

SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Wednesday, 19th October, 1960

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

Speaker, His Honour Sir Donald Jackson

Chief Secretary, Hon. Major I. O. Smith, O.B.E. (Acting).

Attorney-General, Hon. A. M. I. Austin, Q.C.

ex officio

Financial Secretary, Hon. W. P. D'Andrade

The Honourable Dr. C. B. Jagan	—Member for <i>Eastern Berbice</i> (Minister of Trade and Industry)
„ „ B. H. Benn	—Member for <i>Essequibo River</i> (Minister of Natural Resources)
Janet Jagan	—Member for <i>Western Essequibo</i> (Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)
Ram Karran	—Member for <i>Demerara-Essequibo</i> (Minister of Communications and Works)
„ B. S. Rai	—Member for <i>Central Demerara</i> (Minister of Community Development and Education).
Mr. R. B. Gajraj	—Nominated Member
„ W. O. R. Kendall	—Member for <i>New Amsterdam</i>
„ R. C. Tello	—Nominated Member
„ F. Bowman	—Member for <i>Demerara River</i>
„ L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C.	—Member for <i>Georgetown Central</i>
„ S. Campbell	—Member for <i>North Western District</i>
„ A. L. Jackson	—Member for <i>Georgetown North</i>
„ E. B. Beharry	—Member for <i>Eastern Demerara</i>
„ S. M. Saffee	—Member for <i>Western Berbice</i>
„ Ajodha Singh	—Member for <i>Berbice River</i>
„ Jai Narain Singh	—Member for <i>Georgetown South</i>
„ R. E. Davis	—Nominated Member
„ A. M. Fredericks	—Nominated Member
„ H. J. M. Hubbard	—Nominated Member.

Mr. I. Crum Ewing—Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. E. V. Viapree—Assistant Clerk of the Legislature.

ABSENT :

Mr. A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.—Nominated Member—on leave.

The Clerk read prayers.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

MAJOR SMITH, ACTING CHIEF
SECRETARY

Major I. O. Smith, O.B.E., took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance, and was formally welcomed to the Council as Chief Secretary (Acting).

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 16th June, 1960, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FINANCIAL SECRETARY CONGRATULATED

Mr. Speaker: I am sure hon. Members would wish me to say a word of congratulation to our new Financial Secretary. [*Applause*]. He has served in this Council on several occasions in an acting capacity with distinction, and we are pleased to welcome him today in the substantive post.

MR. TASKER ON LEAVE

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tasker, will be on leave from today until the 15th January next year.

HURRICANE "DONNA"

Hon. Members will remember that in the month of September considerable damage was wrought in the Windward and Leeward Islands by hurricane "Donna". The following Resolution has been received from the Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, dated the 27th September, 1960:

"Resolution moved at emergency meeting of Legislative Council held on Friday, 16th September, 1960, by the Honourable C. A. Paul Southwell.

Be it resolved that this Honourable House places on record its profound and

sincere appreciation of the spontaneous, ready and welcome assistance so abundantly received from governments, organisations, groups, and individuals within and without this Territory on the occasion and as a result of the unfortunate disaster in the island of Anguilla caused by hurricane "Donna";

And be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be published and made available to all governments, organisations, groups and individuals concerned."

CHILEAN EARTHQUAKE DISASTER

Hon. Members will recollect that on the 1st June, 1960, this Council passed a Resolution expressing the Council's sympathy with the people of Chile in their disaster by earthquake in that country. With reference to that Resolution the Clerk of the Council has received a letter dated the 7th July, 1960, from the hon. the Chief Secretary, which reads:

"Reference your memorandum Leg. Co. 12/54 V of 3rd June on this subject, I am directed to inform you that Part 1 of the Resolution was duly carried out and an expression of appreciation by the Chilean Government has been received.

2. In furtherance of Part 11 of the Resolution a supply of forty-five bags containing a total of 8,100 pounds of rice has been despatched by ship (S. S. Memnon) which is expected to arrive at Curacao about the 8th of July, whence transfer to Chilean Naval Transport will be arranged."

PAPERS LAID

The Chief Secretary: (Major Smith, acting): I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Annual Report of the Commissioner of Police for the year 1959.

(b) Seventh Report on the work of the Public Service Commission for the period 1st January, 1959 to 31st December, 1959.

(c) Annual Report on British Guiana for the year 1959.

(d) Annual Report of the Government Information Services for the year 1959.

(e) Annual Report of the British Guiana Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service for the year 1959.

(f) Annual Report of the Commissioner of the Interior for the year 1959.

The Attorney-General (Mr. Austin): I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Supreme Court (Amendment) Rules, 1960, made under section 77(c) of the Supreme Court Ordinance, Chapter 7, on the 18th of July, 1960.

(b) Report of the Deeds and Supreme Court Registries for the year 1959.

(c) By-laws made by the Directors of the Demerara Electric Company, Limited, under and pursuant to the provisions of section 17 of the Demerara Electric Company Ordinance, Chapter 239, on the 6th of September, 1960.

(d) Report of the Official Receiver, Public Trustee and Crown Solicitor for the year 1959.

The Financial Secretary (Mr. D'An-drade): I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Annual Report of the Licence Revenue Office for the year 1959.

(b) Order in Council No. 63 of 1960 made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 20th day of June, 1960, and published in the Gazette on the 2nd July, 1960.

(c) Progress Report on the Development Expenditure for the quarter ended 31st March, 1960 in the Development Programme 1960 — 1964.

(d) Report of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Friday, 27th May, 1960.

Mr. Speaker: The Question is that the Report of the Finance Committee be adopted.

Agreed to.

The Financial Secretary: I also beg to lay on the Table:

(e) Certificate and Report of the Director General of the Overseas Audit Service on the Accounts of British Guiana for the year ended the 31st of December, 1956, together with the comments thereon of the Governor. (Sessional Paper No. 5/1960).

(f) Certificate and Report of the Director General of the Overseas Audit Service on the Accounts of British Guiana for the year ended the 31st of December, 1957, together with the comments thereon of the Governor.

(Sessional Paper No. 6/1960).

(g) Certificate and Report of the Director General of the Overseas Audit Service on the Accounts of British Guiana for the year ended the 31st of December, 1957, together with the comments thereon of the Governor. (Sessional Paper No. 7/1960).

(h) Report of the Director of Audit, British Guiana, on the Accounts of the Colony for the year ended 31st December, 1959.

(i) Report of the Director of Audit, British Guiana, on the Accounts of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended 31st December, 1959.

(j) Report of the Executive Commissioner, Board of Commissioners of Currency, British Caribbean Territories (Eastern Group) for the year 1959.

(k) Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations, 1960 (No. 20) made under section 98(3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, Chapter 280, on the 21st of September, 1960, and published in the Gazette on the 8th of October, 1960

(l) Progress Report on the Development Expenditure for the quarter ended 30th June, 1960, in the Development Programme 1960 — 1964.

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan): I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Report of the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board for the period 1st October, 1958 to 30th September, 1959.

(b) Report on the Geological Survey Department for the year 1959.

(c) Annual Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for the year 1959.

(d) Annual Report of the Commissioner for Co-operative Development for the year 1959.

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Annual Report of the Department of the Government Analyst for the year 1959.

(b) Annual Report of the Registrar General for the year 1957.

The Minister of Communications and Works (Mr. Ram Karran): I beg to lay on the Table:

[MR. RAM KARRAN]

(a) Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Demerara Electric Company, Ltd., for the year ended 31st December, 1959.

(b) Report of the Director General of the Overseas Audit Service on the Accounts of the British Guiana Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended 31st December, 1958, together with the Governor's comments thereon.

(c) Annual Report of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year 1959.

(d) Memorandum on the arrangements made for the purchase of the Demerara Electric Company, Limited, the installation of additional plant and the setting up of the British Guiana Electricity Corporation to administer the undertaking.

The Minister of Community Development and Education (Mr. Rai): I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Annual Report of the Commissioner of Local Government for the year 1959.

(b) Annual Report on the Social Assistance Department for the year 1959.

Mr. Kendall: I beg to lay on the Table:

(a) Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council on the Director of Audit Report on the Accounts of the Colony for the year ended 31st December, 1958.

(b) Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council on the Director of Audit's Report on the Accounts of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended 31st December, 1958.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

MOTIONS

DEMERARA ELECTRIC COMPANY BY-LAWS

The Attorney-General: I beg to give notice of the following Motion:

"Be it resolved: That in pursuance of the provisions of section 17 (1) of

the Demerara Electric Company Ordinance, Chapter 239, this Council approves of the By-laws made by the Directors of the Electric Company, Limited, on the 6th September, 1960."

ORDER IN COUNCIL NO. 63 OF 1960

The Financial Secretary: I beg to give notice of the Motions standing in my name on the Order paper:

(a) "Be it resolved: That this Council in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order in Council No. 63 of 1960, which was made on the 20th day of June, 1960, and published in the Gazette on the 2nd of July, 1960."

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS

(b) "Be it resolved: That this Council in terms of section 98 (3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, Chapter 280, confirms the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations, 1960 (No. 20), which were made on the 21st of September, 1960, and published in the Gazette on the 8th of October, 1960."

OTHER NOTICES

P.A.C.'S REPORT ON COLONY'S HARBOUR DEPARTMENT'S ACCOUNTS, 1958

Mr. Kendall: I beg to give notice of the following Motions:

(a) "Be it resolved: That the Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council on the Director of Audit's Report on the Accounts of the Colony for the year ended 31st December, 1958, be referred to the Government for its consideration."

P.A.C.'S REPORT ON TRANSPORT AND ACCOUNTS, 1958

(b) "Be it resolved: That the Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council on the Director of Audit's Report on the Accounts of the Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended 31st December, 1958, be referred to the Government for its consideration."

PETITIONS

B.G. UNITED SAD'R ISLAMIC ANJUMAN (INCORPORATION OF TRUSTEES) BILL

Mr. Saffee: I beg to present a Petition on behalf of "The United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman", a religious organization, praying for incorporation. I respectfully ask that the Petition be read.

The Clerk read the following Petition:

"5A Water Street,
Georgetown, Demerara,
British Guiana,
23rd August, 1960.

His Honour The Speaker,
and
The Members of the
Legislative Council.

The Petition of "THE UNITED SAD'R ISLAMIC ANJUMAN" respectfully sheweth:

1. Your Petitioners are the President and the Secretary respectfully of an organisation known as "The United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman."
2. The office of the above organisation is at 157 Alexander Street, Kitty, East Coast, Demerara.
3. The Organisation is now owning the property referred to in the schedule hereunder stated and expects to acquire other property shortly.
4. The Organisation wishes to vest all its property in an organisation to be known as "The United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman" which will continue to propagate the religion of Islam, its philosophy and culture and to incorporate certain persons namely:

- (a) Abdool Majeed, of Brickdam & Boyle Place, Georgetown;
- (b) A. D. Hack, of Charles Street, Charlestown, Georgetown.
- (c) Abdool Moneer Khan, of Windsor Forest, West Coast, Demerara;
- (d) S. M. Shakoor, of Eccles, East Bank, Demerara;
- (e) Ramjohn, of Skeldon Corentyne, Berbice;
- (f) Two *ex-officio* persons being the Deputy President and the Honorary Treasurer for the

time being of the United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman;

as trustees of the said "The United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman" with power to acquire and dispose of all property movable and immovable whatsoever and wheresoever, and with the right, to sue and be sued in that name.

5. Our Organisation is now the leading body for the propagation of the religion of Islam, and has a following of over fifty thousand adherents.

6. Your Petitioners respectfully request permission to have introduced by Mr. Mohamed Saffie, the elected member for the Legislative Council for Western Berbice, a bill intituled "An Ordinance to incorporate certain persons as trustees of the body known as "The United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman", to vest in such persons certain property and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid, a draft bill whereof is hereto attached.

(Sgd) A. MAJEED,
President, Petitioner,
United Sad'r Islamic
Anjuman.

(Sgd) NASEER A. KHAN,
Secretary, Petitioner.
United Sad'r Islamic
Anjuman."

Mr. Speaker: The Question is, "That the promoters be allowed to proceed".

Question put, and agreed to.

ORAL ASKING AND ANSWERING OF QUESTIONS

ATKINSON AIRPORT

Mr. Davis: I beg to ask the hon. Minister of Communications and Works Question No. 21 standing in the name of Mr. Tasker. In view of the warning issued to airline representatives on 31st March, 1960, by the Director of Civil Aviation to the effect that Staff shortages at Atkinson Airport may necessitate the curtailment of airport services to the hours of daylight only, will the Honourable Minister of Communications and Works state: Whether the proposed reduction in airport services below accepted international standards indicates

[MR. DAVIS]

that Government has decided "that it is impracticable to continue Atkinson Field on its present international basis" (*vide* Sessional Paper No. 5/1959, Section II, paragraph CAD; and if so, what alternative arrangements are envisaged for British Guiana's international air communication?

The Minister of Communications and Works: No decision has been taken by Government on the future of Atkinson Airport. It must be explained, however, that there is no international obligation to provide a twenty-four hour service at any airport. In accordance with Article 28 of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, a contracting State provides such airport services as are practicable for it to provide. Government has, however, decided that Atkinson Airport should be kept open on a 24-hour basis and the Airlines have been informed accordingly. In the circumstances the remainder of the question does not arise.

Mr. Davis: As a Supplementary Question, may I ask whether the hon. Minister of Communications and Works has been advised by his technical officers regarding the possibility of expanding the facilities at Atkinson Airport?

The Minister of Communications and Works: I have already said that Atkinson Airport will be kept open for 24 hours.

ADEQUACY OF POLICE FORCE IN GEORGETOWN

Mr. Jackson: I beg to ask the Chief Secretary Question No. 22 standing in my name on the Order Paper: In view of the extent to which the Greater Georgetown area has become populated and also in view of the alarming rate at which the number of crimes has increased within recent times, does the Government consider the existing numerical strength of the Police Force adequate to present day needs of the city of Georgetown and its environs?

The Chief Secretary: The numerical strength of "A" (Georgetown) Division, the Police Division responsible for Georgetown and its environs, provides, in Government's opinion, a standard of policing of that area appropriate to the duties which that Division is called upon to perform and to the financial resources of the country.

B.W.I.A. — SUSPENSION OF VISCOUNT FLIGHTS TO B.G.

Mr. Burnham: I beg to ask Question No. 23 standing in my name on the Order Paper: Why has British West Indian Airways suspended its Viscount flights to British Guiana?

The Minister of Communications and Works: The reason for the suspension by British West Indian Airways of its Viscount flights to British Guiana is the late delivery of Britannia aircraft to the Company to relieve Viscounts on its New York and Eastern Caribbean routes. I am advised that a contributory factor is the delay in modifications to the Airport facilities at Antigua to enable that island to accommodate Britannia aircraft.

I have held discussions with the Chairman and senior officials of British West Indian Airways emphasizing the inconvenience to this country of the withdrawal of the Viscount service. The Chairman of British West Indian Airways has emphasized that British West Indian Airways regard British Guiana's demands as the first priority for an all-Viscount service and has given the assurance that an all-Viscount service between British Guiana/Trinidad and British Guiana/Barbados will be introduced not later than the 11th December next.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: As a Supplementary Question, would the hon. Minister say that the present service by B.W.I.A. is satisfactory to British Guiana?

The Minister of Communications and Works: We have already discussed this question fully and have passed a resolution on it in this Council. I do not think it is necessary for me to say anything more on the subject.

ERECTION OF GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NEW AMSTERDAM

Mr. Kendall: I beg to ask the hon. Minister of Communications and Works Question No. 24 standing in my name on the Order Paper: Will Government state how soon the following new building will be erected in New Amsterdam:—

Government Primary School?

The Minister of Communications and Works: The building is likely to be commenced within two months, and work is likely to be completed within six to eight thereafter.

Mr. Kendall: As a Supplementary Question, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the answer to my Question will share the same fate as questions asked by me some months ago?

[No reply was offered.]

INADEQUACY OF WAGES AND SALARIES OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Mr. Jackson: I beg to ask Question No. 25 standing in my name on the Order Paper: In view of the very grave dissatisfaction among Government employees in every category regarding the inadequacy of wages and salaries, will the Government undertake a revision of wages and salaries at an early date?

The Chief Secretary: The Government is at present engaged in negotiations with the Federation of Unions of Government Employees on claims for increased wages for its wage-earning employees, and on a review of the structure of the Public Service in regard to its salaried employees.

Mr. Jackson: As a Supplementary Question, is the review which is being

conducted intended to be an answer to my Question?

The Chief Secretary: The review of the structure of the Service will, in some cases, give an improvement in salaries but, generally speaking, it will improve promotional prospects.

Mr. Burnham: As a further Supplementary Question, Mr. Speaker, may I find out how soon this review takes place?

The Chief Secretary: Actually, it is in being. It was started some months ago. It is impossible to say when it will end. It will probably take six months.

Mr. Burnham: And as a further Supplementary Question, may I ask why it has been started so late when the Gorsuch Report came out over a year ago?

The Chief Secretary: It is a difficult Question for me to answer; but the Committee was only appointed three months ago and immediately got down to work.

Mr. Burnham: As a further Supplementary Question, why was the Committee only appointed three months ago? Is Government like the wheels of the gods?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the "wheels" or the "mills"?

Mr. Burnham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chief Secretary: First of all, there was the consideration of the Gorsuch Report; and, secondly, we had to find suitable personnel, particularly the Chairman. It was decided that Mr. Angel should be the Chairman because of his experience but he was away at the time and only recently returned.

Mr. Jackson: As a further Supplementary Question, do I understand that

[MR. JACKSON]

with this review all the people concerned would not receive an improvement in their salary scales?

The Chief Secretary: That is so.

Mr. Burnham: As a further Supplementary Question, may I ask whether Government proposes to make the new scales retroactive in view of the delay on the part of Government?

The Chief Secretary: I am afraid I am not in a position to answer that.

Mr. Burnham: May I, as a further Supplementary Question, ask the hon. Chief Secretary when will he and his Government be in a position to answer that Question?

The Chief Secretary: I am afraid that that, too, I cannot answer.

Mr. Jackson: May I ask a further Supplementary Question?

Mr. Speaker: This is the last one.

Mr. Jackson: Why has Government refused to arrange for a review of salaries so that all the people can benefit?

[No reply was offered.]

MINISTER'S VISIT TO CUBA QUESTIONED

Mr. Bowman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing Question No. 26 standing in my name on the Order Paper. It states: Will the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing state what was the duration of her recent visit to Cuba and whether she drew salary during the period, and if so, then what was the purpose of her visit to Cuba?

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing: The reply to the hon. Member's Question is as follows: I was in Cuba for 14 days, for which period I received salary.

While in Cuba, I took advantage of the opportunities offered me to observe

a number of aspects of development in fields related to my portfolio of Labour, Health and Housing as well as other aspects which, from time to time, as a Minister of the Government, I am called upon to consider. For example, I visited a number of rural and urban housing projects, had discussions with the Directors of the Institute of Housing and Public Health. I also observed projects of agricultural and industrial development; the work of the Tourist Planning Unit, including the development of local handicrafts.

Although most of my time in Cuba was occupied with official activities, I regarded my visit as an unofficial one in view of the fact that my main reason for going to Cuba was to attend the May Day Celebrations there. As I mentioned in my reply to a question on the subject sometime before, expenses incurred in respect to my visit were not met from public funds.

GENERAL MANAGER, B.G. CREDIT CORPORATION

Mr. Davis: I beg to ask the hon. the Financial Secretary Question No. 27 standing in the name of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tasker. It reads as follows: Will the Government state what steps are being taken to fill the post of General Manager, B.G. Credit Corporation?

The Financial Secretary: The answer to the hon. Nominated Member's Question is as follows: An advertisement was issued on 6th August in British Guiana and in the West Indies inviting applications for the vacant post of General Manager of the Corporation.

Mr. Burnham: As a Supplementary Question, may I ask the hon. the Financial Secretary why the advertisement was in August when the post became vacant in May?

The Financial Secretary: I am not sure that the hon. Member is right, that the post became vacant in May.

Mr. Burnham: As a further Supplementary Question, may I find out from the Financial Secretary whether that is the answer to my last Supplementary Question? The General Manager left the Colony on May 1, 1960, for Jamaica where he arrived on the 2nd May, 1960, to take up a new post.

The Financial Secretary: What I am not sure of is whether he had any leave entitlement.

Mr. Burnham: May I find out why the Financial Secretary is not apprised of all these facts—as to whether he had leave or not?

The Financial Secretary: The Corporation is a separate autonomous body.

Mr. Burnham: May I find out whether the Financial Secretary is not a member of the Board?

The Financial Secretary: No.

Mr. Burnham: May I find out whether it is not within the portfolio of the hon. the Financial Secretary?

The Financial Secretary: Yes.

Mr. Burnham: May I, as a further Supplementary Question, ask the hon. Financial Secretary why he does not know?

The Financial Secretary: The Financial Secretary does not know all the day to day details of the running of the Corporation because the Corporation is a separate statutory body.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY TO CITY AND RURAL AREAS

Mr. Burnham: Mr. Speaker, I beg to ask Question No. 28 standing in my name on the Order Paper. It reads as follows: Will the hon. Minister of Communications and Works say what plans does Government now propose to

implement with respect to the supply of electricity to Georgetown and the rural areas?

The Minister of Communications and Works: The Memorandum on Electricity which was laid today provides the answer to the hon. Member's question.

Mr. Burnham: Mr. Speaker, may I ask: Is that the answer to my Question? I do not know that questions are answered by reference?

[No reply was offered.]

STATEMENT BY MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Minister of Communications and Works: Sir, I wish to make the following statement: The Industrial Rates mentioned in the Memorandum on Electricity and agreed upon in London are, it is feared, likely to create hardship to one section of consumers and it is Government's intention to re-open the matter with the International Power Co. Ltd., with a view to its adjustment, if necessary.

RAISING OF A MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Bowman: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as a matter of privilege I—

Mr. Speaker: You should have let me know about it before. The Rules provide for that. I should have had an opportunity to look at it. You cannot spring it on me. We may be sitting tomorrow and that would be a good opportunity.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Chief Secretary: I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of:

- (i) French-Mullen Pension Bill, 1960
- (ii) Amerindian (Amendment) Bill, 1960.

The Attorney-General: I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of:

[THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL]

(i) Commissioner of Title (Additional Powers) Bill, 1960

(ii) Civil Law of British Guiana (Amendment) Bill, 1960.

The Financial Secretary: I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of:

The Development Fund (1959 Appropriation) Bill, 1960.

Mrs. Jagan: I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of:

The Pharmacy and Poisons (Amendment) Bill, 1960.

The Minister of Community Development and Education: I beg to give notice of the introduction and First Reading of:

(i) Local Authorities (Constitution, Election Procedure and Financial Provisions) Bill, 1960

(ii) Georgetown Sewerage and Water (Amendment No. 2) Bill, 1960

(iii) Georgetown Town Council (Amendment) Bill, 1960

(iv) New Amsterdam Town Council (Amendment) Bill, 1960.

ORDER OF THE DAY

BILLS—FIRST READING

The following Bills were read the First time:

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make special provision with respect to the pension of Massy Desmond French-Mullen."

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

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to confer additional powers on a Commissioner of Title."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Civil Law of British Guiana Ordinance with respect to property falling to the Crown under an intestacy."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make provision for the appropriation to the Development Fund of a certain sum of money transferred thereto from the Revenues and Funds of British Guiana."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, 1956."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to provide for the constitution, election procedure and financial provisions of local authorities and for purposes connected therewith."

RICE MARKETING BOARD AS A CO-OPERATIVE

Mr. Speaker: The next item on the Order Paper is the Motion standing in the name of the hon. Member for Georgetown South, Mr. Jai Narine Singh, which reads as follows:

"Be it resolved: That this Council recommends to Government the introduction of legislation to provide for the Rice Marketing Board to be converted into a co-operative organization of the rice producers of this Colony."

On the last occasion when this Council met the hon. Member was still speaking on the Motion when the adjournment was taken. I can rely now on the hon. Member to begin where he left off and to do so with lucidity.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: Thank you, Your Honour. Sir, the rice industry in its present structure is governed by three elements: the Rice Producers' Association, the Executive Committee of the B.G. Rice Marketing Board, and the B.G. Rice Marketing Board itself. Quite recently the people engaged in the industry have shown themselves to be concerned over the way things were going and expressed their dissatisfaction over the separation of the manufacturing side, the land-holding side and the farming or planting side from each other.

I think that co-ordination of all sections of the industry should be the aim of Government, and my belief is that the only way this co-ordination of services and brains can come about is by way of a co-operative organization embracing the whole industry. And I would like hon. Members to recall that when the Rice Marketing Board was established, it was done with the idea that it would emerge eventually as a co-operative organization.

Today the Rice Marketing Board is still a separate institution from the land-owners and the producers, and often the

producers find that the Board is operating against their interests when it comes to the matter of grading, weighing and deterioration when rice is shipped. Farmers also complain that they have to accept a system in which they are not present to watch their interests when their rice is weighed, and graded.

As if this was not enough, the operations of the Board in 1959, according to the Report, show an excess of expenditure over income of \$394,189. The rice industry is therefore running at a loss.

Converting the Rice Marketing Board into a co-operative organization run by the producers would not rule out the employment of competent people at the managerial level or that persons now employed by the Board could not continue in their employment. In fact, in large co-operative organizations the manager is not necessarily a member of the co-operative but one employed for his commercial skill.

Price stabilization for the rice industry has not been established so far because of the structure of the industry. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, not long ago put forward a Motion seeking this measure, whereby for every bag of rice sold a sum would be put aside into a Price Stabilization Fund. This Motion did not find favour in this Council, and the Rice Marketing Board, being a statutory body, cannot introduce it unless legislation is passed by this Council in its favour.

Also, the Board has not taken the initiative to obtain technical assistance to solve the problems of the industry as a whole. It is known that the industry is liable to attack by the fungus disease, yet we do not have a plant pathologist devoting his time to the study of this important matter.

The Government is always declaring itself in favour of a co-operative, but I wonder whether Members have any interest at all in this, the second largest agri-

cultural crop in the Colony. If the industry is put on a co-operative basis it would be greatly enhanced; but this is not being pushed by the Government and the industry is allowed to drift and drift.

The rice farmers are having great difficulty in financing the cultivation of their padi, especially when they have to clear and otherwise prepare the land for planting. Only this week twenty-odd men from the Government estate at Mara came to Georgetown to call Government's attention to their difficulties. These farmers, hungry, sunburnt and scorched, complained that they were receiving only six bags of padi to the acre, and Government as a landlord was asking them to pay \$15 per acre for the lands. Government, through its administrative machinery, was holding up the padi reaped by these farmers at the dams and would not allow them to take the padi to the mills in order to earn something with which to buy food to eat. I think the industry would be very strong under a co-operative system; so strong that all iniquitous practices would cease, no matter in what part of the country.

The whole industry is wavering and being blown about by "hurricanes"—
[An hon. Member: "And politics"]
and by politics, according to my friend. It has been so for a couple of years. Up it goes and down it comes. But politics must not be made to interfere with the lives of poor people—barefooted people, who have patches on their clothes and whose children have no books or slates to take to school.

I feel that a Rice Marketing Board run on a co-operative basis would be best suited to help farmers clear and level lands with machines. The superstructure now existing in the industry was not created by the farmer but by past Governments, and the people had

[**MR. JAI NARINE SINGH**]

no option but to accept it in the circumstances prevailing. It is a gigantic super-structure and the industry is losing money — nearly \$400,000 last year.

I ask that the Government accept this idea and establish this industry on a co-operative basis. The Rice Marketing Board should stop its subvention to bodies like the Rice Producers' Association and become one single unit embracing all aspects.

Mr. Fredericks: I would like to second the Motion for the purpose of discussion.

Dr. Jagan: As I pointed out on the previous occasion, this Motion, whilst having a great deal of merit, does not take into consideration the effect of recent changes which were made in the Rice Marketing Board with the object of democratizing that organization. What is the purpose of a co-operative organization? The purpose of a co-operative organization is, firstly, to put power in the hands of its members. In other words, the people who comprise the co-operative organization, and by democratic vote — one man one vote — decide how their affairs should be administered. I would like the hon. Mover of the Motion to keep that principle in mind — one man one vote — that the people in the organization determine their own affairs. It is a cardinal principle of the co-operative movement.

Secondly, a cardinal principle of a co-operative organization is that in those societies which carry on business the profits earned by the business should be shared by the members according to their contributions. If it is a producer co-operative, a group of people may get together in an agricultural society the profits of which are apportioned according to the labour which each member has contributed to the working of the society. In a consumer co-operative society or a business society in which profits are earned, those profits are generally shared on the basis of patronage. For instance, if a retail store is established,

at the end of the year whatever profits are made are allocated according to the purchases made by each individual member.

So that in looking at the affairs of the Rice Marketing Board we want two things — (1) that the organization must be democratically run; that the rice farmers should run the undertaking; and (2) that any profits made should go back to the farmers. What is the position in regard to the Rice Marketing Board? Up to last year the structure of the Rice Marketing Board was such that it could not be truly said that the administration of the Board was completely in the hands of the rice farmers, but hon. Members are aware that as a result of new proposals which were debated and accepted by this Legislature, the composition of the Rice Marketing Board has completely changed. It has changed to the point where today it can be said that virtual control of the Rice Marketing Board is in the hands of the rice producers of the country. During the debate on the Bill to amend the Rice Marketing Ordinance a few months ago hon. Members suggested certain changes in the category of producers, and the fact is that rice producers, be they millers or farmers, are today controlling the destinies of the Rice Marketing Board.

Therefore, the Rice Marketing (Amendment) Ordinance has by a change in the composition and structure of the Rice Marketing Board, provided what the hon. Mover of this Motion is seeking to give to the farmers by converting the Board into a rice producers' co-operative marketing organization. Had his Motion been debated prior to the acceptance by this Legislature of those amendments to the Ordinance, one could very well say that this is an admirable proposition, but now that the Ordinance has been amended to provide a structure for the control of the Board by rice producers, it is no longer necessary to talk about a co-operative so far as democratic control of the organization is concerned.

That is one aspect of the question. It is true that in the composition of the

Rice Marketing Board there is provision for a few officers of the Government. There is the Director of Agriculture, or a person named by him. There is also a representative of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and there is also provision for two business men whom the Minister of Trade and Industry can appoint. But those are only four of a total of 16 members of the Board. In other words, although it can be argued that if it were a co-operative all the members of the Board would be rice producers, nevertheless one can say that in spite of the fact that there are those four persons, the producers, by an overwhelming majority, have more or less absolute control of the organization.

Let me deal with the question of what are regarded as profits by any commercial undertaking. Any commercial undertaking which makes profits pays dividends to its shareholders. The Rice Marketing Board year after year can make profits or can incur losses, but it has no shareholders in the ordinary sense of a private or public company. The Rice Marketing Board does not share profits to shareholders as an ordinary company does. What happens to the profits, if any, earned by the Rice Marketing Board? The profits are entered into a pool which goes forward into the operations of the Board during the next year. In other words, if there is a surplus in one year it is added to the revenue in the following year which, after expenditure is deducted, is apportioned to the farmers. If the profits made in the previous year are large then the Board is in a position to award higher prices to the producers for rice which is purchased by the Board. So that any profits made by the Board go back to the producers either in the following year or perhaps a little later as the members decide [A Member: "If there is a loss."] If there is a loss, naturally people do not share losses, whether it is a co-operative or a private company. So the question does not arise.

I am dealing with the advantages of a co-operative organization *vis-à-vis* the organization we have at the moment. One

can say that a co-operative generally shares its profits in the form of a dividend at the end of a year's operations. In other words, if there is a small co-operative store and at the end of a year's operations a profit is made that profit is apportioned to the members of the co-operative society by way of a dividend on the basis of the purchases made by individual members. If the Rice Marketing Board makes a profit in one year of say \$1 million, the members of the Board can decide to carry forward that profit and pay a higher price to the producers of rice in the following year, or it can just as easily pay a higher price to the people who have sold rice to the Board during the same year. If Mr. X has sold 10 bags of rice and Mr. Y 20 bags, the profits made by the Board can be apportioned on the current year's operations, or can be shared in the following year by giving an increased price to the farmers. That is a decision which could be made by the members of the Board. The members, as I have said, since the amendment to the Ordinance, are in effect rice producers. Therefore I do not see that it is any longer necessary to convert the Rice Marketing Board into a co-operative.

One can democratize the Rice Marketing Board further by taking out the two commercial men and the two official members. The businessmen were appointed by the Minister of Trade and Industry. In that case the Board would then have not only 12 producer members but 16. As I have said before the majority, that is to say 12 out of 16 members, certainly gives the producer members good control of the organization, and the official and commercial men have been put there to guide them. If it is the view of this Council that these people should not be there and their guidance is no longer necessary, then you can be assured that Government will take the necessary steps to convert the Rice Marketing Board into an organization in which all members will be producer members.

[DR. JAGAN]

Let us assume that we convert it into a co-operative organization in keeping with the hon. Mover's suggestion. What would be the mechanics? How would this co-operative organization work? That is what the hon. Member for Georgetown South should have told us today. How different would the mechanics be from what exist at the moment? How would you elect members to the Committee of Management on the co-operative? At the moment they are democratically elected, and every rice producer in the country can vote for his representatives.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: That is not true! Some are not registered.

Dr. Jagan: There is nothing to prevent a rice producer from being registered. One may say that the 1/- registration fee prevents a rice producer from being registered, but that would not be presenting a very strong case. Therefore there is really nothing to prevent a rice producer from registering as a member of the Rice Producers' Association. The fact is that rice producers have no bar, except the 1/- qualification, from becoming a member of the Rice Producers' Association. As such he votes for members in his district committee.

There are twelve district committees all over the country. These committees are elected directly by the producers, and then the Council of the Rice Producers' Association is indirectly elected. In other words, one member from each of the twelve districts selects four others and they make up the Rice Producers' Council. It is this Council out of its membership that selects the members who are to serve on the Rice Marketing Board. It is necessary to have direct and indirect election to get on the Rice Marketing Board.

Will the hon. Mover of the Motion tell us whether it will not be necessary to set up machinery for the election of people to manage things, if the Board

were converted into a co-operative marketing organization? If he can suggest any improvement in the existing machinery Government would welcome it. It will be recalled that a change in the composition of the Rice Producers' Association was debated in this Council and accepted. It was done not, as some people always allege, by hammering things down people's throats — it was done by way of a compromise and the acceptance of suggestions, etc., from the "Opposition".

I am sorry that the Mover of the motion did not tell us clearly what would be the difference between a co-operative marketing organization and the existing Rice Marketing Board. I was most dissatisfied with the previous composition of the Board, because full control was not in the hands of the producers. Let us not draw red herrings across the trail and talk about complaints that people's rice may not be properly graded and so on. Whether you have a co-operative organization registered under the Co-operative Societies Ordinance or under a separate Ordinance, you will still hear complaints about the management. We must keep the cardinal principle in mind: effective democratic control. I submit that at the moment you have, if not 100 per cent democratic control, at least a 2/3 democratic control of the organization.

I can assure hon. Members that it is the Government's intention to put complete powers into the hands of the producers when they ask for it. This is not an imposition, and we are not withholding any powers from rice producers. While I appreciate the intention of the hon. Mover of the Motion, and while I recognize that he has a genuine and sincere interest in seeing that the rice producers get a square deal, I must say that the present Rice Marketing Board, constituted as it is today, gives the producers no less than they will be given if it were converted into a co-operative marketing organization.

About three years ago I took up this matter with an adviser who came to

this country to advise on the co-operative movement generally. He was also of the view that no practical advantages would be gained. Indeed it would be very difficult to set up a co-operative organization for the whole country, because we know how difficult it is to have small co-operative bodies functioning properly without elaborate rules to guide them. The Rules are laid down elaborately in two Ordinances which have many ramifying clauses. There is no point in scrapping things and duplicating them somewhere else merely to get the same practical results.

I would like to say that while I appreciate the motive of the hon. Member in bringing forward this Motion, I can assure him that the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance can achieve the same results. It may be necessary to see that more interest is taken in the machinery for controlling the elections and, instead of a few people voting, everybody who produces should vote. I repeat that there is no bar other than the 1/— qualification to prevent a producer from being registered. We must generate more interest in the R.P.A. and R.M.B. This cannot be done by converting the Rice Marketing Board into a co-operative organization. I hope that, as a result of my explanation, the hon. Member will withdraw his Motion.

Mr. Davis: I am sorry I cannot remember all of the flowery language the hon. Member for Georgetown South used when he introduced the Motion earlier into this Council. As he spoke I was able to recall one or two portions of it and, in the light of what he has said this afternoon, I have been able to get a fair picture of what he has in mind and what he thinks is best for the industry.

Perhaps it is coincidental that just around the corner — in August next — certain events will be taking place. I look forward to hearing him by the Canal Polder telling the people that the champions of rice did not accept his Motion to convert the Rice Marketing Board into

a co-operative. He has spoken of several ills in the rice industry, that is conceded, and it is our job — I cannot forget that at the moment I have the privilege and honour of serving as a member of the Rice Marketing Board — to tackle this as a problem.

I have recently gone back to the Board after an absence of four years, and I want to say that I was impressed with the improvements that have taken place there during the time I was not actively engaged as a member. The advance the Board has made, particularly in the preparation, packaging and re-milling of certain qualities of rice, have made a tremendous impact, in my humble view, on the industry and it should continue to do so. Now, this industry in which I am actively engaged, wants constructive thoughts and action; and let me say here and now that one of the most important factors or segments of the rice industry is the Rice Marketing Board because, let us not ever forget, it is essential that we be able to sell every pound of rice that we produce and may be likely to produce in the immediate future, and that is the essential work of the Board.

I heard my hon. Friend spoke about blast disease, etc., but is that really the function of the Rice Marketing Board? I would say that the Rice Marketing Board must keep these matters in mind, but would it not be more correct for us to say that the Rice Producers Association should think along the lines of blast and other diseases that sometimes attack and retard the production of rice?

In his speech to the Council when introducing this Motion, the hon. Member spoke of the loss sustained by the Board last year — nearly \$400,000. There are, at the moment, many Members of the Council who were members of the Board last year, including the Chairman and Vice Chairman, and I think they are in a far better position to say why the Board suffered such loss last year. There were particular aspects of last year which should not be forgotten. One has to remember that dur-

[MR. DAVIS]

ing the early parts of the year actually no rice was shipped through a chain of incidents and, in my view, that made a substantial contribution to the loss that the Board sustained.

Then, again, there was a loss sustained with the shipment of padi to Venezuela. But not only the Board must share this blame, because the Board had consulted every branch of the industry before taking the decision. I was, at the time when negotiations for the sale to Venezuela were being made, Vice President of the Rice Millers Association. My organization was called in and the matter was thoroughly discussed at all levels. I want to say if there is any blame to be laid, the other branches or segments of the industry would have to share in it and not only the Board, because we agreed that the transaction should be made. But as I said previously, the former Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board, who are Members of this hon. Council and, perhaps, other members also would be in a far better position than I to explain in detail how this loss came about.

The hon. Member for South Georgetown spoke of the supervision of the industry, from the landlords' side and from the manufacturers' side, and suggested that this can be easily corrected by this 'wave of the wand' in the form of a co-operative organization. Let me remind the hon. Member that there was a Committee which sat under the Chairmanship of the Governor and submitted a Report which made substantial recommendations to the industry; and I seem to recall that the hon. Member for Georgetown South has had the temerity to suggest that the Report be thrown out completely without even discussion. Perhaps if I am wrong the hon. Member would correct me.

The hon. Mover of the Motion also made reference to a Motion, which I tabled in this Council nearly two years now, with regard to the creation of a stabilization fund. I have a bit of news that I desire to give this hon. Council. After

18 to 19 months this idea that there should be a stabilization fund, as suggested by me, was recently discussed at a Board Meeting of the Rice Marketing Board, and it may interest Members to know that the industry to which the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry made reference has not received it favourably. It shocked me to think that my *confrères* in the industry would think in such negative terms as to reject the idea of a stabilization fund. It has startled me. I shall have to decide whether or not I will still bring it to the Council.

The hon. Minister of Trade and Industry also spoke of the discussion he has had with the Adviser on Co-operatives from the Colonial Office. I would like to say that I, also, at one time thought, and thought very seriously, of the Rice Marketing Board being converted into a co-operative organization and of the advantages and, perhaps, disadvantages that would accrue. I was, at the time when the Adviser from the Colonial Office came to the Colony, Vice President of the Rice Producers Association; and the then executive had some very long and serious talks with the Adviser, Mr. Cheeseman, Director of Co-operatives, and Mr. G. C. L. Gordon, Commissioner of Co-operatives, as he then was, in this Colony. We tried to cover every phase of the operation and every benefit that would accrue by creating the Rice Marketing Board into a co-operative, and they impressed me as being very reasonable.

Their arguments were to this effect: that co-operatives are not really mammoth organizations with the possibility of someone coming in and taking over. A co-operative is for the benefit of the co-operators— for them to gain the experience, the 'know-how' and acquire the capacity to expand from small beginnings, and as they expand, to assume and accept more responsibility and eventually take over and expand, still further, whatever they had undertaken. As I said, they impressed me with their reasonable argument that it would introduce a great element of chance. If it was operated in the reverse, that is, by taking

a few rice producers and making them directors of this co-operative body that may be created, that may be all right.

Since this Motion has been tabled for discussion this week, I have refreshed my mind from the notes I had made at that meeting, and I can find nothing that commends itself to me to change what was then in my mind on the subject.

I would like to agree with the point made by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry. It is only about four months since this new structure of the Rice Marketing Board has been created where the industry, as he rightly pointed out, has by a majority from eight to 12 members of the Rice Producers Association who are now *bona fide* members of the Rice Marketing Board. Perhaps, it is a case of democratizing at a pace that is a little too rapid for some of us.

The destiny of the Board is very much in the control of industry. I know there are many things wrong with the industry—we still have much paring and “screw-driving” to do; but, make no mistake about it, the rice industry plays a tremendous part in the livelihood of the country.

I want to make a few suggestions in support of the co-operative idea. I think that the co-operative system can be further applied to a lower level of the industry, as it has been done at Vergenoegen. Rice farmers in a co-operative effort bought the Vergenoegen Rice Mill from Government. They bought the Mill for \$25,000, paid down \$1,500, and arranged to pay the balance over a period of seven years. The details can be found in the “Rice Review”, the quarterly journal of the Rice Producers' Association, which is well worth reading even by non-producers as well. The co-operative purchase is a step in the right direction, and it is one which will lead to the ordinary rice farmer being able to gain experience in the management and operations of a unit in the rice industry.

I might suggest further that in due time it might be not only desirable but necessary for the Rice Development Company, formerly known as the Mahai-cony-Abary Rice Development Scheme, to be taken over on a co-operative basis, at which time experience would have been gained in the co-operative working of other units of the industry.

I am conversant with the “aches and pains” of the industry. We need more planning and efficiency in it; we want to get rid of “red” rice, we need better drainage and irrigation of lands and more pure line seed padi, we would like to explain to the everyday farmer — the man who cultivates from two to ten acres — how to get more yields. We need many things in the rice industry, but I feel strongly that the conversion of the Rice Marketing Board into a co-operative organization is something that is best left alone and not urged at the present period of the industry's existence.

Mr. Gajraj: It is well known that those who are engaged in the production of rice earn a living on a subsistence level. In other words, it is only because most of the people who plant padi do so for the period of time when they can find no other job and also because they are assisted by their families that they are able to give this country an agricultural crop which, in terms of money, nets the Colony a figure in the vicinity of \$18,000,000 a year.

If, however, rice were to be cultivated on a plantation basis, that is to say, the landlord should employ people to do the job for him and pay them wages — even though they would be merely the minimum wage which people in such employment would expect to receive — it would be found that the results at the end of the crop year would not justify the expenditure involved.

One can quite therefore appreciate the feeling of loss and of frustration sometimes felt by those who are so en-

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gaged when their padi is finally turned into the milled product and it suffers loss of weight before reaching the Rice Marketing Board, or when the grading awarded their rice is less than their toil in and out of the field deserves.

It is because of that I believe the hon. Mover of this Motion has come to this Council to urge a change in the system of marketing, so as to give the basic producer a higher return for his labour. If that is so, then no one in this Council can quarrel with him for having come to put the idea before the Legislative Council. But what I do question is whether the manner in which the hon. Mover has proposed it to this Council will resolve such conditions as he has complained of. That I doubt.

He has asked that we should convert, and I lay stress on the word "convert", the existing organization known as the Rice Marketing Board into a co-operative. The question has already been asked of him, how will he go about bringing about such a change? The question is a legitimate one. As we understand it, a co-operative really has its grass roots in the people. It must come from below, it must attract new members; and as it grows bigger and bigger the members with experience might be able to handle the whole of the transaction. I am sure the hon. Mover will agree with me that in an industry of this kind a co-operative system must be based on voluntary association.

Coming together and declaring the intention of pooling their products and accepting the returns of their joint ventures in marketing, etc., is involved, but if the hon. Member or anyone else should get together and ask the rice farmers themselves to express their view on the question he could not get a degree of unanimity necessary to establish a co-operative organization of the scope and purpose of the Rice Marketing Board.

I have said this before in this Council and I repeat it because it is one of the catch-phrases which we use from time to time when efforts are made to defame the Rice Marketing Board or to reduce the value of its work in the eyes of the community. Both the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Producers Association Ordinance were imposed on the industry. That is an accepted historical fact, but we must ask ourselves again the question which I posed to the hon. Member—that if we were to leave it to the voluntary agreement of the persons engaged in the industry, we would not have got such an agreement in order to bring about voluntary and co-operatively the same type of organization as we have. It was necessary, therefore, to alter the method by which the coming together of the people engaged in the industry could be brought about, and realizing that there were many in the industry who agreed that a single buying and a single-selling organization was the answer to remove the cut-throat competition of traders in rice particularly those who engaged in an export trade to the West Indies, Government introduced legislation which brought the Rice Marketing Board into being.

The hon. Member could easily, I believe, have made many of the points he has made in moving his Motion, at the time when the Bill to amend the Rice Marketing Ordinance was before this Council some months ago. I refer to the amendment of the Ordinance whereby the constitution of the Rice Marketing Board was altered, giving tremendous weight to the producer section of the industry on the Board itself. However, I recall that the hon. Mover of the Motion was not in his seat during the debate on the Bill to amend the Ordinance. That was the time when he could have made his points, but that day has gone. I think that many of his strictures on the working of the Rice Marketing Board might possibly have been valid with regard to the Board as constituted prior to 1957. I am sure that we would all wish for the day to come when every

industry, every segment of this country, should be able to handle its own affairs without any direction from any person. That is what the Government has been attempting to do — to use the words of the Minister of Trade and Industry, “democratize the Rice Marketing Board.”

There was, prior to 1957, the charge that those persons who were members of the Board, selected by the rice producers, did not fully represent the large numbers of persons engaged in the rice industry, but it was not that those persons were not properly elected. They were elected by the District Associations, and in due course found themselves on the Council of the Rice Producers' Association. What was wrong was this: that the people who were down at the bottom in the production side of the industry, the farmers themselves, did not take advantage of their electoral rights; they did not register themselves as producers, therefore, when the time came, as it did every year at that time, they were unable either to be nominated for election to their District Association, or in many cases they were unable to vote for whom they wished, because they were not on the list of electors.

It is at that level I think the work must be done; that the farmer and producer must be urged to take his proper place in the industry, not merely by tilling the soil and producing the grain, but by putting himself in the position whereby he can cast his ballot for those whom he considered to be his proper representatives, and if that were done on the basis of full registration of the rice farmers themselves no one could claim thereafter that those who have been elected are not proper and true representatives of the producers. Be that as it may, we have to carry out the democratic process, and when people are elected, whether by a minority of the electorate or by a preponderant majority, they are elected for the period of time that they hold office, and during the period of time they hold office we must give them full support if we wish to see the industry and the country continue on its march to progress.

So I would say that after 1957, when we had the membership of the Rice Marketing Board altered by bringing in those who were then elected to the Council of the Rice Producers' Association, we had for the first time a number of rice producers who had never sat on the Rice Marketing Board. I have said in this Council when the amendment to the Rice Marketing Ordinance was being debated, that I bore testimony to the fact that the rice producers, however humble might be their origin, however much they might have to toil in the padi fields in mud and water, have nevertheless a native intelligence which would enable them by proper application and study of the problems confronting the Rice Marketing Board, to understand the situation that faces the industry from time to time, and with advice from those with more experience, and perhaps with better education and things of that kind, would be able to make proper decisions.

I have had the opportunity—I would say the privilege and indeed the honour—to have served on the Rice Marketing Board with a number of rice producers of very humble origin, and by the time their term of office came to an end I was satisfied that they were as worthy to take decisions of importance on matters in connection with the marketing of rice as any other person. That was why I was strong in my support of the Government's measure whereby the producer section of the Rice Marketing Board has had its numbers increased from 8 to 12. Therefore, as it stands today no one can say that the producer is not getting proper representation on the Board; that he is being fleeced by the Board, because if he is fleeced then he is being fleeced by his own. The rice producer has a preponderant majority on the Board and has 100 per cent. membership on the Executive Committee of the Rice Marketing Board. Therefore, so far as the day-to-day administration of the Board is concerned it is the rice producer alone who decides the questions which come before the Board from day to day.

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It is perhaps at a time like this that some people take the opportunity to attack the Rice Marketing Board and whip up things of the past for the purpose of creating interest in one thing or another, but there must always be some who will take the opportunity to set the record straight. Let me say that the charge which has been made by the hon. Mover of the Motion, that the Rice Marketing Board is operated to a large extent to the exclusion of the producers from its control, is false and unfounded. An hon. Member interjects to say he was speaking of last year. We are dealing with the present; we are dealing with conditions as they are.

The hon. Member has said that one of the complaints he has brought to this Council on behalf of the poor, penniless, hungry and starving rice farmers is that the weight of their rice is found to be less when it reaches the Board than when it leaves the factory. I want to challenge him by saying that even if the Rice Marketing Board were being operated as a co-operative organization, such as he has been telling us about, the co-operative could not pay for more rice than it receives, because what it receives is what it has to sell. It cannot pay for something that has fallen by the wayside, even though from the Bible we learn that some seed falling by the wayside and finding good ground bear abundant fruit. But I daresay that in this case the hon. Member means that when the grains fall by the wayside they fall upon hard and stony ground and therefore nothing good comes out of it. Even if the Rice Marketing Board was a co-operative organization rice farmers would still not be paid for rice which they had not delivered to the Board.

We are told that the bags of rice are weighed by the Board's officers, and it is suggested by inference that they can rob the farmer, but from its inception the Board has tried to be impartial in the matter of weights, and does not employ weighers but permits sworn weighers and gaugers to weigh every bag of rice that

goes into its premises, and those persons are sworn to give certificates in accordance with the true weight of the items they have weighed. It is on the basis of such certificates that payments are made by the Board.

One can easily see that it is almost impossible for hundreds of farmers to leave their homes in the country and come to the Rice Marketing Board to see that their bags of rice are weighed. Therefore people who are supposed to be impartial and who are sworn to be honest in the performance of their duties are permitted to act as the eyes and ears of the farmers, and give a certificate of the actual weight of the rice.

The Rice Marketing Board has not been satisfied with this aspect of the matter, because as the rice crops become bigger more pressure will be placed on the premises of the Board by larger consignments coming in. At times it is very difficult for weighing to take place one bag at a time as is done at the moment. Over a year ago the Rice Marketing Board instructed its officers to investigate the question of automatic weighing of rice, by using large scales such as weigh-bridges whereby the weight could be automatically printed on a ticket and attached to the rice. I am not sure what is the position at the moment, but I am sure that the question is still being studied.

I know that when the Board makes a decision the officers have to put that decision into practice. I believe it will not be long when, as a result of the decision taken over a year ago, automatic weighing of rice will be introduced in order to prevent the delays which have occurred in the past on account of having to weigh bags of rice individually.

The hon. Member for Georgetown South has made a statement that arbitrary grading of rice continues. Grading has always been one of the "whipping horses" some people have used from time to time, but there is the human element in the grading that is being done. The grading in the Rice Marketing Board is

based upon (i) the percentage of broken and discoloured grains of rice; (ii) colour and shading of rice and; (iii) general appearance of rice. It is easy to say that when it comes to assessing the percentage of broken and discoloured grains it can be done with scientific accuracy. Of course it is when we come to the question of, colour, shade and the general background appearance of the rice that the human element comes into play, and this is where sometimes the sight of one pair of eyes may not see things the same way as another pair of eyes. That is why the Board for the past 18 months has been investigating the question of electronic grading.

The members of the Rice Marketing Board did not sit down and allow things to slide. They were very much disturbed over the claims of dissatisfaction; they could hear more from the outside than from the inside, and they endeavoured to find means which would eliminate the human element, sight, and to substitute some scientific, mechanical device to do the job. The application of electronics in industry is something relatively new. It is one of the improvements in science which, in normal times, one would never have believed that people in British Guiana would adopt at any stage, but it only goes to show that those who have been charged with the responsibility of marketing the rice of this country were prepared to make use of every modern device which appeared to be capable of removing the fears and complaints of those who were dealing with the Rice Marketing Board.

Only recently I was informed that the new members of the Board very quickly followed up the work of the previous members of the Board by sending the Manager to the U.S.A. in keeping with a decision to extend the Board's present premises to accommodate a new and larger capacity blending plant. That decision was taken before the new members of the Board took over. I was very pleased indeed to have read, since the Manager's return, that he was able to purchase the necessary equipment, and that it will be installed by next year.

The old members of the Board had also been working on the question of electronic grading and electronic separation, and it is hoped that before next year's crop of rice is reaped there will be perfected an electronic grading device which will permit samples to be put into the machine and the grade recorded automatically, so that there will be no question whatever of the grading officer being charged with partiality.

Perhaps "A" or "B" will get a raw deal, but that is something to be expected. Certain problems cannot be solved overnight. As Your Honour knows, the advance of science is taking place at a tremendous rate each day. We have to try and keep abreast of such advances in order to utilize the knowledge we receive to the best advantage of our country. Electronic separation of the dark grains from samples of rice is now being done at the Rice Marketing Board. We took the risk and imported one sample machine during the time when I was serving on the Board. As a result of the excellent working of that machine an order was placed for a number of larger ones, so as to enable us to process a larger quantity of high quality rice for packaging.

Mr. Speaker: Two minutes more.

Mr. Gajraj: If we had not introduced electronic separation we would have been hard put last year to keep the Trinidad market supply of top grade package rice. I foresee that with the continued use of scientific equipment we will be able to offer to the eating public, rice of a better looking quality and of a higher standard which will enable a higher income to go into the coffers of the Rice Marketing Board. When that takes place the money will return to the industry, because the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry has pointed out very clearly this afternoon that every producer is in effect a part-owner and there are no shareholders in the Rice Marketing Board. The product goes to the Board to be sold for the general good of all rice producers. So long as that continues—

Mr. Speaker: Someone will have to move a motion if you desire to continue.

Mr. Davis: I beg to move that the hon. Member be allowed to continue for twenty minutes.

Mr. Speaker: The Question is, "That the hon. Member be permitted to speak for twenty minutes more."

Agreed to.

Mr. Gajraj: I was saying that it is my view that if the Board continues along those lines it will become more valuable to the industry as time goes by, and, with the relaxation of power into the hands of the producers who have a preponderant majority on the Board, they will use that power to the advantage of the industry as a whole and not to the advantage of any individual or individuals.

My hon. Friend referred to the Rice Marketing Board as being antagonistic to producers and farmers. I do not think that the hon. Mover of the Motion would have thought that that was so, if he had taken advantage of the opportunity which was offered to him by his appointment as a member of a committee of persons outside the membership of the Board which was charged with the responsibility of investigating the operation and efficiency of the Board. At the time when the committee was appointed, I was very pleased to have received the acceptance of the hon. Member for Georgetown South to serve on it. I felt that he would have been able to give a considerable amount of assistance by virtue of, firstly, his knowledge of scientific agriculture, secondly, his knowledge of practical agriculture and, thirdly, his general attachment to the farming community of British Guiana.

However, unfortunately, he did not find it convenient to serve very much on the Committee. Had he done so he would have seen the various operations of the Board, and he would have realized that however much there may have been

justification in the past for saying that the Board was antagonistic to the farmers, he would have seen that everything is being done to relieve the farmer of anxiety, to remove the need for being dissatisfied and to give him a square deal.

The organization exists not for the benefit of the individuals who have the honour and privilege to serve on the Board, it exists for the benefit of those persons who draw merely a subsistence level of earnings from the industry.

He referred, again, to the farmers not having a direct voice. I need not say more about it because it has been stressed sufficiently this afternoon that the present composition of the Board gives the farmers not only a direct voice but a preponderant voice, and if the farmers' representatives do not take advantage of the powers now vested in them then they cannot blame anybody.

I have said it in this Council, and I repeat it again, that I have great faith in these people because I believe that having to look after their own bread and butter they would not permit a situation to develop that they would not be able to take care of.

Here is another point made by the hon. Member which I must rebut to some extent because he said that the Rice Marketing Board does not make any effort to obtain technical assistance for the industry, and he particularized by referring to the blast disease. The hon. Member should remember that we all sat in this Council when the Annual Estimates were being considered and we raised this question with the Minister of Natural Resources regarding the grant of appropriation which Government had been proposing to be made for the scientific investigation of these things and for the eventual eradication, and blast was mentioned; and we received the assurance that it would be tackled. I know that since then the Department of Agriculture has been tackling it and, indeed, has to

some extent been able to advise farmers how to obviate the ill effects of blast disease, that mention of this can only be described as trying to draw red herrings across the trail. How many people must be engaged in technical research in the industry?

Rice farmers, like many other citizens, contribute to the common purse of the Colony. The Department of Agriculture, with its specialist officers, investigates, assists and advises, but in addition to all this—and here again, if the hon. Member had attended as a member of that Committee, he would have known that the Rice Marketing Board, from time to time, had made allocations from its funds to assist Government in carrying out certain investigations in the rice industry. For nearly three years now, the Rice Marketing Board had been making annual grants toward the cost of an entomologist to investigate the problem of storage of rice with particular reference to weevils and other insects, and his report has been very illuminating. It had already assisted the industry in reducing the amount of loss from weevil infestation of rice; and so the Board, although this is not its primary function to delve into such matters, has not in the past, and I am sure will not in the future, refuse to give assistance from its funds in order to carry out such investigations.

He made mention of machinery. He ought to be reminded that the Rice Marketing Board was the pioneer in the introduction of mechanized farming in the industry. It brought down a considerable quantity of tractors and other ancillary equipment that go along with them and sold them to farmers, so much so that over a period of years the Board has had to wipe off from its books some sums of money which could not have been recovered at that stage. But what the Board felt was that it was an investment in the investigation of mechanized cultivation of rice and if it lost money it was an investment that is worthwhile. The way has been cleared and now rice farm-

ers, in general, are able to buy their tractors and harvestors from the agents. The financing is done by the agents themselves or one of the finance companies. And so, having created a condition whereby the use of these things has been proved to be good, the industry can go right ahead and use these items of machinery.

He has spoken about difficulties and the cost of clearing lands. I wonder if the hon. Member, thinking the matter out clearly, agrees that that is the function of the Rice Marketing Board. I do not know why people have always liked, in this country, to set up a multiple of organizations to do the same thing. Government has created a machinery whereby farmers can obtain assistance to clear their lands and reap their crops. Let departments which are charged with a specialized job be permitted to carry on that job because marketing is not a hit-and-miss job—not in these days when our own production is increasing rapidly; when we have got to make sure that the markets to which we sell, can consume more of the rice than we can produce and when a saturation point has been reached, we have to seek other markets. Therefore, it has to be a specialized job; and I would not be one to agree to burden this organization to find money to clear lands when it is looking after weevil, etc., out of its funds.

We purchased, in the time of need, a number of irrigation pumps which we placed at the disposal of the Rice Producers Association, so that they who are supposed to keep in closer touch with the farmers would be able to rush those pumps to the areas in which there is the need to deviate the waters. The Board is also assisting in the provision of blowers for fumigating the plants. The Board has done many things which are not, primarily, the purposes for which the Board was established, but the hon. Member seems to be arguing that we need the type of structure which is contained in the Rice Committee Report where we will have different managers

[MR. GAJRAJ]

looking after different departments. At one time he said that the Rice Committee is against the interest of the farmers and at another time he supports such things as the Rice Committee has recommended. I cannot understand this kind of thing. All of us would like to see perfection reached in every job we do. Perfection should be our goal, but if conditions change from time to time and thereby make the goal more unattainable, we would become disinterested in what we are doing and there would be no progress.

We must be able to move on despite what difficulties may arise. Therefore, we will never be able in this industry, or in any other industry, to reach a stage where we will satisfy everybody. The day we reach that stage, it is time that we pack up and go to Heaven. We have to work and work hard trying to reach that goal, but we will never reach that goal with the proposals which the hon. Member has advanced. I hope that in his search for the means whereby the disadvantages, as he calls them, of these farmers can be got rid of, he can find other means; then all of us will be very happy.

But I submit, very humbly, that the proposals he made to us are not whether we can get rid of these difficulties, but if we can get the farmer himself to take a more positive interest from the bottom. It is their voice and their pressure from the bottom coming up to the membership of the Rice Marketing Board that might enable the industry to obtain a greater voice. The Rice Producers Association, as it stands, is the nearest approach to the co-operative spirit in the producer section. Let the hon. Member, by his contact with the farmers, encourage them to make that strong, then we will have everything else much better.

Mr. Tello: I have listened with a great deal of interest to the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and to the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, who was once a member of the Rice

Marketing Board and also had the honour of being its Chairman. What they have told us is that the object of having a co-operative is to put democratic control into the hands of the people interested in the organization. That is the sole object.

When we look at this Motion we see that it was tabled on 5th January, 1960. That was pretty early in the year. We heard the hon. Minister say also that he was impressed by the loud clamour of the people concerned in favour of democratizing the organization; yet action has been taken by Government to have a statutory provision that resembles the co-operative system, that is, the Rice Marketing (Amendment) Ordinance, 1960, was introduced and passed instead of awaiting the results of the debate on this Motion.

They ask, what is the difference between a co-operative and the amending Ordinance recently passed as it affects the structure of the Board? I do not think that question would arise. They tell us that the Board as it now stands is virtually a co-operative operating under statute. A co-operative, as I understand it, is owned solely by the people involved and there is no statutory control, no interference in its affairs whatever.

“What is the headache? What is the worry?” Government may ask. “Already we have given power to the people to control themselves.” I presume that the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry did not introduce the measure for political reasons but to meet the wishes of the people and because he was convinced that the people were ready and ripe for taking over sole control of this rice marketing business that involves the second largest agricultural crop in the Colony.

Remember, however, that the rice producers outside of this Council were not aware that a Motion was tabled here asking for what they were clamouring for. One of the sources of their infor-

mation was "Thunder", the official organ of the Majority Party, which stated that a co-operative was the only solution for the various ills of the Rice Marketing Board and rice marketing generally.

After this makeshift compromise in which quite recently a Bill was passed implementing somewhat the principles of co-operatives in the Rice Marketing Board, it placed many of us who voted for the measure in an embarrassing position. Members might want to have second thoughts, and those who were not here to feel the atmosphere could not fully appreciate why certain people voted one way or the other. It was the fault of Government putting the cart before the horse. There had been a loud clamour for a co-operative, not a makeshift.

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, said that the governing laws affecting the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Producers Association were imposed on the people in the industry. That is an historical truth—and the demand for a change to a co-operative was to end the period of imposition. Let me say that there is nothing in the rules of a co-operative to prevent a Rice Marketing Board from employing the best experts, or from employing anyone who would make the marketing side a success. Most of the managers of co-operatives in England are employed personnel, and very few of them are members of the co-operatives with which they work. They are employed for their expert knowledge and their business connections. And under a co-operative system there is nothing to prevent a Rice Marketing Board from appointing to its board of directors people possessing specified knowledge, or experts.

Rice farmers with whom I have spoken quite clearly expressed their preference for a co-operative because it is more democratic; they claimed that certain powers were still in the hands of the Minister, which was a form of interference which no co-operative would brook.

Another thing I would like to mention is this, that under a co-operative system there would be no legal definition of a rice farmer. A statutory definition now exists, and it means that legal minds can always, through such definitions, import into the industry people who may be interested in, but are not genuine rice farmers in the true sense of the word.

I am informed that Government amended the Rice Marketing Ordinance, thus liberalizing the structure of the Board, because the Majority Party was losing a certain amount of support or control.

Mr. Speaker, I see time is getting on.

Mr. Speaker: I am waiting for a Motion.

ADJOURNMENT AND PENDING BUSINESS

The Chief Secretary: Sir, I understand that the Finance Committee is meeting tomorrow for urgent business; in which case, if hon. Members would agree, this Council can sit for half an hour, deal with some non-controversial matters, and continue with this debate on Friday.

Hon. Members: We cannot hear the Chief Secretary distinctly.

Mr. Speaker: The Chief Secretary says that there is urgent business before Finance Committee tomorrow, and if Members are agreeable he suggests that Council sit for an hour and a half tomorrow so as to give Finance Committee an opportunity to get through its business.

The Chief Secretary: If hon. Members agree we could take some of the non-controversial Bills tomorrow and continue the debate on this Motion on Friday. I would therefore suggest that we take tomorrow the French-Mullen Pension Bill, the Commissioner of Title (Additional Powers) Bill, the Development Fund (1959 Appropriation) Bill—

Mr. Burnham: That Bill is controversial.

The Chief Secretary: The Georgetown Sewerage and Water (Amendment No. 2) Bill, the Georgetown Town Council (Amendment) Bill. There are about five Bills.

Mr. Burnham: There is the Civil Law of British Guiana (Amendment) Bill which I think is non-controversial.

The Attorney-General: I would like to point out that as those Bills were only read the First time today it will be necessary to get the consent of the Council to take them through their remaining stages tomorrow.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: Government should not be in such a great hurry now because this Council has not met for a few months.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed that Council should sit from 2 to 3.30 p.m. tomorrow?

Mr. Burnham: As it is proposed that Council should sit for an hour and a half tomorrow I think it would be more convenient to most of us to come to Legislative Council at 3.30 p.m.

The Chief Secretary: We are quite agreeable to the suggestion that Council should sit from 3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Council is therefore adjourned until 3.30 p.m. tomorrow.