

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FRIDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., the Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C., Deputy President, in the Chair.

### PRESENT :

- The Deputy President, the Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C. (New Amsterdam)
- The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.
- The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder.
- The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).
- The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).
- The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).
- The Hon. Dr. J. B. Singh, O.B.E. (Demerara-Essequibo).
- The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.E. (Eastern Berbice).
- The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E. (Georgetown South).
- The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).
- The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North Western District).
- The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).
- The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).
- The Hon. T. T. Thompson (Nominated).
- The Hon. H. Rahaman (Nominated).
- The Hon. J. A. Veerasawmy (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 31st October, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

### GOVERNMENT NOTICE

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILL

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave

notice of introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled—

“An Ordinance to amend the Transport and Harbours Ordinance, 1931, with respect to the Management of the Transport and Harbours Department.”

### ORDER OF THE DAY

#### TRANSPORT & HARBOURS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1946.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that the standing Rules and Orders be suspended to enable me to move the first reading of the Transport and Harbours (Amendment) Bill, 1946.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I now move that the following Bill be read the first time :—

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to amend the Transport and Harbours Ordinance, 1931, with respect to the Management of the Transport and Harbours Department.”

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

#### HOUSING BILL, 1946

Council resolved itself into Committee to resume consideration of a Bill intituled—

“An Ordinance to make provision with respect to the housing of persons of the working class and for purposes connected therewith.”

#### COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : It would be within the recollection of hon. Members that under clause 4 (1) the constitution of the Central Authority was determined yesterday and it was agreed to allow me an opportunity to draft a clause in keeping with the decision, in so far as sub-clause (3) and the consequential amendments

went. Hon. Members now have before them clause 4 as amended, and I propose to ask this Council to accept it as carrying out the terms of its decision relating to the constitution of the Central Authority. The hon. Member for Georgetown South has intimated that he is in agreement with the amended clause which reads as follows:—

“4 (1) The Central Authority shall consist of—

- (a) four unofficial members of the Legislative Council to be appointed by the Governor;
  - (b) the Mayor of Georgetown;
  - (c) The Mayor of New Amsterdam; and
  - (d) five other fit and proper persons to be appointed by the Governor.
- (2) The Governor shall appoint a member of the Central Authority to be Chairman, and may at any time revoke any such appointment.
- (3) The members of the Central Authority appointed under paragraphs (a) and (d) of subsection (1) of this section shall be appointed for two years, and they shall be eligible for re-appointment.
- (4) The Governor may grant leave of absence to any member of the Central Authority appointed under paragraphs (a) or (d) of subsection (1) of this section, and in such case he may, subject to the provisions of the said paragraphs of subsection (1) of this section, appoint another person to be a member during the period of such absence on leave.
- (5) Where the member who is granted leave under subsection (4) of this section is the Chairman of the Central Authority, the Governor may appoint another member to be Chairman during the period of such absence on leave.
- (6) The Governor may at any time revoke the appointment of any member appointed under paragraphs (a) or (d) of subsection (1) of this section
- (7) Any member appointed under paragraphs (a) or (d) of subsection (1) of this section who—
- (a) having been appointed a member under paragraph (a) of

that subsection, ceases to be an unofficial member of the Legislative Council; or

- (b) not being an officer in the public service, by writing addressed to the Colonial Secretary, resigns from the Central Authority; or
- (c) departs from the Colony without leave of the Governor; or
- (d) remains out of the Colony after the expiration of his leave; or
- (e) fails without reasonable excuse (the sufficiency of which shall be determined by the Governor) to attend four consecutive meetings of the Central Authority,—

shall cease to be a member of the Central Authority.

- (8) Where the appointment of a member of the Central Authority is revoked, or where a member ceases to be a member of the Central Authority, the Governor may, subject to the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section, appoint another person to fill the vacancy.
- (9) Notice of every appointment, of every revocation of appointment and of every cesser of membership, shall be published in the Gazette.
- (10) The Central Authority may act notwithstanding any vacancy among the members of the Central Authority.”

As regards the question of re-appointment of members, perhaps I should state that the Mayor of Georgetown and the Mayor of New Amsterdam are *ex officio* members and, consequently, sub clause (3) would not be applicable to them.

Mr. GONSALVES: I have read the amendment and the hon. the Attorney-General has spoken to me about it. I rather sensed the feeling yesterday that this Committee would be an active one, and I therefore wonder whether in sub-clause (7) (e) we should not state “three” consecutive meetings instead of “four”. If a Member of the Legislative Council is appointed a member of this Committee and cannot find the time to attend the meetings, he should make way for some other Member who would have the time.

Mr. JACOB : I moved the same amendment previously — that the word should be “three” instead of “four” consecutive meetings in that paragraph — (e). If there are not going to be regular monthly meetings of the Central Authority it would permit of inactivity. I wish the Regulations relating to attendance at the meetings of this Council were stricter. Look at the attendance we have here today—look at the attendance we have been having during the last few days.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I am agreeable to making it “three”.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : May I ask what would happen if the Mayor of Georgetown or the Mayor of New Amsterdam is out of the Colony—say on leave ?

The CHAIRMAN : That is provided for.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : This Council has decided that two of the Members of the Central Authority shall be the Mayor of Georgetown and the Mayor of New Amsterdam, and that has been provided for. Whoever they may be, they would be appointed and would take their places at the meetings. This has nothing to do with the question of expenses.

Mr. GONSALVES : I think clause 5 provides for that.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : No; that does not cover it. The Legislative Council would put them there *ex officio*, and they must be prepared to accept the circumstances under which the Authority carries on. They must accept any difficulty that may arise for the time being. When the Deputy Mayor of Georgetown acts as Mayor he does not become the Mayor and, similarly, when the senior member of the New Amsterdam Town Council acts as Mayor he does not become the Mayor. Here, you are putting two specific persons as members of the Central Authority and, they have to accept the position. The granting of leave merely means that a member would be absent from the deliberations of a particular meeting or meetings, but it does not make him lose his seat. The moment a person becomes Mayor of

Georgetown or New Amsterdam he becomes a member of the Central Authority with all its attendant consequences.

Mr. GONSALVES : The Authority might be without his services; that is all.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : That is all.

The CHAIRMAN : The question is that clause 4 as amended on the Order Paper and also by the substitution of “three” for “four” in sub-clause (7) (e), be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, passed.

Council resumed.

The PRESIDENT : With the consent of hon. Members we can take the third reading of the Bill now.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

#### TOWN PLANNING BILL, 1946

Council resolved itself into Committee to resume consideration of a Bill intituled—

“An Ordinance to make provision for the orderly and progressive development of land, cities, towns and other areas whether urban or rural, to preserve and improve the amenities thereof, and for other matters connected therewith.”

#### COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There are certain verbal amendments—more or less misprints—which are necessary, but I have to see that they are made and I ask that they be adopted as follows :—

Clause 18 (1) —

Substitution of the word “in” for the word “is” in the fourth line.

**Clause 19 (3) —**

Printing error as under corrected.  
Deletion of one of the words "such such" in the second line.

**Clause 29 —**

Mispelling of the words "wilfully" and "penalty" corrected.

**Clause 42 (1)** Proviso :—mispelling of the word "Governor" corrected.

(2) The word "undertaker" in the fifth line amended to "undertakers."

**Clause 44 (3)** Mispelling of word "agreement" corrected.

New clause 47 be inserted as follows :—

"47. Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed as affecting the operation of the Town Planning (Georgetown Fire Area) Ordinance, 1945."

Clause 48 deals with the date of commencement of the Ordinance. It reads :

"This Ordinance shall come into operation on such day as the Governor shall, by proclamation published in the Gazette, appoint."

That brings it into operation the same as the Housing Bill.

Amendments put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Those are all my amendments. I beg to move that this Council resume and to report the passing of this Bill in Committee with amendments.

The Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : With the consent of Members I wish to move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ACQUISITION OF PLNS. LA BONNE MERE AND  
CANE GROVE

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. HEAPE) : I wish to introduce formally

the motion standing in my name, recommending that funds be provided to purchase the property of Pln. La Bonne Mere in order that a Land Settlement can be established there and at Cane Grove. The Governor's Message No. 11 sets out the main principles behind the proposal but, sir, I would like with the permission of Members to suggest that the acting Director of Agriculture should intervene and explain in detail with a plan what the actual proposals are. Mr. Holman Williams was Chairman of the Survey Committee. He has a plan which he is prepared to show hon. Members and all the details at his finger-tips. He is here now and, if Members agree, I would like the Officer to address the Council.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : I am sure hon. Members would like to hear Mr. Holman Williams.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : The Commissioner of Local Government, who is the Officer interested in Land Settlement matters, is also very deeply concerned. He is here to answer any question which the Director of Agriculture may be unable to answer. One of his District Officers, Mr. Gerard, was a member of the Survey Committee, the other member being Mr. Case, Consulting Engineer. I would like to ask the Acting Director of Agriculture, if it is agreeable to hon. Members, to explain what is actually proposed.

Mr. C. H. B. WILLIAMS (Director of Agriculture, Acting) : The area involved is approximately 7,400 acres, but its drainage into the Mahaica River is somewhat difficult. The sugar estates there had to spend a good deal of money within recent years on pumping, but the Consulting Engineer's Department has devised a scheme which will enable us to drain part of the area by natural drainage. The scheme proposed is that we should drain roughly 2,300 acres and that drainage should be sufficiently good to enable farmers to cultivate rice, ground provisions, etc. A certain amount of drainage would also be provided for the other areas, sufficient to enable satisfactory grazing to be carried on there. So that of the 7,400 acres roughly 3,200 acres would be arable land and the other 4,200 acres would be for pasturage.

The system of drainage proposed is



to run a main trench half-way across La Bonne Mere to bring out all the water there and a small portion of the water from the pasture at the back of Cane Grove. Then another main trench will run across Cane Grove parallel with the road which goes into Cane Grove. A third trench will run parallel with the Mahaica River and join the other two. There are at present two sluices at La Bonne Mere which empty into the Mahaica River. They are functioning and it is proposed to continue to use them. There is also another existing sluice which it is proposed to continue to use. Those three sluices will not take off all the water and the Consulting Engineer's Department proposes to put in an additional sluice to take the water off. It is mainly the digging of these trenches and the putting in of the additional sluice and the regrading of the land so as to throw the water down to the river that involves an expenditure of about \$300,000. The actual purchase price of the freehold land of La Bonne Mere is \$60,000. I do not know if any Member has any questions to ask.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I move —

“That, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 11 of the 25th of October, 1946, this Council approves of the provision of the proposals outlined therein and of a sum of \$363,100 as set out in paragraph 5 of the Message.”

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Mr. FERREIRA : What is the maintenance charge per acre ?

Mr. WILLIAMS : We have estimated it at about \$25,000 per annum for the 7,400 acres of which over 3,200 acres is arable land.

Mr. FERREIRA : In other words, I am correct in assuming that the 3,200 acres will cost \$25,000 a year to drain or \$8.00 roughly per acre ?

Mr. WILLIAMS : You must allow some portion of the maintenance charge for the pasture as well. One has to maintain that. I do not think it is fair to place the whole cost to the arable land, as the pasture

also has to be drained although not as efficiently as the other portion.

Mr. FERREIRA : May I make a few comments ?

Mr. JACOB : May I second the motion so that it may be discussed ?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : The Official Member on the right of the Mover has done so. He merely rises and does not say that he seconds the motion.

Mr. THOMPSON : What is the nature of the soil marked “cattle pasture” on the map ?

Mr. WILLIAMS : Where you see patches of yellowish tint on the map it is intended to denote pegasse land, where it is white it denotes the land is clear. The Consulting Engineer's Department in taking levels took the bearing of the soils and endeavoured to show us where there was any tendency of pegasse land. Then there is a sand reef running across and occupying roughly 500 acres. Much of that is already occupied.

Mr. THOMPSON : Are you satisfied that the pasture land will be drained ?

Mr. WILLIAMS : The Consulting Engineer Department has calculated two inches per day for the arable land and simultaneously one inch per day for the pasture.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : I take it, there will be some revenue from the pasture land which will reduce the cost per acre.

Mr. FERREIRA : How far is it ?

Mr. WILLIAMS : Cane Grove is about four miles from Mahaica itself.

Mr. RAHAMAN : Can you say how many inches can be drained during a heavy rainfall, say during the months of June and July ?

Mr. WILLIAMS : I cannot say because at the present time the estate is drained partly by pumps, but we do not propose to use pumps. If we can take off one inch per day from the pasture land and two inches per day from the arable land, we should be

able to maintain a satisfactory condition.

Mr. RAHAMAN : If you have 12 inches of water there, then you would take 12 days to get that water off. What would happen to the cattle there in the meantime ?

Mr. ROTH : I am chary about the scheme. Do hon. Members understand what that so-called pasture is like, especially the area north of the Lamaha Canal ? It was I, as a Government Surveyor twenty-four years ago, who laid out that particular section, and I can assure you, sir, it was like walking on a vast blanket. To show how much water was under the surface, we could not plant paals but had to put bamboo. If you are going to drain that and take one inch of water off per day, it would be a wonderful engineering job. If we can do that, why have the present owners given up those lands ? Why should we take on all that responsibility and spend \$300,000 ? Surely Bookers would not have given up that area if it had been a paying proposition. If two or five thousand people are going to be let down by the closing of the estate, it would be cheaper to remove them to a healthier portion of the coastland. I am not in favour of the scheme at all.

Mr. FERREIRA : I would like it to be clearly understood that I am in favour of Government putting forward land settlement schemes that will tend to raise a prosperous peasantry. I will always listen to any such proposal, and if I am convinced that a scheme is good, irrespective of the amount involved, as long as it is within reason I am always prepared to support that scheme. The amount asked for here is not excessive. Had it been a half million dollars I would not vote against it, but I do not think it is reasonable for Government to ask this Council to approve of this scheme. There is one question which should have been asked at first, and I regret that it was not asked. That question is as regards the health conditions of the place. I rather fear that it is a malarial district, but we have not been told whether the place is healthy or unhealthy. If that area is like the River Districts as I know them, then that would be the first stumbling block. We are told that only 50 per cent. of the area can be drained—50 per cent. of that 7,000

acres — and that the capital cost of the drainage is \$300,000 with a maintenance charge of \$25,000 per annum or \$8.00 per acre. I certainly cannot vote for that.

Surely there are other parts of the Colony where such schemes can be carried out and where the people will have a chance of not only working on their farms and rearing cattle, but of making a living in wood-cutting or obtaining a couple days' work on a neighbouring sugar estate. In such a case they will have a chance of being independent by working on their own lands if they want to and, if they cannot make an ample or sufficient living, there will be other avenues of employment open to them. There are districts in the Colony—I refer to the Courentyne—where you have several sugar estates and where you have natural drainage and an increasing population. People follow wealth, and that wealth is to be found in the Courentyne. Here you have it that the soundest economists, engineers and planters in the Colony whose experience extends over 100 years, have decided to abandon this estate and this Government has decided to take it over. I regret I cannot see the wisdom of such a purchase. We have heard about this drainage scheme, but surely a firm of such repute as Bookers would have discovered natural drainage there and it would not have been left to this Government to do so. Pumps were being used there but they have been removed. Are we going to step in and take over such a thing ? I would ask hon. Members of this Council to go very carefully into these land settlement schemes and not to agree to everything that comes along. We must have land settlement schemes and we must have a prosperous peasantry, but we do not want to urge people on to something which will be a dismal failure. I am very chary about it. From what the last speaker has said, my view is confirmed that this scheme should be rejected.

Mr. JACOB : Mr. Deputy President, I am sorry that the last two hon. Members are not prepared to support this scheme. I trust that when I am finished the few words I have to say and from what the Commissioner of Local Government and the hon. the Colonial Secretary will explain, they will study again and change their minds. It is true we have not got all the re-

ports or facts about the matter, but when it is considered that Pln. Cane Grove, where you have this pasture area, is being given for nothing, just for \$100, surely that is worth something. I think Booker Bros. should be congratulated on their very generous offer to the residents of that district. The hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) suggested that the population of the East Coast Demerara should be transferred to the Courentyne Coast, Berbice. I would just like to tell him that when an attempt was made to transfer the population of the Essequibo Coast to other parts of the Colony, the whole thing proved a failure. You cannot transfer resident population from one district to another very successfully. With local ties and other conditions it is impossible. While the Courentyne should be developed, I think Eastern Demerara should be developed as well.

I think one of the reasons why Pln. Cane Grove is going out of cultivation is that the factory is out of date, the drainage is somewhat faulty and there are labour difficulties. I do not know if those facts are correct, but that is my impression. In fact I have heard that on a few occasions. What should the population in that area do? There are 2,700 people there. They will be out of employment and I am confident that this is a matter for the Land Settlement Committee. I think the present Land Settlement Committee should be strengthened. I have no doubt about that at all. If the Committee is strengthened immediately and action is taken amounts should be loaned to put the lands into cultivation — coconut cultivation, ground provisions cultivation, rice cultivation, citrous cultivation and even coffee cultivation. I think that a good livelihood can be provided there for working people. I believe that the frontlands should be lotted out and sold. I think that it is not the policy of Government at the present time to sell out the lands in house lots, but I trust that policy will be changed because if the lands are laid out in lots and sold, I think, one half of this money would be recovered. If the arable lands are laid out, certain portions for rice cultivation, certain portions for coconut cultivation, certain

portions for ground provisions, sufficient revenue would come out of them to maintain the people and make them prosperous, independent and contented. I am strongly in favour of this experiment, and I trust this Council will pass this motion. I appeal to those Members, who are not in favour of it and who have spoken against it, to withdraw their opposition.

We have always asked that this Colony should have land settlement schemes, and now that a start is going to be made I think we should go boldly into it. We are not going to lose any large sum of money by it. I am confident about that. As I say, if the Land Settlement Committee is strengthened by men who are prepared to work and to visit the places and provide responsible management on the spot, if the Committee meet at least once per month — I suggest that they meet every fortnight—and proper care and supervision are exercised, I think a very successful peasantry can be developed in that area. The population in that area has been removing for some considerable time. At one time in the Mahaica river district there was a prosperous peasantry, but at the present time those people are not there. I think when the conversion of the drainage in that area is carried out, as recommended by the Consulting Engineer's Department, the land around the Mahaica Creek will be in a far better condition for the conduct of successful cultivation and cattlefarms. I am sorry I have not all the facts about it. I never thought there would be opposition in this Council to this motion, otherwise I would have been able to say something more. I have no doubt that if the house plots are properly laid out and the lands are laid out in blocks for the cultivation of rice, coconut, coffee and other crops — I think the land there is suitable for those crops; as a matter of fact the cultivation of coconuts is very successful there—that with skilful management, good care and attention we should have a successful peasantry there.

Mr. GONSALVES : The hon. Member has taken upon himself an unusual role when he says he did not anticipate there would have been opposition to this motion otherwise he would have brought his notes. That makes me feel very uneasy about him,

meets with opposition from the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob). His votes are always for the opposition and not for the affirmative. He seems to be deeply interested in this particular scheme, although he is not representing Eastern Demerara but is representing the North-Western District.

Mr. JACOB : I rise to correct the hon. Member ! I have always supported land settlement schemes from the very first day I came into this Council.

Mr. GONSALVES : I would have expected the hon. Member then to come forward today and say he thought Government might well invest \$50,000 or \$60,000 on some land settlement scheme relating to the North-Western District, where the people might plant citrus fruits or some other crop which he could recommend might be usefully grown in that particular area, having regard to his past experience and knowledge of things agricultural. But today he is apparently advocating the acceptance of a scheme in spite of the statement of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Roth, which to my mind has given us much food for thought. One has to think when proposals come forward and when things of this kind occur. It gives one food for thought. I think there are lots of matters that have to be considered before we plunge into spending \$60,000 of the taxpayers' money as an initial outlay in connection with this proposal. I cannot see the sense in paying down \$60,000 for these lands when there is no prospect of the immediate functioning of this particular scheme.

I have not heard how soon it is proposed to launch this scheme, and how soon those people who have to go away from that particular section of the country would be in a position to come back and settle there again. Then, as one hon. Member has already mentioned, we have no report as regards health conditions. Let us hope we would not have any repetition of the scheme which the hon. Member has himself criticized in this Council—the Essequibo Land Settlement Scheme. That scheme did quite a good

thing, as a special excursion was run to that county when it was launched, and so on. It is called the Bush Lot scheme, but I think somebody said it is more or less a "Water Lot scheme". Perhaps this one should be called a water lot scheme also. I must compliment Government for bringing it forward and for submitting proposals to show that it would cost \$300,000 odd, so that when Members vote now they cannot come back and say they thought the scheme would only cost \$60,000. I agree with the hon. Member for Berbice River, however, that we should be careful about this matter.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : I would like to hear something from Mr. Laing.

The CHAIRMAN : There is a great deal in the Message itself and if hon. Members have not read it carefully they should do so.

Dr. SINGH : During the initial stage I was not in favour of this project, but as matters developed—health conditions were looked into along with the drainage and other things—I agreed with it. One important thing is that we must consider the people resident there. There are about 2,700 people involved and if the estate is closed down they would go all over the place. For their security, sir, I think the scheme should be adopted.

The CHAIRMAN : It seems as if the hon. Member was impressed by Mr. Roth before he came here today. He (Mr. Roth) surveyed the place.

Mr. JACOB : Mr. Roth referred to the estates beyond, and not to those in the required area.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS : I am always in favour of a land settlement scheme, but I must say that the information contained in the Message is not sufficient to enable us to arrive at a decision one way or the other. I would not like to see the Message thrown out, however. It would appear to me that the arable land available is a little on the low side for the cost of this scheme—over \$300,000. In the face of the information that 2,700 persons would be affected if this estate goes out of existence, this Message does not supply me with the



information I would like to get. We might have been told how many families are concerned in these 2,700 persons, and so on, since details like those would have assisted one in arriving at a safe decision. I am wondering whether it would inconvenience Government and whether it would not be in the interest of the scheme itself if we were given a little more time to consider it. I think also that the Commissioner of Local Government should supply Members of this Council with a little more information which would assist us in arriving at a decision one way or the other.

For some years now Government has been very reluctant in embarking on such schemes and now that there are land settlement schemes of a much bigger nature I am wondering whether we are not biting off more than we can chew. The attempt to carry out too many schemes together might be responsible for the failure of a project that everyone would like to see succeed. We know that the Department is just in its infancy—not fully equipped and so on—but we think one Land Settlement Officer should be put in the Courentyne District and another in the West Demerara district, to engage themselves with the important work of the Department. Must we have one in another area altogether to supervise this scheme? I think we should consider whether it would be in our best interest to embark upon it now, and that if it does not inconvenience Government consideration of this Message should be postponed.

Mr. RAHAMAN : I intend to oppose the proposal set forward in this Message and the expenditure of any funds for the purpose. It is quite true that Messrs. Booker Bros. are trying to sell this place very cheap to Government—it is practically a free gift—but I think Government would find itself in some difficulty as regards expenditure in running this estate. If Messrs. Booker Bros. thought that the internal drainage would be sufficient for these lands, why should Government have to embark upon all this expenditure for mechanical drainage? We do not want a land settlement scheme there and I am in favour of establishing such schemes on the coastlands. We cannot get people from the coastlands to go and settle in those districts. It is said that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread" and I

think that Government would find it difficult to carry on this estate.

Mr. THOMPSON : I am not prepared at any time to oppose Government in anything worth while, but I am minded of the saying that one has to be careful when the Greeks offer gifts. It is most amazing that this reputable firm is so anxious to get rid of such a valuable estate. There is one part of this Message that has struck me very much and that is where it says : "Later, an estimate of the cost of other buildings, equipment, etc. which may be required will be prepared". This \$363,000 is just the initial expenditure given to us here, and I think this Council is very fortunate in having had the views of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Roth, who has had personal experience in this district as a Surveyor. I think what he has told us should be taken seriously.

I am not prepared to oppose anything worth while, and while this Message should not be thrown out I do not think it should be rushed. I think Members of this Council should be enabled to go into this matter and get some further information before committing themselves. Labour, it is said, is hard to get for the sugar estates, and it is surprising that although there are 2,700 people in this area the estate proprietors cannot get sufficient labour. I have heard that it is not so much a question of labour, but the cost of keeping up the estate and improving wages. As I have already said, I think this Message should be deferred and that Members should be given an opportunity to get further information so that they would not commit themselves with any regret.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : It does seem that when we have had the scheme examined by experts who should know their business—and they have gone into this scheme—and that at a time when we are clamouring for more houses and more land for settling people and so on, we should not fail to consider an opportunity like this. It is true—and perhaps it is regrettable—that the Company is giving up sugar production in that area, but certain Members of this Council have always thought that the sugar chimneys should be pulled down. Of course, those who know can truthfully say that the

sugar industry, like the bauxite industry, has been keeping the economic soul of the Colony together. I do not think anybody would like to see the sugar industry go out of existence, and therefore it is regrettable that sugar production would be discontinued on this estate. Men of knowledgeable experience have examined the scheme and it seems to me that Mr. Holman Williams who is Chairman of the Committee should know something about the agricultural prospects of such a scheme.

If we are to go in for this large drainage scheme, it seems to me that Mr. Case who is our drainage expert should also be consulted. He, no doubt, has given his opinion in favour of it, then we have the District Commissioner, Mr. Gerrard, who has gone into the matter. I think it is well known that in this Colony there are many so-called experts and that even in the Law we have experts who are not lawyers, but who are prepared to criticize legal matters. If hon. Members feel that by delaying this Message we would get expert knowledge, then let us have it. Surely, however, hon. Members knew that this Message was here and therefore they could have obtained the information they wanted already. I do not say that one would necessarily expect Members to wade through the report of the Committee, but I think that when a Committee is set up to investigate a matter of this kind, we should give it credit for making a thorough job of it, and if there is to be criticism of a policy then that is another matter. This Committee is one which should be considered the best for the purpose and if it regards the scheme as sound we should accept its decision, especially as it concerns one of the agricultural communities of the Colony. Supposing the Town and Country Planning Ordinance just passed had been already in force, it would not have been easy to buy this land at anything like the value at which it is now being offered to us.

I submit that if hon. Members felt that there were places more suitable for this scheme one might understand a little delay, but where are we going to find other sites? Is not this a suitable spot? There seems to me to be no reason for objection in this matter. We have had the Vergenoegen Land Settlement Scheme and we have had

suggestions about other places in the Demerara River. If, as has been stated, this area is not on the coastlands, then those persons who suggested the Demerara River district should be criticized also. Are we going to confine these schemes only to the East Coast? I think the idea of land settlement should be to put settlers in the various parts of the Colony and not to confine them to any particular area. This Message has my whole-hearted support. In this Colony, I regret to say, we always criticize people for not making a start, but when somebody makes a start he gets a kick. That is just a kindergarten attitude, however. I am sure hon. Members of this Council realise that other countries have gone through similar things and have lived to benefit from schemes of this kind.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : I rise to give this scheme my whole-hearted support. Firstly, I would like to inform the hon. Member for Georgetown South that the Essequibo scheme is not a failure. I have lived in Essequibo for years and have come into contact with people who have benefited from that scheme, and it is not a failure. Secondly, I have had experience in the Mahaica area and in the Mahaica Creek. It was one of the most flourishing districts in the Colony, and I have no doubt that if this scheme is passed it would be a very flourishing area again. This is a very urgent matter. I see that the Committee held a meeting and met a representative body of the residents, and the members of this Committee, with their technical knowledge, are satisfied to recommend that this situation should be saved. They have also given reasons here, as to undesirable landlords stepping in. I do not like the word "undesirable" however. I do not see any landlord who would be able to bear the cost of this scheme, and if it is not carried out these people are bound to reach a stage of destitution. This is a very healthy area, and obstacles should not be placed in the way of this scheme by hon. Members here.

I am very pleased with the remarks of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, and I think the little friendly remark that came along about the falling down of chimneys was well meant. My feeling is that as this sugar plantation is going out of existence, this Council should do everything

possible to carry out this scheme which has been recommended by the Director of Agriculture and the Consulting Engineer, Mr. Case. I think this is one of the schemes that this Council would be proud of in the next few years.

Mr. CRITCHLOW : I heartily support this motion and I would like to give my reason for doing so. When these 2,700 people are thrown out of employment some of them would find their way into the City—as they are doing already—and if the work in the City is to be divided further there would be dissatisfaction because some of the workers would not get enough. I think Government is taking the right steps as regards land settlement and many of the people in this district should be settled where they live. One hon. Member said they could not get labour for the estates, but that is funny because labour is always willing to go from this country to another. That question requires examination, because I know that if the labourers get a reasonable wage they would work. I know as a fact that some of the younger men do not work as much as the older men, but there must be some reason for that. Some people say it is due to malnutrition and so on.

I think Government would be well advised to accept this scheme, and I hope it would be established soon. The scheme has been strongly criticized especially as regards expenditure, and if Government can take steps to raise the money we have to be careful as to how we spend it. I think Government is doing the right thing in acquiring this land so as to settle the people in the district and find work for the unemployed.

The PRESIDENT : Perhaps Mr. Holman Williams would give us some idea of the proposals and say what the agricultural prospects are likely to be.

Mr. WILLIAMS : I would like first of all to refer to this question of pegassy land and to say I know that the greater portion of this area which is labelled "Cattle" and coloured in green, is not now under cattle. It is drained and cultivated land. It may have had a thick layer of pegasse at one time, but that is now drained off. Most of it is now under cane and could be used

again if it gets satisfactory drainage. If you want to drain it fairly satisfactorily you will need pumps—artificial drainage—and the Committee does not feel that that would pay. The suggestion to Government is to drain a smaller area, and it might have to be the area which would more interest the people you are settling down.

The machinery at the Cane Grove factory is in a very bad state, and if anything is to be done they would have to put down a new factory, which would be a difficult thing to do in anything like the near future. Some people think it would be better to drain an area of about 3,000 acres, rather than one of about 7,000 acres. Further, this is an area in which we should encourage pastures. This is an area from which Georgetown gets some of its milk, and Government has to leave some of this land to be used as a pasture instead of leaving the milk producers to use a pasture in another area—Clonbrook pasture.

There are 653 families in the area, and the Committee has considered the possibility of removing them elsewhere. They are willing to go elsewhere on the condition that Government provided the housing. Well, 650 families would require about 700 houses, and the Committee did not feel they could support that idea. Then, I think we must bear in mind also that there is an area of freehold land in here, called Virginia Village. People have owned the land in this village for many years and have their settlements there. If this estate is abandoned and no settlement established, I don't know what would happen to the floating population of this village. It would just go adrift.

There is one other point which may have had considerable influence on the firm in deciding to close down the estate, and that is, there has been a pest on the cane there—the frog-hopper—but that does not mean that other persons should not plant canes there. Government could arrange to get canes planted and if they provided persons with facilities to get their canes to estates from that area it would be a paying proposition.

Mr. LUCKHOO : The statement made by Mr. Holman Williams a few seconds ago has certainly influenced me to view this

question in a particular light. I have no desire to delay the passing of this proposal, but it seems to me that certain Members have criticized the scheme through lack of adequate information in the Message. Speaking for myself, I only received this Message yesterday afternoon, so that it was hardly possible for me to get in touch with the people of the district since then in order to get information from them. True statesmanship imperatively demands that you should proceed cautiously in any matter. In passing a measure you must be satisfied it will be in the best interest of the people.

I would like to revise my views in this matter in the light of the statement made by Mr. Holman Williams just a few moments ago, as to whether the land can be beneficially occupied or not. I have always been in favour of a scheme for land settlement adjacent to sugar estates where the people in addition to working on their farms can get a few days' employment and earn cash money. I have never been on the estate in question, and so I just have to depend on the statement made by the speakers. It appears to me that it is the desire of Government to establish settlement farms in various localities, and the responsibility is on Government to see that well considered schemes are put before this Council and figures given which can be relied upon. Having accepted the statement made by Mr. Holman Williams and the assurance given in this Message that we will be in a position to recoup in a very short time—I take it that is the trend of the Message—I will certainly lend my support to this motion.

There is a request by some Members, who are not satisfied that they have been fully supplied with all the facts they want, that there should be a stay of this very important question so as to give them an opportunity to examine it further. We have been given figures here, but we do not know what the maintenance charge will be and what are the health conditions in the district. We have had no medical report on the land in that area. Some years ago when the question of land settlement was under consideration Government took the trouble to get medical advice as to the suitability of the land from a health standpoint. I do not know what it is, and so you cannot expect a layman to give an

opinion on this matter. When the Kilmarnock Scheme came into existence, one man said Government did not consult him in respect of that. That scheme had to be abandoned after an expenditure of \$80,000 to \$90,000. I have no desire to send these people away from there. If they can acquire land at a cheap rate in that locality, by all means afford them the opportunity to do so, but I do not wish Government to embark on any scheme so as to afford relief to anybody in respect of his property. I am not concerned whether the owners are Bookers or anybody else. Where it is in the interest of the community, I think Government should acquire property and get the people settled on the land for their economic benefit.

We have had lands given to the Indian immigrants who were entitled to back passages. I do not know whether the intention of Government is to acquire these lands for the purpose of other people who may forego their return passages in lieu of land. I know that in one or two cases the experiment in that direction was very successful. You have Bush Lot on the Courentyne Coast—I am not referring to the one on the Essequibo Coast. There you have a good many East Indians who have become good settlers and have been given every encouragement by Government to cultivate the land and to extend their cultivation. I do not know this particular locality, whether it is suitable or not, but on the information given by Mr. Holman Williams, who is an expert in his particular branch of work, I have to accept that it is so. I would therefore like to know whether there are engineering difficulties in carrying out this particular scheme. I do not know whether the lands are drained and irrigated. We have had no information other than that given in the Message. I have not seen the details of the report of the Committee, and so I have to rely on the statement made by His Excellency the Governor.

I think that in a matter of this sort there is no need for any rush or hurry. I suppose Bookers will give Government the option of buying these places, and that option has to be exercised within a certain time. I do not think that Bookers are such hard bargainers that if we do not accept



their terms they will not sell to Government. Government can secure an option for the purchase of the lands. That has been done in the case of the residential section, why not in this case so as to allow Members an opportunity to investigate thoroughly the points raised and to satisfy themselves as to reasonableness of acquiring this property? I do not wish to oppose any land settlement Scheme which is in the interest of the people, and I have no desire to drive these people away if they desire to remain there. I would like to see them settled there, but at the present time Members must be given an opportunity to investigate the different points urged by the opposition party in order to satisfy themselves that it is not a wild goose expenditure. I am very much in sympathy with the people who may be deprived of their property and who have no means of obtaining a decent livelihood in that area. There being no objection by the Estate Authorities the land in that section can be well drained and the people made to settle down and given a chance to contribute their quota in enriching the economic potentialities of this Colony.

Mr. LAING (Commissioner of Local Government) : Mr. Deputy President, I fully appreciate the difficulty in which some Members find themselves in regard to the somewhat scant information given in this matter, but Mr. Holman Williams, who was Chairman of the Committee, has fully explained all the details. The hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Mr. Luckhoo) has told us there is no need for hurry in this matter, but is that actually so? Is there any real need for hurry? Pln. Cane Grove is being scrapped as a sugar plantation. We have been told so, and we know that it is going out of sugar cultivation. There are about 2,700 persons on that estate and there are also persons resident in Virginia village. To my mind, the matter calls for immediate action. If this scheme is to be followed through, I think it is clear that we must proceed at once to make these lands available to settlers. We cannot wait until the estate has been scrapped and abandoned and then try to make up our minds as to what we are going to do with those 2,700 people. We must proceed at once to make the lands available, as we require the lands to settle the people on so that they can plant there and earn an income before the

estate's pay table closes. We must not place ourselves in the position of having those people on our hands without the Saturday pay table to go to and no land from which to derive a livelihood. I think therein lies our need for urgent decision in this matter and our need to undertake at once the drainage and irrigation works recommended by the Consulting Engineer.

The proposal would be, if this Council agrees to purchase these estates, to proceed at once with the drainage of Pln. La Bonne Mere where there are available 1,000 acres which the people can plant and, as the canefields are abandoned and become available, those too will be planted by people at Cane Grove. I think that must be our plan. We must start now if we are going to start at all. We must provide land for the people as the work at Cane Grove becomes scarce and more scarce and, I think, therefore, Mr. Deputy President, there is need for decision in this matter at once and we should not delay any longer in making up our minds. Should those estates be purchased, it is proposed that they should be administered by a Land Settlement Committee, comprising the members who are now administering Vergenoeogen together with certain persons who have local interest in and local knowledge of the Mahaica areas.

As regards the health conditions on the estates, I do not think myself the Mahaica areas can be regarded as unhealthy. I am not aware that Virginia Village or the workers' quarters at Pln. Cane Grove are regarded as unhealthy. But I do know, from the map Mr. Holman Williams has shown you, that there is a large section of land which is high and which is eminently suitable for housing sites where the Cane Grove people can be housed. These lands are well drained and dry and are not, as one Member described them, a malarial district. I do not know that Mahaica can be described as a malarial district, and the Cane Grove lands are very similar to the village areas in Mahaica.

The hon. Member for Eastern Berbice said he would like to see the Cane Grove people remain where they are. I am sure we all share his view. Those of us who have been requested to try and transfer

people from one district to another know the extreme difficulty of such a policy, and I think we all desire to see the people remain in the area which they regard as their home. If we are to do that, we must make up our minds at once. If we delay we may find ourselves in an extremely difficult administrative position. The Deputy President has reminded me of what Mr. Holman Williams said in regard to provision for the transfer of cattle from the Mahaica-Clonbrook area. We had proposed to empolder 1,000 acres for the village cattle for which there was no proper provision at the present time. If the Cane Grove estates are taken over by Government provision for the village cattle would be made in the areas marked on the map "Cattle Pastures", which Members have seen. Those areas will take care of not only the cattle of the residents of Cane Grove and La Bonne Mere but also of the residents of the Mahaica-Clonbrook area.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will not delay the Council except to thank those Members who supported the motion, particularly the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Veerasawmy, and the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight). I have not forgotten to thank the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Critchlow, and also the acting Director of Agriculture (Mr. Williams) and the Commissioner of Local Government (Mr. Laing) who have come really today to do what they have been asked to do. Members have asked, why should Government buy something which the Estate Authorities do not think is worth carrying on? Why should Government spend money on land settlement in an area in respect of which there is doubt? The acting Director of Agriculture has answered those questions. The Estate Authorities are selling this area because they find it uneconomical to grow sugar on it. But that does not mean it is uneconomical to small growers to grow other crops.

Members have asked, why Government should spend money on land settlement without carefully going into the question as to whether the land is healthy or is good? That answer is that Government proposes and asks you to support the

expenditure of money for the purchase of Cane Grove and La Bonne Mere purely and simply to look after the people who would not be able to carry on any industry if the estate is closed down. The people are there now and we have to do something about it. One or two hon. Members suggested that they can be removed. I think that the answer has been very clearly given by the hon. Member for North Western District and the Commissioner of Local Government. Then there is the question of health. I do not think we have any medical report at all but, I think, I am right in saying that we are not aware that the people are living in an unhealthy area. They are living there now; that is the point. We are not going to make it more unhealthy; we are going to be realistic about it.

Several Members have asked for time to consider the matter. The Commissioner of Local Government has given good reasons why we should get on with it. I am in favour of getting on with it. I notice that when Members are not in favour of anything, they will not say they are not going to vote but they will ask for time. It is the same thing, when Members ask for time, as trying to block it. I am in favour of it and wish Members would support it. After hearing the acting Director of Agriculture and the Commissioner of Local Government, those who were wondering, I hope, have had their doubts completely removed. With your permission I would like the motion to be passed this afternoon. We can send around later to Members the detailed report of the Committee which went into the question. It was not sent to Members because it is very long. It is cheaper and will not cost very much to have it cyclostyled, and as to printing it if we send it to the Printers we would not get it back in twelve months. I promise to get copies out for Members, if it is possible, and as soon as possible.

I would like, unless it is desired to postpone it formally, to move the motion standing in my name —

"That, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 11 of the 25th October, 1946, this Council approves of the proposals outlined therein and of provision

of a sum of \$363,100 as set out in paragraph 5 of the Message.”

bearing in mind that is not the final total.

Mr. JACOB : I would have liked to second that motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : I hope those hon. Members who opposed this motion and complained that they had not been given sufficient information, with which I am in agreement, having had this afternoon some additional information will now change their minds as the result of what Mr. Holman Williams and the Commissioner of Local Government have told them. Both Officers have considerable experience and, I think, enjoy the confidence of Members of this Council and of the community in general. The proprietors of this estate, so far as I am aware, propose to scrap it during next year. The people who are resident there, as the result of the passing of this motion, will be able to make arrangements to retain their holdings and to look forward to conserving what they have. They will be able to remain on the land if certain portions of the area are acquired by Government. If we wait until the scrapping of the estate takes place all kinds of things may happen. We may spend the money in other directions. I think we have heard enough, and unless there are very strong reasons, I think, Members should support it. Sugar estates have their own medical advisers and I think the district is no better or no worse than anywhere else. I propose to put the motion.

Mr. LUCKHOO : I have no desire to prolong the debate. As the result of the views expressed by the Commissioner of Local Government, the hon. the Colonial

Secretary and yourself, I am inclined to give my vote in this matter, but my reason for asking that it be postponed—and that request was also made by one or two other Members—is that the details have not been given. I am not in a position to express any view as to the suitability of the place. However, I am in favour of land settlement schemes. I advocated that many years ago in the hope that instead of the East Indian immigrants returning to their country they would remain here and the Government be enriched by their labours.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : As the hon. Member has been allowed to speak twice, may I just add that I forgot to say that if any Member has any doubt about the wishes of the people he can come and talk to me. If you are influenced by the wishes of the people living there, I can assure hon. Members that they want this proposal.

Question put, the Council dividing voting as follows :—

For—Messrs. Veerasawmy, Thompson, Jacob, Luckhoo, Dr. Singh, Critchlow, C. V. Wight, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—10.

Against—Messrs. Rahaman, Ferreira, Roth—3.

Did not vote—Mr. Peer Bacchus.

Motion adopted.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : That being all the business, I adjourn the Council until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 6th November.