

# SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Constituted under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Orders in Council, 1953 and 1956).

Thursday, 19th May, 1960

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

<b>Deputy Speaker, Mr. R. B. Gajraj</b>	
<b>Chief Secretary, Hon. D. M. Hedges</b>	
<b>Attorney-General, Hon. A. M. I. Austin, Q.C.</b>	} <i>ex officio</i>
<b>Financial Secretary, Hon. F. W. Essex, C.M.G.</b>	
<b>The Honourable Dr. C. B. Jagan</b>	—Member for Eastern Berbice (Minister of Trade and Industry).
„ „ <b>B. H. Benn</b>	—Member for Essequibo River (Minister of Natural Resources)
„ „ <b>Janet Jagan</b>	—Member for Western Essequibo (Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)
„ „ <b>Ram Karran</b>	—Member for Demerara-Essequibo (Minister of Communications and Works)
„ „ <b>B. S. Rai</b>	—Member for Central Demerara (Minister of Community Development and Education).
<b>Mr. W. O. R. Kendall</b>	—Member for New Amsterdam
„ <b>R. C. Tello</b>	—Nominated Member
„ <b>F. Bowman</b>	—Member for Demerara River
„ <b>S. Campbell</b>	—Member for North Western District
„ <b>A. L. Jackson</b>	—Member for Georgetown North
„ <b>Ajodha Singh</b>	—Member for Berbice River
„ <b>Jai Narine Singh</b>	—Member for Georgetown South
„ <b>R. E. Davis</b>	—Nominated Member
„ <b>A. M. Fredericks</b>	—Nominated Member
„ <b>H. J. M. Hubbard</b>	—Nominated Member
„ <b>A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.</b>	—Nominated Member.
<b>Mr. E. V. Viapree</b>	— Clerk of the Legislature, (acting)
<b>Mr. F. A. Narain</b>	— Assistant Clerk of the Legislature, (acting).

ABSENT :

His Honour the Speaker, Sir Donald Jackson — on leave  
Mr. S. M. Saffee — Member for Western Berbice — on leave  
Mr. L. F. S. Burnham — Member for Georgetown Central — on leave  
Mr. E. B. Beharry — Member for Eastern Demerara.

The Clerk read prayers.

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 18th May, 1960, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## LEAVE TO MEMBER

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** I wish to announce that the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Burnham) has sought leave to be absent from the meeting of the Council today, and has been granted leave.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

## INTERPRETATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

**The Attorney-General:** (Mr Austin): I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of the

Interpretation (Amendment) Bill.  
1960.

## ORDER OF THE DAY

## BILL — FIRST READING

The following Bill was read the First time:

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Interpretation Ordinance."

## ORDER IN COUNCIL NO. 30 of 1960

## RUM BLENDING INGREDIENTS

**The Financial Secretary:** (Mr. Essex): I beg to move:

"Be it Resolved, that this Council in terms of Section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order in Council No. 30 of 1960, which was made on the 8th day of March, 1960, and published in the Gazette on the 26th of March, 1960."

This is a simple matter. We amended Item 11 of the First Schedule to the Customs Ordinance in 1957 to provide that ingredients used in the manufacture of spirituous compounds

should be exempt from Customs duty, provided that this exemption did not apply to ingredients which were classified as alcoholic beverages in Group 112 of the Trade Classification List. Before that date ingredients imported for use in the blending and production of rum were admitted duty free.

The Amendment made in 1957 was necessary because of a legal ruling that spirituous compounds included rum, and it would have been possible for people to import raw spirits, or even rum, to blend with rum. That, obviously, would have been undesirable in view of the local rum industry. But it was not the intention that ingredients other than spirits, which were imported to be blended with rum, should bear an import duty. Having used Group 112 to define alcoholic beverages which are excluded from this duty-free concession, we found that two items, prune wine and blending sherry, were paying duty. There are no local substitutes for those two ingredients, and there is no need to protect the local spirit industry, and as they had been admitted duty free before, when used in the blending of rum, Government felt that the request of the blenders should be met, and those two items should be exempt from duty. That is what this Amendment proposes to do. I do not think any hon. Member will find it controversial.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry** (Dr. Jagan): I beg to second the Motion

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

## FREEHOLD TITLE ON HIRE-PURCHASE BASIS

Council resumed the debate on the following Motion by the hon. Member for Demerara River:

"Whereas the social and economic system which prevails in British Guiana is patterned on that of the Western World, India and Pakistan, and provides for free enterprise and the ownership of property; and

Whereas the policy of the Majority Party of the Government is opposed to freehold ownership of land:

Be it resolved: That this Council urges upon the Government that freehold title on a reasonable hire-purchase basis be granted to —

- (i) farmers in respect of land they now occupy in Government Land Settlement Schemes; and
- (ii) persons occupying Crown lands for farming.”

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The debate on the Motion was suspended yesterday afternoon when the hour of five o'clock had been reached, and at that time the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, was still speaking. I wonder whether he wishes to continue speaking today because, if he does, a request will have to be made to Council for an extension of time.

**Mr. Bowman:** I move that the hon. Nominated Member be allowed an extension of half an hour to continue his speech.

**Mr. Fredericks:** I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

**Mr. Tello:** Your Honour, yesterday at the time of adjournment I was trying to impress upon this Council that any attempt by any Government at any time or place to deprive an individual of his God-given right to own property, especially landed property, must be viewed with concern.

It is even stated in the Holy Bible, at Proverbs 13, verse 22 —

“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children . . .”

One must recognize that every good man tries to own property so that he would have the honour and happiness of bequeathing it to his inheritors, and anyone admires a person who tries to turn his hard-earned income into substance that

can be perpetuated in posterity. Pride of possession among people is almost immeasurable, from those who own the humblest cottage to the largest industry. Those who do not own property do not have the same regard for property, and so the world over one is encouraged to own freehold property because this lends itself to decent, prosperous citizenship. I hope that my eyes are deceiving me, but I am beginning to wonder if the picture is one of a deep-seated plot to cut across the fundamental rights of man.

It is perfectly true that this Government went out of its way to introduce legislation to ease land matters and so that people may register their titles without much difficulty and own land where ownership was uncertain — and this was referred to in another debate. Also true is that when the P.P.P. was elected to office in 1957 there was already a strong feeling about these matters and this feeling gained momentum; and as the P.P.P. had gone around the country declaring its intentions to do something about these problems, it might have proved dangerous to abandon action.

Inasmuch as the Government went out of its way to make it simple and easy for people to own title to their land, we also see the undue haste of Government in introducing the Land Bonds legislation. With the enactment of the Land Bonds legislation, it meant that Government, whether it had the money or not, could purchase land not considered — by Government — to be properly occupied. And when this Land Bonds legislation was passed British Guiana already had on its Statute Book the most progressive land legislation in the British Caribbean — the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance.

**Mr. Hubbard:** To a point of order, Your Honour: we have indulged the hon. Nominated Member by extending the time of his speech.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is no longer an indulgence, but a decision of the

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER]

Council. As long as he continues to speak to the Motion, I do not think any other Member should interrupt. The same courtesy one expects, one must extend.

**Mr. Tello:** Thank you, Your Honour. I was saying that already we had in British Guiana this progressive land acquisition legislation. One must view with some suspicion therefore the coincidence of Government's introduction of further legislation, especially when we recall that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara, who formerly held a Portfolio in the Government, told this Council that the Land Bonds Bill was originally intended to be followed by another Bill which would give the assurance——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Might I point out to the hon. Member that there is a Motion to be moved dealing with the Land Bonds Ordinance, which will provide for a debate, very shortly I hope, and therefore he should not anticipate this discussion by making these references at this stage. If it has some bearing on policy he might do it, but he must bear in mind item 4 on the Order Paper. We should at this stage direct our attention to the particular terms of the Motion under discussion.

**Mr. Tello:** Thank you, Your Honour, but as I see it there is every attempt to fill the air with confusion and to divert attention from the real issue. I would suggest that this Motion before us be accepted, for there is the need for more revenue in the country for developmental purposes. If it is accepted, through the sale of lands, much revenue would come to Government without the burden of repayment as with a loan.

I think that if nothing else has demonstrated the people's sincere desire to own land the opening of the Land Registry Court has, for people turn up there in the hundreds to obtain full possession of land. Perhaps if this Motion

is accepted, the need for Members of the Government to move around the world seeking to raise loans would not be so acute. We would then have revenue from the people, of the people and in the interest of the people.

Yesterday I quoted certain Catholic writings — and I felt it an honour to do so, because I have implicit faith in my own doctrine — and to writings of other faiths. I also referred to what was written in the Holy Bible. I wish to do so again, not because I am a fanatic Christian, but simply because I want to bring to this Council the truth as accepted for generations. It is written in Numbers 35, verse 8, that

“ . . . from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.”

Once more I must point out that in order that children should enjoy the inheritance of their fathers, they must first have the right to own property. No one can bequeath to their generations the property of the state. No one can bequeath to his children or his children's children property that is either not his or is held by lease. I feel very strongly on this matter, because not only christians feel this way. British Guiana is not made up of Christians and Catholics alone. We have a considerable number of Hindus living in this country, and they have been very active in matters economic, social and political. With your permission, Sir, I would like to read a true extract taken from Manu Samriti.

**Mr. Benn:** What !

**Mr. Tello:** I am not certain whether my pronunciation is correct — I am not a Hindu, Sir. This book constitutes the laws of King Manu, the ancient philosopher and law-giver of the Hindus and is respected throughout all ages as the basis of Hindu law. It was compiled in the Second Century, B.C. Already I hear disrespectful assertions like, “this is out of date”. However, I do not regard the

person who has said that as an authority. Outstanding Hindus in this Colony have assured me that the book to which I refer is one of the greatest authorities accepted the world over, and has been so throughout the centuries. Verse 264 states:

"If anyone confiscates the land, house, field, garden, etc., of another, frightening the owner, the King should fine him with 500 gold coins. If it was done unknowingly, the fine should be only 200 gold coins."

[**Hon. Members:** "There are no gold coins nowadays".]

I saw gold coins a few days ago. The Hindus are religious people, and I respect their beliefs and faith. I know that they have great regard for the faith of their forefathers and that faith supports private ownership of land. That is my point, and I am trying to establish here that throughout generations Hindus as well as Christians have been demanding their God-given right to private ownership and private property. Some people may try to minimize this matter, but I know of no man worthy of living who does not have pride in the ownership of property. While some of us are trying to make fun at these Holy writings, I want to warn this Council of the state of things at the moment. I want to warn Members of this Council of our responsibility and our obligation to preserve the right of the individual at all times.

Sir, it is rather fortunate that you are presiding today, because I know of your religious beliefs. I know of your respect for your religious faith and for those honourable people who have gone before you. I know that you will not swerve from the path of your forefathers, and if no one else in this Council will support me, you will support Holy Writ. Fate has been so kind to me that I can now address myself to one who will accept the references that I will make from a true extract, because you can challenge the accuracy of it.

In order to make myself clear, Sir, I should like to state that my next extract is taken from a translation by A. Yusuf Ali. I am again reliably informed that this translator is accepted as authentic and is respected throughout the world, especially throughout the Muslim world. With your permission, Sir, I should like to read what is written in the Holy Koran at chapter 4, verse 7.

**Dr. Jagan:** Is this a religious lecture?

**Mr. Tello:** I am sorry that we must blush and smile at Holy Writ. I was saying that it is written in chapter 4, verse 7:

"From what is left by parents  
And those nearest related,  
There is a share for men  
And a share for women,  
Whether the property be small  
Or large — a determinate share."

It is also written in verse 33:

"To benefit every one,  
We have appointed  
Shares and heirs  
To property left  
By parents and relatives."

The emphasis is on heirs to the property left by parents. That is what I am pleading with this Council to preserve: the parents' right to own and bequeath. This Motion asks for the preservation of that God-given right. I will never be tired pleading with this Council. It is not my disposition to fight when kind words can do a job satisfactorily. I want to remind Members of this Council that throughout the major sectors of our country Hindus, Muslims and other people want to perpetuate this God-given right to own land and property as their individual right.

I have repeated myself; I have even taxed the patience of my hon. Friends, but I am doing it because I feel very strongly on this matter and I do not want it to be said at any time that we have forgotten what the people of British Guiana want. I repeat that Christians,

[MR. TELLO]

Hindus and Muslims have always accepted the natural right to own land, and Government should not deprive them of that right. I hope that my simple warning and beseeching will not fall on deaf ears. I hope that the issues will not be beclouded because the hon. Mover of the Motion is no longer with the P.P.P. I also hope that because I have never had the honour of being elected to this Council and it falls to my lot to make this plea, that the prejudice existing against Nominated Members will not cause certain Members of the Government to oppose it. This is not an opposition to individuals; it is opposition to a fundamental principle. I have already pleaded with Government to bring a White Paper to this Council on the matter, so that things will be properly recorded and publicly known. [Hon. Members: "A red one."]

Perhaps we will have to wait until it gets red. I repeat that I have pleaded with Government to bring a White Paper before this Council setting out its land policy. Yesterday I told this Council that this Motion gives Government an opportunity to state its policy for making it simple and easy for people, who have a great ambition, to own land so that they will have the right as good Christians, good Hindus and good Muslims to pass the land on to their heirs.

**Mr. Hubbard:** When man discovered the means of producing more than was necessary to keep him alive, society became possible. In the pursuit of that aim to produce a surplus, in the beginning, land was all important; it continues to this very day to be the most important means. This truth that I have recited: that society became possible when man discovered the means of producing more than was necessary to keep him alive, becomes manifestly clear when we consider the army of non-producers who live in the modern State. And as civilization grows, more and more non-

producers become necessary for the proper functioning of the State, and so society develops new forms and new means of fulfilling its purpose of increasing this producer's surplus. Land, as I have said, has been the basis of man's social efforts, and the manner in which land has been held has often determined a society's progress.

We are now considering a Motion which proposes that one form of land tenure should be preferred to another form as a matter of State policy. It is proposed that the form known as freehold should be preferred to what we call leasehold.

In listening to some of the remarks that have gone before, I have almost come to the conclusion that we were debating the question whether there should be the right to hold property in land in British Guiana or whether there should not be that right. I think it would be well for us to realize, at this point, that whether land is held by leasehold or whether it is held by what is commonly called freehold title, it is held, and the person having either a leasehold title or a freehold title is in a position to enforce his rights in respect of that land. So the question, then, is not one of whether the land should be held or not. It is a question of what is the nature of the title that should be given.

As I said, many forms have been developed as civilization grew to cover the ownership and the use of land. There was a time when it was considered that personal, absolute ownership and control of land was the desired end; but today, out of the experience of society, it has been found that that is not now a desirable thing. In the United Kingdom, which incidentally is not a communist or socialist country, where Conservatives come forward as Conservatives and win elections; in Great Britain, if a man holds a piece of farm land whatever his title, he has to satisfy the authorities that he has

applied to that land the usages of husbandry which will ensure the maximum productivity for the benefit not only of himself, but of the community at large.

In so individualistic a community as Great Britain we have therefore, well entrenched, a principle that in the use of so basic a means to civilization as land, not only should the interests of the individual be taken into account, but that the needs of the community as a whole should be well and truly taken care of.

We have, in this country, a long history of land and land tenure; a long history of struggles against the use of land to keep the people poor. It was but yesterday that large absentee landowners, having freehold title to vast areas and leasehold title to other vast areas, locked those lands up to ensure a servile and easily manageable labour force. That is our history. I am quite certain that my hon. Friend, the mover of the Motion, is not so far removed from his earlier days that he does not recall what the workers on sugar plantations had to do in order to get a little piece of land for rice cultivation. That was freehold ownership of land! But it was freehold ownership of land which gave to the owner the right to use it for his own purposes regardless of the needs of the community as a whole.

It has been said by one of the best known of those absentee proprietors, that we should not look over our shoulders; but I like to look over my shoulder, because when I see shadows in front of me, I like to know what from behind are casting the shadows.

As I said, we have a history of freehold tenure in this country, and those of us who have not forgotten our past and hope for a better future will bear that history in mind. But this question of tenure is one that is, today, a live question for sociologists all over the world. For the Caribbean, it is a matter of controversy. The Caribbean, let it not be forgotten, has grown up with a

culture and economy based on the plantation where large individual holdings have kept the bulk of the people from being able to use the land to the best advantage of those people and the land.

I will refer, on this question of the terms of tenure, to what has been already said in this Council on the same point. But it is a matter which I do not think can be over-emphasized. It is what Professor W. Arthur Lewis said. I quote from the "Caribbean Economic Review" of October, 1951, at page 87:

"There has been considerable discussion in the West Indies as to whether tenants should be settled on freehold or on leasehold tenures. In fact, the use of these terms is unfortunate. There are many different types of freehold tenure, and many different types of leasehold tenure, and since these types overlap, the battle between them is largely a battle of words."

I had occasion to remark, yesterday, that one of the things which British Guiana has been notably short of in public life, has been honesty. To hand down to an individual, title to land which circumscribes, as any title must, his right to bequeath it in little pieces, his right to do what he would like at will; to circumscribe tenure with a number of restrictions on its use — restrictions which are necessary for the purposes of a developing community — is to hand down title which cannot honestly be said to be freehold title as our people understand it. Therefore, in honesty, the only workable title which the community can give to agricultural lands, is circumscribed title — call it what it is, leasehold title — title held under the condition that it shall be used or may be occupied subject to those numerous conditions.

As I said, this debate could have been short if it had been restricted to the question whether such title as can be given to land should be called leasehold or called freehold. Unfortunately, it has become a much wider debate and has involved the general question of the rights of property.

[MR. HUBBARD]

I would just like to say this : that in different times there are different arguments and different debates on the question of how far the rights of property can legitimately extend. We have had reference to Holy Writ—in Holy Writ it is said that man is made in God's image and likeness—but if I take some of my friends who have spoken seriously, I must conclude that in their opinion, notwithstanding Holy Writ, it is not man who is made in God's image and likeness, but God that is made in man's image and likeness. I am well aware of the day, because it forms an integral part of our Guianese history, when the argument was whether it was legitimate for property in man to be maintained. And there were persons ready to argue with the vehemence of some of our earlier speakers in this debate, that it was a God-given right for man to own property in man. But I like to treat words as they deserve to be treated; words are the means of expressing our thoughts, and I think they should be spoken with care and not poured out unnecessarily.

I think I have said what is relevant to the immediate question under debate, and I would like to end by again saying : let us be honest with the people of this country as we should be honest with ourselves, and let us call the title which we can give them to the land they will hold by its correct name — leasehold.

**Mr. Campbell:** I arrived a few hours ago from the North Western District and I had no knowledge that this Motion would be debated today. I could not come yesterday because the steamer arrives in Georgetown on Thursday. I have not prepared anything, but I am aware that the Motion urges Government to grant freehold title to persons occupying Crown lands, and to settlers on Government land settlement schemes. I agree with the Motion.

In spite of what the last speaker has said, that leasehold is the best form of

land tenure, I am for the freehold system which enables a man to bequeath his land to his children. That is the sort of land tenure which the generality of Guianese understand. With freehold title a farmer knows that the land belongs to him, and that he can cultivate it to the best of his ability. Leasehold is a new-fangled system of land tenure which, in recent years, has been foisted on the farmers of the world. With freehold title a man can go to the Bank or a money lender and borrow money, but with a lease he cannot do that. That is one of the reasons why people prefer freehold title.

East Indians are a race of people who love the land and believe in owning land. I wonder what will be their reaction to this Government's view that leasehold is the better system of land tenure. The last speaker quoted a statement by Professor Authur Lewis in which he described the controversy as a "battle of words." I agree that there is too much of a battle of words, so much babble that the result is confusion in the minds of the people. It is all words which are often used to bamboozle the public. I am supporting the Motion.

**Mr. Ajodha Singh:** I cannot allow this debate to end without making my small contribution. After listening to the speech made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, yesterday I think one would come to the conclusion that he is a Guianese who has been living out of British Guiana. Throughout his speech he urged that man should not be deprived of his right to own property, but he and other Members of this Council know that if a man has the money he can buy any property in this country.

The right is there to own land if you can pay for it. There is no law, and this Government has no intention of passing legislation to prevent a person from purchasing property if he wants to. We on this side of the Table have to sit here and listen to certain Members of the "Opposi-

tion" saying all sorts of things against us, but wasn't the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, a Member of the Interim Government when the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Bill was passed? He was a Member of that Government, but he said nothing against that Bill, the purpose of which was to enable the Government to acquire lands which were not beneficially occupied. He sat then with a closed mouth, but today he is attacking this Government by saying that its intention is not to give people freehold title to lands.

If the hon. Member had any knowledge of what is happening in the country today he would know that every day the Assessment Committees have to deal with cases in which it is disclosed that owners of freehold lands are charging their tenants three or four bags of padi as rental. Those are the good people the hon. Nominated Member talks about—good people who must pass on their inheritance by exploiting the small man. If the hon. Member would attend meetings of the Assessment Committees he would know of the discontent among small farmers who rent lands from freehold proprietors. He would realize that the freehold system would not benefit the small man but the large landowners.

**Mr. Tello:** I cannot allow the hon. Member to continue to quote me incorrectly. I would remind the hon. Member that I stated that the right to possess private property is derived by man from Nature, and that the State has no right to take away a man's land but merely to control its use so as to bring it into harmony with the interests of the public good.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member will also recall that one of his Biblical quotations did include the question of the good man being able to pass on his inheritance to those who came after him. Having used that quotation to expound his ideas along those lines it is quite legitimate for any hon. Member to take the same quotation and give it a

different connotation according to his own opinion. I think the hon. Member for Berbice River is therefore quite in order.

**Mr. Ajodha Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Motion will not help the small man. If the small man wants land, the first difficulty he will face is that he has not got the money to buy it and also to develop it. He then has to go to the big man to borrow the money. When he cannot repay it, the big man will take away the land and rent it to the small man at \$20 a month. Those who hold freehold land can lease it to tenants. These tenants would have to clear the land, plant it, and produce crops, but they can be told at any time that they must quit the land. If the tenants argue and try to defend themselves the landlord would put cows on the land and intimidate the tenants from planting crops. If the hon. Member would cast his attention to the countryside, he would see what is happening.

My friends, hon. Members, I am opposed to this Motion; I am opposed to freehold titles to land because I know it will never help the small man in this country. I agree that if a man can afford to buy land, let him take his money and purchase it—he is free to do that so he can pass it on. But if the Government is going to spend \$9,000 of taxpayers' money on Government Housing Schemes to settle one farmer, I think these people should pay in order that Government should get more money to finance more housing schemes and so reduce unemployment in this country.

If we allow more freehold, the people will be indebted to the big shopkeepers, and instead of being able to pass their land on to their children, they will have to sell it to their creditors eventually. With these few words, I will say that I am against this Motion.

**Mr. Rai:** I would just like to say a few words as to the real nature of freehold and leasehold property. My hon. Friend, the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Hub-

[MR. RAI]

bard, did say something on it, and I just wish to mention one or two other points. This Motion does not set out to examine the question of the right to own property in this country. One can be the owner of leasehold property as well as one can be owner of freehold property. Leasehold, according to the laws of this country and those of England entitles one to legal title to property just as how freehold gives legal title to property.

What does ownership consist of? Ownership only consists of a bundle of rights: for example, the right to use, the right to dispose, the right to encumber, the right to give, the right to bequeath or devise. These rights or attributes are equal in freehold or leasehold property. One can get money on leasehold as security, one can bequeath or devise his leasehold land, one can sell his leasehold as one can sell his freehold. There are differences in the lengths of title. If one has leasehold property for 21 years, then it is for that period of time that he has it, and if it is renewable, he can go on having it after that period. If one has leasehold for perpetuity, it is as good as freehold.

Under the Agricultural Holdings Act, which was passed in the United Kingdom in 1947, the State imposed conditions on the enjoyment and use of freehold property. If a person does not plant his land or cultivate it in any way beneficially, then he can be subjected to an order by the agricultural authorities. So this talk about freehold title being better than leasehold property does not take into consideration the disadvantages one finds affecting the right to use freehold property.

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, was very concerned about the right to own property and the ability to bequeath or devise it: I wish to assure him—and he can also be assured by any lawyer or anyone who knows jurisprudence—that one can dispose of leasehold.

Ownership of leasehold is in the same class with freehold. You can devise or bequeath both. This debate is merely concerned with Crown Land.

There is a rumour going around that this Government proposes to take away transported land and offer leasehold land for it. This is not so, it is propaganda. This question of leasehold and freehold centres around Crown lands, which are not private property, but lands which belong to the State, to everyone in this country, so to speak. It is merely felt by the Majority Party that leasehold title will ensure better utilization of the lands which are now Crown Lands.

**Mr. Davis:** It is indeed a pleasure to speak after the hon. Minister of Community Development and Education, but I think that one or two of his facts have not been completely tabulated. Let us first of all think of the legal question of ownership. I do not quite agree with him when he says that lands which are held by way of freehold are no different, as far as ownership is concerned, from that held by way of leasehold. But surely as a man who has had connections with business and as a lawyer he should appreciate that if a man holds transport to a property which he owns, it is much better and much more secure, so far as possession is concerned, than if he held it under leasehold—which is subjected to a lot of conditions in small print which is sometimes hardly readable, and which often requires scrutiny with the aid of a magnifying glass.

Surely he would recognize the fact that the freehold transport is a much more negotiable instrument than that of leasehold. It has been my experience that a man who holds a property under leasehold experiences grave difficulty in getting money to borrow on that property. Yet it would appear to all intents and purposes that the objects are similar. I would contend, and I think I have some experience of the country—perhaps not as much as the hon. Member for Berbioe River who claims to have abundant

knowledge of the country districts—that the trouble in these areas has been the fact that the people who own land, the small land proprietors, do not have the means to develop their properties to the desired degree.

That is why many of us welcome, very fervently, the introduction of the Land Registration Bill which will give many of these people in the country areas, whose transports are sometimes not clearly defined because of fragmentation and other reasons, an opportunity to have their titles properly registered. I would have thought that one of the arguments of the Majority Party would be that, with the introduction of the Land Registration Bill, it would be easier for the small land proprietor to clear up his title and it would encourage him to use his transport as an instrument for negotiation.

We have often heard the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry saying that the trouble in this country is the fact that there is not sufficient money in circulation. I do not think the Government should concern itself too much about the large land proprietors, because they are quite able to take care of themselves. They seem to be able to get all the money they need to develop their properties properly, and ensure that they are beneficially occupied as well as utilized to a standard which can only be maintained by adequate amenities such as drainage, irrigation, sea defence work and so on. I repeat that the large land proprietors can take care of themselves and their properties.

Let us think of the assistance a small land proprietor will be able to get, if his transport is in order and he can use it to get some of the necessities and amenities that are so necessary for good farming. I heard only recently from knowledgeable persons—persons whose opinions I respect—that many of the people who are working land under the leasehold tenure are unable to pay their leases or rentals. That is true; but what is the reason for that? We have been told that for

the past five years several people have experienced great difficulties in paying their leases.

The trouble is that in many of these areas the control of water has been inadequate, and that is the reason why many of the people have been unable to pay their way fluidly. Under a freehold tenure the people may be able to pledge their properties in order to obtain money to develop their lands, bit by bit, if necessary, and get better returns from them.

Certain Members have used Windsor Forest as an argument to support leasehold. They say that some people prefer to remain occupiers of the land under leasehold rather than by transport. That is absolutely true. However, the people who occupy Windsor Forest Estates pay \$6.00 rental per annum, and they have a lease or title for 99 years. I am not certain how many years are unexpired, but I know that they have leases for a long and reasonable period. The Government also has the responsibility of providing adequate drainage, rangers, estate management and so on. The Government should not “slip up” and make a colossal noise about this, because the estates were already developed and the people found it easy to work the land. They were able to occupy the land at a very cheap rental. Do not let us confuse the issue by referring to Windsor Forest, because I suspect that it has been done in an effort to draw a red herring across the trail.

I am one of those people who believe that the land should be beneficially occupied. I further believe that the utilization of land should be pursued rigorously. I was happy a moment ago to hear the hon. Minister of Community Development and Education saying that in a certain country the State introduced conditions with regard to the complete utilization of lands occupied under a freehold title. I suggest that what is good for others should be good enough for us. Perhaps we may find it profitable to copy what is being done there.

[MR. DAVIS]

Now, there is one grave disability, with regard to this question of freehold and it is the question of fragmentation. A lot of fragmentation has taken place on the lands on the West Coast and it has practically ruined the whole Canal Polder Scheme. Here is a real problem and a serious difficulty. However, I suggest that it is not insurmountable, because I feel that a Government with vision, being aware of the difficulties and disadvantages that accrue from such excessive fragmentation, can take steps to frame legislation to prevent such fragmentation.

The hon. Member for Berbice River made reference to the Rice Assessment Court and the use that is being made of it. I am not quite certain whether he was referring to rice lands. Assuming that his reference was to rice lands, as I observe that he mentioned padi about three or four times, surely, as a legislator and a knowledgeable man in rice, he must know that it is wrong for any land owner or landlord to charge a rice tenant so many bags of padi in lieu of rent. Those landlords are breaking the law, and provision has been made for such delinquents. The police should be informed of such cases, and the hon. Member knows that.

I understand that the rental some landlords are entitled to receive is too low to enable them to run their estates properly. The position is further depressed when some tenants walk off with the rent—this is the common practice in certain areas.

When the tenant moves off the land and he does not pay his rental, the law provides what is to be done in such cases; therefore, I do not think it is reasonable for any Member to make a “hue and a cry” of any such circumstance. I want to suggest further, in urging landlords and tenants to push the full utilization of their land, the consideration of a land tax. If the land is taxed, no matter how modestly, it will ensure that the

landlord must utilize his land to such an extent—it will be incumbent upon him to maintain and keep that land so well occupied, beneficially—as to make it possible for him to meet that tax plus, perhaps, drainage and irrigation rates or call it what you will. But I do not think the answer would be just to say, as was stated by an hon. Minister: “These people cannot even pay their rentals, how much more can they be expected to pay to clear the encumbrances on the estates when they acquire them?”

Let us take, now, the personal aspect of the situation. Would a man who owns property by freehold not take more pride, more interest and be more motivated to work to keep his property to that high degree of utilization? It seems to me the most natural desire and sequence of things, rather than holding his title of leasehold and then finding, perhaps, he has infringed some small tenet of the licence of occupancy which may make him liable, perhaps, to be put off the land. It gives him added security. And may I add this in conclusion: Particularly with this wind of change of independence that is coming our way; even that, I think, is another good reason why man would want and prefer to hold his title by freehold rather than by leasehold. [*Pause*].

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is there any other hon. Member who wishes to speak to the Question? If so, now is the time to do so.

**The Minister of Natural Resources** (Mr. Benn): As I listened to the various speeches on this Motion, I could not help but consider the words of Sir Walter Scott:

“Oh! what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practise to deceive.”

Those who examined the proposition carefully; those who carefully studied the words of the original Motion and even the Amendment to the resolve clause, cannot but recognize that most of the speakers on the other side of the Table, especially those who filled the air with

biblical and religious quotations, used those biblical and religious quotations to hide the success of Government's land distribution campaign.

I have another quotation, if you will permit me, from Gaetano Salvemini. He said:

"Impartiality is either a delusion of the simple-minded, a banner of the opportunist, or the boast of the dishonest. Nobody is entitled to be unbiased towards truth or falsehood."

What is the proposition?

The hon. Member for Demerara River said that the social system of Guianese is apparent to the world; that India and Pakistan provide for free enterprise and ownership of property, and the policy of the Majority Party is opposed to the freehold ownership of land.

Now the Majority Party has never declared itself to be opposed to the freehold ownership of land. I mentioned when I was dealing with the Land Bonds Bill and when the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, who was a Member of the Interim Government, was accusing the present Government of trying to take away people's land, that the Land Registry Ordinance was passed in order to make it possible for people who had titles to land, which titles had got mixed up somehow or other, to get proper titles from re-surveys and the like.

In order to excuse himself, during the debate Mr. Tello said all this was done by the Interim Government, and that the Interim Government had appointed a Committee which had gone to a great deal of worry; the Committee had investigated and spoken to people, and that it would have been highly dangerous if the present Government had held up the Land Registry Bill. That is not being really honest because there were no meetings held all over the country, as the hon. Member has suggested, and there was nothing to prevent the present Government from shelving the Land Registry Bill if it wanted to do so.

In addition, this was said in order to excuse himself from some responsibility for the Land Acquisition Bill which was passed by the Interim Government. That Bill provides for the taking away of people's land. What we sought to do in the Land Bonds Bill was to pay in bonds for the land which the Interim Government attempted to take away; so the former Member of the Interim Government finds himself in the position that he has to oppose everything the present Government does. But our memories are not so short. He has quoted from the Bible. I do not boast, but the hon. Member can never know as much of the Bible as I do.

**Mr. Tello:** Why not practise what you know.

**Mr. Benn:** I can tell the hon. Member that no one who understands the Bible carefully picks quotations out of their context and quote them. I have a Holy Bible here and I can quote:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"

I can go on:

"The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine, saith the Lord."

The devil can quote Scriptures.

**Mr. Tello:** So is he doing now.

**Mr. Benn:** I——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Will the hon. Minister please address the Chair?

**Mr. Benn:** What the hon. Member, in his quotations, did not take into consideration was the reason behind the sayings in the Bible. But we will come to that later on.

In India, Pakistan and the Western World, free enterprise, as well as the ownership of property, was the basis of their system of Government, but today the Government of India is taking away land from persons who have over 30

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acres. They put ceilings on land holdings. They take away the surplus land from those people who have large holdings — a family of five is entitled to 30 acres — and they compensate them for the land which they had taken away, and the individuals have no recourse to the Courts. That is happening in India and in Pakistan.

I have heard the hon. Member quoting from the "Islamic Review" and from the "Holy Koran", but quoting from the "Holy Koran" does not make you holy. I shall refer to a speech — "A Study of the Fundamentals of Modern Economic Systems and Those laid down by Islam" by Muhammad Abu al-Su'ud — in "The Islamic Review" printed in England in May, 1957. The hon. Member must have, perhaps, a better understanding and insight of the "Koran" than the Pakistan Government. Perhaps he has, because he picks a quotation out of its context, throws it on the floor of the Council Chamber and challenges anyone to take it up. I now quote from the speech on page 12:

"I shall now endeavour to discuss the conception of the "ownership" of property. Is ownership an instinct in man? Or is it a conception developed by man over the ages with the intention of securing a more orderly form of life in an expanding community?"

We know that primitive tribes in the early days of history lived a communal life in every sense of the word and knew nothing of private ownership of property. Everything within the domains of the tribe belonged to the tribe as a whole and not to any particular individual or individuals. This form of possession and ownership of property can still be seen in some parts of Africa which have not been touched by civilization. Islam has recognized the communal ownership of property and has laid down rules governing it. Europe in the Middle Ages also recognized the communal ownership of property, when it was held that land was a gift of God to His people as a whole and not to any particular individual. The title to land was then vested in the king or ruler of a country in his capacity as the person selected by God to govern the people. The king or ruler in this case was not in reality the "owner" of the land which was under his control but was

merely a "trustee" appointed by God to administer this land fairly for the benefit of the children of God. It should be remembered here that land was at that time the main source of wealth for the community."

I take it from some of the persons from whose religious teachings the hon. Member is supposed to have quoted. I quote from page 12:

"Muhammad Ali (d. 1849 C.E.), the Khedive of Egypt, was perhaps one of the greatest social reformers Egypt has known in modern times. One of his most notable actions was his confiscation of all agricultural land in Egypt and placing it under the ownership of the State. He divided the land into comparatively small plots and allotted it to a large number of farmers according to their capacity to develop and exploit it. People who became holders of land under this scheme could not sell the land or devise it to their heirs after their death."

The hon. Member is worried because I have found sufficient evidence to refute some of his misstatements and his taking quotations out of their context. In West Pakistan other policies prevail. There land bonds, to which the hon. Member referred, are issued to people whose lands have been taken away, and they cover a period of 25 years. In British Guiana the period of our land bonds is 20 years. The hon. Member said that any Government which did not allow people to obtain freehold title to land is a bad Government, therefore the Governments of India and Pakistan are bad Governments. He does not understand the Bible which he attempts to quote. I do not want to lecture the hon. Member or the Council on the reasons behind some of his quotations from the Bible. He should read the Jewish Antiquities and Religious History and he would find out the reasons.

Let me give him a small quotation from "A Study in Land Tenure." Agriculturists, Land Development Officers, Commissioners of Lands and Heads of Governments got together at Wisconsin in 1951 to discuss land problems and land tenure in the world. I want to quote what Alfred Bonne, a delegate from Israel, said, because the hon. Member has quoted from

the Old Testament. The delegate from Israel was speaking on the manner in which the Jewish State was set up, and on the activities of the Zionist Movement. This is what he is reported to have said at the Conference at page 111 of the Report:

"The need of the first settlers to enjoy progressive land tenure conditions was thus forcefully supported by religious tradition. Conditions of ancient Oriental agriculture with respect to crop-sharing, accumulation of land in the hands of a few great landowners were not so different from those prevailing on the contemporary scene. The social conscience of the Bible has reacted with the admonition that God is the supreme owner of the land ('then mine is the land'); that the fate of the tiller of the soil is a primary concern of society ('you shall dwell in the land in safety'); and that "the land shall not be sold for ever."

The hon. Member suggests that there should be freehold ownership of property in British Guiana. Let me assure him that the People's Progressive Party will not take away his house, his land, his shoes or his tie. The hon. Member should know the reason for freehold property in certain Western countries. He should know how the ownership of land developed.

He cannot have forgotten his study of political economy and how, during the feudal period, land was given out to tenants, sub-tenants, serfs and slaves who had to work for their overlords. The whole system of land tenure in Europe was patterned on that background. In England today most of the lands that people live on are leasehold property. The hon. Member should find out the reason for that. In some parts of Western Germany, even in those territories where co-operatives have been set up, as in Holland, there are fundamental reasons behind the private ownership of agricultural land.

One must not be emotional on a subject of this kind. The hon. Member urges that freehold title should be given to settlers on Government land settlement

schemes. I will come to that later. He also urges that persons who occupy Crown lands for farming should be given freehold title, yet in certain parts of this country, on the Essequibo coast for instance, large landlords are selling their freehold property now and taking up leasehold property from Government. Ask Mr. Deeroop Maraj if he is selling out his freehold property at Coffee Grove. Does the hon. Member want us to sell out all Government and Crown lands to the people in the Mahaica creek? Sugar companies hold about 80,000 acres of Crown land. Is Government to sell that land to them? What will happen to future generations in this country if we sell out all the Crown land to a few people when our population is increasing at such a fast rate? What about the lands which Government is now endeavouring to drain and irrigate? What about the lands on the river banks that are leasehold? The hon. Member would have us sell out all the Crown lands because he says that persons who occupy Crown lands for farming should be sold those lands. The result would be that Government would have very little control over those lands.

The hon. Member for Demerara River has not left the Majority Party so very long ago, and has not stopped reading progressive literature so long ago that he cannot remember the conditions under which agricultural workers on other people's land live. Let him go to the Essequibo Coast, and on some of the coconut estates on the East Coast, and see the standard of living among the workers there. Let him go to Hope, on the East Coast, and see the houses people live in. Does he want to create a class of serfs and slaves in this country? Is that what the hon. Member is suggesting—that all the Crown lands should be sold to people for farming?

Those who have not sufficient money to purchase land, or are not wise enough to purchase now, will have to wait until they can accumulate sufficient money to purchase, or work as serfs and slaves on land owned by big landlords. What happened in India? They broke up the

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Zamindari system because the big landlords were exploiting their tenants. The same thing happened in Egypt and Pakistan. In most Asian countries they are moving against the big landlords because of the low level of subsistence among the people who work in the rice fields.

Some hon. Members are suggesting a new form of slavery on agricultural holdings in this country. Sell the lands, they say. In the Black Bush Polder about 8,000 persons have applied for 1,500 parcels of land. In some cases Government has been able to resume Crown lands and give them out to co-operatives. If those lands were being sold the co-operatives would have had to get money from somewhere to purchase them, and having purchased they would have had to raise more money to develop them. If they could not repay those loans the lands would fall into the hands of a few people.

There are historical reasons which this Council should know of for the policy regarding Crown lands in this country. In 1956 a Sessional Paper was laid on the Table in this Chamber by Sir Frank McDavid, then Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines. In that Paper, No. 3 of 1956, the then hon. Member pointed out the considerable difficulties with respect to ownership and utilization of land in this country. It was as a result of those problems that a working party under Mr. G. F. Messervy was set up to perambulate all over the countryside and to go on people's lands and see the manner in which they were being cultivated. The hon. Member will know what I am talking about when I refer to the estates between Chantilly and Bourda, and the lands in the Canals Polder. They were all freehold lands for years and up to this day, but one can do some good hunting on those lands.

Go to the Boerasirie scheme where the lands are now being cleared of bush.

The lands at the back which Government hopes to utilize are not as good as we would wish, but ninety per cent. of all the lands at the front are privately held and are so forested that you can go and hunt tapir and deer there. To develop those lands the owners could have taken their transport and gone to the Bank, as long as their lands were freehold. Have they gone to the Bank?

There is the question of canals, fragmentation and the like. It is unnecessary to go over all that was said in the debate on the Land Bonds Bill. In that debate I also referred to the action taken by the then Governor, Sir Edward Denham in regard to the problem of the non-utilization of land and the need for land, out of which recommendations were made by distinguished Guianese like A. V. Crane, and others.

Not because a country takes a different attitude to the tenure of land it is a Communist country. If this were so, then Pakistan and India, for instance, must be Communist countries. If you studied this document, a volume entitled "Land Tenure", you would see that in many countries, because of the social and economic system and other reasons existing the Government has decided that Crown lands should be leasehold. This Government decides that Crown lands shall be leasehold. Governments will and must be allowed to govern. This one will govern!

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, in speaking on the Budget said he wanted a White Paper. Almost every time he gets up to speak he wants a White Paper on land policy. Perhaps the hon. Member has a short memory, for I told him quite clearly in this Council that Government had got some way in working out a clear land policy for this country. I mentioned that Sir Frank McDavid, of whom there are few more knowledgeable than he in Administration affairs in this country, as Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines said that the question of a land policy for his Government or any other Govern-

ment of British Guiana was a very large and very difficult matter. It will take years to adjust itself. It is against this background that all this work is being done.

Has not the Government taken some action? Has not the Government looked into this question of land policy? With your permission, Sir, I will refer to what this Government agreed on in December last in regard to "Land Policy — with special reference to Leases of Lands at Government Land Development Schemes".

"... the annual rental for Colony Land should be as follows—

—*for New Land Settlements*: A basic rental of 25 cents per acre plus Improvement charges according to the fertility of the soil (based on the rates in the First Schedule of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance less 25 cents per acre) plus Service charges in accordance with the rates in the Fifth Schedule of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance. The Service charges would be subject to annual review".

Next,

—*for existing Land Settlements*: The existing rate payable is \$15. To bring this rent into line with the formula it would work out as follows—a basic rental of 25 cents should be charged plus an improvement charge of \$7.25 plus a service charge of \$7.50—the charges to be based on the amounts charged for similar lands under the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance".

So that Government has not gone outside of the Ordinance which was passed some years ago. Then there are these conditions:

"the terms of the lease should be for 25 years renewable at the end of each term; the lessee should not be allowed to sublet the holding or any part thereof or to deal with his interest in the lease except as provided in (iv) below;"

which is this:

"the lessee should be allowed to sell his interest in the holding to an approved person at an assessed price equal to the value of the improvements put in by the lessee; that conditions should be inserted in the lease regarding good husbandry, fragment-

ation, and aggregation;  
annual rental for undeveloped Crown Lands should be as follows—

*for Agricultural Purposes*

25 cents per acre for the first 5 years.

50 cents per acre for the second 5 years

\$1.00 per acre thereafter;

*For Grazing Purposes*

25 cents per acre for the first 5 years

50 cents per acre thereafter;

the lessee of undeveloped Crown Land should be allowed to sublet land at rates to be approved by the Government; legislation should be introduced at a convenient opportunity, but the finalisation of leases should not await such legislation."

And then some time after it was decided that with the permission of Government one holding undeveloped Crown Lands could take a mortgage on the lease.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I think the hon. Minister has reached an interesting stage, one where a Motion can be taken that he should continue to speak further.

**Dr. Jagan:** I beg to move that the hon. Minister should continue speaking for another half an hour.

**Mr. Ajodha Singh:** I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Please proceed now.

**Mr. Benn:** Thank you. I have stated part of Government's policy in relation to land. I have mentioned the Bill which the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, took credit for helping to pass in this Council. I have mentioned several documents. A Sessional Paper can be an extremely useful thing because it gives an idea of the problems of land tenure in this country, but I am quite certain that if Members would take time to study the Small Holdings Committee Report also, they would see that the policy of leasehold with restrictions is preferable—

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because of the existing non-utilization of land and a variety of other reasons—to the policy of freehold.

Government's policy in relation to land is not arrived at because the Government is communistic or because Government is going to take away everybody's land. "I conceive", said a Nigerian Chief, "that land belongs to a vast family; of which many are dead, few are living and countless numbers are still unborn."

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Could the hon. Member say which Chief?

**Mr. Benn:** No; just a chief.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** What document?

**Mr. Benn:** I am quoting from a book by Jacob Oser, called "Must Men Starve?"—the Malthusian Controversy. The Nigerian Chief was concerned about the countless numbers still unborn, and this Government is concerned not only with the problems which we face today but the problems that will concern countless numbers that are still unborn.

I said a moment ago that in the Black Bush Polder over 8,000 people applied for 1,500 plots of land. They want land to plant rice and coconut. Every day people are coming to the Ministry to get land. Quite recently some young men got together and applied for about 3,000 acres of land. They call themselves the Corentyne Youth Farmers. They propose to get credit from the Corporation to purchase a dragline, and they are getting credit in order to cultivate the land—that is what they want.

Between the areas of Longsdale and Enfield, over 200 farmers have taken over another large area of land. We had a meeting with them this morning. They have paid down \$2,000 towards the purchase of a dragline, and they hope to get money from the Corporation to purchase the dragline outright. People want land

everyday and they are getting it everyday.

Perhaps the hon. Mover of the Motion is opposed to Government's progressive policy in relation to land, because, as I said at a public meeting some time ago, some people have to resort to every type of tactic in order to discredit the Government and divert the people's attention from Government's land policy. They raise the question of leasehold versus freehold; they go all over the country stirring up trouble, and they tell the people all sorts of things.

The fact remains that this Government has distributed more land in the last two years than all the other Governments have done over the past fifty years. That is a fact that cannot be denied. Because of the fact that this Government has had such a wonderful record in land distribution, co-operative societies are springing up all over the country; people are planting more rice, more coconuts and more permanent crops. Because things are looking so good, an attempt is being made to becloud the issues and hide the good work that has been done during the period this Government has been in office.

What about the Land Settlement Schemes? An hon. Member speaks of giving the people on the Land Settlement Schemes private ownership. Let him go to Cane Grove and see what is taking place there. Government paid about \$100 for Cane Grove in 1927. In Cane Grove there are several people in need of land, but they prefer to remain there rather than going to other areas in search of land. Whenever we are able to remove bush, we give land to people who need it. Do you want us to sell the land to them now?

Some of the people on the Cane Grove Land Settlement Scheme have not been able to pay their leases and other charges because they have had several reverses: bad crops and a variety of other reasons have been given for that. This goes on on all of our Land Settlement

Schemes. Do you want us to sell land to people, when they cannot even pay their small rentals? Do you want to burden them further by forcing them to take the money they should use for purchasing seed padi to develop their lands and use it for purchasing the land? Some of these people owe shopkeepers for as long as two years, but for the sake of humanity some of them can still obtain credit.

Let me give you some idea of the arrears of rent on those Land Settlement Schemes: Charity \$2,540.40; Anna Regina \$49,186.41; Vergeroegen \$24,974.74; Government Estates \$4,346.78; Cane Grove \$25,668.01; Onverwagt \$9,122.19; and Mara \$3,848.62. What does this show? It shows that considerable problems face the people. Look at what has taken place at Mara this year! The Land Development Department collected the rent from some of the people before the Co-operative Society was able to collect what was due to it. Having paid the rent, the people were unable to pay the Society. We will have to rectify this matter. If we do not help these people they will not be able to plant a crop this year.

Do you want us to sell the land and forget future generations? Future generations will curse us if we are so unwise to do that. This Government is not worried about the accusations of communism. One Member attempted, under the veil of political theory, to talk about Communism, Socialism and other things. You cannot stop Communism. It is easier to stop tomorrow than to stop Communism. You cannot stop it, and those of you who try to confuse people by saying that this country is socialist bent should not do so. Anyway they will not be confused for too long. There is no Communist State in the world today, but people still continue to cloud the issue.

I have dealt at considerable length with this question of leasehold and freehold. The hon. Member has quoted scripture, and I have also quoted scrip-

ture to disprove what he has said. He quoted from Manu Samriti in order to give us the historical background for supporting his views, and I have referred to the policy as well as the actions of the Government of India. I will say that, as long as the People's Progressive Party is able to have a say in the Government of this Country, we will adopt such policies as will be suitable, not only for now when we are in office but for future generations. I am sure that intelligent people, not only in British Guiana but all over the world, will judge us by our actions.

**Mr. Jackson:** "It is easier to stop tomorrow than to stop Communism", says the Minister of Natural Resources. I wonder whether he has reflected on these words since he has resumed his seat. Tomorrow is in the hands of a power much greater than the Minister. Tomorrow is in the hands of the Creator who is responsible for the existence of the Minister in this Council today.

Communism is a man-made creed or concept which will follow, in due course of time, the same course which other creeds and philosophies have followed. It contains the seed of its own destruction. Tomorrow is indestructible. Neither the hon. Minister of Natural Resources, his friends, nor I can prevent the sun from revolving around its course. It is a pity that in his fervour the Minister should have uttered such words in this Council. I would have congratulated him upon his extensive preambulation, because he must have spent a great deal of time in research in order to support his policy. However, the way he has ended his speech shows such scant regard for the supremacy of the Creator, that I feel this Council has been done a disservice by the Minister's remarks. Anyone who has due regard for the creative ability of the Creator; anyone who has due regard for man and man's divinity, must feel somewhat depressed in mind at such utterances from a Minister of this Government.

[MR. JACKSON]

I doubt, Mr. Speaker, whether there is anyone else in this Council, or in this world who would have made such a statement. In spite of the various theories; in spite of the combination of different political theories and philosophies, men of greater learning than the Minister—I admit he is a learned man—have never attempted to conclude that tomorrow can be held back by the hand of man. I am sure that everyone who heard that comment would bow his head, and everyone who reads it tomorrow—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** My attention has been drawn to the fact that there is no quorum. Unless there is a quorum we have to conclude.

*Members returned to the Council Chamber.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You may proceed.

**Mr. Jackson:** I was saying that men of learning, of greater knowledge and depth than the Minister, can never and never did so conclude, and I know that if they were to arise from their slumber they would cry shame at a person who holds the Office of a Minister of the Government for having so ridiculed and abused what is a divine concept and a divine law.

We have had a great deal of historical lessons this afternoon, and it is one of our difficulties in this world that we use history as a means of holding back people's desires and ambitions. It seems to me that there are some people who cannot or, rather, who will not realise what is going on around them because they have glued their eyes and minds into history, so that even if the present is different from the past they can only see in the present what was in the past. Their eyes are so glued that they cannot see the future for themselves. They prefer to tell us what people thought of the future.

My impression of a historical record is that it is there for guidance, so that the evils of the past may not be repeated but that the good may continue. I challenge anyone in this Council to say that history does not record the good of men. As long as men are filled with divine qualities, there must be good that can come out of them.

This Motion asks a simple question, and I agree that it has been taken to a wider field than it, perhaps, ought to have been, but each one of us—and I am sure the Minister himself—is guilty of it. If the question of rights has been brought in, it is because the ownership of land gives the right to possess something. I have listened with very keen interest to the Minister of Community Development and Education on the legal aspects of ownership both by leasehold and by freehold and I confess that I have been educated. I have always held the view—and even though I admit being educated I shall not change that view until I have consulted another lawyer—that the land I hold under leasehold conditions cannot be sold by me. I can, perhaps, sell my right to the lease but not the lease, for the lease is governed by a prescribed period of time and other conditions which will not take away the right of ownership from the person who is the proprietor. So it is difficult to concede or to accept the view that because I hold the lease for a piece of land I can sell that land. I can invite being prosecuted for a breach of the law. I am not so fully apprised of basic legal training, but I feel that it is difficult for anyone to sell land which is leased.

And this brings us to the point made by the Minister of Natural Resources that in England there are people who occupy land by lease. That is going to be conceded, but that is not land owned by the State. It is land owned by persons in the same manner as we have it here. I may own "X" acres of land which I am not using properly and "Mr. So-and-So" comes and I lease him that land under specific conditions. Therefore, what is the use of running to England which is

5,000 miles away when we have the same conditions in this country.

Yet we have this amusing situation; for the Government has the power not only to resume Crown Lands which are not properly utilized but also the power compulsorily to purchase or take that which is held by somebody as freehold property which is not properly utilized. The Minister of Community Development and Education referred to what was described as a rumour — that the Government of the day proposes to take away people's land which they hold outright by freehold principle and to redistribute it on leasehold conditions. Is it not a fact that under the law Government can compulsorily purchase land held by persons under freehold conditions, and if Government can do that then what is the difference? Can it be a rumour? Can it be something which has no foundation? Government's policy is not to let people have land on freehold basis, and if the Government has purchased land from a private person, then that land becomes land owned by the State. Therefore it follows, as a consequence, that you are going to buy land held under freehold conditions and redistribute it under leasehold conditions. It seems to me that the Government is existing in fear that this is going to be an accusation which will have some weight.

Of course, the Minister of Natural Resources says: "This Party will govern." Greater men than he and wiser men than he have said that Governments govern with the consent of the people. If this Government does not govern with the consent of the people, then it might not be distant when the end will come; for empires have been born, they have developed strength and they have vanished in the course of time. And if history is this Government's theme and thought, then it also ought to be for their own knowledge and guidance that history has shown that mighty empires have fallen; and if empires have fallen — empires mighty

in structure as they were — why will not this Government fall? None of us can fix a time, for lots of things are not in our own hands. What may be considered by them as indestructible may be just a thought which is vanishing and which may be revealed to them before long.

We have been given, this afternoon, many reasons why land held by the Crown or the Colony should be retained as such and why it should be given out for the purpose of development under conditions of leasehold and not under conditions of freehold. We have been given figures of people who have been tenants of the Government and who have not paid their rents, and very astronomical figures have been shown by the Minister of Natural Resources as outstanding debts by these people.

I have heard in this Council, this afternoon, that those lands belong to the people. But let me ask the Minister this question: Is it any part of justice for you to permit one set of people to owe thousands of dollars when the money spent to develop those places is money which "Mr. X" has paid and you do not also permit him to owe anything to the Government? A principle, to me, seems to be involved and it would have been better for the Minister not to have brought that out in his contribution to this debate to prove and show that the Government's policy is right — that the people are so impoverished that they cannot pay their leases under the obligation which they owe to the Government.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I think this is an appropriate point at which to adjourn.

**The Chief Secretary (Mr. Hedges):** I beg to move that Council adjourn to two o'clock tomorrow.

Agreed to.

*Council adjourned accordingly.*