

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 1950

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

### PRESENT:

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. W. J. Raatgever (Nominat'ed).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. G. H. Smellie (Nominated)

The Hon. J. Carter (Georgetown South).

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

The Hon. L. A. Luckhoo (Nominated)

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 2nd of November, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

### PAPERS LAID

The following documents were laid on the table:—

The Report of the Public Information Officer for the year 1949—(The Colonial Secretary).

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council held on the 26th of October, 1950—(The Financial Secretary & Treasurer).

### UNOFFICIAL NOTICES.

#### FUTURE OPERATION OF TRANSPORT SERVICES

Mr. ROTH gave notice of the following motion:—

“WHEREAS during the past ten years Government has spent on the Steamer Services the sum of \$5,783,705, or an average of \$578,370 per year, with a resulting working deficit of \$1,579,819 or an average of \$157,982 per year, and on the Inland Transport Road Service the sum of \$990,971 or an average of \$99,097 per year with a resulting deficit of \$358,603 or an average of \$35,860 per year;

“AND WHEREAS although these transport services are of an essential nature in that it is the duty of Government to provide or have provided transport services to the outlying settlements of the Colony, there is, nevertheless, an economic limit to the losses that can be sustained in operating such services;

“AND WHEREAS it would appear that such economic limit has now been reached;

“BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommends that Government explore, by advertisement or otherwise, the possibilities of handing over these transport services to private contractors on a subsidised basis as was done prior to 1914.”

#### GOVT. BOUNTY TO QUADS

Mr. CARTER gave notice of the following motion :—

“WHEREAS Mrs. Sultan of Plaisance, East Coast, Demerara, recently gave birth to quadruplets;

“AND WHEREAS this family is in extremely indigent circumstances;

“BE IT RESOLVED that this Council recommend to Government :—

- (i) The payment of a substantial sum to be decided on by this Council for the purpose of effecting structural alterations to their dwelling in order to accommodate the quadruplets; and
- (ii) The payment of a regular monthly sum for the maintenance and upkeep of these children until they attain the age of 18 years.”

#### NOTICE OF QUESTIONS

##### FRANK DOBSON'S HIGH RELIEF

Mr. ROTH gave notice of the following questions :—

1. Is it Government's intention to permit the erection on the General Post Office of Frank Dobson's high relief to which there has been so much public opposition?
2. Was Government's approval of this design obtained before Mr. Dobson began work upon it?
3. If the reply to Question 2 is in the negative does Government propose to pay for the work already done out of public funds?

##### BIRTH OF QUADRUPLETS

Dr. JAGAN: Before the Order of the Day is taken I crave your indulgence Sir, to ask that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended for me to move this motion. With your permission I would like to read it:

“WHEREAS on November 5th at the Public Hospital, Georgetown,

quadruplets were born to Mr. and Mrs. Philip Sultan of Plaisance, East Coast, Demerara;

“AND WHEREAS this marks the first occasion for the birth of quadruplets in British Guiana;

“BE IT RESOLVED that this Council records its congratulations to the parents, Mr. and Mrs. P. Sultan, on the birth of the quadruplets and its best wishes for their continued good health.

“AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council recommends that immediate provision be made by Government for the complete warding and care of the quads.”

The PRESIDENT: I do not know that this matter is of such urgency to justify the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders except the Council wishes to express good wishes to the mother and father. To that I agree, but I notice there is a further notice of motion from another Member of the Council on the same subject and with the same object. I cannot regard this as of such urgency as to be taken without notice. Give notice, and then we will consider it in due course. As far as that part of the motion that best wishes for their continued good health is concerned, this Council would agree that the hon. Member may move that. I think the other part of the motion can come up in its turn

Dr. JAGAN: There is urgency in the sense that the parents are becoming alarmed, as they have no provision either to house or adequately take care of the children when they leave hospital. For that reason some pronouncement or decision taken here will help to clarify the situation.

The PRESIDENT: The hon Member can be assured that nothing untoward will happen. A lot of parties are interested in these quads, as the hon. Member knows.

Dr. JAGAN: In view of that I delete the second resolve clause.

The PRESIDENT: There is notice of another motion given and that will be taken in due course. I will see that it is

not delayed. As regards the congratulations to the parents and best wishes for the continued good health of the children that can be moved.

Dr. JAGAN: I move the motion as amended.

Mr. LEE seconded.

The PRESIDENT: The motion is "That this Council records its congratulations to the parents, Mr. and Mrs. P. Sultan on the birth of the quadruplets and its best wishes for their continued good health".

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion adopted.

#### TRINIDAD'S NEW CONSTITUTION.

Dr. SINGH: I also crave your indulgence, Sir, just to mention that two hon. Members of this Council had been invited by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to witness the inauguration of the new Constitution of that Colony. We were well treated, and now it is our opportunity to thank the Government of Trinidad and Tobago through you, Sir, since the invitation came to us through our Government. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the inhabitants of Trinidad and Tobago on having been honoured with an advanced Constitution. As I saw Trinidad before and during the time I was there I felt the people merited some change of Constitution. They have made those two Islands prosperous. The people are industrious and progressive, and I have also witnessed that there is general improvement, educationally, politically and otherwise. Since those people are now the recipients of a new Constitution, I wish them luck, and I do hope that they will exploit that Constitution to its fullest and that they will make it practically workable by showing their merit. I have formed the opinion that it is a preliminary test in order to qualify them for coming events.

As I sat in that Council Hall amongst distinguished guests from the Caribbean — Governors, Honourable Members and Administrators — as well as responsible citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and

watched the proceedings in a very happy mood, there was that typical West Indian morning bright sunlight, at once, Sir, my thoughts went abroad to other places where functions of that kind are held with, perhaps, more pomp and grandeur and colourful background. At the same time I know, especially in the East when potentates or delegates are invited to such a function they usually take presents with them. In our case we went empty-handed, but we went to express our hearty and best wishes. I remember telling them that I hope that God will guide the hands of those men responsible, the legislators and others, so as to fulfil that desire of the people of Trinidad, that desire of contentment and peace. I know that I am not late. Jamaica and the other Islands had sent letters which were read by the Speaker. I am sure we are not too late. After enjoying their hospitality I do think this is the time to do so, and I do hope Government will do it.

Mr. PETERS: Your Excellency, I desire to endorse the utterances of my hon. colleague, Dr. Singh, who like myself enjoyed the honour and privilege, accompanied by our wives, of being guests of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on the occasion of the opening of their Legislature. It was undoubtedly a unique occasion for the Legislatures in these parts. It was unique from many points of view, and if one might name but two — unique first from the standpoint that we who operate down here have had the novel experience of seeing a Speaker presiding over the Legislature of a Sister Colony. One cannot but see in that historic fact something that is prophetic of what is yet to be in respect of most, if not all, of the Legislatures of the Caribbean area. And then again the occasion was unique in that it was the first time, so far as my knowledge and experience and memory can serve me, that we have had this rather eloquent and prophetic gesture on the part of one Legislature inviting not only its next door neighbour but Legislatures far afield in the Caribbean to come over and behold the great things that they were putting into vogue for the first time so far as these Legislatures are concerned. The occasion was great and memorable. One could not but subject oneself to a great

deal of searching of mind in order that one may be able to evaluate that which was being done there on the 20th October of this year of grace, 1950.

We are now almost at the parting of the ways between the two halves of this portentous century, and it is not without some great and divine significance that while we stand on the brink of stepping over from the first half of this 20th century into the second half that we should have the privilege to behold such a great spectacle of the people of a Sister Colony being given an opportunity to try themselves out in a larger measure in respect of their ability or otherwise to govern themselves. It has been a great privilege, and I desire on my own part and on the part of my better half to return words of our heartiest appreciation of all the courtesies extended to us by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I hope that the time is not far distant when we down here may have good cause and just reason to invite them and other Legislatures to come over and share our hospitality.

The PRESIDENT: Hon. Members are aware that I was also privileged to be present at the inauguration of the new Legislative Council in Trinidad, and I would like to endorse what both hon. Members who have just spoken have said. It was a unique occasion for the people of that Colony and it was a matter of particular interest to us in view of the appointment of a Commission which will be here, I hope, in a month's time to consider major constitutional reform in British Guiana. I am sure the whole Council would wish what has been expressed by hon. Members to be conveyed to the Government of Trinidad and to the new Legislative Council and our appreciation of the kind invitation they sent to us and of our best wishes for the success of their new Constitution, and that I will certainly do.

#### ORDER OF THE DAY.

##### BILLS — FIRST READING.

On motions by the ATTORNEY-GENERAL seconded by Mr. RAATGEVER the following Bills were read a first time:-

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to render the owners of dogs liable for

injuries done to cattle by dogs; to provide better protection from dogs; and for purposes connected therewith."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Matrimonial Causes Ordinance with respect to the dissolution of marriage and for purposes connected therewith."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Constabulary Ordinance by requiring officers to take the oath of office; by making provision for taking the measurements, photographs and finger print impressions of persons in lawful custody; by extending the provisions of the Principal Ordinance relating to the discipline of the Force; by establishing a Police Federation; by establishing a Special Reserve Police Force; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Coconut Products (Control) Ordinance, 1935, by the repeal of those provisions relating to copra brokers and by the abolition of the Copra Brokers Board."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Post and Telegraph Ordinance, Chapter 185, with respect to the grant of licences to instal, use or work amateur wireless stations."

#### GRATUITY TO MR. D. MOSES.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move:

"That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 5 of the 19th of October, this Council approves of the grant of a gratuity of \$373.84 to Mr. D. Moses, ex-Charge Operator of the Mosquito Control Service, Medical Department, who resigned from that Service with effect from the 1st of November, 1949, on the ground of ill-health."

I do not think it is necessary for me to elaborate on what has already been set out in Your Excellency's Message. It is a sad case of an ex-Government employee who is suffering from some mental strain. He voluntarily resigned from his post, thereby depriving himself of superannuation benefits which would normally have come to him had he been retired on the ground of ill health. After considering the case carefully Government recommends that this gratuity should be paid to him, and in view of the fact that it is not covered by the existing Rules approved

by this Council it is necessary that a formal motion be accepted. I formally move the motion.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I ask the hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer a question before I speak to this motion? Can he say whether all the employees who resigned or were made to resign from the Mosquito Control Service after service of 7 years and over with an average of 225 days per annum, have been given any gratuity? If so, how many of them,

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I could not possibly answer that question without due notice, but I would say this: that the Rules provide, in the case of abolition of posts or compulsory retirement, for superannuation benefits in accordance with these Rules to be paid, and I should have no doubt whatever that if there are employees of the Mosquito Control Service who were eligible they would have got their gratuities. If the hon. Member would give formal notice of his question I would investigate the matter.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I will ask the question on another occasion.

Motion agreed to.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE APRIL JUNE, 1950.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move:

"That, this Council approves of the Supplementary Estimate for the quarter ended 30th June, 1950, which has been laid on the table."

This Supplementary Estimate, involving a total of \$1,818,561, covers the three months ended on the 30th June, 1950, and as Members know, all the items have been carefully gone into by the Finance Committee on the monthly schedules of additional provision which are submitted to that body. Consequently I do not propose to move into Committee of the Council unless any Member wishes to do so, but I think Members would wish me to remind them at least of some of the more important items which make up this somewhat formidable total. An analysis indicates that items falling under our

Development Plan comprise the heaviest amounts. Those items total \$246,913, of which the Forestry Officers' quarters, the reconditioning of the Mental Hospital and the erection of the Technical Institute are the largest. Then there is a very large sum of \$740,436 which relates to the rehabilitation programme of the Railway and Steamer services. Another very large item is \$420,788 in connection with the rehabilitation and relief measures arising out of the December—January floods. We also have some re-votes of unexpended balances, and there are a few items under the Development and Welfare Act which amount to \$49,982. So that actually the new items of excess votes related to the current year's services are relatively small in amount. I do not propose to move into Committee and I hope that the Council will pass the motion as it stands.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put, and agreed to.

#### CHRISTIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (INC.) BILL, 1950.

On a motion by Mr. PETERS seconded by Dr. JAGAN, a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to incorporate the Christian Catholic Church" was read the first time.

#### DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION, A COLONIAL QUESTION.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I beg to move:

"WHEREAS British Guiana is essentially an agricultural country and this pertains chiefly to the Coastal Belt of the Colony which is approximately 6' below sea level;

AND WHEREAS it should be the Colony's complete responsibility and obligation to offset this natural disability of the Coastal Belt because:—

- (a) The entire population must benefit directly or indirectly from the agricultural development of the Coastal Belt and an increased production of food comprising of meat, milk, poultry, eggs, etc.;
- (b) Increased production by better drainage will tend to lessen the cost of living of the entire population;

- (c) It is to the interest of the Colony to establish a strong and prosperous peasantry; and
- (d) Encouragement is vitally needed for the excess and unemployed population to turn to the land for a living;

AND WHEREAS the present practice is to establish Local Authorities if there is not already one for collection of maintenance expenses of Drainage and Irrigation, e.g., the Eastern Mahai-cony District — and this becomes so burdensome upon the farmers that it is uneconomic for them to cultivate their lands;

AND WHEREAS in most of the areas of the Colony farmers are in a state of distraction and constant sense of frustration over the huge loss in crops which they sustain year after year and the added burden of having to pay high rates and taxes;

AND WHEREAS in many cases farmers are compelled to abandon their lands or sell out completely because of these difficulties and mounting cost of living;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council regarding the matter as a Colonial question recommend for adoption that the Government of the Colony meet all expenses for the carrying out of all Drainage, Irrigation and Sea Defence Works and the maintenance thereof;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Honourable Council adopting the principle thereof recommend that Government take immediate steps to ensure a more effective drainage and irrigation policy in the Colony than at present."

With regard to this motion I desire to ask permission to move certain amendments, copies of which I have caused to be circulated a while ago. As the last paragraph of the preamble I propose to add the following:—

"And Whereas sugar plantations in the Colony undertake their own drainage and irrigation for sugar estates;"

I also wish to add to the first resolve clause the following words:—

"save and except drainage and irrigation as relate to sugar plantations in the Colony."

I regard this motion as being extremely opportune because of certain circumstances, in some respects distressing, both from the point of view of those who have had cause to strike as well as to the Government and the Departments concerned which have been affected by the strike. They are circumstances, however, which give the clearest indication of what is happening in the Colony of British Guiana. They surely indicate one thing, and that is that there is serious economic stress, and that the people are feeling the pinch.

This motion seeks to make provision particularly for those people who live in the rural districts of the Colony. It was introduced by me in this Legislature at a time when the Government had revised salaries and wages of Government employees to the extent of \$3 million. At that time the Salaries Commission expressed the opinion that there was no hope whatever that the cost of living would go down, but rather that it would rise, so much so that provision was made for an increase in the number of points in the Cost of Living Index above what it was at the time of the presentation of the Commission's report. We now know that the cost of living has risen to an alarming height, with the result that people of the Colony are most obviously feeling the pinch. Within recent times much has been done to relieve the pressure upon civil servants and Government employees in the lower grades, the wage earners, and much has been done as regards the pegging of prices, the remission of Customs duties and so forth to assist the people in Georgetown, but what has been done in any appreciable way to assist the people in the rural districts of the Colony? Very little, if anything, has been done to relieve the burdens of those people. I must recall that I said here that instead of granting loans to farmers at the high rate of 6 per cent. interest we should have granted them interest free to the farmers who were pursuing a very useful line of work in producing what we most need. At any rate the rate of interest should not have been more than 3 per cent.

It has been said over and over that villagers are apt to sell their holdings

and gravitate to Georgetown. It is a very regrettable feature, and something which they should be dissuaded from doing, because we know that conditions in Georgetown, particularly housing conditions, are bad, and such gravitation would not only cause greater hardship on the people in Georgetown but also upon those who come into the City. As part of the Government we have to think very seriously about what can be done to prevent this exodus from the country districts, and in what way we can encourage not only those in the country to remain there but those who have already come to the City to return to the countryside and follow more lucrative pursuits than just looking around for jobs in the City.

When we realize that this is an agricultural country the problems of irrigation and drainage must inevitably come into the picture, and we must give the people a system of irrigation and drainage in order to encourage them not only to find more lands to cultivate, but that they may find it much easier to cultivate their lands than they are presently experiencing. British Guiana is not barren; it has vast expanses of arable and cultivable lands. That is one of its blessings. Hundreds of thousands of acres are virtually begging to be cultivated along the banks of the Demerara river. On the East Bank of the river sugar estates have been abandoned without the slightest effort to convert those abandoned lands into thriving industry and cultivation which would provide food not only for ourselves but for the West Indies as well. It is true that British Guiana is 6 ft. below sea level, but there are countries in the world, particularly Holland, which suffer from a similar handicap. If the Imperial Government is primarily responsible for the development of this Colony and it is the responsibility of the people of the Colony to get down to the task of carrying out that development, then what is the duty of the Imperial Government in so far as this disability is concerned? In my opinion, in view of the fact that it is a physical disability, it is the duty of the Government of this Colony to offset the difficulties caused by that disability. I say that because of the fact that the people of the Colony are footing the entire bill for our sea defences. Why? Because

we have to keep the sea from our shores, and it is equally important after we have kept the sea out to see that we have proper drainage through those sea defences.

It was clearly demonstrated during the serious floods early this year that large agricultural areas, such as on the East Coast of Demerara and Wakenaam, are easily inundated. It is quite clear that such areas cannot depend upon tidal forces for proper drainage, for as soon as the tide comes in the sluices have to be closed. The result is that a large volume of water is locked in on the coastlands. That is what I regard as the physical disability — something which forces us to realize that it is a problem which we have to cope with generally throughout the Colony. It is just there. If, therefore, we regard it as a colonial question, something for which the entire Colony must be responsible, in what way could we approach the whole question? In doing that we must consider certain aspects, one of which is that if the Colony as a whole drains and irrigates the entire coastlands it would not only be discharging an obligation but would be making an investment which would pay dividends which would probably offset completely the burden of the expenditure undertaken by the Colony. In other words, if the Colony spent \$50,000 (I suggest that figure because our Consulting Engineer has put forward one scheme alone which is to cost \$43,000) —

The PRESIDENT: Forty-three million dollars.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Let us say that we will put up \$75 million. That would include every other scheme he is thinking of at the moment.

THE PRESIDENT: No, it would not. It would be about \$160 million, if the hon. Member wants the figure.

Mr. DEBIDIN: In tackling this problem I prefer not to go to the other extreme. We know that there are plans for drainage and irrigation which, if undertaken, would involve considerable expenditure, but I venture to say that the Colony would be fully compensated, and within

a comparatively short time, by reason of the fact that we would be able to produce food not only for ourselves but sufficient quantities to enable us to secure permanent export markets. That is important. How can we ever think of making use of our increasing population except we have avenues in which to absorb that excess population? Thousands of boys are leaving school, and their parents are distracted and experiencing a sense of frustration as to what to do with those boys. What are they to do? At the moment most of us are alarmed because every day parents ask us to try to get jobs for their boys. That is almost impossible in these days. The result is that some boys wander about the City and join the ranks of the hooligans. We cannot countenance such a state of things. In my opinion a tremendous effort must be made by this Government, or by the Imperial Government, to see that this Colony is developed to an extent commensurate with its possibilities. In order to achieve that we must tackle the problem of drainage and irrigation. It is a big problem but I hope it will be solved, at least partially, at the earliest possible time.

The motion before the Council is not to raise \$100 million but for the remission of all drainage and irrigation rates being levied in the various districts, which the people are experiencing great difficulty in paying. I have heard it said that the African people of the Colony are leaving their lands, and that the Indians are buying them up. That is apparently true, and the reason for it is that the villages, which are chiefly African, are unable to pay those rates and taxes. I venture to think that it is because of the difficulty which the villagers experience in paying those drainage rates in addition to their general village rates, that they have to abandon their holdings, and those who have been able to accumulate money by thrift are able to buy them quite easily. That is the truth, and most of us know how many properties are being sold at execution every week because of non-payment of rates and taxes. I am not suggesting that many of the properties which are sold at execution are not being sold for the purpose of obtaining title, because that is a convenient way of getting title, but we know

that many of them are sold because the proprietors are unable to pay the rates and taxes. In the interest of the people of these villages, who are finding it difficult in these days on account of the high cost of living and who find that the returns from their holdings are so small that they are unable to live on whatever they receive from their farms and yet pay rates and taxes, we find that some help must be given to these people in the form, as I am asking, of remission of the drainage rates. I am rather encouraged in bringing forward this motion, because of the fact that Sea Defences are free and also because of a very important fact that Government is already footing the bill by a large amount, in some cases by nearly 60 per cent. Why not go the whole way if you can give as much as that?

Sir, I would like to make reference to some figures which would show what I mean. I have here an extract showing the Local Authorities' Drainage Rates in respect of all the villages of the Colony for 1950, and I propose to take just some of them which will illustrate what I am thinking of. I take the typical example of Buxton and Friendship. Buxton and Friendship Village is charged \$4.87 per acre, and it has an acreage of 2,176 acres. The drainage rates amount to \$10,597.18, and they have to contribute \$2,306.56 and the Government is contributing \$8,290.56, a considerable amount in this case. The fact remains that Buxton and Friendship is one of those fairly large villages. They say it is larger than New Amsterdam. (laughter). It has a total expenditure of \$30,206.51, so that if they have to pay for drainage rates at the rate of \$4.87 per acre, one can appreciate what their general taxes would be in so far as all expenditure for the village is concerned. It is something which will bear down upon them. For example, if they do have to pay 6 per cent. or \$6 per acre — I do not know whether it is by percentage or the acre — an additional \$4 per acre must mean quite a lot, and I feel it is something which, if granted by the Government, would mean a relief in so far as village industries are concerned of an amount of over \$2,000. That relief will be to a greater extent appreciated



in the smaller villages which hardly can pay anything at all.

I wish to refer to the village of Plaisance as a typical small village. Plaisance has to pay a total amount of \$7,226 as drainage rates, but because Plaisance is a small place of only 505 acres it is made to pay \$14.31 per acre. One can appreciate at once how much that will press upon the people of Plaisance. Government gives them assistance to the extent of \$6,000, but they have to find \$1,004. It is because of the large percentage or proportion which this bears to the acreage that Government has given more proportionately than as in the case of Buxton and Friendship. The question I will ask again is, if after going the extent of contributing \$6,000 why not go the whole way and pay the extra \$1,000. The fact remains that they have to pay \$14.31 per acre.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member's arithmetic is not correct. He said the village pays \$1,000 and the Government \$6,000. If the village has 500 acres and pays \$1,000 then that is \$2 per acre so far as the village is concerned.

Mr. DEBIDIN, I am reading from the extract from the Commissioner of Local Government. The drainage rate charged is \$14.31 per acre. They have their own way of calculating according to the work done in the village. This is what is put forward as being the taxable amount. It does amount to \$7,226 to be paid. It does seem to be correct that of that \$6,000 is paid by Government and \$1,000 by the village.

The PRESIDENT: The village pays \$1,000 and Government \$6,000. The acreage is 500. Therefore the village pays \$2 per acre. That is simple arithmetic. It does not pay \$14.31 per acre.

Mr. DEBIDIN: That is what each man of the village would have to pay. But, Sir, \$2 per acre added to what they have to pay as general taxes will give quite a considerable amount. I do not know what is the valuation. I think they pay taxes on house and land, so it may be fairly high for these people. The point must be made then, that it is not only

the drainage rates which are leviable by parate execution but it is the general taxes as well. If it is a question of paying \$2 per acre per annum, the people can do that. It is the general taxes plus this drainage rate that makes it more difficult for them and something of which we are asking to give them some remission. I want to make the further point. In the first place I would like to point out that in so far the villagers are concerned — and this goes for nearly all the rural districts of the Colony — they are their own employers and in that way Government can make up for them for this increased cost of living. Is it equitable to consider the cost of living in respect of Government employees? Is it equitable to think of raising the wages of estate employees when there can be no machinery whatever to assist the people who are their own employers—that is, they are peasant farmers — to meet this rising cost of living which has been imposed upon the people by Devaluation, as we know? Therefore when we try to answer the question we find that there are very few ways in which we can make up to these people and do as much for them as has been done for the Government employees and other employees, whether on the sugar plantations or in the commercial houses in the street. We can remit Customs duties; everybody will get the benefit of that. If the cost of living is still high for other individuals, then it must be still high for them. Yet they get nothing, whereas the Government employees get something.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: What about the guaranteed prices for their products which this Council has undertaken to pay them? They get relief through those prices for their products.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I anticipate that, but I prefer that to come in the reply. As it has been raised, may I state that the guaranteed prices that have been given are not prices calculated to be lucrative to the people, for in many cases it may be helpful to those nearby as the Canals Polder, to whom, perhaps, the prices are far more lucrative when transportation and other factors are taken into account. But I venture to say that the guaranteed prices

which are given for agricultural products are not in my opinion sufficiently high as to give the necessary compensation for the increased cost of living. It merely tides the people over.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I must challenge the hon. Member's statement. The Government Produce Depot of this Colony pays the prices on the spot, whether it is in Morawhanna, and the loss is borne by the taxpayers of the Colony, and it is a very considerable amount.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Nominated Member is correct. The purchases are made on the spot and the amount is paid by the Government.

Mr. DEBIDIN: If that is so, I must accept what the hon. Member has said. He is a member of that Committee and I am sure he is right, but he still has to get over the other question. In one area a man may be subject to excessive flood over a long period more than in another place or, more than that, to pests, etc. There are several other factors which must bear down on the various areas which must vary the cost of production for each area. I have heard — and that is what I would like him to explain, but whether he has taken a sufficiently wide enough survey to say that what I am going to say is wrong I don't know — complaints are coming through that in some of the products it is uneconomical to produce them and the result is the people are not worrying. The pegging of prices, I feel, is an important thing more to Georgetown than to the farmers. It is helpful to the farmers in this respect; they get a market and the losses are borne by the Government. But we have to remember that is an encouragement to get food for Georgetown. Had that not been so, it might have been a different story.

Let us see what has been done. It is a case of quits in so far as the guaranteed prices are concerned. Eight cents per pint for milk until recently can never be an economic price for milk; \$2.70 per bag of padi up to recently can never be an economic price for padi; and so it is with other products. Therefore, I am stating by and large that the people in the rural districts of the Colony have still to find

some means of meeting their cost of living. Remission of Customs duties will help them to a very small extent and that is only those in certain areas, but this particular measure which I am asking this Council to find favour in, I feel sure, would be a very broad and wide means of giving the rural districts some assistance in so far as the rising cost of living is concerned. The extent of that is just a matter of taking the figures for 1950 — \$193,810. That is the entire drainage amount to be paid by the various drainage areas including Local Authorities. So if we were to take the amount which the Local Authorities have to contribute we would see another story. It amounts to \$54,221.38, and we know that every villager, every proprietor in the village, must pay this drainage rate. This relief which is being sought is going to go widely through the villages as well as other areas not within the Local Authorities, and so one can appreciate how widely this motion will assist the people.

Government is contributing a sum of \$78,250, and the rates collectable from all the areas including Local Authorities amount to \$193,810. Looking at this extract which has been supplied me by the Drainage Board, a remarkable feature is this: Up to the 30th September, 1950, there is an amount of \$75,394 outstanding to be collected. I must refer to the fact also that the Essequibo Coast could not pay their rates and a petition was sent to this Government which gave it very long and very careful consideration, and as a result there has been some remission in so far as the amount to be collected and time for payment of the other portion has been given to the people of Essequibo. I would also refer to another feature which, if taken into consideration, we would see how much help the remission would give to the people. There are certain areas which have never been under the Drainage Board, but just because certain drainage works became necessary and had to be done legislation had to be passed to declare new drainage areas. I am speaking of an area quite recently brought into the picture — the Eastern Mahaicony District between Park and Abary. The people never had before then any Local Authority and collectable rates to pay. But what has happened now? Just be-

cause of the necessity to open the Bellamy Canal as Colonial Development work and because it was done and two sluices were put on either side — on the Mahaicony River side and the Abary River side — two watchmen had to be employed at \$720 per annum each, I think, and an Overseer had to be employed also, it became necessary to declare that whole area a Local Authority. Those people never wanted anything like that. They never bargained for that when the Bellamy Canal was dug. But in order to pay two watchmen and an Overseer a Local Authority had to be established; all that just to collect drainage rates.

If I may refer to what has just become the lot of those people, the rates collectable from the Mahaicony—Abary amount to \$23,149 and Government's proportion of that is "Nil". So those people have to pay the whole of the rates and taxes. We know as a fact that area is a very poor producing area. It is a typical rice producing area and very poor in its production. It seems to me then, that something has been imposed as a necessity upon a very large area because you can see from the amount of rates collectable that it must be a very large area. Because of the necessity for irrigation and drainage this Local Authority has been established. It seems then, that when we are going to make this whole matter a Colonial question we may be achieving two things — we will be encouraging other districts to improve their condition and to have more production, as they will see that their drainage works are going to be done in future free of the expense of an overseer as the Government Drainage Department will be looking after the payment for the works as it does anywhere else, thus eliminating the necessity to have an Overseer and a Local Authority to collect the rates. It will also serve as a stimulus and more than that, to my mind if this whole matter becomes a colonial question, the people themselves throughout the Colony would begin to look for new areas of land and probably open to Government the way where development can be achieved. It is something not to be overlooked and something, I earnestly appeal in the consideration of this motion, which is an objective well

worthy of achievement — that the people of the districts be encouraged.

My whole object in bringing this motion is not only to see that the people receive some assistance in the way of meeting up their increased cost of living, but also that the very people in the rural districts be encouraged by an act of Government in the remission of their drainage rates and the making of this a colonial question to stick to the land, to develop the coastal belt more, to have greater courage in meeting the forces of Nature—floods and drought — and to produce more for the Colony which is so vital a necessity. It is an important thing to be taken into account when considering this motion. If we are spending from our 1950 Budget the sum of \$286,870 for Sea Defences and Drainage let us take that as Government expenditure and not grumble about it. Let us free the people of it. Do not let us ask for a return of part of that money. Let us try to give them the encouragement they need. This is, as I said, one way in which we can make them appreciate that we are not only thinking of other classes of people who are earning and whose salaries should be improved but also of the self-employed who have little scope of getting benefit from what Government has been doing to meet the high cost of living. It is a necessity. It is a very highly moral and equitable scheme, and I commend this motion to this Council and trust that we will pass it. I had nearly forgotten an important thing — why I ask to exempt the sugar estates. The sugar plantations in this Colony are spending a matter of \$2 million on irrigation and drainage. It is a figure which has been given me. I do not know if it would be substantiated by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Morrish. Their system of drainage and irrigation is something which is highly developed, and it has not only to do with irrigation and drainage but also with the navigation of punts and a variety of other things.

Mr. MORRISH: To a point of correction! The figure of \$2 million is approximately correct, but it does not include anything for navigation.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I shall explain further why I say it includes navigation for

punts. The sugar plantations in this Colony, unlike those in the Islands where the land is hilly, have to contend with flat lands. Because they are below sea level, they are subject to floods. Consequently we have every sugar plantation having a network of canals and in any heavy rainfall if the canals are flooded there must be pumps going to get the water off. Another thing is, these canals must be kept full of water, and that is why we have the conservancies for which they pay high rates to conserve the necessary water in order to have the water in these canals at a certain height for the punts to travel in them. There must be a certain amount of effort to keep the water in the navigation canals at a certain level throughout the year. That is why I say that their system of canals is something which must affect the cost of \$2 million. Be that as it may, if we are thinking of making drainage and irrigation a colonial question, and of the necessity of taking over the expenditure of \$2 million, I feel sure it would be too much to ask the people of the Colony to do. I am thinking of that \$286,000, and that is why I read from the Budget Statement. If there is free drainage and irrigation a vast number of people would be helped as against just the proprietors of the sugar estates. The Colony is spending directly and indirectly large sums of money which run into millions, and it does not seem to me unreasonable to ask that drainage and irrigation be made a colonial question, save and except on the sugar plantations, or that it is making any discrimination whatever against the sugar estates, for if they were to have their \$2 million then there would be necessity to reimpose the tax of so much per ton which the Financial Secretary has had withdrawn. I commend the motion to the Council's favourable consideration.

Dr. GONSALVES: I second the motion for the purpose of discussion.

Mr. MORRISH: As Chairman of both the Drainage and Irrigation Board and the Sea Defence Board this motion comes very near home. As I see the position, Sir, the two matters of drainage and irrigation and sea defences are not at all parallel. Sea defences is definitely a matter which affects the whole

Colony, and very definitely a matter which must be controlled by some central authority. In my own experience I know how years ago one estate proprietor maintained good sea defence but, unfortunately, he had a bad neighbour who did not maintain any sea defence, or if he maintained any it was very poorly maintained. The result was that the man who took a great deal of care with his sea defence was very often outflanked and eventually had to retire his own sea defence line. I have seen that in many areas in this Colony, and that was one of the chief reasons behind the decision to make the sea defences a colonial question. On the other hand I find it difficult to see why the inhabitants of Georgetown, New Amsterdam or the Rupununi District should have to contribute to the drainage and irrigation costs of any estate, whatever it may be, which is private property. However, the fact is that, as the hon. Member has said, the estimated cost of drainage and irrigation for this year is \$193,810, which is approximately correct, and of that sum Government contributes some \$80,000, which means the general taxpayers of the Colony. In other words the inhabitants of the Colony are already assisting to pay for the drainage and irrigation of private property, and the motion suggests that they should pay some more. I find it hard to think that that is equitable. If I may quote from the motion, the first resolution reads:—

“Be it Resolved that this Honourable Council regarding the matter as a colonial question recommend for adoption that the Government of the Colony meet *all* expenses for the carrying out of all drainage, irrigation, and sea defence works and the maintenance thereof, save and except drainage and irrigation as relate to sugar plantations in the Colony.”

Now I am sure that the hon. Member and mover of the motion cannot possibly mean all drainage and irrigation works. The Colony's bill at the moment is approximately \$194,000 for main drainage and irrigation only, and if *all* drainage and irrigation is intended that bill could be multiplied by 4, 5 or 6. Anyone's guess is as good as mine. Main drainage is only a small part of the drainage of lands

There is a further point in respect of

which I think the figure of \$194,000 does not convey a true picture, because my understanding is that villages and Local Authorities do actually expend within declared drainage areas a further sum of approximately \$100,000. It will be seen, Sir, that if all drainage in the present 23 declared drainage areas were really intended it would mean internal drainage as well. For instance, on the East Coast the Drainage Board looks after main drainage as far as the railway line. All drainage, main and internal, would involve going right to the back—a different picture altogether—and I suggest that if all drainage is meant it would mean that we can all sit back and have a huge staff of Government officers on all our estates and say "Government please go ahead and do the rest; we will sit back and watch you grow our crops for us." I do not think that is at all a desirable state of affairs, but if it is to be carried to the extent of all drainage I suggest that we would not be getting very far from that state.

The hon. Member referred to proposals for new additional drainage schemes. He suggested a figure of \$75 million but my understanding is that schemes are under consideration to the extent of approximately \$150 million, and I understand that those schemes would be for main drainage and irrigation only. What the figure would be if internal drainage were included I cannot say. However, if those schemes, desirable as they probably are, do come into being, and if they are to be maintained it appears to me that there would be a bill of some \$5,250,000 per annum for maintenance of main drainage schemes only, nothing being allowed in that figure for interest on capital expended or for amortization of the capital works over possibly some 40 years. I think the whole question is not to be viewed from the position of what is the bill for main drainage only at the moment, but must be viewed from a long-term point of view of what expenditure the Colony would be faced with for main drainage works only if these schemes materialise. As I see it the sum would be a fantastic one if it is to be all drainage works, and it seems to me that it would be far beyond the

financial capacity of this Colony for many a long year to come.

I cannot help repeating that drainage and irrigation are things for the persons who will benefit to pay for. The hon. Member referred to the rates in certain districts. He referred to Buxton and Friendship and also to Mahaicony-Abary. As I see it the rates for Mahaicony-Abary work out at about 4 cents per acre per week. That does not seem to me a large sum, and it is difficult to think that an acre of land cannot produce 4 cents per week to keep itself free of debt and produce a great deal more. In the case of Buxton-Friendship it works out at less than 10 cents per week, of which Government contributes 80 per cent. There again I do not think that is a very dreadful rate, but whether that rate is high or not I repeat again that in my view the person who benefits should be the person to pay. It may be that in some way or another Government might provide the capital, whether in the form of a loan or a grant I do not think it matters, but surely it is commonsense to say that the maintenance costs, once capital expenditure has been made, should be for the persons who will benefit to provide. The hon. Member also referred to Essequibo, one of the largest districts in the Colony but which finds itself in the greatest difficulty. Your Excellency appointed a Committee to investigate conditions in Essequibo and I am glad to say that we will be able to put our report in your hands in a very short time.

Dr. JAGAN: I rise to support this motion, feeling that unless we begin to think very seriously of this question of drainage and irrigation this Colony will perpetually be obtaining small revenue and struggling every year to balance our budget, without attempting in any way to tackle the very serious problem of the very low standard of living of the people of the Colony. We have in this Colony two very valuable assets—human power and land. It is a curious thing that although we have a very small population and so much land the people have not enough land to till and properly cultivate. When we are faced with statistics and we compare British Guiana with the West Indies, we find places like Barbados and

Jamaica very densely populated. The figures per square mile are very high while in British Guiana there are about 10 persons per square mile. But those figures give a very false picture because, although we have vast areas of land in this Colony and our population is small, I submit that in this Colony there is definitely land hunger. Unless we can make sufficient and properly irrigated and drained land available, conditions in this Colony will remain backward. I did hear of the large sums of money which are involved, and I did hear the chuckles as if to say "Where is all that money to come from, and what a tremendous problem it is?" One hon. Member quoted some time ago the saying "Where there is no vision the people perish."

I think we will have to begin to think in terms of 50 or 100 years from now. If we are to tackle these problems we have to face up to them. We have been pursuing a policy of drift, if I may call it so, for nearly 150 years, and that policy has not got us very far. Where the money is to come from? That is the big question. All along we have been depending for our revenues on Customs duties and, to a lesser extent, on income tax. As prices rise in the exporting countries, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, the revenue of this Colony has increased to the great annoyance of the working class people in this Colony. Must we continue to think in those terms? I would much prefer that we should depend for our revenue on the production of the people of this Colony. I would much prefer to think that we have to spend additional sums of money on drainage and irrigation which would ultimately benefit the Colony, because we would be producing so much more and the revenue of the Colony would increase to a comparative degree.

On the Essequibo Coast sugar estates have been abandoned possibly because of drainage problems. In Demerara and Berbice we still have some sugar estates, but in many cases a great many persons cannot get adequate work to do on those estates, and also not enough land which they can cultivate in their spare time. The sugar producers have given us some very illuminating figures. They say that

on all the estates of the Colony today there are about 12,000 families of whom there are only about 7,000 who can be considered essential workers, while the others are part-time and non-essential workers. There is no real plan up to now to remove that excess population of non-essential workers comprising nearly 5,000 families. I am speaking of estates alone and not of the villages surrounding those estates, where the problem is just as acute. There has been no plan to devise ways and means to remove those people to areas where they can produce crops and thereby increase the national income of this country. I have examined the figures of lands which are available to those people who work as labourers on sugar estates, for the cultivation of rice and ground provisions. I find that not more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre of land can be given to a family for rice cultivation, and not more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre for the cultivation of ground provisions. I submit that such small parcels of land cannot be considered adequate for a family who are not employed on a sugar estate or have no other means of livelihood. An acre of land in these days cannot provide even the very minimum subsistence standard. Most agricultural economists are today agreed that for a family to live fairly decently they must have at their disposal at least 8 or 10 acres of land.

In the villages the problem is just as acute. In my constituency there has been an attempt to induce the people to go in for cane-farming. Many of them are willing to do so, realizing the benefits to be derived, because at the present time cane is yielding the highest price. Some of the people have gone to the extent of adopting the advice of the Department of Agriculture to flood fallow their lands, realizing from practical example that it helps the fertility of their soil and increases the yield, but because they have only two or three acres at their disposal, and because in those two or three acres they have permanent fruit trees—in some cases coconuts, pears, mangoes, etc.—they are very reluctant to convert those lands into permanent cane cultivation and lose the income they are deriving at the present time from their fruit trees. Therefore the problem confronting those people is not so much that they do not want to

flood fallow their lands, but that they cannot get more land. There are shortages in the supply of all local produce except sugar and rice. We have a shortage of citrus fruits in this Colony. I came from one of the Islands a little while ago where I was fortunate to see a peasant selling citrus fruits in the streets utilize one of the oranges to wash his hands. No doubt it is because the soil there is so fertile and a lot of land is available to those people that they can go in for extensive and intensive cultivation.

The PRESIDENT: Shortage of land is more acute in the Islands!

Mr. JAGAN: I was referring to the Dominican Republic. We have in this Colony the problem of recurring oil shortages every now and then, not having enough fats to make soaps, etc, and there is no real excuse in a country like this for a shortage of coconuts, because I am sure if every farmer had available lands he could readily put two or three acres under permanent coconut cultivation. Sir, it seems to me that the quicker we get down to this particular problem of drainage and irrigation in this Colony the quicker we will be walking on the road to the solution of our economic ills in this Colony. I have one suggestion to make, and that is to see where this money is to come from in respect of this huge expenditure, the amount of which was given to us a moment ago so far as this master plan of irrigation and drainage is concerned. Only today we read in the papers where increased grants are being voted by Parliament to augment the sums already given for Colonial Development and Welfare, and I want that this Council seek from His Majesty's Government by passing a resolution immediate aid, not for the minor things which they have been doing in this Colony with reference to Colonial Development and Welfare but this major problem of drainage and irrigation. I have before me some figures of the amount which was actually spent by Colonial Development and Welfare during the period since it has been in operation. As you know, the 1940 Act provided for a sum of £5 million to be spent annually in all the Colonies. For the first five years, that means, £25 million was to be spent. But in 1945 that

sum was increased from £5 million to £12 million per annum, and, up to 1949 an additional sum of £48 million was available, making a total of £73 million from 1940 to 1949. That is what was voted by His Majesty's Government under Colonial Development and Welfare for the various Colonies, etc.

But the figures, which I have at hand, show that up to the end of 1949 only the sum of £25½ million, was spent out of that sum of £73 million, leaving a total of £47½ million if my subtraction is correct. From these figures it does appear that His Majesty's Government for some reason or other has not been spending all the money which it was prepared to spend under Colonial Development and Welfare. £47½ million which has been allocated up to 1949 and which has not been spent comes up to a formidable sum, approximately \$237 million (British Guiana currency). I feel this Council would do well to consider this matter seriously and appeal to His Majesty's Government, if some provision cannot be found whereby out of this tremendous saving which has been made this colossal problem of drainage and irrigation in British Guiana can be tackled by His Majesty's Government. I know that a Commission is to come here to enquire into our Constitution. A similar Commission came to us in 1927 and after looking into our financial situation changed our Constitution. To some it is felt that a backward Constitution had been given to us in 1928. But even though that had been done in 1928, I submit, our ills have not been cured, and I am suggesting in all seriousness that this Council view this matter very seriously and appeal to His Majesty's Government and, if necessary point out to this Commission which is soon coming out here that the drainage and irrigation problem is our principal problem, and unless we can solve it first it is no use talking about increasing the population of British Guiana or encouraging the surplus population of the West Indies to come to British Guiana. There is a vital and urgent necessity for doing that. In Barbados, Jamaica and the other small Islands there is the urgent problem of over-population and overcrowding, and one way to solve that problem is to make lands available in British Guiana so that we can give enough

land to the people of British Guiana and also to the surplus population of the British West Indies and other West Indian territories. In that way, Sir, we will be having the population which we need—more people more development, more people working, more goods produced and, therefore, taxation and more revenue. That is what is going to solve our problems.

There is one other avenue, Sir, from which we may be able to get help, and that is the U.S.A. We have been hearing a great deal about the Marshall Aid, but so far we have not been fortunate in getting any in these parts. But again I feel that if the United States Government is sincere in its aims for developing backward areas of the world, then it must do so looking at the situation from all points of view. I do not think it should only be looking to the Far East where billions upon billions of dollars are being spent. I think the problem that British Guiana has is as vital as that in the Far East, and if by some means this Government or His Majesty's Government can make a strong case to the U.S.A. to give us a few million dollars to solve the serious problem of drainage and irrigation in this Colony, I feel that the United States Government would probably be doing something now as an experiment which it would not have to do in the future. I do hope, Sir, that this Government—I know that the matter is receiving the attention of Government but I want to appeal that we will be only scratching the surface if we do not undertake this particular problem in this Colony seriously—despite the tremendous amount which is involved and despite the fact it has been said to us that we may not be able to pay maintenance charges and sinking fund charges, will look at this problem boldly and try to find one solution very shortly.

Sir, with respect to the first part of this resolution, I feel like the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Morrish, that at the present time we can give encouragement to the farming community by paying these charges which are levied upon them, however small they may be. Farming is a hazardous occupation in British Guiana. No farmer wants his son to become a farmer, or very few do if he can get

another job. That is not an attitude which should be condoned in our country, and the only way to correct it is to give these people encouragement. A man may pay his village rates, but he finds later on that his crops are destroyed either by floods or drought, or, as we have just heard with the question of rice, too early invasion of the rains which has destroyed a great percentage of the rice crop. These are all hazards which the farmer has to face, and the Government will do well to encourage these people at all cost, especially in view of the fact that of the money which is being spent at the present time Government is bearing the major part. I feel Government can go a little further and spend the balance. Sir, I support this motion as it stands.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I find it a little difficult to make a contribution to the debate, because I must confess I am somewhat disappointed at the manner in which the Mover of the motion dealt with what on the face of it is an extremely comprehensive proposition. I am sure he will forgive me for saying that what he has really said is intended to induce this Council to relieve the existing burden of drainage rates on certain of the village areas, whereas the terms of the motion are of a very comprehensive nature, inasmuch as it seeks to impose a principle on the whole Colony — a principle of charging the whole cost of drainage and irrigation on to the general revenue of the Colony. That is something which is wider in its scope than his speech implies.

Mr. DEBIDIN: To a point of correction or explanation! I think the hon. the Financial Secretary must have been pre-occupied otherwise, because I made it clear in my statement that because Local Authorities are established to collect drainage rates—most of the areas affected are areas controlled by Local Authorities—it would help the villages and Local Authorities a great deal. I made it clear they are just a part of what the motion seeks to achieve and that is, free drainage for the entire Colony.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I think the hon. Member



should have elaborated his point much more fully. For instance, speaking of drainage alone, in this Colony there is the functioning of the Central Drainage and Irrigation Board which governs the schemes and works which are constructed in declared drainage areas. Then again there are drainage facilities within those areas, something which the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Morrish, has referred to as internal drainage. Then there is the drainage within the villages themselves which may not be declared drainage areas. Further there is the private drainage of private properties outside both declared drainage areas and village areas. All those comprise the drainage of the Colony and, strictly speaking, are embodied in the terms of this motion. Somewhat as an afterthought the hon. Member sought to exclude the drainage of the sugar estates of the Colony. But the motion also speaks of irrigation. There is the irrigation which is provided by the works of the Drainage and Irrigation Board in some districts, except Essequibo. There is the famous Lamaha Conservancy Scheme which is an irrigation scheme under a special local authority, the East Demerara Water Supply Commissioners. Then there is the Boerasirie Scheme, another irrigation scheme, and also certain other minor schemes here and there throughout the Colony.

So this motion, if accepted in this form, implies the comprehensive taking over of all these various functions and activities and works, etc., throughout the Colony, and I again say his main argument was not directed to anything of the sort but to figures which he quoted. He quoted \$194,000 as being the cost in 1950 of the maintenance of the main drainage works in the declared areas under the Drainage and Irrigation Board, of which \$78,000 is paid by Government as direct relief to Local Authorities whose areas fall within those declared areas that have to maintain pumps. That is the main object of the relief. There are a few areas so poor that they have to get that relief. That relief is granted specifically because those areas cannot be drained by gravity and have to go to the expense of operating pumps.

The hon. Member sought to make an

analogy between this drainage and irrigation and sea defences. The hon. Nominated Member dealt with that at full length, but I would just like to add this: Sea Defence is a completely different proposition. In the old days we used to refer to the sea problem as "external aggression". I well remember my predecessor putting forward an argument that His Majesty's Government should be invited to take care of the cost of Sea Defences is this Colony, just as much as His Majesty's Government takes care of our protection from external enemies. He did not get far with it. It is true argument that we must protect the whole of the foreshore of this Colony from the sea, but when it comes to the cost of works which are carried out in order to put the land to beneficial use one must apply the principle of direct charge. That is the point. It is, perhaps, that principle from which one secures the imposing of a direct charge levied against the user of that land. There is no analogy between that charge and the charge for protection from the sea.

But what strikes me always as being surprising is the very facile way in which the hon. Member is able to dissociate in his own mind, or distinguish in his own mind, between what he calls the Colony or sometimes the Government in dealing with economic and financial affairs and the people. He seems to assume that here standing on one side is something called the Colony or the Government and it has great resources which it derives from heaven or some other external means which it can use to help the people. Of course, that is a very dangerous fallacy, and it is very common at the present time. So many people seem to think that the Government or the Colony can find means to help the people of the Colony, apart from what the people of the Colony provide for the Government. It is completely fallacious, and here in this very motion, where the preamble speaks about the essentiality of agriculture as an industry in British Guiana, as its vital industry, it is sought to show that in order to keep this vital industry a-going the Government, which must depend on its vital industry, must in some way find the means to keep people engaged in that industry free from cost. That is very paradoxical and very illogi-

cal. It cannot just be done. I do agree there must be some means by which the burden must be equalised, must be shared fairly among all concerned, and that is what Government rationally always attempts to do — to share the burden fairly.

In the case of irrigation, it is a direct charge on the producer. If there is misfortune in any one year there is occasion for relief. Similarly we in times of distress relieve the producer who uses the land by giving him special guarantees for prices. You, Sir, in your address to this Council only as recently as May last reminded this Council that by means of the Food Production Organization a subsidy of \$80,000 a year was granted. \$80,000 had been given to the farmers the previous year through that means alone.

I come back to drainage. The principle which the Government and the Legislative Council have adopted is that we recognize that the capital cost of these very comprehensive drainage and irrigation schemes cannot be borne directly by the land, and that is why of the huge expenditure that has taken place over the last 25 years very little — in fact none of it — has been charged to the land. All that the land is bearing is the maintenance charge, and even at that only a part. So to say that the producer or farmer is being squeezed by the other people in the community is quite wrong. He has got, I submit, a fair share.

The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) dealt with the matter quite differently. He used this opportunity to make a very strong appeal for the introduction of a comprehensive irrigation and drainage scheme. With that I am entirely with him, but where I must draw issue with him is when he seeks to imply that it is a matter which has not been given serious attention by the Government or this Council at all, and now is the time, as the result of his appeal, we should give it serious attention. Is there any other subject which has been of more concern to the Government and this Legislative Council and the people for the past 10 years than irrigation and drainage?

Mr. LEE: For the past 50 years!

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I am thinking of the more immediate present. What led the Government to embark upon this terrifying scheme — the Torani Canal to connect the Berbice and the Canje Rivers? What induced the urgency of that scheme but recognition of the fact that more land was urgently necessary in the county of Berbice to meet the growing population? It is all well and good to criticize now, but I can tell this Council that the previous Governor was deeply concerned with that problem and, although he knew that various factors governing that scheme were not completely available, he was prepared to push ahead with it as fast as he could, and he induced this Council to embark upon that scheme at once so that more land would be available in that particular area where the population was mounting so rapidly. Similarly with the Boesasirie Scheme. It did start in a small way but enlarged subsequently. All was introduced so as to provide more land. And so all the other drainage and irrigation schemes have been introduced with that problem well in mind. So I do think the hon. Member is very unfair when he seeks to suggest there has been no serious consideration of the problem of irrigation and drainage. And what is more, we have got a Consulting Engineer of high reputation, Mr. Hutchinson, at the present time.

While frightened by the millions referred to this afternoon I myself quoted schemes to cost £150,000 without internal works, without facility to make them pay their way. Why are we still considering them? Why is Mr. Hutchinson going on with surveys at great cost? It is because that particular problem is in the forefront of the problems facing Government. I submit that is meant by the activities of the Government at the present time.

To return to the motion itself, I should have referred to the preamble before. Hon. Members have now followed the practice of introducing long preambles to their motions. I do submit it is dangerous. Preambles are supposed to be facts, premises on which the motion hangs. Surely it is not correct to leave on the records of this Council one preamble at least which reads:

"Whereas in most of the areas of the Colony farmers are in a state of distraction and constant sense of frustration over the huge loss in crops which they sustain year after year and the added burden of having to pay high rates and taxes."

Surely those are gross exaggerations. If farmers are willing to sell, to whom are they willing to sell? Are they selling out to other farmers? I hope so. They are exaggerations and do not necessarily add any weight to the motion itself.

I should advise the Council very strongly not to adopt any motion of this nature having for its object the complete taking over of the drainage and irrigation of all the lands in the coastal belt of this Colony. First of all the principle is completely wrong. Secondly, it is completely impracticable, which is shown by the attitude of the hon. Member in excluding all the sugar estates from the operation of such a scheme. Thirdly, I think that the principle of making the user pay in this particular instance more than any other is correct.

In the case of the villages I read a minute by Mr. Laing on the subject. He is very keen on maintaining a sense of responsibility among the villagers for running their own affairs. The hon. Member is correct in his analysis of village estimates. Drainage, especially internal drainage, is a very important feature of the functions of a village community or Village Authority, and it would be a fatal mistake to take that particular function away from them and put it in some central organization of the Government itself. By all means let the villages run their own affairs and look after their drainage. By all means relieve them to the extent that is necessary to be done, but it would be a vital mistake to take away the functions of drainage or the maintenance of drainage. Lastly, I must say that if the hon. Member had made out a case for further relief beyond the \$78,000 out of the \$194,000 which is now being paid for maintenance, I would have said there was something in it, but he covered up that small issue in the huge comprehensive suggestion that drainage and irrigation be made a colonial question.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. Member has completely misunderstood the motion.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member can deal with that in his reply.

Mr. LEE: There is no doubt that the coastlands of this Colony need drainage and irrigation, but can any Member of this Council say that Government has not made repeated attempts to relieve distress in areas which have been flooded? The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) has forgotten that there is no legal obligation on the proprietors to look after their internal drainage, with the result that many of them lose their crops and rents from their lands, and are unable to pay their rates for maintenance of main drainage. I mention that because it is one of the most important questions in any drainage area, and no Member has referred to it.

Mr. MORRISH: To a point of correction. I referred particularly to internal drainage.

Mr. LEE: Yes, but the hon. Member did not refer to the point that there is no legal compulsion on the proprietors to provide internal drainage if Government spends money on main drainage. In many cases on the Essequibo Coast the lands are not properly drained internally, with the result that the proprietors cannot get returns from them in order to pay maintenance rates for main drainage, but in many cases, for instance in the Crabwood Creek area, Government has given relief to those people. I say without hesitation that if a motion is brought forward in this Council for the purpose of giving relief to any flooded area this Council would give it sympathetic consideration. I agree with the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) that it is a major problem which should be tackled, and I agree with the hon. the Financial Secretary that it has been tackled within the last 10 or 15 years by Your Excellency's predecessor and by yourself.

If Your Excellency has the time to read some of the despatches by your predecessor you will see the urgent way in which he dealt with the matter and

urged upon the previous Council that the Colony should advance the money in order that the scheme should be started, pending the receipt of assistance from the Imperial Government to continue the schemes. I understand that Government is pursuing that policy but it takes time. My friend says that the progress which has been made is not sufficient, and I certainly agree with his suggestion that Government should endeavour to get money from the U.S.A. in order to speed up the rate of progress on these drainage and irrigation schemes. I say with all due consideration that unless H.M. Government takes into account the development of the agricultural lands in this Colony it will be faced with the problem of the surplus population of the British West Indies, apart from those of the Caribbean area. The time will come when it will cost H.M. Government more either in doles to these Colonies or to undertake the development of British Guiana. It is time that the Imperial Government take due warning that the agricultural and industrial development of British Guiana for the purpose of absorbing the surplus population of the British West Indies should be considered immediately.

Mr. CARTER: I think we are all conscious of the efforts which Government is making to tackle the question of drainage and irrigation in the Colony, but I think what the mover is trying to say is that in spite of those efforts there still remains a great deal to be done. What I see is that the mere non-collection of maintenance rates will not by itself be sufficient to relieve the very serious situation which faces the farmers. It is true that the Colony, the Government and the people are all one, and that we can only spend money which has been put into the Government by the people themselves, but this is such an important problem that I think some attention should be given to the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) that efforts should be made by this Government to attract money either from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund or from the U.S. Government, and that steps should be taken immediately to see whether H.M. Government would favour a more comprehensive drainage and irrigation scheme.

I have been told that one other source of raising money in this country is to impose taxation on certain Companies which have benefited directly as a result of devaluation. I think it is true to say (If I speak incorrectly I speak after a certain economist) that as a result of devaluation certain industries in this Colony, without having to put in any more capital or energy, have benefited to the extent of 30 per cent. on their regular annual incomes. In view of that I propose to move an amendment to the first resolve clause of the motion for the insertion of the words "take steps to" between the words "Colony" and "meet" in the fourth line. I think if that amendment is carried Government could then seek to attract funds from the C.D. & W. Fund, from the U.S.A., and possibly, if my statement is correct that Companies in this Colony have benefited as a result of devaluation, take steps to impose taxation on those Companies for the purpose of the maintenance of drainage, irrigation, and sea defences.

Capt. COGLAN: I am in complete sympathy with the sentiments expressed by the mover of the motion and the other Members who have spoken in favour of it. I do not wish to take up any time in wasteful discussion of something about which we should first and foremost ascertain how much it is going to cost. For that reason I would like to propose an amendment of the first resolution of the motion to the effect that this Council recommends that His Excellency the Governor "Appoint a Select Committee to ascertain what amount of capital expenditure and maintenance costs would be necessary to provide the arable lands on the coastlands of the Colony with free drainage and irrigation."

Mr. LEE seconded.

The PRESIDENT: Will the hon. Member put his amendment in writing? I gather that what the hon. Member wants to do is to delete all the words after the word "Council" and insert the words he suggests. The effect of his amendment would be that before the Council adopts any motion like this an inquiry should be made as to the cost involved. Is that what you suggest?

Capt. COGHLAN: Yes, sir.

The PRESIDENT: I presume the hon. Member means the cost of providing all services free — the cost of providing such further drainage and irrigation works as are necessary, and for their maintenance after.

Capt. COGHLAN: Yes, sir.

Mr. DEBIDIN: To a point of explanation. Doesn't that go outside the spirit of my motion? It involves the whole question of bringing in new lands under the drainage and irrigation scheme. I do not mind a Select Committee being appointed to go into the question of the spirit of the motion.

The PRESIDENT: I do not know

that I can regard it as an amendment to the motion.

Capt. COGHLAN: I will work it into the resolve clause.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I have no objection to a Select Committee being appointed to go into the question of what it would cost if my motion were put into effect.

The PRESIDENT: As it is close upon 5 o'clock we will adjourn the debate until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Mr. LEE: There is the Deputy Mayor's luncheon at 1 o'clock tomorrow.

The PRESIDENT: The Council will meet at 2.30 p.m. instead of at 2 o'clock tomorrow.