

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

THURSDAY, 18TH FEBRUARY, 1954.

The Council met at 2 p.m. His Honour the Speaker, Sir Eustace Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C., in the Chair.

PRESENT :

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

Ex-Officio Members:—

The Hon. the Chief Secretary, Mr. John Gutch, C.M.G., O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder, 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 Agriculture, Forests, and Lands and Mines).

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

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall.

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.

The Hon. G. H. Smellie.

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj.

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. W. A. Phang.

Mr. L. A. Luckhoo.

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

Mr. C. A. Carter.

Mr. E. F. Correia.

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb.

Mr. H. Rahaman.

Miss Gertie H. Collins.

Mrs. Esther E. Dey.

Dr. H. A. Fraser.

Lt. Col. E. J. Haywood, M.B.E., T.D.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.

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

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature—Mr. I. R. King.

Absent:—

Mr. T. Lee—on leave.

Mr. R. B. Jailal.

The Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on Tuesday, the 16th of February, 1954, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

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

The Report of the Principal of the University College of the West Indies for the year 1952-53.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

ATKINSON FIELD-MACKENZIE ROAD

Mr. Carter : I beg to give notice of the following motion:

"Whereas the population of the Colony is increasing rapidly and the empoldered areas of the coastland are practically all fully beneficially occupied;

And whereas it is not possible for established industry to employ all the adult population seeking employment;

And whereas it is desirable that a road be constructed from Atkinson Airfield to Mackenzie which would provide means of transport and communication and assist in the opening out of the surrounding districts and also provide employment;

And whereas preliminary surveys have already been conducted in the areas concerned which can be made available for the purpose of the construction of a road:

Be it resolved:-

That this Council recommends the examination of the proposal to construct a road from Atkinson Airfield to Mackenzie and the submission of a report on the project as early as possible for the consideration of this Council."

ORDER OF THE DAY

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1954

Council resumed the debate on the Bill intituled:

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

Mr. Macnie : Your Honour, when you adjourned the Council at our last

sitting I found myself batting rather late in the innings, and hoped to do some overnight batting on the following day. I am not seeking to imitate the batsmen who have been giving us much entertainment in another place, but I will do so before proceeding to speak about the sugar industry. I would like to say one or two things on the Estimates, as I will not be here tomorrow—I have to be in the country district on one of the Government Boards on which I have the pleasure to serve. It may be that we will reach the Estimates tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: That is possible, of course.

Mr. Macnie : Whether we reach them or not, I will make these general remarks. In Finance Committee when we were discussing the Head "Customs", as the Minutes of that Committee will show, I raised the question of duties on imported materials. A list of all those materials is in the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of the 19th January. In raising the question I suggested that the Government, in view of the great urge—very properly initiated by His Excellency—for rehousing, should reduce the duties on the building materials in question, which covered a wide range, and so have what might be termed a tariff holiday for them. I am glad to say my proposals were supported by hon. Members present at the meeting, and I do hope we would be hearing something of the Government's reaction very soon.

I would like to raise also the question of the duty on films. The situation is peculiar. No duty is charged on films brought into the Colony for display for commercial purposes, but a duty of 20 per cent. is charged on films brought in for educational purposes. Quite a few organisations, including the one to which I belong, give film shows as part,

of their work, including religious bodies who give shows as part of their campaign. It is, to say the least, wrong that such bodies should bring the films as part of their welfare programme and yet have to pay a duty of 20 per cent. It is a wrong that should be righted.

Again, on the matter of films. I also raised in Finance Committee on January 15th, the question of censorship of films which are shown publicly, and in particular in certain cinemas. I would again urge that instead of accepting Trinidad censorship certificates, which I understand is the present practice, we should set up a Film Censorship Board or re-establish one. I am sure hon. Members around this table do feel there is need for censorship of some of the films which have been shown not only in the City but throughout the country at the present time, and in fact for some time past. I hope that the Administration will give these matters their attention.

In turning to the sugar industry I would ask you, Sir, and hon. Members to bear with me if I have to refer to my notes to refer to figures and also to quote from them. A good deal of criticism was made when last we met. It was even suggested that the disaffection in the industry was largely the cause of the trouble the Colony has experienced in recent months. I feel we should look at the other side of the picture. It was admitted that something had been done, but the burden of the remarks made by the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj was that sufficient had not been done. Let us examine the general economic problem of the Colony, as I myself, a Guianese who has spent most of his life here, see it.

British Guiana has been described as the Magnificent Province. There has been some argument as to who first

used the word "magnificent". I looked up an old book written as long ago as 1883, and found it there. So, I think Dr. Fraser would have to bow, because Mr. Sugrim Singh was wrong in saying that it was Joseph Eleazar. I feel that the word "magnificent" is a complete and, in fact, a grave misnomer. Briefly, 90 per cent. of our local population live on the coastal belt, and I think it is fair to say that some 80 per cent. of that population is concentrated there. On that coastal belt the water from the Ocean has had to be kept out through the years at enormous expense not only in the construction of sea defences and their re-construction and maintenance, but in meeting the unforeseeable changes in currents which cause alterations of the foreshore almost overnight. Almost overnight the whole picture can be changed causing large sums of money to be spent. .

In addition, the coastal belt is below sea level, and to deal with rainfall a most costly system of drainage has to be maintained and in some areas, has to be augmented by the provision of expensive pumps. On top of that, in order to provide for irrigation water when the rain stops falling, we have to conserve the rain water in other areas to irrigate lands under cultivation. I think it will be agreed that very many persons who have come to this country have expressed surprise that this battle, this costly struggle with water, has been maintained. In fact they have been impressed by the artificial method with which it has been possible to achieve efficient production in the agriculture of this country. That efficient production has only been achieved by the investment of huge sums of capital through the years, and unfortunately costly importation of skilled scientific and technical men. On this point, may I digress to say

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that I, and those with whom I am associated, eagerly look forward to the day when it will become unnecessary to import so many skilled men: but unfortunately, as the International Bank Mission has observed in its Report:

“The population of the Colony is perhaps more literate than skilled, as the result of an educational system much more heavily weighted in the direction of arts than techniques.”

I hope it would not be long before that defect on which they have put their finger will be remedied.

I do suggest that the background which I have tried to give about the battle with water and enormous expense, must be borne in mind when criticism is made or kicks are aimed at the sugar industry. It has also to be borne in mind when criticism is made of the effort or lack of effort of previous Governments because in the same way that battle has had an effect on economic affairs generally, as it has had on the industry upon which, unfortunately, so many people depend.

Now, turning to the question of profits; it has been alleged that large sums of money are taken out of the Colony by people who are called “sugar barons” and the like, and a much more hackneyed word, “exploiters”—a word which we have heard over and over again, in and out of this Chamber. If one looks back into history one will find that the truth is that through the years many sugar estates owned by local investors have had to be folded up, have disappeared or “gone to the wall”—call it what you will. There are many Members around this table, if I may say so, who will remember what a tragedy it was when some of the estates had to be closed down.

I do not think it is necessary to draw attention to the present conditions on the sugar estates that were closed down 15 or 20 years ago. The position is that estates which have survived have, in the main, done so with the assistance of outside capital. Over the past 10 years the profits which the sugar companies made reflect in average dividends paid by the sugar companies, approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and I would submit that no one can suggest that that is unreasonable as a return on the money invested. Personally, I am not a shareholder in anything except in this country and its future. If I had any money to invest and could become what certain people describe as a “local capitalist”, I would not feel that anyone could justly accuse me of being a profiteer or an exploiter, for getting $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the money I invested.

As I have said, Sir, my only share holding is in this country and its future. As regards the facts I have given, I would add that in the period previous to the ten years during which a nominal dividend was paid to shareholders, there were many Companies which, for some time, paid no dividends at all. Now, what do we find? Despite what occurred—I would not call it a profitable picture—over the last five years, one Company alone invested £5,000,000—\$24,000,000—in B.G. I would suggest that all this talk about big profits, about money being pulled out of this country and taken away by certain people who are living off the fat of the land, is just a deliberate distortion of the truth. I have endeavoured to give the truth.

In the course of his speech, the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphai, referred to the employment of local personnel in the upper grade of the sugar industry and expressed the hope that more and

more would be employed. I have already stated what is the policy of the industry, so far as I know. I think the hon. Member (Mr. Ramphal) would be surprised to know that approximately 50 per cent of the whole senior staff employed on sugar estates is made up of men like myself—of Guianese or West Indian origin. In addition to that, as the hon. Member would know, many men of similar origin are employed in senior technical and administrative posts.

I will now turn to some of the things which I feel should be remembered but, possibly, have been forgotten about what the industry has done in recent years. Firstly, I would refer to the work done by that distinguished gentleman who has been employed by the industry for many years—Dr. Giglioli—in the eradication of malaria from this country. I am very glad that my reference to him has been well received. I do feel that that should be recognized—the part which the sugar industry has played in this regard—and, with your permission, Sir, I should like to quote what the Venn Commission has said in connection with the D.D.T. campaign for which Dr. Giglioli was responsible. The Commission (on page 114 of its report) has said:

"1. Reference has already been made to the D.D.T. spraying campaign for which Dr. G. Giglioli, O.B.E., Honorary Malaria-ologist to Government and Medical Adviser to the Sugar Producers' Association has been responsible, and its widespread effect on the health of the people in the previously malarial coastal belt cannot be overrated."

Those are the words used by the Venn Commission which was in this Colony not so many years ago. As hon. Members will remember, Dr. Giglioli was responsible for the direction of the Malaria Control Campaign not only on

the sugar estates, but throughout the Colony. I would like to give the Council some statistics to show what has happened as a result of D.D.T., and in doing so I must refer to my notes. During the six-year period 1947-53, following the establishment of malaria eradication, the sugar estate population increased from 69,281 to 83,920. That is, roughly about 14,640 people or souls, equivalent to 21.1 per cent on the population of 1947. The average annual increase in the estate population for the 10 years before the D.D.T. campaign, was .02 per cent. After malaria was controlled, it rose to 3.5 per cent., and in 1952 it was estimated that the natural growth of the East Indian population in the Colony was 5 per cent per annum. That, Sir, gives some idea, I think, of the effect of the eradication of malaria *via* the D.D.T. campaign and other measures. But, the sugar industry has not been satisfied with that alone. On its own responsibility it is still maintaining the D.D.T. campaign on all sugar estates. It spends something like \$30,000 a year on the D.D.T. campaign alone, not counting the overhead charges for staff and so on.

Now, Sir, somewhat recently — in September, 1952, — the sugar industry initiated its own Estates Medical Service and employed doctors who are stationed on the East Coast, Demerara, and also on the West Coast, Demerara. The doctors on the East Coast at least, deal with all the sugar estates there and also with those on the West Bank, Berbice, as far as Canje, and the Medical Service is being extended to embrace the Corentyne and the East Bank, Berbice. Already we have a Medical Officer stationed at the Berbice estuary who deals with the estates at the mouth of the Berbice river. In addition, the in-

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dustry has not been satisfied to wait for Government to carry out its part of the Venn Commission recommendations with regard to rural State hospitals, but has gone ahead and implemented their part by providing dispensaries and ambulance services as recommended by the Commission. Further, pending the implementation by Government of the Venn Commission recommendations for the building of rural State hospitals for sick people in villages as well as on sugar estates, the industry has centralized its hospital services in the various areas. We are glad to say that this year adequate provision has been made for the erection of the first rural State hospital which, I believe, is to be sited at Port Mourant or in that vicinity. It was provided for last year but, for various reasons including inadequate funds, it was not erected. I did not intend to burden the Council with all these statistics, but one hon. Member has informed me of something which I did not know, and that is, we relieve the Government of having to spend its own money for the employment of a Veterinary Surgeon.

Turning to what I can call the social welfare side, I think I should mention what we are trying to do with regard to providing film shows. I have already said something about films, and I think some hon. Members know that the S.P.A. provides, regularly and throughout the year, free film shows to junior staff workers as well as children. We have recently increased our equipment—a number of projectors having been obtained for more of these shows—and we have also purchased a mobile generator with which we can give more of these shows to workers and their children who live in areas which do not have electricity supplies, as many of the coastal areas do. The intention is that

mobile generators would move around and shows given, as is done in many countries, from any place that is available. I should also say that the S.P.A., as some hon. Members know, is only too willing to lend their films, projectors and other equipment to religious bodies and social welfare organisations.

On the housing side, quite apart from housing by what is known as the Labour Welfare Fund, the industry, during recent years and at their own expense, has built some 338 houses of good type—not those deplorable ranges—for junior staff and what we call “key workers.” On the welfare and recreational side, the estates, again at their own expense, have provided and improved some 17 recreation grounds and playing fields, several community and recreation centres, pavilions and junior staff clubs to which we are attaching libraries, and we have also provided other facilities such as new creches and supervision for the children of mothers who have to work. A number of Welfare Officers have been employed, and I think it is fair to say that what has been done on the welfare side is not inconsiderable.

I may add that the industry is doing its utmost to increase and accelerate its efforts in this direction, within the limits of the money available. I have mentioned the Labour Welfare Fund and while I know that there are some hon. Members who know all about it, I feel sure that there are some who know little or nothing. I think it is right, therefore, that I should try to explain briefly how it came about. In 1947 the United Kingdom Government increased the price of sugar, as from January 1, that year, by \$28.80 per ton to the producers in this part of the world, and it was agreed that \$13.20 out of that increased price should be set aside for the creation of three funds.

The three funds established were a Stabilisation Fund whereby a levy of \$6 per ton on all sugar exported was set aside, a Rehabilitation Fund for which \$4.80 per ton was set aside, and a Welfare Fund for which a levy of \$2.40 per ton was set aside. The body responsible for administering the Welfare Fund is a Committee set up under the Ordinance and comprising representatives of the Government, the Unions representing the workers and the sugar producers themselves. These levies are still being made on all sugar exported from the Colony, whether it is exported to the United Kingdom at a negotiated price or on the world free market at a very much lower price.

Since the establishment of the Welfare Fund — and I think I should say something about the Committee of which I am a member, since, unfortunately, there is no other member of the Committee on this Council. The income has accrued from a levy of \$3,015,785 and most of that has been spent on loans to various people who formerly lived in ranges and who are given priority. I think everyone would agree that that is desirable, so that these workers can build their own houses in areas which have been laid out for the purpose. At the end of 1953 loans were made to no fewer than 3,755 workers and practically all of these workers had completed their houses at the end of the year.

But, it has always been obvious that the money accruing to the Welfare Fund, which is nearly about half a million dollars a year, could never be sufficient to tackle the problem properly, and we are housing people who are very badly housed at present on certain sugar estates. Therefore, in August last year, His Excellency the Governor approached the sugar producers and got them to discuss various matters including the

question of increasing the money available for free houses, and the sugar producers agreed in November to a diversion of \$2½ million from the Stabilisation Fund to the Welfare Fund. With your permission, Sir, I should like to read the relevant portion of the release which His Excellency made to the Press in November last, when this money was granted. It says:

“In view of the inability of the Government to undertake the heavy financial commitments involved in the rehousing of sugar workers, the major portion of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund has, from its inception, been appropriated for this purpose. Because of the inadequacy of the amounts which can be made available from that source, His Excellency the Governor asked the S.P.A. on 10th August to consider the possibility of making a loan from Stabilisation Fund in order to expedite the rehousing of sugar workers living in ranges.

“While the S.P.A. has in mind that the Venn Commission and other authorities had recommended that rehousing be undertaken by Government, it has agreed to the diversion of a sum of approximately \$2½ million from the Sugar Industry Price Stabilisation Fund to be used specifically for rehousing. The method of effecting this diversion is contained in the Order in Council signed today.

“2. In reaching this decision the S.P.A. has been influenced by its strong desire to co-operate with the Governor in his efforts to improve conditions in this Colony.”

Let me say that our desire remains as strong or even stronger today than it was then. With this sum of \$2½ million the Welfare Committee is really now able to get on with the project, but do not let it be thought that \$2½ million will solve the problem. There are still many workers to be housed, and the number of families increases every year as children

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become adults, both young men and young women got married. As it will now be possible to use some of the money accruing from the welfare levy for tackling welfare projects other than housing, we hope that in the near future we would be able to accelerate our programme for the provision of more playing fields, libraries and the like for the welfare centres. We have got quite a comprehensive programme in preparation.

Now, Sir, the hon. Mr. Gajraj referred to some remarks made by His Excellency the Governor a few days ago—remarks made very properly when His Excellency commended the B.G. Timbers or the C.D.C. for what they had done in the way of good housing and additional amenities for the workers on their timber grants or forest stations. I think those were the words used by Mr. Gajraj. The hon. Member went on to make a comparison with the sugar industry and to infer that the sugar industry could do similar things as it was well within the capacity of the industry to do so today. But, Sir, there is an enormous difference between an operator in the timber or any other industry as compared with those in the sugar industry. The difference is that in the timber and certain other industries, the operators employ as near as can be the exact number of workers they need, and they provide amenities for that number alone, and no more. In fact, I think I am right in saying that those who are not employed are not allowed on the properties or concessions of those companies. Do I need to remind the Council that the position on the sugar estates is entirely different, entirely? On the many estates and in their vicinity there are enormous populations living there, many of the people not fully employed by the estate and some are not working

with the industry at all. I would submit that a parallel is hardly found. I for one, and those associated with me—and, I hope all hon. Members here—are concerned with the serious under-employment of those living on the estates and vicinity. To my mind it is one of the biggest problems we have to face.

The hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, also spoke of electricity. Let me say that I agree that the lighting of streets and of houses is most desirable. On those estates—and they are very few—where there is surplus electrical power available throughout the year consideration is being given to the extent to which the extension of electric lighting is possible. The hon. Member referred to a Press report in which it was stated that Uitylught houses are to be supplied with electricity next. Well, I do not know the source of the report, but the report was quite incorrect. The position is that on that estate at present there is not sufficient surplus electricity available, but maybe in a year or so, if it is then available, the estate will do what it can to make provision for extra lighting.

I think I should mention that the late Government took up this matter with my Association. Some correspondence and interviews passed between myself and the then Minister of Local Government, Mr. Jai Narine Singh, and the proposal was that the estate should supply electricity in bulk to adjacent villages and sell it. I pointed out that where there is no surplus power available assistance would be needed from Government. An estimate of the amount of power needed for consumption would have to be prepared. The Minister was to obtain this information and proceed from that. I do not know what happened after that.

There has been serious comment in this Council by the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj concerning the provision of drinking water for workers in the field. There was a Press release on the same subject yesterday, and I can assure hon. Members that I had nothing to do with the release by that august body, the BPI. What was stated there was communicated to Government about a week ago. We are providing potable water for cane-cutters in the fields on all fields on all estates. That has been done on some estates for a while and we are considering the possibility of supplying potable water to other workers, but there is some difficulty in conveying water to workers who are scattered over large areas.

Before concluding, I would like to say that the main problems this Government will have to tackle are those of providing better living standards, improved housing and the removal of under-employment. By improved living conditions I do not mean just taking a man out of a bad house and putting him in a good house, but taking steps to ensure that the growing numbers are given an opportunity of full, gainful and productive employment. A very large number of people who live in good and bad houses are seriously under-employed. This can only be remedied by clearing large areas of forest lands and draining and irrigating them—in other words, opening up new land, not for people who have land already, but for people who are anxious and in some cases starving for land.

That is the way in which we can get improvement in this country. It can be done with the aid of the money which His Excellency has so wonderfully obtained. More money will be needed, but success can only be attained if everyone in this Colony, no matter what his

race or beliefs are, or his politics for that matter, is prepared to co-operate, work and work hard trying to bring about a better British Guiana. There is an enormous and exciting task ahead of us all. Some of us may not live to see the completion of it, but while we can, I would suggest that we try to get on with it. I for one, and those with whom I am associated, are anxious and willing to help. We should try to get on with the job and not spend precious time—because time is precious—on recriminations about the errors or omissions of the past.

To end, I would suggest that we recall the words used by the present Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, when he took over from Sir Neville Chamberlain, then Prime Minister, in that dark, terrible and troublous year, 1940, when England stood practically alone, Mr. Churchill as he was then, faced with pressure from certain persons in the Government for a purge of those in the House who were liable to be criticized for their shortcomings, said:

“If the present tries to sit in judgment on the past, it will lose the future.”

Mr. Correia: I rise to make a few remarks on the Budget Statement, but before I do so I would like to join the other hon. Members in complimenting the hon. the Financial Secretary for the manner in which he presented his Budget and, moreso, without added taxation. I listened with interest to hon. Members who spoke about agriculture, and on the drainage and irrigation of lands. I also listened with interest to the last speaker on the same subject, and we have heard him give a most edifying speech on the sugar industry.

I admit we are land starved, and in this connection I would like to turn the minds of Members away from the coast-

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lands to the interior. I would like to paint a little picture of the interior for them.

In the past the Dutch occupied nearly all the river lands, and their plantations and estates supported a fairly large population. Today, we find that those areas are neglected when they can be reclaimed and extended. If that is done, we will be in a position to avoid that continuous fight with the sea which the last hon. Member just described. It has been suggested in this Council that recommendations should be made to reclaim the riverain lands so as to alleviate the shortage of agricultural lands on the coastlands, which the hon. Mr. Jallal has said are suitable for rice growing. It is for this Council to recommend that in reclaimed areas lands not suited to agriculture should be devoted to beef, dairy and cattle products. Coconuts, coffee, cocoa and various other peasant crops can be produced by land settlement.

In tapping our riverain areas we will be able to fill the gap for our growing population in conditions of land shortage. It is up to Government to reclaim these areas in the near future, because they will be yet more need for agricultural lands. But we can only tap these lands economically by building roads at the same time. Eventually we will be able to push further and further into the interior, not only in search of agricultural lands but to tap our very rich timber forests. I admit what the hon. Member, Dr Fraser, said for his travels have taken him to the Rupununi savannahs, but there are fertile lands below and above the white sand belt, and these lands will be available for our growing population. British Guiana unfortunately has to go short of meat. Experiments were made by private persons in cattle rearing in the Bartica and Potaro areas and they were very successful. I suggest that in conjunction

with cattle rearing in those areas we can introduce fish farming—it was done successfully in China. Going from Bartica there are streams, and artificial lakes, and ponds can be provided.

I am also looking forward to the day when British Guiana will be able to sell meat to the West Indies and, perhaps, British Guiana will become the Argentine of the West Indies.

During the debate the Financial Secretary told us of the statement of the Conservator of Forests that the intake of greenheart timber at the mills should be as great as the known reserves as long as greenheart remained a mainstay of our economy, otherwise it will be exhausted in 20 or 30 years. Like the Governor, who referred to this at the opening of the Houston Sawmills, I do not share the view that greenheart has a very short term life. Greenheart, Sir, is a slow-growing timber. I have done a little timber working myself and happen to have worked a greenheart forest some years ago that had been worked some 40 years previously by another grant-holder. Unless one was careful he could not tell that the area had been worked before, because the young trees had already grown up and were fit for cutting again. I think Government should realize that our greenheart, with care, could be a source of national wealth for generations to come, especially if it is properly cured by trained officers of the Forest Department.

I would like to be very brief, because I think we have already spent much time reviewing the Budget and we should proceed further with our business. I want to say, however, that I should like this Council to recommend to Government the establishment of a Police post at the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela. Our Government has been neglecting this

frontier in the past with the result that other nationals were free to come and go across the boundary without any hindrance. I know that some of them are working our diamonds, while others are bleeding our balata and destroying the trees by cutting them down when they are finished. As a matter of fact, these people feel that we are trespassing on their preserves, and that is because Government have neglected that area too long. Other nationals feel they have a right to it because they have been using it all along.

I think the time has come when this Government must establish a Police post in the area in order to protect its rights and those of its people. Since the days when I was a boy I used to hear of claims by certain nationals to a very large area of our lands in the interior, and I notice that those claims were renewed at a Pan American conference, recently. Those people feel that they have a right to the lands, and I think it is all due to neglect by Government in not establishing ownership to the area in a definite manner. The sooner a Police post is established in that area, the sooner would the Colony as a whole benefit quite a lot.

There are large numbers of miners in that area, and quite recently a rich deposit of diamonds was reported to have been found there. I mentioned that in the course of my remarks in Finance Committee on the Cuyuni district, and I notice that the Development Plan provides for the construction of interior airstrips. I think a survey was made some time ago for the construction of an airstrip in the Cuyuni district, right on the border. A report was made in the matter, so far as I know, and I think an airstrip can be constructed in the area as cheaply as in any other mining district. It would render valuable service to the miners who have to face all the

dangers of the interior, since they would be able to get foodstuff and other supplies quicker and cheaper than they do at present.

The Financial Secretary: May I ask the hon. Member to mention the exact name of the place where he thinks this airstrip should be built?

Mr. Correia: The name of the place is the Upper Wenamu—between the British and the Venezuelan borders. I should also like to mention something about a certain item in the Estimates, and that is the \$1,500 grant by Government to the Bartica Village Council. This village council has been receiving the grant for quite a few years now—I cannot say exactly how many years—in lieu of rates on Government properties there. In the meantime, however, Government have built many other properties — and I now ask to be permitted to quote from my notes. The village valuation of Government property at the end of 1953 was \$110,000. Of course, I may say that these properties cannot be replaced for anything under \$400,000 because the \$110,000 is only the village valuation. I think, therefore, that the grant of \$1,500 by Government is very inadequate. The village, fortunately or unfortunately, was laid out in blocks as in the case of Georgetown. On account of this lay-out, the village has over seven miles of roads to upkeep—I think more than any other village in this Colony. Therefore, Government should take steps to assist the village council and the rate-payers of the village in the burden they have to carry with respect to Government property.

While I am on this area, I would like to suggest that the Eastern road (commencing from the Garage and con-

[Mr. Correia]

necting Bartica with the Potaro road) which has been declared a public road, should be maintained by the Public Works Department. That road carries all the heavy traffic to the interior, but the village of Bartica, with its very small population, has to upkeep it. I admit that the Transport and Harbours Department gives a very small grant for the upkeep of this road, but I would like to see Government establishing it as a public road in order to remove the burden of its upkeep from the village council and the taxpayers of Bartica.

During a sitting of the Finance Committee I referred to this matter, and I was told by the Financial Secretary that it was receiving the attention of Government. Only a week or two ago fire broke out early one morning aboard a Government launch—the *Torani*—which was moored alongside the T.H.D. stelling at Bartica. Fortunately, some willing hands nearby were able to cast the launch from her moorings and send her drifting, otherwise the stelling would have caught fire also. The Government properties at Bartica include the Police Station and the Post Office, and these could not be replaced at a cost of even \$100,000.

I hope Government will not wait until it is too late to do something in this matter. The main building centre is in First Avenue, and any fire in this Avenue would destroy the buildings completely. Therefore, there should be fire protection for the village, and I am asking Government and this Council to suggest that the Fire Chief be asked to prepare a plan for fire protection for the village, or sooner or later there might be a "Black Friday" at Bartica similar to those we have already had in Georgetown.

I would like to mention one other point, and it relates to medical facilities in the Mazaruni district. In the past Government had a Doctor stationed in the Mazaruni with two dispensers, but later the doctor was removed leaving the dispensers. Some time later, one dispenser was removed, leaving one only. From a map which I have in my possession here, it would be seen that the distance this dispenser has to travel in the performance of his duties—from Issano to Apiqua—is one of 12 miles. Then, he has another 100 miles of creek travelling to do. In all he has to travel about 200 miles while visiting the mining areas, and it is just as bad as if there was no dispenser, because he has too much travelling to do. The time has come when Government should see its way to give that district another dispenser, and also to remove the hospital from Kamakusa to Issano. I think the hon. Member, Mr. Macnie, can remember how Government became possessed of that hospital. The building was bought from a Company which was selling it cheaply, and Government has continued the dispensary there instead of incurring a little expenditure and taking it to a more central part of the district. We are asking for better medical facilities for the Mazaruni district, and in doing so we are not asking for much.

Lieut.-Col. Haywood: I should like to associate myself with those hon. Members who have joined in congratulating the hon. the Financial Secretary with respect to the Recurrent Budget that is now being discussed. I consider this Budget to be a bold one owing to the fact that we have additional or increased expenditure and no increased taxation. Whatever may be the comparative merits of direct and indirect taxation,

the fact remains that in due course any new taxation affects the whole community. We are all grateful to be relieved from carrying any extra burden at this juncture. Any comments that I have to add to those I made when we were in Finance Committee, I intend to reserve until we are in Committee again, and then to make them emphatic and real. I am not bent on criticising any individual Member, but I give it as an opinion that we are moving far too slowly in the passing of this Budget. This is the 18th calendar day to which this debate has been extended, and at 5 o'clock today it will be 8 days during which we have been in session for three hours each day. I do appreciate the desire of hon. Members to speak on the Concurrent Budget, and to express their views quite fully and frankly. I know that their views are being placed on record, and I think it is right that the public should be given a chance to find out what hon. Members think. At the same time, if that general desire is to be met, I think we should meet more often or our sessions should be much longer.

I think I have made it clear that I am not attacking the Members who have spoken. It is understandable that the Finance Committee, with many new members, was unable to complete its task in the time envisaged by the hon. the Financial Secretary. I think we have to excuse the normal progress we have made since then, especially when we remember that this is but one of two Budgets. The more important one—the Development Budget—is still to be laid before us finally, and it seems that one-sixth of the year will have passed before we finish with the first one. We do have a heavy task ahead of us, and in these critical times we

must be able to display a sense of urgency. As I have said, we have not yet achieved the facility to act wisely and expeditiously at the same time. We shall be judged in the end not by our words, but by our deeds. I think we have to remember that, and I do urge hon. Members to get on with the job. (Applause).

Mr. Speaker: If no other Member desires to join in the debate, I shall have to ask the Financial Secretary whether he wishes to reply this afternoon.

The Financial Secretary: Sir, I shall now proceed to reply to the Budget debate which is now in its fifth day. If I were expected to answer all the points made by hon. Members, I am afraid we should be another five days before getting through the Budget. I do not, however, propose to reply at length to all the points that have been made by hon. Members. I shall just observe as regards the last speaker who took his seat, that his speech was the shortest but it seemed to have drawn the loudest cheers, and I wish to see whether I cannot excel him in that respect. Before this Council goes into Committee, there are a few things I should like to say. It seems to be my turn now to extend congratulations, and I desire to congratulate the hon. Members who have spoken on the Budget, and especially those who have made their maiden speeches in this Council, on the excellent speeches to which we have had the pleasure to listen. I am sure I am right in saying that those speeches are well up to the level of the speeches we are accustomed to listen to in this Chamber.

There is one other point I should like to make, and that is the extent to which Council has recaptured the dignity and decorum that has until quite recently, distinguished its pro-

[The Financial Secretary]

ceedings. I wish to say that I desire to associate myself with those who, as I have observed, are determined to reach forward towards those things that seem desirable, and strongly to strive after the things that count. I hope that this spirit is a happy augury for the future, and I should now, Sir, like to sound a more personal note and say thanks to the Members of this Council for the graceful things they have said about my Budget Statement. It has been suggested to me that on these occasions, for a Financial Secretary to be popular, it is only necessary for him to present a balanced Budget and one without any additional taxation. That might be so, but I want to say that the Financial Secretary, on occasions such as the presentation of the Budget, occupies a rather focal position in which, perhaps quite undeservedly, he comes more into the limelight than he should. But, the Financial Secretary has behind him a small but efficient band of helpers who reflect the highest ideals and principles of what is sometimes referred to as the Silent Service. It is on behalf of my assistants that I am proud to accept the congratulations directed towards me.

Most of the hon. Members who have spoken have done so around the Development Budget. I am not surprised at that, and I must say that I am rather disappointed that I did not have an opportunity of presenting that Budget along with the recurrent Budget. But, hon. Members are aware of the reasons for that, and I do not intend to be drawn out today into speaking on that question. When the Development Budget has been presented by my hon. friend on my right (Sir Frank Mc David), ample opportunity will be given me to speak on development.

I should like to take this early opportunity of associating myself with those hon. Members who expressed gratitude to His Excellency the Governor for the task he performed in securing finance for our Development Budget. I think that if His Excellency did not do anything else during his regime here, he would still have made a vital and lasting contribution to the development and progress of this country. I propose, after the Budget has been presented to introduce—or ask some other hon. Member to do so—a motion thanking His Excellency for the part he has so far played and also thanking the Secretary of State for the Colonies for his munificent gesture of assistance at a crucial time of our history.

I cannot go into all the speeches made, but I was rather disappointed at the remarks of the hon. Member, Mr. Lee to the effect that the \$100,000 odd for the Bureau of Public Information is money being thrown away. I was very glad to see that hon. Members who spoke after him did not support him. I hope that the additional expenditure in this connection would be regarded as an investment in the education of our people whose outlook has been disturbed by harmful propaganda.

My friend, Mr. Jailal spoke on agriculture, and he was supported to some extent by Dr. Fraser that Government should take early steps to de-control beef and livestock. This is a matter which I myself mentioned in the Budget Statement, and in referring to the question today, I wish that the hon. Member (Mr. Jailal) were here. I have already initiated action with representatives of the Industry to see what can be done. It is not only a question of de-control—that is very simple—but we all know there is a perennial shortage of beef cattle. What is wanted is the provision of in-

centives which would lead to the expansion of the industry to a point of self-sufficiency.

My friend, Mr. Correia said he looked forward to the day when this country would be the Argentine of this part of the world in the field of the beef and the livestock industry. I think that is a dream. If we can get as far as self-sufficiency, I think that is as far as we can hope to go. My friend, Mr. Bobb, referred to the coconut industry as well as the pig-rearing and coconut oil industries. I wish to say in respect of these that a comprehensive report has been written. I am not sure that that report has been discussed in the Legislature. I think it is a very good report, and if it has not been laid, I think steps should be taken to do so because it makes very valuable recommendations and puts the pig rearing and crude oil industries on a more scientific basis. I think the hon. Member was fearful that sanctions would be imposed against the makers of crude oil, but I wish to say that Government does not intend to employ any sanctions against them. I think the Development Budget will provide the means for putting these industries on a better basis.

Mr. Bobb also referred to the training of Civil Servants. It seems to me that the provision which I have made for this purpose has escaped the attention of my friend. Compared with the provision made in 1952, slightly over \$10,000, and that of 1953, \$19,000, the figure for this year is \$96,000. I think my friend would agree with me that that is acceleration *in excelsis*. I hope the people who will go away through this training scheme and those who will avail themselves of the opportunities afforded them will come back and make good citizens. The experience of the past in this respect has not been happy.

My friend, Mr. Luckhoo, challenged my statement that capital is knocking at the door and went on to deny that this was the case. However, I agree with him that it is important we should encourage private capital and the only way to do so is by making conditions attractive. Risk capital is shy. It wants to know in addition to a particular investment being economic that tax concessions granted to attract it will not be arbitrarily withdrawn. Another thing capital wants to know is that labour relations are stable. As regards capital knocking at the door, there is right now in this Colony a representative of a group of very wealthy United States capitalists who is interested in two big projects. I have introduced this representative to my hon. friend on my right who has taken over the portfolio of Lands and Mines from me, and I think he was suitably impressed.

My friend, Mr. Ramphal gave me quite a lecture on my being cautious in the preparation of the Budget. But I would like to say this: if he is trying in his own budget to put into effect what he is advocating, I hope he will not think me rude if I should serve him on a silver salver some of that advice which he directed to me. I do think that anyone who spends what he has not got is asking for a great deal of trouble.

My friend, Mr. Macnie spoke of the duty on films. I am sorry he took me unaware, and I have no information on the point. I shall, however, certainly look into the matter. He also referred to film censorship. As I promised, I referred the matter to the authority concerned and the answer was that there was a Board, but it has never functioned; nevertheless I was assured that steps were being taken to re-introduce the Board. I shall see that it does not fall asleep.

The Chief Secretary: It will not fall asleep. (*Laughter*).

The Financial Secretary: I am very glad. I do not think there is any other matter on which I wish to make comment at the moment. If there is, I shall deal with it later. I therefore move that the Bill be read a second time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask to be allowed to place on record some idea of the conditions obtaining on sugar estates on my first visit to one 65 years ago, and on which an overseer, a relative of mine, was then employed. The estate was Chateau Margot, on the East Coast, and overseers were then being paid a salary at the rate of \$360 a year, and took their meals at the Manager's table—during which period no conversation between them was possible, and no objection to the quality or otherwise of the meals supplied could be made, the Manager being paid a monthly sum to board the overseers. Immediately after dinner they found their way to their lodgings, then merely a barn—their wants being attended to by an East Indian boy who was paid 6/- a week. There were in those days no electric lights, no telephones, no recreation of any kind, clubs or messes being unknown. One went to bed about 8.30 p.m. The position of the overseers, accustomed to a better standard of living than labourers, was then very little better than theirs, and not far removed from a form of slavery.

Conditions of labour for workers were: one shilling a day under contract of indenture, and they had to work fully five days a week. Labourers were

then often, almost weekly, prosecuted in the Magistrates' Courts where I attended and sometimes pleaded guilty in an endeavour to persuade the magistrate to make the fine \$3 instead of the customary \$5 or in default of payment, imprisonment for seven days.

One more reference I would like to make about the situation as regards conditions on the sugar estates in years gone by. The late Mr. Quintin Hogg was the owner of Bel Air, the first sugar estate adjacent to the City. If you look at the records of 1895 on this sea defence question you will see that he gave evidence before a Royal Commission then sitting in London and explained that the expenditure on his estate in resisting the invasion of the sea was enormous because sea defence methods, as some hon. Members know, in those days consisted of placing fascine against the mud dams which were washed away almost as soon as they were put up. He said in effect to that commission, "I cannot continue to maintain my estate with this expenditure and unless Government comes to the rescue I shall crop the estate." As early as that it was being requested by planters that maintenance of the Sea Defences be made a Colonial Question and that the then existing sea wall should be continued, but the Government of the day did nothing, or we should not have been in this position today. With indentured labour at a shilling a day and cement at five shillings a bag the sea defences on the East Coast could have been erected at a very small cost. Mr. Quintin Hogg whose cultivation extended as far as Queenstown Ward was forced to abandon Plantation Bel Air.

I would also like to refer to the late Mr. William Russell, a sugar estate proprietor in days gone by, whose statue stands in Stabroek Market Square, and to the valuable service he rendered the

Colony. Not so long ago it was proposed to remove the statue from its present position. Mr. Russell was responsible for the establishment of both the Lamaha and the Boerasirie Conservancies and people have forgotten their vast importance to the Colony's economy. The statue is there to commemorate an important contribution to the welfare of the Colony, and I am sure one of these days, if we are not careful, we shall get up to find it gone.

With reference to interior travel, I can tell you of my first experience in 1895 and what conditions then existed.

We went to Potaro, but this is the point I wish to make: having got to Tumatumari we had to abandon the boat at the landing and were transported to the place we had to go in donkey carts. I only mention this because of what I have heard.

The Financial Secretary: I ask if it be agreed that the Council be adjourned until tomorrow.

Suggestion put, and agreed to.

Council adjourned to 2.00 p.m. on Friday, 19th February, 1954.