

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF BRITISH GUIANA

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE BRITISH GUIANA (CONSTITUTION) (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) ORDERS IN COUNCIL 1953 AND 1956.

IN THE EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II.

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

OF PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION

FIRST SITTING _____ TUESDAY, 15TH DECEMBER, 1959.

The first meeting of the Third Session of the Legislative Council constituted under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Orders in Council 1953 and 1956, was held in the Chamber of the Legislature, Public Buildings, Georgetown, on Tuesday, 15th December, 1959, at 9.30 a.m., with customary formalities and ceremonies. The proceedings were broadcast over the British Guiana Broadcasting Service (BGBS).

PRESENT :

Speaker , His Honour Sir Donald Jackson	
Chief Secretary , Hon. M. S. Porcher, acting	
Attorney-General , Hon. A. M. I. Austin, Q.C.	<i>ex officio</i>
Financial Secretary , Hon. F. W. Essex, C.M.G.	
The Honourable Dr. C. B. Jagan	—Member for Eastern Berbice (Minister of Trade and Industry)
” ” B. H. Benn	—Member for Essequibo River (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)
” ” B. S. Rai	—Member for Central Demerara (Minister of Community Development and Education).
Mr. R. B. Gajraj	—Nominated Member
” W. O. R. Kendall	—Member for New Amsterdam
” 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
” E. B. Beharry	—Member for Eastern Demerara
” 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
” A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.	—Nominated Member.

Mr. I. Crum Ewing — Clerk of the Legislature

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

Mr. R. C.

Hansard

PROCLAMATION

BRITISH GUIANA

No. 9 of 1959

PROCLAMATION SUMMONING A SESSION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

By His Excellency DENNIS MITCHELL
HEDGES, Officer Administering the Govern-
ment and Commander-in-Chief in and over the
Colony of British Guiana, Vice-Admiral of the
same,

etc. etc. etc.

D. M. HEDGES,
Officer Administering the Government.

WHEREAS I have by Proclamation dated the seventh day of December, 1959, prorogued the Legislative Council with effect from Tuesday, the eighth day of December, 1959;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (1) of section 54 of the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Orders in Council, 1953 and 1956, that, subject to the provisions of subsections (2) and (3) of section 54 of the said Orders, the sessions of the Legislative Council shall be held at such times and places as the Governor shall from time to time by Proclamation published in the Gazette appoint;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (2) of section 54 of the said Orders that there shall be a session of the Legislative Council once at least in every year, so that a period of twelve months shall not intervene between the last sitting in one session and the first sitting in the next session of the Legislative Council:

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of the said section, I do hereby proclaim and appoint Tuesday, the fifteenth day of December, nineteen hundred and fifty-nine at the hour of nine thirty of the clock in the forenoon as the time at which a session of the Legislative Council shall be held at the Chamber of the Legislature in the Public Buildings, Georgetown, Demerara.

Given under my Hand and the Public Seal of the
Colony at Government House, British
Guiana, this 7th day of December, in the
year of Our Lord one thousand nine hun-
dred and fifty-nine and in the eighth year
of Her Majesty's Reign.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

By His Excellency's Command,

IVAN H. SEELIG,
Acting Governor's Secretary.

SUMMONING OF SESSION

Mr. Speaker: I shall now ask the Clerk of the Legislative Council to read the Proclamation.

The Clerk read the Proclamation, No. 9 of 1959, summoning the Third Session of the Legislative Council.

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Proclamation having been read, giving authority for the opening of this Session, I shall now ask His Grace the Archbishop to read Prayers.

Prayers were read by the Archbishop of the West Indies (the Most Rev. Dr. A. J. Knight, C.M.G.)

MINUTES

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 25th November, last, have been printed and circulated. The question is, that those Minutes be confirmed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

SITTING SUSPENDED

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of this Council will now be suspended in order to give me the opportunity to meet His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government. Members and invitees may leave the Chamber, if they wish, and go into the gallery in order to witness His Excellency's inspection of the guard of honour. I shall, however, be extremely grateful if you will return to your seats before His Excellency comes along the corridor

The sitting was suspended.

OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT'S ADDRESS

Council resumed at 10 a.m.

His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Hon. D. M. Hedges, preceded by His Honour the Speaker, entered the Chamber, and addressed the Council as follows:

Mr. Speaker, a week ago we came to the end of the Second Session of the life of this Council. This period might perhaps be termed a year of preparation, preparation to be able to meet and face up to the challenging years that lie ahead. The two items that figured foremost in 1959 concerned a future Constitution for this country and the policy that should be adopted for its economic progress. It might be said that these two items go hand in glove; they cannot be separated in a vigorous and growing community that is aspiring to look after its own affairs. For, as we all know, constitutional advance must be dependent on an economy that is built on sound and firm foundations.

With regard to the future Constitution, it will be recollected that in November, 1958, the Governor announced that, with the agreement of the Secretary of State, he had appointed a Constitutional Committee consisting of all the elected and nominated Members of the Legislative Council, with the Speaker as Chairman and the three *ex officio* Members as advisers, the Chairman and advisers having no vote. The Committee held nineteen meetings in all and submitted its Report last July. The Report was published shortly afterwards and comments on it were received from a wide cross-section of the public. The Committee's Report, together with the comments received from members of the public, were forwarded to the Secretary of State in November, and these are now being studied by him in preparation for

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the talks which it has been agreed will be held early in the New Year.

On the economic front, Mr. Kenneth Berrill, a noted economist, came in April to study our economic problems. His findings and ways of thinking fell very much in line with the thoughts of Government, and in June a financial delegation proceeded to London to hold discussions with the Secretary of State so as to determine, from all the resources that are available to us, our future economic policy. The end result was the production of a Development Programme covering the next five years which, after sober thought and debate, was unanimously accepted and passed by this Council. The main emphasis of this programme is to improve the economic sector by increasing agricultural production and encouraging industry in order to effect a better balance of the country's economy. These should jointly open up new avenues of employment and generally increase the national income.

The Government proposes in 1960 and the ensuing years to encourage manufacturers to produce goods to meet local needs and, where possible, to export to foreign markets. It is planned to offer in 1960 an additional incentive to entrepreneurs by providing factory sites on industrial estates to be established in close proximity to transport and communication routes and to available labour. Adequate supplies of water and power will also be provided.

While private enterprise will be encouraged in every possible way to establish industries, it is proposed that Government also should take the initiative and set up new factories. Financial provision will be included for this purpose in the 1960 Development Estimates, and it is hoped, if the viability of certain industries which will utilise local raw materials is established, to start construction of factories and, if possible, production in the New Year.

The activities of the Minor Industries unit will be expanded by the addition of a wood-turning factory to produce wooden novelties and toys.

The Government will continue to promote, as much as possible, reciprocal trade with other territories. The hard dollar currency has been liberalised, and the only restrictions now imposed on importations are those designed to safeguard local industry. In 1959 British Guiana sent a trade mission to Venezuela and participated in another which visited the United Kingdom. In return, missions from Canada, Hungary and Japan came here. In 1960 a mission to Brazil is contemplated. It is hoped that in addition to encouraging an increase in trade, these missions will arouse interest among overseas investors in the industrial development of British Guiana.

As a result of recommendations made by the Tourist Committee, it is hoped to give every encouragement to promoting and developing the Tourist Industry. A sum of \$225,000 has been included in the 1960—1964 Development Programme, and it is hoped to start developing tourist attractions in 1960.

The Co-operative Department plans to intensify its programme for the promotion of co-operative societies to develop new lands and to purchase farm machinery. These societies have been found to be of great benefit to small farmers, and offer quick and comparatively inexpensive means of bringing new areas under cultivation.

It has also been decided to place the marketing activities of the Agriculture and Forest Departments under the management of a Director of Marketing to be attached to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. It is hoped that this re-organization, which should be effected in 1960, will result in more efficient marketing, and will cut down, if not remove altogether, the losses now shown by the various units.

During 1960 geological mapping and reconnaissance prospecting will continue in order to complete the geological map of British Guiana and the investigation of mineral deposits and possible mineral bearing geological formations. In the lower Mazaruni River basin, investigation of the distribution of chromium minerals will be assisted by an aerial magnetometer survey, and on the coastlands the search for bauxite will be assisted by pollen analysis of certain horizons of the coastal sediments. Other investigations are aimed at assessing the potentialities of water-bearing strata at deeper levels than that which normally supplies most of the artesian water of the coastlands.

Work on topographic survey has slowed down recently on account of the shortage of technical personnel. In 1960, however, it is hoped to continue the aerial photography of the interior.

On the Local Government front the Government proposes, with certain exceptions, to elevate the status of all country districts to that of village districts, and elections to the Councils of these districts will be held during January and February, 1960.

The Valuation Officer appointed under the Local Government (Valuation of Property) Ordinance, 1959, will commence in the New Year the valuation of properties in the Georgetown, New Amsterdam and No. 52 to Crabwood Creek areas as provided for by this Ordinance.

Further legislation relating to Local Government reform as set in Sessional Paper No. 5/1958, will be enacted to provide for the constitution and election of the new local authorities, the financial and general powers of these authorities, and the setting up of a Local Government Service Commission. All necessary legislation will be enacted with a view to the setting up of the authorities as early as possible thereafter.

With the additional funds allocated under the 1960/64 Development Programme the work of the Regional Development Committees will be continued and accelerated. It is hoped that more community centres will be erected and more self-help schemes and community development projects will be undertaken with the assistance of public funds.

During 1960, it is hoped to acquire a new site within easy reach of Georgetown, on which to commence building the first phase of the "Georgetown Prison". It is also proposed to extend the literary programme in the Prisons and to engage the prisoners in as much out-door work as possible.

With regard to Primary Education, it is proposed to spend a large sum in 1960 on building new Government-owned and Government-controlled schools. It is also intended to encourage, wherever possible, the erection of new schools, to be Government-controlled, on an aided self-help basis. Ten schools which should have been built or enlarged in 1959, will be completed during the first half of 1960.

Eight Woodwork and Home Economics Departments to be attached to eight Government schools, which should have been built in 1959, will be completed early in the new year. The programme will be continued in 1960. These Departments will afford training in pre-vocational courses.

The syllabus for the county scholarship examination will be modified and will be used as a basis for entrance to the Government and Government-aided secondary schools.

Plans are being made to continue throughout 1960, in all primary schools, the valuable scheme of snack meals for children who, after examination by the Medical Department, are reported to be in need of supplementary feeding.

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The system of local examination for teachers is being reviewed with a view to reducing the number of examinations and to increasing the emphasis on professional studies, local environmental studies and practical work.

Scholarships will continue to be awarded to teachers for training overseas. One teacher will specialise in in Rural Education and in particular Rural Science.

A recent report from the Education Committee on the "dual control" of schools is being examined, and this problem will be thoroughly investigated with a view to eliminating the failings of the present system.

As regards secondary education, the policy of aiding secondary schools, both by way of annually recurrent grants to pay teachers and capital grants to improve schools and to assist in the provision of science laboratories, workshops and additional classrooms will be continued. There are now twelve aided secondary schools. Two or three others are likely to be aided in 1960.

Two additional laboratories, one for Biology and one for Chemistry, which should already have been constructed at Queen's College, will be erected in 1960.

A new Government secondary school of the bi-lateral type will be constructed at Anna Regina, Essequibo.

Three scholarships for teachers, two for science degrees and one for the Diploma in Education, tenable at the University College of the West Indies, will again be offered. The question of teacher training for science teachers at the University College of the West Indies will be pursued.

In the sphere of University education, the Government will continue its contributions to the University College and the exhibitions tenable thereat. It

is also intended to continue with the loans scheme to enable deserving students to pursue higher education subject to their returning to serve in this country.

I will now pass on to the field of communications and works and deal first with the roads programme.

Actual construction is scheduled to begin in 1960 on the new road from Parika to a point opposite Bartica. Coupled with this, reconstruction of the Bartica-Potaro Road is to continue, as well as survey and design work on the route for the extension of this road to the Rupununi District.

With regard to the transport services the Demerara ferry service is to be further improved by reconstruction the terminals at Georgetown and Vreed-en-Hoop. The reconstruction of these terminals will mark a new phase in the history of the Colony's ferry services, as the heaviest commercial vehicles will be able to pass over the terminals and across the river without delay or exceptional arrangements having to be made. The Berbice ferry will also be substantially improved when the sister ship to the *Makouria*, which is being built in Georgetown, is put into operation about the middle of 1960.

A new light-ship and pilot station are to be built and improvements are to be provided in the navigation aids for ocean-going ships approaching the Colony's low-lying sea-board.

One of the main events for 1960 will be the inauguration of the new Central Automatic Telephone Exchange together with a number of rural automatic exchanges. In New Amsterdam a start is to be made on the construction of a new automatic telephone exchange. In the meantime, steps are being taken to improve the trunk telephone service between Georgetown and New Amsterdam by means of radio installation.

Dealing now with Natural Resources, the Government will continue

to give priority to the development of land both in the coastal and on riverain areas that is presently not beneficially occupied, and for its allocation on lease to farmers. The terms and conditions for leases of Crown and Colony lands generally as well as on the existing Land Settlements should be finalised early in the new year.

The Development Programme provides for the purchase, development and allocation of extensive riverain areas. Some of the lands in these areas will be acquired under the provisions of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959.

Legislation to provide security of tenure for farmers on lands other than on rice lands and also improved security for tenants on rice lands provided under the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance, 1956, will be introduced in 1960.

The main works of the Boerasirie Extension Project have been completed, and, with the extension of sea and river defences, flood control will be provided for the entire coastal area between the Essequibo and Demerara River. Facilities for the drainage and irrigation of this area have been provided, and development must now follow for approximately 40,000 acres of land that has not yet been beneficially occupied.

On the Black Bush Polder Scheme, very good progress has been made, and drainage and irrigation works for the Lesbeholden Settlement Area have been completed. Similar works for the other settlement areas should be finished in 1960.

In the Tapakuma Area, the Consulting Engineers' investigational work is virtually complete, and their final project report is expected very shortly. The Consultants have been authorised to take steps towards inviting tenders for the construction works, and it is hoped to secure tenders not only from companies in the United Kingdom, but from

others in the United States of America and Europe. Benefits for some 35,000 acres of land will be assured under the scheme.

Investigational work by the Department of Drainage and Irrigation proceeds in the Mahaica/Berbice area. The Department has a team of engineers and surveyors devoted solely to this work, which is being planned to provide flood control, drainage and irrigation for this large coastal area. In view of this, and of the other major schemes, it is proposed to introduce suitable legislation for the administration and control of these areas.

The approved Development Programme includes an ambitious and far-reaching programme for work for the Departments of Agriculture and Land Development. The completion of the Central Agricultural Station at Mon Repos will enable research to be carried out on problems relating to the coastal and riverain areas. The Department of Agriculture will continue its programme for the improvement of the rice industry and for the diversification of agriculture throughout the country. A new programme for the education of farmers will be undertaken in 1960 in order that they should improve agricultural techniques and practices and cooperate to benefit adequately from drainage and irrigation works.

The Land Development Department will concentrate on the projects listed in the Development Programme and it is proposed to "move out" of some of the existing Land Settlements in 1960.

The Government intends that Land Registration should be put into effect early in the new year. The Land Registry Ordinance was enacted in August, 1959, to establish a new system of conveyancing alongside the transport system. In addition, there will be legal machinery to enable declarations of title to be given quickly and cheaply to people who have no clear title at present but who can establish that nobody

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owns the land they occupy. It is intended that the first Land Registration area will be created on the West Bank, Demerara River, upstream of Wales, where the titles to much of the land are in confusion. When these are cleared and land not held under transport is registered, development of the area will be greatly facilitated.

Turning now to Health, the keynote of the health programme in 1960 and throughout the five-year development period will be the prevention and control of disease, and an increased emphasis on public health activities. These will include malaria eradication from certain areas of the interior, a national filaria control programme, and research work on typhoid jointly sponsored by the United Kingdom Government and the World Health Organisation. Work will also be concentrated on continuing the anti-polio campaign which began this month. In addition there will be an environmental sanitation programme with emphasis on the control of refuse, meat slaughtering, encouragement to build improved latrines, health education, sanitary engineering and improved child and maternal care through a network of Health Centres and Clinics. The work on the twenty-four Health Centres scheduled for 1959 continues in 1960.

Three cottage hospitals will come into operation during 1960 at Mahaicony, Leguan and Leonora. The Lethem Hospital and the Suddie Hospital will be extended and improved. That at Suddie will have an additional wing to accommodate maternity cases, a labour room and nursery.

A housing settlement for discharged patients of the Mahaica Hospital, started in 1959, will get into full swing in 1960. Work on the new out-patient wing at the New Amsterdam Hospital and a new wing to the Central Medical Laboratory, Public Hospital, Georgetown, is to commence in 1960. It is also proposed that the Children's Convalescent Home should

be altered to accommodate crippled children.

An accelerated pure water supply programme will be continued next year in the three counties of British Guiana.

As regards Housing, the five year Development Programme envisages up to 2,000 houses to be built by Government. In the early part of 1960 it is anticipated that self-help housing units will start building in East La Penitence, and later in the year it is hoped that a beginning will be made to constructing rental and hire-purchase houses. Preparation of 96 lots of land at Sparendam will continue into 1960, and allocation of lots should take place in the first quarter of the year.

I now wish to turn to the Interior, where measures to promote the development of agricultural activities, the improvement of water supplies, sanitation and housing standards, and an elementary system of Local Government in the remote Amerindian Districts, will be continued. Construction of an airstrip at Kamarang River mouth in the Upper Mazaruni District, and improvement of another at Karasabal in the Rupununi District for use by cargo-carrying aircraft, should be completed in 1960.

It is proposed to improve and extend existing roads and construct new roads in the Upper Mazaruni and Rupununi districts. It is also intended to undertake road construction and agricultural development in some 700 acres within the North West Amerindian District. The Training Programme started in 1956, with the assistance of the International Co-operation Administration of the United States of America, has equipped many Amerindians as carpenter/woodworkers, seamstresses, etc. Training Courses are being continued, and in working on the new projects in their areas Amerindians will be further trained to take their places with other groups in the development of British Guiana.

I am afraid, Sir, I have spoken for a long time, but in keeping with British Parliamentary practice, I wished to outline the policy and programme that my Government has in mind for the ensuing year. The ramifications of Government are considerable, and whilst I have tried to be as brief as possible, I hope I have shown the incredible amount of work in which the Government, through its departments and agencies, is immediately and energetically engaged. I have however kept as far away as possible from figures, as presentation of the budget is for the Honourable Financial Secretary and not for myself.

Sir, I feel I cannot let this occasion pass without making reference to the strike by the Federation of Unions of Government Employees. I am indeed unhappy that the relationships of this Government with those who represent the Government services have been so unsatisfactory; but with God's guidance I hope this estrangement will soon be repaired and relationships restored so that future discussions can take place with each side having confidence and trust in the other, and resort to strike action becomes unnecessary. Within its financial resources any good Government would wish to be a fair employer, and I feel sure I am expressing the voice of this Government by saying that it is its wish to see that its employees are well treated, so that they may be neither envied nor pitied by the public. The Christmas season is one of "Peace on Earth and goodwill to all men". I have also heard it said the other way round "Peace on Earth to men of goodwill". And recent days have shown us the importance of having "men of goodwill" both from Government and its employees.

Before I close, Sir, I feel all would wish to join me in expressing our regret that we had to lose Sir Patrick Renison. He was, I know, extremely sorry that he was denied the opportunity of being able to say goodbye in the way he would have wished to the many friends that he had

made during his stay in British Guiana. And in one week's time we shall be greeting our new Governor, Sir Ralph Grey. He will, I have no doubt, be received in the traditional Guianese way, but perhaps I may be forgiven if I say no one will be happier to see him than myself. Judging from the warmth and friendliness that I have received from all sides since my arrival in this country, I feel I may also be permitted to say that I know he will be very happy here, and that he can count on receiving support from all quarters.

The year 1960 should be a year of remembrance, and we are indeed fortunate that so soon after the New Year we shall be graciously honoured by a visit from Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal. She will come as no stranger to us, and we shall all do our best to see that her stay is a happy and memorable one. This visit, I feel, is a pleasant augury to a year that, from many standpoints, is not likely to be easy.

I now declare open the Third Session of this Legislature, and pray for the guidance of Almighty God in the work which lies before us.

REPLY TO HIS EXCELLENCY'S ADDRESS

Mr. Kendall: Your Excellency, it is my pleasant duty as Senior Member of this Council, to say thanks to you on behalf of the entire Legislative Council for the interesting Address you have just delivered. This is the first time, Sir, you have had the opportunity to speak to the peoples of British Guiana on an occasion such as this. Notwithstanding the grave problems facing the Colony at the moment, I sincerely trust that you will remain long enough in British Guiana to assist not only in the execution of the Development Programme by your Government, but also to ease the tension which at the moment is crippling the economy of this country. Members of the Council would wish that you give the necessary instructions that your Speech be printed and laid.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

His Excellency nodded assent and, accompanied by the Speaker, withdrew from the Chamber, while the sitting was suspended.

RESUMPTION AND ADJOURNMENT

The sitting was resumed shortly after when Mr. Speaker returned to the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker : Hon. Members, this Council is adjourned to a date to be fixed. I shall be grateful if Members and invitees will remain in the Chamber in order to enable His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government and Mrs. Hedges, with the reception party, to leave unimpeded.

Council was adjourned to a date to be fixed.