts they could sell the crude oil at 36c per gallon although people are now selling it at 48c per gallon. The fate of the crude oil manufacturers—241 families—is in the hands of this Council. They cannot get any crude oil, and Bookers are taking 80 per cent. of the copra meal. The Financial Secretary and Treasurer is getting 20 per cent. and perhaps that is the reason why he has taken this stand.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not think the hon. Member can insinuate anything improper against any Member of this Council. I think the hon. Member should withdraw it.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I did not intend to insinuate anything against the Financial Secretary or anyone else.

The PRESIDENT: I take it that the hon. Member is withdrawing the statement.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am withdrawing the insinuation, but I have made a statement which I read and that is that the Financial Secretary—according to my information—is getting 20 per cent. of the copra meal while Bookers are getting 80 per cent. and that is the reason why these poor people cannot get any.

Mr. WIGHT: To a point of explanation: As regards the remark that the hon. the Financial Secretary is obtaining 20 per cent. of the copra meal, no doubt it is being stressed because there is a crowd in the gallery but I want to say that it is absolutely incorrect. The Financial Secretary and Treasurer, to my knowledge, is not the owner of any estate, nor is he interested in pig-rearing as the hon. Member suggests. He might be interested as a shareholder in a company known as Messrs. Gladys Hicken, Ltd., but so far as I know he is not in any way interested in pig-rearing.

Dr. SINGH: Now that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has had his say, I would just like to point out that he has missed my point.

The PRESIDENT: The discussion is finished, I will put the motion to the vote.

Motion put, the Council dividing and voting as follows:—

For: Dr. Jagan, Mr. Debidin and Dr. Singh-3.

Against: Messrs. Macnie, Bobb, Gajraj, Peters, Fernandes, Coghlan, Farnum, Ferreira, Roth, Dr. Nicholson, Wight, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary-14.

Motion lost.

GRANT TO FARQUHARSON EXHIBITIONER

Mr. FERNANDES: At this stage I crave your indulgence, Sir, to move the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders to enable me to move a very simple motion. It should not take more than 15 minutes or thereabout and if we do not take it before the recess of this Council it would be of no use in meeting the situation we desire to meet. The motion reads:—

"WHEREAS Yvonne Eastman, a student of Bishop's High School has been awarded a Farquharson Memorial Exhibition at the University College of the West Indies;

"AND WHEREAS she is unable to accept it without financial assistance from Government;

"BE IT RESOLVED that this Council recommend to Government the granting of the necessary financial assistance by way of a grant or a loan and a grant."

Mr. FERREIRA: I beg to second the motion.

Motion put and agreed to.

Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

Mr. FERNANDES: It is with great pleasure that I move the motion I have

just read. It is very simple. This young lady attends the Bishops' High School for Girls and is a very fine student with an excellent character. At an open competition she was awarded the Farquharson Memorial Exhibition tenable at the University College of the West Indies. This Exhibition is worth £75—not a very big sum, but I think it is something we should all be grateful for because it has come to one of our girls. The letter from the University says that for 3 years this young lady would require \$360 a year, therefore there is a difference of £185. I proposed asking Government to vote the whole of the balance because that would have been reasonable, but if this Council can see its way to vote £75, making the total £150 I propose to raise the balance in order to enable this young lady to benefit from the award of the exhibition.

The way in which I propose to raise the balance is to ask the Principal of the College who is represented in this Colony by Mr. Thompson of the Extra-Mural Department and who, by the way, is anxious that the young lady should take advantage of the award, to recommend that she be given at least £50 a year out of the funds recently donated by Messrs. Wieting & Richter, Ltd., of this Colony for purposes such as this. As regards the balance, I propose to contribute it myself because when one is appearing on behalf of a person like this he must be prepared to contribute himself. Therefore, I am asking hon. Members to recommend today that Government give a grant of £75 a year, for three years, to this young lady. When I gave notice of this motion I intended to ask for a grant of £75 and a loan of the balance which I would have been prepared to sign as surety for, but I have since changed my mind. I am therefore going to ask the Council's permission to delete the words following the word "grant" in the resolve clause of the motion and to substitute therefor the words "of a sum equivalent to the

the value of the Farquharson Memorial Exhibition to assist Miss Eastman to proceed to the University College of the West Indies." In other words, the grant would be equivalent to the amount which this young lady has earned by the award of the Exhibition.

I know that Government has taken opportunity to enquire into the young lady's financial standing and everything else. She is attending the Bishops' High School for Girls and the information as regards her character, ability and general manner is such, I am sure, as can stand any kind of scrutiny. Before closing I should say that the young lady intends to study Arts—languages—and to return to British Guiana at the end of 3 years and give her services to the same school, if necessary. Every Member of this Council knows that at the moment there is a shortage of that type of teacher and, therefore, a young lady with that type of ability should do well. It is her intention to return and give to British Guiana the benefit of the result of the free tuition she would get for three years at the University College of the West Indies. I am sure every hon. Member of this Council would vote for this motion without a division.

Mr. FERREIRA: In seconding this motion I would like to commend the mover for bringing this matter before the Council. There can be no doubt that it is a deserving cause, and I hope it will be carried without a division. I would like to say that there is precedent for Government helping a brilliant student and, recently, I think help was extended by Government in a similar case. This motion asks that some financial assistance be given to a young lady student who has lived all her life in this Colony, and I see no objection to it.

Dr. NICHOLSON: I rise to support the motion. The University College in Jamaica has asked all the Colonial Governments to contribute towards a fund to be used for the purpose of assisting

necessitous students, and last year this Council voted \$10,000 in that respect. It is proposed that from year to year we will add to that amount, and I think it would be a simple matter to recommend to the Principal of the University who will administer the Fund, the student whom we have in mind for assistance. I would like to say also that the young lady in question is a very apt student and the expectations are that she will win a Guiana Scholarship for Girls. If she does, then we would be relieved of the amount we are now being asked to vote. But, of course, that is only an "iron in the fire." We should rather vote the amount which the motion requires, and if she wins a Guiana Scholarship for Girls it would revert to the original fund. I support the motion.

Dr. JAGAN: I too would like to support this motion, because I feel that every opportunity should be given to people who are bright and deserving to get such qualifications as would enable them to be of future service to this country. I was glad to hear from the hon. Mover of the motion that this young lady aspires to the teaching profession, and in view of the fact that we are now experiencing a shortage of teachers for our secondary schools she might be able to fill a valuable place when she qualifies. While I support this motion, at the same time I would like Government to keep this matter in mind as a general principle. There are many individuals who are now being awarded exhibitions and scholarships of various kinds but because of their economic circumstances and poor background and so on, some of them have not been able to avail themselves of the awards.

I think Government will do well to consider this matter in all its aspects and to decide whether such individuals should not be given some help from public funds, especially if they are prepared to come back and give service in their chosen fields to the people of this Colony. I have always advocated that one way of meeting the

recurrent shortage of officers in most of these fields—professional and otherwise—in this Colony, is to provide more and more scholarships for local students with conditions attached to them, so that after these students qualify with the help of public funds they would return and serve this country. I feel that that is the only way in which we are going to be able to solve this problem of shortage of trained staff, both in the professional and the technical field. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

Mr. WIGHT: In supporting this motion I would like first of all to reply to the remarks of the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) and to assure him that the Scholarship Selection Committee which comprises certain Members of this Council and others, is fully aware of the sentiments he has expressed, and as far as financial commitments permit, is in favour of adopting the lines indicated by him.

With regard to the particular matter under discussion I would like to say that I was approached by an uncle of the successful candidate, and I suggested to him that he might approach the Scholarship Selection Committee to see what assistance, if any, they could give. I also told him that there was a motion before the Council which was a wrong procedure, but that he could let it go ahead. I happen to know that certain relatives of the young lady are perfectly willing to assist but, unfortunately, they are not financially in a position to do so. One happens to be an employee of the Town Council who, with great credit to himself, has risen from a messenger to the post of overseer or time-keeper. I feel sure that if he could, he would be willing even to borrow the money to assist. Another relative is a policeman whom I also know, and I feel sure that if he were able he would assist. In fact I believe he has offered to assist with a very small sum, but not sufficient to meet the deficit. I told

him that were I in a financial position to do so I would have put up the money.

I feel that this is a case which merits some form of assistance from Government. I have been privileged to see a letter from Dr. Taylor, the Principal of the University College, in which he wrote highly of the young lady's achievement, and suggested that every effort should be made to assist her to continue her studies.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If it is the general wish of Members—and it seems that it is—to approve of this motion Government will not oppose it. The young lady has a very good record, she has been well reported on by the Headmistress of B.H.S., and I am satisfied that her family circumstances are such that even if she gets this additional assistance she will have to obtain further assistance to go to the University. There is, however, as the hon. Member for Central Demerara has pointed out, a general principle involved, and if Council agrees to assistance being given in this case we will find it difficult not to agree in all other cases where Exhibitions are granted in similar circumstances, and to that extent it may be said that the Government would be exposing itself to fairly unlimited liability, though in practice the number of Exhibitions won by students in this Colony is not, I suppose, likely to be very large, and will not, I hope, for the sake of the Financial Secretary, be so, seeing that our funds are limited at the moment.

Dr. SINGH: While I agree with the motion in principle I must say that it is rather sudden. It has never appeared on the Order Paper and many of us were unprepared for it.

Mr. FERNANDES: It is not sudden. It has appeared in the Minutes of this Council for more than two weeks. There is nothing sudden about it.

Dr. SINGH: I feel that it should have been on the Order Paper.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member should have opposed the motion for the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders.

Mr. FERNANDES: I would like to reply to a few points. I expected this motion to go through without any unpleasant remarks, but the hon. Member for Western Essequibo has suggested that the procedure is wrong. I do not think it is fair to me. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) said there were a number of other cases. I can assure him and this Council that no other case has reached me. On the question of correct procedure I may mention that when I was approached by this young lady and I saw the letter from the University College I advised her to write the Director of Education asking whether he could help in any manner. The reply was "No". I advised her at the same time to write the Principal of the University College and ask if any help could be given from that end. The reply was "No." In the circumstances I had no option but to come to this Council after the hon. Member for Western Essequibo had failed to take the matter up on behalf of the young lady.

Mr. WIGHT: I must object to that statement. There is no question of failing. When I was approached on behalf of the young lady I was informed that the hon. Member had already been approached and had already filed his motion. What was the use of my pursuing the matter?

Mr. FERNANDES: The hon. Member failed to take the matter up with the Scholarship Committee, but if he was informed that it was already in my hands and he wanted to help, I think he could at least have got in touch with me, or told the young lady to tell me to get in touch with him,

and made some recommendation to the Scholarship Committee. Those of us who are green expect to be helped by those who know right and wrong procedure.

The hon. the Colonial Secretary raised the issue of precedent, but all this Council is asked to recommend is a sum equivalent to the value of the Exhibition. Surely that is a principle which has been accepted by this Council over and over. In the case of C.D. & W. Scholarships the Colony pays half. I do not like the suggestion that a wrong procedure has been adopted. I have certain rights under the Constitution and I have the right to use them. The hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo (Dr. Singh) suggested that it was sudden when I moved the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders. The Council should have thrown that motion out and I would have had to bring it again.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to say that nobody brought this case to my notice. I will put the motion.

Mr. LEE: I ask for a division.

The Council divided and voted:

For: Messrs. Macnie, Bobb, Gajraj, Fernandes, Coghlan, Farnum, Ferreira, Wight, Dr. Jagan, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary 14.

Did not vote: Mr. Lee.

Motion carried.

FREEHOLD TITLE FOR SUGAR ESTATES LESSEES.

Council then considered the following motion by Dr. JAGAN:—

Whereas sugar estates control a total of 171,078 acres of land, 82,205 acres of which are freehold and 88,873 acres of which are leasehold at a yearly rental of \$4,222.75 or less than 5 cents per acre;

And Whereas only about 60,000 acres represent the area actually under cane cultivation, and about 20,000 acres, the area being flood-fallowed or rested at any given time;

And Whereas acreage tax returns indicate that much of the leased land held by sugar estates are not beneficially occupied;

And Whereas Guianese farmers have to pay as much as \$7.20 per acre for Government lands at Cane Grove, Anna Regina, etc.;

And Whereas extra-nuclear houses are now being built on estate lands under leases with many objectionable features;

Be it resolved that this Council recommend to Government that either the leases for lands not beneficially occupied be withdrawn or the rental be increased to a figure commensurate with the rate levied for other Government lands;

Be it further resolved that this Council recommend that Government enter negotiations with the Sugar Producers' Associations with the view of obtaining freehold title to estate-owned lands on which extra-nuclear houses are to be built in exchange for absolute grants of equivalent areas of land now leased.

Dr. JAGAN: The motion deals with the question of land holdings on sugar estates and also the question of house lots owned by sugar estates. From time to time in this Council I have advocated that the people of this Colony should be provided with lands, and I suppose I have made that statement so many times that Members are tired of hearing it. Nevertheless the problem does exist in spite of the fact that the statement may appear to be redundant, and it is indeed an acute one. As the first preamble of my motion indicates, the sugar estates control a total of 171,078 acres of land, 82,205 acres of which are freehold and 88,873 acres are leasehold, at a yearly rental of \$4,222.75, or less than 5 cents per acre. This is indeed a very large holding, but when one considers that only a certain portion of the total area is cultivated one appreciates the fact that this large hold-

ing of uncultivated land is in some measure responsible for the lack of production in this Colony.

A study of the Venn Commission Report shows that sugar estates occupy about 60,000 acres of land for cane cultivation in any one year, apart from which there are about 20,000 acres under flood fallow, making a total of approximately 80,000 acres. That is more or less equivalent to the area which they have under freehold, but there is an enormous area of land, nearly 90,000 acres, most of which is uncultivated. I have with me the acreage tax returns for 1950, and with your permission, sir, I would like to give the Council some of those figures so that Members may get a true picture of the situation.

With regard to the total of 171,078 acres mentioned in my motion, I observe that the figures of the Department of Lands and Mines are different—159,149 acres. I do not know the reason for the discrepancy, because the figures in my motion were given to me in answer to questions which I asked in this Council. There must be some slip somewhere. Let us assume that the total given in the preamble of my motion is correct. We find from the acreage tax returns for 1950, from January to June, that there were 70,771 acres of land under cane cultivation. I take it that that excludes flood-fallowed areas. Possibly there has been an increase of a few acres since the report of the Venn Commission was written. The acreage tax returns also show that for the period January to June there were 11,859 acres under mixed cultivation, while 76,519 acres were uncultivated. Why such a large area—approximately 50 per cent.—should remain uncultivated on the coastlands where there is definite land hunger today? A moment ago we were discussing the question of coconuts. At Turkeyen there are coconut estates which were originally planted by peasants and subsequently taken away by the estates. Where there is no security of tenure people will not go in

for coconut cultivation or the planting of permanent crops. That is one reason why we have the problem of production in this country.

Every now and then we listen to message from the Throne or from the Financial Secretary's Budget Statement, that the solution of our economic problem in this country is more production, but I have always contended that the people cannot produce more unless land is placed at their disposal. There is a tremendous acreage uncultivated, but what is being done about it? I submit that the reason why such a large acreage remains uncultivated is because land rentals are too low. In reply to a question tabled by me Government stated that the annual rentals from 88,873 acres of land amounted to approximately \$4,222.75—approximately 5 cents per acre. If sugar estates have at their disposal large areas of land leased from Government at the small sum of 5 cents per acre one can very well appreciate that such land can be withheld from the farmers on sugar estates and adjoining estates, if the estate authorities so desire. I have come to the conclusion that there must be some deliberate plan somewhere to withhold those areas of land from the farmers.

Not long ago I quoted in this Council from the report of the Committee which was set up in 1943 to study piece work and other related matters on sugar estates. Mr. P. W. King was the Chairman of that Committee which found that resident workers were working only 2.1 day per week, and non-resident workers not more than 3 days per week on sugar estate. The Committee's report was published in 1944. When the Venn Commission visited this Colony I submitted to them figures which I culled from the annual reports of the Labour Department, which showed that from 1943 to 1947 approximately 26 acres of rice land were taken away from people who had been given those lands for cultivation on sugar estate, and approximately

1,000 acre of land for the cultivation of ground provisions.

It may be asked: what was the reason for taking away those lands from the people on sugar estates within that period of four years? I say that the answer is given in the report of Mr. King's Committee in which it is stated that the resident worker on sugar estates were finding it more profitable to work on their own rice fields, and that the non-resident workers were also finding it more profitable to seek employment outside the sugar estate and consequently only worked approximately three days per week on sugar estates. In order to maintain sugar production by getting the people to work more than two or three days per week on the estates the sugar proprietors decided to take away the lands which they had placed at the workers' disposal for the cultivation of rice and ground provision. That seems to be the obvious conclusion—that the sugar estates were deliberately withholding their lands so as to force the people to work in the cane fields.

My contention is that if the sugar estate proprietor were paying \$2 or \$3 per acre for land leased from Government they would not find it so profitable to keep nearly 50 per cent. of those leased lands unoccupied, or to take away from the estate workers lands which they had placed at their disposal for the cultivation of rice and ground provisions. A few days ago we had the privilege of seeing in this Council a copy of the lease in respect of lots to be provided for workers on sugar estates for the building of houses. In the terms of that lease there are many objectionable features. For instance a worker must not grow coconut trees or any fruit trees on the plot of land. Right now Government is trying to get school children to plant coconut trees in their yards and everywhere else, while at the same time thousands of house lot are to be leased to sugar estate workers on the condition

that they are not to plant coconut trees or fruit trees on those lots. Another condition of the lease is that the occupiers of the house lots are not to keep cows, sheep or goats. It is true that it is said that this is being done in the interest of sanitation, but we know that sanitary gangs are still working in the villages, and that the Public Health Authorities see to it that the sanitary regulations are carried out. Yet there is no attempt to prevent the villagers from growing coconut trees or fruit trees.

What is the object of all those conditions in the lease? One cannot help coming to the conclusion, the inescapable conclusion, that the motive behind this lease, with all those objectionable features and the withholding of sugar estate land for the cultivation of rice and ground provisions, is to deprive the workers on sugar estates and non-resident workers of economic self-sufficiency—to starve them and force them to work on the sugar estates. If there is any brake against production in this Colony, that is the greatest brake. When I hear reference to increased production and all that airy talk I smile, because I know that Government has no serious plans as far as land reform is concerned. This motion seeks to solve that problem of huge land holdings—of lands being held in an uncultivated condition to force the economy of this country into the straight jacket in which it has been held for many years.

The time has come when we must give the people the freedom to choose whether they would grow coconuts, plant rice or cultivate ground provisions. Every now and then we have to go "hat in hand" and beg the United Kingdom Government to pay higher prices for our sugar and to give us long-term agreements, but one does not find the same solicitous representations being made on behalf of copra, rice and such other products. I hope the time will come when we will make the same vigorous representations on behalf of other pro-

ducts as we do in the case of sugar. We must not let ourselves be used in such a way as to deprive this Colony of the opportunity to develop a free economy simply because large areas of land are being held and kept idle with such conditions attached to them that people are restricted in cultivating what they would like.

I had to suggest an amendment to the second resolve clause of the motion and I am glad to see that the hon. the Colonial Secretary appended it to the motion. I should like to read it now for the information of hon. Members. It says:—

"Be It Further Resolved that this Council recommend that Government enter negotiations with the Sugar Producers' Association with the view of obtaining freehold title to estate-owned lands on which extra-nuclear houses are to be built in exchange for absolute grants of equivalent areas of land now leased."

I feel that the majority of hon. Members will agree with me when I say that the leases which these people have to sign at present for house lots contain many features which are objectionable. I recall one of them which says that no person other than members of the family is allowed to visit or stay within the house lot or the house. I do not know whether we are introducing South African legislation in this Colony, or whether this is aimed at people like myself. To aim at people like me is one thing, but to put it in black and white is really a horse of a different colour. That is really coming down to the South African legislation which peoples all over the world are deploring so very much at present.

I remember that when this matter was previously discussed Members of this Council expressed agreement with the idea that the people should own the land on which their houses are built. That is not anything new, because when one examines the first report on

the Ten-Year Development Plan he will find that even the sugar estates were willing to cede to Government at a very nominal price some 200 acres of land. There was what is known in the report as a four-estate scheme, the estates being Schoon Ord, Versailles, and I think Wales and another estate. The land was to be given to Government for as little as \$1 per acre and Government was to provide the other necessities—roads and sanitation—in order that the people might carry out house building.

Since the sugar producers were prepared to enter into such an agreement with Government, I feel that this motion would not raise any serious obstacle so far as they are concerned. I do not remember the total number of acres of land they were prepared to hand over, but I do recall that over 9,000 house lots were provided for in the report prepared by Dr. Giglioli and they were of various sizes. I took the trouble to add up all these small areas in order to find out the total involved, and if I remember rightly, I submitted to the Venn Commission a total in the vicinity of 12,000 acres.

This motion seeks to ask Government to enter into negotiations with the Sugar Producers' Association and see whether it is possible to give in return for freehold title all those lands which they are now preparing for house lots—lands which are being leased to the sugar producers—so that the people who build houses on them would have the right either to purchase outright from Government or to be given the lots as a grant by Government. I believe that is a satisfactory way in which this matter can be solved. I may add that so far as the sugar producers are concerned, it is admitted that most of the front lands on which the houses are to be built are not as valuable as the backlands. If a concern is interested in the cultivation of sugar cane, naturally it would be inter-

ested in the fertility of the soil and it is an accepted fact that the front lands on which the houses are to be built, because of their nearness to salt water and so on, are not as valuable as the back lands now being leased from Government. Therefore, if this exchange is made, the sugar producers are likely to benefit in the long run. I feel that the people also are likely to benefit by getting better security of tenure than the objectionable features in the leases as they exist at present. They would be able to get from Government, either as a grant or through a loan, these areas of land which would be given to them in due course as freehold.

The other resolve clause deals with a point I have already covered. It requests the Council to "recommend to Government that either the leases for lands not beneficially occupied be withdrawn or the rental be increased to a figure commensurate with the rate levied for other Government lands." That also is nothing new because time and time again we have had reports in this Colony stating that lands which are unoccupied should not be so held. The Governor in Council which has already investigated this problem suggested that one of the possible ways by which these large holdings of uncultivated lands can be prevented is to introduce a land tax which would force the holders of these areas either to give them up or to occupy them usefully.

At the conference I attended in Curacao recently, a resolution arising out of a report by Dr. Newmerk of the Food and Agriculture Organisation was passed, providing for a similar land tax on uncultivated lands. I have stated in the preamble to this motion that people on Government estates such as Anna Regina, Cane Grove and Vergenoegen have to pay as much as \$7.20 per acre for land there, and in addition, they have to pay for "breaking" the land and so on. It is true that drainage

costs are included in these sums, and so I have stated in the preamble that the price of 5c. per acre is too low, and that this figure must be increased, taking into consideration what it costs the sugar producers for drainage and so on. That might prevent people from holding these huge areas of uncultivated land, and in the long run others would be able to get them and bring about that increased production of rice which we are all clamouring so much to get. I feel that I need not speak any more on this motion, because the arguments which I have put forward are self-evident. I do hope hon. Members will approve the motion as it stands on the Order Paper.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I beg to second the motion.

Mr. WIGHT: I move that the question be now put.

Mr. LEE: It is regrettable that the mover of the motion should have been so mild in his request of the Government or of this Council. I would have preferred him to move for an exercise of the law whereby there would be compulsory acquisition of these large areas of uncultivated lands. This Council, I am sure, would have supported him, because an opportunity would have been given to those people who are being turned out by the proprietors of certain rice and sugar estates to acquire their own homes.

Mr. DEBIDIN: To a point of explanation, may I ask what legislation the hon. Member is referring to? Is it the Ordinance dealing with the compulsory acquisition of land for housing purposes?

Mr. LEE: I have not got the reference here, but I will supply it to the hon. Member. Only a few weeks ago the hon. Member supported a motion in this Council urging that the Rent Restriction Ordinance should be applied throughout the Colony, but he and others forgot that if the sugar

producers avail themselves of the Rent Restriction Ordinance the workers might suffer greater hardships. I feel sure that if they had considered this fact they would not have asked that the Ordinance be made applicable to the whole Colony, although the idea was to protect the people who are on leased lands belonging to sugar estates. I do not think hon. Members realise that if the tenants plant permanent crops on their holdings they would not be compensated for them at the end of their lease. I tabled a motion in this Council dealing with that question some time ago, and would have to do so again later on.

I desire to inform the mover and the seconder of this motion that it is, in my opinion, a good one, but it does not go sufficiently far to protect those people who live on sugar estates and would only be granted leases of bits of land which would not enable them to maintain a decent standard of living, especially if they have large families. Further, I think that the change of air in some of these areas is very marked and that very offensive odours sometimes come from latrines which the Sanitary Authorities compel the people to erect. If we are endeavouring to provide a better standard of living for these people—and the sugar industry is supposed in this respect through the Sugar Welfare Fund—it should be done in such a manner that the world would see that these unfortunate people are unable to speak for themselves. I do hope, however, that they will be able to think for themselves under the new Constitution.

I move about on the West Coast, Demerara, where there is a housing shortage at places like Leonora and Uitvlugt, and if Government agrees with the kind of policy that is being adopted there, then I would say that they are not looking after those people properly. Government should adopt a more liberal policy so that these people would be able to own their own houses and to barter for better wages. Their houses should be in such a con-

dition as not to be eyesores to people who come from abroad and also to those who are interested in their welfare. I will support this motion, but I repeat that it does not go far enough.

Let us look at the rice industry in my constituency, for instance. Government has condemned the ranges in which some of the people are living, and when the Royal Commission came out here one of the members said they were not fit for human beings to live in. What has Government done, however? They have accepted the principle of the compulsory acquisition of land, but that is all. They have also accepted the principle set out in the Venn Commission that these people be removed to better areas, but they have not gone beyond the mere acceptance of the principle. The Law Officers of the Crown know that the law is not being made applicable to these people, and if I were a sugar estate proprietor I would have agreed to the exchange of front lands for back lands, but I would insist on receiving payment for drainage through my trenches.

Whether a local Authority or a village district is set up in any of these areas it would have to be drained through the neighbouring sugar estate, or it would have to instal its own drainage system which would be a very

expensive matter. The sugar producers have the drainage situation in their hands and I do not blame them because they have spent a lot of money on it and they have to give returns to their shareholders. Any company that spends money must endeavour to show returns to its shareholders because it is not a charitable institution, but Government is there to protect the workers.

I would like to know whether Government has accepted the policy that the people who are being removed from the sugar estates should be given sufficient land to build homes on, and that these lands should be freehold property to those who agree to buy at reasonable prices? The lands should not be sold at exorbitant prices, because no worker will be able to pay such prices. Government should accept this principle of allowing these people to live on their own lands in some form or fashion, so that they would be free to barter their labour to the sugar estates.

The PRESIDENT: As it is getting on towards 5 p.m., Council will adjourn until 2 p.m., tomorrow, when we will continue the debate on this motion. The hon. Mover is leaving the Colony shortly.