

SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Wednesday, 1st June, 1960.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

Speaker, His Honour Sir Donald Jackson

Chief Secretary, Hon. D. M. Hedges

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

ex officio

Financial Secretary, W. P. D'Andrade (acting).

The Honourable **Dr. C. B. Jagan** — *Member for Eastern Berbice*

(Minister of Trade and Industry)

„ **B. H. Benn** — *Member for Essequibo River*

(Minister of Natural Resources)

„ **Janet Jagan** — *Member for Western Essequibo*

(Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)

„ „ **Ram Karran** — *Member for Demerara-Essequibo*

(Minister of Communications and Works)

„ „ **B. S. Rai** — *Member for Central Demerara*

(Minister of Community Development and Education).

Mr. **W. O. R. Kendall** — *Member for New Amsterdam*

„ **R. C. Tello** — *Nominated Member*

„ **F. Bowman** — *Member for Demerara River*

„ **S. Campbell** — *Member for North Western District*

„ **A. L. Jackson** — *Member for Georgetown North*

„ **S. M. Saffee** — *Member for Western Berbice*

„ **Ajodha Singh** — *Member for Berbice River*

„ **Jai Narine Singh** — *Member for Georgetown South*

„ **R. E. Davis** — *Nominated Member*

„ **A. M. Fredericks** — *Nominated Member*

„ **H. J. M. Hubbard** — *Nominated Member*

„ **A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.** — *Nominated Member.*

Mr. I. Crum Ewing — Clerk of the Legislature

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

ABSENT :

Mr. L. F. S. Burnham — Member for Georgetown Central

Mr. E. B. Beharry — Member for Eastern Demerara

Mr. R. B. Gajraj — Nominated Member.

The Clerk read prayers.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 26th May, 1960, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LEAVE TO MEMBERS

Mr. Speaker: I have to announce that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Beharry) reports that he is indisposed and unable to attend today.

The hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Burnham) reports that he is unable to attend during the early stages of today's meeting.

PAPERS LAID

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan): On behalf of the hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, I wish to lay on the Table the

Annual Reports of the Central Housing and Planning Authority for the years 1955—1958, together with the Certificates and Reports of the Director of Audit thereon.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Mr. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I beg to intimate that, with your permission, I wish at the appropriate time to ask to move a Motion for the suspension of the relevant Standing Order to enable me to move a Motion concerning which I have already consulted you.

ORAL ASKING AND ANSWERING OF QUESTIONS

DEPARTURE AND RETURN OF GUIANESE

Mr. Jackson: I beg to ask Question No. 10 standing in my name on the Order Paper. Will the Honourable Chief Secretary say how many Guianese left the Colony between the 1st of January, 1958, and the 31st of December, 1959, for the

several parts of the British Commonwealth and the United States of America, and how many have returned to the Colony during the same period of time?

The Chief Secretary (Mr. Hedges): I regret that the form in which statistics of departures from and arrivals in British Guiana are kept does not allow of the question being answered in the precise form in which it is asked. Complete figures are kept only of departures to the British Caribbean Territories, including British Honduras and the Bahamas, to other Commonwealth countries as a whole, and to all foreign countries. In addition, a record is kept of persons going to the United Kingdom to take up permanent residence. With regard to Guianese who return to British Guiana only the total figure is available, no record being kept of the individual countries from which they are returning.

The available figures for the period 1st January, 1958 to 31st December, 1959, are as follows:

Guianese Departing:

British Caribbean territories (including British Honduras and the Bahamas)	..	7,361
Other Commonwealth countries (including 1,100 who left to take up permanent residence in the United Kingdom)	..	3,473
All foreign countries	..	9,241
Total	..	20,075

Guianese Returning: 17,658

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 11.

ADMINISTRATION OF GEORGETOWN PRISON

Mr. Jackson: I beg to ask Question No. 11 standing in my name on the Order Paper. In view of the fact that a Prison Officer was murdered in the Georgetown Prison, does the Government propose to order an inquiry into the administration

of the Prison Department, and if so, how soon?

The Minister of Community Development and Education (Mr. Rai): No Sir. Unhappily, the late officer neglected to comply with a written order from the Director of Prisons reminding Prison Officers that prisoners Douglas Lewis and Wilbert Henry who were being confined in the Punishment Section of the Prison should only be unlocked in the presence of two officers and then only when all the other prisoners in that Section were in their cells. The late officer released prisoners James and Lewis from their cells at the same time and allowed his assistant to remain out in the Exercise Yard while the two prisoners were in the Punishment Section with him.

The need for constant vigilance is being impressed on all Prison Officers, both in the interest of their own safety and the security of the Prison, and a repetition of the circumstances which resulted in the death of the Prison Officer is unlikely in the future.

ORDER OF THE DAY

LAND BONDS ORDINANCE 1959: REPEAL PROPOSED

Mr. Speaker: Council will resume debate on the following Motion:

"Whereas enactment of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959 (No. 21) has caused dissatisfaction and grave concern among the landed proprietors of the Colony:

Be it resolved: That this Council recommends the repeal of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959."

But before we proceed with this Motion, I think it might be appropriate, Mr. Jackson, if you wish to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Order, to do so now.

SYMPATHY WITH PEOPLE OF CHILE.

Mr. Jackson: I beg to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Order to permit me to move the Motion which has been circulated. The Motion reads:

"Be it resolved: That this Council expresses its profound sympathy with the people of Chile in the serious calamity which has befallen their country.

And be it further resolved: That this Council recommends to Government that steps be taken to render financial and other forms of material relief."

Mr. Speaker: The Standing Order under which this notice is given is No. 24, that is:

"Notice shall not be dispensed with in the case of a motion, or in respect of any proceedings for which notice is required, except with the consent of the Speaker and the unanimous assent of the Members present at the time."

I give my consent.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, one hardly expects that there will be any controversy as far as this Motion is concerned. It is known that the people of Chile have suffered and are still suffering from the results of a calamity which came upon them in very recent days. Thousands of lives have been lost, homes have been destroyed and, as far as has been reported, there is great distress in that land.

Countries have already taken action with respect to rendering aid of one kind or another to those who are suffering, and it is my view that we in this country can and should join with other countries in the world to express our sympathy to the relatives of people who have lost their lives, those who have lost their homes, and to the State in general.

We in this country are fortunate that we do not have such calamities; and perhaps it might be difficult at times to appreciate to the fullest extent what such sufferings are like: nevertheless, it is my conviction that all of us in this Council will share sympathies with those who are suffering.

[Mr. JACKSON]

I think the time has come to ask that when we are extending our sympathies with those who are suffering in Chile we also do so in a very tangible manner. It is true that our circumstances are bad, but not so bad that we cannot show that sympathy in a very tangible manner, by offering financial aid and other forms of material relief. I heartily commend this Motion to this Council.

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): I second this admirable Motion moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North. I think every Member in this Council, representing as we do, in one form or another, the people of British Guiana, feels the utmost sympathy for the people of Chile who have suffered such misfortunes as tidal waves, earthquakes and so on. Moreover, we who also live on the South American continent must feel a brotherhood for all those people living in this area.

Certainly theirs is one of the greatest disasters the world has seen in many a year. The people of British Guiana should express their sympathy through the correct channels, so that the people of Chile will appreciate that they have friends and sympathizers all over the world. I agree that we should take steps to see what relief other than financial is possible. Only a few days ago I was approached by an organization which felt the same way and was anxious to send blood to Chile. However, because of the geographical position, I found, speaking to the doctors in charge of the blood bank, it would have been very difficult to send blood to Chile and in the quantities which we have available here.

It is appreciated that this is a small country and that we would have to contribute within the limits of our resources. I understand that there is a move afoot for certain organizations in British Guiana to get together and collect money and clothing and other things which might assist the people in their time of disaster. So that with some assistance from Government added to that, I think British

Guiana would be able to express its sympathy in a tangible way. I take pleasure in supporting the Motion.

Mr. Hubbard: Mr. Speaker, George Bernard Shaw once wrote that "Nature is red in tooth and claw". The recent events in Chile point to the truth of that statement. Unfortunately, when we look at natural calamities such as those the people of that poor South American country have had to endure we come to realize that though "nature is red in tooth and claw", nature is not so terrible as man.

What the people of Chile and the Pacific have suffered in consequence of these natural upheavals is no whit as great as the suffering of the people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in consequence of the brutality of man himself. And I would like, in contemplating these great and moving events, to draw some philosophy from them.

What I think we must realize is that nature is terrible, but man is still nature, and nature even moreso. We can contemplate the disaster in Chile without any passion and without any necessity to place blame on any one person or set of persons. We therefore can draw fully upon the reservoirs of the human side of our nature: kindness and charity. We can see in this natural disaster the brotherhood that is in all of us; and I think, Sir, that it is fitting when we have the opportunity, to look upon the deeds of nature and of men and use the experience of the one to temper the acts of the other.

I heartily support the proposal that our sympathy and our assistance go out to our brothers in Chile.

Mr. Campbell: I rise to give my whole-hearted support to this Motion moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North. It is very lamentable to hear of the results of this awful natural calamity. I heard that in the West Indies scientists are beginning to record shocks. All along we in British Guiana have been safe from such natural calamities, but one never knows. We are under the level of

the Atlantic and I am sure that if the Atlantic were to rise just around 10 ft. with a tidal wave the suffering that would come to the people of these parts can be imagined. The nearest highland above the sea level is 25 miles away from the City, at Atkinson Field. Anyway, I am always grateful to the Creator for our being spared such disasters.

Question put, Motion carried unanimously.

LAND BONDS ORDINANCE 1959: REPEAL PROPOSED

Mr. Speaker: We shall resume the debate on the Motion, moved by the hon. Member for Demerara River, as follows:

“Whereas enactment of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959 (No. 21) has caused dissatisfaction and grave concern among the landed proprietors of the Colony:

Be it resolved: That this Council recommends the repeal of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959 (No. 21).”

I was not present when this Motion was moved, but from the records I notice that the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, was speaking at the time of the adjournment. It does appear also from the records that he began to speak from 4.25 p.m. and that the adjournment was taken somewhere about five o'clock. If the record is accurate, it seems to me that before he can continue, there must be some Motion to extend the time of his speaking.

Mr. Fredericks: I beg to move that the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, be given an extra half-hour to speak.

Dr. Jagan: Speaking on this Motion—

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment.

Dr. Jagan: Speaking on this Motion just moved, Sir—

Mr. Speaker: I think the rule says that it must be put without amendment or debate.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order No. 35 (1) states:

“The mover of an original motion shall not be limited in the duration of his speech on such motion or in reply.

(2) Subject to the preceding paragraph of this Standing Order, a Member shall not be entitled to address the Council for more than 30 minutes on any subject:

Provided that the Council may, by motion made and carried without amendment or debate which shall set out the extension, extend the time limited by this Order.”

By this particular Standing Order I am precluded from accepting an amendment, or to permit a debate. I shall have to put the question accordingly. The question is, that Mr. Tello be permitted to continue for 30 minutes more. Those who are in favour, please say “Aye”; those who are against, please say “No”.

None against; the Motion is carried.

Mr. Tello: On the adjournment I was trying to impress on this Council that it is my considered opinion that the Government erred in introducing the Land Bonds Bill, without first fulfilling certain prerequisites. I was trying to prove to Council that already British Guiana has on its Statute Book adequate legislation for dealing with any man who hoards land at the expense of the economy of the country. Before Government had given thought to the introduction of legislation as expressed in the Land Bonds Ordinance, certain prerequisites should have been attended to.

I express the opinion that, in view of the fact that this piece of legislation was on the Statute Book, the Government should have moved to intensify its interest in providing markets, local and foreign, in order to show the small farmers that markets are available for marketing their produce. I recognize that Government is taking steps to appoint a Marketing Officer. It is a step in the right direction, and it is a credit to the Government, but I make the point that this has come after, rather than before, this hostile piece of legislation.

[MR. TELLO]

I repeat that the Government has not done enough to educate our peasantry in relation to accepting scientific agricultural methods, and accepting what is necessary in these modern times in order to produce economically and find a place in a competitive market. I repeat that the Government erred in introducing this piece of legislation, and the hon. Mover is quite correct in his attempt to remove it from the Statute Book. I hope to continue to prove that there is merit in the Motion.

I do not know if I have impressed on this Council what I feel, and what has been made known to me by associating with the general public. There is a considerable amount of uneasiness on the part of the small landowner. When I say small landowner, I mean people who own between one to a hundred acres of land—people who own land at tremendous sacrifices, by closing their eyes to many necessities of life, by depriving their children from obtaining proper education and by adopting a standard of living much lower than what is accepted.

I have already said that in some cases these people have invested every penny in order to pay cash for their parcels of land, and that others who could not raise the money to pay cash are still burdened by the heavy rate of interest on mortgages. These people, not having easy access to money with cheap interest, are rather nervous about Government's true intentions behind the introduction of the Land Bonds Ordinance.

I, for one, feel very unhappy over the enactment of the Land Bonds Ordinance. I, like others who are worried about it, tremble at the very mention of the Land Bonds Ordinance. The position is this: many of those wide areas of land that are now undeveloped, are not undeveloped from mere choice. The lands in most cases are not inherited, but were bought by people who are finding difficulty in getting money at low interest to develop the entire area. It is not human to

take all you own and put it in one basket merely to watch and wait. It is not normally human to do that, and that is the reason why some land remains undeveloped.

When the Governments of Trinidad and Barbados investigated the cause of a similar type of trouble, they discovered that the source of the trouble was the unavailability of money at low interest to develop the land. They passed legislation and made Banks available to the people who required loans. I have already quoted from the Trinidad legislation and I need not quote it again. I believe it is accepted that in Barbados and Trinidad people can borrow money to pay for and to develop their lands. At one stage loans were only available for developing the land, but it was soon recognized that it was not an easy task to keep the lands well developed on the very small margin of profit, meet the burden of the high cost of living, and pay off loans on a heavy, interest-bearing mortgage. Those two Governments introduced legislation in order to remove that obstacle. The results are that peasants are now more whole-heartedly interested in developing the agricultural economy of their countries.

In British Guiana it is known that the Credit Corporation is there, but the machinery of the Corporation moves rather slowly. I am not saying that it is not doing its best — I am not an expert in such matters — but I know that there are times when money is needed in a matter of hours, and the machinery in the Credit Corporation sometimes takes weeks or months to finalise matters I say that if Government were truly interested in developing the healthy agricultural economy of this country, in order to assist the people and enable them to retain the ownership of their lands, they would have followed the example of the two Islands. I have referred to, and would have made loans available at a low rate of interest. However, that is not the case, and that is why the masses of the peasants and farmers look askance at the Land Bonds Ordinance.

Why nullify the very good service that this Government rendered the colony when they passed the Land Registry Bill? That Bill gave the farmers in the rural areas confidence that the land would be theirs in the end. At the time the ordinary man felt that Government were anxious to let him have a deed for his land as well as to maintain freehold ownership. But almost on the heels of this bit of progressive legislation they came with this destructive, faith-destroying Bill, the Land Bonds Bill.

Often I, myself, feel that possibly Government were not so kindly disposed to the Land Registry Ordinance themselves, but it might have been too much of a political dynamite to play with because the public had known that certain steps had been taken by the previous Government to make provision for a registration of title Bill. Whether Government were sincere or not, let us believe that they were sincere about it. Immediately after the law was passed, there was an enormous crowd at the first sitting of the Court; everybody rushed to make use of the opportunity of obtaining titles for their lands. If you desire further evidence to show that it is the will of the people to own land on a freehold basis—it is their preference—that has been fully demonstrated by the number of people who rushed to the Court.

I fear that there will be no real sense of happiness until the minds of the people are made easy. I only hope that the Land Registry Ordinance was not intended to lull people into a false sense of security. Today we tremble at the very thought of the Land Bonds Ordinance. Almost every day I read in the newspapers, hear over the radio, or at some public meeting, that Government do not have sufficient power. Let us imagine what the position would have been like with regards to the health of the agricultural economy of British Guiana, if the peasants and farmers had power to make their purchases of necessary equipment like tractors, harvesters, and ploughs. Every man who owned a piece of land would have been able to get

equipment to develop it. He would have been able to purchase fertilizers and pay good wages to his workers. What a healthy agricultural economy we would have had in this country if the farmers and peasants could purchase with bonds. Those poor people have no such power, so they have to struggle within their limited means. Many of them have already paid off for their lands and are contributing abundantly to the economy of the country, but they are beginning to lose faith; their future is insecure. They spend sleepless nights wondering what the morrow holds for them with land bonds hovering over their heads.

I am submitting to this Council that the Land Bonds Ordinance is not a good thing for British Guiana at this stage of its development. In our Development Programme large sums of money have been allocated to agriculture, and this piece of legislation presents a hurdle in the way of this most important aspect of this country's development. After all, the knowledge that one owns a piece of land which one can bequeath to posterity gives one confidence and a stake in the country. I fully agree that in the interest of the country the Government should have the right to control the use of land. It is the doctrine of my Church. The Catholic Church concedes that Government should have the right to control the utilization of land, but it does not agree that it has the right to deprive a person of his land. Pope Pius XIII. in his famous Encyclical, said:

"The right to possess private property is derived from Nature, not man; and the State has by no means the right to abolish it, but only to control its use and bring it into harmony with the interests of the public good."

I fully agree that the use of land must be controlled in the interest of the community as a whole, but I also believe in the dignity of man and his right to own and bequeath property. The quotation I have just made is simply the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and as we are not all Catholics it is only fair that I should refer to something of wider application. Fortunately I came across in "The Sun-

[MR. TELLO]

day Argosy" of the 29th May, a statement issued by the Christian Social Council of British Guiana from which, with Your Honour's permission, I will quote one or two short passages. I quote:

"If the State is to achieve its purpose the Government must exercise authority — that is, it must have the power to make laws and to enforce them. This power is something which comes from God Himself."

It goes on to state:

"Though Government rules, the task of those who govern is to *serve the people*. Those in authority have not been put in power to satisfy their human vanity or for self-aggrandisement. It would be an abuse for those in power to use their authority, not to promote the common good but for their own ends — to feather their own nests or to pay off old scores."

The statement continues:

"Because God wishes us to serve Him, He must clearly have given each one a claim and a right to the conditions necessary for this service. *No authority given by God to the State can override these natural rights given by God to the individual.* Such rights include . . . the right to acquire private property (the only material guarantee of personal liberty)."

To deprive a person of the right to own property and to bequeath it to his children is to practise another form of slavery worse than the one from which human beings have been emancipated. I feel that Government must take heed of this Motion and thereby re-establish the confidence it temporarily won when it passed the Land Registry Ordinance. The large army of people who turned up at the first sitting of the Court for the registration of their titles to land is in itself evidence of the will of the people to own land. I have quoted from statements made by Church dignitaries, and with Your Honour's permission I would like to quote from the Holy Bible itself. It is recorded in Proverbs, Chapter 13:

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children;"

How is it possible for a man to leave an inheritance to his children if he is not per-

mitted in the first instance to own property? Ownership of land is most important in any part of the world. It is said that those who own the land own the country. This point of view is sustained by the Holy Koran and by other Hindu writings. I should like to quote Chapter 4, verse 7 from the Koran as translated by A. Yusuf Ali:

"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."

There is another quotation from Manu Samriti, Verses 264-265. The writer is accepted universally as a Hindu Law Giver and Philosopher, whose book was compiled in the Second Century, B.C. I quote:

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

There are many of us in this Council and elsewhere who have lost respect for Holy Writ and regard for time-honoured writings and principles. In this Council I have heard references made to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on several occasions by Members of the Government whenever they found it convenient to do so in support of some argument. I propose to follow their example by quoting Article 17 of the United Nations Charter:

"Article 17 (1) Every one has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property."

I maintain that whatever is this Government's secret intention in introducing the Land Bonds Bill, it is accepted throughout the length and breadth of British Guiana that that piece of legislation was intended to give Government the power to purchase land held by people freehold and put it into a common pool of land which Government proposes to distribute on a leasehold basis. During the debate

on the Budget I asked what Government proposed to do with lands which were acquired and paid for with land bonds, and the hon. Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Benn) replied that such lands would be added to the pool of Government owned lands. He thus made it quite clear that his Government propose to perpetuate the policy of leasehold in preference to freehold land tenure. So there is no misunderstanding about it. I have challenged the Government over and over to bring a Sessional Paper to this Council.

The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr Benn): A White Paper.

Mr. Tello: A White Paper is just another description for a Sessional Paper. I asked Government to bring a White Paper to this Council so that all of us will understand, quite clearly, what is Government's policy with regards ownership of land and, further, there will be no misunderstanding in the future.

Mr. Speaker: Only one minute more!

Mr. Tello: The hon. Minister of Communications and Works tried to make out in this Council that I had supported the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Bill, but I said I had three reasons for so doing. Firstly, I wanted to stop land hoarding. Secondly, in this Ordinance there is provision for controlling the purchase price of such land to enable people, who would subsequently own land, to buy easily and cheaply; and thirdly, in order to pass this Bill, there had to be a special interpretation for land settlement schemes. This is what it says :

“land settlement scheme” includes any project intended to secure land for the establishment of farmers as an organised settlement or for distribution by sale, lease or otherwise to persons individually for agricultural purposes.”

So that the Land Acquisition Bill was intended to prevent the hoarding of land; it was passed so as to keep the price

of land down and within the reach of the small people; and thirdly, to make land available in small parcels so that people can buy cheaply, either individually or collectively. I strongly support the Motion and would be terribly disappointed if it is not passed.

Mr. Fredericks: I had not intended to speak on this Motion, but as I will not be voting in its favour, I desire to offer a few remarks explaining my reasons for not so doing.

The hon. Member for Demerara River, in presenting his Motion, has stated that land represents a person's wealth and as such he is free to use his savings to purchase or to sell land at a profit. In other words, land is a commodity which can be acquired or sold without any Government restriction, or acquired by any means such as bonds. I disagree with this viewpoint and cannot see how my friends on this side of the Table will support this Motion.

Land is a source of any country's economic wealth; it is the means of production, consequently, we must recognize the fundamental principle that nature intends that the earth — land — should be used by all the people in a proper manner. It devolves, therefore, upon the Government to enact laws so that the principle of private ownership — its individual aspect — is recognised and also its social aspect — that is, its utilization in the interest of the common good. In this respect I would like to quote from the *Hansard* report on the debate on the Land Bonds Bill of the 30th September, 1959. It is not often that I quote from Members on the other side of the Table, but I will make this an exception. I would like to quote the Minister of Communications and Works. When referring to New Zealand, he said:

“Land is there as a national asset and any individual who suggests that land can be kept idle because the owner of it holds a piece of paper — a transport — cannot deny that it is a very grave sin to see that alongside those barren fields mankind is suffering for employment.”

[MR. FREDERICKS]

I do not think anyone here would disagree with that. I would like, also, to quote from the speech of the Minister of Natural Resources in the same debate on this Land Bonds Bill on the 30th September, 1959. He, also, was quoting from the *Hansard* of the 5th April, 1957, and he said:

"That Governments of the area accept the concept that the use of land must be regarded not only as the business of the owner but also as the proper concern of the community as a whole and to provide legislation to give practical effect to this concept. Where the interests of landlords and/or tenants conflict with those of the community, the interests of the community should prevail."

I heartily agree with the Minister of Natural Resources. It is therefore wrong, I submit, that land should be held as a commodity to be bought or sold or for anyone to encourage land acquisition without development. Such action would be inimical to the best interest of the country. In the circumstances I cannot support this Motion. Bonds should be accepted for land not beneficially occupied — as it would be in the interest of the common good to do so — and it devolves upon the community as a whole to make sure that the bonds so issued would become more valuable as time goes on. In the circumstances, I would not support the Motion.

Mr. Tasker: I cannot endorse the comments of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Fredericks. It seems to me that all the arguments we have been hearing on this Bill have, in fact, been directed to the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, 1957, and not to this one. It was made perfectly clear, when this Ordinance was passed last year, that it was designed to provide a method of payment for a certain type of land — unbeneficially occupied land. Though I was not present at that debate, I have read the *Hansard* account and while anybody, given a free choice, would prefer in any circumstances to be paid in cash for land acquisition, nevertheless, because of the particular problems of British Guiana and the shortage

of cash, I find it very hard to see how land bonds cannot be regarded as an acceptable alternative, provided that the legislation provides a reasonable safeguard, as this Bill does.

The Financial Secretary, in the debate, was at some pains to point out the basis on which it had been drafted, and the small area in which it differed from similar legislation in Jamaica. I have no intention of supporting the Motion, but I do hope that Government will take account, again, of the concern which is so obviously felt over their policy for land. I seem to have heard much the same speeches on the previous Motion; certainly, we had some of the same quotations: but it does seem that the fear, insofar as there is a fear, and a real fear, goes back to what the hon. Member for Georgetown Central said in the original debate on the Land Bonds Bill. He pointed out that Section 14 of the Land Bonds Bill makes an Amendment to the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, 1957, and also that there was a suggestion in that Amendment — particularly since it had not been considered necessary to give any explanation in the Objects and Reasons — that the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance was going to be used to acquire land where the major part of any given parcel might be beneficially occupied. In other words, that Government had a hidden motive.

The hon. the Attorney-General answered that point and made it clear that there was no such intention. He pointed out that all that this Clause was seeking to do was to ensure that if an area of land is to be acquired for land settlement, it must be established, first of all, what portion is beneficially occupied or unbeneficially occupied, and that the Land Bonds Bill provides for the vendor to be required to take land bonds only for the portion which is not beneficially occupied. I think it is this misunderstanding that has given rise, perhaps quite unfairly, to the suggestion that the Land Bonds Bill, because of this Amendment which it makes to the pre-

vious Ordinance, is designed to facilitate the acquisition by Government of beneficially occupied land; and it would go a long way to re-assure the public concerned on this whole issue if during this debate, Government took the opportunity to assure once again this Council and this country that that is not their intention; that in fact it is not in the public interest to use this Land Bonds Ordinance, or the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, in order to acquire land which, so far as is practicable, is already beneficially occupied.

Mr. Kendall: Mr. Speaker, during the debate on this Motion the Minister of Communications and Works in making his contribution observed that the Land Bonds Bill was the result of the passing of the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Bill by the previous Government. I refer to the Interim Government, of which I am still proud to have been a Member. But the hon. Minister, like his colleagues, always endeavours to find someone to lay the blame on. In this instance, he has blamed the Interim Government. In the Government's indecent haste to lay this blame it has forgotten that since 1916 on the Statute Book of the Colony there has been the Acquisition of Lands for Public Purposes Ordinance.

The Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance which was enacted in 1957 during the régime of the Interim Government actually was a measure which repealed and re-enacted Chapter 180—the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance of 1943. It might well be that Government has forgotten and a little reminder is necessary. Members of the Government, however, should be conversant with the files handed over to them by the previous Government.

One of the main reasons why the 1957 Ordinance was passed was because in certain parts of the Colony—I think in Essequibo—there was a great need for land for farming. A particular estate was up for sale. When the pro-

prietor realized that Government was interested, the proprietor sold the estate to a relation of his for a sum of money far above what he would have received ordinarily, so that if Government bought, Government would have had to pay what the previous proprietor sold for. Government therefore thought of acquiring the land, but Chapter 180 was inadequate, and the new Bill was drafted, introduced and debated and later passed.

The main reason why I am not supporting this Motion before the Council lies with my fears over the attitude of the Government in relation to its land policy. Some time ago the hon. Member for Georgetown Central brought to the notice of this Council the fact that the Government in power was discriminating in the issue of land. There was a hue and a cry from Members on the other side that they were not given enough facts to satisfy them that the accusation was correct.

I can now refer to another case, to something which occurred in the last few days in New Amsterdam. The hon. Minister of Natural Resources was approached by people from Canje for lands aback of Vryheid, and I heard that the Minister told them that the lands aback of Vryheid would be allocated to members of his Party or those who were prepared to join his Party, and that when he made the allocation, no Governor or anybody—

[Cries of "Shame!"]

Mr. Kendall: There is no "Shame" about this. The District Commissioner for the area was there. It is for the Minister of Natural Resources to reply and say whether it is true or not.

A Member: This is not the U.D.P. !

Mr. Kendall: If the U.D.P. were in power they would have used their power to distribute lands fairly. I will add that there is a real fear existing in the country that the Government is discriminating in its land policy and that only those people who are supporters of the P.P.P. are being given lands. I would

[**MR. KENDALL**]

be pleasantly surprised if from all the allocations made within the last two years 25 per cent. of the people who benefited are not members of the Party. In fact I should be very glad if the hon. Minister or the Government could make a statement in this Council disproving what I have said.

The Land Bonds Ordinance should be repealed, for if Government is to acquire and distribute lands in the way they acquire and distribute Crown Lands, then it would reach a stage where a good many of us who are contributing to the revenue of the country and who are not supporters of the P.P.P. will not benefit in the distribution of land.

It is a very unfortunate situation, and I do trust that Government will change its policy. Government should look to the country as a whole and remember that the land-hungry masses should rightly share in these benefits.

The Minister of Natural Resources knows only too well that only a few days ago he was approached by people from No. 45 Village on the Corentyne, who have been planting rice, for a small area of land and what he told them. Whether he likes it or not, it has been given out that Government is only interested in people who are interested in his Party. It must be remembered that these lands are the lands of all the people of British Guiana.

Mr. Benn: It would be unnecessary for me to speak at length in reply to questions raised by certain hon. Members in this debate. I did not think of having to recapitulate what I said during the debate on the Land Bonds Bill about a year ago. Anyway, I do not think that I should have to go over all the points to justify the Land Bonds Ordinance of this country.

What I must do is to try to reply to some of the slander and mud-slinging which were resorted to by certain Mem-

bers of this Council against the Majority Party and myself, and I refer especially to the last speaker, the hon. Member for New Amsterdam. Some Members want to drag the Majority Party down to their low level. In 1954 when the Interim Government was in office they went around telling people, "If you join the U.D.P. you are going to get loans from the new Credit Corporation." That was what they were doing in 1954, and that is what they are accusing the P.P.P. of doing in 1960. Only recently when some American Company was preparing to invest in housing, members of the P.N.C. went around telling people that if they joined the Party they would get houses. Even people who dislike our Party would say that we have not sunk to such a low level.

What about this question of the lands aback of Vryheid? When I went to New Amsterdam about four weeks ago all the persons who applied for land were acquainted with the fact. A Co-operative had been formed and they applied for land. Several other people squatted on the land illegally. I met the squatters and farmers. I said that Government had interviewed members of the Co-operative and had decided to give some of them the lands. I said that as there was enough land, those who were squatting could remain on the small holdings—some of them occupied 13 acres, others five acres. That was said in the presence of the District Commissioner, the Crown Lands Ranger, the Acting Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources, and all of the farmers including members of the Co-operative. Some members of the Co-operative were most dissatisfied with the distribution, because the squatters had received more land, individually, than members of the Co-operative. On the other hand several members of the Co-operative were fairly satisfied with the amount of land given to them.

In New Amsterdam, two weeks after, the same set of people came to me dissatisfied. Some of the squatters wanted more land. Indeed the very night after I

gave them permission to remain on the land on which they had squatted, many of them took tractors and ploughed more land than their share. When the Crown Lands Ranger went on the land he found them with more land than they were entitled to under our agreement.

On Monday last I went to New Amsterdam where I held a meeting. The District Commissioner, the Director of Drainage and Irrigation, the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Commissioner of Lands and Mines were there. After another meeting the farmers came to me and said that the squatters felt that they should be allowed to extend their holdings.

When we divided the land between members of the Co-operative, it worked out that each member would get 3 acres of land. Many of the squatters got 5 acres of land—one even got 13 acres. In spite of that they said that it was wrong to give the Co-operative land because members of the P.P.P. were also members of the Co-operative. They threatened to protest through the leader of the P.N.C. I told them that when the Leader of the Opposition Party wins the majority of seats in the Government he can do what he wants, but as long as I was the Minister I would decide how the land should be divided. I also told them that if they were not careful, all of them who had squatted on the land would be thrown off.

This slander of the P.P.P. and the District Commissioner is wicked. The hon. Member for New Amsterdam said that the District Commissioner was present when I said that only P.P.P. members must be given land. The Majority Party set up a committee to investigate this matter of land distribution, and the committee was comprised of the Land Development Officer, members of the P.N.C., members of the P.P.P., and school teachers who interviewed people all over the country.

This Government is now being slandered by those who are incompetent,

and are not decent enough to come here and speak to a motion properly. I know that several attempts have been made by members of the "Opposition" to stop the distribution of land in this country. In 1958 a Motion was moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North calling for a Commission to investigate the distribution of land, and asking that, until the Report was submitted, no more land should be distributed. They are still making other efforts to stop the distribution of land, although they say that they want to end unemployment. This is one thing that the present Government has been able to do. What else have the members of the "Opposition" done? They have gone all over the country trying to stir up trouble. They brought a large delegation to me last week urging me to stop the distribution of land in the Black Bush Polder area, because a few malcontents were making noise about it.

As long as I am a Minister, as long as the Majority Party is in the Government, and as long as we have power to do certain things, we are going to do them. When the "Opposition" get a chance they can do what they like, but they should try, at least, to be decent and bring decent criticisms against the Government.

Mr. Tello started his distortion of the Holy Bible again. I did not know that he would have repeated the same arguments he used a week or two ago by quoting from Proverbs, Leviticus, from some Hindu scripture, and from the Holy Koran. The hon. Nominated Member does not understand that when certain things are read from the Bible they have to be read in the circumstances under which they occurred. I used to teach scripture in school, and I want to teach the hon. Member a little scripture. You cannot divorce—you cannot take a verse out of the context and say that Solomon said in Proverbs, as the hon. Nominated Member has been screaming here: "That you shall be able to bequeath to your family."

[MR. BENN]

Last week I quoted from the "Proceedings of the International Conference on Land Tenure and Related Problems in World Agriculture Held at Madison, Wisconsin, 1951" for the benefit of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello. Alfred Bonne, who was speaking on Major Aspects Of Land Tenure And Rural Social Structure in Israel said — before I quote let me remind the hon. Member that he is the person from whom the Bible came. The Bible is not a Western invention; it came from the Middle East. This is what the writer, who is a Jew. said.

With your permission, Sir, I will quote from page 111:

"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."

I quoted from Leviticus last week.

The Jew continues to state:

"This ideological heritage has been fully incorporated."

The hon. Nominated Member took his quotations from the Jewish Testament, but "The land shall belong to the people"; "The land shall not be sold forever" are from that source. The hon. Nominated Member endeavoured to show that those who are taking away people's land are not Christians; they are against Hinduism and so on. He even quoted from Manu.

Today, in certain States, the Government of India is taking away land from people if they have more than 30 acres. A family of five is allowed 30 acres of land. Does the hon. Nominated Member know more than the Indian whose main religion is Hinduism? He condemns this Government for introducing the Land Bonds Bill, and he is now condemning the Government of India for the manner in which they are distributing their lands.

I am merely going over what I said last week. The hon. Nominated Member quoted from the Koran, and I quoted from the words of a Member of the Government of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali, who states:

"Is Private ownership a natural human instinct?"

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."

Later on the writer attempts to show, and I quote him again:

"This shows that the conception of the private ownership of property is not by any means instinctive in man. It is merely a conception which has been developed by man;."

The hon. Nominated Member will not agree with these quotations, but he will agree to the ones he has picked up somewhere or other. I quoted from the Bible, and from a Jew who knows the Bible better than any Christian. I have discussed the policy of the Government of India as well as the policy of the Government of Pakistan.

In "Pakistan Affairs", a publication of which I have, it will be seen that in some parts of West Pakistan land is sold to farmers, and in other parts land is not sold to farmers. On the question of land bonds, the Government of Pakistan acquires land under an acquisition law similar to what we have in this country, and pays the people by issuing land bonds over a period of 25 years. With your permission, Sir, I shall read from page 2, Vol XII, No. 4, of "Pakistan Affairs" published on February 15, 1959, which states:

"The landlords will be paid fair compensation for the resumed lands in the form of interest-bearing bonds redeemable in 25 years."

I do not know what this Government must do to satisfy the "Opposition." I expect opposition, but sensible opposition.

Mr. Tello also spoke of what two other Governments are doing in relation to agriculture in those Islands. He mentioned Barbados and Trinidad, and he asked what this Government is doing in relation to the education and diversification of agriculture in this country. If the hon. Member does not read the newspapers or listen to the radio, how can he expect to know certain things? He should have read or heard of the bonus given to coconut producers, dairy farmers, citrus growers and so on, or he should have spoken to the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, who attended the Agricultural Field Day at Mon Repos in August last year. Every Member of this Council was invited to attend that function. The hon. Member did not attend, and he is now asking what Government is doing. I will quote from some statistics to show what the Agricultural Department has done by way of educating the farmers:

<i>Meetings attended and organized</i>				
1958	..	..	..	1,056
1959	..	..	..	1,314
<i>Film Shows</i>				
1958	..	..	..	31
1959	..	..	..	26
<i>Demonstrations</i>				
1958	..	..	..	479
1959	..	..	..	1,062
<i>Field Days</i>				
1958	..	..	..	16
1959	..	..	..	35
<i>Leaflets & Bulletins Published</i>				
1958	..	..	..	31
1959	..	..	..	30
<i>Agricultural Fairs & Exhibitions</i>				
1958	..	..	..	6
1959	..	..	..	7
<i>Farm Journals</i>				
1958	..	..	..	4
1959	..	..	..	4

I believe every Member of the Legislative Council has a copy of the Farm Journal. I think it is issued quarterly.

<i>School Gardens</i>				
1958	..	..	..	106
1959	..	..	..	112
<i>No. of 4-H Clubs and Young Farmers Clubs</i>				
1958	..	..	..	40
1959	..	..	..	48
<i>Training Courses</i>				
1958	..	..	..	6
1959	..	..	..	6

The hon. Member says that Government is doing nothing to educate the farmers of this country.

Mr. Tello: I said that the Government did not pursue certain pre-requisites which involved education. The hon. Minister has quoted figures for 1958 while the Land Bonds Bill was passed in 1959.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Member is trying to get himself out of a predicament. Having used his tongue so freely he has lost his head. Now he attempts to correct himself on some of the points on which he used to babble and make a lot of irresponsible statements.

I shall now turn to one or two questions raised in connection with credit for farmers, particularly for the purchase of land. In moving the Land Bonds Bill I told this Council that farmers in Zealandia, Wakenaar, had bought lands for large sums of money, and having found themselves in difficulty they had come to me to help them to get assistance from the Credit Corporation. They complained of the high rate of interest they were charged and wanted the Credit Corporation to take over their debt with respect to their lands and charge them a lower rate of interest.

Members will find that recorded in the *Hansard* report of the debate on the Bill. The Credit Corporation still helps farmers to purchase land, and people in British Guiana are not prevented from purchasing land for agricultural purposes

[MR. BENN]

or for cattle rearing. What this Government has said and continues to say is that the lands which it is developing and other Crown lands will be given out under lease.

I went through the whole matter with the hon. Member for Demerara River, now the champion of landed proprietors, but hon. Members evidently do not read *Hansard* or remember what I said. Perhaps I will have to say it all over again. I shall deal with the Motion proper after replying to the statement by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, that Trinidad and Barbados were helping farmers to buy land. I want to say that in British Guiana the Credit Corporation has always helped and is still helping farmers to buy land. Not only that, the Corporation also lends money for agricultural production—for rice, cocoa and citrus. Some Members may say that the money advanced is not enough, but no system is as good as we would wish it. The fact is that people are getting agricultural credit both short and long term.

The hon. Member for Demerara River, who was elected by the votes of sugar workers and others of the working-class in this country, having deserted the Party which helped to get him elected, has now gone over completely on the side of those whom he has described as landed proprietors in this country. Who are the landed proprietors who are making a big noise? I think the hon. Member knows the President of an Association who wrote a long letter to the Commissioner for the Government of India asking him to do something to prevent this Government from passing the Land Bonds Bill. Is he representing the gentleman who also wrote a letter to the United States Government asking them to intervene against this Government for passing that Bill? I happen to know that Dr. Rajcoomar, Commissioner for the Government of India, did not treat him too nicely.

That is the type of landed proprietors the hon. Member is supporting, some

of whom own whole islands with people working under most inhuman conditions. Some of those landed proprietors have lands up river under bush where one can hunt, and they are the type of landed proprietors who will never vote for a working-class man. But the day of reckoning is coming, and the workers will decide whether the hon. Member was elected to this Council by them or by the landed proprietors whom he now champions.

The landed proprietors to whom the hon. Member referred are not people with 10 or 15 acres of land who are applying to the Credit Corporation for loans to develop those lands. Those landed proprietors who are said to be afraid—I do not want to look in the direction of certain hon. Members when I speak—

Mr. Speaker: Be impersonal.

Mr. Benn: I was looking at the hon. Member. The landed proprietors who, he says, are afraid are the big landed proprietors. The landed proprietors to whom the hon. Member refers must be proprietors like Bookers. Well, we shall see. In replying to the debate on the Motion I do not have to go into the merits of the Land Bonds Ordinance, but merely to deal with some of the remarks made by certain Members.

The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara said that the distribution of land was his idea. He slandered the Minister of Trade and Industry by saying that he was in office for three months in 1953 and did not give out one acre of land, but he had given out more land than we could imagine. We all know about the land the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara was giving out, and when the bubble burst it was found that a lot of the releases to the Press about land being given out here and there were just propaganda. That was one of the reasons why the Government had more or less to give the boot to the person who then held the portfolio of Minister of Natural Resources. The hon. Member says that the distribution of land was his idea. With your

permission, Sir, I would like to read an extract from the People's Progressive Party's Manifesto for the General Election in 1957, prepared when the hon. Member was perhaps at some stall. I quote:

"The P.P.P. considers that the future welfare and development of B.G. depends on the availability of adequate areas of land suitably drained and irrigated. Towards this end the Party plans to have:

1. A programme of land reclamation whereby large areas of land along the coastlands and rivers, abandoned to bush and swamp, can be made available for agricultural purposes.
2. An equitable distribution of agricultural lands, and a change in the system of crop and stock production, with special emphasis on a more effective utilisation of the land.
3. The setting up of a land commission to investigate the possibility for the acquisition of land, its development and land settlement. To formulate a positive policy as regards land settlement which will embrace agricultural planning for the achievement of a balanced economy. The need for diversification, dairy and livestock farming is essential in land settlement."

The Manifesto goes on to enumerate a considerable number of things which the Party intended to do when it got into office, yet the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara said the distribution of land was his idea. I think the Minister of Communications and Works did him a great honour by suggesting that the Land Bonds Bill was his brain child, but the fact is that he was only carrying out the policy of the Party which is the Government, and that is what we all have to do as Ministers without running around and taking credit to ourselves.

Mr. Speaker: One minute more!

Dr. Jagan: I beg to move that the hon. Minister be allowed to continue for another 30 minutes.

The Minister of Communications and Works (Mr. Ram Karran): I beg to second the Motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Member said that when he drafted the Land Bonds Bill his intention was that when lands were

acquired and paid for in bonds those lands would be given out on a freehold basis. What we are concerned about is not what the hon. Member wanted to do as an individual, but what the political party which brought him here wanted to do, and as a Minister of the Government he was put here to carry out the wishes of the Majority Party, like any Minister of any Government in any part of the world.

The hon. Member takes credit for himself. What were the other points which came before us during the debate on the Land Bonds Bill? The hon. Member, Mr. Tello, spoke about a White Paper again. Must I tell him what is the policy of this Government in relation to land before the whole question of policy is worked out? Must I say what the former Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines (Sir Frank McDavid), a most capable person no matter how we dislike him, said on the question of formulating a comprehensive land policy? Must I read out all the decisions Government has arrived at regarding agricultural and grazing leases on Crown lands, and decisions with respect to Colony lands in land settlements? No.

Government has no objection to people purchasing land. The fact that the Majority Party introduced the Land Registration Bill is evidence that this Government is in favour of people who have private lands continuing to own them. The Government will do nothing to prevent people from buying private land; and this is personal: if you look in the Official Gazette of last Saturday, you will see that I am purchasing a piece of land myself. I wonder if that will satisfy you. Government is not against people purchasing land. What else?

On Crown and Colony land, leases of 25 years will be given renewable at the end of each term provided that the person who owns the land has it in beneficial occupation. I do not remember all the ingredients of the decision which I read out in this Council, but if hon. Members

[MR. BENN]

would read the *Hansard* of a meeting of two weeks ago, they would see this is the same thing which I said. I would not like to be a gramophone record and repeat myself, but Government remains wedded to its policy. Government maintains that the Land Bonds Ordinance is an Ordinance which is suitable to the needs of this country. The Government rejects the Motion moved by the hon. Member for Demerara River.

Mr. Jackson: Last week the Minister of Natural Resources made this very famous statement: "It is easier to hold back tomorrow than to hold back Communism." Today he makes another famous statement in referring to the writer from whose book he quoted; and he said in quoting, that the writer, who was a Jew, knew the Bible more than any Christian.

Now, Sir, no one challenges the right of the Minister to make references to books written by anyone. It is his right as Minister so to do, or as a Member of this Council so to do. But surely, when he goes out of his way to belittle men of learning in the manner in which he has done, it is something which someone ought to make a passing comment on.

I am aware that there are men of learning in the Christian faith—men who know, I assume, as much as the writer from whose book he quoted, and there are people who know far more than that writer; and I would say that every Member, to put his point forward, would choose any one portion of a book or of the Bible or from any other document, to support his contention. That is why he has the opportunity of replying to anything the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tello, has said thereon.

I think as one who has been brought up in a Christian home; as one who tries to understand the Christian Bible; as one who tries to understand not only the Christian but the philosophy of other writers, and as one who tries to grasp the

religious tenets of all the other groups of people, I do not think it is fair for the Minister to make this comment.

Mr. Benn: I did not say the Christian Bible. The portion which the hon. Member quoted was from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Mr. Jackson: The Minister said: "a Jew who knows the Bible more than any Christian", and all I am trying to do is to point out—better still if what he said is meant to be a reply—that his comparison should not be a Jew with a Christian, but a few with a Jew.

I was saying that I have every regard for men of learning and also for the Minister who is a man of learning, but I shall not say that the Minister has a high degree of learning. And the Minister has a very good habit of making statements in this Council during his speeches and of leaving his seat when persons are to reply to what he has said. Perhaps, that is another degree of learning which the Minister has acquired over his years, and one would expect if that is learning, then he would demonstrate it wherever he goes.

In his reply to the Motion, the Minister referred to the fact that in 1958, I moved a Motion in this Council seeking to get a decision to suspend the distribution of land until an inquiry is made into the manner in which previous allocations were made. I want to remind him that that Motion resulted from the discovery of an injustice done on the Essequibo Coast. I want to remind him that the course was one which concerned a Mr. William Bailey who was, at the time, occupying beneficially, and rather efficiently, 5½ acres of land in a certain area, and that when the land was reclaimed or resumed, the area which was cultivated by Mr. Bailey was taken away from him by the Committee and Mr. Bailey was sent to another area to cultivate virgin land. I know that as a result of that Motion and the debate which took place, Mr. Bailey had his land restored to him; so that if an attempt

to bring about a suspension of the distribution of land is to be regarded as an act of abusing the People's Progressive Party, then I have no apology for taking that course of action; for by taking that course Mr. Bailey got back the 5½ acres which were taken from him and given to another person.

We, in this Council, are here to oppose injustices as often as we find them done; but listening to the hon. Minister's observations I could find no point on which he ever did reply to the Motion. He had been abusing other political parties and other Members of this Council in his contribution to this Motion. In his introduction of the Land Bonds Bill the Minister said that one of the primary objects of the Bill was to provide employment. I wonder if the Minister would indicate to what extent unemployment has been relieved by the passing of the Land Bonds Bill in October, 1959.

As far as one is aware, the unemployment figures have been increasing very rapidly and they have, by now, reached an unprecedented number. So that if the intention of the Government was to provide employment for the unemployed, then one must ask the question: "Why has not the Government purchased any of the land which has not been beneficially used? Why has it not purchased those lands from last October up to now under the law which they operate? Has Government purchased yet, any land under the Land Bonds Bill passed in October? If it has not, how can it be argued that the Government is interested in the finding of relief for the several thousands of people who have been unemployed since 1956, 1957, 1958, and those who are leaving school?"

So that if the intention of the Land Bonds Ordinance was to give Government an opportunity of finding employment, then that Ordinance has not yet served its purpose; for we cannot say whether anyone has found employment as the result of the existence of the Land Bonds Ordinance.

The Minister quoted Professor W. Arthur Lewis. Professor Lewis was, at that time, his mentor; I notice he has found many more since October and I wonder how many more he will find before 1961. If the Government's policy is one based upon balancing the economy of this country with a view to making progress, for which we all hope, then it seems to me that the policy of the Government needs recasting; and that is why I am supporting the Motion for a repeal of the Ordinance.

The Minister, himself, a week ago informed this Council that several tenants of Government estates have been unable to pay their rents. He quoted these figures:

"Charity	—	\$ 2,540.40
Anna Regina	—	49,186.41
Vergenoegen	—	24,974.74
Government Estates	—	4,346.78
Cane Grove	—	25,669.01
Onverwagt	—	9,122.19
Mara	—	3,848.62"

which is approximately \$120,000. One must ask the question, "How much money has been spent by Government in the preparation of all these Land Settlement Schemes"? That is a very important question, for the lease of land is at 25c. per acre.

It can be seen that at no point of time can the Government ever hope to get adequate payment or returns from Land Settlement Schemes. So that if the Lands Bonds Ordinance was designed to take, purchase or acquire lands belonging to people and to pay them by way of bonds, it can be assumed that the cost to the country is going to be astronomical and the economic results would be disastrous. It is clear to my mind that this country cannot afford to embark upon a scheme of this kind. Government will possibly pay out millions of dollars in bonds and the people who will cultivate or acquire the lands thereafter will bring to Government very little revenue as a result. It will amount to putting the burden on one set of people while others get the benefits.

[MR. JACKSON]

I still hold the view that there is discrimination. Only last week I pointed out that while Government was allowing some people to run into arrears in respect of monies owing to Government, other people were distressed for arrears.

I would rather support this Motion and be accused of taking the part of the large landed proprietors — there is one hon Member on this side who has a large area of land—than support the continued existence of the Land Bonds Ordinance. I have been accused of supporting Bookers. I said last year that people are accused by everyone of some bias or the other when one stands up for principles. I have never submitted myself to big business. As a matter of fact, I am not one known by big business, and I know big business will never offer me anything which is considered an attempt to take away my conscience.

Last year the hon. Minister referred to Bookers. Today he referred to Bookers. I say it is unfair and improper for Government to have its eyes on lands which are already prepared. Instead, land should be reclaimed and provided with good drainage. It is most dishonest for Government to have its eyes on lands which are properly drained and irrigated with a view to telling those who own them, "as you have no use for them, we will take them away." But "bonds" is now a popular word. "Bonds for pension." "Bonds for gratuities." "Bonds for everything." I am reminded that in present-day Cuba issuing bonds is the pattern of the Government. I hope that our Government will find itself facing up to the payment of these bonds.

The Attorney-General (Mr. Austin): I think it is recognized in this day and age that ownership of land carries with it not only rights but responsibilities towards the community. This is especially so in countries which are land-hungry, as is British Guiana today.

In my view there is a war going on in British Guiana and the enemy is eco-

nomie waste. There are too many people living at subsistence level, and the energies of this Government are bent on trying to improve their lot and the lot of everybody else in this country. One cannot deny that the greatest chance of success lies in trying to make the best use of land, that can be used beneficially for agricultural purposes.

This situation in which we find ourselves today has been faced in other countries at different times. During the war it was felt that in England, an island which depends so much on imports for its food and welfare, every square yard of agricultural land should be put to beneficial use, and it had to be so done. If there was agricultural land which was not used to the best advantage, legislation would be brought forward to oblige the owner to do so, and if he failed the land should be taken away. And land was taken away from people who did not make the best use of their land. Such legislation was repealed only a year or two ago because it was felt that the situation as regards land and food generally in the United Kingdom had changed and it was no longer necessary to keep that legislation on the Statute Book.

In Jamaica where similar needs for the best use of land have been felt, it was decided that if the Government required land to improve it and enable it to be used, but did not have the money to pay cash for land it would not be unreasonable to oblige the owner to take land bonds in payment. Land bonds are really a compulsory loan by the owner to the Government. In 1955 a Land Bonds law was passed in Jamaica providing for the issue of bonds in respect of the compulsory acquisition of certain types of land. The first type was described as follows :

"Land in parcels of fifty acres and upwards comprising the whole or part of an estate declared by the Governor in Council to be in his opinion substantially unused by the owner or occupied for the purpose of renting the tenants in terms not exceeding five years or in parcels not exceeding ten acres each."

It was considered a perfectly proper measure in Jamaica to oblige those who held land which they did not use to accept bonds as satisfaction of the acquisition of the land, which was going to be used by Government for the purpose of settling people upon it. The law was passed in a country which is one of the leading territories of The West Indies and which is respected for its Government and generally for the way it conducts its affairs.

We in British Guiana consider that it would be perfectly proper to follow the pattern set by Jamaica in this respect. It is not, as some Members suggested, a Machiavellian creation to expropriate land from those who have land today.

Why is it not a measure designed to grab good land? Because the whole spirit of the Ordinance, when read with the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, to which it is complementary, is that the land in question is land which is not beneficially occupied or used for agriculture.

I am going to refer to the 1957 law which sets the pattern or background to the Land Bonds Ordinance. Where the Government wishes to acquire land which is being made full use of, of course, it has to pay the market value of the land; but in respect of land which is not being beneficially used, it was felt it should be acquired at a value which is in keeping with its purely utility value. Section 5 of the Acquisition of land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, 1957, states that the value should be:

"either the capitalized value of the net annual income which would be derived from the use of the land for agriculture after deducting the estimated capital expenditure on improvements required to bring the land into a state fit for use as aforesaid or, the price paid for land (exclusive of any buildings, plant and machinery on the land) by the person who owned the land on the 1st July, 1955."

This suggests that, as the amount of capital that would be required to be spent on

improvements to bring the land into a fit state for agriculture has to be taken into account, the land, at the time, is not in a fit state for agriculture. The object of the Ordinance is to deal with land that is not being used properly.

In order to provide safeguards for owners of land, there is a section under which independent Commissioners may be appointed to report on whether it is in the public interest that the land should be compulsorily acquired. What they have to take into account is whether or not it is in the public interest that the land should be acquired for a land settlement scheme, having regard to the fact that the land is not beneficially occupied or used for agriculture. It is quite clear that the pattern of this legislation is such that it is designed to deal with land that is largely not used for agriculture, although it could be so used if improvements were made to it.

It has been suggested that it is possible that a large area of land might not be beneficially occupied and could be used as a land settlement scheme without spending money on it to bring it into a fit state of agriculture. It has also been suggested that a small part of a large unused area might be beneficially occupied, and that a land settlement scheme would be frustrated if the small area so beneficially occupied was not acquired at the same time. Government can turn the situation around and say: Let us take this opportunity of acquiring land that is beneficially occupied at its utility value, and a certain small area that is not beneficially occupied can act as a token purpose for the acquisition.

I say categorically that it is not the intention of the Government ever to abuse the spirit of the Ordinance. It has never entered into the consideration of the Government that they should, instead of paying the full value of land which is being made proper use of by its owner, resort to this 1957 law in order to virtually seize land without paying

[THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL]

proper compensation for it. Indeed the Land Bonds Ordinance includes a section which amends the provisions of the 1957 Ordinance dealing with Commissioners, and it states that when the Commissioners report on whether a certain parcel of land should rightly be acquired for land settlement in the public interest, they must state specifically the portion of the land that is not beneficially occupied and the portion of land, if any, that is beneficially occupied. The reason for that is that the Lands Bonds Ordinance provides that no landowner shall be obliged to accept land bonds in satisfaction for the acquisition of land if that land is beneficially occupied.

If the Commissioners, under the 1957 law, report that an area of land is suitable for a land settlement scheme and should be acquired in the public interest, they may say, for example, nine-tenths of the land is not beneficially occupied but one-tenth is. On that statement it may be argued that the one-tenth of the land which is beneficially occupied should be acquired because without its acquisition it would jeopardize or prejudice the land settlement scheme. In that event Government can exercise its right to issue bonds for the nine-tenths of land which is not beneficially occupied, and must pay cash for the one-tenth of land which is beneficially occupied.

In the light of the safeguards and the reasonable provisions that I have pointed out, no well-intentioned person can question the reasonableness of the Land Bonds Ordinance, nor indeed resurrect doubts as to the intentions behind the 1957 Acquisition Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance which is complementary to the Land Bonds Ordinance. It is mischievous to impute that it is the intention of this Government to misuse the 1957 legislation in order to acquire land from landowners who are making use of their land and pay them a price for it which would be patently unjust. These charges might be made if actual cases can support them,

but not now. I defend this Land Bonds Ordinance as being a perfectly proper and democratic legislative measure.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Attorney-General has made a wonderful defence for the Bill. I have listened to his advice, but I am afraid that a large proportion of the people in this country are confused over this matter. Hon. Members have already expressed the view that there is confusion and fear about the ulterior motives behind the Land Bonds Ordinance. The Land Acquisition Ordinance, No. 13 of 1957, was perfectly right in making such a provision, because at the time there was an abuse of land holdings by big land holders.

The whole of the Demerara River is owned up to now by absentee landlords. Nobody can get a piece of that land for farming, so that that Ordinance was quite in order. But the aim of the Ordinance was to acquire land from those who were just hoarding it and keeping it away from *bona fide* farmers who wanted land to farm. The law said, I think, in Section 2 of the 1957 Ordinance, that the lands when acquired from people who were not using them were to be sold, leased, or otherwise given to the people who desired lands. It was also taken for granted that Government would pay cash for the lands acquired, under the 1957 legislation.

That was quite alright, but some fear creeps into the matter of the 1959 Land Bonds Ordinance. The P.P.P., which happens to be the Government, has a definite policy of leasehold as opposed to freehold tenure. If Government has any good intention it would repeal the Lands Bonds Ordinance so as to allay that fear. What is the fear? The fear is from the ideological angle. Everybody knows that the leaders of this Government are Marxists, and the philosophy of Karl Marx is that the State must take control of all the resources and wealth of the land. Agricultural lands produce wealth, and if this Government believes in Marxism or Communism it stands to reason that we will have State farms and collectivism in this country.

We see some danger in this Land Bonds Ordinance and we are hoping against hope that it will not be put into operation according to the Government's ideological beliefs. I hold that the right to own personal property is inherent in man, although we are told the contrary by those on the other side of the Table. A man who owns a piece of freehold land feels that he has the right to work and develop it, and no one should want to deny him that right. A farmer on a land settlement scheme would be happier in mind if he knew that he and his family could work in peace and develop his holding if he knew that he could own that piece of land eventually. If we have a contented farming community in British Guiana the whole country will be prosperous, but with a disgruntled farming community we will have anything but harmony. Government's function should be to safeguard the natural rights and liberty of the family; not to endanger them.

The whole world is in turmoil, with some people fighting for power for the sake of power. Absolute power corrupts, absolutely. Power should be used for the common good, for the benefit of mankind. Sometimes the word "community" is used as a smoke screen. The word "peace" has lost its meaning, and some people are using the word "Democracy" to serve their own ends. About eight months ago, when the Land Bonds Bill

was being debated, I concluded my remarks thus:

"I am no land owner. I have got a kind of a lease, but when I see a Bill like this coming here for my blessing I am certainly not going to give it, because it is not reasonable; it is not logical, unless the Government is entering into a new kind of experimentation of socialising and communising the land. If that is the aim, well let us hear it. We will then know what to expect." [*Official Report, 30th September, 1959, Col. 1936.*]

Today I am still of that mind, and I am supporting the Motion.

Mr. Bowman: We have only about five minutes left before the time for the Adjournment. What I have to say in reply to the debate will take much longer than that.

Mr. Speaker: Do you intend to reply?

Mr. Bowman: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I will be pleased if you begin now.

Mr. Bowman: We have been debating a Motion which was activated by a most iniquitous piece of legislation.—

Mr. Speaker: I think that is enough. You have begun, so that I shall know when next the Council meets that you are to resume your reply to the debate. Council is adjourned until two o'clock tomorrow afternoon.