LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

WEDNESDAY, 17TH APRIL, 1957

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

His Honour the Speaker,
Sir Eustace Gordon Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C.

Ex-Officio Members:

The Hon. the Chief Secretary, **Mr. F. D. Jakeway, C.M.G., O.B.E.**

The Hon. the Attorney General, **Mr. A. M. I. Austin.**

The Hon. the Financial Secretary, **Mr. F. W. Essex.**

Nominated Members of Executive Council:

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

The Hon. **P. A. Cummings** (Member for Labour, Health and Housing).

The Hon. **W. O. R. Kendall** (Member for Communications and Works).

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

The Hon. **R. C. Tello.**

Nominated Unofficials:

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

Mr. C. A. Carter.

Mr. E. F. Correia.

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb.

Mr. H. Rahaman.

Miss Gertie H. Collins.

Dr. H. A. Fraser.

Mr. R. B. Jailal.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.

Clerk of the Legislature:

Mr. I. Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature:

Mr. E. V. Viapree.

Absent:

The Hon. **R. B. Gajraj.**

Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

Mr. T. Lee—on leave.

Mr. W. A. Phang—on leave.

Mrs. Esther E. Dey—on leave.

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.—on leave.

The Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 11th April, 1957, as printed and circulated were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LEAVE TO MEMBERS

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Lord is unable to be here today but he expects to re-

[Mr. Speaker]

sume attendance after the Easter recess. Mrs. Dey has also asked to be excused from today's meeting.

PAPERS LAID

The Financial Secretary (Mr. Essex): I beg to lay on the table, the

Report of the Regional Economic Committee of the British West Indies, British Guiana and British Honduras for the period July, 1954 to December, 1955.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EAST DEMERARA WATER CONSERVANCY (AMENDMENT) BILL

Sir Frank McDavid (Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines): I beg to give notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled.

"An Ordinance to amend the East Demerara Water Conservancy Ordinance."

ORDER OF THE DAY

BILLS—FIRST READING

The following Bill was read the first time:

EAST DEMERARA WATER CONSERVANCY (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled:
"An Ordinance to amend the East Demerara Water Conservancy Ordinance".

MONEYLENDERS BILL

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

"An Ordinance to consolidate and amend the law relating to moneylenders."

clause by clause.

Sir Frank McDavid: I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

The Financial Secretary: When the Bill was left in Committee at the last sitting there were one or two points left outstanding. One related to the retrospective effect of the new Ordinance if and when it comes into force, and the other to a person having to get a certificate although he is already registered under the existing Ordinance. The first amendment listed on the paper circulated deals with the latter.

One other point of difficulty was in connection with the issuing of an auditor's certificate. Several Members spoke on this, as to what would happen in the case of a new moneylender who has not got books to be audited for the 12 months ending the previous 30th September. An even more difficult point was that raised by another Member: how can we expect a moneylender to keep his books in accordance with an Ordinance with which he is not aware and if he cannot, how can he be properly constituted as a moneylender under the new Ordinance?

Well, the new clause 26, which is also on the paper, covers both of those points: a person who has not had books for the 12 months ending on the 30th September, and also the case of the moneylender who has books but they are not yet in accordance with the new law and therefore cannot be called a properly qualified moneylender. I think we can say now that these amendments have been circulated that they also cover the position of a moneylender who takes out or wishes to take out a licence

though he has not been in the moneylending business for a period of 12 months ending on the 30th September.

At the moment the moneylenders fee as prescribed in section 29, Cap. 298, the Tax Ordinance, is $150. The proposed new clause 28 is to ensure that the licence issued under this Moneylenders Ordinance embraces both. This also prescribes $150 as the duty for an annual moneylenders licence, instead of having to take out a licence. This means that the moneylender who has a licence for the year 1957 should not have to take out another licence when this law comes into effect—and one assumes it will be promulgated to take effect later this year.

I now ask that clause 3 be recommitted for the purpose of amendment.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause recommitted. —*Licences to be taken out by moneylenders.*

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move the amendment of this clause by the insertion of a new subclause (4) as follows:

"(4) The provisions of subsection (1) of this section shall not, until the 1st January, 1958, apply to any moneylender who, at the time of the coming into force of this Ordinance, is registered as a moneylender under the provisions of the Moneylenders Ordinance and who has taken out a licence under the provisions of section 29 of the Tax Ordinance for the period of twelve months or less ending on the 31st December, 1957."

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 3 passed as amended.

Clause 26. — *Audit of moneylenders' books.*

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move the substitution of a new clause 26. The first subclause is fairly easy. The question was raised that there was no reason why an auditor qualified under the Companies Ordinance had to be appointed by the District Commissioner. The only difference between this first subclause and that passed last week is that we have substituted for the words in the last line, "or approved in that behalf by the district commissioner" the words, "or is a person approved for the purpose by the district commissioner."

Mr. Carter: I moved an amendment last week to retain subclause (4) of clause 26. The amendments proposed by the mover delete this most important subclause, which sets out the penalty for a moneylender not keeping his books. Under the old Ordinance he must keep books and have them audited.

Now the moneylender will not be able to apply for a licence covering a succeeding year unless he already has a certificate—not only that, a certificate in his favour. A certificate may be given but it may be one accompanied by a very adverse report on his book-keeping for the year. But as I see it, it must be made compulsory for him to have his books audited and submitted. As it is, if he is not disposed to do so he need not apply for a moneylenders licence for the next year, especially if he knows he has broken the laws. So I would like us to compel that he gets his books audited whether he is going to continue as a moneylender for the succeeding year or not. That is the only way of knowing whether he is committing a breach of the Ordinance —by submitting his audited books.

[Mr. Carter]

The Financial Secretary: In the printed Bill we have supplanted subclause (3) of clause 26 which merely says that a moneylender shall transmit an auditor's certificate to the District Commissioner. For that we are substituting a new subclause (3) which provides that a moneylender cannot get a licence unless he produces an auditor's certificate. That is a very much stronger provision. There is difficulty in applying a penalty in respect of the original subclause (1) which provided that every moneylender shall each year have his books audited by an approved auditor. As far as I can see it would be difficult to discover whether a moneylender has had his books audited, so that the new subclause (3) simply provides that he would not be able to get a licence unless he produced an auditor's certificate.

Mr. Carter: In that case the hon. the Financial Secretary is saying that if a moneylender does not submit an auditor's certificate he would not get a licence. He does not care whether he has broken all the laws.

The Financial Secretary: Subclause (4) of the printed Bill, which the hon. Member wishes to reintroduce, only prescribes a penalty.

Mr. Carter: Yes, it provides a penalty of $5 for every day on which a moneylender fails to comply with the provisions of subclauses (1) and (3) of the printed Bill.

The Attorney General: The really important point is that a moneylender must keep his books in the prescribed form, and there is a penalty laid down for that, not actually day by day, but if he is found not keeping books he can be prosecuted under subclause (5) of clause 17. That is the important point; he has to keep books. On the question about their being audited, one can only say whether they are kept properly when they are submitted to audit, and if they are found not to be kept in accordance with the requirements of the Ordinance the moneylender loses his licence, or does not have it renewed.

It does not seem to be a very important requirement that an audit should be done within so many days, because the moneylender is going to be caught all right, and whether he is caught today, or in a week or a month's time does not really seem to matter. If subclause (4) remained in the Bill it might never be used, because it would be very difficult to apply, and even if it were found that a moneylender had not submitted his accounts for audit within the 12 months it would not be discovered for some time, and it is very difficult to impose a fine for an offence of this nature which was committed a long time ago. It is a procedural offence rather than one which is criminal.

The Chairman: The Attorney General's opinion is against your contention, Mr. Carter. Do you still wish to pursue the point?

Mr. Carter: No, Sir. It is a Government Bill and I am in favour of it. If Government feels that a penalty is not necessary. I do not see why I should press it.

New clause 26 agreed to.

New clause 28.—*Substitution of section* 29, *Cap.* 298.

The Financial Secretary: I move the recommittal of clause 28 in order

to substitute the following new clause 28, with consequential renumbering of clauses 28 and 29 in the printed Bill:

"28. The following section shall be substituted for section 29 of the Tax Ordinance:—

"The duty for an annual moneylender's licence under the provisions of section 3 of the Moneylenders Ordinance shall be the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars."

New clause 28 agreed to.

Clauses 28 and 29 re-numbered as clauses 29 and 30 respectively.

First and Second Schedules passed as printed.

Title and enacting clause passed as printed.

Council resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Where there have been several amendments the third reading of a Bill should be deferred.

The Financial Secretary: If it is the wish of the Council I would like to move the third reading now. We have taken very considerable care in drafting the amendments, and I should be prepared to take a chance.

Mr. Speaker: If there is no objection to the third reading I am prepared to put the question "That the Bill be now read a third time and passed."

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ACQUISITION OF LAND (LAND SETTLEMENT) BILL

Council resumed the debate on the motion for the second reading of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to repeal and re-enact the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance."

Mr. Speaker: I have received notice from Mr. Jailal and Dr. Fraser of their intention to speak on the motion for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. Jailal: Mr. Sugrim Singh has asked me to be good enough to concede first place to him.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am indeed very grateful to my hon. friends, Mr. Jailal and Dr. Fraser, for allowing me the opportunity to speak first on this Bill. At last, after a year, this much discussed bit of legislation, the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Bill, is before this Council. I must oppose this Bill, and I trust that when the proper time comes, after hon. Members have made their contributions to the debate and have heard both sides, they will unhesitatingly throw out this Bill which, instead of solving the burning problem of the day—land for the landless — would ultimately result in bringing about what I would describe as a state of insecurity among the very category of people whom it ostensibly seeks to help, apart from the bitterness it would cause to people who, by their thrift and application, have acquired lands in this country.

When it is brought home to us forcibly that 90 per cent. of the area of British Guiana, which is 83,000 square miles — and roughly 74,700 square miles are still Crown Lands, and only 10 per cent. is privately-owned land—we cannot be in favour of this Bill. I wish to refer to the Report of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. At page 206 it says:

"Ownership of freehold land in the Colony began with the Dutch before 1803,

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

and was later extended by the British Government. Originally the Dutch rights affected 607 square miles and the British rights, from 1831 onward, 347 square miles. All this land is found in the coastal belt and along the banks of the lower reaches of the main navigable rivers. A great part of the old Dutch freeholdings have been abandoned or neglected. The present owners are not, for the most part, the heirs of the original owners.

Under the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance, (Chapter 172, as amended by the Crown Lands Amendment Ordinance of 1917) possession of any land which has been abandoned by the owner for eight years or more may be resumed by the Crown. This right of the Crown has never been used directly, but 206 square miles have been bought by the Colony. Besides this 'colony land' 90 per cent of the area of the Colony is the property of the Crown and can be alienated by the Government."

As I have said before, 90 per cent of the area of the Colony is Crown land. That land can be alienated by the Crown. When it is considered that we have the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance whereby the Government can resume and reclaim thousands of acres of fertile lands, which are described by the experts as being fertile and suitable for land settlement, it must strike anyone that this Bill is unwarranted, unjustified and an unnecessary encroachment on the proprietary rights of Guianese, as it places — what I will describe as —a serious limitation on land ownership in this Colony.

The hon. Mover of this Bill has, indeed, in his opening remarks, handled what I would describe as his "brief" well. He has given us an exhaustive dissertation on Government's agricultural policy, and brought his Land Acquisition Bill into that policy. He must be complimented for presenting the case in favour of this Bill. I have looked at the argument he has advanced from every conceivable angle. I have examined the references made to accepted reports which the hon. Mover has used to support his arguments in favour of this Bill, and I must confess that I have failed to see any justification, any necessity for this legislation to be placed on our Statute Books.

Indeed, I want to say at the beginning, that we all agree and we must face facts, that at the moment undoubtedly, there is a necessity for lands. There is a necessity for lands, not only for land settlement but there is a necessity for lands for housing. But, the point I wish to make is, has Government exhausted all efforts to resume and reclaim its own fertile and suitable lands where Government would not have to spend a penny to secure its lands? Has Government failed in its negotiations even with landlords to secure such lands? We have on record, only recently Cane Grove was bought by this Government, as a result of negotiations, for $60,000. We have got Mara purchased from the landlords. We have got the Garden of Eden also obtained by negotiations. Has Government in the face of the existence of a Land Resumption Ordinance done anything to reclaim lands for land settlement? I would like the hon. Mover when he replies to the motion to assist us since the resumption of this Crown Land Ordinance—

Sir Frank McDavid: May I ask the hon. Member to inform me and the Council precisely what he is referring to — what are the conditions under which the Crown can resume land. It is important. Members are entitled to know what are those conditions.

The Chairman: The chapter is 176.

Sir Frank McDavid: I know the chapter is 176.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance, chapter 176, says, if it can be established that these lands are not beneficially occupied for eight years, the Crown has got a right to enter in the procedure outlined—

Sir Frank McDavid: As I have read it, it says:

> "When any land in the Colony which has been or is hereafter alienated by or on behalf of the Crown appears to the Commisioner to have been abandoned by the owner, thereof for eight years or upwards, and the owner, or anyone lawfully claiming under him, cannot be ascertained, not withstanding every reasonably diligent inquiry made by the Commissioner, he may . . :"

put up a notice or do certain things. The Ordinance further goes on to say, if the lawful owner fails to claim within six months the land will then be resumed by the Crown. I do not want hon. Members to think that mere abandonment is a ground for reacquisition as the lawful owner has the right to claim. Furthermore, the Commissioner of Lands and Mines has to make diligent inquiry to find the owner before the land can be reclaimed.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: The hon. Mover of this motion has gone on to explain in detail the question of resumption of Crown Lands which can only be made after diligent efforts have been made to ascertain if there is any successor in title. That is the point. I would like the hon. Mover in his reply to give this Council some idea as to if any effort had been made to reclaim land. Am I to understand that throughout the length and breadth of this country, due to successors not being available, that this whole big project has been left idle and thousands of acres of land left abandoned? I certainly cannot believe it.

I want to say from this Council and I want to make it perfectly clear —as a matter of fact I want to say that there is a necessity for land for small farmers for land settlement schemes and for housing, as I have explained before, and it must not be understood that I am championing the cause of any landlord or trying to go against the just and honest demands of tenants. My point clear and simple is that at the moment there are large tracks of land belonging to the Government which the Government can take without any expense and make available very easily. Why, then, if that is so, should Government seek to put such a Bill as this on the Statute Books? Why should Government try to leave their own lands in the place of all the machinery I have spoken about in the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance? I want to say in every lease of land whether grazing or agricultural, various provisions in that lease are made where the Goverment has in some cases come in as a result of violations of conditions of the leases and resumed those lands. Looking at this Bill, I want to describe it firstly, as an unnecessary, unwarranted and unjustifiable measure which cannot solve the problem it seeks to solve. I would like to describe this Bill, secondly, as a flagrant encroachment on proprietary rights and landownership in this Colony which must result in destroying incentive and the spirit of enterprise which are so necessary in our Development Programme.

I want to describe this Bill, thirdly, as a measure which has no precedent in democratic countries—only in Russia and Communist China, where

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

such Bills were put on the Statute Books not to solve the question of productivity, but designed to bring about — it is a strong word but I speak as I feel — that type of Agrarian Revolution to produce a peasant revolutionary dictatorship over landlords. I would like to describe this Bill fourthly, as a Bill which is a complete departure from the recommendations from such outstanding reports as the Report of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and The Report of Land Problems by Mr. Frank Brown. Lastly, I wish to describe this Bill, as I hope to prove later, as one which seeks to implement the manifesto of the deposed Government, which was one calculated to liquidate and eliminate the landlord and satiate the land hunger of their fellow-travellers.

In vain the hon. Mover quoted from the Report of the International Bank, for sections he referred to were taken completely out of their context. Is there any necessity for this bit of legislation? Can we not achieve the very object of providing necessary lands without causing further bitterness? I ask this because if this Bill is placed on the Statute Books it will rebound on the very people we wish to set up on small holdings. We must not make fish of one and fowl of the other.

We all know of the evolution of land ownership in England. We can go right back to the feudal system in which large landlords had their respective complement of servants. The powers of the landlord were rated according to the number of servants he had and these servants were drafted as soldiers in time of war. From that time to now there have been revolutionary changes in land ownership. Credit for these changes has been claimed by the communist world. My research, however takes me back to times before the communists, to the French Revolution which among other things struck at the roots of the feudal system. Since that event there have been marked changes, not necessarily of landlords refusing to negotiate but willing to give up large tracts of land where, in the words of the mover of this motion, the interests of the community clashes, shall I say, with the interests of the landlord.

Landlords have been willing to co-operate. Years ago in this country sugar estates were willing to hand over large tracts of land at one single dollar per acre: the interests of the community were at stake. In India there is a movement which is making revolutionary changes in land ownership through what is called the "land gift" or *houdan* system—*hou* meaning land and *dan* meaning gift. Thousands of acres of land are now being donated by landlords to assist in relieving the land shortage in India.

Let me come back to British Guiana. The points which have been raised by the hon. Mover in support of this Bill are voluminous and it is impossible for me to deal with all of them in the time allowed me under the Standing Orders. I do hope, Sir, that in your usual way you will exercise your generosity, if I may so call it, and let me deal with those points which are very controversial. Let us look back into the history of this country. It is stated in para. 13 of the Report of the Land Tenure and Registration of Titles Committee, 1954-1955:

> "By the articles of capitulation signed by the Dutch and accepted by Great Britain in 1803, it was provided that 'the laws and usages of the Colony shall re-

main in force and be respected' and also that the inhabitants shall have the free enjoyment of their properties.' "

Those are two solemn promises of international importance.

This very matter of acquiring land which is not beneficially used came up in the Legislative Council in 1951 when the now deposed Leader of the House of Assembly (Dr. Jagan) moved a motion dealing specifically with sugar estate lands. I will refer to what the then Colonial Secretary (acting) said, but before doing so, I shall quote the motion itself:

"Whereas sugar estates control a total of 171,078 acres of land, 82,205 acres of which are freehold and 88,873 acres of which are leasehold at a yearly rental of $4,222.75 or less than 5 cents an acre;

And whereas only about 60,000 acres represent the area actually under cane cultivation, and about 20,000 acres the area being flood-fallowed or rested at any given time;

And whereas acreage tax returns indicate that much of the leased land held by sugar estates are not benefically occupied;

And whereas Guianese farmers have to pay as much as $7.20 per acre for Government lands at Cane Grove, Anna Regina, etc;

And whereas extra-nuclear houses are now being built on estate lands under leases with many objectionable features;

Be it resolved: that this Council recommend to Government that either the leases for lands not beneficially occupied be withdrawn or the rental be increased to a figure commensurate with the rate levied for other Government lands;

Be it further resolved: that this Council recommend that Government enter negotiations with the Sugar Producers' Association with the view of obtaining freehold title to estate-owned lands on which extra-nuclear houses are to be built in exchange for absolute grants of equivalent areas of land now leased."

The words "enter negotiations" there are important. The importance of freehold ownership was realized and the motion did not go as far as seeking proprietary rights. It sought negotiations to obtain acceptable freehold titles in exchange for front lands suitable for housing. There was no question of compulsion. Now the Colonial Secretary said, and I quote from *Hansard* of 5th July, 1951, col. 3427:

"As regards the second point" (that is the second resolve clause) "I am advised that a revision of the rental in this case would involve legislation, and it is, I submit, very doubtful whether we should introduce legislation to alter the conditions of a contract freely entered into. It would certainly not encourage confidence in the integrity of the Government."

Indeed it would be a flagrant breach of principle that the Government should be given the power to pounce down on land which people have acquired by the sweat of their brow, take it away from them and declare it a public work. I can find no better words than those of the Colonial Secretary when I say that this measure will certainly not encourage confidence in the integrity of the Government.

Let us have a look at the stages by which this encroachment on rights have come along. We had first the Acquisition of Lands for Public Purposes Ordinance, Cap. 179. The public said nothing about this as we felt it was not necessary to do so, but section 3 stated:

"The Governor in Council may, by order published in the Gazette, declare any railway, tramway, road, canal, dock, harbour work, polder, building, dam, sluice or drain, or any work, measure or undertaking of whatsoever description whether **ejusdem generis** with any of the foregoing or not, and whether constructed or to be constructed out of public funds or otherwise or by the Government or otherwise, to be public work and may alter or vary any order so made."

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

It is particularly to that section that the provisions of this Bill apply. As the mover made clear, compensation is to be given on market value. This is provided for in section 19 of the Ordinance, Cap. 179. Next we had the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, Cap. 180. Here the ambit, the jurisdiction of the law was extended. It was now not just a question of declaring any dam, trench, or railway a public work but, as section 2 of this latter Ordinance provided:

> "It shall be lawful for the Governor in Council, by order published in the Gazette under section 3 of the Acquisition of Lands for Public Purposes Ordinance, to declare any Government land settlement scheme to be a public work for the purposes of the aforesaid Ordinance and thereafter the provisions of that Ordinance shall, subject to the modifications herein after stated, apply in relation to the acquisition of any land required to give effect to the said scheme."

In effect, the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, No. 14 of 1943, Chapter 180, extended the ambit of the operation of the previous Ordinance, Chapter 179, to include even land settlement as a public work. In other words, Government had only to declare any area of land to be a public work and the provisions of the Ordinance applied. I respectfully submit that under the provisions of Chapter 179 the method of computing compensation was on the basis of the market value. Moving on to the Housing Ordinance, Chapter 182, we find that section 30 (1) says:

> "30 (1) Where land or buildings or any interest therein is or are acquired by the Central Authority compulsorily under this Ordinance, compensation shall be payable by the Central Authority, to the owner of such land or building or interest therein, and the compensation shall, subject to the provisions of this Ordinance, be assessed according to the provisions of the Acquisition of Lands for Puhlic Purposes Ordinance."

In other words we have this anachronism, this inconsistency of Government buying land for housing and paying the market value, and on the other hand acquiring land for land settlement, also at the market value under the Ordinance of 1943, while under this Bill it proposes to do so below the market value.

There has been a great deal of encroachment upon the proprietary rights of property in this country, and I must concede to the hon. Member that the compulsory acquisition of land under the Housing Ordinance was the most serious step towards the acquisition of private property. I wish to ask at this stage: where next are we going in the matter of acquiring private property? Are we going to nationalize property? Government owns 90 per cent. of the land in this Colony and has all the machinery to occupy it. In fact it has been recommended by all the experts that it should do so, but Government has turned its back completely on that and has turned its eagle eye on privately owned lands.

I have quoted those Ordinances to show that the question of compulsory acquisition of land started in a small way with dams and trenches and moved on to the acquisition of land for housing, all on the basis of the market value. But going still further to the compulsory acquisition of land for land settlement we find in this Bill on the question of compensation a basis of permutation and combination which makes no sense at all. In the debate of 1951 the motion by the deposed Minister sought to get Government to acquire sugar estate lands. I would ask hon. Members to read in the *Hansard* report of the 5th July, 1951, what Mr. Macnie had to say on the subject. A more convincing case could not have been made out, so convincing that it provoked their reply from the Colonial Secretary:

> "Finally, on the question of land availability there are, according to the Commissioner of Lands and Mines, some 50,000 acres of land in different parts of the Colony which are fairly easily accessible in the upper Berbice River and in Essequibo, which could be occupied if there was a very serious land hunger."

It may be said that this is 1957 — six years later — but I would ask hon. Members whether there has been a catastrophic change in the land situation. Apart from the fact that it has been made more acute as a result of the political climate in the country and the Development Programme, has there been any substantial fundamental change? Even with the aid of a microscope I cannot see why Government with all the machinery at its disposal and with all the land it owns, should turn the Nelson eye on such land. I may be told that Crown lands are not in areas which are fertile and suitable for land settlement. I may also be told that privately owned lands are to be found in areas which are considered fertile and suitable for occupation. Is Government seriously urging that that is the position when the International Bank Report and Mr. Frank Brown's Report have actually pinpointed certain areas in the Colony and given reasons why they suggest land settlement in those areas?

Mr. Speaker: If I may be allowed to say it, you have made reference to a certain debate which took place in this Chamber in 1951 on a motion moved by someone whom you have described as a "deposed Minister". I would remind you that in 1951 there was no Ministerial system at all in this Colony, therefore you should refer to the mover of that motion as Dr. Jagan, and in support of your contention the reply to the debate on that motion was contributed by the then Colonial Secretary, Mr. Gutch. The Government's opposition at that time to the motion of Dr. Jagan, then a private Member of the Council, does not help your argument. It was not a Government motion. I just thought I should remind you that it was in the days before 1953.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I appreciate Your Honour's intervention to chalk out the route very clearly. I only referred to that debate to make two points. I may be wrong, but we have all been accustomed to accept statements by the Chief Secretary as the words of the Government.

Mr. Speaker: .....Yes, he was the Government's spokesman of the day.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I also wanted to make the point that even then when land was required, there was no question of compulsory acquisition. What the motion called for was negotiation with the sugar producers to see how far they would consider acquiring title for the lands on which they were planting cane, and for which they were paying 30 cents per acre, and handing over their freehold land in exchange. I made those two references because in this Bill Government is turning its back and in effect destroying the contract which the then Colonial Secretary referred to. I say that if this Council should pass this Bill it would in effect be giving Government a free licence, putting a dangerous weapon in the hands of Government which, if a lawless Government chooses to use it, it could cripple this country's economy and future. I say "if a lawless Government", for indeed within our own time we have seen such a Government.

My friend, the hon. Mover of the Bill, has made heavy weather of the criticisms of the Bill which have appeared in the Press, but I wish to say that we have a right to put our arguments before this Council. I say that had legislation of this nature been on our Statute Book when the

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

deposed Government was in power the entire sugar estate lands would have gone with the wind. *Prima facie* it would appear that this Bill only strikes at landlords. On the contrary it would eventually affect the very people it is supposed to help.

I would like the hon. Mover of this motion to enlighten this Council as to the question of precedent within the Caribbean area and indeed in the Commonwealth countries where it had become necessary to have a Land Acquisition Bill of this type. We are only half a million in this country. We have less or around five persons to the square mile. Let us look at the other Caribbean countries and we see Barbados, for instance, with 1,494 persons to the square mile. Are there any privately owned estates in Barbados? Are there any persons in Barbados who by dint of work have acquired private property that the Government of that Colony, in the face of a *prima facie* and obviously patent state of congestion, has had the need to encroach upon those persons' rights in order to acquire private land for any public purpose? I hope the hon. Mover of the motion will relieve my anxiety.

Sir Frank McDavid: There is not a square inch of land in Barbados that is not beneficially occupied.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I still ask the hon. Member to relieve my anxiety. Can you find a precedent in the Caribbean Colonies to this incursion in British Guiana? It comes to this, that everything is possible in British Guiana, everything can happen in British Guiana. I do not propose to champion the cause of the landlords or their interests. The landlords are a lazy lot of people in British Guiana, as since this Bill has been brought forward not a single landlord has tried to find out what is happening. I am thinking principally of our having such a measure on the Statute Books of British Guiana and how it will work hardship on the people. In spite of the burning necessity for land only for land settlement, must I understand that in Barbados there are no estates? Does this Bill before this Council refer to anything beneficially occupied or to what may be described as the reasonable requirement of the landlord? That is all that is mentioned in the Bill, but what is more, in this Bill we find this amazing provision:

> "Before an order is made under section 3 of the Principal Ordinance and section 3 of this Ordinance the Governor, acting in his discretion may by notice published in the Gazette issue a Commission appointing two or more commissioners to determine by investigation whether or not, having regard to the reasonable requirements of the owner of the land in respect of which it is sought to make an order as aforesaid for utilization of the said land for agriculture, the said land should properly be acquired for a land settlement scheme . . ."

Land, from time immemorial, has been the wealth of nations. Of all wealth that anyone has, land comes first, and yet we find in a Bill for compulsory acquisition of land this Government through the Governor has power to acquire anybody's land. I wish to draw the attention not only of Members of this Council who can appreciate the effect of those words "reasonable requirements" in the Bill. A landlord may be dissatisfied with his assessment as to his reasonable requirement and he can make representation in the matter. Even in the Rent Restriction Ordinance a tenant paying two shillings a week, if dissatisfied, is provided with the right of appeal. But in this matter involving thousands of acres of land there is no such right. How can hon. Members of Council allow this bit of legislation to infiltrate on our Statute Books? I say again and I will say at all times that there is no necessity for

such a Bill. This Bill is eventually going to work hardship on the very people whom it ostensibly seeks to help. If passed, the land taken from the landlord would only be something lost by the landlord, but the land taken from the tenant would be the loss of all he has.

One, however, must not consider the view of the landlord or that of the tenant, but consider the effect of this Bill. As we look at the position very closely, what do we find? One must take first things first. Is it not true that nearly all the lands of this country occupied by Government and even privately-owned lands have not been beneficially occupied in the majority of cases, due primarily to two things—inadequate, inefficient and in some cases complete absence of proper irrigation and drainage, and absolutely no financial assistance by way of agricultural credit or otherwise to landlords to assist them in the development of the land? Is it not true that on the Essequibo Coast as the result of large sums charged for drainage rates, though absolutely no drainage is given, many estates have been sold at execution for drainage rates? Those are things which cause dissatisfaction. I would like the hon. Mover of the motion to give this Council some indication of the number of proprietors who had had to petition the Governor in Council and make representations that their estates be not sold for drainage rates.

I wish to pose this question. Suppose Government compulsorily acquire these lands, are these lands going to become cultivable and habitable overnight? Is it not the same universal problem of inadequate and inefficient drainage? To be ridiculous, will the rains fall when Government own the lands and not fall when the people own the lands? Those are questions which deserve some consideration. Is it not in line with Government's very policy to think first of adequate drainage and irrigation facilities as a prerequisite to land occupation for agricultural purposes? Why is the Government spending large sums of money on the Boerasirie and Torani Schemes? Is it not true that those projects are necessary to provide the prerequisite irrigation and drainage before one can think of Land Settlements for habitation?

I charge Government with being inconsistent On the one hand Government made legislation to provide irrigation and drainage and then occupation to follow afterwards, which is Government's policy, and on the other hand Government is now introducing legislation to acquire land without having provided irrigation and drainage for it. It is putting the cart before the horse, I may say. I would like the hon. Mover to mention whether the people have been given adequate drainage facilities, whether they have not any cause to complain about drainage, and in spite of that they have not beneficially occupied the private property.

I would like to hear that we in British Guiana have lands fertile and in good order with proper drainage and irrigation and yet the lands cannot be beneficially occupied. Private owners of land have had to fall down on the mercies of the lending authorities, primarily the Credit Corporation and the Banks. They had to seek the assistance of the Rice Marketing Board to assist them to get agricultural machinery whereby they can develop larger areas of land than hitherto. But, as the result of inadequate drainage and irri-

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

gation facilities they have in some cases lost completely their crops or part of their crops in some cases. The ultimate result is bankruptcy. Who is going to launch out on a project with no security, no certainty as to whether he will have water?

Is it not true that 55 per cent. of the rice lands under cultivation depend on the weather? Those are figures given by the very Government. 55 per cent. of the rice lands depend on rainfall for water, as there are no adequate reliable drainage and irrigation facilities. The proprietors of Essequibo are the most hard hit at this point. Government has its Tapacooma Scheme to try and see what assistance can be given, and I say before going into the facts of the case that it is not fair to burden the landlords of Essequibo with heavy drainage rates when, due to no fault of theirs, there is no drainage to assist them with their crops. I trust their case will be sympathetically considered, otherwise all the estates on the Essequibo Coast will have to be put up at execution sale as some of them have already been. I must repeat this point, that not only private lands are affected but even Crown lands. It is a universal problem.

We are below sea level and drainage and irrigation from an agricultural point of view is our No. 1 problem, and it has been so for years. We have made sporadic attempts to give relief, but relief is not the solution. We have relief of all kinds. We hear of flood relief funds being given here and there, but that does not give the farmer that security which he needs, as referred to in the World Bank Mission Report. There was a time in the history of this country when one could look around in the market-places and observe that everyone was trying to go in for farming, cattle-rearing and kitchen gardening in the rural areas. There were seasonal crops—mangoes, pineapples, etc. being sold at six cents per basket. Those times are gone. This insecurity, this continual loss of crops over a long number of years has resulted in our peasantry turning its face away from the land except for a few who are anchored to the land.

Government cannot deem those people's lands as not being beneficially occupied. I say so without fear of contradiction. Government must remember that it was its duty to give all the facilities for the land to be occupied beneficially, but it did not. The people cried aloud for relief, but absolutely no effort was made in some cases to provide the most important thing—water—and to take the water off the land without which they could not occupy the land beneficially. Even tenants could not so occupy the land. How can Government morally turn around and say that these landlords have deliberately not beneficially occupied the land in this country? All over this place we have second depth lands, empoldered and drained. I have spoken previously in this Council on this subject and I wish to remind Members that actually I tabled a motion which I ask your permission to read. Sir:

> "Whereas the progress and development of peasant farming in British Guiana would be considerably accelerated if more suitable lands could be made available to peasant farmers;
>
> And whereas there are large areas of empoldered Crown Land in the Colony under lease which are not beneficially occupied;
>
> And whereas peasant farmers all over the Colony are anxious to occupy these lands for peasant farming, thereby im-

proving their own economic position, and also the economic position of the Colony:

Be it resolved: that this Council requests the Governor in Council to appoint a Committee to investigate the possibility of resuming Crown lands under lease which are not beneficially occupied in order that those lands may be made available to peasant farmers."

That was on the 29th July, 1955. Council was prorogued on 29th March, 1956, and during that period of about a year the motion was not debated.

I must say again that I agree with the hon. Mover that there is necessity for more land, but my reproach is, not to interfere with private lands after people have exhausted all their efforts to acquire them. How many thousands of acres would be obtained if Government would put into effect the recommendations of the Land Resumption Ordinance. I will refer again to the Report of the Land Tenure and Registration of Titles Committee (and all these reports have outlined a policy to meet this land shortage) where, at para. 70, it deals with forfeiture of land. It states:

"The Land Magistrates and the Land Tribunal can in our opinion also help to solve the problem of how to deal effectively with the question of forfeiture of land for failure to occupy it beneficially or to obtain title therefor, We have already referred to this question of forfeiture in paragraphs 41, 42, 51 and 52, and although it is not within our terms of reference, it has been the subject of considerable discussion.

71. It seems to us to be essential to provide some machinery whereby all persons who are occupiers without title of agricultural land capable of beneficial occupation are at first encouraged to obtain title therefor, and then finally called upon by notice in writing to do so within a stipulated time."

Those are recommendations of a Committee appointed by the Government.

Sir Frank McDavid: The hon. Member must go further and read the relevant paragraphs to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am coming to 74 and 75. Para. 72 states:

"If such persons neglect to comply with such final notice, then notice of such neglect should be given to the Commissioner of Lands and Mines. It would be the duty of the Commissioner of Lands and Mines on receipt of such notice, or in the cases referred to in paragraph 41 on his own motion, to file a claim with the Land Magistrate for an order vesting such land in the Colony, and serve such claim on the person in possession or holding title."

To continue:

73. The Land Magistrate would then investigate the claim and if it is substantiated a provisional certificate of title in favour of the Colony would be issued and the procedure already set out would be adopted for making the certificate absolute by the Land Tribunal.

74. Land so vested would become Colony land and may be granted or leased as if it were Crown land save that preference would be given to persons who had been in possession or had previously held title.

75. If these provisions as to forfeiture of land were inserted in any new legislation, the Crown Lands Resumption used, could be repealed or amended to accord with such provisions."

I accepted the hon. Members point.

Sir Frank McDavid: The hon. Member has got me wrong. I have just repeated what I said at the last meeting when I withdrew this motion, asking this Council to consider this Report. I took the trouble to point out that one of the principal recommendations was this: that lands which have been lying abandoned for five years should automatically pass on to the Crown without compensation. That is a recommendation which

[Sir Frank McDavid]

this Government certainly could not very lightly accept, that is, that land should be taken without compensation merely because of its having been idle for five years. What I said was, in this Bill before the Council, what we are endeavouring to do is this: to take such land but give compensation as to its economic value.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: When it comes to land which has been held by more than one generation, taking it away involves a moral obligation rather than a legal obligation. The question of giving preference to persons who had been in possession or had previously held title is important. The compulsory acquisition of private property irrespective of the method of compensation would cost this Government money. Here we have the Report of the Land Tenure and Registration of Titles Committee setting out how these lands could be acquired and, as this Committee remarked, the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance lies freezing on our Statute Books.

It "has hardly ever been used" and there is absolutely no reason why it cannot be used. As we have heard from the hon. mover himself, this Committee was made up of competent men. We had on it men experienced in the law, men familiar with the records of Government, men familiar with the layout of these lands and the operation of leases. We had Mr. Macnie, a person experienced in these matters, the then Commissioner of Lands and Mines, a veritable conduit pipe through which all these things have to pass, Mr. Persaud, Registrar of Deeds, Mr. C. V. Wight, Mr. Roth in whom a better authority on the Interior can hardly be found, Mr. J. T. Clarke and others. These men, after looking at Government reports and applying their minds to their task, asked, why has not this Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance been used ?

On the question of titled areas, I respectively submit, to refute the point made, that hundreds of these acres are not used. There is a section in each contract empowering the Crown for purposes of this kind to come in—

Sir Frank McDavid: Please do not say, to resume land which is held by freehold. We are talking about land which the Crown has issued on lease. The hon. Member is not doing that. I am sorry he did not have an opportunity of moving his motion, but simultaneously there has been a working party going at full speed for two years on the question of leased Crown Land. The hon. Member is talking about freehold land, and that is a different story altogether.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I say with fairness, there are two types of Crown land: grazing leases and agricultural leases, at 20 cents per acre. My point is, absolutely nothing has been done to resume those lands not beneficially occupied. People continue to pay 10 cents and 20 cents per acre for land and continue to get 3 bags of padi per acre from that land. What is Government doing about this?

At the moment Government is anxious to solve this question of land shortage. I personally accept the reports on this question, including the International Bank's, and they have outlined a system by which these lands under discussion can easily be reclaimed. The International Bank's suggestion was a system of tax. This very system of tax has been previously debated in this Council and given full consideration in 1951 when the matter of freehold and leasehold titles for sugar estates was

discussed. Then it was felt that taxing these lands would eventually end up with a situation in which these lands were bouncing back to the Crown. This point was supported forcibly by Mr. Macnie, the Colonial Secretary, and other Members. But the point I wish to make is this: whether they are beneficially occupied or not, is it fair to tax these lands or even to deem them beneficially occupied when we have not assisted in any way to provide any reasonable kind of irrigation and drainage for them?

Whenever there is heavy rainfall these owners of land are at the mercy of the weather. I do not blame Government for not having a comprehensive drainage and irrigation scheme in this country. It is a gigantic project which has to be undertaken by stages, and Government has launched some of those schemes to improve drainage and irrigation as a prerequisite to land settlement. But the point I wish to make is: is it fair to deem lands to be not beneficially occupied, or even to tax them, as recommended in the World Bank Report, in order to compel the owners to put them in beneficial occupation? Is it fair to do either when there is no *sine qua non* from the point of view of agricultural products? Is this the reason why the World Bank Report has to some extent recommended the development of riverain lands?

I have not had the privilege of going into the figures but in my view Government will very soon find it difficult to find settlers to occupy the large acreage of land which will be available to the public as a result of the drainage and irrigation projects now in progress. I will read the report of Mr. Frank Brown on the subject.

Sir Frank McDavid: I would be very much obliged to the hon. Member.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I refer to the Report on "Land Settlement Problems in British Guiana" by Frank A. Brown, at paragraph 29, under the heading "Responsibilities of Government." It says:

> "29. Government should provide a strong advisory service in each area. Agriculture, Welfare, Medical, Irrigation and Drainage, and in the early stages, Public Works Department to advise on housing and other constructional works, and to make and maintain roads."

Mr. Brown does not favour freehold ownership of land. He was responsible for the Gezira scheme in the Sudan, to which he makes reference in his Report. In that scheme the Government supplied the land and the water, taking 40 per cent. of the value of the cash crop — cotton. The farmer did or paid for all agricultural work, also taking 40 per cent. of the cash crop. The commercial company which was responsible for the whole of the business and administrative side of the scheme received 20 per cent. of the proceeds. I will read paragraphs 35 and 36 of Mr. Brown's Report —

> "35. The East Indian, who is the most important potential rice farmer of new areas on the coastal clays, hankers after a farm and house, which he owns, and can bequeath to his heirs. The advantage of freehold tenancy is that the owner is likely to be more contented and settled. He will be keener to sink capital into the farm, improve the dwellings and the land, and plant "more permanent and semi-permanent crops."

> "36. There are, however, many grave disadvantages in this system. Where large sale organised farming is in force, everyone must grow the same crops, at the same time, and in the same place, and for the general well being, must conform to certain rules. It would be practically impossible to insist on this, if the farmer owned his farm. British Guiana has already suffered through the granting of land freehold to those who are either incapable or unwilling to farm in a reasonable manner."

Freehold farming has the added disadvantage of encouraging speculation in

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

land values, any increase in the real value of the land, apart from improvements, should be a gain to the state.

It appears, therefore, that if a farmer is to take his place in any large scheme such as is envisaged, a leasehold tenancy is necessary."

Taking that to its logical conclusion, Government might wish to have an experiment in pineapple cultivation, for example —

Sir Frank McDavid: I crave the indulgence of the hon. Member to say that he has referred to Mr. Brown's Report in relation to this Bill, and I would ask him to favour me by turning to page 21 of that Report and reading paragraph 70 with as much emphasis. If the hon. Member would be embarrassed I would read the paragraph.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Mr. Speaker, is it necessary for me to be interrupted at this stage when the hon. mover has the right of reply? I will read paragraph 70. It says:

"70. A considerable amount of good, and at one time fully developed, agricultural land in the Colony is being wasted by the fact that freehold landlords either cannot or will not put it to its best use.

In some cases the reason is that owners bought up large areas cheaply, not realising the extent of their responsibilities and commitments. The owners are now unable to clear the land, and are also incapable or unwilling to spend money on the maintenance and cleaning of drainage and irrigation channels. Land at one time bearing crops of sugar cane, cocoa, etc., has gone back to semi-bush. Not only is this detrimental to their own interests, and a loss to the country, but in many areas it effectively prevents their neighbours from making the best use of their land.

Land speculation can also be considered under the same category."

I will also read paragraph 71, which says:

"71. Government should take steps to remedy this. Such unused areas should either be heavily taxed or the owners should be compelled to sell to Government at a reasonable figure, after being given a period of grace.

Mr. Speaker: Here there is no period of grace. It is preceded by a notice to the proprietor to put his land in order. Mr. Brown says so.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am very grateful to the hon. Member because it has to some extent supported my contention in the sense that a considerable amount of good, and at one time fully developed agricultural land was being wasted by the fact that the proprietors of freehold land would not use them. That is my point — that freehold landlords could not beneficially occupy their lands because their first requisite was not there. Would any sensible landlord throw money down the drain by embarking on any agricultural project on a large scale when he has to depend on the mercy of the weather?

In the World Bank Mission's Report from which the hon. Member for Agriculture quoted in his opening remarks, the imposition of a land tax was suggested, to compel the owners to sell their land to Government at a reasonable figure. Does that mean compulsory land acquisition? I do not follow that. On page 53 of the World Bank Report paragraph 4 states:

"4. Legislation relating to ownership and tenure of unused backlands and riverain lands should be thoroughly reviewed;"

That is exactly my contention. It has been reviewed by a Land Tenure Committee of responsible persons who made recommendations which have been put into cold storage. The paragraph continues to say:

"Such reclaimable land should be gradually brought into productive use, if necessary by appropriate legal measures."

Does the phrase "appropriate legal measures" by any stretch of reason mean a compulsory land acquisition Bill? I say it does not. There are many measures which, if well thought out, could achieve the desired result rather than placing this objectionable piece of legislation on the Statute Books of the Colony, and causing posterity to condemn this Government for allowing such a dangerous weapon to be put into the hands of, I repeat, a lawless Government, to the hindrance of the development of this country. The Torani, Tapacooma and Boerasirie schemes are going to make large areas of land available in another three years, but unless there is an influx of population Government is going to find it difficult to find people to occupy those thousands of acres of land which will be available to the public when those schemes are completed.

A large number of people have been thrown out of employment by the closing down of Pln. Port Mourant and a very attractive scheme has been prepared at Mara, but Mr. Frank Brown does not recommend that small farmers should be required to live on the land away from their homes. He argues, quite convincingly, that we cannot take such people into jungle settlements away from the amenities of life, social and medical services which are available in the villages. There must be some incentive for a man to leave the bright lights of his village and go into the interior, away from civilization, and remain there unless amenities are provided for him. That is what Frank Brown has recommended in his report, and I challenge any denial, and for that reason it is necessary and it logically follows that in these settlements contemplated by Government not only should Government have the prerequisite of irrigation and drainage but provide the incentive of enough water, which the settler must have in order to stay on the land. Also, proximity to other advanced communities is equally important when you have supplied all those facilities.

Here is Government owning 90 per cent. of land. Where is Government going to get the money to purchase other lands, assuming the rate of compensation in the schedule is more acceptable than the purchase price of the land, but to provide irrigation and drainage and to make the lands attractive to the farmer ? Do you imagine what it would cost Government to provide the amenities of modern life — medical services etc., — for this scheme I shudder to think what eventually wil happen in these laudable enterprising projects look *prima facie* good on paper, but, the proof is not in the pudding but in the eating. This Government has 38,000 acres of land in Government Estates—Anna Regina, Cane Grove, etc. There are large tracks of land there lying idle, and absolutely no effort has been made to make them attractive for anybody to occupy them. Government has its Geological Department and its Agricultural Department in order to get as much as possible whenever the time comes for expert advice on the suitability of certain things. If we are going into the Bush to establish settlements, we have to know whether the soil is suitable for the production of crops and what crops, and how to lay the land out for the rearing of cattle. We have to look to these experts for such advice.

But what has happened at Cane Grove? Government with its Geological Department and its Agricultural Department did not take the trouble to find out whether the lands at Cane Grove were suitable for the production of rice. What is the result? The farmers—I ask my hon. Friend, Mr. Jailal, to deal with this point—there have been

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

breaking their heads and throwing money into the sea in trying to grow rice with no proper returns. Government has to spend money to assist those people. My point is, Government with its own estates has not been able to find the means to do any extension or expansion. Had Government thought of fertilising its lands which were found to be completely unsuited for rice cultivation by the occupants? I have never heard anything about that. But where are the people going to find the money to pay for that if they are to continue to plant rice? I prophesy that within the next three or four years the whole of the Cane Grove settlement will go down the drain.

Look at Anna Regina, Onverwagt. There are large tracts of land there and Government has left all those to bring forward this Bill. It passes my understanding. Look at the provisions of this Bill. Why Government wants to acquire compulsory people's lands for land settlement? I appeal to the hon. Mover to assist me in trying to understand the object of what Government is doing. In this country there are large numbers of people who need land, but my point is, that with little effort, and no expense and no one hurt Government is entitled to make use of its own land. What is more striking and what is a more degrading form of 'black marketing' one can think of, is the action of our own Government in this case. Government estates are themselves not beneficially occupied. Most of them are in a dilapidated state and certainly they are not an example of what a model estate should be. The tenants are all complaining of bad conditions there. If Government acquired these other lands, is Government going to provide the drainage they need to enable them to be beneficially occupied?

I am opposed to the passing of this Land Acquisition Bill. Government has all the lands required at its disposal — 90 per cent. of the area of the Colony. We have been told that there are fertile Crown Lands which can be resumed. Why Government does not resume some of those lands, I cannot understand. My point is, there is room for possible negotiation to achieve the purpose of the Bill. There was a time when the sugar estates were willing to sell their land at $1.00 per acre, and even now they have been co-operative. But I must mention that this Government must use its bargaining machinery sometimes. If land is being sold at fantastic prices, is it not reasonable to expect a person to ask for a handsome price for his land? Is it not equitable for Government to meet in conclave with the representatives of landowners in order to see what can be done to meet this land shortage?

I would like to ask the hon. Mover if it is not true, that at Bel Air the sugar estates authorities have been planting cassava on lands which could be utilized for settlements. Have you heard of the sugar estates at any time exporting cassava? You know the reason why that is done?

Sir Frank McDavid: Because this Bill is not law.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: People would pay $2,000 a lot and erect a little bungalow on that land instead of hiding themselves in the riverain areas to make their homes. Those front lands of the sugar estates enjoy all the ozone from the Atlantic, but they are being used to plant cassava.

At this stage the adjournment was taken to the next day, Thursday, 18th April, 1957, at 2 p.m.