

2019

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

2020

(Constituted under the British Guiana
(Constitution) (Temporary Provisions)
Order in Council, 1953)

TUESDAY, 15TH MARCH, 1955

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

His Honour the Speaker,—Sir Eus-
tace Gordon Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C.

Ex-Officio Members:—

The Hon. the Chief Secretary,
Mr. F. D. Jakeway, O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney General,
Mr. F. W. Holder, C.M.G., Q.C.

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,
Mr. W. O. Fraser, O.B.E.

Nominated Members of Executive Council:—

The Hon. Sir Frank McDavid
C.M.G., C.B.E. (Member for Agricul-
ture, Forests, Lands and Mines).

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Mem-
ber for Labour, Health and Housing).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (Mem-
ber for Communications and Works).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.
(Member for Local Government, Social
Welfare and Co-operative Develop-
ment).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie.

The Hon. R. C. Tello.

Deputy Speaker:—

Mr. W. J. Raatgever, C.B.E.

Nominated Officials:—

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

Nominated Unofficials:—

Mr. T. Lee—on leave.

Mr. W. A. Phang

Mr. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.

Mr. C. A. Carter

Mr. E. F. Correia—on leave.

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb—on leave.

Mr. H. Rahaman

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Lt. Col. E. J. Haywood, M.B.E., T.D,
—on leave.

Mr. R. B. Jailal

Mr. Sugrim Singh

Clerk of the Legislature —

Mr. I. Crum Ewing

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature—

Mr. E. V. Viapree (Ag.)

Absent

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj.

Dr. H. A. Fraser

The Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, 11th March, 1955, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: I am glad to see the hon. Member, Mr. Correia, back, and hope he has had a successful trip abroad.

Mr. Correia: Thank you, Sir. I did enjoy my holiday.

Mr. Speaker: I have to announce that the hon. Member, Dr. Fraser, has asked to be excused from attending to-day's meeting.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

The Financial Secretary: I beg to lay on the table:

Report of the Trade Commissioner in the United Kingdom for the British West Indies, British Guiana and British Honduras for the period 1st July, 1954, to 31st December, 1954.

Sir Frank McDavid (Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines): I beg to lay on the table:

The Annual Report and Financial Statement of the East Demerara Water Conservancy Board for the year ended 31st December, 1954.

ORDER OF THE DAY

SUMMARY JURISDICTION (APPEALS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

"An Ordinance further to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Appeals) Ordinance."

The Attorney-General: With the leave of the Council I ask that consideration of this Bill be deferred. I think it would be better for the Council to continue the debate on Federation.

Agreed to.

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance further to amend the Drainage and Irrigation Ordinance, 1949."

Sir Frank McDavid: I too ask that consideration of this Bill be deferred.

Agreed to.

BILLS DEFERRED

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development): I also ask that items 3, 4 and 5 on the Order Paper be deferred. I refer to the following Bills:

The Georgetown Town Council (Amendment No. 2) Bill.

The Criminal Law (Offences) (Amendment) Bill.

The Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed to.

BRITISH CARIBBEAN FEDERATION

Council resumed the debate on the following motion by the Rev. Mr. Bobb:

"That this Council, having noted the steps which are being taken by other Caribbean Governments and by Her Majesty's Government towards the creation of a British Caribbean Federation, and the statement of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Parliament to the effect that the constitutional instruments will provide that British Guiana and other territories which might care to do so will be quite free to join the Federation, is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined.

This Council further prays His Excellency the Governor to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding towards the setting up of the

Federation, and to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation."

Mr. Speaker: The hon Mr. Sugrim Singh had not concluded his speech when the Council adjourned last Friday.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Not at all, Sir. I am indeed very sorry to have to tax the attention and the patience of this Council in this debate, but I am quite sure that even the staunch and fanatic federationists in this Council will agree with me that in view of the complexity of the subject there is some justification for any trespass on their time. Quite often I have been interrupted justifiably, but on a few occasions unjustifiably. That has, to some extent, interfered with the sequence of things, but I start this afternoon from the point at which I left off to give way to the hon. Mr. Gajraj who had to leave the Colony the following day.

At that point I was discussing the question: why the small islands want to federate? I have already given this Council the figures showing the density of population in some of the West Indian islands, particularly Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. I also reminded the Council of the stand which Barbados took at the London Conference, making sure that the question of migration and movement of population was put on the Exclusive List under the sole jurisdiction of the Federal Government. I also drew the deduction that the object of the stand taken by Barbados was to make sure that in the proposed Federation she would be provided an opportunity to solve one of her most difficult problems — to find congenial

avenues for accommodation of her growing population.

I move on now to another reason why the small Islands would like to federate, and here, Sir, I come to the question of natural resources. There is no doubt that this Colony, going into the Federation with its present economic set-up, would easily be the dumping ground for the produce of the small Islands — their manufactured goods whatever they may be. Sir, I desire to refer you to the Report of the Customs Union which has just been circulated, at paragraph 16. I am developing the point.

Sir Frank McDavid: May I ask what report is that?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The Report of the Commission on the Establishment of a Customs Union in the British Caribbean area. I refer to paragraph 16. The point I am developing at the moment is to show that in this proposed Caribbean Federation, in which there must be free trade and free movement of population, and in which must be observed what is known and referred to as the reciprocity of trade, we find from this Report that if any unit of the proposed Federation can manufacture or produce a certain commodity in a more modern and organised way, and in substantially larger quantities than any other Unit of the Federation, the smaller will have to stand down in favour of the larger. What would happen to our small industries which are now coming up, and so many of which have received help and support from Government? Has this Council considered the implications of Federation? Would not this in practice stifle growth, put an end to enterprise, and eventually lead to monopoly in which we would be veritably the market for the exports of other units in the Federation?

Sir Frank McDavid: We would still produce rum in British Guiana, whatever happens.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I live in a world of reality and not one of dreams. Here is an example. In British Guiana we have a little industry which is growing up, which Government is helping, and which employs quite a number of people. It is producing an article comparable with the imported one. I refer to the shirt-making industry. What would happen to this industry? Before I make my point I would like to read this paragraph from the Customs Union Report :

"In the early stages of a custom union, however, it might be necessary to afford a certain amount of protection to selected local industries by restricting the importation of the like kind of goods from other parts of the free trade area, but care would have to be exercised to ensure that industries were not being artificially kept alive against the interests of the consumer or the real interests of local economies....."

There is only one interpretation of that. We have a shirt industry. In Trinidad there is a \$3 million shirt factory in the heart of the place. I refer to the Jung Bahadur Singh's shirt factory. The Elite shirt factory, a colossal get-together They are manufacturing very good shirts. They have a bigger production and I am even prepared to say a better organization. In this Colony we have a few enterprising people who have started the same industry. If this Colony were to federate, we would have to face this position. They would say "You are manufacturing shirts and we are also manufacturing shirts, but look at the size of our machinery; we can supply the whole of the West Indies." What would be the result? Our shirt industry which Government is encouraging would at once go six feet deep, throwing so many people out of

employment and killing local initiative. *Ad infinitum*, I may go on to refer to several other minor industries which, if this Colony goes into the Federation, would be affected by this Report of the Customs Union Commission. We would have to give up all these small industries which are just starting up, and make room for the more organized and more financially strong companies doing the same things in other areas. That takes us to the logical question: what have we got in this Colony in which no other unit of this proposed Federation can outmatch us and beat us?

I will refer, Sir, to rice, though we have several other resources, such as hauxite and several untapped resources in this Colony of which we cannot take any notice. Actually what have we got that the West Indies, even if they intend to take up the attitude "We will try", cannot outmatch us? The only solitary case as far as I see is rice. Look at the figures. I wish to refer to the figures in respect of the export of rice to the West Indian Islands for the year 1954. This Colony exported to Antigua 2,768,572 lbs. of rice valued at \$275,894; to Barbados 15,920,982 lbs. valued at \$1,680,613; to Dominica 1,052,890 lbs. valued at \$110,839; to Grenada 2,563,030 lbs. valued at \$264,550; to Jamaica 20,334,312 lbs. valued at \$2,614,459; to Montserrat 264,100 lbs. valued at \$27,486, to St. Kitts and Nevis 2,755,204 lbs. valued at \$290,594; to St. Lucia 1,806,160 lbs., valued at \$181,442; to St. Vincent 1,852,520 lbs. valued at \$191,034, and to Trinidad 32,592,152 lbs. valued at \$3,597,324. The total in dollars of our rice exported to the West Indian Islands is \$9,254,235 for 81,914,922 lbs. of rice.

Let us look at the opposite side. As against these exports we have as imports from them cement, margarine,

tianed fruits and almost every conceivable thing. There is no Federation yet, and right now we get all these items. I was in Trinidad last year and I moved around some of the people who mattered. I learnt that Trinidad is reluctant to extend our rice contract with them for any length of time. I say it with authority that actually Trinidad has started planting rice and is prepared to produce rice for their own consumption, even if it costs over and above the price at which they get rice from this Colony.

Sir Frank McDavid : That is why we should federate.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I appreciate refreshing interruptions by the hon. Member for Agriculture. Unless I hear his voice I feel that what I say is like water falling on a duck's back. We can never hope to have small industries in a Federation with these Caribbean Islands. I have tried to the best of my ability, with whatever figures I have been able to muster to show that in this proposed Federation this Colony would be the dumping ground of the manufactured goods of these Caribbean Islands, and now I move on to the question of population.

I referred to Jamaica and made the point that out of sheer principle the United Kingdom Government could not introduce Immigration Laws to deprive the Jamaicans of the privilege of going to the United Kingdom, as they are children of the Empire going home to roost. I am now asking this Council to look at the amendment moved in the Trinidad Legislature which clears the atmosphere beyond any reasonable doubt. Why has not the Colonial Office made an effort to bring British Honduras into this proposed

Federation? What of Grenada and Bermuda? British Honduras has also decided to keep out of it. Absolutely no word is said about them. Why must attention be focused on British Guiana? Does it not seem that there is something in British Guiana which is very necessary to this proposed Federation?

The Attorney-General: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but he is stating something about the Colonial Office seeking to impose Federation on this Colony, or something tantamount to that. The hon. Member has no justification at all for making that statement.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The hon. the Attorney General is unusually sensitive. By no logical deduction can it be said that I am conveying the impression that the Administration or the Colonial Office wants to force Federation. What I do say—and, remember, this motion calls for a re-examination of our position — is that no effort has been made to get British Honduras to do this, or otherwise.

Mr. Correia: I must point this out to the hon. Member. Only a few weeks ago I was in the House of Commons listening to the debates, and the question was asked as to what steps the Government was taking to get British Guiana and British Honduras to join in the Federation.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The hon Member is supporting my point. In the House of Commons they were asking what steps were being taken to include us.

The Attorney General: It seems to me a lamentable lack of appreciation on the hon. Member's part, that the fact that a question was asked in the House of Commons does not imply

[The Attorney General]

that the Colonial Office is forcing Federation on this Colony. The action which has been taken has been taken by the hon. Member, Mr. Bobb, and I do not know that the hon. Member has told this Council that he was inspired in his action by the Colonial Office or anybody.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I do confess a weakness—the inability to understand bad logic.

The Attorney General : How did the hon. Member know it was bad logic?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I insist that there is bad logic in the Attorney General's reasoning. The hon. Member, Mr. Bobb, has moved a motion which calls for re-examination, while there is no effort from any source to weaken British Honduras in its stand of non-intervention and of not desiring to come into this Federation.

I shall not be moved from making my point. Let me illustrate it by referring to paragraph 4 of the amendment moved in the Trinidad Legislative Council, and which appears in column 507 of the *Hansard*:

“That every effort be made to include British Guiana in the federation (but by democratic process, i.e., by the expressed wish of the people either through elected representatives or by plebiscite) so that the economic resources and land space of British Guiana be also available to the federated nation, and British Guiana be enabled to take its place at an early date in a democratic system;”

That is their interest, if the Attorney General wants to know. What other conclusion can we draw?

Sir Frank McDavid: I do not know if the hon. Member realizes it,

but that motion was never accepted by the Legislature.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I know that, Sir, but it does show the trend of political thought in an important Legislature like that of Trinidad. That is what they want of this country—space, and nothing more. This country is going to be the dumping ground in this Federation. Where are they going to put their surplus population? Are they going to put them on the Blue Mountains — on Mount St. Benedict? Are they going to ask them to swim in the Pitch Lake? I repeat: they want space.

I know that the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, an ex-pedagogue of some reputation, will support me in this. A slight look at any geography book showing the West Indies will indicate that the West Indies are divided into three parts: the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles and the Lesser Antilles. Why have they not asked the Bahamas and Bermuda to come into the Federation? Has this Council considered that at any time? Mr. Speaker, your knowledge of the Caribbean is better than mine. It is not that those countries are financially strong and they do not agree to associate with any small islands? As a matter of fact there exists in Bermuda a situation which is difficult even for West Indians, and even a distinguished son of Guiana has suffered as a result of the conservative and narrow outlook of the people of that area. After I have seen something with my own eyes, should I use a torch to find it?

I ask Members of this Council to have faith in British Guiana. We have lost faith in this country when we are preparing to sell it to the West Indies. Right here we have talked about our colossal Development Pro-

gramme costing \$66 million, according to the Report of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and \$44 million is actually being used. In this Chamber we have had Ministers telling us of their outstanding problems and their schemes for the development of this country. Industries are taking shape and a search is actually being made to see if oil can be discovered in commercial quantities. Take away oil and asphalt from Trinidad and see what will happen to the economy of that country. Have we considered the value of the exports of oil and asphalt from Trinidad? To all those who advocate Federation, all this may appear to be without merit, but they have lost faith in this Colony.

We have not yet been able, with all the talk about development, to absorb the unemployed of this country. My friend, the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, should stand up and give the unemployment statistics to this Council, even though statistics are misleading.

Mr. Lee: My friend, the hon. Member, is quite right. There is no proper record yet.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: If you register at the Employment Exchange and you do not re-register the next month, you are out of business. This country has had to pass labour laws and appoint a special prosecutor to see that people carry out the labour laws. Trinidad has no labour laws.

Mr. Cummings: I do not know what authority the hon. Member has for that statement. He must be accurate in what he says, Sir.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: There is no special prosecutor assigned in Trinidad as there is in this country. My point is that it is because of the growing

list of cases in which it is claimed that people are not fair to their employees, and also because there are people all over the place who want to work.—Nevertheless, I challenge anyone to say that there are people who are willing to work for smaller wages than they should get because there is so much unemployment. Would it be in the interest of the working class if we should join this Federation? No, the ranks of the unemployed would be swollen, and that would result in a chain of evils. My friend said that the Credit Corporation will develop and would help the situation. I agree. But should not the people who have suffered be given some consideration, now that there is something coming up? The indigenous population must be given some consideration. Where will some of them go — to the Alms House? Take a walk up Brickdam and see how many of them are there already — thousands of them taking their walks in the sunshine.

Mr. Farnum: There are no thousands at the Alms House.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: But there are several charitable homes in the Colony, like the Dharm Shala, which function apart from the Alms House, and in all there are thousands living in them.

My point is : is it fair to over-step the local population who have suffered in British Guiana, depressed over many years? Would Government be acting in the interest of the working class of this Colony?

I say without fear of contradiction that we would not get the best type of people under an immigration system. I would not like to discuss individual colonies, but I do not want it to be said that I am making sweeping statements without backing them up.

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

But when a country wants to get rid of its excess population, the country at the receiving end does not get the best people. You get people who are unemployed, and what would that mean? I admit that we cannot live in isolation, but with our future outlook and high incidence of unemployment, we should not allow others to come from outside and overstep our people. There are quite a few responsible persons—servants of this Government—who have come from the West Indies and are distinguishing themselves—pulling their weight and reflecting to some extent the intelligence of West Indians. I have absolutely nothing to complain about so far as that is concerned, but it must be realised that migration is proposed under this Federation. We have an example in the different types of people who are at present leaving Jamaica and going to England. The least said about that, however, the better.

This proposed Federation, as I see it, will result in increased taxation for the people of this Colony in keeping with the federal principle of helping the strong monopolies and squeezing out small industries. We must remember that 15 per cent of our Customs revenue, according to the proposals set out, would have to go to the Federal Government. Then there is the question of the cost of the Federation. These charges would certainly affect our economy and create a gap which we could not fill except for the hope that we have in our development schemes. There is no hope in the foreseeable future, however, that this gap will be closed.

I now move on to my next point. The Ranch Report, in paragraph 12 makes this point:

“The way to real political independence is, in short, through economic stability and solvency.....”

Later on, it says:

“If economic stability and financial solvency are the necessary foundations for political independence, any proposals for attaining the latter must be judged, among other things, by the extent to which they promote the former.....”

This Report enunciates the fact that the ultimate object of Colonies such as British Guiana, is to achieve independence within the British Commonwealth—what we call Dominion status. It makes out that if we proceed along the road mapped out for us in the Report—accepting Federation willy-nilly—we are going to arrive at the goal much earlier than if we follow a stricter set of things. This argument would have been convincing, however, if we were in Montserrat, St. Kitts and such other small islands. Let us look at the picture of those small islands. There is Antigua with an area of 180 sq. miles; St. Kitts—68 sq. miles; Nevis, 50 sq. miles; Anguilla, 35 sq. miles, Monserratt, 321 sq. miles; the Virgin Islands, 58 sq. miles; Grenada, 133 sq. miles; St. Lucia, 233 sq. miles; St. Vincent, 150 sq. miles; Dominica, 345 square miles, Barbados—166 sq. miles, Trinidad and Tobago—10,978 sq. miles. The total area of those islands is 12,469 sq. miles, while the area of British Guiana is 83,000 square miles. British Guiana is, therefore, nearly eight times the size of the B.W.I. islands put together, and 43 times the size of Trinidad.

The Attorney-General: May I ask the hon. Member if he would include Jamaica, which is also in the Federation?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I like to see the Attorney General happy, Sir, and I would point out that Jamaica has an area of 4,412 sq. miles. I have already stated that the other B.W.I. islands have an area of 12,469 sq. miles, and that British Guiana alone comprises

83,000 sq. miles, or nearly the size of England, Scotland and Wales together. That is the Colony we have here.

I think it is necessary for us to consider another economic factor, and that is the financial position of the Colony. I am not familiar with the figures in that respect, but I hope the Financial Secretary will state for the benefit of the Council the entire figures showing the financial position of British Guiana with respect to Federation. I do say, however, that this Colony is not in a bad way financially when compared with certain of the West Indian islands. Actually, I have still ringing in my ears some information from the Financial Secretary's office about some substantial reserves which we have to our credit in this Colony, and at that time we did not have a Development Programme. Now that we have a definite reserve with the Development Programme in full swing, we can say that the blue-print has been passed urging our Government into action.

With the dwindling financial resources of this Colony we are indeed in a bad way, since we owe money to the Colonial Office. I take the view, however, that our financial obligations, in a small way, strengthen the ties that exist between us and the other Colonies. When the Mother Country herself decides to give financial aid or succour to British Guiana, that decision itself is one of a great maternal obligation. If we are told that this Colony is not yet out of debt, there is no reason why one should come to the conclusion that we have not got our finances on a sound footing.

The Development Programme is going to have its consequences—it is surely going to bring revenue to this Colony—but in spite of that there will be much fault-finding from time to time if we have not got financial

stability. Let us get to the West Indian islands and compare the development there with the development that has taken place in this Colony. That is a very important point. If we look at par. 16 of the Rance Report we will find this:

“...Some of the units, particularly the smaller ones, have no evident prospect, as units, of moving very far from the margin of subsistence in public finance; and, while that is so, genuine independence must remain unrealised and its pursuit, an occupation doomed to failure and frustration.”

These small islands have reached the point of saturation so far as their finances are concerned.

Mr. Kendall: Will the hon. Member read further for the benefit of those Members who haven't got the Rance Report with them at the moment?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I will read further. The par. goes on:

“No one unit is large enough, or rich enough, to be able to maintain by itself the range of scientists and others to whom, as we have suggested above, the region must look for a real improvement in its productivity and economic stability. Further, all experience shows that on the basis of independent units, the joint action in external economic and related matters, which daily becomes more and more important, is rendered infinitely slow and difficult and consequently much less effective than it should be. There is much more to be said on this topic, but we do not consider it necessary to labour it, since we believe that it is perhaps one of the few on which there is fairly general unanimity. We are satisfied the region will not achieve economic stability while it consists of a large number of quite separate political units, and consequently that the hopes of such units of achieving real political independence, as such, are slight.”

It is a different thing when it comes to British Guiana. I shall relieve the anxiety of the federalists by referring again to Professor K. C.

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

Wheare, an authority on Federation, who on page 54 of his book says:

"It is not, however, a question merely of what resources are available throughout the communities as a whole. A great deal would depend on how those resources are divided between the general and regional governments when the federal union is established. It may well be provided that when a region desires independence in a federal union but lacks resources to make that independence real, after it has surrendered certain of its revenues for the maintenance of the general government, it should be guaranteed certain incomes from the resources of its wealthier neighbours."

This Government is leading the country into Federation, and this Colony and the West Indian Colonies which are financially strong would have to make good the national income of the small islands. I know that we are liberal and generous, but any generosity at the expense of this country would be false generosity if we have to make good the national income of the weaker units of the Federation. We cannot run away from the fact that in the Federation we might some day be called upon to assist our unfortunate brothers. I do not intend to draw a line between ourselves and the West Indies. We must be friendly; we must co-operate. There must be closer association but not political federation.

In the proposed federal union, from the time we hitch on to the Federation bandwagon, this Colony will have to look to the Federal Government to borrow money for us if we need any such help. We have been told in the Rance Report that the borrowing powers of the Federal Government will be based on its credit-worthiness. It has to establish that before it can get loans. Would the Federal Government give British Guiana the consideration it deserves in the face of the small

islands which have reached the stage of financial stagnation? Instead of being the captain we would be the crew of the boat. The hon. the Financial Secretary in his most lucid Budget Statement has given us a very glowing account of the potentialities of this country. We have bauxite, and right now the possibilities of oil are being explored in this country.

Mr. Correia: Prospecting for oil you should say.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: My friend has not lived long enough. Years ago oil was found in this country, but whether it exists in commercial quantities is another matter. In this country we also have columbite, tantalite, manganese, rice, timber and all sorts of potentialities. Are we to adopt a defeatist policy, with no faith in our resources, by hitching this country on to the West Indies?

Mr. Ramphal: Is that what the Financial Secretary said?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The hon. Member knows very well that the Financial Secretary said nothing of the sort. I appreciate interruption, but when it is to say something that has no sense I strongly object to it. I want every hon. Member to understand that every statement I make I am able to back up.

Mr. Ramphal: The hon. Member did not make it clear where his reference to the Financial Secretary's statement ended.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am waiting until certain hon. Members stand up to support Federation, because it is in the *Hansard* that three years ago they spoke fervently against it. I promise the Council that I shall not lose my equilibrium in spite of these interruptions. I invite the Council to con-

sider a commonsense question. I seriously ask Members to keep their minds open, and if I am wrong they can give the opposite view. We are going to have six seats in the Federal Government—

Sir Frank McDavid: We have no seats at all.

Mr. Lee: The proposed Constitution of the Federal Government is based on the Australian Constitution, therefore, on the basis of population we cannot get more than six seats.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: My point is that if we go into the Federation we would be given a number of seats; let us call it "X". It may be 15 or 25, but so far as I am concerned it may even be 50; it does not matter. The point is that those seats will be voted for on the basis of universal adult suffrage. I challenge any Member to deny that. Having agreed with me up to that point, let us look at the picture of British Guiana. If we go to the polls on the basis of universal adult suffrage in the foreseeable future (It has been decided that this Interim Government should continue for four years—marking time) say in four years' time, we are going to have subversive people put into that Federal Government. That is what I expected the hon. mover to deal with. If we are satisfied that there has been a change of heart in this country to the extent that our people will not put subversive people back again, then there is justification for abolishing this Interim Government and going back to the polls. But we have had the hon. Mr. Gajraj squirting political catch-phrases which mean absolutely nothing.

I live in this country and have travelled about it. I am satisfied that if we join the Federation we would in effect be giving those very people whom

we want to keep out of this Chamber promotion, as it were, from the House of Commons to the House of Lords. They are going to go into the Federal Government. I may tell hon. Members that this point is also exercising the minds of the Trinidad legislators. The question has been asked in their Legislature: "Suppose we bring British Guiana in?" and they actually mentioned the names of Jagan and Burnham in the debate. It is recorded in their *Hansard*. They say:

"Suppose the British Guiana electorate in its wisdom decides to put such people back into its Legislature and they come into the Federal Government, what shall we do? The answer is: we shall boycott them and go on, on our own."

The point sticks out a mile that British Guiana cannot afford to throw in its lot in this experiment, for, after all, it is just an experiment. I make this point and I would be very grateful if the protagonists of Federation would answer it: What will be the position of this Colony when those seats, whatever they may be, have to be chosen on universal adult suffrage by the people? I am asking this Council to approach the subject with an open mind.

Sir Frank McDavid: What is the point—must we keep our subversives at home?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I do not suggest that, but I am saying that if we go back to the polls tomorrow those people are going to storm this Council again. Conditions have not yet changed, although they are on the verge of changing. I face realities. The people of this Colony are wrong in taking that stand, but a fact is a fact. It is my considered opinion, and I am saying it without fear of contradiction—I can wager my life on it—that if we went to the polls today those people would be returned. If you take that argument, is it not patently clear, is it not fully

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

logical that the whole of British Guiana would have to vote?

Mr. Kendall (*sotto voce*): This is a Federal Government for the future.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I have not heard the hon. Member for Communications and Works for a while. It is very refreshing to hear him. At page 2 of the Annual Report on British Guiana for 1958 what do we find? Look at these figures. There were 208,939 voters throughout the whole of British Guiana. I know I am carrying coal to Newcastle. Those were the voters registered on the 23rd of April, 1955.

Sir Frank McDavid: That is subject to correction.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am correct. Of an electoral roll of 208,939 voters 156,236 voted; that is 74.8 per cent of the voters registered who actually cast their votes. There were 3,950, or 2.6 per cent of the total number of voters, whose votes were rejected, and 152,231 or 72.8 per cent. of the votes which were actually counted. The P.P.P. got 77,694 votes. That is 51 per cent of the votes cast. 51,504 votes went to independent candidates like myself and the hon. Member, Rev. Mr. Bobb. What do we see from the figures of the last elections? We had the P.P.P. with its colony-wide majority. If there was strength in any particular locality by the other contestants it would make a difference, but we have this colony-wide majority by that party.

Sir Frank McDavid: Where does the hon. Member get the idea that the electoral procedure for the Federal Parliament would permanently be colony-wide and not subject to sub-division? Where does he get that information?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I wish to refer the hon. Member to *Dacey*. No one is going to move me off my feet. The mechanism of the Rance Report has set out a certain number of seats. The basis of election will have to be universal adult suffrage, and I challenge anyone to deny that. My point is that under universal adult suffrage this country is going to open its door to those people who have not the interest of the Colony at heart and who have placed us in this precarious position, would get promotion from the local Legislature to the Federal Government with the members of the other units. They would accomplish that as they actually control the electorate.

Sir Frank McDavid: Just to get that point clear! On page 9 of the Plan for the British Caribbean Federation—the White Paper issued in April, 1953,—it says quite clearly that each unit or territory to which more than one seat has been allocated should be empowered by legislation, after consultation with the unit's Legislature, to divide the unit into as many constituencies as there are seats to be filled. It therefore follows that the election would not be colony-wide but would be by sub-division.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The hon. Member has missed my point. From the time we accept the Federal Government each unit sends representatives to it. My point is, that there must be universal adult suffrage to elect those representatives. Can the hon. Member show me anywhere in the Rance Report, or in the Constitution of Australia, the pattern which he is talking about? Nowhere in the Constitution of the U.S.A. or of Canada is there any other means than universal adult suffrage.

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. Member allow me to intervene? I think what he intends to convey is this. There

are three or more ways of ascertaining the wishes of the electorate. One is by having a general election in which Federation will be made a definite issue. I have no doubt that if you have a general election you cannot possibly escape the conviction as to what the result would be. The other way is by plebiscite, and the third possibility is, as has been suggested, by the appointment of a Commission. What the hon. Member wishes to say is that whatever happens the whole community would be invited to give their opinion so far as the Colony's participation in the Federal Government is concerned, and that would be decided on their votes. But as the hon. Member has pointed out, if and when this Colony becomes a member of the Federation, the basis of representation is what is pointed out in the Order in Council. I think what the hon. Member means is that in order to achieve whatever our position would be in the Federal Government, it would still be the decision of the people. That is what he means.

I would suggest to the hon. Member not to bother to go into the basis of representation on the Federal Government. Some indication may have been given, but it may not be final. I do not think anyone knows the number of seats. It may be greater or lesser. What, I think, is the greater problem is the question of participation. Let us get on with this particular motion. I suggest to the hon. Member that there will always be divided opinion on that.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I must say that I have great regard for Your Honour's knowledge of Constitutional Law and Practice, and I do accept from you the point that in a representative Government, where persons are elected and the question of Federation has been made an election issue, those representatives who are returned are competent to decide on the question of Federation. I bow entirely to that.

As regards the question of a Commission my difficulty has been that in all the Federal Constitutions within the Commonwealth — there are four as I think South Rhodesia has just come in — the representatives have not been chosen on the basis of a Commission. There is no precedent for it. If you permit me I would cite Dicey, an authority which cannot be challenged, and K. C. Wheare. There is no provision anywhere of any Commission, however representative it may be, however wide it may take the views of the people. It is a complex subject. I do not wish to convey the impression that I am averse to being told something, but my difficulty is that nowhere have I seen, either in the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Swiss Federation, or the North American Federation, any representation in the Federal Legislature being determined on the basis of a Commission.

Mr. Speaker: That may be so, and I have been careful to say that it is possible that that would be one of the means of ascertaining the wishes of this particular community. You may call it a Committee or a Commission, but you cannot rule out the possibility of that course being adopted, whether it is constitutionally correct or not.

The Attorney General: I think Your Honour and the hon. Member are at cross purposes. Your Honour is at the first hurdle and the hon. Member is at the third. Your point is the question of the first hurdle, the terms of the motion asserting for the purpose of supporting the motion of the hon. Member these alternatives. The hon. Member has gone further than that—two hurdles beyond that. He is dealing with the method of electing persons who are to go into the Federal Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: What the hon. Member is pointing out are the dangers that may accrue from this motion—what the composition of the Federal Government might be.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I appreciate the hon. the Attorney General's difficulty. He is a bit involved. I am open to be advised and instructed as to where in the British Commonwealth there has been such a Federation. As you know, there are two types of Federation. One is the type that has selected subjects given to the Federal Government, as in Australia, but in Canada there is the other type where the residue goes to the Federal Government and the selected subjects go to the individual autonomous units. Where in either of these types of Federal Constitution is there any election to the Federal Government on the basis of any Commission?

My next question is: why is there all this haste, all this time spent in trying to reopen this issue, when in 1952 this matter was discussed and decided? We have been told that the door is open for us to join whenever we desire. Why this sudden outburst of Federation fever? I cannot really understand this sudden change. This point should be interesting to those who feel that if we miss this opportunity we shall be "missing the bus"—we shall be kept out forever afterwards and we shall suffer by not entering into this great Utopia that is going to be set up through Federation. They go on further and refer to Australia; how New South Wales kept out and what it had to do to get back in; they refer to Canada and they tell us that when the Federation of the Canadian Provinces was mooted Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick kept out, and what they had to do afterwards to

get in? We have arguments of that kind. But the position in this Colony is different. I would like someone who has actually visited those countries to assist this Council by making a clear statement on the geographical contiguity and propinquity of the units of those areas—

Mr. Speaker : They are contiguous States or Governments.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Very well Sir. You can drive a car or use a railway to go from one coast to the other in those areas. But what is the position here? We are 1,500 miles from Kingston, Jamaica. Barbados is 1,950 miles from Belize. It is easier to go to the United Kingdom today than it is to go to Jamaica, I respectfully submit to this Council.

Assuming even that the position at the moment in this country seems gloomy, we must satisfy ourselves that we know all the circumstances for and against Federation, and that if we join this Federation we are doing so for the benefit of the people and not according to the wishes of any influential group or individual. We must remember that the "door has been left open" for British Guiana to join at any time. But even if British Guiana decides to remain out of the Federation, such a decision will not hamper the country's chances of securing complete independence within the Commonwealth. I have made this point, and perhaps I have repeated it *ad nauseam*. New South Wales, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia did not spoil their chances. Newfoundland went into the Dominion of Canada as late as 1949.

The Rance Report makes out that Dominion status is shorter. I venture to think the road is longer. If it

is the view of the Rance Report that financial solvency is the basis for federation, then I respectfully wish to urge that at the moment, blessed as we are with finances we would quicker reach financial solvency and economic stability than within the Federation — taking into consideration our natural resources and our development programmes. The units will be called upon *pro rata* to finance the Federation until it reaches a stage of economic independence when it would be suitable for the granting of Dominion status to be discussed.

The issue is now simply this: would we reach financial stability quicker if we join this Federation in which we would have our borrowing power from the Federal Government, and in which we would have to bear the burden of the Colonies, than if we remain on our own? I appeal to this Council to consider it. If our ultimate aim is Dominion status then I am of the unshaken view that this Colony will quicker qualify to be endowed with that great constitutional privilege while on her own and "steering her own canoe" than in Federation, in which she has nothing to gain.

Now, I wish to pose the question: what has this Colony to gain from Federation? It is a "\$64 question" being asked by everybody. We are being asked to surrender lock, stock and barrel, shall I call it — sovereignty as an autonomous Government.

Mr. Ramphal rose—

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I will relieve my friend the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, by saying that Professor C.E.M. Joad based the whole federal system on the sovereignty of the federal units.

Mr. Ramphal: I do not wish to deny what Professor Joad has written, but the hon. Member said in effect that British Guiana is an autonomous state, and I am denying that.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The function of any unit Government within a Caribbean Federation will fall into two classes, the first of which will be to legislate in the interest of its own indigenous population, on matters such as income tax, marriage laws, etc. Then it has to legislate on matters concerning the whole area, such as defence. Defence is something which will concern not only our indigenous population but our neighbours, and therefore our neighbours must have a say in it. That is where the federal principle comes in, as Professor Joad argues. Since problems like West Indian shipping services concern everyone, over and above the indigenous populations, each unit must have a say, and that is why there is an Exclusive Legislative List appearing in the Rance Report. That is why there are 19 legislative functions for the central Government of the Federation, and 40 for the indigenous Governments, and if the indigenous or autonomous Government should clash with the Federal Government, as you know Sir, where equity and law meet, equity prevails, —the Federal Government prevails.

Mr. Ramphal: How is the Federal Government going to affect only the indigenous people of this Colony, sir? The only indigenous people here are the Aboriginal Indians.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: If the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, misunderstands me, I do not intend to join issue with him. I am using the word "indigenous" according to the meaning in the Oxford Concise Dictionary, and I challenge him to find that it means "American." It means the local people. I am not concerned with any creolese interpretation of the English language. This is a British Legislative Council.

Mr. Cummings: I must object to that sort of thing. The hon. Member got up and asked the sense in which he used the word.

Mr. Lee: Are these interruptions on a point of correction?

Mr. Ramphal rose.

Mr. Speaker : Order, order!

Mr. Ramphal : I wished to say there is no dishonour whatever in my being considered a creole.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal interrupted Mr. Sugrim Singh to say that in his opinion the word "indigenous" meant the Amerindians of the Colony, and Mr. Sugrim Singh said in effect, "this is not so—I got my definition from the Oxford Dictionary". It is a matter of opinion, and he went on to say he was free to interpret the word in his own way. That is all.

Mr. Ramphal: I wanted it to be very clear to this Council that if the hon. Member used the word in its wider sense of being born in the Colony —

Mr. Speaker: He used it in his own way: the sense in which he interprets the expression.

Mr. Ramphal: I do appreciate that he was using it in Mr. Singh's own way, and I just wanted to clear it up.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I was not using it in my own way. I was using it in accordance with the Oxford Concise Dictionary.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said so.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: In the Oxford Concise Dictionary it does not mean Aboriginal Indians.

Mr. Speaker : Have you got the Dictionary here?

Mr. Sugrim Singh : No Sir, but I am pretty certain, and my friend can satisfy you on this: that some historians have referred to the Aboriginal Indians as the first settlers in the Colony, and as being the indigenous population. But it does not alter the fact that even if they are right, I intended to include Aborigines and everyone else living in this Colony.

I have been disturbed, and the sequence of my argument has been interrupted. I make allowances for others to intervene and interrupt all the time. I must say that the question of the interpretation of the word "indigenous" is no justification for disturbing a speaker in this Council.

Mr. Ramphal: I rose because it is a most important point as to whether Federation is going to affect a small number of the people or the Colony as a whole.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Taking it from what I have said — in its context and not in its intrinsic sense — the word "indigenous" would mean the entire population of British Guiana. I never mentioned anything about any Carib, but I will move on. I have rubbed shoulders with the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, for a long time, and I think the hon. Member's views have been given publicity over the Government Information Services—also known as the B.P.I.—but not a single thing was mentioned of any opposite view. Federation, as I have said, is a very difficult subject. I myself am just a layman so far as that is concerned, and even authorities like

Professor Wheare and other qualified people admit that Federation is not an easy subject. In a Colony like British Guiana where there is a high standard of illiteracy, I do want people to appreciate the fact. What we do want is a decision by the people. All the authorities, including Lord Halifax, tell us that you cannot have Federation of any kind unless it comes from the people themselves.

The Speaker: I think the best authority is Dicey on the "Law of the Constitution," and I suggest that you will find his views on the question very well put.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: That is clear. All the authorities, beginning from Professor Joad admit that this Federal Government is going to control. Today the actual thing is at work in the U.S.A. Is the Federal Parliament subordinate to any autonomous unit? That is the pattern—in the U.S.A. What seems to be happening in Trinidad is that the Federal Government wants to control, but Trinidad wants to control the questions of immigration, emigration and deportation. The Trinidad Press was willing to throw in its weight. According to the Rance Report the Federal Government prevails. You can get all the things you need in an individual autonomous Government without joining a Federation, especially if you live in a community where a Federal Government can come along and say: "We have so and so" or "We will do so and so", and their view would prevail. What are we to get in this Federation?

I have used a telescope and a magnifying glass to try to see what this Colony would get from Federation, except providing a dumping ground for the unemployed population of the West Indies, or providing nearby and more lucrative markets for their products—the pro-

ducts of the small islands. We would like to hear arguments showing that people with money would come here, take up lands and develop the country in various ways. All that we have been hearing is: "British Guiana will miss the bus—British Guiana will miss a great opportunity" and so on, but I would like to hear some real argument to show what benefits this Colony would derive from Federation.

I have already explained that Trinidad—one of our neighbours with an area of 1,900 square miles—has been referred to as stating (in amendment No. 3) in effect that "We agree to Federation, but you must not come into our orchard which is laden with grapes. Until you have planted your orchard you have no right to come into ours and spoil this smiling 'Land of the Humming Bird'". That is the effect of the words used by the Hon. Mr. Quevedo of Trinidad. On page 570 of the *Hansard* report of the Trinidad Legislature, dated Friday, December 10, 1954, he goes further and says:

"I can envisage, Sir, a Federation of the British West Indies, but although I might be charged with being insular — I am unrepentant about this — I still subscribe to the elegy of Sir Walter Scott:

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my own, my native land."

Then we have the hon. Member saying:

"I will be happy to see a federation with Trinidad—land of nativity and not captivity."

Sir Frank McDavid: Why doesn't the hon. Member go on? He should not take portions out of their context like that.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I do not like these interruptions. I am saying that the remarks made by the hon. Member (Mr. Quevedo) in the Trinidad Legislature go to show what was the trend of thought in that island.

Mr. Speaker: Isn't that gentleman a member of the Popular Party in Trinidad?

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I cannot remember, Sir. I think the hon. Member for Labour was in Trinidad recently and may be able to tell us whether that is so.

Mr. Speaker: You see, there is a Party in Trinidad known as the Popular Party.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I was proceeding to show that in Trinidad, although the Legislature, as such, by a majority vote threw out the amendment asking for a ten-year limit in regard to immigration restrictions, the principal thing is movement of the population, and this is borne out by the fact that the very Conference now going on in Trinidad is considering it. That is the bone of contention when it comes to Trinidad. Trinidad does not want to open its doors. Trinidadians argue that standards of living are higher in Trinidad than in Jamaica and they do not want anyone else to come into Trinidad. I move on.

Rev. Mr. Bobb : Before the speaker moves on I would like him to refresh this Council by telling us what it is an amendment of. He promised in the course of his speech to tell us. He has not up to now quoted the motion, but he has been referring to the amendment. Would he be kind enough to tell us and quote the motion in full?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I think the hon. Member will appreciate that I was trying to save time. I have been speaking for a long time, and I have regard for the hon. Members who would also like to take part in the debate. I will read the motion, but I should not like the hon. Member to labour his request because, after hon. Members have listened to the opposition in this Council I am expect-

ing a political metamorphosis, even from the mover. Our case is not one of sentiment but of reason.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member read the original motion?

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I will read from column 494 of the *Hansard*. The Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce (Hon. A. Gomes) moved the following Resolution :

"Whereas this Council has recorded its opinion that the shortest path towards a real political independence for the British peoples of the region within the framework of the British Commonwealth is by way of a political federation:

And whereas this Council has expressed itself as anxious that a sound and workable Federation be established at the earliest possible date;

Be it resolved

That this Council accepts the proposals in the Plan for a British Caribbean Federation agreed by the London Conference in April, 1953 (Cmd 8895) subject to the following modifications :

- (a) that since there are reasonable doubts whether unrestricted freedom of movement could be introduced without detriment to some Islands, this Council welcomes the proposals of the Barbados House of Assembly for a conference on immigration with a view to reaching the greatest measure of agreement on measures designed to protect the position of Islands which may be so affected.
- (b) that since there have been reservations about the site of the capital, the difficulty should be resolved by leaving the site of the permanent capital to be settled by the Federal Government as is contemplated by paragraph 6 (u) of the London Conference Plan (Cmd 8895) and in the meantime the temporary capital should be sited anywhere agreed upon within the region; and
- (c) that since the need to consider constitutional reform in the units will arise from time to time, adherence to these proposals should not impede the introduction of new or modified constitutions."

That was the substantive motion moved by the Hon. Albert Gomes.

To that motion the hon. R. Kumar—I think he is the Member for Caroni North—moved an amendment, beginning from column 505 of the *Hansard*. The amendment is as follows:

“That this House agrees to a political federation of the British West Indies along the general lines agreed on at the London conference subject to the following conditions:

- (1) That the British Government gives an irrevocable pledge in advance that it will, within five years of the proclamation of a federal constitution, set up the machinery of the federal government, and for this purpose contribute a sum of not less than £5 million to the initial cost, and during this initial five years will guide the people's representatives in the federal government towards self-government and gradually transfer authority to them, and after this period of 5 years will grant full self-government to the federated British West Indies as a Dominion within the British Commonwealth as soon as a resolution to this effect is passed by a simple majority in the elected chamber of the Federal Parliament;
- (2) That during this initial period of five years, the British Government with an expenditure of not less than £50 million from the British exchequer, will carry out economic development schemes in the economically backward colonies previously neglected, in order to create more employment for the people of those colonies in their own colony and thus reduce their need for emigration;
- (3) That while it is recognised that federation into a nation must essentially imply unrestricted migration by nationals over the whole territory, yet in existing economic conditions this ideal can only be gradually realised over a period of years, and therefore it be agreed in advance (in another conference if necessary) and be binding on all parties that immigration restrictions between the participating

colonies will be gradually relaxed over a period of 10 years, and during this time the British, federal and local governments will carry out works in Trinidad and other colonies by way of establishing new industries, extending existing industries, providing new agricultural areas, laying out housing settlements and building housing accommodation &c., to accommodate the influx of immigrants that is likely when immigration restrictions are relaxed, so that such immigrants will not endanger the livelihood, employment and living standards of the natives of the Colony to which they immigrate, and in general there will be enough suitable employment for all British West Indians somewhere in the British West Indies;

- (4) That every effort be made to include British Guiana in the federation (but by democratic process, i.e., by the expressed wish of the people either through elected representatives or by plebiscite) so that the economic resources and land space of British Guiana be also available to the federated nation, and British Guiana be enabled to take its place at an early date in a democratic system;
- (5) That the capital seat of the federal government be determined by the federal parliament when it meets, but meanwhile due to lack of communication facilities and accommodation in Grenada, Trinidad offer its facilities to the federal government as a temporary initial capital;
- (6) That during the initial period of 5 years the federated nation be guided by a chief executive from the United Kingdom who is free from any local associations or antipathies developed during previous service in the Caribbean.”

That is the end of the amendment. Perhaps, Sir, to round off I should remind the hon. mover how the voting went. The question was put with respect to Conditions 2 and 3, the House divided and the Ayes were 8 while the Noes were 12. With respect to Condition

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4,—which is the one dealing with British Guiana—the House again divided and the voting was, Ayes 7 and Noes 13. Those are the particulars given in the *Hansard*.

Mr. Kendall: Excuse me, Sir, but is it possible for the hon. Member to give the names of those voting for and against?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I shall start at column 708, where it shows that the voting on Condition 1, calling for Dominion status for the federated West Indies after 5 years, was: Ayes—M. G. Sinanan, S. C. Maharaj, B. S. Maraj, A. E. James, P. W. McLean, T. U. B. Butler, Chanka Maharaj, R. Kumar (8), and Noes — N. W. Tang, C. G. Netto, A. Storey, H. A. Bennett, H. E. Robinson, A. P. T. James, V. Bryan, A. Gomes, L. C. Hannays, L. N. Blanche-Fraser, C. de L. Inniss, M. H. Dorman (12).

We move on to Conditions 2 and 3. I see the voting was again 8—12. The Ayes were M. G. Sinanan, S. C. Maharaj, P. S. Maraj, A. E. James, P. W. McLean, T. U. B. Butler, Chanka Maharaj, R. Kumar, and the Noes were N. W. Tang, C. G. Netto, A. Storey, H. A. Bennett, H. E. Robinson, A. P. T. James, V. Bryan, A. Gomes, L. C. Hannays, L. N. Blanche-Fraser, C. de L. Inniss, M. H. Dorman.

In respect of the voting on Conditions 4 and 5 I would say that so far as I see, the names go the same way all the time.

Mr. Kendall: Thank you.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The point I was developing was that, as mentioned in Trinidad, we are going to have a Federal Legislature consisting of repre-

sentatives of each individual unit of the Federation. There is no party system, but there is to be a Prime Minister who, according to the Rance Report, is supposed to select seven persons, leaving the Governor General to select one.

Mr. Speaker: The proposed Constitution is in that White Paper.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The question I ask this Council to consider is: what are British Guiana's chances of selection? I do not wish to be unkind to any famous West Indian politician, but I think it can be vouched that the hon. Albert Gomes is backed to be Prime Minister. We have in this country men of whom I, as a Guianese, am proud. There are men in this country qualified to hold their own among all the West Indian politicians put together. I do not wish to flatter you, Sir, but I am familiar with the part you have played in the constitutional development of this country. We have an outstanding son of Guiana, the hon. Sir Frank McDavid; we have other Members of this Council fully qualified to represent us, but I want to say we may not be given any place. They may hear our views and our contentions and give us one, but this business is going to be a monopoly. Our Colony will be in the humiliating position of having to surrender important items of income, and to call upon the people to make good that position, and from that point it will have to take orders.

I ask a hundred times: what have we to get from Federation? The protagonists of Federation are eloquently silent on this point. I am hoping to be convinced, not by meaningless political incantations, and not by any squirt of newspaper headlines. I want to hear argument. I am not satisfied to suck a bone—I want to see some meat

on it. I want the protagonists of Federation to stand here in this Council and tell us what we are going to get from Federation.

The mover has said that this issue of Federation is next in importance to the constitutional crisis. In my view it is more important than the crisis, for while the crisis is transient and will only last for a period, the acceptance of Federation is something that will bind us for generations to come, and to extricate ourselves from it is another matter. I want to make it clear that I have the greatest regard for all my friends in the West Indies. I have sat in the House of Parliament with the hon. Mr. Bustamante and listened to the annual Colonial debate. I have met the Hon. Albert Gomes and every other Member of the Trinidad Legislature, and I have met Members of the Barbados Legislature. I do not want to convey the impression that I am sponsoring the opposition in order to throw a spanner into the works.

I have stood in this Interim Council and listened to the hon. mover, my erstwhile colleague, with whom I have often stood on the same platform, but I have not heard him mention anything about what we are going to get. I have applied a microscope to his speech and my efforts have proved futile. I have done the same in the case of the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, and the result is the same. We do not expect something to be put in writing. Customs Union is there and we will continue to have that, Federation or not. We will continue to have Unified Currency. There is also the question of whether technical officers who go to Trinidad and other parts of the West Indies will be available to this Colony. How many of them have not been?

Was that the benefit of Federation? We have a claim on the Colonial Office. We have a right to ask it for help, and it has not at any time refused that help. Has the Colonial Office said: "Since you have not indicated that you are going to join this Federation, we are not going to give you any financial or technical help?" Not the Colonial Office as I know it.

But that is the view that is being disseminated. People are saying, "Look how the Islands are moving on—let us join them." But we have to look at all the aspects of the matter, and I say that this Colony is going to eclipse in the not too distant future not only the Caribbean area but several other Colonies in the Colonial Empire. We have the land. Eighty-seven per cent. of the entire land space of the Colony's 83,000 square miles is not yet utilised. Of course, that very argument is going to be used against the opposition, and it is going to be said, "You cannot handle all this land and therefore you should not prevent others from doing so." I expect to hear that argument.

We have been tied down for a long time. Malaria has affected the health of our population, and we have had a Member of Parliament, Mr. Marquand, saying derisively that the rise in our population is due to the successful efforts of Dr. Giglioli to eradicate malaria from the Colony. Our birth-rate is rising, and if we look at the Report of the Registrar-General we will see to what extent. In another ten years we will have over a million people. Newfoundland gave its decision to join the Canadian Dominion when its population was 200,000, while in the case of New Zealand it was given its present status when its population stood at two million. Is it impossible, with our set-up, our population, our rising birth-rate, to attain self-government, even if we have to depend on

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many things from the outside world? We cannot live isolated from others, but we can have closer association and all the things we have had, without actually destroying all that we have done in this Interim Government, and yet not succumb to this move and join this Federation. We need population, but our own people are not at the moment all employed. You yourself, Sir, have been approached by persons holding the Senior Cambridge Certificate who ask for recommendations for employment. By the sweat of their brow workers have kept their children in school to qualify themselves, and at this crucial time when the children are looking for employment, they might have to play second fiddle and allow this country to be the dumping ground for other people wanting work.

The people of this country can certainly be divided into three classes: the aristocracy, the middle class and the working class. In the migration that necessarily follows Federation we are going to get immigrants. I do not want to be personal, but we have had immigrants from the West Indies on the sugar estates of this Colony who were given specific quarters, but they failed, and we had to send them back. The quarters erected for them still exist on some of our sugar estates. They cannot work in mud or muddy areas. They are not accustomed to it.

I am not prepared to discuss the whys and the wherefores at this moment. The point I want to make is that the settlers we are going to get from the West Indies would be of the type of people who are now trekking to England. The result is that they would become a burden on the Administration, because they would not

be skilled persons or technicians. We do not want unskilled labour in this Colony, since we have all we want in the form of general labour. We want technicians and others who would be able to form a strong chain in this development generally. We want experts and people who are going to assist this Colony — not people who are going to be a burden on the Administration. That is exactly the attitude of the Trinidad Government, and it is due to hard experience on their part. They have therefore made their immigration laws very rigid in order to control the movement of the population.

The next question I wish to pose in this Council is whether it is necessary at this time to bestow a Federal Government on the West Indies and lead them towards Dominion status—within 20 years we are told. The answer is that we should look at other nations within the Commonwealth and see what is happening. We would find that the burden of administering these far-flung Colonies of the Empire is not an easy one. We would also find that in all these Colonies Her Majesty's Government is gradually transferring power to the local Governments—at least, that is their endeavour. We have to ask: What room is there for Federation and development? We have the Bahamas—the first place referred to in the geography books as a West Indian island — but nobody troubles them. The Bahamas occupy an area of 4,375 square miles, while Jamaica is slightly larger—with 4,450 square miles. We find, however, that no effort has been made to bring the Bahamas into this mix-up. All the effort appears to be directed towards British Guiana, but I shall move on to another point.

The aim of all these units seeking Federation, as I have said, is independence within the British Commonwealth.

I think that is the one merging point that we must admit—that the aim is self-government within the Commonwealth, with what is known as Dominion status. That, I submit, is a legitimate aspiration, and is not confined to the Colonial Empire. The point is, however, what road shall we take? Should we walk an individual road and achieve our objective within a shorter space of time, or should we link up with the small islands and feel that that would enable us to reach our destination? There is no difference of opinion as regards our ultimate destination, but there is a difference of opinion as to the path we should follow in order to reach it.

My own view is that British Guiana will achieve Dominion status on a proper basis, quicker and more surely, if she proceeds individually. You cannot have a Dominion of St. Kitts or of Nevis with an area of 36 square miles. A good marathon runner would be able to run around any one of these islands in a matter of minutes if roads are available. British Guiana is the largest individual unit in this hemisphere, and both its resources and its size are in its favour. We have actual development schemes here, and I may add that I am very optimistic about them. They are going to open the bosom of this Colony and transform its hitherto unknown resources into things of great value.

Why are we planning all this development? I have been speaking to the hon. Member for Housing, and I know that he is striving to accommodate the indigenous population of the Colony in the face of many difficulties. One admires the way in which building operations are being pushed in various parts of the Colony, and also the fact that the Rent Restriction laws are still in operation and have been extended to places outside

Georgetown, including New Amsterdam and Bartica. Therefore, when we have this Federation we would be able to provide accommodation veritably the market for the exports of for people coming from the West Indies. Does the Member for Housing realise the tremendous amount of work which will face his Department? I am sure he does. Where are we going to put these people—in what part of the Colony are we going to house them? Would they, as it is said in Liverpool or London, form a pitiful picture and go down to the sea, or would they walk around the streets of Georgetown and swell the ranks of the unemployed, increasing crime and robberies at the same time?

It has been established by K.C. Wheare that Federation is a question which involves economics. He points out that:

"The units must possess sufficient economic resources to support both an independent general government and independent regional government. It is not enough that the general government should be able to finance itself; it is essential also that the regional governments should be able to do likewise. At the very outset, therefore, in considering whether federal government is appropriate, the question of adequate economic resources arises. If a general government is to be established and supported—and that is the first assumption of any union, federal or non-federal—will there be sufficient resources also to support independent regional governments? If there are not, then no matter how much states desire a federal union, and no matter whether a federal constitution is drawn up, in practice federal government will not be possible. Soon the regional governments will be unable to perform their functions or they will be able to perform them only at the price of financial dependence upon the general government, that is, at the price of financial unification.

"It was on economic grounds, among others, that federal union was rejected by the leaders in South Africa. They

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

thought that the financial resources of the country would be unduly taxed if they were required to support not only a general government but also independent regional governments. For federalism is expensive and it is always a question whether the independence it gives is worth the price that must be paid for it."

No unit that has not got reserves to keep two Governments—its own autonomous Government and the Federal Government—is qualified to join a Federation. That, in effect, would be a burden and a millstone around its neck, and that of every other unit of the Federation.

In the West Indies there is a vast divergence of opinion as to the situation—common sentiment, intercolonial outlook, and even race and religion. Can it be said that British Guiana has the geographical contiguity and propinquity as compared with the other federated governments known within the Commonwealth? Take Jamaica, for example. After the question of communication was gone into for nearly 100 years, a West Indian Shipping Service has been developed. For this we are paying \$4,800 annually, but our good friends in the proposed Caribbean Federation have not condescended to let the ship pay a call to the Port of Georgetown. I live in a world of realities and I will call a spade a spade. This Government cannot exist on goodwill; goodwill has been responsible for the backwardness of British Guiana. There are many here who are starving while thousands of dollars are being spent on the ship by British Guiana in order to keep our good name with the West Indian Islands. I would like to see the ship come here if only to get a cruise on it on the Demerara River.

There are many problems in the British Caribbean including the racial

one. There are at least six races in the Caribbean and about 28,000 East Indians in Jamaica. Of course, there is no such problem in St. Vincent or Nevis, for instance. Trinidad is loyal to Her Majesty but certain traditions, like the Carnival, with its Spanish background, still adhere. By no federal law can it be hoped to eradicate the traditions of the people—particularly in Trinidad and British Guiana. Time and time alone can perhaps do that.

I regret that I may have exceeded my time and taxed the patience of hon. Members. I may have raised issues in speaking, but I have deliberately done so to hear the sentiments of the opposite side. My mind is still open and I am prepared to listen to argument.

The point I was just trying to make is that the ultimate aim in the Caribbean and British Guiana is to have one nation. I am saying that no federal laws can change the religious and cultural institutions of the people who reside in these territories. They are protected by the Human Rights Charter of the United Nations. Why then is a Federal Government expected to bring about the change? Time, I repeat, is the only factor to make a change. There is, however, a sociological axiom—wherever there is a heterogeneous population, mixed marriages, or miscegenation are inevitable. That may not sound palatable to fanatical racialists, but it is inevitable. The Robertson Commission's Report has bemoaned the fact that there has not been a sufficient leavening of the population to bring about the one nation that is desirable.

I wish to refer to the case of England where it is said that there is truly no pure Englishman to be found now.

In England there are mosques and temples and Jewish synagogues. They are all in existence in London. How could the desired aim be brought about by legislation—by a federal plan—and if Federation came about, would Trinidad give up its carnival?

Sir Frank McDavid : Why should it?

Mr. Speaker: Do hon. Members desire to continue the debate today?

Sir Frank McDavid: I suggest that Mr. Sugrim Singh be allowed to complete his address.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I am afraid that I am far from being finished.

Mr. Raatgever: It is desirable that we get through the debate as early as possible.

Mr. Speaker: I adjourn Council to 2.00 p.m. tomorrow.