

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 18TH JULY, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT

The President, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson (acting).

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C. (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. J. I. de Aguiar (Central Demerara).

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).

The Hon. J. B. Singh, O.B.E. (Demerara—Essequibo).

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.E. (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E. (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E. (Georgetown South).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. H. C. Humphrys, K.C. (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North Western District).

The Hon. A. G. King (Demerara River).

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. A. M. Edun (Nominated).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).

The Hon. T. T. Thompson (Nominated).

The Hon. W. J. Raatgever (Nominated).

The Clerk read the prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 21st of June, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MR. M. B. G. AUSTIN'S APPRECIATION

The PRESIDENT: I have pleasure in informing Members of the Council that I have heard from Mr. Austin who has asked me to be kind enough to transmit to hon. Members his heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation of the kind remarks made in the Council Chamber on the occasion of his resignation as a Member of the Legislative Council.

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

As regards the Order of the Day, I would ask the indulgence of the Council to move the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to get through as many of the items as we can. Of course, it would not be possible to get through all today, but we will do as many as we can and take the others tomorrow. As there is a fairly large number of Members in attendance and as many of them have come from far away, I suggest that there should be a suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders and, unless hon. Members object, that the Attorney-General should move the first and other readings of the Bastardy Bill and also of the Wortmanville Housing Bill. It is very desirable that these Bills should become law as soon as possible and if hon. Members agree we would go through with them now. After that, we will take the rather controversial motion relating to the purchase of Davson's property and such other business as we can.

ERECTOR OF NEW POST OFFICE

There is another urgent matter and that is the motion of which notice is to be given by the Attorney-General with respect to the erection of a new Post Office I should explain that it is urgently necessary that this Legislative Council should decide what we are going to do about the new Post Office. Mr. Gray of the firm of Messrs. Watkins and Partners is leaving for London on July 28 and he has asked me to give some indication as to what the wishes of Government are in the matter. I have to apologise to hon. Members for giving such short notice, but I have caused to be circularised among you a report by Mr. Gray who had extensive discussions with the Executive Council and myself on the matter. If hon. Members would study the report tonight I think we would be able to deal with the motion tomorrow. It is not a very long report and all the facts are clearly set forth in it. Although I do not suggest that we decide the matter today, I hope you will allow the Attorney-General to move the motion tomorrow.

PURCHASE OF DAVSON PROPERTY

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. Fraser, Acting) communicated the following Message to the Council:—

MESSAGE NO. 4

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

Honourable Members of Council will recall that in September 1945 the sum of \$26,500 was placed on the supplementary estimate for the purpose of acquiring the property owned by Messrs. S. Davson and Company, Limited, in the Strand, New Amsterdam, as Government felt that the present residential accommodation, which is confined to the third flat at Colony House, is totally inadequate to provide for the Governor, the Judges and other senior officials visiting New Amsterdam on official business. Indeed, under the present arrangement Colony House is fully occupied for many months in the year by the Presiding Judge and Court officials when the Supreme Court is in session, with the result that other officials visiting New Amsterdam on Government business have to seek accommodation at hotels, etc., with consequential increase in expenditure on subsistence allowance.

When the proposal to purchase

this property last came before the Council criticism was expressed by some Members who regarded the price asked as excessive and the item was deferred for further consideration. The house has now been carefully inspected and valued by a senior officer of the Public Works Department. The report submitted states that the house is a slate roofed, substantially built, two-storeyed structure in good repair and completely mosquito proof. Its lower storey contains a drawing-room and dining room panelled in Colony woods with concealed lighting. A gallery adjoins these rooms on two sides, with kitchen, pantry and a store room in a separate wing. The upper storey has three large bedrooms, each with its own bath and lavatory attached and a large attic with bedroom. The ground underneath the building is completely concreted and has four servant rooms floored in wood.

The house is beautifully sited, its grounds are spacious, well laid out and in very good preservation. The total of \$26,500 includes, of course, the acquisition of approximately 4.6 acres of the river-side land, the purchase of which will be most convenient since Government already owns the land on both sides of this property. Government is entirely satisfied from the valuations submitted by the Public Works Department that the property is at this date well worth \$26,500 which Messrs. Davson and Company are still willing to accept. The Company are however unwilling to sell the land without the house.

In view of these considerations Council is invited to approve of provision being made in the estimates for the acquisition of this property.

W. L. HEAPE,

Officer Administering the
Government.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

British Guiana.

4th July, 1946.

MINIMUM PRICES AT GOVERNMENT
PRODUCE DEPOT

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Parkinson, acting) communicated the following Message to the Council:—

MESSAGE NO. 5

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

Honourable Members will recall Messages No. 9 of 1944 and No. 1 of 1945 in connection with the guarantee

of certain minimum prices to be paid for a specified number of farm products by the Government Produce Depot.

2. The period covered by the present guaranteed prices expires on the 14th instant and the *ad hoc* Marketing Committee has recommended a renewal of the guarantee for the period July 15, 1946, to July 14, 1947, with certain price modifications, and the Legislative Council Food Production Committee supports the recommendation.

3. The prices recommended are as follows:—

Plantains	2c. per lb.
Sweet Cassava	1¼c.
Sweet Potatoes	2½c.
Eddoes	1¾c.
Tannias	3¼c. „
Yams (B & B)	4½c. „ „
Blackeye Peas	12 c. „ „
Vita Peas ..	8 c. „ „
Pigeon Peas	10 c. „ „

and it is anticipated that the loss involved in this guarantee may reach \$50,000. In this connection it may be mentioned that the loss for the year now ending will be approximately \$45,000 instead of the \$65,000 mentioned in Message No. 1 of 1945.

4. It is considered that these guarantees have caused material improvement in —

- The total food supply;
- The variety of foods available;
- The living standard of the farming population;

and in view of this and of the unsatisfactory food situation of the world at large, I have the honour to invite Honourable Members to record, in principle, their concurrence with the proposals.

W. L. HEAPE,
Officer Administering the
Government.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana.
4th July, 1946.

RIVER DEFENCES ON WEST BANK
DEMERARA.

The COLONIAL TREASURER communicated the following Message to the Council:—

MESSAGE NO. 6

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,

For some time now erosion has

been causing deterioration of the river defences on the West Bank of the Demerara River and, despite temporary repairs year by year to existing defences, the position in the La Retraite, Sisters, Good Intent area has become critical.

The policy of Government in regard to the construction of river defences is that financial responsibility should normally fall on the local authorities and/or the individual proprietors concerned, unless the question of damage to Government property is involved or the matter is one in which the interests of the community as a whole are affected. In the area in question the safety of the public road is now gravely threatened and in any case the local authorities and individual proprietors concerned are quite unable to pay for the construction of major works.

The Consulting Engineer recommends, with the advice of the Sea Defence Board, that the river dam at Good Intent should be retired and a new sluice constructed, and that a reinforced concrete wall should be erected at La Retraite and Sisters where it is not possible to retire the river-dam. These proposals are estimated to cost \$54,300 as follows:—

<i>La Retraite</i> —1,162 feet of reinforced concrete wall @ \$20 a foot	\$23,240
<i>Sisters</i> — 700 feet of reinforced concrete wall @ \$20 a foot.	14,000
<i>Good Intent</i> —1,840 feet of earth dam and new reinforced concrete sluice	14,000
	\$51,240
War Bonus	3,060
TOTAL	\$54,300

On the completion of this work, which is estimated to take about twelve months, the first step will have been taken to make the position secure in this area, but of course still further works may have to be undertaken.

I have gone over the whole area myself and am satisfied that there is urgent need for action. I accordingly, with the advice of Executive Council, invite the Legislative Council to approve of the provision of the necessary funds being made under Head XLIV A—Public Works—Drain-

age, Irrigation and Sea Defence—
Extraordinary.

W. L. HEAPE,
Officer Administering the
Government.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
British Guiana.
4th July, 1946.

PAPERS LAID

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on
the table the following documents :—

The report of the Colonial Treasurer
for the year 1944.

Schedule of applications for gratuities
from dependents of deceased
teachers for the period July 1944
to December, 1945.

Report of the Registrar of Trade
Unions for the year 1945.

Public Officers Leave (Passages) Regu-
lations, 1946.

Legislative Council (Elections)
(Amendment No. 2) Regulations,
No. 15 of 1946.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr.
Holder) gave notice of the introduction and
first reading of the following Bills :—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance
further to amend the Bastardy
Ordinance, Chapter 147."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance
to establish a scheme for providing
housing accommodation for persons
of the working class in Wortman-
ville in the City of Georgetown and
for purposes connected therewith."

ERECTION OF NEW POST OFFICE

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave
notice of the following motion :—

"That this Council approves of
the erection of a building to accom-
modate the Post Office and other Gov-
ernment offices at a cost not exceeding
\$700,000 and, further approves of the
cost being met from the funds raised
under the Public Loan Ordinance,
1945."

MINIMUM PRICES AT GOVERNMENT PRODUCE DEPOT

The COLONIAL SECRETARY gave
notice of the following motion :—

"That, with reference to the
Officer Administering the Govern-
ment's Message No. 5 of the 4th of July,
1946, this Council concurs with the
recommendation of the *ad hoc* Mar-
keting Committee that the Government
Produce Depot minimum prices
guarantee, as set out in the Message,
should be extended for a further year
from July 15th, 1946, to July 14th,
1947."

PURCHASE OF DAVSON PROPERTY

The COLONIAL TREASURER gave
notice of the following motions—

"That, with reference to the
Officer Administering the Government's
Message No. 4 of the 4th of July, 1946,
this Council approves of the purchase
of the property owned by Messrs. S.
Davson and Company, Limited, in the
Strand, New Amsterdam, together with
approximately 4.6 acres of land on the
river side for \$26,500."

WEST BANK DEMERARA RIVER DEFENCE

"That, with reference to the Officer
Administering the Government's Mes-
sage No. 6 of the 4th of July, 1946, this
Council approves of the provision of
\$54,300 for the purpose of re-
conditioning the river defences in the
La Retraite, Sisters Good Intent area."

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

LEG. CO. ELECTIONS ORDINANCE

Mr. JACOB gave notice of the fol-
lowing motion:—

"WHEREAS certain provisions
under Legislative Council (Elections)
Ordinance No. 13 of 1945, as herein-
after detailed, are not in the best in-
terest of the inhabitants of the Colony
of British Guiana;

"AND WHEREAS certain Regu-
lations made under the Legislative
Council (Elections) Ordinance, 1945,
as hereinafter detailed, are also not in
the best interests of the inhabitants
of the Colony of British Guiana;

BE IT RESOLVED —

"(a) that the words "during the
qualifying period" regarding
qualification of voters be de-

leted in section 3 wherever they occur, and that sub-section 8 of section 3 be also deleted;

- “(b) that provision be made in the Ordinance to enable a legally constituted Attorney of any eligible person to be empowered to register that person as a voter if he or she is temporarily absent from the Colony.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED —

- “(a) that Regulation 6 regarding declarations in support of Claim be deleted;
- “(b) that Regulation 3 (1) be amended by substituting the words “15th day of August” in place of 15th day of June;
- “(c) that Regulation 9 (1) be amended by substituting the words “31st day of October, 1946” for 31st day of August, 1946;
- “(d) that all other dates for the publication, preparation by Revising Officer, and final publication of the list of voters under Part One of the Regulations be extended for a period of two months.”

QUEEN'S COLLEGE, MILK CONTROL & RURAL HOUSING

Mr. JACOB on behalf of Mr. LEE gave notice of the following motions:—

- “(a) That immediate steps be taken to increase the accommodation at Queen's College.
- “(b) That a Committee of elected members of the Legislative Council be appointed to enquire into the control and management of the Board of Control for Milk.
- “(c) That Government should introduce legislation to ensure the proper and successful carrying out of the Housing Scheme in rural areas.”

ORDER OF THE DAY

MINOR OFFENCES IN TOWN

Mr. ROTH asked and the COLONIAL SECRETARY laid over replies to the following questions:—

Q.— Will Government consider favourably the amendment of Section 156 of Chapter 13 of the laws so that it shall be an offence for —

- (a) any pedestrian to walk along any road provided with pave-

ments or footpaths except for the purpose of crossing that road;

- (b) any pedestrian to loiter on or in any way cause an obstruction on any road;
- (c) any person to drive a motor car or other vehicle in the city of Georgetown with lights which dazzle or annoy other users of the road.

- A — (a) It is not considered desirable to create an offence as proposed;
- (b) Consideration is being given to the suggestion of the hon. Member;
- (c) It is already an offence, under regulation 31 (3) of the Motor Vehicles Regulations, 1932, for any person driving any motor vehicle on any road to use any headlight the rays from which may dazzle or confuse other users of the road or make it difficult or unsafe for them to ride, drive or walk thereon.

BILLS — FIRST READING

The following Bills were read the first time:—

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance further to amend the Bastardy Ordinance, Chapter 147.”

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to establish a scheme for providing housing accommodation for persons of the working class in Wortmanville in the City of Georgetown and for purposes connected therewith. (The Attorney-General).”

WORTMANVILLE HOUSING SCHEME BILL

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended to enable me to move the second reading of a Bill intituled—

“An Ordinance to establish a scheme for providing housing accommodation for persons of the working class in Wortmanville in the City of Georgetown and for purposes connected therewith.”

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Motion put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It would be within the recollection of hon. Members that on Thursday, November 22, 1945,

His Excellency the Governor made a pronouncement in this Council in connection with this housing scheme. His Excellency stated that

“A proposition was under consideration and that while it would have been proper for it to have been undertaken by the Town Council that, of course, was impossible owing to legal restrictions, and that the Central Government would facilitate early action.”

His Excellency, continuing, said:—

“The proposition is for the building of 48 dwellings in Wortmanville on a site which can be rented. I have authorised the taking of the lease in the name of Government, and I have also authorised the contracting firm to go on with the building. The estimated cost is \$80,000. I have done so on the very definite understanding that a special housing authority is created for the purpose of carrying this particular scheme, and this will require a brief Ordinance. But rather than delay action, I have authorised the taking of the lease and the guarantee of the funds by Government.”

His Excellency then went on to say:—

“I feel sure that Members of this Council will support the action taken as have the Members of the Executive Council and will be prepared to pass the necessary supplementary expenditure if that becomes necessary. For the moment I would treat any expenditure as an advance and ultimately it may, of course, be taken over by the new authority. But what I would make very clear is this: that the scheme has been set in motion because of the urgent necessity of action. It has not been framed in the first instance on such a footing as can ensure that it will pay for itself. I am not without hope that we may be able to put it on such a footing as will qualify for financial assistance under the Development and Welfare Act. But as Members are very well aware, pending the announcement of the allocation of total funds available to this Colony, and thereafter the difficult decisions on priorities, it is quite impossible for me to anticipate that such assistance will be forthcoming.

“Members will remember the difference in the position when I asked them to agree to the advance of funds for drainage and irrigation, housing, land settlement, and the building of schools. In those cases there was no question about priority and the schemes had in detail already received the approval in

principle of both the Comptroller and the Secretary of State. In the present case we are very far from that. Moreover, as I have said, there is no chance of the scheme itself paying its way. It will not in any way be regarded as a precedent. In other words, if we do not get assistance under Development and Welfare Act somebody will have to stand the balance that cannot be recovered from rents. I am not going to suggest any final decision on that, but again I would say that I feel very sure that Members of this Council would rather that Government took this risk in the immediate present in order to get some beginning with the very much needed housing.”

Hon. Members will appreciate the fact that the Legislative Council has already approved of the capital amount of \$80,000 being charged to the Colony in accordance with Resolution No. 5 of 1945, and this Bill now comes before this Council to implement what was then stated by His Excellency the Governor. As will be seen from the memorandum of Objects and Reasons, the object of the Bill is to establish in Wortmanville, Georgetown, a housing scheme for the accommodation of persons of the working class and buildings are being erected for that purpose on certain lands leased from the Incorporated Trustees of the Church in the Diocese of Guiana. The management and control of the scheme is to be vested in a committee of three persons appointed by the Governor. Four buildings containing 12 apartments each will be erected and let to persons now occupying insanitary or overcrowded houses, or have large families, or are living under insanitary housing conditions. It is estimated that the cost will not exceed \$98,000 and to that extent the cost of construction will be defrayed from the funds referred to in Clause 7 of the Bill.

It will be appreciated that when His Excellency made his pronouncement the estimated cost of the scheme was \$80,000 but Government has since been advised that the estimated cost will now not exceed \$98,000. So far as the Bill itself is concerned, hon. Members will see that clause 3 provides for the establishment of a Housing Scheme Committee. “Scheme” has been defined in clause 2 as meaning “the establishment in Wortmanville in the city of Georgetown, consisting of the lands described in the Schedule to this Ordinance

and the buildings and erections thereon created under this Ordinance for the purpose of providing housing accommodation for persons of the working classes."

The next clause, 3, provides for the establishment of a committee comprised of three persons to be appointed by the Governor. The members of this committee will hold office for a term of 2 years and will be eligible for reappointment from time to time. The Governor will have the right to appoint a member of the committee to be the Chairman and may at any time revoke that appointment and appoint another Chairman out of the members of the committee as he may think fit. Under clause 4, the right, title and interest of the Colony of British Guiana in regard to this scheme will be vested in the Committee. It will also be observed that under this clause the Committee will have the general management, regulation and control of the scheme for the purposes of the Ordinance. In other words, the Committee will be the landlords and will have the responsibility of looking after the scheme.

In clause 5 (3) there is a provision setting out that:

"(3) No building, apartment, flat or room shall be let by the Committee to any person who is not a person of the working class."

In clause 5 (5) it will be noticed that:

"(5) The Committee may at any time grant to any tenant such rebates from rent, subject to such terms and conditions as it may think fit."

I suggest that this is a necessary provision because occasions might arise where the Committee would say that because of special circumstances they would not collect the full amount of rent that a tenant was liable to pay. This provision, in other words, has been inserted so as to give the Committee a discretionary power, so there would be nothing to prevent the Committee from waiving a few cents by way of rent where the circumstances deserve such consideration.

In clause 5 (8) provision is made for the delivery to every tenant of a rent book in which certain things have to be inserted so that the tenants will know their position and will not be able to say "we were not told what the conditions were." In sub-clause

(9) of the same clause, provision is made for the insertion of any "other fact or matter required by any bye-law to be entered therein..." In clause 13, power is given to the Committee to make bye-laws with regard to the several matters set out in that clause. Clause 7 deals with the financial provisions and there it will be noticed—and I wish to draw this to the attention of hon. Members—that in clause 7 (1) it is stated that:

"(1) The Treasurer shall, from time to time on the warrant of the Governor, pay and advance to the Committee sums of money, not exceeding in the aggregate ninety-eight thousand dollars, as the capital money expendable, for the purposes of this Ordinance."

That is to say, the estimated cost of the scheme, Government is now advised, would be in the neighbourhood of \$98,000. In a communication received from the Mayor and Town Council of Georgetown, there is quoted an extract from a letter from the Directors of Messrs. Sproston Ltd. in which they suggest that a figure of \$98,000 be now quoted, as a revision of the structure was requested after their original estimate was made. We are advised that this revised figure of \$98,000 is the quotation which the Colonial Secretary has accepted. In other words, Government wanted to know the amount over and above the \$80,000 quoted originally and put before this Council in His Excellency the Governor's pronouncement and in their communication Messrs. Sproston Ltd. have stated that the figure of \$98,000 can be regarded as sufficient to cover the cost of the scheme. I hope I have made that perfectly clear. With regard to the Bill, it will be appreciated that clause 7 (2) states:

"(2) The Committee shall pay to the Colonial Treasurer interest on the said capital money, or such part thereof as the Legislative Council may determine, at such rate as the Council shall fix."

In other words, it is left to this Council to say how much of the capital amount should bear interest, and the rate of interest to be paid. Sub-clause (3) of the said clause says:—

"(3) The said capital money shall be charged in the accounts of

the Colony in such manner as the Legislative Council may by resolution direct, and shall be repaid by the Committee to the Treasurer at the times and in the instalments set out in any resolution of the Legislative Council."

I have already pointed out to hon. Members that this Council has already approved by resolution the capital money of \$80,000 being charged as a loan against the Colony, and the Colonial Treasurer has listed the amount to be included in the Supplementary Loan Schedule. Provision is made in clause 7 (4) that

"(4) The Legislative Council may by resolution waive repayment of such portion of the said capital money and any interest thereon as it may think fit."

Therefore, in so far as the amount of money and interest to be repaid is concerned, that is a matter which has been left to the Legislative Council. In sub-clause (5) it is stated that:

"(5) The Committee shall apply the said capital money, and any other money which may otherwise be advanced to it for the purposes of the scheme, for defraying the cost of constructing and completing the scheme."

I wish to draw the attention of hon. Members to the phrase "and any other money which may otherwise be advanced to it for defraying the cost of constructing and completing the scheme." It may be suggested that having regard to the fact that we have put in an amount which ought to be taken as the ultimate point of capital expenditure—\$98,000—that amount could not be altered, but one cannot foresee every possibility and therefore those words have been inserted in case it becomes necessary for the amount of \$98,000 to be exceeded. Government hopes, however, that it will not. We do not know whether the Mayor and Town Council of Georgetown wish to contribute to the scheme, and therefore room is left for "any other money" — not necessarily money advanced by Government but by any other body.

In clause 10, provision is made for half-yearly reports by the Committee and these will include —

"(a) a report of its transactions

to the end of the last preceding half-year,

(b) a full statement of income and expenditure audited by an auditor approved by the Governor-in-Council, and

(c) a balance sheet showing the correct position of the affairs of the scheme."

This Council, therefore, will be fully apprised of the working of the scheme. I do not think it is necessary for me to emphasise the desirability—in fact the necessity of a housing scheme of this nature, or for dealing with the question of housing in general. Perhaps I should take this opportunity to inform this Council that we have now in draft a Bill dealing generally with the question of housing. Perhaps when that Bill comes before this Council for consideration it may be found necessary or desirable to transfer the rights and powers, duties and responsibilities, which have been dealt with by this Bill now before the Council, to the General Central Authority in an all-embracing covering Ordinance. I do not think it is necessary for me to add anything more to these remarks with regard to the necessity for a Bill of this nature. So I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

The PRESIDENT: Would it be right Mr. Attorney-General to say this Bill is a temporary measure to legalize the work on the Housing Scheme? We hope that the Central Housing Scheme Bill will be enacted shortly or before the end of 1946, when the Legislative Council will decide whether it wants to cancel this Bill or wants to get this housing scheme completely settled. At the moment, unless you pass this measure, there is really no authority to run the scheme when it is completed.

Mr. EDUN: I am very glad for that last statement by the hon. the Attorney-General. That has somewhat clarified the whole atmosphere, because in going through this Bill I see so many loopholes. First of all I want to bring to the attention of this Council that although this scheme will be under a kind of statutory body governing forty-eight tenants, there is no provision for the rights of the tenants at all,

You see, sir, we have had very much experience about these statutory bodies in the past; as for example, the Transport and Harbours Board and the Rice Marketing Board. The Transport and Harbours Board is something that stinks in the noses of good citizens nowadays. The Rice Marketing Board—I am not happy about the conditions which I hear exist there—is also a statutory body. Then now this is to be another statutory Committee. I thought, sir, that a very comprehensive scheme of Urban and Rural Housing would have been put forward to this Council. But if I am to understand that this is an experiment to embrace a comprehensive scheme of housing, certainly I shall watch with interest its development. That is why I will not decide on the scheme as it is. Care must be taken in the appointment of the members of the Committee. We want persons who will have the interest of the tenants at heart also. I want that to be clearly understood. I will not say anything more, because having clarified the atmosphere by your last statement that it is a temporary measure, sir, I am looking forward to how it will work. For that reason I support the Bill.

Mr. JACKSON: I have all along thought that the long range system of housing that appears on the sugar estates was too old and unwieldy, and I have noticed considerable improvement on the sugar estates in the building of small cottages for families of two or three persons. But, as I understand this Bill, they are to have four houses each to house twelve families. I have not seen the houses, but I do not understand how one house can accommodate twelve families, and large families at that. I should like to know, sir, although this might be a matter of details, whether the walls of these barracks would be sound-proof. It might be a very difficult thing for persons to live in apartment houses that are not sound-proof. I would like to hear something in that respect. I had all along thought that separate houses would be built for families, and, really, I could not conceive one house for twelve families. It seems to me rather peculiar and I would like to receive information on that point.

The PRESIDENT: The Mayor is not

here, but some Member may be able to tell you.

Mr. FERREIRA: I had the pleasure of going over the buildings with the Mayor, and I was informed that those buildings had been erected in accordance with a plan made by Mr. de Sylas, who should be an authority on the subject. I can say that the floors are double lined with a sheet of cardboard between. From what I see, I think, it is something for which the Mayor and Town Council of Georgetown, and particularly the Mayor, should be commended, having got a move on under conditions in which there was so much talk and so little action. I think that if the last speaker and every other Member of this Council visit the site, they would be satisfied that those buildings are something creditable. I will not say they are of the best as the best materials were not available, but certainly they denote a step forward. I would not like it to be thought that they are anything like the long ranges on the sugar estates.

Mr. GONSALVES: I think it is appropriate that I should follow after the last speaker, especially in view of his last remark wherein he compliments the Georgetown Town Council for doing something good. It is not always that the Town Council gets a compliment from the community, and if we get it from the Legislative Council I regard it rather as an honour to inform the Town Council. I am sorry the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight), who is Mayor of Georgetown, is not in his seat, because he knows more about this matter than I do. I know that at this moment he is engaged in the Magistrates' Court in some case and, perhaps, that has delayed his attendance here this afternoon. The scheme, I know, is progressing. Whilst, speaking for myself, I am somewhat disappointed that it has not made better progress than it has done; the tardiness in the carrying on of the work has been attributed to the difficulty in getting materials. With the passing of this Bill the matter will be transferred to a Committee which will be appointed under this Ordinance by the Governor. I do hope that Committee will have better influence and better opportunities in getting

materials from the sawmill proprietors and those interested in the timber industry than the Government has had in the past. Government, as far as I see, was not able to get these people to supply the necessary materials to carry on the work. I do hope this Committee will have and will exercise better influence in enabling the work to progress faster than it has done.

With regard to the formation of this Committee I observe that the clause says it is to be a Committee of three persons to be appointed by the Governor. But it is silent as to who are the persons to constitute the Committee. I do certainly think that, since the Town Council has been associated with this work and since the scheme is in Georgetown, the Mayor ought to be a member of the Committee. If Government thinks the Mayor is too busy and does not fancy his appointment, then certainly another member of the Town Council should be appointed. But, I think, the Mayor, who is the Executive Head of the Town Council, should be one of the members of the Committee. I am inclined to go even further and say that, perhaps, he might be regarded as the Chairman when the time comes. But that is a matter entirely for the Governor who, when appointing the Chairman, may exercise his discretion in the same way that he has done under the Sewerage and Water Ordinance. Up to now the Mayor has been appointed the Chairman of the Georgetown Sewerage and Water Commissioners. I hope this scheme which is on the tapis is only the commencement of further proposals or schemes which will be undertaken.

There have been discussions within recent times, and during the last week or two conferences between the members of the Georgetown Town Council and certain members of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, and we have been discussing other proposals with the view of seeing what can be done in the way of giving immediate relief. I think at the conference it was suggested that an appointment might be made with His Excellency with the view to discussing the matter further. I hope when that is done, we will be able to get on much quicker and, with the assistance of the members of the Chamber

of Commerce, to find some way in which schemes can be undertaken immediately and put into operation. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo is here now and, perhaps, he will have more to say on the scheme than I can, but, I certainly think that we have had a move on and it is necessary to have this legislation passed.

The PRESIDENT: There is one point I would like to make. The hon. Member hopes the Committee will have more influence with the sawmills. I might point out that we are now endeavouring to remove all influence with the sawmills. We do not want influence.

Mr. GONSALVES: I am speaking of good influence, sir, not bad one.

Mr. THOMPSON: I regret to have to strike a little discordant note along the lines the last speakers have travelled. I heard the hon. the Attorney-General tell us about improved conditions. I notice that the Bill speaks of working classes and I am just wondering how far those phrases are applicable. We have to commend the Town Council on their effort to solve this housing situation, but I may say at the outset that I prefer to see twelve houses put up instead of the four buildings with forty-eight rooms that I have seen there. I have always advocated that it is a very good thing for Members of this Council to visit these places and familiarize themselves with conditions as they exist. I have had a look through the buildings, and apart from the surrounding sanitary conditions which will improve later, I do not think that these buildings as they are laid out are leading us anywhere further than the White Scourge. I can assure you, sir, that if these buildings are closed up on a rainy day I doubt very much that the residents would know when the sun is sinking in the West. There we have very heavy windows through which it is utterly impossible for sunlight to penetrate, and I think that buildings which are being put up to improve conditions should be given a little more tasteful appearance, a little more improved health conditions. I have visited the buildings a little while ago and found heavy windows all around them. When they are closed what is the position of the people living there? We are out to improve conditions—

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I do not like to interrupt hon. Members, but I desire to say that quite recently a change has been made in those windows. The windows are being changed.

Mr. THOMPSON: I am glad to hear that the windows are being changed. When the change is made I hope they will not be all board, as a little glass will help to improve the appearance. I am saying that Members of this Council would do well to have a look at those windows. You have the drawing-room leading to the bathroom; I do not think it reflects nicely on the designers. I do not think we should erect such things and call them improved buildings. Go around other parts of the City—to Queenstown and even beyond to Kitty—and see the kind of buildings the people are trying to erect on their own. I think, if Government is initiating anything, it should put before the people something that they would try to emulate and so improve their lot. If you say that because the houses are for the working classes they are to be dumped anywhere, then it is all very good; but I am sure that in my home my horse is provided with more light than I have seen in those buildings.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I am not going to deal with any of the details of this Bill. I am more concerned with the structure on which this Bill has been made. As I see it, it seems as if this scheme is going to be a sort of partnership between Government on the one hand and the Georgetown Town Council on the other. Government is apparently going to put up the money and the Town Council is going to run the scheme. That seems to me a very good partnership. Provision is made here for the appointment of a Committee. I am not going to be like one hon. Member who spoke here today and who despised what is known as a democratic principle—the appointment of a Committee—by saying that committees are no good. I would rather see it work first before making any comment. What I am concerned about is the financial implications of the Bill. Clause 7 tells this Council that Government is advancing up to \$98,000 for the scheme. But as I read that clause, I interpret it to mean that after the com-

pletion of these works the amount paid by the Treasury will be a debt. So far, that is all right, but what I do not see here is this: Provision is made for the repayment, it is quite true, but the draughtsman has been very careful in giving discretionary powers to some future Legislative Council to accept repayment of the capital either in a greater or lesser sum as the necessity arises. That is where I find fault. I had hoped, first of all, that the Mayor would have been here a little earlier, the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, as he would, perhaps, tell us what the Town Council had in mind in the preparation of this scheme. I have heard him on previous occasions refer to uneconomic loans, but as I interpret this financial clause, if I may so term it, it seems to me that proper provision has not been made for the repayment of the capital. No estimates have been prepared as to what is expected from this scheme, and no undertaking has been given to this Council as to how and when the capital is to be repaid, if at all. All that it says is this:

“The Legislative Council may by resolution waive repayment of such portion of the said capital money and any interest thereon as it may think fit.”

To my mind that is a very important clause and I invite the attention of Members of this Council to the implications of it. If the income from this scheme is greater than the expenditure, then it is reasonable for one to expect that some repayment of capital will be made. If, on the other hand, the position is the reverse and expenditure is greater than income, I see no provision in this Bill as to how that deficit is going to be met. Am I to understand that the deficit, whether annually, half-yearly or whatever period the accounts are made up, will be borne by the Town Council, or am I to understand that application will be made to this Council for the reimbursement of that deficit? I think it is important that in passing a measure of this kind such a point should be clarified. Members are entitled to know—I feel I am entitled to know—whether it is expected that this scheme is likely to stand on its feet. I regret to say the hon. the Attorney-General was rather silent on that point. If it is not going to stand on its feet, how much would this Government or the Town

Council be expected to pay in future years, as long as the scheme continues? The reason why I have taken pains to explain what is operating in my mind in regard to this clause is my fear that if it is only found practicable to equalize income with expenditure, one can see how difficult it would be to expect any repayment of capital at all. If that is going to be the policy, then I think this Council should be told right here and now what is to be expected in the future.

I started off by saying that this is a partnership, as I understand it, between Government furnishing the money on the one hand and the Town Council doing the work on the other hand. If we are to put up money in this form it should be made clear. I am not against the scheme at all, and I hope it will work. I think it will work, but I am disturbed over the statement made so frequently here and elsewhere that it is a communal scheme along un-economic lines. I am just wondering what the position would be in the future if it is found that the scheme cannot be operated, I will not go as far as to say successfully. From the financial point I can hardly expect it to be so successful, but if we are going to put up the money—the entire amount of \$98,000—with no possible hope of recovery, I think this Council ought to be informed of the fact so that we will know exactly what our position is. In so far as the Town Council is concerned, I hope the Mayor will be able to say something on the point I have raised. I regard it as being very important, otherwise it seems that sub clause (4) of clause 7 may have to be redrafted to cover something else I have in mind in so far as the financial implications of the Bill are concerned.

The PRESIDENT: I think, Sir Gordon when he invited the Legislative Council to approve of the advance of the sum of \$80,000 for the buildings said "I am afraid we cannot expect to get that back." That is my recollection.

Mr. JACOB: I am not so much concerned about the financial implications in this matter. I am concerned, sir, about

the social welfare of the people of this Colony. I think this Government is also very much concerned about Social Welfare, and I was a little surprised to hear the criticism of the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Thompson). I have not seen those buildings closely. I was in the Cemetery one day and did notice a few of the buildings, but they did not impress me very much. However, when I understood you are going to have twelve rooms in one building for families of an average of five, i.e., sixty persons occupying one building, and that there are to be four buildings near to each other, then I began to wonder where is all this idea about Social Welfare. The point was made that in rural housing you must have independent houses fairly well spaced so that there should be privacy, etc., but in Georgetown we are attempting to do something otherwise. There is no question that we want improvement in Georgetown; we want to see all tenement rooms abolished; we want to see independent cottages, but when we have, as stated by the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira), this scheme planned, designed and put into operation by a Housing Expert, I wonder if that expert has any knowledge of tropical conditions. It may be all right to have barracks in cold climates and countries where you have stone walls separating the rooms and where one person in a room can hardly know what the people in another room are doing. When neighbours are at home, one cannot even hear a conversation abroad, but in this Colony we know what happens and especially with the kind of materials we are getting now, we know what would be the condition of the walls in these houses.

The hon. the Sixth Nominated Member mentioned the floor, but I should like to know what about the partitions. I do not think we should support the idea of forty families living in such buildings in that part of the City. The whole scheme has been badly planned and badly conceived. I am wholly in favour of housing—both urban and rural housing—but I think we are being wrongly advised. I do not care if we spend even \$200,000 in this direction, but it is clear that somebody has blundered in this case. We should do something better than this. I am told that we cannot get materials,

but that is because of the system being adopted here. If Government would only allow private enterprise—the private importers — to look around, we would get nearly the materials we need but, maybe, certain considerations are weighing with this Government. The Imperial Government is not allowing anybody to import from the United States of America, but I wish everybody would be allowed to import from there especially now that a loan has been given by the United States to the United Kingdom. I think that if private people are allowed to import materials from the United States of America, in a short time these four buildings would become white elephants. My criticisms may be considered harsh, but I think they are justified.

I do not even care so much about the buildings being put up there, but how would the people who occupy them get transportation to and from their work-places? Probably Government is thinking about the introduction of a good bus system, but I do not think that would materialise for quite a long time. I know of a case where the Controller of Commodities refused to allow certain buses to come in because there was some kind of objection to a certain group of people. All these things should be abolished, since there are far too many restrictions of one kind or another in this Colony and they are operating against the poor man all the time.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I was not here to listen to all the criticisms levelled against this scheme, but there is one thing I am sure of and that is, it is going to take a very very strong will on the part of any Member of this Council to vote against this scheme. In fact, I am optimistic enough to expect every Member to vote in favour of it. The Town Council and Government were faced with the necessity to do something to relieve the acute housing congestion in the City, and this Council has itself voted \$40,000 for a housing survey. As regards the difficulty in obtaining materials, we have heard of it from the hon. Member who has just taken his seat. When this scheme is completed, I submit it will show what can be done through a little push and initiative as against such criticism which could only come from certain

Members. I have no hesitation in challenging anyone—whoever he may be—to come forward and tackle the various phases of this problem and to overcome them. The idea is that there would be 48 so-called families in those buildings, each family with a bathroom, a kitchen and a lavatory of its own. Each family would also have three rooms, and the idea is that the rental should be \$10 per month for each family.

The Colonial Development and Welfare Adviser thought that we should charge between \$5 and \$7 per month, so I rather smiled when I heard about the question of financial consideration. I do not consider it a question of finance at all, the object of the scheme being what it is, but if we start to quibble about the finance in discussing housing for the poorer classes—and not the wealthy classes—I do not know how far we are going to get. The hon. Member for North Western District has suggested that these tenants are being charged an uneconomic rent, but I challenge any Member of this Council to say that a housing scheme for the working classes with rents of \$60 per annum and upwards can be a financial proposition. The tenants will surely have to be subsidized. There is an economic rent from which houses have to give a return, but it is impracticable to build houses for these people and charge them an economic rent which they cannot pay.

This scheme is being carried out in order to relieve the present situation and, as I have already said, the Adviser to the Colonial Development and Welfare organisation suggested that the rental should be \$5 per month for each family, but a rental of \$10 per month was eventually decided on, so that the scheme would yield a total of \$5,760 per annum. If the rental is reduced to \$5 per month, however, this total will have to be reduced to one half. The idea of this scheme started when a small committee of the Town Council met to consider the housing situation and it was found very difficult to obtain land on which to build. The land on which these buildings are being erected had to be filled up, and it took 8,000 loads of earth in order to do that. How could the scheme be an economic proposition when the filling up of the land alone cost \$5,000? But,

perhaps we will be told by certain financial wizards that they could have done it cheaper. The land was also wanted by a certain firm in this Colony—Messrs. Wieting and Richter, Ltd.,—who had in mind a housing scheme for their employees.

The Medical Authorities have approved of the site for the carrying out of the scheme, and perhaps we would get DDT to assist in the improvement of the sanitary conditions if it is such a malarial hole, as alleged. We have already been told by the Medical Authorities in the form of a certificate, however, that that part of the City is quite healthy. We must not forget also that people have been living in that area for a long number of years. The site also has the added advantage of having a bus route just across the way. One hon. Member says we will never get a good bus service in a hurry, but that hon. Member was on holiday abroad and does not know that the Town Council has had tenders for bus services along certain routes and that some of them have been recommended to Government.

The attitude taken up by the hon. Member for North Western District is the sort of way, however, that we are expected to make progress in this Colony. Before a project is completed it is torn down—before it gets into operation. I would suggest to hon. Members of this Council that we let the people who go to live in these buildings tell us what is wrong and make suggestions for improvements. It would surprise hon. Members to know that we have hundreds of applications from all kinds of people for these flats. The criticism levelled against the scheme at a meeting held in the Town Hall recently, was that it is a scheme for the classes and not for the masses. These buildings were designed by Mr. de Syllas, an Architectural Adviser to the Comptroller for Development and Welfare. We were not happy about the “block” windows, but I understand that is the type the Development and Welfare organisation has been introducing throughout the West Indies.

We have been thinking also about the question of cost and every time we changed a window, up rose the cost of the scheme. However, we are experimenting and are

putting in shutter windows. Now we are being told about glass windows, but it would be difficult to get them since the materials are not available. Some people talk about monopoly in Water Street, but I suppose they would not talk about monopoly in beer and that sort of thing. I am the Mayor of this City and I am constantly being told by the City Engineer that he could not get “this or that” and was trying to get something else. The Director of Public Works will also tell hon. Members about the difficulty in getting certain materials. We have not heard any of the critics say “I have erected a building and I have been able to get materials in such and such a way.” We have gone ahead with the scheme and Government is fully aware that time and again we have been held up through lack of materials. If anybody is to be blamed for the arrangements in the buildings, it is the Adviser to the Colonial Development and Welfare organisation. He is the person who submitted the plan.

There is another housing scheme at Chalmers Place and that has been also approved by the Colonial Development and Welfare people. As Mayor of the City, I speak with the majority of the members of the Town Council behind me when I say that the Town Council is not going to pay for this Wortmanville scheme. Whether the hon. Member for Central Demerara would move a motion to get this Council to take steps in order that the Town Council should pay is a different matter. The Town Council has no intention to pay, however, and that is the reason why Government is going to advance the money.

It is being said—and I wonder whether it is “a sprat to catch a whale”—that this is a partnership between Government and the Town Council, but it is nothing of the kind. Some of us like to take credit for other people’s work when we have no right to it, and I do not think it would be fair for the Town Council to take credit in this case since the financial assistance—which is really the key to the project—was given by Government. I think two or three other members of the Town Council joined me in making the negotiations with Government when Government gave this kind of assistance. I repeat, however, that we

should wait and hear from the people who are going to occupy these buildings whether mistakes have been made and let them give suggestions as to what improvements should be effected. I do not think these applicants sent in their applications blindly—without knowing what they are going into. I am not concerned with the financial implications of the scheme, and I repeat that if the hon. Member for Central Demerara wants the Town Council to repay this money he should move a motion to that effect in this Council. His Excellency the Governor has told this Council that we cannot expect any of this money back and I would suggest that we accept the idea that about \$100,000 would be gone. Further, if there is any profit I suggest that it be used for the erection of more buildings in schemes of this nature.

With regard to the openings in the walls of the present buildings, it must be remembered that they were built of new and not seasoned lumber. We expect to have cracks and openings because of the new lumber. As I have already stated, there is no partnership between Government and the Town Council in this matter and I think it is intended that Government should bear all the financial implications. There is no reason why any portion of this \$100,000 should be foisted on the Town Council. If we—the Town Council—had the money we would have spent it on housing already. It is amusing to hear certain persons saying "Let the Town Council pay for the scheme", but the people who are raising that cry are the very people who have been pegging at the Town Council in and out of season to reduce the assessment of properties and will be the first people to go for the Town Council if rates and taxes are raised. Surely, if we want as much as \$300,000 for housing schemes and the people who are already carrying the burden of taxation want the Town Council to find the money, the Town Council would do so. It would mean an increase in taxation, but so long as the taxpayers are prepared to bear it the Town Council would be prepared to go in for housing schemes.

I suggest to hon. Members, however, that they accept this scheme as a start and as a worthy attempt which shows that somebody is trying to do something. If

hon. Members say they want "palaces" and that somebody must pay for them, then let them find that somebody. I repeat that hundreds of applications have been put in for these flats by all classes of people in the community—people occupying houses with rents from \$60 per month down. These people must have seen the buildings that are now in course of erection, but I suppose we will be told that they have nowhere to go and are bound to take what is given to them. It is quite easy to say "Let us wait until we get proper materials and everything else", but if that is done these 48 families would not get relief in a hurry. It has been stated by some experts that we should fix the rent of the tenants at one-third of the income, but some people say that is too high. We are trying to get them to pay one-sixth of the average amount of \$60, and that is \$10 per month.

I suggest to hon. Members that they should go up and see the site, and then state whether the scheme is not a praiseworthy effort. I have already stated that the plan was furnished by the Colonial Development and Welfare people. I met a certain member of the community standing outside the premises on one occasion and he suggested to me that the buildings wanted "this and that". I suggested to him to go in and see things for himself and after he had had a good look around he said "I had no idea that they were going to look so fine; \$10 per month cannot pay for this." That is the kind of thing we get from people who have not taken the trouble to find things out properly.

Mr. CRITCHLOW: Sir, since 1935 the B.G. Labour Union was behind Government and the Town Council for better housing accommodation for the poor people. In those days materials were available, but Government appointed a committee to consider the matter and then it was stated that Government did not have the money to do anything. I must congratulate Government and the Town Council for having made a start in that direction now. I, personally, would like to see cottages put up, but I think that the working classes are winning. It is true that the present buildings have not got everything desired, but proper cottages would cost more than \$10 per month. I know that in England workers get substantial cot-

tages to live in, the rental for which is about 10 shillings per week. The working classes here need houses badly and, as the hon. Member for Western Essequibo has stated, many people would pay for these flats long in advance because when the Magistrate orders them to vacate their homes they have to find other houses to live in. I think every Member of this Council should support this Bill, and I would add that the working-class people are willing to take advantage of a house-purchasing scheme. I congratulate Government and the Town Council heartily and I will give this Bill every possible support.

The PRESIDENT: Does any other Member wish to speak on the principle of this Bill? Mr. Attorney-General, do you wish to reply?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I desire to reply only on one point, and that is the point made by the hon. Member for Central Demerara with regard to the financial implications of the scheme. It will be seen from clause 7 (2) that:

“(2) The Committee shall pay to the Colonial Treasurer interest on the said capital money, or such part thereof as the Legislative Council may determine, at such rate as the said Council shall fix.”

Therefore, the matter is left in the hands of this Council, in so far as the financial implications are concerned. With regard to the question of current funds, it is provided in clause 8 (1) that:

“(1) All rent and other moneys received by the Committee for the tenancy or occupation of any building, apartment, flat or room and all other money which may accrue to the Committee in respect of the scheme shall be the current funds of the Committee for the purposes of this Ordinance

Then, in sub-clause (2), it is shown how the funds should be applied—for “the payment of instalments of the capital money due to be repaid to the Treasurer”, and so on. After having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, it is quite clear that this scheme cannot be regarded as a commercial proposition in the sense in which a man would erect a house and expect that he

would get a complete and full return of his expenditure from it.

Mr. de AGUIAR: That is not what I have said. I never envisaged a commercial proposition at all. However, I shall have my turn to speak later.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I never said the hon. Member did so. I said that after having listened to the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, it would be seen that an undertaking of this nature cannot be regarded from the point of view of a commercial proposition. I am not saying that the hon. Member said so. I have already stated that when this matter was originally placed before the Council, His Excellency the Governor endeavoured to put it in its proper perspective by stating that we must bear in mind that we are making an outlay for the purpose of providing houses and that we would not get back all the money expended. This Bill provides that the Legislative Council shall have the final word with regard to the financial implications of the scheme. If hon. Members feel later that the scheme is doing well and that the tenants should pay more rent, it would be up to them to say so. If they feel also that the interest payable on the capital money should be 5 or 6 per cent., it is up to them to say so. Therefore I suggest that matter is completely safeguarded, and it is left to the Legislative Council to say how it feels the money should be repaid.

I wish to say the hon. Member did not say it is a commercial undertaking. I am only putting it from every point of view to hon. Members. In view of the fact that it has been raised that this Council desires that some provision be inserted in the Bill whereby no opportunity will be given to any subsequent Council to say that the capital money is to be repaid and the Council will be tied down by this Bill, the desirability from every point of view should be examined. It is a matter for this Council.

The PRESIDENT: I think hon. Members may be interested if I read what Sir Gordon said when the question of the scheme was mentioned in Council:

“It has not been framed in the first instance on such a footing as can

ensure that it will pay for itself. I am not without hope that we may be able to put it on such a footing as will qualify for financial assistance under the Development and Welfare Act.....

"Moreover, as I have said, there is no chance of the scheme itself paying its way. It will not in any way be regarded as a precedent. In other words, if we do not get assistance under the Development and Welfare Act somebody will have to stand the balance that cannot be recovered from rents. I am not going to suggest any final decision on that, but again I would say that I feel very sure that Members of this Council would rather that Government took this risk in the immediate present in order to get some beginning with the very much needed housing."

It may be possible to provide regulations for the administration of the Committee. I hope I have put all my cards on the table. If you pass this Bill you must realize that it would be our undertaking, nothing less. I do not think Government should be saddled every year with a subsidy. I think, if it is possible, we should try and make the scheme not pay its way but earn enough to pay back the \$80,000 or \$90,000. That is how I look at it. I think that the scheme is very badly needed and something has to be done. Sir Gordon gave you no illusion about it. He told you that on his own responsibility he is advancing the money and hopes you will agree. I will put the second reading and leave it at that.

Mr. de AGUIAR: Before you put the second reading may I ask you to let the Council go into Committee on the Bill this afternoon? I think it is important. Owing to the Standing Rules and Orders hon. Members will be unable to go back on certain points raised. I think Government would be well advised, if this Bill reaches the Committee stage, to give certain Members an opportunity of bringing the attention of the Council to other points which have arisen in the debate. However, if Government wishes to leave it as it is, then I take it an opportunity will be afforded hon. Members at a later stage to do so. This is a very important Bill, and I do think that in view of all that has transpired here it is very desirable that

Members should have an opportunity to speak in Committee again.

The PRESIDENT: It is equally desirable that Members who have come some distance should deal this afternoon with the next controversial question of the purchase of the Davson's property. I will put the second reading of this Bill and go on to the motion in respect of the purchase of the Davson's property. After we have got through that we will then return to the Bill.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: There is such a depleted Council present that I think we should wait until there is a full Council to discuss the motion. I would ask this Council to consider that I am carrying a certain amount of responsibility in this matter and will be glad to be relieved of that. I, therefore, ask hon. Members to get this Bill through and have the Committee formed so that someone else will carry the responsibility of the scheme. I do not mind who is the Member, but let me get out of it as early as possible.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I am anxious to assist the hon. Member.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest that we leave it in the second reading, go on to the Davson Property motion and return to the Bill this afternoon. Is that agreeable?

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

PURCHASE OF DAVSON PROPERTY

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Your Excellency and hon. Members of Council, I beg to move the following motion standing in my name:—

"That with reference to the Officer Administering the Government's Message No. 4 of the 4th July, 1946, this Council approves of the purchase of the property owned by Messrs. S. Davson and Company, Limited, in the Strand, New Amsterdam, together with approximately 4.6 acres of land on the river side for \$26,500."

Your Excellency's Message on the question has been circulated to hon. Members and sets out the reasons why Government desires to purchase this property. It also gives the price of the property with the details which form the background to the price which is being asked for it. This matter has been before this Council previously, and I do not know whether at this stage I can usefully add anything further to what is in the Message, except to say that within the last five or six years the Civil Service has been greatly expanded and a much greater number of Officers visit New Amsterdam than formerly. Yet the accommodation which exists there for them is essentially the same as it was possibly 70 or 80 years ago. I think, sir, that the conditions of accommodation in New Amsterdam are very unsatisfactory, and I hope hon. Members will agree with me and will approve of the motion which is before the Council to-day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: I am going to take the same attitude as I did on the last occasion. This is a definite waste of public money. I can assure you, sir, that I appreciate your pluck in bringing forward this motion after the matter had been thrashed out and put in cold storage for some length of time. On the last occasion I particularly sought permission to inspect this property on my visit to Berbice and was denied it. I asked a Government Officer in the Treasury Department and he tried to facilitate me. I am one of the few Members of this Legislature who seldom oppose Government in doing something that is useful. I am saying that this is undoubtedly one of the greatest farces I have ever had to sit down and listen to. I can assure Government that this property, if it were in Georgetown, could never fetch that figure that has been asked for. I was told that there is a scarcity of accommodation for Government Officers going to New Amsterdam, but I have turned up the records and found that with the exception of one Governor spending a period of a few months there, no other Governor has spent time there to warrant the spending of \$26,500 for the purchase of this property.

The Chief Justice is capable of expressing an opinion as to the necessity for it. The Treasurer at the time stated that it is difficult for Officers to get accommodation up there. Is this a favour being done to a firm because of the position the owners occupy? I understand they were approached. There were other properties during that time which could have been acquired for one-third of that money—Mr. Ralph Rice's property, a new comparatively built house with the accommodation required and a splendid site. Government could have acquired that property if it was really in earnest to get a place for the accommodation of its Officers. What is to prevent Government, if there is a genuine scarcity of accommodation, erecting its own premises just east of the present place that the Governor occupies when he is up there? I have inspected the site myself. Government could have put up a modern bungalow with six or eight rooms and use the lower flat for offices for the Commissioner of Labour who is paying a rather high rent.

I am not opposing this on sentimental grounds but on a principle. I cannot stand here and see money being thrown away, and I certainly appeal to you, sir, to withdraw this motion and Message No. 4 from this Legislature. I do not know whether it would be a good gesture on the part of the owners to make a presentation of it to the Colony for the benefits they have obtained from the Colony. I have the greatest respect for those gentlemen. Sir Edward Davson was one of those men whom everybody who came into contact with appreciated. Those gentlemen have benefited materially from the ownership of their estates in this Colony. Objection was made at one time to the Governor staying at that place. It was thought not to be right. Such things are so trifling, so ridiculous and absurd to me that I can never think that they can have any influence on a Governor if he is a fair man. No one has ever given a motive for a thing of that kind. Those gentlemen when in Georgetown are entertained at Government House, but that cannot influence the King's Representative. I certainly appeal to Members to throw the motion out as it rightly deserves. As you have stated in your Message, sir —

"In September, 1945, the sum of

\$26,500 was placed on the supplementary estimate for the purpose of acquiring the property owned by Messrs. S. Davson and Company Limited, in the Strand, New Amsterdam, as Government felt that the present residential accommodation, which is confined to the third flat at Colony House, is totally inadequate to provide for the Governor, the Judges and other senior officials visiting New Amsterdam on official business...."

We are going to keep a place that costs the taxpayers of this Colony \$266 per month expenditure besides the employment of two gardeners and a watchman, just for these official visits. If Government puts up a bungalow almost opposite to this place, facing east it would get everything that this place can offer. If the Governor has to go to New Amsterdam a particular portion of the building can be set aside for the Governor's use. At this place if, while the Governor is there, the Paymaster wants a place in Berbice temporarily he would have to occupy a bedroom alongside His Excellency's.

The PRESIDENT : I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but the Governor, the Chief Justice and, I hope, the Colonial Secretary only will be permitted to go to Davson House. The other Officers of Government have Colony House available to them. It is only for about four months of the year Colony House is entirely occupied by the Law Officers. It is not suggested that all Government Officers will go to Davson House. If the Governor has to go down to Berbice while the Law Officers are there, they will have to suspend the Session.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: The Chief Justice said in my presence that it is undoubtedly an unnecessary purchase, as Colony House is quite good enough. There is no other man who has spent as much money in the building of new houses and the taking down of old houses and re-erecting them elsewhere as I, and I am making the statement that this thing is a waste of the taxpayers' money. Put up a bungalow with an upper flat for the use of the Governor when in New Amsterdam. One room can be set aside for the Governor's use only and the other rooms can be used for whatever purpose you want. How many Governors of this Colony have spent

a month in Berbice within the last fifty years? I would be very pleased to hear. We have had an excellent Governor in Sir Gordon Lethem, who is the only one that has done so. He has certainly been going around and seeing for himself. That was the advice he got from me. Every Member was asked to go to Government House and discuss matters with him, and he had me at Government House a few days. I told him I was not prepared to take on much more than I am doing and that is the reason why, perhaps, use is not made of me more often. I say in connection with this matter that, if it was the general feeling that this property should be purchased, we should not go to the Engineers of the Public Works Department to tell us what to do. What I understand as regards the acquisition, Government made the offer and the owners as businessmen have accepted it.

Mr. WOOLFORD: That statement is incorrect !

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: That is what I heard.

Mr. WOOLFORD: The statement that the contract has been concluded between Government and the owners is not correct.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: The offer was made by Government and accepted by the firm.

The PRESIDENT: What you say is entirely incorrect. No offer or contract was made without the approval of this Council.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: I do not mind your intervention. I want the statement. I am against it. Why is it, knowing my capabilities in that direction, I have been thwarted from seeing the place so that I can come here and express an honest opinion about the value? I feel sure that although there are men of eminence on the Council none would refute the statement that I am a fit and proper person to assist Government as to the value of that place far better than any officer of Government. I know that officer can no more give you values than my office messenger can tell me what it costs to erect my house. I am not depreciating the officer's ability. He may be remarkably clever in his line of

business—engineering. It would be a slur on this Council if we purchase that place for \$26,500.

Mr. ROTH: I am afraid from what I have been made to understand, I must be in agreement with the views expressed by the hon. Member who has just taken his seat. I ask hon. Members to consider seriously whether it is reasonable to pay \$26,500 for that particular property. Unlike the hon. Member, I am not an expert in real estate business, but I have had the opportunity of speaking to several persons who have great experience in it and who have said the value of the building is between \$11,000 and \$12,000 along with another \$1,000 for the 4½ acres of land, the greater part of which is mudflat and pasture not in the business section of the town. I certainly do think that the amount stated is far in excess of its real value. I am prepared to vote up to \$15,000 and not one cent more.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I am Member for the constituency in which this house is situated, and I have known that site since 1890. I remember the site as being the property of Dr. Young, a medical practitioner, who selected it and bought it eventually. I have no doubt of its sanitary condition. When it comes to acquiring a property and ascertaining its value, I have very different angles of approach—the propriety of the purchase, the suitability for the need you require it for, its situation in relation to the surroundings according to your taste and requirements. In that respect I claim to be no less an expert than any Member of this Council. I have never yet bought a building and not sold it at a handsome profit. I have never yet in my life advised anyone to do so but with the same successful result. My hon. friend, the Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Percy C. Wight) claims to be an expert. I hope he will allow me to claim that I have always dabbled for very many years in ascertaining the value of immovable property. I do not think any one man who pays attention to the subject is in a better position to value property in this Colony than I. In saying that, I am willing to concede even two ways of looking at it. If a man wants to purchase Davson's

property as an investment he would not pay \$20,000 for it as it is not worth it, but there are many men, and I am one of them, who would be willing to pay for a residential property of its suitability and three lots of land a sum of over £5,000.

It has been stated that Governors go to Berbice very seldom. That is perfectly true. A good many people do not visit New Amsterdam very frequently—I am included in that number but for different reasons. When Sir Edward Denham came to this Colony and proposed to visit Berbice, I was sent for and asked what sort of place it was. I told him what to expect—the condition of Colony House, a place in which I lived over and over again. I remember the days when the sanitary condition of Colony House was disgraceful. It is today much better than you can expect to find in any decent Boarding House. But you cannot even claim to enjoy the amenities of the town. There are very many inconveniences which a man in private life should not be made to undergo. If we have no respect for our Colony, we ought to respect the Officer who is administering the Government. We should see that a man in his position when travelling, except in the interior, is provided with suitable accommodation where he can have interviews and do so comfortably.

I have made a very close inspection of this property. Whoever is responsible for the hon. Member for Central Demerara not being able to do so, it is a very unfortunate thing, but I think he would give me credit for knowing what the proper appointments of the house should be, the value of the appurtenances and fittings. He has made dollars in acquiring property and erecting buildings not only fit for Governors to live in but any gentleman. I have heard it said that the Governor of the Colony—if it is proper to say it here—should not expect anything better than the ordinary accommodation he is entitled to. It is a very fine house which offers the accommodation, I think, a person in his position should expect. Let us leave comparisons alone.

If the Governor proposes to visit New Amsterdam and there is a sitting of the Criminal Courts—something which is regulated by Statute and is distinct from the Civil Courts—at Colony House, he

would have to postpone his visit. I am sure no Governor would ask that a statutory sitting of the Criminal Courts be postponed. These Courts have been postponed for some reason recently, but I am sure no Governor would postpone a sitting as a matter of routine.

At the present moment one of the Judges is staying at Colony House. He has been there for some little time and if my information is correct he might be there for a much longer time yet. I really do not know what is going to happen if special provision is not made for the sittings of the Court. Then there are visits to be made to New Amsterdam by Education and Labour Officers who would normally use Colony House. Are these visits to be postponed? The situation is one of great importance and no other property has been acquired. Is it being suggested that Colony House should be left for use by the Governor and that Government should acquire another property for the use of Civil Servants? That is the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central.

The fact remains that another property is absolutely necessary from many points of view. I suggest to hon. Members—and in this particular case I can speak on behalf of my colleagues and the constituency of Berbice, not necessarily New Amsterdam, who have been consulted—that we should look at this matter from all the different angles. I have made my own independent visits to New Amsterdam and I wish to say that I am not at all influenced by anything Messrs. Davson & Coy. might have said in this matter. They cannot influence a man like me. I know my constituents and I know their wishes, and I have not heard any objection to the acquisition of this property from them. As far as they are concerned the need for a better residence for the Governor while in New Amsterdam exists and the money for the purchase would be forthcoming. I regret that it has been suggested that the proprietors' influence in Berbice may have contributed to the proposal for the acquisition of this property. Whilst I have much respect for Davsons in Berbice, I think there is no more unpopular firm in New Amsterdam. So far as Government is concerned, however, and so far as my

constituency is concerned, there is no objection to the purchase of this property. I am viewing the matter from the angle of the real and true value of the building and the appropriate necessity to acquire it.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: May I point out something to the hon. Member, sir?

The PRESIDENT: Is it to a point of order or not?

Mr. WIGHT: It is only to remind him that the best bargain he has ever got for a property is when he bought through me.

Mr. WOOLFORD: Oh no, sir. The hon. Member seems to have forgotten. If he would recollect, he would know that I bought it within five minutes and not through any advice from him.

Mr. EDUN: I am not concerned so much with the acquisition of the property as with the state of the Colony's finances, and I am going to urge that if our finances are in a parlous state we should not acquire the property at this time. I remember very well—and hon. Members will recollect also—that we recently gave to the higher class of Civil Servants better status with increases in pay, leave passage rights and other excellent conditions of employment. Looking through this Message, sir, I find that the proposal is to acquire this house for the convenience of His Excellency the Governor, the Judges and other senior officers, but I think they have been given all possible benefits recently and that this Council should think 100 times before spending money uneconomically. This house would be more or less an ornament and would serve no useful purpose except to accommodate, temporarily, the Governor, the Judges and, perhaps, one or two Members of this Council when they travel to New Amsterdam. That is not sufficient reason to my mind to move a Member of this Council to vote for the expenditure of \$26,000 at this critical juncture of our finances. I think Government should credit Members like myself with some powers of introspection, and we have to examine ourselves to see whether we would be right in spending the taxpayers' money in this way.

Hon. Members will recollect that I moved a motion in this very Council not so long ago with the object of getting increased wages for the labour employees of this Government—those miserably-paid persons in the employ of the Public Works and the Sea Defence Departments. What was the reaction, however, on the part of Government? They would not budge from their untenable position, urging that the Colony's financial position did not permit of paying those labourers more. I say now that to spend \$26,000 for the purchase of a house to accommodate the Governor and a couple of Judges temporarily would be a waste of the Colony's funds, and I do not think this is the time to do such a thing.

I visited the Courentyne district just a few days ago, and I would say that the Courentynians feel that this Government is exploiting the esteem and popularity of Sir Gordon Lethem in deciding to buy this property. I do not think it is fair to His Excellency's name, because there might be another Governor who would not care to visit the Courentyne and he would have no need for the house. If, for instance, Sir Gordon does not return to the Colony, such a situation might arise.

The PRESIDENT: I must correct you. We want another house, whoever may be Governor.

Mr. EDUN: It is intended principally for the convenience of the Governor, but it appears to be disputable whether that is so or not. If I was asked as a public man what would be the best site for a house of that kind, I would say "Put it up at Hogstye and let the Governor and the Judges live there." To have an ornament in a sleepy place like New Amsterdam will be a waste of money. If Davsons have no use for this house, why should Government try to find some use for it? When the motion was brought forward for the labour employees of Government money could not be found, yet this Council was subsequently presented with supplementary estimates calling for amounts like \$200,000 and \$300,000. One cannot but feel that although a senior officer of the Public Works Department is reported to have assessed the value of this house that should not be taken as a criterion, for with

the reputation for wastage which that Department has, I would have absolutely no faith in any of its officers at the present time. Only recently Your Excellency visited the sea defences on the West Coast, Demerara, and actually stopped certain work because it was a waste of money. If that is an indication of how those officers can estimate, then one cannot be expected to rely on them.

The PRESIDENT: I am not quite certain, but I think you said I stopped the work.

Mr. EDUN: I understand that that was done.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member is entirely wrong. What I said was that I wanted to see whether we were going to spend a substantial sum of money there. I went there for no other purpose. I went to see whether the works were necessary and I came away convinced that sea defences there were necessary. I cannot remember stopping any work; you must have got a wrong report.

Mr. EDUN: Very well, sir, but there is a wide rumour on the West Coast that Your Excellency went there and saw that certain works were not necessary and said that they should be stopped. In any case, I have no faith in the estimates of senior officers of the Public Works Department and would not consider them at all. I visited the Courentyne district from one end to the other recently, and I took opportunity to ask the intelligentsia of that district what they thought of this proposal to purchase this property. The consensus of opinion was that if we would always have a Governor of the type and calibre of Sir Gordon Lethem, it would be well to have such a house to accommodate him. I have visited Colony House myself and seen the congestion which takes place there. I went there when a certain case was on trial and I saw that it was difficult to live upstairs during such a period, but I am considering whether the purchase of this property would in any way help the situation—or the Administration for that matter—because the tendency on the part of the people in New Amsterdam is for every cultured person to get away from the town.

Mr. FERREIRA : I question that.

Mr. WOOLFORD : Order, order.

Mr. EDUN: Davsons happen to have their own business there, and just across the river they have a plantation. Their interests are sundry in and around that sleepy town, yet they would not think of keeping any ornamental property near to the river. The tendency is to get rid of it and pass it on to the Government. The whole fact is that nobody is prepared to buy that property and the only party that is willing to do so is the Government. I think that with this idea prevailing on the Courentyne, it would not be advisable to embark on the proposition at present. If I was satisfied the proposal would enhance the Administrative mind I would have supported it wholeheartedly, but I am not satisfied with certain aspects of the Administration at all. For instance, District Administration is in a state of collapse. The Berbice district should be divided into two and there should be another District Administrator somewhere in the County. Government have fallen down in this matter of District Administration and now they want to buy this big property out of Colony funds. I am not convinced with the proposition at all.

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam feels that the property should be bought now, that the lands should be bonified and that the Militia Band should be made to play there once a month, but this is not the time to indulge in things of that sort. I am sure the hon. the Colonial Treasurer himself would tell us that he is not satisfied with the present state of our finances. Should we not wait until after the general elections then to tackle a proposal like this? With those observations I will sit down.

Mr. JACOB : I think it is necessary to dispose of this matter this afternoon. I think we have a full house and it is necessary to settle the matter once and for all. I say I am not convinced that it would be in the best interest of the Colony to spend this \$26,500 now and cause recurrent expenditure year after year in order to provide accommodation for a few senior officials. I am hoping that we would not have a

Governor here very much longer, but that we would have a Governor-General residing in some part of the Colony or somewhere in the West Indies. That is the kind of development I am looking forward to, but I do not think we would get it until we get federation. Taking this view of the matter, I think it would be very unwise to go into this proposition with the present state of our finances.

Let me just give a few figures to show what I mean. The surplus at the end of 1944 was \$6,950,659 while the estimated deficit for 1945 was \$2,707,491 and the estimated deficit for 1946—exclusive of this \$26,000 — was \$2,892,115 — a total estimated deficit of \$5,599,606—leaving a surplus balance of \$1,351,053. In a recent statement by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer, it has been recorded that we would have increasing deficits year after year, for some years to come.

Let us assume that we would have a deficit of \$2,090,000 next year and what would be the position? Our accumulated surplus of roughly \$7,000,000 will have been spent, and that is one of the best reasons for deferring the purchase of this property until our finances are in a better state.

The PRESIDENT: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but I cannot allow him to get away with that. The hon. Member himself has always said that the Treasurer paints a very black picture which never turns out that way.

Mr. JACOB: I am coming to that; this Government never accepts my advice. I am certain that these figures are not correct, but they are Government's figures and from this statement this Colony is not in the financial position to spend \$26,000 for the purchase of this property. The hon. Member for New Amsterdam has suggested that this is not a bad financial proposition—that the purchase price is not too high—but I think it is best to feel that this Government is being run on business lines from every point of view and we have it from one hon. Member who is an acknowledged expert in the valuation of properties—there can be no doubt about it—that the price is too high. We have heard that the hon. Member for New

Amsterdam is also an expert in these matters, but I know him to be an expert in another sphere. The hon. Member for Georgetown Central values this property at \$15,000 and perhaps this Government can make an offer of that amount for it, if it is necessary to find a house to accommodate senior officials in New Amsterdam.

I feel, however, that this is not the time to spend money on property in that way. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, not only pointed out that this is not the time to spend money in that way, but also referred to the way in which the under-dog is being treated by Government. I intended to refer to that question also. This Government is doing nothing for the labouring class of people in its employ. We have done all we could for the senior officials; they are well paid and, as a matter of fact, I think some of them are being over-paid. What I have to say does not refer to the officials sitting around this table, but it is true that many officials do not give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. It is said that the under-dog does not give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, but that is a long story.

I can suggest how this \$26,000 can be better spent. We have not got a mile of good roads in this Colony—in the various districts—and I think it is to the credit of the Georgetown Town Council that there are some good roads in the City. Let us spend this money in building a better road from Georgetown to New Amsterdam, and in that case the Governor would be able to run up there and return to the City in a day. On the other hand, if the Governor is paying a hurried visit to the County and Colony House is not comfortable for him to stay overnight, let him travel by plane and return in the afternoon. I want to say a word also about the land that is connected with this property. What is the value of 4½ acres of land in New Amsterdam? The acquisition of so much land would call for recurrent expenditure which we cannot afford. If Davsons had it for purposes of a wharf, let them keep it. If Government wants to buy a house, why should it want to buy all this land along with it? I think it would be more economical to build a proper house for these officials. Government should not

acquire dilapidated properties and then rebuild them. The hon. Member for New Amsterdam referred to the fact that he knew this place since 1890. Whether he refers to the house as being there since then, I do not know.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I particularly said the site. I never suggested it is an ancient monument. If the hon. Member had gone inside as I have done, he would know that the amenities of the house, which you don't see from outside, are worth a considerable sum of money.

Mr. JACOB. The hon. Member knows this site long before I was born. I would like in my lifetime to build something of greater benefit to coming generations. I think we should forget that site and think of deepening the harbour and making New Amsterdam a place for large steamers to call at. At the moment the whole thing is out-of-date and it would be most unworthy, bearing in mind the finances of the Colony, to embark on this project.

Mr. FERREIRA: I have listened with great interest and much amusement to some of the comments made. I must say as a Berbician that I had to sit down and tolerate certain insults as well. I do not want to go into that. I want to be brief and to the point. I would like first of all to draw the Council's attention to certain remarks that have been made. One Member states he has no knowledge of real estate but yet he fixes the value at \$15,000. Having no knowledge I do not know how he can arrive at those figures.

Mr. ROTH: To a point of correction! I stated I had discussed the matter with people who had knowledge of it.

Mr. FERREIRA: We have the explanation. He is told by others the place is not worth more than \$15,000. That is absurd. Persons conversant with land values in New Amsterdam must be aware that properties of lesser value, properties smaller and cannot be compared with this one, are being sold for an amount in the vicinity of \$12,000. We have been told also that the Governor should select a residence on a different site. That is not good enough for Berbicians. We Berbicians feel

that we have a right to have not a third-rate building or room as the Governor's residence but a Government House at New Amsterdam. That is the feeling of every Berbician of any intelligence. We feel that because of lack of accommodation the Governor and Senior Officials do not visit Berbice as often as they should, and conditions have consequently deteriorated. We know as a fact that the present Governor's visits have resulted in tangible evidence of development. We have schemes in progress—the Crabwood Creek, Mara Road and Ibini schemes. But for the Governor's visits those works would not have gone ahead as fast as they have done.

To talk of the house being dilapidated is just too frivolous, when you have not visited that place. I claim to have some commonsense, and I am satisfied that it is worth the amount stated. Certain Members may be interested to know that a certain association made an offer of \$3,000 for the 4½ acres of land. There is no hedging about it. It is a statement of fact. The house has, moreover, been inspected and valued by an Officer of the Public Works Department. I happen to know the Officer and I respect his opinion. I say the place is worth it. Why should Government miss this opportunity of getting a property situated in line with other Government properties? It is most desirable that Government should own that property. I prefer to see that property in the hands of Government than for it to fall into hands which cannot keep it as it should be. I prefer to see it as a place we can call "Government House, Berbice". There will be no excuse for Senior Officers of Government not going to New Amsterdam and not visiting Berbice. We have gone back too much through lack of accommodation. Here is a case before us where Berbice can benefit. I strongly support the motion. I have visited the place and it is worth the money. It is an asset not only to Berbice but to the Colony of British Guiana.

Mr. JACKSON: I am not concerned with the finances of the Colony as mentioned in the remarks made by two hon. Members, the one on my left (Mr. Edun) and the other on my right (Mr. Jacob). I am concerned as to whether a residence in

New Amsterdam is needed for the Governor, whether there is absolute necessity for the purchase to be made. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks made generally. I have listened to the two experts with a good deal of thought, and where the experts differ I think the layman ought to have his own way. There is no doubt that there is need for improved accommodation for the Governor and Senior Officials in New Amsterdam, and I am going to support the motion. As to whether the sum of \$26,500 is reasonable for the owners to ask for the place, I am not going to concern myself much about. If the house is there—and it is there—and if it is needed—and I am satisfied that it is required—then I do not mind if a few thousand dollars more than the actual value is paid for acquiring it, and I do not think the Council would be doing anything wrong in giving its sanction to the purchase of that property.

I look upon the talk about \$26,500 crippling the finances of the Colony as mere balderdash. I suppose if it were two or three million dollars for building a bridge across the Demerara River—we are told that is too big a problem to take up at this time—I would be inclined to say "Wait until we get some more money", but when we speak of the resources of the Colony and about \$26,500 as being too much to spend, according to our Estimates that is a mere bagatelle. I think it is necessary to have a property and I am not worrying whether the experts differ in value. If Government is satisfied that the property is worth that amount and a Government Officer on whom Government depends has stated that it is worth that amount, then I say let us have it.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I would be the last to deny the Governor suitable accommodation in Berbice, and I would like to offer the Governor when he visits Berbice all the comfort that he enjoys in the City of Georgetown. I also would be as proud as the hon. Member for Berbice River to have a residence in Berbice that will suit the status of the Governor. Therefore I am thinking whether this residence, that has been built perhaps not quite in 1890 but a little later than 1890, would be a suitable building.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I must correct the hon. Member! I said that I knew that site since 1890 when Dr. Young lived there and carried on private practice in New Amsterdam. I never suggested that the house was erected in 1890. This house was built by the Davsons. Site and building are two different things.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: As I said, it does not concern me very much whether the building was erected in 1890 or some time later, but this fact remains that it is a construction which does not fit in—I say so unhesitatingly—with any modern construction that I would be proud to see as the Governor's residence in Berbice. There might be some improvements which do not show outside the building but, I think, in so far as a modern construction is concerned you can see beauty both inside and outside. So far as accommodation is concerned other Officials of Government certainly should be afforded accommodation also, but I am thinking like the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, whether New Amsterdam is a suitable site for the accommodation of Government Officials. We know that the Drainage and Irrigation Scheme commences over sixteen miles from New Amsterdam. Are the Officers of the Public Works Department going to travel 48 to 50 miles from New Amsterdam and back every time they visit or remain overnight and travel back the next morning? In the last two lines of paragraph 1 of Your Excellency's Message you state: "*with consequential increase in expenditure on subsistence allowance.*" I do not know whether the subsistence allowance of an officer differs in respect of his staying at Colony House, or at a private place with a friend, or at a hotel. I think it is fixed according to the status of the officer.

Travelling expenses, however, are accounted for according to the miles the officer has travelled. He will be covering at least 32 miles on this Drainage and Irrigation Scheme every day whether he has anything to supervise or not. We do know also that the bulk of the population starts 9 or 10 miles from New Amsterdam, and so far as the Education Department is concerned quarters further up the Courentyne Coast will be in the best interest of this Colony for Government

Officials. If the necessity arose that some of the senior Government officials should stay in New Amsterdam, my suggestion is that we should build a modern building to accommodate the Governor only, which I feel the hon. Member for Berbice River and myself would be proud of. The accommodation that is now afforded in Colony House can be for those senior Government officers who have to stay in New Amsterdam as it may not be in the best interest of the country for them to stay far up the Courentyne Coast.

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam has said that one has to take into consideration two things in the valuation of the property—if it is for the purpose of investment and if it is for residential purpose. So far as that is concerned I am not an expert, neither am I pretending to be one. If this Council is to accept the figure given by an expert, the hon. Member who is sitting on my right (Mr. Percy C. Wight), then \$10,500 would be too much of a margin to pay for a residential area. There is another thing involved, and that is the purchaser is not more anxious to purchase than the seller is to sell. It is no secret that so far as the firm of Davson is concerned it is already making preparations for transfer to the City of Georgetown and, therefore, that residence that has been erected in New Amsterdam does not mean much to the firm. Whether Government is anxious to purchase or the firm is anxious to sell, I am of the opinion that the firm is more anxious to sell than Government is to buy. That is a third consideration in the valuation of a property, and in this case it is the most important one to be considered in negotiating for the acquisition of this property in New Amsterdam. How proud I would be as a Berbician to see the Governor of this Colony afforded such residential quarters as would suit his status? But I am sorry I do not think this building would cause me to feel so, neither would I feel so in contributing to the purchase of this building at the figure mentioned in this Message.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I wish to state that in my opinion the acquisition of this property is both desirable and necessary. The activities of Government during the past few years have considerably increased in the County of Berbice. Berbice is an

important part of the Colony and, therefore, is entitled to fair and just treatment, if not preferential treatment, with respect to the accommodation of the Governor in suitable quarters. It has been complained by Senior Officials as well as Governors in the past that Colony House was not a suitable residence to accommodate the Governor during his visits to New Amsterdam. As Your Excellency has stated in your Message, for the greater period of the year Colony House is occupied for some weeks by the Judges holding Session there. What has been the result of that? On account of the Governor's visit to New Amsterdam on one occasion, a very important one in connection with agricultural bias and the Irrigation and Drainage Scheme in the area from Crabwood Creek to Auchlyne and Port Mourant District, the Session had to be postponed. The Governor spent a long time there and it was not a consoling circumstance to know that we had to meet the Governor in interviews in the Court Hall sitting around the Bar table with the prisoners' dock behind us. There we had to meet the Governor in a most important interview on the Colony's affairs. Was it right and proper that the Governor should be placed in such a position? The Governor has already expressed his views with respect to the accommodation there and, I think, the point emerged from a discussion that it is one of policy. Perhaps it is desirable to approach it as such.

It is very essential and necessary that we should have the Governor housed in a proper residential area in the town of New Amsterdam. Many disparaging remarks have been made about the town of New Amsterdam itself, but I will let that go by the board. Those of us who know the improvement done in the County during the past few years appreciate the progressive activity of that part of the Colony. We have recently erected several new buildings on the Courentyne Coast. New Amsterdam is really the centre of that activity. All the mercantile and Government offices are situated in New Amsterdam. The Chamber of Commerce made representations to Government long before Davson's property became the subject of discussion that the Governor should be housed in proper quarters in

the County. At one time it was suggested that it should be on the Courentyne Coast or in Queenstown. So it is no new idea. The firm of Davson is of high moral repute and of great commercial standing. It is a highly reputable firm. When disparaging remarks are made against the firm and when we know what the firm of Davson means to the people of Berbice as the largest employers of labour in that County, it is the limit. The firm is not grabbing at this \$26,500 and wants to foist this property on Government. It is most unjust to attach that on a firm of such high moral standing in the community. That is really beside the point. The point is one of policy and is really one that should be considered. The property in question is well kept and well looked after, and the Davsons kept it so not in order to induce the Government to buy the property. The agitation came from the people of Berbice.

Mr. JACOB: Do I understand the hon. Member to say he knows the valuation of the property in the New Amsterdam Town Council books?

Mr. LUCKHOO: In so far as the sale price required to be budgeted for is concerned, having regard to the situation of this property Government would be well advised to purchase it at the figure asked for. If you reject it, do you think the owners are going to dismantle the house and bring it to Georgetown? They have no desire to do so. They have large businesses in Berbice still going on. They give a great deal to charity and other deserving causes. Some people seem to overlook the fact that during the war period they contributed handsomely to the war effort and did everything possible to alleviate distress in that part of the Colony. Their charities are too well known and their generosity too long established in that County for anyone to suggest that in order to get rid of their property they want to foist it on Government. The property has been valued by a Senior Officer of the Public Works Department. Who it is, I do not know. It appears in Your Excellency's Message. I am well aware of the extent of the land, not only the particular residential area but the 4½ acres, and that part of it by the seashore

can be used by Government for some proper purpose at some later date.

As regards the question of the necessity for acquiring it, we cannot have a private conference with the Governor in Berbice unless we go into his private quarters at Colony House. On the occasions that we were summoned to meet him we had to go into the Court Hall proper. The acquisition is very desirable, and to speak of the Governor holding a reception there he can only accommodate a few people in the Court Hall itself. Surely that is not good enough. Members think this property should be acquired but that the price is too high, but if they only bear in mind the value of property in that residential area they would have no objection to the price asked for. It is not unreasonable and excessive having due regard to the locality and site.

Mr. EDUN: I rise to a point of correction in regard to the hon. Member's remark! I do not recall any hon. Member imputing improper motives to the Davsons in this matter.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: The past Mayor of New Amsterdam having given us those facts, you may let us know the Municipal value of the property. You will then see the difference in the values.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I have always been and I am against the general principle of Government purchasing houses. An unfortunate remark has been made in this Council. It is unfortunate and one which can very well be viewed with some concern by hon. Members of this Council. Not because the hon. Member for Georgetown Central happens to be my ancestor, not because he knows fully well that I differ with him on political subjects, but I do think from a constitutional point of view a matter of this kind being before this Council for the purpose of negotiation hon. Members should be afforded every facility to visit that property. It does seem a very serious principle, one which ought not to be treated lightly. If Government is endeavouring to purchase a property, every Member of this Council should have the right freely to inspect that property and, I intend to go as far as to say, without

invitation. It is a right that we must see what Government is going to purchase and, I think, a refusal of that kind is a reflection on this whole Council. Be that as it may, I have heard a lot about this ancient county of Berbice and the necessity of having a Governor's House. What about the ancient county of Essequibo? It ought to have one at Suddie. Are you going to purchase one at Suddie or build one there, or are we going to say Suddie is a derelict place? I have heard one hon. Member say that this place is going to be used by the Judges. The hon. Member knows fully well that on certain occasions Colony House is used by certain Judges. I cannot follow his logic. If the Judges are going to use the new house and the Governor wants to go to Berbice while they are there, where is he going to, Colony House or that new house?

The PRESIDENT: I can explain that. If you have one house and you have the Judge, the Governor and a public officer—the Commissioner of Labour or the Director of Medical Services or the Director of Education—all wanting it, only the Governor or the Judge will occupy it. If you have another house to which the Governor or the Judge can go, then Colony House will be for the Officers of the Departments to use.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: It is not as simple as all that. Colony House was occupied by the Judge and the Governor wanted to go down there, and so the Judge had to put off the Session, which was a very unfortunate thing. Supposing it happens again? One of the main points made by certain speakers was that the Session had actually to be postponed because the Governor was going down there and not because the Director of Medical Services or the President of the Chamber of Commerce or someone else wanted to go down there to make investigation. Another point is this: The Government does not invest when purchasing. My hon. friend, the Deputy President, talked about the days before I was born. When the Government buys without any outlook with regard to investment, that has an influence on the purchase price. Surely it must be weighed in some way. You must compare it.

Mr. WOOLFORD: Not necessarily in money.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: With regard to the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Mr. Luckhoo) he stated that he had to pay a visit to His Excellency at Colony House for the purpose of an interview and had to sit behind, or in front, or within the dock in the Court Hall. What I am suggesting is this: If we are going to have a purchase price of \$26,000 you may have to add a sum to repair the property, and so the amount may run into \$80,000. This is only the purchase price. Another point raised by one hon. Member is the value of the property. The goodwill has a very important bearing on the purchase price. You are not going to say the purchase price has no bearing or relation to the appraised value. That is an important point. I suppose as Government has purchased for \$26,000 the Town Council of New Amsterdam is going to appraise the property at \$26,000. The Council will be very foolish if it does not. I do not think anyone suggested that Davsons are receivers of charity rather than givers of charity. It seems, if I size up the debate correctly, that Members feel if the Governor is to have a residence in Berbice—and I feel the majority favour that—the question of price should be arranged. A lot of the opposition would whittle away if that is done. This matter presents me with some difficulty as I am always against the principle of Government acquiring properties. I do hope we are going to see the end of that.

Mr. THOMPSON: It seems to be my misfortune to rise late after others have taken my thunder. The point before us is whether a house for the Governor is necessary in Berbice or not. I emphatically say a house is necessary and a suitable one. Berbice has been neglected for a long time, and when I heard one hon. Member say that only once in fifty years a Governor visits there, I said to myself then let us make the necessary provision so that Governors will always go there. If they are not visiting for want of a house, let us get a suitable house so that the Governor can visit there. There is one point that is a bit confusing. Is this house to be reserved

for the Governor or is it for the Governor and the Judges?

The PRESIDENT: The house will be mainly used by the Governor, but the Judges or Senior Government Officials will be given permission to use it if they cannot get accommodation at Colony House. I am not going to ask this Council to lay down who is to be allowed to use the house. It is a matter for the Governor.

Mr. THOMPSON: Thank you! I was thinking if the Judge is there and the Governor wants to go there, what would be the position. The air has been cleared by the reply I have received. When it comes to building a house at a cheaper rate, we have been hearing that there is a lack of building materials and priority can be had neither by Government nor anybody else. What then are we going to do? I think it is necessary that this matter be pushed through. I am prepared to support the Message and motion. As regards the price, it should be made quite possible for Members to satisfy themselves as to the suitability or otherwise of the place, and I definitely disagree that an embargo should be placed on Members having an inspection. It should be allowed in most cases where the money has to be voted by Members. That will help the position all the more, as having seen Members will be able to arrive at a suitable price and there can be a compromise.

In so far as the Davson's house is concerned, I know it is in a perfectly sound condition. It is kept always in a state of fit repair. Year in and year out it is being examined. Members can be assured that they will have suitable material for the money they are going to expend. The only thing to satisfy Members, however, is to allow them to see the condition of the house for themselves and arrive at a suitable price. As regards the aspersion cast on Berbice, I am not prepared to worry about that. We, Berbicians, are very tolerant and sympathise with persons when they sling mud at us. We endeavour to take it in good part and to show them that we are broadminded. We are not thinking of the price. We are thinking of the necessity and suitability of a residence for

the Governor in the county. I am prepared to support the Message and motion on that score.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: With regard to the acquisition, the offer was made to this Government by Messrs. Cameron and Shepherd through the Colonial Treasurer. Government has in no way committed itself.

The PRESIDENT: I think we have discussed this matter fully. I will put it to the vote.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: Are we in order? It is a quarter past five.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the hon. Member. Having listened patiently throughout this afternoon to the debate I now suggest that we take the vote. Is there anyone against that? I put the motion for the purchase of the property at \$26,500.

Motion put, and the Council divided, the voting being as follows:—

For—Messrs. Raatgever, Thompson, Ferreira, Jackson, Humphrys, Luckhoo, Dr. Singh, Critchlow, De Aguiar, Woolford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General, the Colonial Secretary—13.

Against—Messrs. Roth, Edun, Jacob, Peer Bacchus, Percy C. Wight—5.

Did not vote—Mr. C. V. Wight—1.

Motion adopted.

The PRESIDENT: I thank hon. Members for permitting the Standing Rules to be suspended and taking this business to-day so satisfactorily through. We will adjourn until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

The Council adjourned accordingly.