

# SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Friday, 13th February, 1959.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

## PRESENT :

**Speaker**, His Honour Sir Donald Jackson

**Chief Secretary**, Hon. M. S. Porcher (acting)

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

**Financial Secretary**, Hon. F. W. Essex.

} *ex officio*

The Honourable **Dr. C. B. Jagan**—*Member for Eastern Berbice*

(Minister of Trade and Industry)

„ „ **B. H. Benn**

*Member for Essequibo River*

(Minister of Community Development and Education)

„ „ **E. B. Beharry** — *Member for Eastern Demerara*

(Minister of Natural Resources)

„ „ **Janet Jagan**

*Member for Western Essequibo*

(Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)

**Ram Karran**

*Member for Demerara-Essequibo*

(Minister of Communications and Works).

Mr. **R. B. Gajraj**

*Nominated Member*

„ **R. C. Tello**

*Nominated Member*

„ **F. Bowman**

*Member for Demerara River*

„ **L. F. S. Burnham**

*Member for Georgetown Central*

„ **S. Campbell**

*Member for North Western District*

„ **A. L. Jackson**

*Member for Georgetown North*

„ **S. M. Saffee**

*Member for Western Berbice*

„ **Ajodha Singh**

*Member for Berbice River*

„ **J. N. Singh**

*Member for Georgetown South*

„ **R. E. Davis**

*Nominated Member*

„ **A. M. Fredericks**

*Nominated Member*

„ **H. J. M. Hubbard**

*Nominated Member.*

Mr. I. Crum Ewing—Clerk of the Legislature.

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

## ABSENT :

Mr. B. S. Rai — on leave.

Mr. W. O. R. Kendall — on leave.

Mr. A. G. Tasker, O.B.E. — on leave.

The Clerk read prayer.

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, the 12th of February, 1959, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

## ORAL ASKING AND ANSWERING OF QUESTIONS

## MENTAL HOSPITAL ATTENDANTS

**Mr. Tello:** I beg to ask the hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing the following Questions: (1) Is Government aware of the assurance given to Attendants of the Mental Hospital by the Ministry of Health and senior officers of the Medical Department, that opportunity would be afforded certain Attendants of that hospital to be trained as mental nurses, e.g. in occupational therapy, technology of mental nursing, etc.? (2) If the answer is "Yes", will Government state what steps have been taken to honour the assurance?

**The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan):** The answer is No! No assurances were given at the meeting held between the Minister, the Assistant Director of Medical Services and Attendants early in December, 1958, that certain Attendants would be afforded the opportunity for training as mental nurses. I did say that the general question of training of Attendants would be examined.

**Mr. Tello:** Is the hon. Minister aware that in a letter dated 30th December, 1958, an assurance was given to the employees at the Mental Hospital that opportunity for such training would be provided? I have a copy of the letter here.

**Mrs. Jagan:** I would appreciate if the hon. Member would read the letter.

**Mr. Tello:** The letter states:

"Headquarters,  
Medical Department,  
Georgetown,  
30th December, 1958.

Ref. No. 11/2/6.

Sir,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 15th December, 1958.

2. It is the policy of the Medical Department to send suitable officers away for necessary training when such training is possible. Efforts have been made by the Department to obtain approval for a course of training in mental nursing for general qualified Guianese male and female nurses, and it is hoped in due course that this will be implemented.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) L. A. P. SLINGER,  
Director of Medical Services.

The Secretary,  
B.G. Medical Employees' Union,  
Berbice Branch."

The promise that in due course it will be implemented is, I submit, an assurance, and my question was intended to ascertain how early it would be implemented.

**The Minister of Community Development and Education (Mr. Benn):** Is the hon. Member making a speech or asking a question?

**Mr. Tello:** I was asked to read the letter, and I have made my comment.

**Mrs. Jagan:** As I said in my reply, no promise was made, but it was said that the question would be examined. That is what we are doing.

**Mr. Jackson:** As a further supplementary question, may I ask the hon. Minister whether she would indicate how early that examination will come to an end?

**Mrs. Jagan:** The examination is going on.

**Mr. Jackson:** The question is how early will that examination come to an end?

**Mrs. Jagan:** I am not in a position to say.

**Mr. Jackson:** Will the hon. Minister give an assurance now that she will take steps to bring that examination to an early end?

**Mr. Tello:** Is it a new procedure that questions are not answered when they are directed to a Minister?

**Mr. Speaker:** As you do know, questions are orally answered by Ministers when they are directed to them, but if a Member of the Government does not wish or is not in a position to answer your question there is nothing in the Standing Orders or under the Constitution, as far as I can see, to compel that Minister to answer. If you wish to go further into the matter you may table a Motion to discuss it, but in the circumstances nothing more can be done at this stage if the Minister does not answer any further questions.

**Mr. Tello:** I bow to your ruling, Sir, but I interpret the Standing Order much differently.

**Mr. Speaker:** You cannot open the mouth of a Minister and extract an answer. That is a physical impossibility.

**Mr. Jackson:** I appreciate your ruling, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** At another time, under another Head and in a proper form you may avail yourself of the opportunity to get the information you desire, but not now.

**Mr. Jackson:** We shall take that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDER OF THE DAY

### APPROPRIATION BILL

#### BUDGET DEBATE

**The Financial Secretary:** I beg to move that Council resolve itself into Committee to resume consideration of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to appropriate the supplies granted in the current session of the Legislative Council."

Agreed to.

## COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

### AGRICULTURE

**The Chairman:** At the time of adjournment yesterday I had hoped that in a few minutes more we would have been able to complete the Head, Agriculture.

**Mr. Tello:** If I may remind you, Sir, I think the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, had reminded the Chair that the hon. Minister had spoken but had not replied to his request for certain assurances.

**The Chairman:** I do not think he reminded the Chair; the Chair needs no whipping up by a Member. The Chair is always alert. The hon. Nominated Member had called the attention of the particular Minister to the fact that in his view his question had not been answered. I think that would be more accurate.

**Mr. Jackson:** I will now ask the hon. Minister of Natural Resources what steps he has taken to procure substitutes for potatoes, in view of the fact that there has been an increase of 12 per cent in the tax on imported potatoes?

**The Chairman:** I wish to remind hon. Members that items 19 and 25 were under review on the last occasion.

**The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Beharry):** The hon. the Financial Secretary has already answered the question asked by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj.

**The Chairman:** Then his answer is your answer?

**Mr. Beharry:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Jackson:** The hon. the Financial Secretary gave the reply that the tax on potatoes was not a protective tax, so that could not be the answer to the question: what steps have been taken to find a substitute for potatoes.

**Mr. Beharry:** I think the Financial Secretary made it quite clear that potatoes will not be prevented from entering this country. The hon. Member is asking about a substitute for potatoes, thereby suggesting that potatoes will not be available in the country, hence a substitute must be found. I think the hon. Member has missed the answer which the Financial Secretary gave, and I would like to reiterate for the hon. Member's benefit that the Financial Secretary has answered the question.

**Mr. Jackson:** That answer is not satisfactory. The reply given by the Financial Secretary is one which says that the tax is not a protective tax. That is an inaccurate assessment of the situation, for in one part of his Budget Speech the Financial Secretary says that it takes a lot of swallowing to import 19,000,000 lbs of potatoes into a country which produces cassava, rice and other things. So that could not be an answer to the question asked.

**Mr. Beharry:** I cannot see why hon. Members are insisting that there is no substitute and that there should be a substitute. I made it quite clear to hon. Members just now that the Government has not prohibited the importation of potatoes. If the hon. Member is inquiring about the policy of the Government that is an entirely different matter.

Perhaps the hon. Member's intention is to inquire into the vegetable foodstuffs imported into the country in relation to the vegetable foodstuffs produced locally. If that is his intention, I would like to inform him that 1958 was really an historic era for British Guiana in so far as agricultural production is concerned. Never before in the history of our country has the farmer responded to the call of the Government of the day.

I am sure hon. Members will agree with me that every encouragement and facility should be given to the farmers of our country. Patriotism remains at home; love of one's country should supersede the desire to use foreign food. Several hon. Members have said that it is very

difficult to change one's eating habits, but I feel that love for one's country and a patriotic sense of duty to the farmers together with a desire to see an improvement in our economy should force people to realize that it is their duty to support the farmers and their efforts.

I said earlier that 1958 was an historic year in the field of agriculture in this country, and I should like to tell hon. Members of some of our achievements in this field. I should like to emphasize that whenever one talks of agriculture in our country one should think of the activities of our farmers who comprise the bulk of the population in British Guiana.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh** rose—

**Mr. Beharry:** I will give hon. Members some of the figures:

Sugar		
Year	..	Amount Produced
1957	..	284,978 tons
1958	..	21,388 tons
		more than 1957
Rice		
		Amount Produced
1957	..	57,500 tons
1958	..	100,500 tons
Cassava		
		Amount Produced
1957	..	7,490 lbs
1958	..	5,208,705 lbs.

The figures with respect to cassava are in relation to —

[*Interruption by a lady in the Chamber*]

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** May I ask that the woman who is sitting behind me be removed from this Chamber? She is interrupting me and making all sorts of noises.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have two constables at the door, and, if there is any interruption by anyone in this Chamber, they have the authority to remove that person. I wish to sound a warning now to all strangers here, that if there is any interruption or disturbance by anyone, he or she will be removed. It is a privilege for you to be present during these debates. We welcome you here, but only on condition that you behave yourselves, say nothing, do not applaud, and do not in any way express appreciation or non-appreciation

of what is going on. I hope I shall not have to say it again, or to act in any way. Proceed, please.

**Mr. Beharry :** I would like to correct a remark. I said just now that we produced in 1957 about 7,490 lbs. of cassava. I was trying to explain to the hon. Member that it was the amount of cassava which had been purchased by the Government Produce Depot. The Government Produce Depot buys produce and other crops, with the exception of sugar and rice, from farmers when they cannot get their crops sold in the open market. The Government Produce Depot maintains a fixed price for produce in order to protect the farmers. If the Government Marketing Depot failed to take the excess produce from the farmers when the hucksters and other people were unable to buy, the produce would rot in the hands of the farmers. I have already given you the figures for 1957 and 1958, and they reflect the production of British Guiana in relation to the fact that when the farmers were unable to sell a certain amount of their produce to hucksters and consumers the Government Produce Depot bought everything. You will observe that we had a phenomenal increase in cassava.

Plantains		
Year		Amount Purchased
1957	..	301,699 lbs.
1958	..	5,487,324 lbs.
Eddoes		
1957	..	47,000 lbs.
1958	..	144,000 lbs.
Yams		
1958	..	22,000 lbs.
Sweet Potatoes		
1957	..	32,000 lbs.
1958	..	83,000 lbs.
Corn		
1957	..	1,200,000 lbs.
1958	..	1,300,000 lbs.
Milk		
1957	..	268,000 gallons
1958	..	477,000 gallons
Fish		
1957	..	486,000 lbs.
1958	..	1,000,000 lbs.

With respect to pork, in 1958 the production rose to 60% as against that of

1957. Not one single head of cattle was exported from British Guiana in 1957. In 1958 British Guiana exported 477 heads of cattle and 46,799 lbs. of beef.

As far as coconuts are concerned—

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh :** On a point of order. Is this dealing with the question raised about potatoes?

**Mr. Beharry :** I am dealing with production under agriculture. I am trying to put things forcibly before Members of this Council.

**The Chairman :** You were pressed to give an answer to certain questions. You said that you understood subsequently, according to the questions and by the tenor of the questions that hon. Members were inquiring into the policy in relation to these matters and, therefore, you rose in order to give an exhaustive account of the policy of Government in that regard. So I understand you.

**Mr. Beharry :** I thank you, Sir. I repeat that the policy of this Government is to make this country as self-sufficient as possible. I said so yesterday while referring to the large amount of potatoes we are importing from abroad. I am merely mentioning some of the figures so that my hon. Friends will realize that everything is being done by Government to carry out this policy. I think this policy reflects to the credit of the farming community and the Government in encouraging farmers to answer the call. It is in that context that I quoted so many figures.

There is a shortage of edible oil in this country, but that has been so even before this Government took office. In keeping with the policy of making this country self-sufficient, this Government has embarked on a programme of producing and distributing coconut seedlings to farmers. This Government took office in 1957. The Department of Agriculture which is responsible for the agricultural and economic future of this country did not produce a coconut seedling in 1957. However, in 1958 as a result of the

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vigorous agricultural policy introduced by this Government it was able to distribute 36,500 coconut seedlings. Coconut seedlings have been bought and 75,000 coconuts have been planted in order to bring 1,000 acres of land under coconut cultivation yearly in the hope that within five or six years we will be able to provide enough edible oil for the country. In the meantime I have asked the Agricultural Department to produce a substitute crop of some sort which will ease the situation, because it takes five or six years before a crop of coconuts can be harvested. An investigation is being carried out with respect to sesame, but the Department has not reported good results.

I understand that in other countries sunflower seeds are used for making oil, but the advice I have received from the Agricultural Department is not very encouraging. That is why a substitute has not been found to fill the gap during the time we have to wait to reap the fruits of our coconut expansion programme.

In this process of encouraging farmers to produce more year after year, the Marketing section of this Department has come under fire on several occasions. I should like hon. Members to realize that this is not a commercial organization which buys and sells in order to make a profit. The organization was not set up as a commercial organization like other commercial organizations in our country, which aim at making a profit in dollars and cents primarily. Our profit is not seen. I saw on the balance sheet—

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I must rise again. Yesterday, when I tried to speak on certain things many people said I was speaking outside of the debate. Today my friend is trying to speak on the Produce Depot and what not.

**Mr. Beharry:** This is all tied up with the ultimate result of encouraging our farmers to produce more and encouraging local people—

**Mr. Tello:** Do I understand the hon. Minister to be making use of this opportunity to explain the principle behind the tariff? The hon. Member for Georgetown South had tried to speak in his right but was interpreted as speaking on the principle after an opportunity was lost. I want to be very certain because I have some intentions too, and I do not want to trespass.

**The Chairman:** The question went a little beyond the policy in relation to the tax on these things, and if the Minister goes some way in trying to explain the policy, as called for by the question, then I think he is entitled on that score to do so; the questioner is also entitled to traverse the ground which the Minister has trod.

**Members:** Hear, hear

**Mr. Beharry:** I was saying that the Government Produce Depot was set up in order, one — to give farmers a guaranteed market where they can sell their produce; two—to give the farmers guaranteed prices with respect to certain produce that the Government would like to encourage, and, three — to have an abundance of food available in order to feed our local people. It serves as a means whereby farmers can get fertilizers at cost, insecticides at cost, veterinary medicine at cost and several other facilities—which we can go on encouraging. In this process of assisting local agricultural production and guaranteeing our farmers a fair standard of living by protecting prices on certain produce, we have suffered the loss of over \$310,855 last year.

The Financial Secretary, in dealing with the tax on potatoes made it quite clear that it was not only a protective tax, but a revenue-raising tax — it had a dual purpose. It is true, I must say, that during last year there was an overproduction of cassava by farmers in this country. Our farmers produced sweet cassava way above that which we could consume. They were warned by the Government, but we had

to come to their aid. They were warned, because Government's policy is not to produce more than we can consume and more than there is a market for. We are not encouraging the farmers of British Guiana—

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh** *rose* —

**The Chairman:** The hon. Member will keep his mind always on the question directed to him as the main thing, because if he goes far out he opens the opportunity to the other side to also go far out.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I rise to ask your direction and guidance on a matter. When a Minister makes an incorrect statement, what is the position of a Member of the Legislature sitting and hearing him; should he correct him—

**The Chairman:** He must wait for a seasonable opportunity.

**Mr. Beharry:** Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** Maybe you will indicate to us what is "seasonable opportunity."

**The Chairman:** That depends upon the circumstances. Members will not be permitted at every moment when they think someone is wrong to be bobbing up and down. They will have an opportunity to place their facts and figures before the Council eventually. Please proceed.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I do not think I have a very clear-cut guidance from you, Sir. I asked the question in all sincerity. I am not happy about the explanation given by you, Sir.

**The Chairman:** I appreciate your limitations and later on I will endeavour to make it clear.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** The Chair should not at any time try to insult any Member. That is your duty, Sir.

**The Chairman:** I have not insulted you.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** You have tried to do so.

**The Chairman:** Please, I have given you my ruling, and I expect you will accept it. I said it in clear language — it would have to be a seasonable opportunity. That does not mean that because a Member thinks someone has made an incorrect statement that at that moment he must rise to speak; in other words, he must not jump up on every occasion to say it is incorrect.

It is sufficient if he indicates; there will be an opportunity for him to speak, and no Member is denied the opportunity to speak at the correct time. If that is not clear enough, it may well be that the limitation is on my side, or it may be on your side — perhaps not on your side. I am quite willing to say it is on my side, and it is my duty to make it as clear as possible whenever and whoever the hearers may be if it is not clear. If it is not clear to the hearers, then I will say I am at fault, and I must make it clearer still.

Even now, I will endeavour to make it at a later stage still clearer. My patience will never be exhausted. I will always, as Speaker, endeavour to make myself understood.

I will never in this House — I do not even do it outside of this House — try to cast any aspersions on anyone, or offer any insult to anyone; I do so neither in this House nor in my ordinary life, because I realize that would be a derogation from the ordinary civilities of polite life.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Beharry:** I do not know if anyone here indulges in pedantry; I certainly would not like to do so, but I would like to say that what one considers to be incorrect, others may consider to be authentic.

**The Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mr. Beharry :** Thank you, Sir. The explanations I gave I gave in all sincerity. The information reflects the co-ordinated policies and programmes of the Agricultural Department and the authenticity of the figures is unchallengeable — unless people here have other organizations besides the Department of Agriculture to carry out surveys and so on.

I said that in December it was discovered that too much cassava was produced, and in March last year we realized we would have to go to the aid of the farmers by offering, for this particular crop, 2½ cents per lb. All this was publicized, and the farmers were advised to return to the planting of bitter cassava, which was very prolific and could be more economically produced. Starch, a by-product of cassava has a very promising market, and so a new directive was given.

In this process of trying to help our farmers to produce more it has cost the Government \$310,000. That is in terms of dollars and cents so far as the taxpayers are concerned, but in terms of benefit to the consumer he was able to pay 4 cents per lb. for plantains in 1958 as against 8 cents per lb. in 1957, 3 cents per lb. for cassava in 1958 as compared with 6 cents per lb. in 1957. While Government subsidized the farmers to the extent of \$310,000 the ordinary working class people of the country benefited to a greater extent than \$310,000 by being able to obtain cheap foodstuffs produced by our farmers. For this I think those Members of the Council who are trade unionists should be very glad.

I would like Members on the other side of the Table to know that the policy of the present Government is to continue to encourage the production of more produce in order to reduce the quantity of imported foodstuffs. A careful study has been made this year by the Department of Agriculture of some of the foodstuffs we are importing which we can replace by increasing our own production. A scientific programme has been embarked upon by the Department. We use quite a lot of split peas in this country

and a research programme has been initiated this year to find out whether we cannot reduce this particular commodity we are importing. The success of this programme is not dependent upon the Ministry but on the technical men attached to the Department of Agriculture, and I hope that at the next Estimates meeting of the Council I may be able to say something more tangible on this aspect of the research activities of the Department.

I hope that my Friends on the other side will appreciate that our loyalty is first to our own farmers in British Guiana. I have heard quite a lot about the tax on potatoes but nothing has been said about our farmers. Every time we eat a pound of potatoes we support the farmers outside British Guiana, but every time we eat a pound of cassava or plantains we support our own farmers in this country. The relative food value of potatoes against some of our local starchy vegetables has been analysed by the Department of Agriculture. I am not a scientist and I shall not claim to be one, but I have been informed by one agricultural scientist that our vegetables compare favourably, and in many cases are better.

I must say that I am in sympathy with people who really do use quite a lot of potatoes; people who, like myself, have acquired the habit. As the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, has said, food habits are very difficult to break, but I would like to inform him and other Members that there must be a beginning. Provided we do not reduce the number of calories and are able to get the same food value from local foodstuffs, I do not see why true Guianese should use a substitute from another country. A man who will not use local produce that has the same food value as an imported article does not love his country.

**Mr. Jackson :** I have not studied agricultural science, nor have I studied the science of dietetics, and I am not sure that any of our agricultural officers is qualified in the field of dietetics. The hon. Minister must therefore be very careful when he takes advice from his



officers who are not qualified in that field. It has taken a situation such as this for Members to know what is the policy of the Government, and while the Minister has evaded the question which was asked by me, it seems that he has confirmed that the intention of the Government's policy of over-production of local foodstuffs is to put a prohibition upon the importation of a certain commodity.

**Mr. Beharry:** To a point of correction!

**Mr. Jackson:** I am not yielding.

**The Chairman:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Jackson:** There are several ways of prohibiting the importation of a commodity, and one does not have to go to the extent of stating on paper that one is placing an embargo upon any one commodity. All that needs to be done is to increase the duty to the point where people would hardly be able to buy the commodity. It is very clear that the intention of the Government is to prohibit the importation of potatoes so as to, in the words of the Minister himself, encourage the farmer to produce local commodities. Beating around the bush, as he has done so long-windedly, in order to try to deny what is a patent fact, was certainly a waste of time, for the Financial Secretary himself has indicated that that is not the intention of the tax on potatoes. This is not the time to deal with the Budget Statement by the Financial Secretary, but since the hon. Minister has gone to the extent he has I crave the Chair's indulgence to prove that what we are saying is quite accurate. On page 29 of the Budget Statement, paragraph 70, one reads:

" . . . The duties are therefore either purely revenue raising or partly revenue raising, partly protective. . . "

In paragraph 78 he says:

" . . . The duty is very low, either 24 cents or 30 cents per 100 lbs. The amount imported and the low duty are anomalous in a country which produces cassava, rice and other starch foods, and is able to grow more of them".

That is very clear — that since we are growing cassava, rice and other starch foods the policy must be to put a tax upon potatoes so that people would be forced to buy local foodstuffs instead of imported commodities. The Minister of Natural Resources has today confirmed that intention by saying that first of all patriotic Guianese should support our farmers. I am no less patriotic than the Minister, and it is because of my patriotism I stand here to tell him that the policy is bad. The question of making this country self-sufficient at this time is one on which I challenge the hon. Minister, for if we are going to tell the people of this country not to buy any more imported potatoes, or to buy less than they are buying now, by what means can we ask people outside this country to buy our produce?

What cheek would we have to ask other people to buy our rice because we have a lot on our hands, when we stifle importation of their commodities? Ministers must be very careful about what they say, because they are not here only to play politics but also to take care of the economy of the country. It is all nonsense to say that a tax is put on potatoes because Government wants us to eat more of our local foodstuffs, when everybody knows that there is no guarantee that local produce is as good as imported potatoes. We on this side of the Table are inclined to say that our farmers should be given proper prices for their produce, and that they should be encouraged, but when Ministers of the Government tell the people of this country that they must buy more cassava, more starch vegetables, they have no right to ask the people of Trinidad to buy our rice, or to ask Canada to exchange flour for rice.

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources spoke about the glut in cassava. There was no glut in cassava. I admit that cassava is a perishable commodity, but the Department is not geared to distribute perishable commodities. The Government Marketing Division was established as a war-time measure, but since it was not closed down and has

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been encouraged to expand its activities it should have been given the consideration to which it is entitled. For example, you may have cassava in large quantities, but if there is no proper marketing organization to look after its distribution people will still find difficulty in obtaining it.

I once raised a question in this Council in connection with cassava, and later Government got the idea that starch could be made from cassava. The starch was made, but it could not be sold in this country because the price was prohibitive. I am certain that the starch will not be sold here at such an exorbitant price.

What is the Marketing Division? I am happy to hear the hon. Minister say that it is not a commercial concern. That is why you have so many people there who are not qualified to operate it. The weakness of the organization is based upon the fact that the people who are operating it are not qualified to operate a marketing organization. It is possible that, by virtue of the fact that it is not a commercial organization, the people are unable to get rid of some of the produce lying there. We are told that some people get drunk on the premises.

If the Marketing Division and the Department of Agriculture were properly operated, the Minister would not have had to throw away cassava in the streets last year because they would have been able to distribute the cassava at various points. When they were criticized they hired private lorries at \$40 a day to take cassava all over the place. I say that with knowledge, and I challenge the Minister to deny it.

When we asked about the distribution of cassava, they sent their lorries to the country districts and got back the cost of the cassava. When you are dealing with perishable commodities you do not leave things to chance — you must plan in advance. Since the Government has encouraged farmers to produce more it

should have considered how it would have distributed the produce. The Minister says that the Department does not purchase all of the produce, and he says the policy is to maintain a fixed price for the produce. It is true that the Marketing Division charges a certain price for produce. Does the hon. Minister of Natural Resources know what price is paid for produce when it does not pass through the Marketing Division?

This hare-brain idea and this talk we have heard is filled with a desire to make people believe that all is well. All is not well, and since the hon. Minister has gone in for a lengthy exposition of his policy, it gives me a chance to speak at length. I was dealing with potatoes, but the Minister spoke about peas and so on. They have increased the price of imported peas when they know that—

**Mr. Ram Karran** *rose* —

**Mr. Jackson** : I will not give way. The Minister dealt with policy, and I am replying to his statement of policy. He said that we were importing this and that, and his policy is to make this country self-sufficient. He is trying to impose a future upon a present. You have increased the tax on imported peas when you know that we do not have enough local peas to supply the inhabitants of this country. In the circumstances you are encouraging a period of inflation. If there is a shortage of supply and the demand is greater than the farmer can supply, the farmer will increase the price of the commodity and the consumer has no alternative to paying the price the farmer demands. No sensible Government will attempt to do what this Government has done if it was aware of the fact that the country has not yet reached a period of self-sufficiency.

In their desire to bring about a period of self-sufficiency, the Members of this Government think that the best way of doing so is to put up barriers—this one is a price barrier. They are putting the cart before the horse. Before this can be done it will be necessary to find a substitute for the 19,000,000 lbs. of potatoes we are now importing — that should be the principle and policy.

**Mr. Beharry** rose —

**Mr. Jackson:** I will not yield. I shall deal later with other aspects of the policy of Government as they relate to other Ministries. The same type of policy applies to the other Ministries. The hon. Minister of Natural Resources said that more pork was produced last year. The Minister is, perhaps, guilty of relying too very much on his advisers for information. Several pig-rearers have informed me that they are unable to keep pigs nowadays because the price of feed is too high. If we accept the Minister's version, perhaps that is the reason why people have to purchase bacon and ham that are improperly cured. He should ask the Marketing Division how often bacon and ham have been sent back by large firms. The Minister knows that I have personal experience in this matter. I have seen pork with disease germs sold to the public. It will not always be possible to fool the public in this country. People will ask for an explanation of some of the things we have been talking about so glibly today. The Department should be asked to produce proper bacon and ham, and the public would be prepared to buy these items.

People are interested in price, quality and quantity. If the quality of a local commodity is not as good as the imported commodity you cannot make people buy the local one, but if the locally produced article is as good as the imported article people will certainly buy it. A man wants to be patriotic to his country, but he must be patriotic to himself as well; he must be patriotic to his stomach.

**Mr. Beharry:** I would like to reply to a few of the remarks made by the hon. Member for North Georgetown who asked why Trinidad should buy our rice if we did not want to buy commodities from other places. The hon. Member is not conversant with—

**Mr. Jackson:** On a point of correction. I said what right have we to ask a man to buy our rice when we do not want to buy what he produces?

**Mr. Beharry:** The hon. Member is not conversant with statistics regarding what we buy from Trinidad and what we sell to Trinidad. British Guiana buys more from Trinidad than it sells to Trinidad. The hon. Member on his left has informed him that we buy \$1 million more from Trinidad than we sell them.

**Mr. Jackson:** On a point of correction. I said what right have we to ask a man in another country to buy our rice when we do not want to buy what he produces? The name of the country is immaterial at the moment.

**Mr. Beharry:** I am quite prepared to yield. The hon. Member refused to yield just now when I rose to make a point. In this question of buying and selling as well as human relation one's patriotism must be taken into consideration. Are you going to think in terms of what we are going to buy from the other man, or in terms of what we are going to buy from ourselves?

I agree with the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, that eating habits are very hard to get rid of. Are the people in this country supporting local farmers when they buy English potatoes at 3 cents or 4 cents a pound? Our farmers cannot plant potatoes and plantains to compete with such a cheap commodity as English potatoes. We have not prohibited the importation of English potatoes. If an individual is prepared to indulge in an expensive type of food he can buy it. I repeat that it is not the intention to prohibit the importation of English potatoes.

The hon. the Financial Secretary said quite clearly that it was a protective tax, and he gave various reasons why it was introduced. I should like to clarify another remark made by the hon. Member for Georgetown North in connection with the ham and bacon factory. I would like the hon. Member to know, lest the newspapers publish that our hams and bacon are not up to standard — in fact he did not say that they were not up to standard, he said that the hams made there were infested with worms.

**Mr. Jackson:** On a point of correction. I said that the ham and bacon were improperly cured and the pork had worms.

**Mr. Beharry:** I would like the hon. Member to know that the ham and bacon factory has reached a period of maturity, and Government is now asking private industry to take it over. Last year the ham and bacon factory made a profit of \$2,733. This is the same factory which the hon. Member so strongly condemns. I would like the hon. Member to know that this particular factory is a profit-making organization, and that Government is willing to hand it over to any individual who is willing to take it.

Now for the benefit of Members and in order to put the record and the newspapers straight, last year we produced 6,200 lbs. of ham, 56,300 lbs. of bacon, 9,300 lbs. of sausages, 8,200 lbs. of lard and 2,800 lbs. of crackling.

With respect to the financial situation, the factory can only be successful if it is run at a first-class level, and if its produce meets the needs and demands of the consumers which it serves, otherwise it would definitely run at a loss. The factory, after paying interest and depreciation charges to the extent of \$5,550, and operating expenses to the extent of \$47,000, made a gross profit of \$36,000—or, rather, a gross profit of \$16,000 and a net profit of \$2,733. What the hon. Member said might create a wrong impression on the commercial community as well as on the consumers.

I would like the hon. Member to know something about starch, which he dealt with exhaustively. At the moment we cannot compete economically against the export of starch from Holland. There is a large market for starch even in the aluminium industry, and we can also sell it to the United States. In fact, last year we exported a very large quantity of starch from this country.

But if we are to be a big exporter of starch—and Dutch starch is 10c. per pound, c.i.f.—we can only compete suc-

cessfully if we produce it from bitter cassava, and the Department of Agriculture has given a directive to our farmers to produce more bitter cassava so that starch, the by-product of bitter cassava, can be developed for the export market. That is the policy we are working out right now. It was agreed upon since the beginning of January last year, when this over-production of sweet cassava was still in evidence in the market.

**Mr. Jackson:** It has taken some people their political career to realize that you cannot produce starch from sweet cassava. Ever since my childhood I knew that. I am happy to know that the hon. Minister has learned something, even at this period of his life. All I said was that the Processing Factory could not and did not produce bacon and ham which was as good as the bacon and ham imported into this country. I also said that many of the firms have had to return to the Marketing Division ham and bacon sent to them. The Minister has not denied that. It is no use quoting figures to get the record or the newspapers straight: you are not producing as good an article as the imported commodity, and until this is done, you will find yourself in the same circumstances. He cannot challenge me on that, because I have all the facts.

What is the use of telling us that the Factory made a profit when \$310,000 from public funds had to be used as a result of the overproduction of an item of food which would only be kept for a couple of days. What is the good of telling us that one side made a profit, when on the other side the loss is piling up. This will not happen when your Marketing Division is properly run. It is known that the place is not properly administered, and it is known not only by people like me but by people in the Department of Agriculture. I will invite the Minister on any one day and show him that. He would be able to see that what he is saying today is just "paper story." We are talking not because we want a newspaper account of it, but because we want the Minister to take proper stock and put

everything in proper focus so that the country's economy can be properly shaped and geared.

**Mr. Beharry:** I tried to explain to the hon. Member that this organization has offered the people by-products of pork, such as ham and bacon, and if its products were not good, it would not have made a profit.

I am not denying that there might be some isolated case where the commodity sold was not of the best standard. That is inevitable in commodities of a perishable nature. I, as an importer of food-stuffs, have had English potatoes arrive in bad condition, but that does not say that the exporter always sends them in bad condition. I import salted fish, and Danish ham, and on occasions I would get some in bad condition. These things happen, and they should not be used as a criterion in order to condemn an organization.

But I rise merely to correct the impressions of the hon. Member for Georgetown North. This organization has many activities, and it is true that all may not be well with it. In order to assist in the administration of it, I have put the hon. Member for Georgetown North on a Committee; I realized he would be of inestimable value and help. I therefore cannot see why the hon. Member should condemn the whole of the bacon factory because one or two articles sent out may have been bad.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** The Minister of Natural Resources has told us of his loyalty to the farmers. What has caused farmers to walk bare-foot and lose thousands of dollars? It does not even pay them to reap their cassava and bring it to the market for sale. Today when he said that the farmers were warned in December, 1958, it was categorically untrue. For his information, the prices were cut down from 2½c. per pound at the end of August; representations were made and the time was extended to October when it came to an end. From that time farmers have had produce

growing on their farms and cannot reap it.

If the hon. Minister would bear in mind that it takes between seven to ten months to reap cassava, it would be easier for him to appreciate that it was not the correct approach for Government to give a warning a few days or even a month that it would reduce the guaranteed price of 40% of what it was originally. The Minister and other members of the Government cannot escape responsibility for it. The farmers are practically crying at the Minister's feet asking for help, but the Minister seems to be a mere tool in the hands of the administration of Marketing Division. If there is one Department where chaos reigns, it is there. There has been a serious fraud, as the Minister probably knows, in the Marketing Division.

**Mr. Beharry:** This man——

**The Chairman:** Did you say, "this man"?

**Mr. Beharry:** Yes, Sir; I am sorry. The hon. Member for Georgetown South was asked last year to produce proof to the Police in this matter, in the interest of his country, and he has failed.

**The Chairman:** Just a moment.

**Mr. Beharry:** In the interest of the country and the farmers this organization operates, and he has failed to produce evidence of something affecting it, but he keeps repeating it in this Council.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** Let me contradict the Minister. Documents were produced and are in the hands of the Commissioner of Police.

**The Chairman:** The hon. Member having said that the documents are in the hands of the Commissioner of Police, he should not desire to go any further.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I will not, Sir, but I should like to state for the benefit of the Minister who spoke of the loyalty we owe to our farmers, that the

[MR. JAI NARINE SINGH]

Budget Speech and the Minister himself said that the increase in the tax on potatoes was intended as a protective and a revenue-earning measure. How does it protect cassava when the guaranteed price is below the cost of production? In his loyalty to the farmers has the Minister announced that he proposes to reintroduce a subsidized price of 2½ cents per lb. for cassava? He has made no such statement. He very carefully dodges the issue and leaves the farmer who is producing cassava in a chaotic state. Loyalty to the farmers should be shown by Government in a tangible form; not by words in this Council.

The Minister knows of the serious unemployment situation in British Guiana, and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, has told this Council of what was done on similar occasions in 1933, 1934 and 1935, when the then Government set up soup kitchens as a measure of relief to the unemployed. But this Government, in its benevolence to the working class people, has increased the duty on potatoes, 19 million pounds of which are imported, when we do not produce 19 million pounds of cassava, eddoes, yams and tannias, and the Minister talks about loyalty to the farmers. This Government speaks of loyalty with its tongue in its cheek. In the Majority Party's manifesto at the last election they clearly stated how they proposed to raise revenue if they were elected. They said:

"We will raise and collect more by way of direct taxation from those who are able to pay, and reduce the very high incidence of indirect taxation which falls heavily on the poor. We feel that greater deductions should be allowed for wives and dependents under the Income Tax Ordinance. We will change the emphasis from indirect taxation to direct taxation.

This extract from the Party's manifesto is recorded in the *Hansard* report of the 30th January, 1958. What does the Government of the U.S.A. do to protect its farmers? It subsidizes practically all farmers' produce and does not seek to make the poor pay when they cannot.

The Minister talks about producing starch from sweet cassava, but I would inform him that it takes a considerable quantity of sweet cassava to produce starch, and that the bitter cassava, from which starch is usually made, takes a longer time to grow than the sweet cassava. Consequently there is no balance in the cost of production.

By the increased tax on potatoes Government has increased the cost of living to the ordinary man without doing anything to enable him to earn more. I do not think it is fair to the community to maintain the increased tax on potatoes which I do not consider a correct approach to revenue raising, or even to provide protection for local farmers, because it takes quite a long time to change the eating habits of people.

**Mr. Beharry:** To a point of order! The hon. Member keeps repeating—

**The Chairman:** The Minister must realize that is not a point of order, because he has himself repeated statements several times. I took it that he did so for emphasis. The hon. Member for Georgetown South can do the same. He wants to keep your memory green.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I would seriously recommend to the hon. Minister to consider the question of organized production and marketing, and not allow the chaos which exists in the Marketing Division of the Department of Agriculture to continue. I would like him to bear in mind that the poor man as well as the rich man pays three cents more every time he eats a pound of potatoes, and that the poor man should not have his back broken with taxation. A man who does not cut cane today does not earn more than \$10 per week, but he is asked to pay three cents more per pound for potatoes. In imposing this tax on potatoes Government has done a wrong which it cannot remedy unless it takes other steps now. I am asking the hon. Minister in all sincerity to show his loyalty to the working class people of the country and to the farmers themselves, and I am asking Government to reconsider the tax on potatoes.

**Mr. Beharry:** I would like to put the record straight.

**The Chairman:** Will you wait until the end to keep the record straight?

**Mr. Campbell:** I have been trying to get in a word for some time. There is a question which I wanted to ask for the last 30 years. I have been a farmer in the Pomeroon, the worst section of British Guiana, which calls for a great deal of stamina and pioneering spirit, and it has always struck me that there are three most important people in a community or country — the producer or farmer, the consumer, and somebody in-between, the middleman. I have heard some wonderful talk by the Minister of Natural Resources about being loyal to our farmers, about actually making sacrifices for our farmers, and that the whole policy of the Government is to benefit the farmers. That is all very laudable but I am afraid that I am sceptical that the farmer is really benefited. I would be more than gratified if I could believe that the farmers of British Guiana, the producers of root crops and fruits, are really getting a fair deal.

Take eddoes for example. The farmer produces a pound of eddoes and he may receive about 2½c. for them from the middleman or the Government. By the time the eddoes reach the consumer the price goes up by 300% or 400%. I feel that when a farmer sells an article for 3c. the consumer should not pay more than 5c. for it — about 75%. However you will find that the consumer is called upon to pay as much as 300% to 500% on an article produced by the farmer.

If this Government has the welfare of one and all, I think it should do something to improve the method of distributing the produce of farmers. The Marketing Division has been under fire from time to time. I believe I can describe a little bit of what is wrong in that Department. The employees are not prepared to bestir themselves too very much in order to distribute the

articles. Therefore housewives have to remain standing in the sun or the rain waiting to be served while the employees behind the counter indulge in cosy chats. Then the poor housewives get disgusted standing in the rain or the sun and walk away disgusted to purchase eddoes and so on from hucksters at high prices. Cannot Government do something in order to improve the position?

Let us take fruits for an example. The farmer may get an orange sold for 2c. in the North West District, but I have had to pay as much as 10c. for one in Georgetown — about 500%. If you are lucky you can get a pear sold for 5c. in the North West District, but I have had to pay 32c. for a pear in Georgetown. I think the discrepancy between the price at which the farmer sells his commodity and the price the consumer has to pay for it is too great, and Government should give serious consideration to this matter in order to put things right. I am not convinced that the farmer is getting a fair deal.

**Dr. Jagan:** I am amused by the contradictions made in the speeches of hon. Members. One can very well characterize the whole thing by the use of the slogan: "A person wants to eat his cake and still have it." My friend the hon. Member for Georgetown South and other Members of this Council are anxious to protect the farmers. He tells us that the farmers are suffering, but yesterday we listened to the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, who praised the Government for taking what he considered to be a courageous step in imposing taxation on imported potatoes. He may not have praised the Government but, at least, he said that the Government took a courageous step.

**Mr. Burnham:** You are seeking bouquets without being offered!

**Dr. Jagan:** We will get the bouquets when the time comes. We know that when you have a sound policy things will turn out good in the end. This does not mean that when you solve one problem others will not crop up. We

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never had trouble in marketing rice before, because the West Indian market took care of what we produced. Quite recently we had an excess of certain produce and several problems have arisen.

What is the curse of most backward Colonial territories? Economic Experts have stated that the curse of backward countries and backward peoples is that they not only do not produce the food which they eat, but they have no manufacturing industries and have a difficult time to get started as a result of the competition they have to face from outside.

We try to protect the farmers, as my hon. Friend opposite says. On the other hand this Council is told that the Department is losing money. One hon. Member says that we should subsidize the farmers, but he has forgotten that in the U.S.A. the national income per head is roughly \$1,500 to \$1,700, whereas in British Guiana it is around \$350 to \$400. In Africa it is about \$60 to \$100. Where does one get money from to run a country and to subsidize the farmers? The money has to be found either from taxation, or from savings generally for development.

It is quite obvious that in the U.S.A. where the economy is based on industries, that the country which has a national income of roughly \$1,500 per head is in a far better position to support the agricultural sector of the economy which is not basic to the whole economy. The position is entirely different in British Guiana where our national income is low and we have no industries to speak of. We know what has taken place in the bauxite industry and so on. This is predominantly an agricultural country and, therefore, the problem of subsidizing agriculture becomes more difficult in the sense that you are calling upon agriculture to subsidize agriculture. This is an economic fact, and the hon. Members who have just spoken must be prepared to face facts.

With regard to the question of policy, we are saying that the Government is

determined as far as is practicable — we are not saying that the cost will not be great — to make this country self-sufficient so far as food is concerned. I think the hon. Minister of Natural Resources has already given you the figures and I do not propose to reiterate them. You cannot have it both ways. Some people say that you cannot change eating habits. I am not saying that everybody should stop eating imported potatoes overnight. Before I went to the U.S.A. I ate rice twice a day, but in the U.S.A. the only time I ate rice was in pudding as a dessert. I did not die; I got used to it.

**Mr. Burnham:** What a pity!

**Dr. Jagan:** If this country is to be developed, then our people must be prepared to change not only some of their eating and production habits, but their drinking habits as well. I should like to point out that hon. Members on the opposite side of the Table who have spoken on these points have been contradicting themselves. They tell us to protect the farmers and then they criticize the Government for the losses at the Government Produce Depot. I am not saying that there has not been a certain amount of stealing and waste here and there, but facts speak for themselves.

In 1959 the Produce Depot paid—

**Mr. Tello:** We have accepted the figures from the hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

**Dr. Jagan:** I have not totalled up the figures I have here. The main point we would like to take a look at is that the production of bitter cassava increased simply because during the end of 1957 the Government raised the price of sweet cassava from 1½c. to 2½c. per pound. That is a fact. Eventually a great deal of cassava was produced and, obviously, there was a loss. Are you criticizing Government for that? You cannot have it both ways. If you want to subsidize the farmers and you want them to receive an economic price for



their produce, you must be prepared to pay.

On the other hand the hon. Member on my left has said that the potato tax is not necessarily a protective tax — it has been introduced for two or three reasons. I am not saying that the people will consume less than the amount of Irish potatoes or English potatoes that they are consuming at the moment. If they continue to consume the same amount of imported potatoes, then Government will be in a position — looking at it from a revenue point of view — to carry on the policy of helping the farmers. I think that is what my hon. Friend on the opposite side of the Table wants.

Let us give the farmers an economic price for their produce; give them a chance to produce more and, if they cannot get their produce sold, Government would have to find money from somewhere to subsidize that loss. It seems to me that this is a clear policy which does not have contradictions. So far as the "Opposition" is concerned, one Member says one thing and another Member says something else. The hon. Members are merely contradicting themselves.

So I think we have spent enough time on this, and I would suggest that hon. Members opposite should look at the situation realistically and realize that Government is doing everything possible to stimulate production by a policy of minimum guaranteed prices which is, in my opinion, a sound policy to help farmers.

From time to time these prices are reviewed. If there is a drop in price of sweet cassava and there is an increase in the price of other things, it is one of the features of agricultural production. Increase of price is one of the ways open to us and other ways are left open to the scientific people.

The hon. Member has himself pointed out that Government should try to increase three-fold or four-fold its agricul-

tural production at the moment, acre for acre. Certainly that is very good and we should desire it, but it would have to be left to the scientific people to work out new breeds and make trials and so on to find out which is the shortest way of increasing rapidly the production of rice, plantains, eddoes and so on. Government's policy is clear. We want to make this country self-sufficient in foods. We want to keep in this country some \$20 million used at the moment for the importation of food. We would also like to help the farmers and give them incentives and we will try to stimulate production as much as possible.

**Mr. Hubbard:** The hon. Member for the North West District has touched on a question which has been bedeviling the life of this community for many years, that is, the efficient distribution of farmers' produce. During last year when there was a surplus of supplies to the Government Produce Depôt, Government suggested in the Press that shops might carry ground provisions as part of their stock-in-trade.

I know that for a long number of years the "salt goods shops", as they are known, carried ground provisions as part of their normal stock, and I think when the war came, that is, World War II, and imported produce became scarce and local ground provisions were insufficient or, at least not in plentiful supply, the "salt goods shops" abandoned the practice of carrying ground provisions.

I think the Department's effort or, at least, their idea to invite merchants to carry ground provisions is commendable, but I think that this has to be supported by the personal endeavour of socially-conscious citizens within the community. I am happy in this connection to compliment the Management of Bookers Amalgamated Groceries who are now carrying a large range of local produce as a normal part of their stock-in-trade.

I myself had discussions with the Minister of Trade and Industry on the possibility that I might assist by induc-

[MR. HUBBARD]

ing my friends in the provision trade to start stocking farmers' produce as a means of assisting the farmer to get the best possible prices and, as the Member for North Western District pointed out, to save him from the middleman who seeks to take everything for himself.

I would like to ask Members here, and the public generally to ask their own suppliers to assist our people by resuming the practice of carrying this type of commodity as before.

**Mr. Benn:** Sir, I beg to move that the Question be put.

**Mr. Tello:** I desire just to say a few words. I know that the hon. Minister is not as anxious as all that, and I can assure him that this Head, Agriculture, has not been extensively dealt with yet and I do not think it is fair for him to try and rush it.

**Mr. Benn:** To a point of order! I beg to move that the Question be put.

**The Chairman:** Are you pressing that the Question be put?

**Mr. Burnham:** The Speaker has the discretion. It is a point of procedure.

**Mr. Tello:** I certainly appreciate what the last two speakers said. I certainly accept the suggestion that we should find more distributors for our produce. But that would be only playing with it. When the Minister of Natural Resources spoke he made it quite clear that the surplus was no accident, that they had anticipated it, but we find that when it came, they were quite unready to deal with it. If I can assist, I may be successful in a small degree, but this is a national matter and no one man's effort is going to solve it.

Production, as far as I am informed, was increased throughout the producing centres of the Colony, and this is a matter the Government must deal with through a thorough programme. I would like the Minister of Natural Resources to comment on this: if we are going to

use \$310,000 of the people's money to pay for the dumped produce; how does this stand up against the comment of a very responsible organization like the Co-operative Union that thousands of pounds of produce were either dumped or given away? If that is true we are never going to be self-sufficient; we are just going to be revolving and each year there will be a greater need for subsidy, greater pressure and greater taxation.

I am satisfied that the Minister of Natural Resources is doing everything on his part this year — "The Co-operator" said so——

**The Chairman:** You quoted from it yesterday.

**Mr. Tello:** Yes, Sir.

**A Member:** The Member is wasting time.

**The Chairman:** Please!

**Mr. Tello:** "There was a lack of vision on the part of the Government to anticipate the increase in production, and a failure of Government's policies to dove-tail into each other." If we are going to continue in that way and the policy of expansion of production goes on with it, distribution would not solve anything.

I am pressing this point: if the hon. Minister thought fit, he would have given me the assurance I sought yesterday that something would be done to make provision for the loss of wages by the rice mill workers——

**Mr. Benn:** Again?

**The Chairman:** I wish hon. Members would not practise that. They must address the Chair.

**Mr. Tello:** I am repeating that I am asking for that assurance — I have just enough courage to ask for it. Talking about courage, I notice Government did not have enough courage to defend the principle of the Budget offered, and now

we have to seek other ways of getting assurances. I seek this assurance so that it will be recorded in *Hansard*: that the Minister will not further worsen the unemployment situation by making less work available or less income for the rice mill workers.

**The Chairman:** The Minister has spoken several times on this point. The hon. Member is saying one thing, and the hon. Minister another. I do not know if the Minister wants to say something new.

**Mr. Beharry:** Sir—

**Mr. Tello:** I asked for an assurance. I asked for one and was given it yesterday. Mr. Gajraj asked and today it was given in his absence.

**The Chairman:** I am not preventing the hon. Minister from giving assurances if he wants to. In fact I never did that. I am only asking if he has not spoken several times in answer to the hon. Member.

**Mr. Beharry:** I want to put the record straight. The hon. Member for Georgetown South said we were not making provision to meet the demand of 18 million or 19 million pounds of provisions which he mentioned. In 1957 the total production including plantains was 30 million pounds, and in 1958 the total production including plantains was approximately 50 million pounds. Those are figures supplied by the Department of Agriculture. As far as the consumers are concerned, they have benefited substantially from the abundance of supplies. Valued at eight cents per pound, the total colony production in 1957 is \$2,400,000 and in 1958, valued at six cents per pound is \$3 million—and increase of \$600,000.

The average retail price for plantains fell from 8 cents per lb. in 1957 to 5 cents per lb. in 1958, and that of cassava from 6 cents per lb. in 1957 to 4 cents per lb. in 1958.

**The Chairman:** I think you indicated that before.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I have not heard from the Minister whether it is intended that plantains should be a substitute for potatoes, but perhaps he may give this Council an assurance that there will be an increase of the guaranteed price for cassava from 1½ to 2 cents per lb. this year.

**The Chairman:** If there is no assurance I shall pass on to the next item, because I think we have exhausted this subject. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, moved a reduction of the item by one dollar because, I think, he wanted to exhaust the subject. That gave Members an opportunity to speak yesterday and again from 2 o'clock this afternoon until now, 18 minutes past four o'clock. I am sure, therefore, that Members will not say that they have not had a full opportunity to speak, and Mr. Gajraj is not here now to withdraw his Motion. I shall therefore proceed to put the Question.

**Mr. Davis:** I have not had an opportunity to speak on the Amendment. I have made several attempts to do so but every time some other Member has spoken, or some Minister has jumped up.

**The Chairman:** You say you have made several attempts to speak. Very well, I will give you an opportunity now, but please be brief.

**Mr. Davis:** I shall be extremely brief. I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry for the reference he made to what I consider a very small portion of my speech yesterday, but it is noticeable that he did not find it necessary, or perhaps he did not notice that under this same Head, Agriculture, I made very serious criticism of the withdrawal of the sum of \$18,000 paid to agents of the Government to keep the Rupununi cattle trail open. I had hoped to get some statement by the Government on this very vital point, but the Ministers of the Government have ignored the ques-

[MR. DAVIS]

tion or avoided it. I would therefore like to bring it again to their attention.

Another point is that the Minister of Natural Resources said that last year there was an increase in the production of pork to the extent of 60 per cent. I challenge that statement very vigorously, and I have come to the conclusion that the Minister was either speaking with his tongue in his cheek, or that he is further removed from his Ministry than I thought he was.

**Mr. Beharry** *rose* —

**The Chairman** : Just a moment. Are you rising to give an assurance, or are you going to say something about the cattle trail?

**Mr. Beharry** : I wish to speak on the question of pork.

**The Chairman** : If you are not giving the assurance which Members have asked for, or touching on the question of the cattle trail, I shall have to put the Motion. The Question is that Head 3 be reduced by \$1. Those in favour please say "Aye", those against "No". I declare that the "Noes" have it.

Amendment negatived.

#### DEPUTY DIRECTORS OF AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Burnham** : I beg to move that Sub-head 1, item (2)—2 Deputy Directors of Agriculture, \$9,200—be reduced by one dollar in order to find out, first of all, how it is that from March, 1959, the Department of Agriculture can be run with one Deputy Director when last year the Minister most strenuously emphasized the fact that it was impossible to run it with one, and in that view he was ably supported by the hon. the Chief Secretary. It seems to me that if agriculture plays such an important part in our economy the Department of Agriculture must be an important Department, and I cannot see how this Government, which emphasizes so much the importance of agriculture, can reduce in one year the Establishment of that Department.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh** : Last year when there were two Deputy Directors of Agriculture one was in charge of Research, etc., while the other was in charge of Marketing and matters connected with production. It seems to me now that we have no Deputy Director in charge of the Marketing Division of the Department there is chaos in the Department and, consequently, no organised production or marketing.

**The Chairman** : Just a moment. We are dealing with item (2) which provides for two Deputy Directors of Agriculture. I do not wish Members to go over the question of the Marketing Division again. Let us confine our attention to the question of the two Deputy Directors of Agriculture. I will not allow any further reference to the Marketing Division, ham and pork.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh** : Which of the Deputy Directors is now functioning? Is he in charge of Research or Marketing?

**Mr. Beharry** : The hon. Member for Georgetown Central is correct in saying that last year I advocated that there should be two Deputy Directors of Agriculture, but during the year I examined the entire administration of the Department, and the hon. Member will, I think, agree with me that wherever it is found possible to effect economy but still maintain the efficiency of any Government Department, we should do everything possible to encourage it. We have today a Director of Agriculture who is a son of the soil, a Guianese, and he has assured me that his Department can be efficiently and effectively run with one Deputy Director of Agriculture. That is the reason why provision is not made for two Deputy Directors.

**Mr. Burnham** : The hon. Minister has not answered the question put by the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Jai Narine Singh) — which of the two Deputies has been done away with, the one responsible for Research and Administration, or the one in charge of Marketing? We must know, because we have to provide the funds and we do not

want to pass funds for people who are not doing work, or to find that the work has not been properly done.

**Mr. Beharry :** Several designations of officers are being changed. Last year we had Agricultural Superintendents—

**Mr. Burnham :** I am asking about Deputy Directors. We are hearing about Agricultural Superintendents.

**Mr. Beharry :** Agricultural Superintendents have now been designated Agricultural Officers. The designations have been changed this year in order to give more flexibility. Previously a Deputy Director was confined to the Marketing Division of the Department. That has been changed in order that full use may be made of that officer in more than one direction, without weakening the activities of the Department. I am satisfied, and the Director of Agriculture has assured me that the Department can be run efficiently with one Deputy Director.

**Mr. Burnham :** Will the Minister be a little more to the point and be frank, as his colleague, the Financial Secretary, was in Finance Committee? It was obvious last year that Government kept two Deputy Directors because one of them was a local man, and that was the only way to save a job for him. The Financial Secretary has always earned my admiration because he admitted that in Finance Committee, and I would have expected that he would have passed this frankness on to the Minister. It is time that this elected Government stopped allowing itself to be used by the other partner in the alleged alliance, because last year Members of the Government swore their heads off that it was necessary to have two Deputy Directors when they knew as well as we did, that they were keeping two because one was a local man and the other was to be moved up. I think congratulations are due to those who fought the case to see that the local man, who is properly qualified, was appointed, but let us be honest. There is no Executive Council secrecy about it, and no excuse for the "jiggery pokery" that took place last year.

**The Chairman :** You have used a word which is rather strange to me.

**Mr. Burnham :** I apologise, Sir. I thought that everyone who lived in British Guiana was familiar with the term.

**The Chairman :** Everyone has not that retentive memory.

**Mr. Tello :** I believe that we, on this side of the Table, have assumed correctly, but we should have an official reply for the records. I wonder whether this is not really a matter for the Minister in charge of personnel. The Minister of Natural Resources is in charge of the administration of the policy of the Department, but I do not think that responsibility for personnel falls within his ambit. Possibly he may not be in a position to tell us exactly which of the two deputies has been relieved and the reason for that.

**The Chairman :** I hope it will be possible for us to get through this item. Yesterday this Council agreed that we should stop at 4.30 p.m. in order to have refreshment and then resume. It is very near to the time for adjournment, but I think it may be possible for us to get through this Head.

**Mr. Burnham :** This is a very long Head, Sir.

**The Chairman :** Are you going to be very long?

**Mr. Tello :** We are still awaiting certain information.

**Mr. Burnham :** I would like to find out from the person responsible for Establishment whether the answer given to us by the hon. Minister of Natural Resources is the correct one, or the one given to us by the hon. the Financial Secretary in Finance Committee?

We have heard the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry accusing the Members on this side of the Table of contradicting themselves. There is an excuse for that. We do not all belong to the same Council or Party, but the Members

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on the other side belong to the same Government and the same Party. We would like to know which answer we should take home.

**Dr. Jagan:** Perhaps we have accepted your view.

**The Chairman:** We must stop at 4.30 p.m. because we have agreed to do so. If it is not your intention that we should adjourn at 4.30 p.m. it suits me.

**The Financial Secretary:** I beg to move that the Council resume.

Question put, and agreed to.

Council resumed.

**Mr. Speaker:** We will adjourn until 5 p.m.

Council adjourned at 4.35 p.m.

*Council resumed at 5 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION

### MR. KENDALL'S ABSENCE

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to repair an omission I made, and it is this: I should have announced earlier this afternoon that the hon. Member for New Amsterdam, Mr. Kendall, had asked to be excused from today's meeting, as he had an engagement which he could not forego. He assures me, however, that it may be possible for him to attend tomorrow if we get a message through to him tonight.

## APPROPRIATION BILL

### BUDGET DEBATE

Council resolved itself into Committee to resume consideration of the Bill intitled,

"An Ordinance to appropriate the supplies granted in the current Session of the Legislative Council".

## Schedule

### AGRICULTURE

#### TWO DEPUTY DIRECTORS OF AGRICULTURE

**The Chairman:** A motion has been moved for the reduction by \$1 of sub-head 1, item (2), "2 Deputy Directors of Agriculture".

**The Chief Secretary:** I have nothing to add to what the hon. Minister of Natural Resources has said on that subject.

**Mr. Burnham:** Well, if he has nothing to add, he must admit that taxpayers' money was being wasted last year when they allowed us to spend \$7,000. Was it to accommodate some blue-eyed boy or some favourite? Must taxpayers' money be expended in that fashion? I am surprised that the Chief Secretary, who is charged with Establishment, can give us no better answer than the Minister of Natural Resources, in whose Portfolio this does not come. The next thing we must do is to see that the Minister of Natural Resources is made "Minister of Establishment," so we will have more forthright answers.

**Mr. Jackson:** Last year when we were debating this item here, I indicated my knowledge of the situation was that in a few months the Director of Agriculture would leave this Colony's services for another appointment, and I sought to know whether, as we then had two Deputy Directors of Agriculture, one of them would be chosen for preferment, instead of someone from another field of Agriculture. I was turned into a prophet for six months later, in June, the Director of Agriculture went on promotion to The West Indies.

We had indicated that the practice of having two Deputies was creating a situation which at the time was untenable to the Government, and I said that when the Director goes there would be one Deputy. We must ask why this Council was fooled last year by the Minister of Natural Resources and his colleagues. Now that we have a Guianese as Director, why do we have only one Deputy

Director? Is it intended to destroy the ability of the present holder who is a Guianese?

We hear the Members opposite talking about the Guianization of the Service; is this what they mean? Why must the present Director carry a burden his predecessor did not have to carry. Is it that the present Director will not have to travel to different points, advising the Minister of Natural Resources on scientific problems which he knows nothing about? We feel it is an injustice to the man appointed to the post of Director that the staff should now be reduced. If this country is going to be preponderantly agricultural in its scientific foundation, then we need to have two Deputy Directors to help carry on the work of the Department; and we must not forget, too, that the emphasis in this country is on further development. Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that Government cannot defend this policy. The position has been so transformed that it is as if someone had used a magic wand. It may be a question of presenting an "economy Budget", as we have heard in another place; if so, it is economy at the expense of the efficiency of a progressive Department.

**The Chairman :** Is the hon. Member withdrawing his Motion?

**Mr. Burnham :** Yes, Mr. Chairman; I suppose I will have to withdraw the Motion, because the hon. Chief Secretary is incompetent to answer.

**The Chief Secretary :** On a point of order—

**Mr. Burnham :** Incompetent to answer! I am not saying he is incompetent; and I withdraw the Motion.

#### TWELVE AGRICULTURAL OFFICERS

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh :** I beg to move that item (19) of sub-head 1—"12 Agricultural Officers, \$52,556—be reduced by \$1. Turning to the "Notes" I see that included in the term "Agricultural Officer" are the Rice Agronomist, the Live-stock Officer, Agricultural Superintend-

ents, the Marketing Officer, the Agricultural Officer and the Superintendent, Rural Youth Work. There is also provision, at a vote of \$3,697, for three other Agricultural Officers. It does not seem to me that all this is correct. In the field of extension, the total remuneration figure is \$52,556. Clearly, in the field of laboratory and other research work, where men of high calibre are required, one would expect that the total remuneration figure would be more than \$3,697.

**The Financial Secretary :** May I draw attention to the Note on item (8) and (9)? The salary scale of the Soil Surveyor and three Agricultural Officers, two of whom are to be Agronomists, is A3, the same as that of the other Agricultural Officers. It is not known if we can recruit two Agronomists, and in any case it is stated that it is a token provision for (8) and (9).

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh :** I know that our Rice Breeding Station has suffered because of the change which removed suddenly a person who had been doing experimental work for many years. He was dedicated for eight or nine years to rice agronomy and rice breeding. A new man has been put there without any experience in rice breeding, and I would ask that the Minister or the person responsible for Establishment give us some explanation for this. This took place after the officer removed was sent abroad and was encouraged in his genetical pursuits in Europe (*Laughter*), and I am surprised that it has.

**The Financial Secretary :** May I ask if this is germane to the Estimates?

**The Chairman :** That is why I asked the hon. Member if it came under this Head.

**Mr. Burnham :** In supporting the Amendment I would submit that the hon. Member for Georgetown South has made very relevant remarks, and they are very germane for this reason, that if this money is not being well spent through having someone who the hon. Member says is incompetent in the field and knows nothing about rice breeding, we are not

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going to vote it. We would like to be assured that the taxpayers' money is being well spent. That is why I support the hon. Member.

**The Financial Secretary :** Does the hon. Member say that the holder of the post is incompetent?

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh :** I am saying that he is completely inexperienced and lacks the necessary knowledge for the degree of research which is required. He will have to start at scratch in an industry which is of great importance to this country. That is why I say that the Department is going backwards, especially in the matter of research.

**Mr. Gajraj :** If the hon. Member's statement is correct that the officer in question, who has spent so much of his service and his life in the pursuit of knowledge in rice breeding, has been removed and someone with very much less experience has been placed in that position, then it certainly goes to show that there is something wrong in the way officers are being shunted from place to place. Not only in this instance but time and again in the past officers have been sent abroad to take a special course and to qualify in a particular field, and on their return they have been removed to another Department, so that the knowledge they were sent to acquire and the experience they gained over a number of years has been completely wasted. We should make sure that those things should not take place as often as in the past, and they should be stopped. What is the use of imposing additional taxation if taxpayers' money is to be wasted in this manner?

**Mr. Jackson :** In the Notes on the opposite page we find that the designations of certain officers have been changed and some specialist officers have been grouped as Agricultural Officers, and in Finance Committee the explanation given was that in this new designation it would be possible to shift those officers around from one place to another, apparently on the assumption that every agriculturist has a little bit of

knowledge on every subject. But those are specialist posts filled by men who have qualified in a special branch. How can a specialist in a particular field be put into a field in which he has had no experience? It is like putting a medical practitioner to do the work of a surgeon or a surgeon to do the work of a physician because he has some basic knowledge of the science. In our Department of Agriculture, a Guianese Director finds it possible and convenient to shift specialist officers around by a change of designations. We have specialists because we know that we need them, and I suspected before we went into Finance Committee that there was something wrong and some motive in bringing about this change of designations. That was confirmed by the Director himself when he said that they wanted to remove this officer from one field to another. Why should the Rice Agronomist be put to do the work of a horticulturist? The whole thing is bad. Even if we have to retain the designation, Agricultural Officers, it should be laid down very clearly that a specialist should remain in his own field.

**Mr. Tello :** This debate is rather timely. The points have been well made, especially the one made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj. As we go through the Estimates we will come across provision for scholarships. If we are to vote money for officers to take special studies and to specialize in certain jobs, to find later that because of the bad system of promotion, or through prejudice against certain individuals, or for some unknown reason an officer is removed from his job and transferred to another job for which he is not suitable, and another officer who is unsuitable for that job is put into his place, it would be a circle of wastage of public funds. I am glad this debate has taken place and that the criticism of this policy will be put on record, because last year we asked for certain assurances and a statement of policy by the Government, but we were refused. I feel that in this matter Government should make a clear statement of its policy.



**The Chief Secretary:** The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, has referred to the fact that certain officers are sent away for training and when they return they are put in different jobs. From time to time that has happened; I do not deny it. There are sometimes reasons why it is necessary to do so, but I think I am right in saying that in over 90 per cent. of the cases officers who are sent abroad for training are put into the jobs they are trained for. I give my personal assurance that if at any time a Member of this Council should draw my attention to a case in which this has not been done, I would look into the matter to find out the reason.

In regard to the specific case mentioned by the hon. Member for Georgetown South, I would explain that it is not my job, or the job of the Establishment Department, to deal with the assignment of individual officers, but that of the Head of the particular Department. I do not know the officer to whom the hon. Member has referred, but I have every confidence in the Head of the Department to allocate his staff to various jobs. If the hon. Member is not quite satisfied I will look into the matter and let him know the result of my investigation.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** In the light of the hon. the Chief Secretary's assurance I beg to withdraw my Amendment.

#### PLANT PATHOLOGIST

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I observe that the vote for the Plant Pathologist has been decreased by \$1,684. I move the reduction of the sub-head by \$1, and in doing so I wish to bring to the attention of the Government the fact that British Guiana faces a serious crisis in its rice industry as a result of the appearance of blast disease in the rice cultivations on the East Bank, Demerara, the East Bank, Berbice, and in several other areas. I should have thought that Government would have made provision for an additional Plant Pathologist so as to enable one officer to devote his whole time to finding an effective cure for this disease, or that Government would have had the Plant Pathologist and the Plant Breeder

working together to find a type of rice immune to the disease. It may well be that our rice industry is threatened with extinction by the blast disease, and I am surprised at the Government's apparent indifference to the menace to our rice industry. On the East Bank, Berbice, the Department of Agriculture has taken steps to see that rice from that area is not removed to other parts of the country. Padi was transported from Mara to the Canje district and the owners were compelled by law to take it back to Mara so as to prevent the spread of the disease.

The reduction of the vote makes me feel that a junior officer who is not ripe in research and not fully experienced in the field of plant pathology has now been put in charge of this section of the Department's activities which is most important. The hon. Minister of Natural Resources has spoken about the extension of the coconut industry, but little does he know that thousands of coconut trees die every year from pathological disease. He should know about it. We need more research in this Department in order to combat these diseases, and I would recommend that the Minister should go into the matter more diligently in order to prevent a serious situation developing in our rice industry. Our country is humid and fungus can travel from 20 to 40 miles in a humid atmosphere, thus affecting other areas. I would suggest that Government should take immediate steps to combat the blast disease which threatens our rice industry.

**Mr. Gajraj:** I would like to join the hon. Member for Georgetown South in bringing this particular matter to the attention of this Council. Blast disease, in so far as it affects the cultivation of padi, is indeed something which should be given the most serious attention by the Department of Agriculture.

As has been said by the hon. Member, on the East Bank of Demerara and on the East Bank of the Berbice River this disease has shown its head in very large areas. At first it was felt that blast disease came about as a result of the forest areas being denuded of large trees

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and used for the production of rice, thereby disturbing the feeding habits of the insects that inhabit the jungle areas.

Whilst it was felt at one time that the position would correct itself, it is now felt that if the disease is not eradicated quickly it is apt to affect other areas where rice is grown, especially if the padi is moved from the area where it has been reaped into another area where the disease has not been found. From that point of view it will be necessary to isolate the padi grown and reaped in certain areas until the Department can find something to eradicate this disease. It is in this respect that I feel that the criticism of the hon. Member for Georgetown South is correct, because here we find that the provision for the Plant Pathologist for the year 1959 is \$1,684 less than the amount provided in 1958.

We wonder, therefore, whether the officer who was paid in 1958 for doing that job will not be doing it in 1959. Has he been promoted outside of the Department, or has he been sent to another territory to work? On the other hand, as has been suggested in a previous debate, I wonder whether the Plant Pathologist has been given some other kind of work to do while this disease is playing havoc with our padi. I feel that this disease should be tackled seriously and as early as possible.

I echo the sentiments of the hon. Member for Georgetown South with reference to the large areas of new, pure line seed padi under cultivation. If this disease is not checked quickly, one can imagine what will happen to the padi grown in these areas. Many of the areas are contiguous to rice growing areas, and if the disease is allowed to spread to new areas much harm will be done, especially at a time when we have been spending so much of the revenue of this country on developing new land for rice production.

Hon. Members of this Council, as well

as rice producers, know that markets must be found for this increase in our rice production, and it is time that we take an early opportunity to dispense with this blast disease. The loss may not only reflect seriously on the earnings of the people who are occupying new lands for the first time, but it may also reduce the earnings of the people who have been generous in planting rice in the existing areas. It seems to me, and I join with my colleagues in urging, that Government should give us some assurance on the point.

**Mr. Jackson:** I asked the hon Minister of Natural Resources to tell us why it was necessary to switch these officers around. We are now told that an officer with a considerable amount of experience has resigned from Government and has gone to work with a private firm. One wonders whether his sudden departure was not due to the projected ideas which were known to him at the time. I do not know whether the person who has succeeded him is fully qualified to hold the post.

I believe that the officer who has resigned is a very good man, and he was allowed to resign for one reason or another. Why should Government always suffer in this respect? Why should a qualified officer be permitted to go and work with a private firm at a time like this? I hope the hon. Minister of Natural Resources will ask the Director of Agriculture to change his policy of shifting qualified officers from one place to another.

**Mr. Tello:** I have to join my colleagues, because when the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry returned from Venezuela he mentioned that "white leaf disease" was a very devastating disease. I am reliably informed that blast disease can be just as devastating. If it is a question of saving a few cents and this valuable officer has been allowed to go, then this Government has broken down in its responsibilities.

We have been told that the salvation of this country lies in its increased agri-

cultural production. We have been told that rice has come into its own and it has a new status; no longer can it be regarded in the province of the infinites, it is so important to the economy of the country. However, the rice industry is now threatened with blast disease, and Government sits down in its complacency, happy in its Ministerial slumber and allows very valuable officers to leave the Department of Agriculture.

I see again that dollars are more important than people, and more important than the prosperity of the country. I am asking that some assurance be given to us that arrangements will be made for qualified and experienced officers to take care of the various aspects of the work in the Department of Agriculture. I refer to plant pathology and the blast disease that is now causing us some degree of concern. I know that the hon. Minister of Natural Resources receives his advice from a son of the soil, the Director of Agriculture, but I would like to have some assurance that this new system which has been introduced by the Director of Agriculture justifies itself and that the future of rice and other plant production programmes will not be impaired.

**Mr. Beharry:** I regret very much that I have to condemn the remarks of the hon Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, that while the industry is threatened with a disease known as blast the Minister sits complacently in his seat in the Ministry. The moment the disease was discovered in the country the Ministry made every effort to combat it. It was announced in the newspapers that efforts were made through the Secretary of State for the Colonies to obtain the services of a specialist from India where the disease was most rampant and Agricultural Scientists have gained a lot of experience in this field. Every effort has been made by Government to protect the rice industry from blast disease.

Hon. Members on the other side of the Table said that something should be done to retain the services of the officer who worked on this particular industry. The Department of Agriculture has no

Plant Pathologist at the moment and this is a very grave situation. The position is that the officer was offered a more remunerative job, and that is why he left the Department. The Department of Agriculture and Government are trying to get another officer to fill the vacant post, but the Ministry can do nothing in the matter until a suitable officer is found.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I thought the hon. Member for Georgetown South would have risen to correct the mis-statement made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, regarding the activities of the disease known as blast. As far as I know, it is more likely to catch the Members of the Opposition than for it to spread to other plants.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** This matter seems to be more serious than I thought. I am not a Member of the Government, and I was not aware of the fact that there is no Plant Pathologist in the Department of Agriculture at the moment. As a matter of fact I was about to suggest to the Government that provision be made for a Plant Breeder and a Plant Pathologist to work in conjunction on this blast disease in order to find an immune or a resistant type of plant.

I am surprised to find that Government does not have such an officer in the Department at this moment of crisis. I would seriously recommend to Government that an additional sum be provided for another officer. I think Government should reconsider the question of taking back the officer who was taken off the rice producing programme and putting him to work in conjunction with the Plant Pathologist in an effort to find a resistant type of plant for this disease. This matter is more serious than the hon. Minister of Natural Resources thinks.

We may not be able to sell our rice outside of British Guiana in the future. If it is discovered abroad that our rice has been attacked by blast disease, people will not buy it.

**Mr. Tello:** Or our padi either.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** It must be remembered that the rice will carry this disease, and if outsiders are made aware of it this industry will suffer immensely. I think the Government should tackle this disease with speed and deal with it in an urgent manner. I wish to have an assurance from the Government that a report will be given to us in this Council on this matter.

**Mr. Jackson:** This statement by the Minister of Natural Resources is alarming. He says today that he has no Plant Pathologist. In Finance Committee I asked if this specialist office was filled and I got the answer, yes. It was because of my knowledge of the department that I asked the question. If I was told, yes, in Finance Committee, the post is filled, how can the Minister tell us today he has no Plant Pathologist?

**Mr. Beharry:** There are several posts vacant in the Department, including that of a Pathologist. I could not have told him that.

**Mr. Jackson:** Mr. Chairman, I am in a position to know a great deal about Government Departments and the Minister will not dispute that. I knew there was no Plant Pathologist in this Department when the Department was being discussed in Finance Committee.

**Mr. Beharry:** I did not say in Finance Committee that we have a Plant Pathologist. I know there are several vacancies. I agree with Members on the other side that it is regrettable that the Department does not have a Plant Pathologist, but every effort is being made to fill the vacancy. The Minister can only complain but it is for the Establishment Department to do something in a matter like this.

**Mr. Jackson:** I am not asking whether it is not going to be done. I asked the question in Finance Committee in the presence of the Director of Agriculture, and—

**The Chairman:** Just a moment. You said you were told that the post was

filled. The Minister says he did not say that. I think probably you were told so by the Director, with the Minister at the meeting. My own experience here apprises me of the fact that very often Members are physically present during a debate, but not consciously present.

**Mr. Jackson:** Mr. Chairman, I am inclined to accept the version which has come from your wise lips. Perhaps he was not conscious of the fact that an answer was given.

**Mr. Beharry:** On a point of correction; I did not give him an answer. If the Director of Agriculture told him so I do not know, but I did not. It is incorrect for him to say that I did.

**Mr. Tello:** I do not know that what the Opposition said could have indicted the Government any more than the statement made. He recognizes the danger threatening the industry, and the Administration allows an experienced man to leave the Government's service at this particular time. In previous debates the Minister was kind enough to speak for the Establishment Department. I feel it would be all right for him to express an opinion this time, because of the collective responsibility that exists, but I want to say at once that the Administration as a whole can hardly explain away the lack of responsible behaviour in that they allowed an officer to leave the Service because of a better salary offered him elsewhere. This is too slender an excuse at any time, especially at a time when the second most important industry was threatened by a vital disease.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** In this matter I want an assurance whether a Plant Breeder would be put to the task of finding a solution to this problem. It may be of the gravest consideration for our country. At this stage I want some assurance too, that a Plant Pathologist would be appointed to the Department of Agriculture. In any case, if the Plant Pathologist leaves, the Plant Breeder would have to continue with the research work with respect to blast threatening the industry. If this disease

gets its way, it may result in our not being able to export our rice. I want some assurance, and I think it is a reasonable assurance I am asking for.

**Mr. Gajraj:** Before the hon. Minister says whether he is willing or not to give assurances, may I point out also that the admission by him that the experienced officer who was engaged in this technical job accepted an offer of better employment elsewhere, and was allowed by Government to do so at a time when, to quote his words, "efforts were being made to obtain a specialist in plant diseases to come out from the East" was disquieting.

Because of the hidebound policy of Government the Officer was told he could not get more salary because the post was fixed at "X" and therefore he could not go beyond "X". Now that we seek to replace him we find that indeed the value of such people in terms of money has gone up in the world, and therefore, rather reluctantly and late in the day, we decide we should increase the emoluments of the office. Meanwhile, time is going and the work which this technician was doing is not continued.

Now I put it to this Committee straightforwardly, because I think we are wasting time: if there is no officer at the moment, if it is expected that we will recruit an officer in the year, 1959, and if Government admits that we lost the last officer because we could not offer him more than he would get in private employment, how can we be asked to vote a sum less than the previous one for the post? Are we being realistic? To my mind, we are just begging the question, and we are playing with the situation and the future prospects of the country. The future of the industry lies in the balance and we are playing with the situation.

**Mr. Beharry:** I want to make one thing clear to Members of this Committee: every effort has been made by the Ministry to combat this disease when it appeared, and Members will see that sub-head 16, on page 7, is a request for

\$15,000 in order to assist in combating these plant diseases.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** That is for plant pest.

**Mr. Beharry:** If the hon. Member reads the "Notes" he will see that it is intended to provide for the control of blast disease. I think the hon. the Chief Secretary said he is making every effort to fill the post—it is not really within the periphery of my Ministry to fill the vacancy.

**The Financial Secretary:** May I deal with the reduction of the provision? I have explained many times in the Legislative Council and outside that if a post is vacant and it appears in the Estimates the actual financial provision is made at the minimum salary of the scale. If it so happens that the officer eventually appointed is to be paid more than the minimum because of age, experience, market value and so on, the Government is not inhibited from so doing because of the minimum appearing in the Estimates. The financial provision appearing under a sub-head in the Estimates is not a limiting factor in the payment of salaries: the limiting factors are the approved Establishment and the salary scale.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** All I asked was for some assurance from the Minister that we will have a Plant Pathologist who will devote his time to research leading to the control and eradication of blast disease in British Guiana. I also asked that we be given some assurance that we will have a Plant Breeder who will be able to breed a type of padi which would be resistant or immune to blast disease. We should start research in this direction now, because it may take 20 or 50 years to breed the type of padi. In matters of research very great experience is required. For example, in the Geological Department we have one of the best brains in that field in a retired man for whose knowledge and experience we have had to pay a good salary. Our aim is to indicate our anxiety about this matter and I wanted

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some assurance that a Plant Breeder and a Plant Pathologist would be put on the job to find a solution to this urgent problem in our rice industry.

**Mr. Beharry:** There is no shortage of Plant Breeders, and our programme in that respect is well established. The only shortage is that we have no Plant Pathologist. There is one officer who is directly seconded to the breeding of new types of padi, and a new variety is expected to be released in the very near future, maybe this year. We are well staffed with respect to plant breeding but the Department needs a Plant Pathologist.

**Mr. Jai Narain Singh:** What I was trying to get the hon. Minister to understand — I am not suggesting that his knowledge in this field is limited but he needs some direction in the matter of research, because he is confronted with so many problems that I would not expect him to appreciate fully the fact that I said that we need a Plant Breeder to devote his time exclusively to breeding a variety of padi which would be resistant or immune to blast disease, and that he should work in conjunction with the Plant Pathologist. Our sugar industry has its own plant breeding expert, and it is not menaced by any disease. In two years this white leaf disease has reduced Venezuela's rice production by 50 per cent., and we should take note of what is happening. I am therefore asking for an assurance that a Plant Breeder will devote his whole time to rice and other crops.

**Mr. Beharry:** With regard to breeding a variety of padi which would be resistant to blast disease, it is very difficult to find such a variety. In India they are now trying to breed such a variety of padi, and from what we have been told by the Colonial Office, India is more experienced than any other country in the world in that direction. But they are working on a new variety, and if we could get a man from India to assist us in our investigations along similar lines it would be of great benefit to this coun-

try. It is not that Government is not making every effort to solve this problem.

With regard to the suggestion by the hon. Member that one officer should devote his whole time to the breeding of new types of padi, I may mention that there are two Plant Breeders in the Department of Agriculture, one of whom is devoted solely to the breeding of new varieties of padi while the other deals with general food crops. The finding of a variety of padi which would be resistant to blast disease is a world problem.

**Mr. Gajraj:** I believe that the hon. Minister has misunderstood the hon. Member. What my Friend has been asking is not that there should be a Plant Breeder who has found a variety of padi resistant to the blast disease, but that because of the grave threat to the rice industry generally that blast poses at the moment, this Council should be given an assurance that someone with the proper qualifications and knowledge will be put on the job to endeavour to breed a type of padi which would be resistant to the fungus which is creating trouble in our rice-growing areas. It is alright for the Minister to tell us that there are two Plant Breeders in the Department of Agriculture, one of whom does nothing else but work on the breeding of padi, but up to now we have not been told that any of the varieties that have been tried out by the Department in its nurseries is in any way resistant to blast, or that attempts are being made to see that they are.

I know, and I believe hon. Members realize, that this question of rice breeding has been going on, not since the Minister has taken over the portfolio of Natural Resources, but for 9 or 10 years, and we have been informed by the technicians attached to the Department that it takes 9 or 10 years for a new variety to be tested and brought to the point where the new seed can be distributed to those who are planting padi. So that if we hear that it is possible that some new variety may be passed on to the farmers in 1959 it is creditable to the Minister that it would be done during his time, but they should not be led to believe that

this has all been done during his tenure of office. The process was started years ago, and many of us have seen it in various stages until it has reached the stage of fulfilment in 1959. In the meantime, what we would like to know is, inasmuch as the gravity of the disease has been accepted by the Government, that it would be able to put an officer on the job as soon as possible to work towards the discovery of a variety which would resist blast disease. That is what the hon. Member has been asking. If there is such a variety the answer would be for the Department of Agriculture to import samples and increase the supply of seed padi for distribution to farmers.

We realise that work has to be done, and because the Colonial Office has told this Government that India is endeavouring to combat the disease is no reason why we should just sit down and wait for the people in India to find a solution to the problem. We should be just as capable to put our own house in order. We should try to get as much assistance as is available, but we should not leave the job which is ours on others' shoulders because they are more experienced.

**Mr. Beharry:** What surprises me most is that the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, and the hon. Member, for Georgetown South (Mr. Jai Narine Singh) should be reiterating that we should find someone to breed a variety of padi resistant to blast disease. We do not know whether a cure for blast is finding a variety that is resistant to the disease, or whether it is a disease which can be eradicated by any other scientific means. That is the investigation which is going on — to find out whether the disease can be eradicated by fertilizers; whether it is a fungus disease, or whether insecticides can combat it. Hon. Members are taking it upon themselves to suggest that breeding of a new variety of padi is the solution. I can assure hon. Members that everything possible is being done by the Department of Agriculture to combat the disease

I said before that we do not have a Plant Pathologist. The Chief Secretary

says that he is making every effort to get one. I cannot see what else we can do but to make every effort to bring the disease under control. I do not know what investigations the Department is pursuing but every effort is being made to isolate and contain the disease within certain areas. An Order in Council has been published providing certain protective measures within the areas in which the disease has appeared.

**Mr. Hubbard:** The hon. Member for Georgetown South and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, have been advocating that two new posts should be created in the Department of Agriculture, the two officers filling those posts to work exclusively on breeding varieties of padi resistant to blast disease. I have been interested in the remarks which have been made, and in view of the fact that Mr. Gajraj is the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board it may be interesting if we could get him to tell us whether his Board would consider making some contribution to the additional expense to the general taxpayers which he is advocating so forcefully and so freely.

**Mr. Gajraj:** The hon. Nominated Member has posed a question for the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board to answer. The Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board is not a Member of this Council. In my position as a Member of this Council I would like to make this open and categorical statement, that any proposal which the Government wishes to make to the Rice Marketing Board will, I am sure, receive from the members of that Board very careful and sympathetic consideration, but to expect me to take the responsibility of answering on behalf of the Board, half of which is composed of producer-members who are elected by the rice producers of the country, is asking too much. It is quite possible that there is another Member of this Council who is in a far better position than I am to give an assurance on behalf of the Rice Marketing Board and the rice producers. Members will have observed that within recent times publicity of information no longer comes from

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the Chairman or the executive officials of the Board. Perhaps I should say here that it seems that the Rice Marketing Board falls within the portfolio of the Minister of Trade and Industry who wishes to do its publicity for it.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** The hon. Minister of Natural Resources certainly does not know what is taking place. I am surprised to hear him talking about insecticide. Insecticide is intended to control insects, and fungicide is intended to control fungus. If the Minister had taken time off to read the footnote at item 16, he would have seen that a fungicide is something for controlling fungus. I will not waste his time in order to tell him what is meant by fungus.

The hon. Minister does not seem to appreciate the dangers that are facing this industry. He still thinks that one can breed a rice-resistant plant at the same place where one is breeding ordinary rice plants for cultivation in the country. It will be necessary to breed rice-resistant plants in an isolated or quarantined area, lest it becomes an area for distribution of blast disease. We will have to be very careful in dealing with this matter. I am sure your technical officers can advise you properly.

This is a matter of vital importance, and Government is rather complacent over what is likely to happen if this disease gets out of hand. What we need here is a Plant Breeder and a Geneticist—a qualified man who can devote his attention to the breeding of rice and the question of experimenting with a non-resistant type of plant. Perhaps the conditions in British Guiana may be different from what obtains in India.

If a Research Officer comes here from India he will have to find out whether the general agricultural conditions are similar to what exist in India. He will have to give consideration to the relative humidity, the amount of rainfall and so on. All of these things will be of great interest to the scientist who will have to tackle this job.

I ask the hon. Minister to give an assurance that officers will be put on this job. I am not indicting the Minister. I am imploring him to do something in the matter, lest we fall into a position where we will not be able to find a remedy for this disease.

**Mr. Beharry:** The hon. Member for Georgetown South seems to claim more knowledge of this matter than the scientists in the Department of Agriculture. I, personally, do not think the hon. Member has more knowledge than the ordinary farmer on this matter, and I need not take his advice. This is a new disease and the Department of Agriculture is making every effort to combat it. The hon. Member keeps repeating his statement that it is necessary to provide a new rice-resistant plant in order to combat this disease. I do not think he has enough knowledge in this matter to direct the Department as to the correct method in which this disease should be tackled.

The Department of Agriculture says that it cannot find the answer for blast disease at the moment, but every effort is being made to combat it. I do not think the hon. Member is qualified to speak on this subject. I am prepared to accept the advice of the officers in the Department of Agriculture. I am not prepared to accept the advice of the hon. Member, because I feel that his advice will be on the same level of an ordinary farmer.

**Mr. Tello:** The hon. Minister seems to misunderstand the remarks of the hon. Member for Georgetown South. The hon. Member is simply offering a suggestion which the Minister should put to his technical officers. The Minister is trying to belittle the qualifications of the hon. Member, but the point is that he was trained and has some knowledge of agriculture.

The point is that when the leaf-scald disease attacked this country some time ago a small laboratory was set up to deal with it and within eighteen months the disease was brought under control.



Had the disease been dealt with in conjunction with the cane-breeding programme it would have taken the Department about seven or eight years to control it. Perhaps if the hon. Minister will be good enough to refer the question raised by the hon. Member for Georgetown South to the Director of Agriculture he may consider that there is merit in the hon. Member's suggestion.

The hon. Member has suggested that a Plant Breeder and a Plant Pathologist should be put on the job to combat this disease before it gets beyond control. I do not see anything wrong in that suggestion. I am not saying that the hon. Minister of Natural Resources is obliged to take the advice of the hon. Member for Georgetown South, but he is a Member of this Council and his advice might prove helpful. I feel sure that if his suggestion is passed on to the Director of Agriculture it will be sympathetically received. I would prefer the Minister to pass on the suggestion to his Department, because I would not like to hear that the hon. Member went over his head and discussed it with the Director of Agriculture.

I hope that no hard feelings will develop as a result of the discussion on this matter. Several Members have spoken very strongly on this matter because everyone of us is interested in the rice industry. I hope the Minister will see his way to accept my suggestion.

**Mr. Jackson:** I wonder whether the hon. Minister of Natural Resources realizes the implication of his remarks when he says that he does not regard the hon. Member for Georgetown South as having any more knowledge in agriculture than the ordinary farmer. The hon. Member for Georgetown South holds a diploma from the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture. The implication is that the College does not know what it is doing, and it is issuing certificates to unqualified people. This is a serious indictment and the hon. Minister should not have taken it upon himself to make such a statement in this Council.

The hon. Minister knows that the hon. Member for Georgetown South attended the I.C.T.A.; the College is an impartial organization, and is qualified to issue certificates to students who graduate after a full course of training. The Minister's statement is tantamount to saying that the College is unworthy of its existence. I feel that he has done an injustice to this College by making such a statement in this Council.

**Mr. Beharry:** I gave both the hon. Member for Georgetown South and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, the assurance that the Department is doing everything scientifically possible to combat this blast disease. I also said that the Ministry is endeavouring to get a Plant Pathologist to fill the vacant post.

The Department of Agriculture realizes the seriousness of the disease, and certain areas where the disease has been found have already been isolated. I have given hon. Members the assurance that everything possible is being done to bring the disease under control.

**Mr. Jackson:** Does that indicate that an hon. Member of this Council cannot give you information and advice? The Minister has not yet replied to the question I have raised. He said that the hon. Member for Georgetown South has no more knowledge than an ordinary farmer, despite the fact that he knows the hon. Member holds a diploma of the I.C.T.A.

**Mr. Benn:** The hon. Minister said more than once that the Department of Agriculture is doing everything possible to bring the disease under control. He also said that Government is making every effort to secure an officer to replace the one who has resigned. I hope hon. Members on the other side of the Table will accept what the hon. Minister has said, and let us proceed with the business before us.

**The Chairman:** I am sure the hon. Minister of Natural Resources will say that he did not wish to impute anything improper.

**Mr. Beharry:** Because the hon. Member for Georgetown South holds a diploma of the I.C.T.A. that does not make him an expert on every aspect of agriculture. He may hold a diploma of the I.C.T.A., but that does not make him a Plant Pathologist, an expert in pathology, or an expert in any specific research field in agriculture. I was not challenging his ability as an agriculturist. I was dealing with specific, scientific matters. An individual has to spend several years studying particular scientific aspects of the general field of agriculture. If the hon. Member takes offence to my remarks I am sorry, because I did not mean it in that context. I meant that an individual has to be a specialist in a particular field of research. We are now dealing in one particular field of agriculture, and it is in this context that I made my statement regarding the hon. Member.

I see no reason why the hon. Member for Georgetown North should tell me that because the hon. Member for Georgetown South attended the I.C.T.A. and received a diploma, he must be considered an authority on every aspect of agriculture.

**Mr. Jackson:** Mr. Chairman, the point is this, that the hon. Minister said he has not got more knowledge than the ordinary farmer.

**Mr. Benn** *rose* —

**The Chairman:** Will you allow me, Mr. Minister of Education? What I am saying is this: the hon. Minister of Natural Resources has explained that if it is taken that he meant to demean the qualities of the Member for South Georgetown, he is very sorry; he never intended such a thing. He said he was speaking in respect of an expert.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I want to tell the hon. Member that he is not competent to judge my qualifications. Consequently, I cannot argue with one who is incompetent in this field at all.

**The Chairman:** He said he did not mean it in that way.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** For his informa-

tion, I devoted years of my scientific life to the breeding of plants, in order to find resistant types. Six years. Because of the interruption in my breeding programme — my plant breeding programme—

**The Chairman:** I do not think you need worry about that.

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** Let me sound a last note of warning. Let the blood be on the Minister's head, if he does not take advice from this side of the Table. Let the people of British Guiana suffer from incompetency and the lack of help from this Department.

**The Chairman:** Do you withdraw the Motion?

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** I do, Sir.

CURATOR, BOTANIC GARDENS

**Mr. Jackson:** I beg to move the reduction of item (12) of sub-head 1—“Curator, Botanic Gardens”—by \$1. I am asking the Minister if he would consider the necessity of separating the Botanic Gardens from the Department of Agriculture. I ask this question because of what is happening at the moment, and because there are people in the world who cherish beauty—despite the views of other people.

Now the Curator has gone on leave, and his *locum tenens* has no knowledge of that particular subject, but I know he is qualified to hold his substantive post. Therefore, we can have a trained man in the field of horticulture and in the art of beautifying the City. More and more our Department of Agriculture is moving away from that type of activity and in order to attract tourists, the upkeep of a place like the Botanic Gardens should be the responsibility of a separate body, more concerned with that sort of thing. Would the Minister give consideration to this suggestion, if he has not already done so?

**Mr. Beharry:** I do not know whether it should be separate from the Department, but it can be discussed with the Director, and I do not see that if it is possible that it can be separate it should not be done—there are other Gar-

dens in the City not administered by the Department of Agriculture.

**Mr. Tello:** I must compliment the hon. Minister, for he has matured within the last few minutes.

**Mr. Jackson:** With that assurance I withdraw my Motion.

#### TWELVE AGRICULTURAL OFFICERS

**Mr. Jai Narine Singh:** Under the item (19) of sub-head 1 — "12 Agricultural Officers"—I would like to know from the Minister how many of these men are dedicated to field extension work, and what he proposes to do about the existing crops of coconuts to make them produce more fruit. Are they putting fertilisers into the plantations, combating pathological diseases, or curbing entomological infestations which appear? In what way and to what degree will they increase the number of coconuts for edible oil? The Minister is aware, I suppose, that caterpillar infestations do have an indirect effect on decreasing the yield. If he is, what steps is he taking in this direction? If it is hoped at all to have an increase in the control of that pest—and the very core of the coconut palm can be affected by the bacteria — what steps are being taken? In my opinion we can make the present coconut plantations produce 50% more by very efficient agricultural methods, and by fertilisers.

**Mr. Gajraj:** I would like to commend the hon. Member for bringing to the attention of this Council the question of the increased production of coconuts which we so need in this country. I think he struck the nail on the head when he referred to the increase in production of the existing coconut plantations as separate and distinct from any increase which we might gain by additional plantings, which I believe have been fostered by the Minister of Natural Resources during his term of office. Of course such plantings will not give us production for a few years yet, and in the meantime, with the increase of our population and the greater use of coconut products, it becomes increasingly difficult for this country to meet its own requirements from its own production.

There was a time, just prior to the establishment of the margarine and soap factory on the East Bank, when it was felt that production within British Guiana was about equal to the Colony's needs, but since we have been using some of our own coconut oil to produce margarine for local consumption we have found that the amount of oil that is available for other purposes is certainly much less than we need.

On the question of utilizing our existing cultivation for increased production, may I inform the hon. Minister of Natural Resources that in the West Indian island of St. Lucia just that has been done; I have seen it myself. I was taken around by the Agricultural Officer in that island and I have been shown how one acre of land is being used to produce three different crops. There are the old coconut trees which have been there for years and are still producing a number of nuts, but beneath those coconut trees they have been experimenting with planting cocoa, so that the cocoa plants would benefit from the shade of the coconut palms, and as the cocoa plants grow high enough a further crop is planted in the shape of bananas. It has been found in that small island that because of the additional cultivation of the land around the coconut trees for the cocoa and banana crops, the yield of coconuts has increased instead of being reduced. When I was told about it my first reaction was that with the other crops feeding from the same soil the yield of coconuts would be reduced, but the officer assured me that experience had proved that because of the need for tilling the soil around the coconut trees for the other plants, there was an increase in the production of coconuts.

In British Guiana we have made several attempts to grow cocoa, and I think a scheme is being continued by the present Government, and is to be extended where possible. We have made efforts to grow bananas in the past and we have been told by the experts of those days that we could not produce bananas of a sufficient size of stem to

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enter the export market. I, and I believe there are other Guianese like myself who feel that we can produce bananas for export, so that if in the effort to increase production of coconuts we find that we can utilize the same area of land to produce other crops, each one of which acts as a shelter to the other, I am sure that Government, like the people of this country, will realize the tremendous benefits that can accrue from such action, and will in due course express their gratitude to Members on this side of the Table for bringing up such an important matter which should originate from the experts in the Department of Agriculture.

**Mr. Campbell:** If I may be permitted I would like to ask a question on coconuts, to which I would be grateful to have an answer from the Minister of Natural Resources. I have been a coconut planter in the Pomeroun for a period of about 20 years, and have grown three generations of coconut trees. The average life span of the coconut tree is between six and seven years. In four years we got a wonderful production of coconuts, but they became suddenly yellow and died. We asked the Department of Agriculture for advice and assistance. One Agricultural Instructor told us that we had too much drainage. We reduced the amount of drainage, and after three years we asked another Instructor who said there was too much flooding; we required more drainage. That was in the upper part of the Pomeroun. In the lower Pomeroun the life span of the coconut tree is ten or twenty years.

Some time ago the Minister of Natural Resources publicized that he had a wonderful plan for the Moruca area in the North West District which he wanted to make one of the centres of coconut cultivation, with which I heartily agree. In the Moruca area the life span of the coconut tree sometimes reaches a century. There are trees which were there when I was a boy. It is an area which lends itself to extensive coconut cultivation, and I would like to ask the Minister if his plan is being pursued, and if we

should look forward to its implementation.

**Mr. Beharry:** Earlier this evening I dealt with the programme of the Department of Agriculture with respect to the production of coconuts. I told the Council that seedlings were planted and distributed last year and the year before, and what is contemplated this year. The hon. Member for Georgetown South would like to know whether we are using fertilizers. I can assure the hon. Member that the Department's report shows that fertilizers are being used on plantations on the East Coast, and that the moth borer and the caterpillar disease are receiving the attention of the Department. Much activity of the Extension Service of the Department is being directed towards the control of those two pests.

With respect to the question about coconuts raised by the hon. Member for the North West District I would like him to know that a nursery has been established by the Department of Agriculture at Moruca, and thousands of seedlings have been planted there with the intention of distributing them among the Amerindian farmers of that area.

A plan to develop this particular area into a large coconut producing section is still to be prosecuted actively by the Government. Provision is not included in this year's Estimates, but the programme for the development of the area will be considered in our next plan.

**Mr. Campbell:** I am not satisfied with that answer. No provision has been made in the Estimates, but the hon. Minister is saying that an allocation will be made later on. How long is that going to be? Will that be in another year or two? What method will be used to have the land prepared and planted in coconuts?

In Moruca and the Pomeroun it is possible to have coconuts produced in four or five years' time. If Government wishes to accelerate the production of coconuts, it should begin to help the peasants as early as possible.

**Mr. Gajraj:** I should like to join with

the hon. Member for the North West District in the plea he has made to the Minister of Natural Resources. There is no doubt whatsoever that, from the answer the hon. Minister has given to the first question which the hon. Member for North West District asked, it is an indication that the people in that area can claim to be a forgotten people. Despite all of the difficulties they have suffered in the past by way of neglect, the hon. Minister of Natural Resources is saying at this stage that Government is going into the matter and that no provision has been made in this year's Estimates.

We have been told that this is the first opportunity this Government has of influencing or putting what it wants in the Budget. Members of this Government cannot claim that this Budget was prepared for them and they had to accept what was in it. This Budget was prepared by the present Government. The hon. Member for the North West District says that he had been given the assurance that consideration would have been given to the matter so far as financial provision was concerned. We have to ask ourselves, what are we? Perhaps the hon. Member himself may agree to the suggestion that, because he is on this side of the Table, his constituency is not receiving the attention it should from the Government.

I believe that if the voices of the Members on this side of the Table are joined with the hon. Member the pressure will have the effect of making the Government hasten its plans and submit proposals to this Council for early consideration. I am aware that the necessary provision cannot be included in the present Budget, but Government can bring Supplementary Estimates during the year to provide for the cost of the programme. That would assist the people in the hon. Member's constituency and make them feel that they are not neglected.

The Amerindians are natives of this country, and whatever we do for the other races we must do for them. The Amerindians are the original settlers of

this country, so we should do everything possible to assist them to make this country more prosperous.

**Mr. Campbell:** There is already a kind of a scheme proposed by the hon. Minister of Natural Resources—I think it is a distance of about 20 miles between the Moruca and Waini rivers—for the settlement of the Amerindians. The people are constantly asking me about this scheme, but I am unable to give them any information. Government had promised to give them bulldozers for clearing the land, and the people want to know what is being done in the matter. They want to make themselves economically sound, so that the entire country can benefit from the production of copra.

It is known that the plantations in the lowlands of British Guiana are always subject to fungi, bacteria, etc., and it will take this Government a tremendous amount of money to control the pests that attack coconut trees in the swamps. If this Government really wants to do something to assist people in providing fats and oil for everyone in a short period of five or six years, now is the time to get ahead with the coconut scheme in the North West District. If the scheme is not cut and dried yet, Government should start to work on it immediately.

**Mr. Davis:** The hon. Minister in answer to the question raised by the hon. Member for Georgetown South said that fertilizers were being used. As I understand it, the fertilizers were used on already established cultivations and not on coconut trees. The Minister said that the fertilizers were used up and down the coast. I would like him to indicate whether he includes the East Coast in his remarks. If he includes the East Coast, then I would like to know which part of that area was given fertilizers so that I can go and see what is being done there.

**Mr. Beharry:** With respect to the point raised by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, I do not know the names of the plantations that have been encouraged to use fertilizers on their existing

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cultivations. However, I do not mind supplying him with the information as soon as I receive it from the Department of Agriculture. A report from the Department indicates that fertilizers are being used in certain areas.

With regard to what the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, says about the Amerindians, it is rather surprising that he has waited until today to realize that the Amerindians are being neglected. He had an opportunity to assist them long ago because he was a Member of this Council for a number of years. Why has he waited until today to realize that they have been neglected?

I would like to assure Mr. Campbell that—

**Mr. Gajraj:** On a point of order. I want—

**Mr. Beharry:** What Mr. Campbell says is true. He was referring to the land development programme for the Moruca area in Finance Committee, and he was told that the matter would be considered by Government. No provision has been inserted in this year's Estimates for the development of the area because of the limitation of funds at Government's disposal. Notwithstanding this, every effort is being made to assist the people at Moruca.

**Mr. Tello:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister, but I think he should address the hon. Member for North West District in the proper manner.

**Mr. Beharry:** I am sorry, Sir. The hon. Member for North West District knows that I have visited the area with the Director of Agriculture. In order to guide and assist the Amerindians as well as to encourage them to produce more coconuts, a nursery was established by the Agricultural Department in order to distribute coconut seedlings at subsidized prices to Amerindians in the Moruca area. As soon as funds are made available this Government will carry out the development programme to expand coconut production in the Moruca area because it is ideally suited for coconut production. I assure the hon. Member that Government will give top priority towards the question of increasing the coconut production in this particular area.

Council resumed.

#### ADJOURNMENT AND PENDING BUSINESS

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I cannot thank you sufficiently for your indulgence also for your kindness for stepping into the breach and agreeing to sit tomorrow, in view of the postponement of the meeting of the Constitutional Committee.

I declare the Council now adjourned until tomorrow at ten o'clock.