

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Thursday, 12th December, 1940.*

The Council met at 10.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR WILFRID JACKSON, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

## PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C.

The Hon. F. Dias, O.B.E., (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. J. S. Dash, Director of Agriculture.

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, K.C., (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. E. F. McDavid, M.B.E., Colonial Treasurer.

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, O.B.E., (Georgetown North).

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin, O.B.E., (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. W. A. D'Andrade, Comptroller of Customs.

The Hon. N. M. MacLennan, Director of Medical Services.

The Hon. M. B. Laing, O.B.E., Commissioner of Labour and Local Government.

The Hon. G. O. Case, Director of Public Works and Sea Defences.

The Hon. L. G. Crease, Director of Education.

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E., (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E., (Georgetown South).

The Hon. J. I. De Aguiar (Central Demerara).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. E. M. Walcott (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North Western District).

The Hon. J. W. Jackson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western-Essequibo).

## MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 11th of December, 1940, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

## PETITION.

Mr. WOOLFORD: May I be allowed to lay over a petition which is not properly addressed?

THE PRESIDENT: Is it a petition to the Council?

Mr. WOOLFORD: It is a petition to the Governor.

THE PRESIDENT: It should be a petition to the Council.

Mr. WOOLFORD: It is intended to be one.

THE PRESIDENT: Unless it is addressed to the Council it cannot be laid.

## ORDER OF THE DAY.

### ESTIMATES, 1941.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the estimates of expenditure to be defrayed from revenue during the year ending the 31st December 1941, which have been laid on the table.

### TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: This Council is asked to-day to vote the Deficiency of this Department which, according to the

Estimates for 1941, is \$253,451. The Deficiency according to the approved estimates for 1940 was \$157,218. I might not have risen from my seat to-day if I did not consider that this is a very important department of Government not only in regard to the financial ramifications of the Department but also in view of the Department's duty to the public in respect of the services they have to perform. I propose to-day to deal with both sides of the question—the financial aspect as well as the services to the public. The operating expenditure, as shown on page 8, discloses that the amount which will be required in 1941 is \$848,852 while the amount for 1940 is \$815,425, an increase of \$33,427. Subject to what I shall say hereafter about the increase, I should like to preface my remarks with the general observation that the increase on the whole is probably due to increases arising out of war conditions, principally the temporary war bonus that is being paid to the employees of the Department. On the other hand the extraordinary expenditure estimated for 1941 is to be \$164,500 while the revised estimate for 1940 is \$141,738, an increase of \$22,762.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. G. D. Owen): I would ask hon. Members when quoting figures to give the page they are quoting from, as it is very difficult to follow them otherwise.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Before I proceed to deal with that phase of the matter, I may at this stage enquire whether the amount budgeted for under this head for 1940 was actually spent, and I refer particularly to the sum of \$80,000 which was put down to be spent for reconditioning the West Coast Railway this year. I refer to it, sir, for the simple reason that as far as I know nothing has been spent in that direction, and the amount being so large it will undoubtedly have some bearing on not only the financial position of the Department itself but also on the financial transactions of the Government as a whole, having regard to the fact that this Council has to vote the Deficiency of the Department. I refer to it also because I find that in respect of 1941 a sum of \$70,000 appears under the same head, and I would like to know whether it is contemplated to spend such a large sum this year. Under that head there is an item "Recondition-

ing s.s. *Biara*, \$51,000." Although we have not been given any details, it seems to me that the reason for spending that money next year is that it is found impracticable to proceed with the programme of replacement in respect of the steamers of the Service and it is hoped to meet the position by reconditioning this steamer. I can only express the hope that Government has been very carefully advised as to the wisdom of spending such a large sum of money on reconditioning the particular steamer mentioned.

I also find there is a sum of \$10,000 for renewing the Permanent Way. I refer to that because there is a reduction. I believe the amount for 1939 was put down at \$20,936. There again I believe that that work is being done on a definite programme. I do not know what was done in 1940, as I have not been able from these estimates to observe whether any of this work was continued in 1940. At all events it is proposed to spend \$10,000 and the question, one can reasonably ask, is whether Government is satisfied, having regard to the desirability for the safe carriage of passengers on the Railway Service, that the amount is considered sufficient for the purpose. I make that observation because at one time great alarm was stressed at the condition of the permanent way. Although a bold start was made in 1939 nothing has been done in 1940, and now it is proposed only to spend \$10,000 in 1941. That observation is made because it seems to me that the Department in its effort to make two ends meet, although it has never seemed able to do so, is going to starve one branch presumably for the benefit of something else.

On the revenue side, although there is an increase under the head of expenditure, it seems to me that the officers of the Department have been warned to be very conservative because we find very few, if any at all, anticipated increases under revenue. The result of it, having regard to the increase under expenditure, is that the operating cost shows out in a very bad light. If you were to refer to page 10 of the Appendix you would be better able to follow the figures I am about to quote. Under sub-head 1 there is only a slight increase of \$4,000; under sub-head 2 there is hardly any difference at all; under sub-head 3 there is a slight

increase of \$4,000; under sub-head 4 there is a major increase but I do not propose to say too much about that as we all know the reason for it, the increase being in the vicinity of \$100,000; under sub-head 5 there is a decrease, the amount for 1939 being \$83,000 and that for 1940 \$77,000. For the first time the Department admits that this Service (Bartica-Potaro Road Transport) will be run at a loss. I am not against this Service except to say that it should be made to pay. Here you have the anticipated revenue from this Service as \$77,000 and on the other hand the operating cost on page 6 as \$79,000.

I have quoted these figures to show that for the first time this Service is coming before this Council in an unfavourable light. It may have been so before. I would like to mention that I am somewhat at a disadvantage in referring to these figures unless I assume—and for the purpose of my argument I am going to assume—that the figures as printed here are the actual figures, otherwise there will be no merit in my argument. I do not know about any supplementary estimates. I was warned about that yesterday and, therefore, I want to be very careful. It seems that the Bartica-Potaro Road Transport Service from this showing will be operated at a loss of \$2,000 next year. I hope that is not the case. As a matter of fact I make the bold statement that it should not be so. If it is so then that enquiry which was talked about before should be made, and if it has not been made then it ought to be done now. I warned Government then, and I do so again to-day, that an enquiry into that Service is very desirable. Only this morning shortly before I came to the Council I received a complaint from a man who had shipped a canister containing money through the Department. He holds a receipt from the Department that the canister was said to contain so much money, but the money was lost in transit and the Department sent him a reply to the effect: "I have to inform you that this Department has never at any time received from you the sum of money for transit and, therefore, your claim is not understood."

THE CHAIRMAN: Was the amount of money checked over by the Department?

Mr. DE AGUIAR: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Why not?

Mr. DE AGUIAR: It was a sealed canister said to contain the amount.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member would see that the ordinary requirement was not observed.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: In this connection I may tell you, sir, that although that is not the practice, I am informed that in this particular case the gentleman concerned offered to have the money checked but the Officer of the Department—the Clerk at the stelling or bond—declined the offer, and perhaps rightly so. Nevertheless he was charged \$1 for carrying the canister, and I am going to ask Government the question whether that rate of carriage does not include the cost of insurance.

THE CHAIRMAN: Not for an unknown amount.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am not suggesting that, but the Department said they never received any money at all. It may not have been there at all, but nevertheless if this information is worth anything the Clerk must have believed there was money in the canister because possession of it was taken by the Transport Officer himself, who took it to his house and kept it there for the whole of that day and night until the following morning when it was handed to the lorryman to be taken along the line. The Department considered that the canister had money at the time because they took very great care with it and did not leave it in the Bond overnight. I only mention that *en passant*. I am not pleading the cause of the party concerned because I suppose he has his legal adviser and it is for his legal adviser to take whatever steps he considers in his client's interest, but I have mentioned it, as I said, because the matter was reported to me and it is one that I can mention as an instance of what I consider to be some weakness in the administration at that end.

THE CHAIRMAN: What was the amount to which the hon. Member is referring?

Mr. DE AGUIAR: \$500, sir. To go back to the estimates of expenditure for a

moment, I find that there are one or two new posts which I am not going to deal with, however, as the Board of Directors are very competent men and, I presume, have given the matter careful consideration before creating those posts. What I do not understand, however, is the regrading. I find that they have actually regraded two posts. You will find one of them on page 1. Item 2—"Chief Clerk—(\$2,160 to \$2,640 by \$120), \$2,630"—is a regraded post. I would like to know under what principle this regrading is done. Is it to bring it in line with the Government Service as a whole? I have not been able to find that grading anywhere. I cannot follow the reason for it. Yet, sir, I happen to know that as the result of an investigation which was made not so long ago by a Committee appointed by this Council certain recommendations were put up suggesting certain grades for the entire Service. Perhaps that did not find favour with the administration as none of the recommendations appear on these estimates. I am not going to deal at any length on that matter because I presume it is still under consideration. I do not know whether it is travelling by the "Basra," which is one of the slowest steamers of the Department. It certainly seems to be taking a very long time to get along. I mention that because I know that certain suggestions were put forward for the regrading of the members of the staff in the Service, which were not done helter-skelter but with certain principles involved and which, I think, were fully set out. That proposal has not been dealt with, yet I find that they have regraded two or three other posts and the reason behind this regrading is not known. Perhaps the Government speaker on this side will enlighten me as to why these posts are regraded.

Another thing I was surprised to learn is this: it was thought that the Provident Society connected with the Department was a necessity. I can assure Government that it was very badly mismanaged at the time of the enquiry; but be that as it may the recommendation put forward was that it ought to be put on a proper footing. Everybody will agree that a Provident Society properly run is a good thing for employees. I was surprised to hear that as the result of the recommendation of the Committee the whole thing is abolished

now. Is that the kind of administration we are going to have in that Department? There you have it, a Committee reporting after careful enquiry that the Provident Society, which was one of the things very carefully gone into, should be encouraged and the Department abolishing it. It is true that it was badly run, very badly managed but it was not envisaged that the whole thing would be allowed to go under. I hope that is not true. I am only saying what was told to me. I would prefer to hear in reply this morning: "We are very sorry the way in which it was run in the past but now that the matter has been brought to our attention we have revived it. We have prepared fresh rules etc., and we have got this society running to the best advantage." I am hoping what I have heard is not true. I just mention that to show what is the feeling in connection with this matter.

One further point I wish to make before I pass on to something else. It is this: it was felt that this is a very large Department of Government. I think the number of employees is something bordering on 1,000. It is humanly impossible to expect the General Manager to be able to keep track of them all. I can assure you sir, that their records are not very easy to find. Information about an employee is not very easy to be obtained. It was felt that perhaps there ought to be some officer between the General Manager and the employees so that complaints and things of that kind can be properly investigated before any wrong decisions are given. I use the word "wrong" advisedly, because it was discovered that a number of wrong decisions had been made merely on reports, some of which were not corroborated at all and were merely on the whims and caprices of perhaps the immediate Head of that subordinate employee. It was felt therefore that if there was such an officer the relationship between the management of the Department and the employees would be better established. Speaking for myself, I am exceedingly disappointed that the recommendation was not accepted and the post not created for 1941.

I want to make it perfectly clear at this stage that I am not criticizing the Board of Directors. You only have to look at



the list of names and you will find they are all men who know their jobs well, some of them perhaps better than I do, but I have heard the criticism—and I think there is some merit in it—that the principal adviser of Government who occupies the seat of Chairman of the Board—I speak of the office and not the individual—should be replaced by someone else. A very sound reason was advanced. As a matter of fact I think I am correct in quoting the words once used in this Council by the officer concerned. He said: “I accepted the decision as Chairman of the Board but I have the right to reject it as the Principal Officer of Government”—or words to that effect. That is something I have not been able to understand at all.

There you have a gentleman sitting as Chairman of a Board of Directors and with his colleagues having discussed something, threshed it out point by point and arrived at a decision, whether he is in favour of it or not personally, but when the proposal goes forward to Government the same gentleman in another capacity as Colonial Secretary saying: “I cannot agree with it.” I sympathize with him because when he goes back to his office he has to look at the matter from an entirely different angle. When he sits as Chairman of the Transport Board he sees the need for the particular item in question and therefore supports it there, but when he sits in his office as Colonial Secretary he sees the need for economy and rejects it. I have always understood that a very strong effort is being made to run the Transport and Harbours Department on commercial lines, and it is along those lines I am basing most of my argument this morning. If it is not the intention of doing that then it seems that commercial men may reasonably send in their resignation from the Board, because I am sure they are not going to sit there and try to follow Government’s ways of doing things. In saying that I do not mean that Government’s ways are not right, but at the same time there is an old saying: “The minute Government tries to interfere with commerce you cannot expect much success.”

When I referred to the revenue side just now, I mentioned just casually that under one of the heads of the estimated gross receipts—No. 4 (Harbour and Pilotage)—there was a substantial increase, and we

know the reason for that. Most of it is due to the large number of ships coming into the harbour at the present time. But let us look at the expenditure side of that same head, and what do we find? We have a Harbour Master—I do not know who he is, whether he is an Admiral or a Colonel. I know that the last one did very little work, but I do not know how much this one is doing. Then there are two first-class Pilots, one second-class and two third-class Pilots. I do not know what is meant by Pilots’ Assistants but that item is put down at \$635. What I do know, and it is a shame, is that a man earning \$45 per month is responsible for bringing in 18, 19 or 20 ships in one month. I would like to know what the Minister of Shipping would say about that. I have been trying to find out how that is so, and the statement I am making is one of fact. There is one, or perhaps two or maybe more of these men in this branch of the Service, and their salary is only \$45 a month, but they are responsible for bringing in a large number of ships per month. I would like to refer to that as “sweated labour”, and there must be something wrong about it.

As far as I know these young Pilots have got to do one year’s service somewhere else. The other day I heard about “deep sea” service. The “deep sea fisherman” has gone. In a similar debate we heard about “deep sea” service. These youngsters, I believe, have to work under sail for a year and then have to pass one examination and then another. Very often if they are not *personae gratiae* with the persons who are responsible for their certificates these are withheld. All these things happen, and even when they do get the certificate they do not get the job. That is a matter, I think, which should receive immediate attention. I do not know if the Board of Commissioners are aware of it. I cannot conceive that they are aware of such things happening in the Service and, as I said before, I wonder what the Minister of Shipping would think of us here, what would be Government’s answer to the Minister of Shipping if we had an incompetent person bringing ships into a harbour such as ours and those ships went aground. It seems to me that the Government can give no answer at all.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I

can give an answer, but I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member.

Mr. DE AGUIAR I hope your answer will be reasonable. I hope your answer will justify the meagre salary that is being paid to these men. If my facts are correct and I know they are correct, I cannot see how the Department can justify paying a competent person for performing such important service the salary I have mentioned. It seems to me that the reason for it is this: there again it is a question of grading. I do not know who decided there should be only one second class Pilot and no more and that there should be only two third class Pilots. The fault may be in the grading. I have not gone into this phase of the matter very carefully, and so I just throw out the suggestion that that is where the fault is to be found. There is no room at the top and these unfortunate individuals find themselves here as Pilots' Assistants and cannot go any farther. I submit that the time has come that either the positions at the top should be widened or at any event something done so that justice might be done. We cannot do anything for this particular type of employee and yet we can regrade other employees in the Service. The regrading of course had only one object in view and that was to put the particular officer concerned on a higher scale of salary. He was not graded down but up. I am not saying he is not entitled to it, but I have raised that to show that some persons in the Service seem to be able to obtain their just due and others, although they clamour for it until they are tired, never seem to get any further. I want to make it perfectly clear that I have not been approached by this unfortunate individual. I do not even know him. Most of what I am saying is the result of the experience I have gained from the enquiry conducted. I am speaking as one of the hon. Members of Council who were appointed to enquire into the matter.

I understood from the hon. Colonial Secretary in Council a few days ago that some change or reorganization—a very nice word—is contemplated in the Mechanical Branch of the Service, as the result of the proposal to recommend the present Head of that particular branch of the Service for the post of General Manager—on Irish promotion—as from the first of

next year. I mention that because I believe the promotion will be “Irish.” On looking at the estimates I find that the minimum salary of that post happens to be the maximum salary of the post of Mechanical Engineer. I am a little bit in sympathy with the individual, and I am glad that he is in the Council Chamber now. I do not see how he can draw any allowance for all the time that he is acting as General Manager. That is, however, only by the way. I refer to that because I would like the hon. Colonial Secretary in the course of his reply to give some indication to the Council of the proposal to reorganize that branch of the Service, if it is still proposed to send forward the recommendation that the Head of that branch be appointed to the post of General Manager. If that recommendation goes through, personally I would be somewhat disappointed for the reason that I regard that post as one which requires the services of an officer with administrative ability. I said these same words at the time when some years ago the retiring General Manager was appointed to the post, and I repeat the same words to-day. My view, having regard to what I have learnt since I made that pronouncement some years ago, is that it is very desirable that the post of General Manager should be filled by a person of administrative ability.

I am not suggesting for a moment that a Mechanical Engineer, or for that matter a Civil Engineer, cannot be an administrator, but in order to be an administrator—and I am going to use Government's words which are so often used in this Council—the officer must be specially trained. I do not think it can be said that the proposed appointee has had any opportunity of receiving special training in the administration of such a large department. As a mechanical engineer certainly I give him full marks, as the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Eleazar) always says, but as an administrator I am afraid I shall have to minus a very large percentage of marks. I do not know whether the matter has reached the stage of recommendation, but if it has not, I am going to suggest that the matter may be more carefully considered having regard to the fact that it is most desirable that the person who is to fill the post of General Manager, now that Government has accepted the principle

that it should have a Civil Engineer, should be a person of outstanding administrative ability. I think I have said enough under this head, but I would like to conclude my remarks with a definite enquiry as to whether in respect of the various items that are put down on the expenditure side of these estimates, it is proposed to spend all that money in 1941, having regard to what I have said in respect of some of the items which appeared in the 1940 Estimates.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I would just like to ask a few questions as regards certain items, having heard what the hon. Member who has just taken his seat has said as regards the Chairman of the Board. Perhaps Government may let this Council into its confidence and say what is the underlying cause for the appointment of the Colonial Secretary as Chairman of that Board which includes a fair number of merchants and other businessmen of the City in its personnel.

The second point is in respect of item 19 (Stock Verifier). I see it is proposed that a whole-time officer be appointed for the taking of the stock of Unallocated Stores so as to avoid an annual stock-taking. Is it proposed that this officer should periodically take the stock or that he should continuously do it by checking up the amounts?

It seems a little difficult to follow some of the items of these estimates of expenditure, but with regard to the salary of the Second Assistant Mechanical Engineer I see there is a revised scale which gives an increase of \$120, the normal increment of that post.

With regard to item 23 on page 5—Stellings and Buildings—may I ask when these stellings referred to in the Notes were last repaired, and whether the repairs have become necessary on account of faulty or bad work?

With regard to item 1 below the line on page 6—“Harbour Master (\$2,160 to \$2,880 by \$240), \$2,880”—may I ask why the maximum salary should be fixed as the minimum salary to be paid the officer concerned. If the maximum salary is the commencing salary of that officer, it strikes one that perhaps there may be some

sort of continuous growth. If this officer occupies the post for some time there will be an application later on for a personal allowance.

With regard to extraordinary expenditure on Renewals and Replacements on page 8, may I ask in respect of item 1—Reconditioning s.s. Baiara, \$51,000—how long will that continue the life of that particular boat in question, and how long will it avoid the necessity of replacement?

With regard to the item—“New Locomotive, \$35,000”—could that not be postponed in the present crisis?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will endeavour to deal with the questions in the order in which they were given, beginning with the question asked by the hon. Member for Central Demerara. He referred to a figure on page 8 of Appendix A in the middle of the page. The amount put down for 1940 is \$80,000 for the reconstruction of the West Coast Railway. The hon. Member asks whether that money will be spent this year. It is not possible for me to say whether it will be spent; it is entirely in the hands of the Crown Agents. When the first Supplementary Estimates were passed in August, a supplementary vote for the Transport and Harbours Department amounting to \$101,000 was taken and it was mentioned then that it was anticipated that a sum of \$80,000 would be spent this year out of \$150,000 required for the reconstruction of the railway, but correspondence was received from the Crown Agents to the effect that they were going ahead and were placing the order. Whether they have succeeded in getting the materials or not it is impossible for me to say until the close of the year. If they have failed to purchase the materials the money would not be spent. As we have not been told that they have failed, the Department naturally includes in the 1941 Estimates the remainder of the amount required, because if the materials are received we will have to go ahead and complete the work at this end.

Two hon. Members have raised a question on item 1—“Reconditioning s.s. Baiara, \$51,000.” That amount is required to recondition the hull of the vessel and also to take out the old boiler and place a diesel engine in that ship. It is estimated



that the life of the vessel will then be 10 years longer.

The next item referred to was item 2—“Renewal of Permanent Way.” It was pointed out that nothing had been included in the 1940 Estimates and that \$10,000 was inserted in the 1941 Estimates. There was no possibility whatever of getting any steel rails from aboard. There are, however, a certain number in the Colony which we have in reserve. It is proposed in 1941 to use these rails and improve the permanent way as far as we possibly can. It is useless to place a larger amount on the Estimates because we have been told that steel rails cannot be obtained at the present time.

The revenue figures of the Bartica—Potaro Road Transport Service have been referred to. It has been mentioned that the 1941 figures show a reduction on the 1940 revised figures. That is due to the fact that in 1940 there was a very severe drought. The rivers could not be used and so freight came by way of the Potaro Road which under normal circumstances would not be taken along that road. The Commissioners do not anticipate another drought in 1941 and think it advisable to revert to the actual amount ruling in previous years.

The next point referred to was the alleged loss of money from a canister. The hon. Member did not mention whether his informant stated that the seals were broken or not when the canister was received—when it was handed over to the Transport and Harbours Department or when it was delivered at the other end. We have a statement from the owner of the canister that the seals were intact. We saw no reason therefore to hand over a cheque for \$500.

The hon. Member referred to certain recommendations submitted to Government by the Legislative Council Committee appointed to enquire into the Transport and Harbours Department. Those recommendations have also been before the Board of Commissioners and before Your Excellency in Executive Council. I think hon. Members must be aware that Government is still in communication with that Committee. It is, therefore, not possible for me at this stage to give Government's

decision in regard to the Committee's recommendations. One of the recommendations to which the hon. Member referred was the improving of the administration of the Provident Fund and he said, I think, that as the result of what the Committee had stated the Board of Commissioners of the Department had decided to do away with the Fund altogether. I would like to correct that because the recommendation of the Committee had nothing to do with the decision taken by the members of the Provident Fund. A resolution was passed by the Society. Provided five-sixth of the members pass a resolution it is usual to give effect to their request, and five-sixth had asked that the Fund should cease to exist at the end of this year. I daresay the Committee when it wrote its report felt that it was an excellent fund and should be continued, but it was not aware of the fact that Government was going to extend superannuation benefits to the employees of the Transport and Harbours Department. What will be the result if they still have a Provident Fund to which Government contributes \$500 annually? Why should Government continue to contribute \$500 annually to that Fund and at the same time grant the employees so many days leave on full pay when ill, so many days leave on half pay, vacation leave, and also gratuity and pension on retirement? Apart from that, I admit that the meetings of the Society had been very few and far between, but on the whole I do not know that it is right to say that the Fund has failed and has not served its purpose, when it is going to be wound up with a balance of \$8,000 to its credit. That money will be distributed among the members of the Fund. I only want to correct the impression that any recommendation made by the Committee had anything to do with the matter. It was done previous to the Committee's report.

Another recommendation of the Committee to which the hon. Member referred is the appointment of an officer as a “go-between” the Manager and employees. That recommendation was very carefully considered by the Board of Commissioners and it was felt that it would be an unnecessary waste of money. The hon. Member may not be aware of the fact that no matter how many such officers are in



the Department, if their decisions do not satisfy the employees they are not going to be contented and will go to the Head of the Department and, if still not satisfied, they will go to the Colonial Secretary and yet further by petition to the Governor. Since I have been here an officer appealed to the Secretary of State, and another went further and presented a petition to the King. That is the usual procedure; no matter how many liaison officers you appoint, they will still go to the Secretary of State if they are not satisfied with a decision given locally. It is felt that having an additional officer merely to deal with matters on which they cannot give a final decision is a waste of money, as the matters must go before the Board if the persons are not satisfied with a decision given. The Executive Council have not dealt with all the recommendations, and if they feel that those recommendations to which reference has been made should be given effect to the Board of Commissioners would bow, but we feel it our duty to point out that we do not think it necessary.

The hon. Member then referred to the Chairman of the Board giving a decision on certain subjects and when it is referred to him as Colonial Secretary he, perhaps quite rightly, arrives at an opposite decision. I am not sure whether there is any particular incident to which the hon. Member refers. One of the recommendations of the Committee is that free medical attendance at reduced rates should be provided to the staff of the Transport and Harbours Department. I think that is very excellent and I do not want to deprive anybody of free medical attendance or at reduced rate—

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: Is that one of the recommendations which will be forthcoming?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: No such recommendation has been put before the Commissioners, and the only incident which I think the hon. Member is referring to is this particular one. My point of view is that I could not say that I was going to agree with the members of the Board to a recommendation of that sort when the members of other Departments are not allowed free medical attendance. Why should the messenger in the Transport and Harbours Department have free medical attendance and the messengers in

other departments should not? If you are going to have free medical attendance throughout the Service, I am in favour. I am not against that recommendation of the Committee, but I am against it if the executive Government is not going to extend that privilege to the messengers in my department and other departments. That is a difficulty in which the Chairman as Colonial Secretary must find himself. I hope the hon. Member does not think that I merely sit on the Board and vote for a thing without letting the members know what my views are as Colonial Secretary.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Oh, no!

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: With regard to the filling of the post of General Manager I only made reference to the possible re-arrangement of the Mechanical Branch of the Department. When the motion was before this Council for the appointment of a Civil Engineer, some hon. Members said they would like to know before voting whether it was contemplated that a General Manager outside the Colony would be appointed. I was then able to give my views. I think I said, the matter was not finally settled by the Board of Commissioners but there was every indication that the appointment of the acting officer would be recommended. I do not feel I can commit the Board at this stage to any arrangement until their recommendation comes forward. The Board has not finally decided the matter. The hon. Member has had the advantage of placing his views before four members of the Board and other members of the Committee before the final recommendation is made, and consideration will be given to what he said. During the period, however, that this officer has been acting the Board has told me this: They are perfectly satisfied with the manner in which he performs his duties.

With reference to the personnel of the Department, one statement made by an hon. Member I think is very unfortunate. He referred to the Pilot certificates issued by the Harbour Master. I think he said that the Harbour Master holds examinations and if he does not like an individual he withholds the certificate. It has left me with the impression that he thinks there is injustice being done by the examiner. I hope that is not intended. It is a serious allegation and the Board has never come

across any incident of the sort. With regard to the Pilots' Assistant the hon. Member correctly said he is piloting vessels now, but the hon. Member wonders what reply would be made to the Minister of Shipping if he raises the question. I do not know if the hon. Member is aware that there are many junior officers in the Merchant Service with a Master's certificate and no doubt there are also many in the teaching profession who have a Head Teacher's certificate but they do not get the pay of a Master or Head Teacher. There is only one Pilots' Assistant. He obtained his licence in September, 1940, and was appointed a Pilots' Assistant in November. There is no vacancy in the third class branch of Pilots and I do not know whether the hon. Member is suggesting that once a Pilot receives a certificate for promotion he should get promotion. If that is so, we may be left with half a dozen first class pilots. A pilot takes the examination before he is due for promotion so that when the time arrives for promotion he can get it. If it is suggested that a Pilots' Assistant should be promoted to the third class when he obtains a certain certificate, the Board would certainly have to consider acting in the same manner towards all other pilots.

The hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) asked me to say why the Colonial Secretary holds the office of Chairman of the Board. I am afraid I cannot answer that question without looking up the previous correspondence on the matter, as I was not here when the appointment was first made. It was, however, created by law.

MR. C. V. WIGHT: I am aware that it is in the Ordinance, but I would like to know the motive or cause.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member may look up the debates of 1931.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: With regard to the appointment of another clerk for stock-taking, the hon. Member asked whether he will be continuously taking stock throughout the year. I reply: "Yes." There is a card system in vogue, and as long as you have the staff to keep it up to date it avoids tremendous delay at the beginning of each year. The present system is working satisfactorily but in order to keep the stock up-to-date

it has been found necessary to ask for an additional clerk.

With regard to item 10 on page 2—"Second Assistant Mechanical Engineer"—the hon. Member asked why his salary has been increased. The scale of salaries has been revised in two cases and this is one, the other being the Chief Clerk which the hon. Member for Central Demerara has referred to. The Board of Commissioners recommended before the war that certain increases in salaries should be made to these officers, and at the outbreak of war Government turned down the recommendation. The Commissioners since then renewed their request and the Government replied, that they could not agree to all the recommendations submitted but if there were any special cases which the Board wished to bring to the notice of Government they should do so. The Board brought these two cases to the notice of Government and the increases have been provided in the draft estimates for next year.

In respect of item 23—"Stellings and Buildings"—on page 5, the hon. Member for Western Essequibo wants to know whether the money is required on account of bad work having been done. The reply is that the stellings are in a very bad state of disrepair. They have not been repaired for a very long time, and that is why the money is needed. It is not a case of bad work having been done which has now to be redone.

With regard to the Harbour Master's salary, as hon. Members know, the present acting Harbour Master came here a short time ago not as Harbour Master but to perform quite different duties which had nothing to do with this Government. The Board having lost the services of the permanent Harbour Master had to look about for someone to act as Harbour Master, and after very careful consideration of the matter the Board recommended that the officer who had come here to perform certain duties very closely connected with the duties of Harbour Master should be asked to act. It was not a question of compelling him to act. The maximum salary of the post is put down, but the present holder draws half of it and the balance goes towards making up the salary of the substantive holder of the post while he is seconded for Naval Service. It is a recog-

nized principle that if the pay received from the Naval or Military Services does not come up to the Civil pay of an officer it is to be made up by this Colony. That principle was adopted during the last war and is being carried out now. The whole amount is required to pay the two officers.

The Commissioners have asked for a sum of money to enable them to purchase a locomotive, but I cannot say whether we can get it. If it is not possible to get it, it may be necessary to curtail our railway service. The amount we originally asked for was larger; it was for two locomotives. In the draft Estimates for 1940 we had asked for two locomotives but the whole item was cut out. The Commissioners have asked again, as it is very desirable that we should get one locomotive. If we cannot get it, then the question of curtailing the service would have to be considered. I have endeavoured to cover all the points raised and, if I have overlooked any, hon. Members may remind me. Hon. Members may also wish to ask further questions.

MR. DE AGUIAR: With regard to the canister story, I would like to state from information received that this canister had three seals of which two were intact and one was broken. The Department held the view that the one seal was broken as the result of handling in transit. That may be so or not, but I merely give you the information I have got. I think, I should let you know that I have been so informed. I am not in a position to say where the broken seal was. I think, I am at liberty to say that I know the individual personally and have reason to believe that the money was put into the canister.

As regards the point raised about the Pilots, I am sorry the hon. Colonial Secretary has rather taken a different view to what I expressed. What I had in mind was this: Whether in view of the large increase in the shipping to this Colony the Board of Commissioners should not consider the necessity of increasing the number of posts, and in support of that—

THE CHAIRMAN: Whether temporary or otherwise?

MR. DE AGUIAR: Yes, and in support of that I cited the instance. I want, however, to assure the hon. Colonial Secretary that I do not know the gentlemen. My

impression is that there are two of them. I am not taking up the case of any particular individual. I want to make that perfectly clear, because I do not want the impression to be given that I was approached in the matter. My impression is that there are two Pilots' Assistants, and the hon. Colonial Secretary has said there is only one. I referred to it because I know there is a large increase of shipping to the Colony at the present time, and it seems to be some injustice to have a man who is qualified put down as an Assistant and given a meagre salary when in fact he is doing just as much as the Seniors. When I referred to the subject I thought I had made the suggestion that what was required was to increase the number of posts above. The Department may decide whether it may be temporary or otherwise, but the need exists for it. Perhaps I used very forceful language. I admit that when I did hear of it I was shocked. If I had such a person in my employ I know what my Board of Directors would have told me. Perhaps I had that in mind and tried to use language they would have used to me.

Relative to the "go-between," it was never suggested that this officer should make decisions. What I discovered, and what other hon. Members discovered, was that there was a lack of complete enquiry into complaints, and I make that statement without fear of contradiction. It may well be that it is felt the General Manager is such a busy man, he has not the time to ferret out all the complaints. I do not expect him to, but if I had to say something about it I would disapprove of an officer who is expected to do administrative work—important work—and is drawing a very decent salary going around the ferry stelling and railway station to enquire into complaints, a large number of which is received daily. What I want is an investigation officer, one who will enquire into complaints. It was clearly illustrated to me that there was this lack of complete enquiry into complaints. I mention that because I would like to see everything going on smoothly. The Committee made the suggestion because it was felt that it would serve some useful purpose. If the Board does not think so, the matter is at an end, but Government should not come back and say it was not warned, because so long as there is lack of complete



enquiry into complaints there is bound to be some difficulty between employees and administrator.

I am sorry the hon. Colonial Secretary brought in the question of drought in justification of the Bartica-Potaro Road Service. I did not know there was a drought in 1938. I would not, however, prolong the discussion on that but just mention that in passing. I invite him in his spare moments to make a comparison of the 1938, 1939, 1940 and the proposed 1941 figures and, I feel sure, he would tell me that the drought had nothing to do with it. I did not include the drought in my consideration of the figures. What I said at the beginning and have said to-day is that the Bartica-Potaro Road Service should be made to pay, and if it is not paying there is something wrong.

THE CHAIRMAN: How should it be made to pay?

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I think the principle is on the Department's own showing. All the time the Department has produced figures to show it on the right side, and this is the first occasion they are shown like this. I am not going to challenge the figures produced as being wrong, but this is the first occasion the Department has submitted figures showing that the project is non-paying.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would the hon. Member suggest raising the rates?

Mr. DE AGUIAR: No, sir; the rates are exceedingly high already. It is always cheaper to transport by water, which is your main competitor. It would be folly to suggest that carriage by road should be as cheap as carriage by water. I think some of the officers of the Department know my views on the subject. It is not from that end of it I am discussing this matter. Some time ago I had to criticize that section of the Service when provision was not made for replacements and things of that kind. I know what I am referring to. I am not criticizing the revenue side as we cannot get any more. I want the Department to look at the expenditure side. Do not tell us about the drought, that we had, as an excuse.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am afraid it has, and I must insist upon that.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: But I say the drought had nothing to do with it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then the hon. Member realizes that that road will never be made to pay on account of the cost of upkeep.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am speaking of the Service and not of the road. I do not want to go into details of what has happened before the Committee sat concerning the Provident Fund. As a matter of fact it would have been much better if the hon. Colonial Secretary did not refer to it at all.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: May I ask why? I have endeavoured to reply to the several questions asked, and I think it is right to correct the mis-statement the hon. Member has made that instead of the Commissioners tightening it up and improving the administration of the Fund they have abolished it. I want to make the hon. Member understand that the Commissioners are merely the Trustees of the Fund and had nothing to do with the decision. Several preliminary meetings were held to hear the views of the members and it was decided to put before them a draft resolution. There was an executive committee which was in favour of it, and at a meeting called for the purpose five-sixth of the members voted that the Fund should be closed down. The money will be divided between them and they can take that and join one of the several Friendly Societies in existence and still get benefits in time of sickness. The Board of Commissioners did not think it fair to ask Government to continue to vote \$500 a year towards the Fund and at the same time give them privileges such as I have explained—sick leave with pay, vacation leave, pension etc. I am merely correcting the hon. Member's statement. It had nothing to do with the Committee's recommendation. While the question of the continuation of this Fund was before the Committee, and before the findings of the Committee were received, that decision was made. It had nothing to do with the final decision of the Committee. There is one hon. Member present who can enlarge on what I have said, as he attended the meetings and went carefully into the Fund. I was not President of the Society and had



nothing to do with the Fund except as a Trustee.

Mr. AUSTIN : I support what the hon. Colonial Secretary has said. As a member of that Committee and in the absence of the Chairman of that Committee I would like to say that this Committee started to sit in March, 1939, and sat for one year. Its instructions were to report on the conditions as we found them, and that is the report we have submitted. This Fund to which reference has been made was in a curious state. Nobody seemed to know anything about it. One of the officers of the Department gave us some information that was available. One of the main rules was that meetings were to be held when required by the subscribers to the Fund, and a statement on the operation of the Fund was to be posted up in a place where it could be seen. Nothing in that direction was ever done, and we felt it was our duty to call attention to that. I think it was the hon. Colonial Secretary's wish that we should go into the matter with this new information before us.

With regards to the liaison officer which was suggested by the Committee, it was not intended that this should be a new post. I do not think it occurs in the present management, but alterations have been already made as the result of the enquiry. Investigation has shown that complaints were not given proper attention, and in these days the labourer has to be heard and his grievances listened to. It was apparent that when complaints were made the individual was hooted out of the office and left to bring them forward in some other way. The Committee had a very difficult task in obtaining data in certain directions. Later on that eased up a bit. If we had been given voluntarily and willingly the information, that we asked for and which sometimes we had to go to the hon. Colonial Secretary and demand that we should get, the report as written might not have been. I am convinced that the report has done a certain amount of good, and I am certain that conditions in the Transport and Harbours Department will be all the better in the forthcoming year.

Mr. GONSALVES : With regards to this matter of the Provident Society I think the hon. Member for Central Dem-

erara (Mr. De Aguiar) has not got the correct facts. There was such a fund existing in connection with the Department, and as a member of the sub-committee appointed by the Board to go into this matter I may say that we were enquiring into it whilst another committee was at the same time going into matters in general in regard to the Service. The question had arisen at one time as to whether the sub-committee should continue its enquiry in regard to the Society or leave it over until the Legislative Committee had reported. In connection with that it appears, and it can be shown from the records of the Department, that the question of the continuation of the Society was one which had been considered many years ago at a meeting of this Society. The members themselves expressed the desire then that the Society should no longer continue. Under the rules the necessary meetings for its dissolution had to be summoned. The rules also provided for delegates to represent members. A meeting was summoned in the proper way in October last when it was unanimously agreed that the Society should be wound up and the fund available distributed among the members. Not only the members at present existing in the Society, but those who in the past had contributed to the Society's fund but were no longer members were to share in the distribution of the fund of the Society. The feeling of the sub-committee as stated by the hon. Colonial Secretary, was that as the Department now provides superannuation benefits to employees it did not seem necessary for the Department to continue the Society.

On the question of Friendly Societies I took the opportunity to point out to the members of this Society at the last meeting I attended, when they referred to the number of Friendly Societies existing at the present time in the Colony and in the City, that if they still desired they could join any of those societies outside the Department and derive the benefits they were accustomed to receive. What I want to point out now is that it is not a question of the Department being anxious to rid itself of the Fund of the Society. The Department felt with the Committee, that the existence of the Society was not of any great importance at the moment, but it was the members themselves who

desired to have the Society wound up and the funds available distributed among them. They are so anxious about it that they thought they would have been able to get their share before the Christmas holidays. As the Society could not be wound up by that time, I suggested to them that while it would be disappointing to them not to have it for the Christmas they could nevertheless be hopeful of getting it for Easter which was just as good a holiday. Their anxiety was to know how soon they could get their share of the Fund.

The other questions raised by the hon. Member for Central Demerara have all been answered by the Chairman of the Board, but I would like to state that I also share the view as a member of that Board that except for the fact that it would be creating a new post and giving somebody else a job the question of appointing a "go-between" officer would not materially help. The views of the hon. Colonial Secretary are exactly mine. It is not going to stop the Board or the hon. Colonial Secretary being asked to investigate matters. As far as I know, and as members of the Board know, the subordinate executives of the Department—those in charge of a number of men—investigate any report made to them and send it on to the Board with their comment thereon. If at any time there is any question of doubt in respect of the correspondence and it is necessary to hear the officer concerned, he is always asked to appear before the Board. The Board endeavours always to give satisfaction to all concerned. The allegation has been made that when a man goes to the office to make a complaint he is told to get out. That is a matter of who the officer is, the time he walks in to make the complaint, and the circumstances under which he approaches the officer to make the complaint. When genuine and serious complaints are made they do go before the Board, and they receive the consideration they deserve.

The hon. Member for Central Demerara commented on the Bartica-Potaro Road Service and pointed out that the expenditure is \$79,000 for 1941 and the anticipated revenue is \$77,000. But I think he has omitted—I cannot say he has done so wilfully—to draw attention to the fact that in the \$79,000 for 1941 is included \$2,872 for Temporary War Bonus to

employees. If you look at item 12 on page 6 you will see that amount. If that amount is deducted you have the estimated expenditure as \$76,880, while the revenue provided is \$77,530, a difference of \$650 on the actual working. I give the hon. Member credit for being much better at figures than I am. I am not in his street in manipulating figures for the purpose of his trade. He has in the course of the debate and in his own cute way suggested that there is nothing wrong in the hon. Colonial Treasurer being Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board because of his knowledge of figures and his ability in that respect. As far as I can see the excess is only \$650, the difference between the revenue and expenditure

Your Excellency raised the same question, as my hon. friend on my right (Mr. Percy C. Wight) did, that if the revenue is to be increased you must contemplate increasing the freight and passenger rates. That Service depends on passenger and freight charges for its revenue, and unless these two items are to be considered for increases you cannot get any more revenue; otherwise it will be necessary to reduce expenditure and to effect that you will have to curtail the Service. You will have to do away with a certain portion of the Service and a certain portion of the staff. Then again there is the question of unemployment. If you reduce the staff it means that some employees would have to go out of the Service.

If there is the impression either in this Council or out of it that matters in connection with this Department are not given careful attention, I wish to say that that is far from being correct. Every matter receives very careful attention by the members of the Board. There are members of the Board who are in commercial life as well as others, and there is also the representative of Berbice, Mr. Farrar, who well takes care of the necessities of Berbice when he attends the meetings of the Board; and apart from that fact there is the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) who is Vice-Chairman of the Board. Berbice is therefore well represented on the Board.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I would not have returned to the subject especially after the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Austin, had

made his remarks about the Provident Fund, but in view of what the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Gonsalves) has just said I think it my duty to come back, however unpleasant it may be to me and my hearers. I do not want to say much. I want to tell the hon. Member for Georgetown South and Government that the only reason why the members of the Provident Society expressed the desire to abolish the Society was because they were not satisfied with the manner in which the Fund was being conducted. In that there was nothing wrong. Their complaint was that they did not know what was going on. No meetings were held, no balance sheet was put before them, and that had been going on not for two months or two years but for quite a few years. Personally I feel they were justified in making that request. One of the members who appeared before us said: "We know nothing about it."

THE CHAIRMAN: Was not the original purpose of the Fund largely to provide financial aid in sickness and at death?

MR. DE AGUIAR: It must be remembered that when the Committee strongly advocated not only the continuation of the Fund but the strengthening of it they had no knowledge of Government's intention of giving superannuation benefits to the employees.

THE CHAIRMAN: Then the situation has been altered!

MR. DE AGUIAR: Yes; but to say there was no justification by the members would not be a statement of fact because those statements were made and quite emphatically. I go further and make this observation. When the Executive Officers of the Department heard of the Provident Fund from the Committee they were surprised; they did not think the question would have been raised. Those who appeared before us confessed that they knew nothing about it. Quite a lot of evidence was taken in this matter. We tried to investigate it as much as possible because we were charged with a duty and this was one of the things the Committee felt strongly about, but as I say the position has been changed as a result of the superannuation benefits. When a member of the Board or an Executive of the

Department gets up here and says the complaint at the time was not justifiable I draw—

THE CHAIRMAN: I do not think any hon. Member has said that.

MR. GONSALVES: To a point of explanation! My remarks only dealt with the particular question. I endeavoured to point out that whatever complaint was made during the time the Legislative Committee dealt with it and after, it was the wish of the members themselves that the Fund be abolished. There was actually a motion, but the meeting was never properly summoned and it never came off.

MR. WOOLFORD: No one seems to have referred to the origin of this Provident Society. It was a society formed under the auspices of Mr. Dornford who was Manager of the Demerara Railway Company. In those days the Transport and Harbours Department did not exist. It had its origin in the management of the Demerara Railway Company forming a Provident Society in part for their own protection, and the contributors were men who were confined to the railway alone. It was mainly designed to provide sick and burial benefits for the contributors. It happened that nobody wanted to join and it was then almost made compulsory. As time went on and after the Government had taken over the Service the drawings for sick and burial benefits exceeded the income owing to an absence of medical inspection and approval as a pre-requisite. It was not compulsory for any member of the Steamer Service to join and, therefore, the drawings on the funds of the Society by members went beyond even the share they had in them. I wish to say this: The workmen were then responsible for financing the Society. It so happened as the Fund continued to lessen that this Government was approached for a contribution, which it was under no obligation to give as it was not a fund to be distributed among all the employees of the Department.

It is true that the rules provided for the management to be the Trustees, but in actual fact the manager of the old Railway Company used to preside at its meetings and, as a matter of convenience and giving some support to the movement, when the Government took over the railway the General Manager continued to preside over



the meetings. I believe there were no meetings for some considerable time, but the time came when the Board of Commissioners were faced with making contributions towards what appeared to be a society which could not maintain its existence. The time came when we had to consider whether this contribution was justifiable. The members decided among themselves that the Society should be wound up. Even if that was not done this Government would not have been justified in contributing \$500 annually in circumstances which have entirely altered the viewpoint of the Commissioners in that direction. The members, who are contributors to the Fund and who used to have part of their contributions returned under sick benefits, now have the benefit of getting a certain amount of pay when they are ill and of being paid also a certain amount during vacation leave. Their position is entirely altered now. Instead of being entirely dependent upon the Fund to get benefits, they will now receive them under the superannuation system of the Department and also vacation and sick leave which did not exist before.

With the exception of burial benefits, the benefits of the Society are revised by the improvement of the status of the men as the result of representation made by the Board of Commissioners. I would like to say that this recommendation is not the result of the Committee's recommendations. Before the Committee was appointed the Board had made efforts in that direction. So far as the general superannuation allowance is concerned, there had been considerable delay in the matter as the Secretary of State's approval had to be obtained. It must not be understood that the position as to improved salaries is the result of the Reorganization Committee's recommendation. The Provident Society has been referred to year after year by the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners is not responsible for it and, in my opinion, it should never have been taken over when the amalgamation took place.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not so easy for people not knowing what goes on inside to realize the true position, and the hon. Member for Central Demerara quite correctly stated that this was one of the complaints brought to the

notice of the Committee, and they were not satisfied with the way in which the Society was functioning. The Board was not satisfied when it discovered that the meetings of the Society had not been held as frequently as they should have been, but the Board had nothing to do with the complaint made to the Committee. It came to the Board's notice for the first time when one member wished to withdraw. There had not been a single complaint from a member that there was any dissatisfaction with the working of the Society. There was no rule for the withdrawal of a member. I am afraid when this Committee was appointed the members of the Society sat down and scratched their heads to know what to put before the Committee, but there was not a single complaint made to the Board about the working of the Society.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am glad the hon. Colonial Secretary stated that no meetings were held. As a member of that Committee I have sat for days and weeks, and there was no doubt that everybody who came before the Committee was extremely adamant on the subject of not being fairly treated. The members did not know what was the state of affairs, as no statement was put before them about the working of the Society.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is very remarkable that it has gone on all these years without any complaint to Government before now.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: One may gather that they considered the contribution a compulsory reduction from their wages.

At this stage the Committee adjourned for the luncheon recess until 2 p.m.

2 p.m.—

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I intend to move a formal reduction of this vote, but before doing so I would like to support the views expressed by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) so far as the post of General Manager is concerned. Great care should be exercised in the selection of a General Manager. One of the outstanding qualifications should be his administrative ability, and without casting any reflection on the present acting General Manager I suggest that the Board



in considering applications for the post should give due consideration to that matter and to the claims of the officer holding the acting appointment.

I intend to move a reduction of the vote by \$45,000, and I may say that I have been influenced by the reply given to this Council by the Colonial Secretary in regard to item 1—Reconditioning s.s. *Baiara* \$51,000. If I understand him correctly I think it should be re-constructing instead of re-conditioning. I understood him to say that the boiler of that ship was found to be bad and it is intended to put in a Diesel engine. If the boiler is bad why not replace it? I observe from item 3 that to replace a boiler in a locomotive will cost \$6,000. I do not know whether the Commissioners have taken into consideration the unemployment that would be caused among wood-cutters by putting a Diesel engine in this ship. A Diesel engine will require imported fuel and we were even short of imported fuel some time ago, necessitating the curtailment of certain services.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Commissioners have taken expert advice outside the Service in regard to this matter. Strictly speaking, this ship should be taken off the service next year and a new vessel purchased. There was a programme extending over a period of years but there is no hope whatever of obtaining a new vessel, and the Board asked experts outside to examine the vessel to see, first of all, whether anything could be done to extend her life, and they recommended that certain work should be done to the hull and a Diesel engine installed. Those views had already been expressed by the Department's officers, and the Board felt that \$51,000 should be asked for to enable the work to be done. I am afraid the question of unemployment was not considered by the Board, and I feel it would have been useless to recommend that a new boiler be put into the vessel so as to enable one or two wood-cutters to get some work, if the experts were of the opinion that that would be a wrong step to take.

The Committee divided on the motion for the reduction of the item by \$45,000 to \$171,451, and there voted:—

*For*—Messrs. Peer Bacchus and De Aguiar—2.

*Against*—Messrs. Jackson, Jacob, Crease, Case, Laing, D'Andrade, Austin, McDavid, Woolford, Dias, Dr. Maclellan, Professor Dash, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary.—14.

Motion lost.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I now move that the item "Net Deficiency" be increased by \$720 and carried out at \$217,171. In view of the superannuation benefits scheme extended to this Department, in which there are over 1,000 employees, a very careful record has to be kept of the service of the employees, including the daily employees, and it will be necessary to have a special clerk detailed for the keeping of this record. The increase proposed will not be paid to the officer detailed to carry out those duties, but arrangements will be made departmentally for the work to be done, provided a clerk at \$720 per annum is given to the Department.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I do not think I have grasped what is the intention, whether it is proposed to second a clerk from another branch of the Government Service to carry out the duties required of this particular officer in compiling the record we have heard so much about.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is in the Department an officer particularly suited to the post which is a very responsible one. The records have to be searched up for years and very accurately kept, but the Department has not asked for the salary of a more highly paid officer. It is proposed to re-adjust the duties at the Head Office, so that if the Department is strengthened by one clerk at \$720 arrangements could be made for the records to be kept by another officer in the same Department.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Therefore \$720 will not be required for the clerk engaged in this work, but for another clerk who will be required to do other duties.

THE CHAIRMAN: For replacement.

Item as amended put, and agreed to.

## TREASURY.

Mr. JACOB: I wish to make a few remarks under this head. In view of the debate under Agriculture and the Public Works Department yesterday I wish my dissent recorded against item (a)—Colonial Treasurer, \$5,280. I know it means nothing to Government. As a matter of fact Government must support one of its principal officers, but on a question of policy I have to record my dissent against this item. I have no doubt that this officer has done very well—

THE CHAIRMAN: The Colonial Treasurer's salary is a statutory amount. The hon. Member is not in order in moving a reduction of it.

Mr. JACOB: I wish to record my dissent against the whole head. I know that the gentleman in charge of this Department has done very good work and has given very good service, and Government must of necessity support him in every possible way, but perhaps it would be better from that officer's point of view that he should be transferred to another Colony on promotion. I do not wish to say anything which would interfere with the officer's financial position. I am looking at the matter from the Colony's point of view. While Government is probably 100 per cent. satisfied I am sure the taxpayers are not fully satisfied with what is going on and what may be going on in the near future. From that point of view I think it is only right that I should place on record what I feel and what I conscientiously think is the feeling of a large number of people. I do not intend to go into details but I wish to make the statement that the Colony is heading towards financial chaos, and I do hope we will get out of it before certain of the principal officers of Government leave this Colony.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I could hardly restrain myself to retain my seat and allow such an attack on an officer who, I consider, has rendered very valuable service to this Government, to go unchallenged. As a matter of fact I think it is the very first occasion when words actually fail me to say what I would like to say in reply to the unwarranted statement just made by the hon. Member. Perhaps I may say in a few words that I was surprised and disappointed. I am ashamed that such a state-

ment should come from one of my hon. colleagues against an officer, a creole of this country, a man who we know has done his best and is doing his best, and will continue to do his best in the interest of the Government and the inhabitants of the Colony as a whole. Where is the evidence of the dissatisfaction of the people to which the hon. Member has referred? I know of none. He has produced none to the Council, and I could not allow such a statement to be made without rising from my seat and dissociating myself in no uncertain terms and paying a tribute instead to the officer at present occupying the post.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) for the remarks he has made. The remarks of the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) have been described as an attack on the hon. Colonial Treasurer. I do not think I would call them that, because there was nothing whatever of any substance in his criticism, except the statement that the taxpayers are not satisfied. That may be true; no taxpayers are ever satisfied with taxes. But I am not sorry that the hon. Member has chosen to do this, because it gives me the opportunity of saying that he is perfectly right in one thing—that the Treasurer has the complete confidence of Government, and I would like to say that he is one of the ablest officers in his post I have met in my experience. (applause).

Mr. JACOB: I am sorry but I do not regret having made the statement. I paid a tribute to the officer. He has done well in his particular sphere, but if Government still maintains that his activities in connection with the rice industry are in the interest of the taxpayers I have to differ, because Government has evidence of dissatisfaction.

THE CHAIRMAN: I shall not make any attempt to convince the hon. Member because I know that is not possible.

## PUBLIC WORKS—EXTRAORDINARY.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am exceedingly glad that Government has seen the wisdom, especially in these times, in not restricting public works, and has considered it advisable to put up a programme such as we

have here. I have not selected any particular item to make this observation, but my chief concern is that I think Government should endeavour to maintain public works as far as possible during these times, because we all know that the man in the street looks forward to these works being carried out, and if on the ground of economy Government had to postpone works of this nature it would have been a most regrettable thing to do. I have risen merely to say that I am very pleased with the programme which has been put up and I hope that the works will be carried out within the figures stated in the respective estimates.

Mr. JACKSON: There are a few items on which I would like to make some comments. I will deal first of all with item 2. It is extremely gratifying to see that Government has placed on the Estimates an amount for the construction of a Trade Centre at Fellowship, West Coast, Demerara, and I think it is opportune at this moment to mention that, instead of resting on its oars as far as educational matters are concerned Government is making an effort to train the hand, the head and the mind together. It may not be generally known that there are Trade Centres in some parts of the Colony to which the boys in the vicinity go to receive training in wood-work, and it might be a source of satisfaction to some Members to know that there are at least two Centres in Georgetown, and that the desks and benches of the schools are made at those Centres by boys who were originally trained at the Trade Centres in the country districts and elsewhere. The building at Fellowship is in a very bad condition. Government has recognized that and the staff and the boys are to be congratulated on their courage in remaining in the building at present in use. Government is to be congratulated on its decision to build a new Centre there.

With regard to item 8 there is some reference to water supply, and I am asking that the pipe-line at Uitvlugt, which ends at the school where there is a stand pipe in the compound, be extended about 200 yards in order to permit the people of that district to get water and so relieve the congestion which now takes place in the school yard where they all go for water. I mentioned this matter when we met in

informal committee, and I think the Colonial Secretary made a note of it. I would be glad if Government could see its way to make the extension I suggest. The work of the school is frequently disturbed by the large number of people who have to go there for water.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am sorry I omitted to ask for some information with respect to two items, 25 and 27. I was wondering whether they are the result of a promise made by Government to improve the drainage of New Amsterdam. I would also like to know whether item 25 is related to item 27. I am also wondering whether item 34 has been included under this head, because the Estimates when prepared included no consideration of a war bonus. It is not usual to find items like that under this head.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I would like to know exactly what the hon. Member meant by referring to item 27, because if he had attended the meeting of the informal Committee—

Mr. DE AGUIAR: My question is whether item 25 is related to item 27 which is the result of a promise made by Government? I would like to know whether it forms part of the drainage improvement works.

Mr. CASE (Director of Public Works and Sea Defences): It does. It is work which would have been done by the New Amsterdam Town Council but they have not got the money.

Mr. WOOLFORD: This amount will complete the drainage scheme. That is all very well in its way, but I am wondering whether it includes the drainage of Winkel? I do not wish to raise a controversy, but we all know—those who live in New Amsterdam know—that Winkel is a hot-bed of malaria and insanitary conditions. It is at the north of the town of New Amsterdam and it is most desirable that it should be incorporated in the scheme. I do not know whether the Director of Public Works, under whose supervision the work is being undertaken, can assist us in determining whether any further expenditure will be necessary to incorporate Winkel in the scheme. I understood him to say it would not be necessary.



Mr. CASE: It includes the main drainage. No further sum is required.

Mr. WOOLFORD: That work is already done.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is a scheme for improvement of the main drainage, and there is, no doubt, a great deal of supplementary work.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I would like to know whether the drainage work at Winkel is completed, because it is proposed to go to the Court to restrain any Municipal activities in that particular area. How far it will succeed is another matter.

I have also risen to move that item 5 (c) on page 84—Construction of strong room and office for records, Georgetown Magistrates' Court, \$3,000—be deleted. This expenditure is being asked for to prevent the disappearance or theft of notes taken by the Magistrates at the hearing of cases. That is one of the objects of this item. Magistrates take notes in every case; they are required to do that, but some notes are of no further importance than the case itself. In summary matters the notes do not become important unless there is going to be an appeal. *Ex facie* it seems to me to be quite logical to assume that the only reason for this item is to protect the Magistrate's notes in cases in which there is an appeal subsequently, in order that they may be available for use in the Supreme Court.

I do invite Government to consider whether, because of an occurrence which took place, and which is not at all likely to be repeated, we are justified in incurring the expenditure of \$3,000? If Government says that it is something that is necessary then the logical thing is to construct strong rooms in every Magistrate's Court. Why assume that every Magistrate's notes are going to be lost? There is no necessity for a strong room. The clerk has a safe in Court which is encased and which protects his cash. Let the notes disappear and let some appeal case not be heard. Government does not know how those notes disappeared. I have heard quite privately but I cannot mention it here. (laughter). They disappeared in the same way as the previous ones disappeared. The particular appellant, who was convicted of evasion of Customs duty, would

not have paid his fine. The Colonial Secretary rather suggested to me that if the appeal had not been successful Government would have been able to recover the fine. There was not the slightest hope of that. I know the man well; he only has the clothes he wears. He would have gone to prison and come out, and he would have continued to earn the living he has earned for years. He would not have been able to pay the Customs duty.

I consider this item to be a waste of money. There are other means of protecting a Magistrate's notes. All Government has to do is to provide him with a safe so that he can lock up his note-books during the night. What is to prevent those notes disappearing when the Magistrate goes to breakfast and adjourns the Court for an hour and a half? The note-books are left on the table. If there are any other reasons for this item I would like to know.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: It is rather difficult to hear the hon. Member at this end.

Mr. WOOLFORD: The hon. Member heard all I had to say at the informal meeting—I do not know whether he was there. (Laughter).

Mr. WIGHT: I do not know whether the hon. Member said he assisted in the disappearance of the Magistrate's notes or aided and abetted the removal. I am not quite sure. (laughter).

Mr. JACOB: I wish to support the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford). I have been asked by the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) to suggest for Government's consideration the extension of the Bartica hospital. There is congestion there, I understand, and it is suggested that the addition of a wing at a cost of \$5,000 or \$6,000 would help to alleviate suffering in that part of the Colony. I think this is a very good opportunity to abandon the proposal to spend \$3,000 on a strong room and relieve the congestion at the Bartica hospital.

I am also requested by the hon. Member who is absent to point out that hardly any provision has been made for unemployment works in Leguan and Wakenaam although the estimates under this head amount to \$474,855. It does appear to me a neces-



sity while the crops are growing and when on account of drought and other causes no rice crops will be planted between now and next April, that unemployment works should be carried out in those islands.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I would like to say a word or two about item 5 (c). I would be the very last person to ask for any expenditure which is in any way unnecessary. As a matter of fact I agreed to several items being deleted from this particular head. Hon. Members are aware of the facts of this case. An appeal went before the Chief Justice who made certain very strong statements in a considered judgment. The least this Council can do is to give some consideration to the suggestions made by the Chief Justice. That is why that item is on the Estimates. It may be said that it is possible to provide a place to keep the records in the Georgetown office, but it is so over-crowded that it is impossible to keep anything else there. These books are kept in the open where anybody can get hold of them. The hon. Member said he knew where the missing notes went to. I wish I did. I have no idea where they went to. Every Court in the world has a strong room for its records. One is entitled to get a copy of the proceedings in a case 50 years after. It is a public right. We want somewhere to keep these records, a building of some kind. Whether it costs \$3,000 or a smaller amount is immaterial. The hon. Member said he knew that in this case the man would not have paid the fine. All I can say is that a man who apparently had nothing but the suit he stood up in was able to engage senior counsel.

Starting early next year there will be an extra Magistrate and an extra Magisterial division in Berbice. One effect of that will be that a Magistrate will sit for two days a week in Georgetown. Therefore we want another court-room in Georgetown for the third Magistrate to sit in. I could not possibly have the nerve to ask for a new court at this time. I should have to borrow or share a room where the extra Magistrate could sit for two days a week. That Magistrate will have to keep his records somewhere, and the whole paraphernalia of the Court will have to be kept somewhere. They certainly cannot be kept in the existing building; there is no space. Therefore an additional pur-

pose for this building with a strong room is for use as a third Court if possible. I am no engineer but all that is required is a structure of some kind above the store on the existing site, which is very congested, to keep the record books and other paraphernalia of a third Court which we hope to establish very early in the new year. I hope that hon. Members will not strike the item out entirely, because the consequence would be that a third Court could not sit. With their local knowledge of the amount which would be sufficient to provide a room for keeping records hon. Members may reduce the item.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I wish to deal with one or two questions raised in the course of this debate. The hon. Mr. Jackson referred to a point raised in Committee. One of the advantages of having that Committee, if Members would attend the meetings, is that small things are brought to the notice of Government without long debates. The hon. Member will be pleased to know that the work to which he has referred is already being done and should be completed by the end of the year.

With regard to the war bonus the figure put down here was arrived at by taking as a guide the figure for 1940. The expenditure under this head for next year will be more or less the same as this year, plus the \$250,000 to which I have already referred. The amount spent this year on war bonuses is the figure inserted in next year's estimate for the same period. Provision for war bonus has been included under each head. It would be rather difficult to put it opposite each item.

MR. DE AGUIAR: I appreciate that in dealing with the ordinary heads provision for war bonus is put at the bottom of the page. This is an estimate of extraordinary expenditure on works for which plans are prepared and costs are made out in respect of labour and materials, and I would have thought, subject to what the Colonial Secretary might say, that when, for instance, the cost of extending the wharf at the Colonial Bond was arrived at, it would have included war bonus to the labourers.

MR. Mc DAVID: These estimates have been prepared without including the

amount required to pay war bonus. The fact is that the war bonus is a fixed percentage, and it is quite easy to prepare the cost without taking that percentage into account. The hon. Member will appreciate that we want to know what is expended on the temporary war bonus in total, and if it is hidden up under a number of sub-heads we shall not know easily what the Colony has spent on war bonuses. Taking everything into consideration the plan is to allow the estimates to be prepared exclusive of war bonuses, and to show the cost of war bonuses in a separate item in respect of each head.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member for Essequebo River (Mr. Lee) asked me at the Committee meeting whether I would give further consideration to a proposal to provide money for another wing at the Bartica hospital instead of constructing a number of rooms under the hospital, and I spoke to the Director of Medical Services. Both items had been included in the original estimate but, as I said at the meeting, a sum of \$200,000 had to be cut off this particular head, and it was felt that the Director of Medical Services should bear his share of the cut. I left it to him to say which item should be cut out and he decided on the wing. If it is the general feeling of the Council that the wing should be included Government would consider it. The addition of a wing would cost about \$6,000.

With regard to the item about which the Attorney-General has been speaking I am afraid there has been some misunderstanding. It was thought that he required a strong room and his estimate was prepared on the basis of providing a fire and burglar-proof room, but if the building is also required for a Magistrate it is obvious that we cannot put him in a strong room.

I would like to move a few amendments under this head. Under sub-head 3—Industrial School, Onderneeming—I move that sub-item (a)—Construction of quarters for Matron, \$2,500—be amended to read:—(a)—Construction of quarters for Schoolmaster and Matron, \$4,500. It is now intended to provide two buildings instead of one. We have to provide quarters for the staff, and at present there is no accommodation for either the Schoolmaster or the Matron. That is why it is necessary to increase the vote.

MR. DE AGUIAR: There are quarters which are occupied by the District Administration.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: If we turn out the clerk of the District Administration we would have to provide a building for him. These buildings will be erected in the compound of the institution.

MR. C. V. WIGHT: There are certain cases in which there should be a concentration of Government offices in a district. The District Commissioner lives at Suddie while his office is at Onderneeming, while certain officers who work at Onderneeming live at Suddie. There are certain buildings at Suddie which are occupied by officers who work at Onderneeming. One wonders whether there could not be some inter-changing.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member is quite right. The matter struck me when I went there and I spoke to the Commissioner of Labour about it. There is no suitable building at Suddie at the moment to which his staff could be removed. I cannot see why the District Commissioner's staff was moved into the building in front of the Onderneeming School. It seems rather strange. Their removal now would necessitate the erection of other buildings at Suddie, and unfortunately we have not the money to do that. The District Commissioner should have his clerk nearer the Suddie compound.

THE CHAIRMAN: The buildings cannot be removed as they are; we would have to add to them.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I understand that this arrangement was made when the Headmaster at Onderneeming was also District Commissioner.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have to do the cheapest thing we can at the moment—to provide quarters for those two officers at Onderneeming. That is probably the most economical way of doing it.

Items put, and agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move the insertion of a new sub-head, 5—Lands and Mines—Boathouse and stelling, \$300. It is proposed to erect this boathouse at or near Parika for the launch to

which I referred a few days ago. Under sub-head 6—Medical Department—which will now be renumbered 7, I move the deletion of sub-item (a)—Improvement to existing mortuary, \$700. Provision has already been made for this work under Public Works—Annually Recurrent.

Agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that sub-head 19—Police Stations, Berbice—re-numbered 20, be amended by the addition of the following sub-items—(c) Police Station, Corentyne, \$31,250; (d) Magistrate's quarters, Corentyne, \$6,000, a total of \$37,250.

This is a re-vote. Hon. Members will remember that \$40,500 was voted on the First Schedule for the erection of these buildings, but it would not be possible to spend the money this year. Government is therefore asking that the money be re-voted.

Items put, and agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move the insertion of a new sub-head, 28—Water Supply, Coastal Villages, \$600. This item is being transferred from head XLVII.—Colonial Development Fund Schemes.

Item put, and agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is a matter I would like to mention to the Council. When we were dealing with the re-organization of the Public Works Department at the last session it was stated that Mr. Case and his staff would be moved into another building known as the "Lighthouse Cottage," and that it would be made serviceable for that purpose at a very small cost. The tenant has removed and the building has been carefully examined, but I am afraid that the cost of repairing it will not be as small as was then expected. I think it is right to let Members know that it is estimated that it will cost \$2,000 to renovate the building so as to make it suitable for Mr. Case and his staff. I think I am in order in mentioning the matter under sub-head 24—Public Works Department.

Mr. JACOB: What is the total of the head—Public Works—Extraordinary?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The total is \$513,705. Your Excellency has given the Council permission to ask that one or two heads be re-committed. The head Public Works Department may be one of the heads to be re-committed. We may have to increase it slightly before the Estimates are finally passed.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am wondering whether the figures with respect to items 26 and 28 cannot be transposed. Is it not possible to take a portion of the sum of \$21,300 under item 28—Drainage and filling Government lands, Georgetown—and add it to item 26—Drilling new and re-conditioning old artesian wells, \$22,400? I make the suggestion in view of the paucity of wells in certain areas and the necessity for more wells in certain districts.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I explained to the Committee when the point was raised, that Government has to keep in view the fact that a certain amount of work must be provided for people in and near Georgetown. I think the hon. Member is aware that during the last two or three years this work has been carried out primarily for purposes of health, but I may say it also had the advantage of providing employment for people in the City. I think that is why this sum has been provided for next year.

#### COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND SCHEMES.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that the items under this head appearing in the column headed "Estimate, 1941" be deleted. They have all been transferred to other heads—Lands and Mines Department, Public Works—Extraordinary, and Agriculture.

Agreed to.

#### ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AMENDED.

Mr. McDAVID: I would like to direct the attention of the Council to the revenue side of the Estimates. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) this morning referred to what he called the conservatism of Government in estimating revenue. Government has suffered for some years past very severely from a lack of sufficient conservatism in estimating revenue, but we have been very conserva-



tive, I admit, during the last three or four years. Nevertheless, for 1941 I am afraid we have not been so. If the hon. Member will look at the estimate of revenue under Customs he will see that the total for 1941 is carried out at only \$2,000 less than the revised total for 1940. In budgeting for Customs revenue for 1941 we have adopted the precise figures of the revised estimate for 1940 although we have absolutely no data on which we could make any reliable forecast and, as the Colonial Secretary stated in his budget statement, we have to make some reserve because it is more than likely that imports will drop and that these revenue duties will not be secured. I am not a prophet; I cannot say. It is on the cards that that will be the case. Nevertheless I would like to make the point that we have not been conservative this year at all. We have budgeted on the high side with regard to the most important items of colonial revenue.

Two changes have to be made in these estimates. Under "Internal Revenue" item 7—Income Tax—should be increased on the understanding that this Council will enact an amendment to the Income Tax Ordinance which has been already foreshadowed by the Colonial Secretary and myself. An item has also to be included under sub-head 8—Excess Profits Tax. As I mentioned when I made a statement some time ago, it is expected that the increase in Income Tax and the new Excess Profits Tax will yield approximately \$300,000 and perhaps something more. It is extremely difficult for me to divide that \$300,000 between those two items; they both react on each other. For example, Excess Profits Tax is allowed as a deduction in computing Income Tax, so that it is almost impossible for me, not knowing how much we are going to get from the Excess Profits Tax, to allocate that \$300,000 between those two subjects. Nevertheless I would ask the Council to agree to \$150,000 being added under Income Tax and \$150,000 being included under Excess Profits Tax.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are dividing it half and half.

Mr. McDAVID: Yes, sir. There is one other item which might come in but I am not asking that the estimates be changed. If the Colonization Fund (Re-

serve Appropriation) Bill, which is on the Order Paper to-day, is passed that will ensure a transfer during next year of \$400,000 to form a reserve to this budget, but I am not asking that any entry be made in these estimates. As a matter of accounting procedure it has to pass through the revenue accounts, but I do not think it is necessary to include the item under revenue at this stage. The result of what I have just said is that the total of the revenue budget shown on page vi. as \$6,674,275 should read \$6,974,275.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that the Council resume.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Committee will rise with leave to sit again.

The Council resumed.

#### SURTAX ON TONNAGE AND LIGHT DUES.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move:—

THAT, with reference to Governor's Message No. 2 dated 5th October, 1940, this Council approves of a surtax of 15 per centum being levied on the amount of tonnage and light dues which shall be collected during the year 1941 under section 18 of the Transport and Harbours Ordinance, 1931.

The object of the motion is to collect for another year the 15 per cent. surtax which has been approved since 1932. It is estimated that it will bring in between \$30,000 and \$40,000 more revenue

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am not opposing the motion. I merely want to refer to a matter which was dealt with by me some time before in respect of which I had hoped some action would have been taken. Perhaps Your Excellency will recall that some time last year I tabled some questions

with regard to this particular matter. I am referring to the section under which these dues are leviable. Under section 18 of Ordinance 30 of 1931 it is provided:—

(ii) where a steamer carrying mails after having arrived at any port of the Colony from any port beyond the seas and having paid dues as aforesaid departs and subsequently, within twenty-one days thereafter, enters any port of the Colony on the return voyage, the dues pay-



able on the return voyage shall not exceed the difference between the dues payable on the whole of the steamer's registered tonnage and the dues paid on the previous arrival;

The effect of that is that if a steamer came into port, paid its dues and departed, and returned within the time prescribed with mails it would not in such circumstances pay dues again. The answer I got to my question was, if my memory serves me rightly, that this Colony lost in the year mentioned something like \$7,000 under that proviso. It is felt that the matter is one which might be looked into. The matter came under my notice and I thought it was my duty to bring it to the notice of Government. The law might need amendment. At the time I asked the question I practically knew the answer, but I thought by asking the question I would be drawing Government's attention to it. Nothing has been done in the matter.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member brought up several points at the last session. The whole debate was laid before the Board of Commissioners and every point was dealt with at two or three meetings. This was one of the points placed before the Board, and the feeling was that no recommendation should be made to Government to have the law amended. There are two ways of looking at the matter, and especially during war time. The hon. Member is aware that there are many people who rely on steamship communication for their mails, and I think it is an advantage to have these ships bringing in mails whenever they are coming. That was only one of the points considered, but the Commissioners did not feel disposed to submit a recommendation for an amendment of the law.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know whether the hon. Member raised the point last year. I can see certain difficulties, particularly during war time. We do not want to penalize Allied shipping.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I know of a case in which a captain posted a letter to himself.

THE PRESIDENT: Why did he do that? I suppose to say he had mails on board.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Yes, sir.

Motion put, and agreed to.

#### EX-GRATIA PAYMENT TO Miss A. M. ARCHER.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

THAT, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 4 dated 6th December, 1940, this Council approves of an *ex-gratia* payment of \$120 to Miss A. M. Archer, in respect of her services as Casual Wardress, Georgetown Prison.

When the 1940 Estimates were before the Council I drew attention to the fact that a very unsatisfactory system existed at the Prison in Georgetown where female prisoners go until they are sent to New Amsterdam, and a Casual Wardress was only employed and paid when there were prisoners to look after, but her services had always to be at the disposal of Government. This had been going on for several years and it seemed to be very unfair. It was therefore decided to put an item on the Estimate for a permanent appointment. The item was passed and consideration was given to the question of confirming the individual in that post, when it was discovered that she was over age and therefore could not continue. Government had done it not only to help her but with the hope that she would benefit by it, but she had to retire on account of her age. It is felt that she should be given some gratuity. She was paid only 50 cents per day when employed. Her average receipts for the past three years were \$105, and it is felt that a sum of \$120 would be a reasonable amount to pay her.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Motion put, and agreed to.

#### GRATUITIES FOR MARRIED FEMALE OFFICERS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move:—

THAT, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 5 dated 9th December, 1940, this Council approves of the payment to a female employce, who has served the Government for at least seven continuous years and resigns or is required to retire for the reason that she is married or is about to marry, of a gratuity at the rate of one-eighteenth of a month's pay for each completed month of service, with a maximum of one year's pay: provided that at the

time of such resignation or retirement she held:—

- (a) a non-pensionable post named in the approved list appended to Governor's Message No. 21 of the 14th August, 1940; or
- (b) a pensionable post but is not eligible for a gratuity under section 5 of the Pensions (Amendment) Ordinance, No. 14 of 1939.

When the resolution was passed in this Council approving of payment being made in the case of female clerks on the pensionable basis who retire on marriage it was pointed out that something should be done for those not on the pensionable establishment. Government undertook to give consideration to the matter and that was done, with the result that we are now asking the Council to approve of some consideration being given to those young ladies who are not on the pensionable establishment. The reason for inserting paragraph (b) in the resolution is this: that formerly a clerk might serve for many years in a non-pensionable post and perhaps for a year or two in a pensionable post, then gets married and has to leave. It is only fair that she should receive some gratuity in respect of her service in the non-pensionable post. One condition is that her service must be for seven continuous years. I think the motion will meet with the approval of the Council.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Mr. JACOB: I am not very familiar with the terms of the Governor's Message referred to in the motion, but I take it that a nurse who was employed, say from 1919, and had to resign in 1937 on account of marriage would be entitled to some gratuity under this motion.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I intend to raise the same question with respect to a case which has been brought to my notice. It is the case of a nurse who, after giving 12 years service, became ill and subsequently married and was retired from the Service. I see the motion refers to female employees who have served the Government at least seven continuous years and resign or are required to resign on marriage. Therefore I accept the view that both the hon. Member's case and my own will be met by this motion. That being so I am very glad Government has found it possible to meet those cases. They have been referred to on several occasions. Some very hard

cases crop up now and then, and Members have had to make special representations to Government on their behalf. The adoption of this motion will remove all that difficulty now.

Mr. DIAS: I suggest that the matter should be considered by Government with a view to making the motion retrospective.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think we could undertake that.

Mr. DIAS: The Ordinance came into force about September last year.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would like to point out to the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) that a resolution was passed in August in which there is a list of offices the holders of which are entitled to this concession on marriage. That resolution was not made retrospective. I think I am correct in saying that, and it is not proposed that this resolution should be made retrospective either. Certain cases referred to by hon. Members will not be considered under this motion.

Mr. JACOB: I am not very familiar with the case but I think some application was made, and there is correspondence to the effect that Government was considering the question of giving some gratuity to female employees who had retired as in that particular case. I think Government should re-consider the matter in that light. I know it is all well for those who retire from now on, but those who served in the past and had to retire are, in some cases, in very bad circumstances.

THE PRESIDENT: How far back would the hon. Member go?

Mr. JACOB: Probably five years.

THE PRESIDENT: Why not 10 years?

Mr. JACOB: I think 10 years would be better. I have not thought of the matter very carefully; I did not know the motion was coming up to-day.

THE PRESIDENT: I can give no undertaking at all that this provision will be made retrospective. The matter would have to be very carefully investigated

before any such action could be taken. It is very unusual.

Motion put, and agreed to.

#### EXPIRING LAWS CONTINUANCE BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance to continue certain expiring laws" be read a second time. The object of this Bill is to continue in force for another year the collection of duties and taxes.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without discussion.

Notice was given that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read a third time and passed. (*Colonial Secretary*).

#### GAMBLING PREVENTION (AMENDMENT) BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance further to amend the Gambling Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 95, by making it an offence for any person in the Colony to sell or deliver any ticket in any lottery conducted outside the Colony" be read a second time. Hon. Members are aware that lotteries in this Colony are permitted in four cases, one of which is on the Race Course, and it is provided that local charities shall take not less than 15 per cent. of the profits. In the case of foreign lotteries the selling or offering of tickets for sale is prohibited altogether, but there is no provision relating to Empire lotteries. In some parts of the Empire, including Great Britain, they are illegal, but in other parts they are legal. The object of the Bill is to prohibit the sale within the Colony of tickets in all lotteries other than approved local lotteries so as to prevent money going to other lotteries and affecting local charities.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture) seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without discussion.

The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read a third time and passed. (*The Attorney-General*).

#### FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance to amend the Firearms Ordinance, 1940, with respect to the date upon which firearms which have been surrendered to the Police may be disposed of at the discretion of the Commissioner of Police" be read a second time. When the Firearms Ordinance was enacted it was intended that the commencing date should be the 1st August, 1940. Hon. Members will remember that section 3 of the Ordinance gave persons two months in which to surrender their firearms to be stamped by the Police, and those who had not taken them back from the Police by the last day of December were liable to have them disposed of by the Commissioner of Police. Grave delay ensued in obtaining the dies to stamp those weapons, with the result that the date of commencement of the Ordinance had to be postponed to the 1st December this year. Therefore the period of two months will not expire until the last day of January next, and the object of the Bill is to give people two months within which to hand in their firearms and a further three months to withdraw them from the Police. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

Professor DASH seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without discussion.



The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read a third time and passed, (*The Attorney-General*).

GEORGETOWN (TAXATION AND RATING CONCESSIONS) BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance to confer power on the Georgetown Town Council to exempt or to exempt partially the owners of certain properties in the City from the liability to pay taxes or rates for a limited period" be read a second time. This Bill seeks to give effect to a resolution of the Town Council of Georgetown passed in April this year, and the object of that resolution is to encourage a building programme in Georgetown and of the reconstruction and repair of existing buildings in Georgetown by a reduction of taxes or remission or reduction of rates in respect of such buildings. It is entirely a Municipal affair and applies to Georgetown only. It will be in force for three years only, starting from the 1st January, 1940. In other words the first year has almost expired. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

Professor DASH seconded.

Mr. JACOB: I would like to make some general observations on this Bill. Under section 160 of the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance, Chapter 86, the Town Council has the right to order the re-appraisal of certain lands and buildings, but for some reason or other the Town Council has not carried out its function in respect of that Ordinance. I have a few cases in point, but I take this opportunity to bring one particular case to the notice of this Council. The buildings I have in mind are on lots 101, 102 and 103, Kingston. That property was valued on several occasions and the information I have is that in one instance the valuation was actually changed in the Town Council's records. I also have information that the property was valued in 1939 but owing to certain irregularities the valuation was not accepted. I think the Supreme Court made an order that the 1938 valuations should be used for the collection of taxes

in 1940. This property was valued by Mr. Magistrate Crane at over \$6,000 but it is in the town books at \$2,150, and it has been at that figure for 10 years. I think there was an addition of \$100 four or five years ago. The matter was referred to at a meeting of the Town Council and I think the valuation was actually changed.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: The facts stated by the hon. Member are absolutely incorrect. For his information I will say that the matter was not only debated at the Town Council but the Auditors went into it. It was examined by everybody on the Council and the matter was dropped like hot cakes by the Councillor who moved the motion. His informant, who happens also to be the hon. Member's informant, had given him wrong information. That is on record at the Town Council.

Mr. JACOB: I think the hon. Member is an interested party and I do not thank him for the interruption. I do not know whether an enquiry was made at the Town Hall.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I would like to ask the hon. Member how long is he going to speak on the procedure of the Town Council?

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member must understand that the whole conduct of the Town Council is not before the Council on this Bill. I would like to know how the facts he is giving are relevant to this Bill.

Mr. JACOB: We are discussing the exemption of certain properties from taxes.

THE PRESIDENT: We are discussing a specific measure for exempting certain properties from taxes. It has nothing to do with the general system of rates.

Mr. JACOB: The property in question has vacant lots as well and houses may be built on those lots. I am submitting that I am within my right and I ask your indulgence.

THE PRESIDENT: I have asked the hon. Member to explain how it is relevant to this Bill.

Mr. JACOB: We are passing legislation which will permit ratepayers to erect

buildings in Georgetown on which they will not have to pay taxes for a certain number of years. I am referring to three lots of land and I think there are buildings on two of those lots. On one lot there is no building at all, and it is quite possible that a building may be put up there.

THE PRESIDENT: Will the hon. Member confine himself to the vacant lot?

Mr. JACOB: There are buildings on two of those lots, and if an inspection is made there it will be seen that there is a building on the N $\frac{1}{2}$  of lot 103 and another on lot 102. Lot 100 is vacant and it is quite possible that a building may be built there. I am drawing attention to the fact that the land and buildings are assessed in the Town books at \$2,150 while the value of the property is over \$5,000. I think some notice should be taken of the matter. I am asking Government to instruct its representatives on the Town Council to see that certain things are done in a right and regular manner. There is legislation empowering the Town Council to act in certain cases, but the Council has declined to act or investigate the matter in a proper and satisfactory manner, and I submit that Government is losing money in that way.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I do not intend to occupy much of the Council's time, but I would like to point out with reference to what the hon. Member has said that if he had only read the Bill correctly he would have seen that clause 5 covers the point he has raised. The hon. Member seems to delight in indulging in personal attacks on other hon. Members, but if he has found that a profitable pastime in the past he may be sure it will not be so profitable to him in the future.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without discussion.

The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read a third time and passed. (*The Attorney-General*).

#### SEA DEFENCE (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Mr. CASE (Director of Public Works and Sea Defences): I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance further to amend the Sea Defences Ordinance, Chapter 118, with respect to the removal from the foreshore by estate owners of the stumps of felled courida trees" be read a second time. In recent years the Sea Defence Board has spent large sums of money in removing stumps from the foreshore which may be the cause of serious erosion. The object of the Bill is to enable the Sea Defence Board to order that stumps be removed when courida trees are felled on the foreshore.

Dr. MACLENNAN seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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

Clause 2.—Amendment of section 16 of the Principal Ordinance.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Since the Bill was published the proprietors of estates have pointed out that they have been cutting courida trees on the foreshore for about 20 years and some of the stumps are still there. They fear they may be called upon to remove them now. This clause says that the Director of Public Works may require that. In actual fact he would not require them to remove those stumps in such cases. I move that paragraph (b) of clause 2 be amended by deleting therefrom all the words following the word "paragraph" and by substituting the following therefor:—

"(d) Subject to the provisions of section fourteen, excavate and remove from the foreshore of his estate all stumps of courida or other trees which he fells or permits to be felled after the first day of January, nineteen hundred and forty-one."

THE PRESIDENT: That makes it only applicable to trees felled after the 1st January next.

Amendment put, and agreed to.

The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read a third time and passed. (*Mr. Case*).

COLONIZATION FUND RESERVE (APPROPRIATION) BILL.

*Mr. McDAVID* (Colonial Treasurer) : I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance to make provision for the transfer of the Colonization Reserve to the general revenue of the Colony" be read a second time. The purpose of this Bill has been fully explained in the Colonial Secretary's Budget statement and also in the Address which Your Excellency gave to the Council at the opening of the session. The Council has by resolution adopted as its policy that this Colony shall meet all its financial obligations from its own resources, and at that time it was fully realized that we should have to call up our last remaining reserve in order to strengthen our financial position. That reserve is the Colonization reserve which by law is set aside to meet the cost of future Indian immigration. It is not conceivable that that purpose will accrue within any reasonable time, and furthermore I think the Council can expect, if and when colonization is resumed in this Colony, that finances will be found from other sources. Therefore it is proposed to transfer this reserve, which amounts to \$400,000, into revenue in order to strengthen the general financial position of the Colony. The Bill has only one clause and authorizes the Treasurer to realize the investments of the Fund after transferring them to revenue, as and when necessary. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

*Mr. AUSTIN* seconded.

*Mr. DE AGUIAR* : I really cannot oppose the Bill but I feel very sad that the necessity has arisen for this Colony to absorb the last remaining reserve it holds—to use the words of the Treasurer—into general revenue. I fully appreciate that efforts will be made, if and when the time comes to resume colonization, to find the money, but I had hoped that the necessity would not have arisen for us to absorb

this Fund into general revenue. When I rose to speak I had in mind a suggestion to make, but now that I am on my feet I can hardly see how it could work. I will still throw it out for what it is worth. I was wondering whether, now that we are faced with this position and in view of the fact that it is proposed to carry forward a working balance of \$240,000, which is very near the figure at which this Fund stands at the moment, it might not be possible to keep the Fund intact as long as possible as a safeguard for the future.

In my own business I never like to feel that there is not something on which I could lean for support, and I am sure the commercial Members of the Council will appreciate what I mean when I say that. To use up this money right away, as I gather is the intention, seems to me to be a very hard thing to do. It is most regrettable that we find ourselves in the position that we must do it. Government no doubt must have considered the matter very carefully, and perhaps this step is taken as a means to an end, but if the suggestion I have thrown out is worth anything I commend it to the careful consideration of Government just to keep an eye on the Fund, for the present at any rate. If, as some of us feel, there are harder times ahead I do not know what will happen to us next year when we have not got this reserve to fall back upon.

*Mr. JACOB* : I find myself in a very difficult position. To a large section of the community this Fund was considered as something which would be utilized, not necessarily for financing Indian immigration but for settling a large number of people on the land. Representations have been made to Government during the last 10 or 15 years that this money should have been used for purposes which might have enabled this Government to avoid being in its present position. I refer to land settlement on a large scale. Large areas of land are available around other cultivated areas, and we were hoping, and I think Government promised, that something would be done and surveys made, and that this money would be used in that direction. We now find that this money is to be used in the general administration of the Colony.

I agree with the hon. Member that



there appear to be harder times ahead. The money is to be used up in 1941. What are we going to do in 1942 and 1943? I hope things will improve and we will not find ourselves in this position at the end of 1941. Not long ago I said that the country was heading towards financial chaos and I recommended that certain expenditure should be curtailed. The Colony is not in a position to meet certain expenditure. I think we are heading towards bankruptcy. Government feels satisfied that the best is being done and that nothing better can be done. Large sections of the people believe that better could have been done and that better can be done. I hope the position as I see it will not materialize, and that we will be in a far better position next year and the years to come.

I have been asked to record my dissent against this Fund being used. It is not going to have any effect at all, but it is necessary that it be recorded that people in the country are not at all satisfied. I find myself in a very difficult position. Money which has been kept for a long number of years for a specific purpose is now to be used up. I feel that something ought to be done to curtail expenditure in certain directions and to expend money in directions which will be productive.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I do not think anyone can refrain from commenting on the general finances of the country. First of all I must congratulate Government on having considered it advisable to impose an excess profits tax, but I must say that I am disappointed with the proportion of

excess profits to be taxed. It is proposed to levy the tax on 60 per cent. of the excess profits, and I am disappointed that such a large margin of excess profits will be allowed. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) laughs at the idea, but I think an excess profits tax should be levied on such a basis that it would not give the mercantile community any encouragement whatever to further press the consuming public so as to make a profit of 40 per cent. Of course I believe that the mercantile community is willing and determined to throw its full weight into the present struggle and assist the Empire to bring the war to an early and successful end. Therefore I feel certain that the commercial community would not think of collecting an extra 40 per cent. If, as I do believe, that conviction is true Government will be very much disappointed in the collection of this excess profits tax. I think Government was ill advised to withdraw the proposed increase in individual income tax. I would support both the increased income tax and the excess profits tax rather than uplift this Colonization reserve to meet the Colony's budget. If need be I would suggest even a further increase of the gasoline tax which I would not term unreasonable or unjustifiable.

THE PRESIDENT: For to-morrow there is very little business that is ready for the Council because time has to expire between these Bills. I think we should be able to give hon. Members some leisure to attend to their own affairs to-morrow, and the Council will meet again on Tuesday next at 11 a.m.