

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**WEDNESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1948**

The Council met at 2 p.m., the Hon. C. V. Wight, O.B.E., Deputy President, in the Chair.

PRESENT:

The Deputy President, the Hon. C. V. Wight, O.B.E., (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney General, Mr. F. W. Holder, K.C.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.M.G., C.B.E.

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

The Hon. Dr. J. A. Nicholson, (Georgetown North).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum (Nominated).

The Hon. Capt J. P. Coghlan (Demerara River).

The Hon. D. P. Debidin (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. Dr. G. M. Gonsalves (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. Dr. C. Jagan (Central Demerara).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. C. A. McDoom (Nominated).

The Hon. J. Carter (Georgetown South).

The Hon. E. M. Gonsalves (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 27th of August, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID.

The following documents were laid on the table :—

The Report on Meteorology in British Guiana for the year 1947.

The Legislative Council (Elections) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations, No. 24 of 1948.

—(The Colonial Secretary).

The Minutes of the Finance Committee meetings held on the 13th and 26th of August, 1948.

—(The Colonial Treasurer).

ORDER OF THE DAY.**DREDGING OF NEW AMSTERDAM HARBOUR.**

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I now call upon the hon. Member for New Amsterdam to move the motion standing in his name.

Mr. KENDALL: I beg to move:—

“WHEREAS the continuous silting of the New Amsterdam harbour has forced Government, Municipal, and private enterprises to carry out elaborate extensions to their wharves from time to time, and

“WHEREAS it is extremely necessary to improve the said harbour to meet the growing demands for increased shipping facilities up the Berbice River for our Bauxite, Timber, Sugar, Rice and other products, and

“WHEREAS it was the view of a previous Legislative Council when the dredge Sir Crawford was purchased;

that the New Amsterdam harbour would be included in Government's dredging programme;

"BE IT RESOLVED that this present Legislative Council, at its earliest opportunity, investigate the advisability of blocking the channel to the south of Crab Island leading to the Canje Creek, with a view to increasing the flow of the water in and out of the Berbice River, and at the same time reducing the silt on the New Amsterdam section of the harbour, and

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable dredge be used for the deepening of the mouth of the Berbice River."

The motion, Sir, speaks for itself but in order that you may be apprised of certain facts I will proceed to give you a brief outline of the difficulties we experience in New Amsterdam through not having the facilities which my motion is endeavouring to obtain. For some time now there has been a continuous accumulation of silt at the mouth of the Berbice River where New Amsterdam is situate, a circumstance which has resulted in an enormous amount of expenditure on the part of two concerns in having to extend their stellings from time to time. With your permission, sir, I will read the amounts expended by those two concerns — the Transport and Harbours Department, and Messrs. Sprostons, Ltd., — from 1936 to the present time. In 1936 the Transport and Harbours Department spent \$24,999.22 in extending their stelling at New Amsterdam, and in 1944 a further sum of \$3,511.51 was spent, making a total of \$28,510.73. Messrs. Sprostons, Ltd., spent the sum of \$11,400 between 1933 and 1948, and it should be noted that every seven years this particular concern has had to be spending considerable sums of money for the extension of their stelling.

I have suggested as the first proposal in my motion that there should be a blocking of the channel on the southern side of Crab Island leading into the Canje Creek, with a view to diverting the water entering the Canje from the Berbice River and thereby increasing the flow of water in and out of the said river. This suggestion, sir, is not a new one. I think it was during the regime of the

late Sir Geoffrey Northcote that the advice of one who had years of experience in the navigable rivers of this Colony was sought, and he suggested that there should be a blockage of that particular entrance into the Canje Creek as it would increase the flow of water in the Berbice River and reduce the silt formation. The suggestion was not entertained by Government, however, and \$25,000 was spent on the extension of the stelling. I am told that if the suggestion was accepted the cost of blocking the channel would have been less than that of extending the stelling.

I still believe that there is a certain amount of merit in that suggestion and I think it should be reconsidered especially since Messrs. Sprostons, Ltd., are at present carrying out extensive work on their stelling. Those of us who travel across the New Amsterdam ferry regularly realise that sooner or later Government would have to incur further expenditure in order to extend the stelling. In order to prove the reasonableness of my contention I invite you, sir, to look at the Berbice River at low water mark and you will find that at the mouth of the river there is an enormous amount of land lying there and up to about half-way opposite the town of New Amsterdam. From the vicinity of Pitt Street you will see that the amount of land is reduced, so much so that at Stanleytown where a considerable amount of erosion has taken place work has had to be carried out by Government in order to save the roads. That gives one the conviction that by the blocking of the channel you will be able to increase the flow of the river and during the falling tide especially the silt, or most of it, would be carried away. I can come to no other conclusion than that by blocking the channel we will minimise the necessity of having to extend the Ferry Stelling every seven years as is the case under the present conditions.

There is another proposition in my motion and that is for the dredging of the Berbice harbour. For some time now all the constituencies in Berbice have been clamouring for the dredging of the New Amsterdam harbour with a view to facilitating increased shipping. As you are aware, Sir, there is a concern which

is at present carrying out large-scale operations in Berbice and it is willing to have that harbour improved. I want to suggest that if Government approaches the matter in the right way some form of assistance might be given in that direction. It must be borne in mind that similar operations are being carried on in other countries — I refer to the bauxite industry — and therefore every effort should be made by this Government to see that those persons concerned with operations in this Colony do not come out of it because of non-assistance by Government in this particular direction. It must also be borne in mind that with the improvement of the harbour in New Amsterdam we would be able to increase facilities for the employment of our citizens, since encouragement would be given for the establishment of new industries. As you are aware, Sir, Berbice contributes a very large portion of the revenue of this Colony and I must emphasise that the residents of the County, especially those of New Amsterdam, are not satisfied with the encouragement received from Government by way of opportunities to assist themselves. In spite of this fact, at least 45% of the Colony's revenue is derived from that County. The agricultural population of the County is great and I think it is right that these people should be granted the facility of having their goods landed in Berbice. It would save increased freight charges and bring many other advantages to the people.

Those are the main points in my motion and I cannot but say again that in dealing with the question of dredging the New Amsterdam harbour I desire to mention five advantages for the consideration of this Council. They are,

- 1.—Bigger ships would be able to enter the harbour, thereby taking away our products.
- 2.—Greater production.
- 3.—More employment.
- 4.—New avenues for minor industries.
- 5.—Government should assist the people in order that they may assist themselves.

That, Sir, is a brief outline of my motion and I present it to hon. Members of this Council hoping that they would give it favourable consideration.

Dr. GONSALVES: I rise to second the motion, firstly to point out the reasons why I believe it should commend itself to this honourable Council and, secondly, to point out what I and the people of Eastern Berbice consider to be some great anomalies. I am not going to concern myself very much with the reasons why the Transport and Harbours Department have had to be extending their stelling at New Amsterdam. I hoped it was possible for them to extend it across the Berbice River as that would save us all this inconvenience and what we consider to be nothing short of extremely bad treatment on the part of Government. I think the harbour at New Amsterdam should be reconditioned and while I may not know all the implications fully, I do know that if the harbour is reconditioned it would rekindle the life of the town as it seems to be dying through no fault of its own. It seems to be a design on the part of someone to neglect the town, and I am saying that with a dead New Amsterdam and a dead Berbice it would mean that your Colony would be dying by 45 or 50 per cent. For that reason alone I think the harbour should be reconditioned.

We see no reason why goods should be transhipped from Rosignol to New Amsterdam and why Government should not have it in its power to bring about the necessary relief. New Amsterdam holds a unique position in this Colony and when the export figures are gone into it would be seen that it is extremely necessary that the harbour should be dredged and the port kept open in a better way. As regards the bauxite industry, the opinion of experts is that if the harbour is dredged it would pay good dividends to Government because large ships would be able to come to the Colony and carry the bauxite to Canada rather than having it transhipped at Trinidad. The residents of New Amsterdam feel that if the project is carried out it would infuse new life in the town and in the county of Berbice as a whole and, therefore, it is

something which Government cannot afford to turn a deaf ear to.

The next thing I desire to refer to is the question of getting supplies to those persons who are trading in various parts of the County and also to residents. I do not know if it is Government's policy that these supplies must be transhipped to New Amsterdam but we do say that when ships are going up the Berbice River to load Bauxite and other things they could take goods to New Amsterdam at the same time. The residents in my constituency — Eastern Berbice — feel very strongly about this matter and urge that they are entitled to better treatment. For instance, we take a great hazard every day in crossing the New Amsterdam ferry; we have a most dilapidated boat — the "Hassar" — there and it causes all sorts of inconvenience but we have to use it in order to come here and serve. Originally intended to carry 150 people, the ship is now carrying 250 passengers, some part of the construction having been removed. I have made complaints about this ship and have been told that the Department has put 3 tons of ballast and what not in it. I do not care how much ballast they put, I say that that ship is not good enough for Berbice. On the whole, we seem to get the most dilapidated things in Berbice—anything that is not good enough for Georgetown — and the people feel very uneasy over it.

Many complaints have come to me and I have referred them to the heads of the Departments concerned. So far as this steamer service is concerned I have always tried to pacify the people by telling them that Government is doing its best to make the service better. Whilst I am preaching this doctrine I feel very strongly about this and other matters, but I have not encouraged the people to any other action but that which is decent in principle. Nobody had ever seen fit to instal X-Ray apparatus at the New Amsterdam hospital until a kind-hearted donor — the late Mr. Edgar Hicken of my constituency — gave one to the institution and so prevented people from having to travel to Georgetown in order to have an X-Ray picture taken. We have since heard that

the coil from that apparatus was taken away and brought to Georgetown because the Public Hospital, Georgetown, did not have one.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY. To a point of order: I do not think the question of X-ray apparatus is relevant to the motion. I must say, however, that this question of X-ray came up before the Medical Advisory Committee and the Director of Medical Services, according to the minutes, gave an explanation to the members of that Committee which was accepted. Although I sympathise with the hon. Member when he feels that the capital of the Colony gets more than its fair share perhaps, I do feel that the X-ray question has nothing to do with this motion.

Dr. GONSALVES: My point is that we are not getting a fair share for what we contribute to the revenue of the Colony and I do not think the question of the X-ray is irrelevant. For the contribution Berbice is making to the Colony's revenue what are we getting? That X-ray question is a very sore point. We feel that these things should be put through for the convenience of Berbicians and that they are all related to the question of improving the harbour. I have no desire to stray from the points in the motion but I am charged to lay before this Council the case for my constituents as they see it and I hope I have endeavoured to put the facts before this Council. I would like to quote a few figures to show that Berbice is not getting fair treatment with regard to the harbour—the dilapidated boats and so on—and we are asking for better treatment. We will say that the Colony has a population of 375,700 people and that the population of Berbice is 96,600. Eastern Berbice—the constituency which I represent—has a population of 51,500 and let us see how it contributes to the revenue of the Colony. In 1946-47 a total of 109,349 acres of rice was cultivated in the Colony and of this Eastern Berbice cultivated 46,415 acres. In other words, it produced 23,208 tons of rice or more than 38% of the Colony's production according to the agricultural figures for that year. As regards sugar it produced 73,240 tons or 43% of the Colony's total during the same period.

Coconuts, 4,615 acres or 13% of the total acreage of the Colony, yielding 9,000,000 nuts. Berbice produced 998,791 proof gallons of rum or 36 per cent. of the Colony's production. As regards cattle my figures are not as accurate as they should be, but according to the check made so far I find that between 55 and 58 per cent. of the cattle, goats, sheep and pigs, were produced in the Abary and Crabwood creek area.

We were told by Government, and I have also preached it, that the roads would be put in order. When we are not riding in a storm of dust we are driving in slush. We are saying that Berbice is neglected in spite of her contribution to the Colony's production. We are told that the Soya bean oil, which is being imported, cannot be distributed in Berbice because it is required in the interior and in Georgetown. We are told it cannot be sent to Berbice because it would be mixed with Fryol. I do not know that there are more conscientious merchants in Georgetown. New Amsterdam holds a strategic position and should be developed. As the second town of the Colony we cannot afford to allow it to die. I believe the constituency of Berbice is the largest in the Colony, and we feel that we should be given the amenities to which we are rightfully entitled.

I do not know the technical implications, but experts have said that the continuous dredging of a harbour pays good dividends even if there is resilting. After all, the dredge **Sir Crawford** was bought with a percentage of Berbicians' money, and it should also operate in the Berbice River. We feel that if we continue to use the **Hassar** on the ferry we will some day be told that we have to cross the river with our cars in batteaux. I am not in a position to say whether the situation would be relieved by blocking the southern end of Crab Island, but I do know that the whole harbour is in a very neglected condition, and I am asking Government in the name of the people whom I serve, to do all it can to remedy the situation. If I had my way I would ask the mover not to confine his motion to dredging alone, but to ask Government to adopt any other means for the improvement of the harbour. I do feel very strongly in

this matter. With your permission, Sir, I should like to quote a few words from an anonymous article which appeared in the **Daily Chronicle** recently. It says:

"The continual flow of water from the Canje Creek is steadily causing silt to collect at its point of outflow on the bank of the Berbice River. This has necessitated the building of the longest pier in the Colony, as the wharf that accommodates the traffic is already 400 feet long. If the silting clogs the channel, as it seems likely to do, the wharf would have to be lengthened, and that would entail considerable expense to Government. The formation of Crab Island at the point of the junction of the two waterways is possibly the result of the conflict of the tidal waters of two rivers, and the engineers have a big problem on their hands to keep the channel clear for the passage of steamers."

"The body of opinion in the town and County is that New Amsterdam should be developed into a port to receive ocean-going vessels. At present goods for the County have to be landed in Georgetown and despatched to New Amsterdam by rail or by sloop. It is not for prestige alone that merchants want a direct port; it is for convenience and the cheapening of costs as well. At one time boats used to frequent the port, and it would be bringing back the brightness and the dash of former days if it is found possible and practicable to attract vessels to the ancient town. It is argued that if more vessels were to use the river silting would not proceed at such a rapid pace."

That is not material which I can quote with authority but it not only supports my own views on the subject; it shows what the people of Berbice are thinking. Whether Berbice is not getting the representation it got years ago is not for me to say, but when we hear such unkindly remarks that the country Members would get more money I cannot help wondering whether anyone would think that I would belittle myself to the extent of coming to Georgetown idly so as to draw more money. It was said by one of the candidates at the General Election that no middle-class person was capable of representing Berbice. I say that Berbice does not want anybody from Georgetown to represent that constituency. She wants her representatives to live among the

people in the County, to understand, see and feel the needs of the people. That is the case of Berbice, and those are the reasons why we feel very strongly in supporting this motion which should be given full consideration.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: May I suggest that we ask the Director of Public Works to give us the reasons, if any, for Government's policy in relation to the New Amsterdam harbour and the dredging thereof. Is it the desire of Members that I should ask the Director to address the Council?

Mr. H. E. SMYTHE (Director of Public Works): Sir, this is a very old question, the question of the improvement of the Berbice harbour. The Berbice River, like all other rivers of similar kind throughout the world, is only endeavouring to stabilise itself in its lower region. The lower region of the Berbice River has some very peculiar characteristics. Above Sisters the river takes a sharp turn and flows eastward, and at Everton it takes another sharp turn and flows northward. These are not the characteristics of an old established and stabilised river. What happened in the past was that possibly it encountered hard strata opposite Sisters, and it deflected eastward and then turned northward. Those characteristics have made it very difficult for the river to stabilise itself in the lower region.

There has been, and is still taking place, a very active erosion at Everton. The effect of that erosion has been to deflect the maximum velocity from the right bank of the river, more towards the centre of the river, and that has engendered favourable conditions for accretion opposite New Amsterdam. If we could re-establish the conditions which existed at the Everton bend say prior to 1900, either by cutting through the land opposite Everton or by re-establishing the right bank of the river in the bend at Everton, then we would begin to get erosion on the right bank of the river down to New Amsterdam. So that from consideration of the technical aspects of the problem, the silting or the accretion of the foreshore in front of New Amsterdam is more involved, possibly, than some hon. Members have any idea of. The whole prob-

lem revolves around factors which are induced by the river endeavouring to stabilise itself in the lower regions. Any effect that can be made on the silting or the accretion at New Amsterdam is, in my opinion, purely incidental.

The suggestion has been made by previous investigators that the blocking of the eastern channel and the discharge of the Canje through Crab Island into the main river may be a solution of the difficulty, but it is very questionable whether that would have any effect on the accretion which is taking place in front of New Amsterdam, which I believe is due to the action of the river higher up. Once you start interfering with a river, such as the Berbice River, by man-made structures you upset any tendency towards stability, and it is my experience, and the experience all over the world, that once you start you have to go in for very expensive river works, and the reports which have been made on the various aspects of the problem indicate that the cost would be very heavy. For example, to re-establish the Everton bend one investigator suggested cutting through the land opposite Sisters. In other words he suggested making a new bend in the river by taking out nearly five million cubic yards of material which represented a lot in dollars.

The Torani canal involves the excavation of five million cubic yards of material, and the estimated cost of that work is 1¾ million dollars, so that on a comparative scale the cost of cutting through the bend at Sisters would probably be 1¼ million dollars. The other alternative is the reconstruction of the right bank of the river by extensive training works.

Once you have done that you could probably hope for some erosion in the foreshore between Albion and New Amsterdam, but it is probable that that erosion may be more of a problem than the accretion which is taking place today. The tendency of the river is to stabilise itself by building a bank from near Albion to New Amsterdam, and the river is going to do that despite any efforts on our part to the contrary.

With regard to the outer bar and the

inner bar that is one section of the motion. The outer bar at present is about a depth of 7 feet at low water at ordinary spring tide, and even in that condition when conditions are favourable at high water it is possible for vessels with a draught of 15 feet 6 inches to enter or leave the Berbice River. If you want vessels of larger draught to enter the river the obvious thing to do would be to dredge the outer bar, but there is no point in doing that unless you dredge the inner bar. The outer bar is blocked by four miles of hard sand, and if you wish to provide for vessels drawing 18 feet of water laden you would have to dredge the bar 4 feet to 11 feet and for a distance of four miles. The width necessary according to the investigators would be at least 900 feet or 300 yards, and the amount of material to be dredged would be something like 2 to 2½ million cubic yards. The inner bar is about 2 miles long, and you would have to provide for the dredging of about 1½ million cubic yards of material. Adding those two together you will see that the total amount of material to be dredged from both bars would be possibly 3½ million cubic yards or roughly three-quarters of the total volume of the Berbice-Canje canal.

The Berbice-Canje canal is a somewhat similar problem to the dredging of the outer bar. There you have to operate under very adverse conditions. You cannot dredge and pump the silt out the side. You will have to load it and take it out to sea. You can see what a costly proposition the dredging of the outer and inner bars would be. The total quantity of material involved would be about 3½ million cubic yards, and if we assume that we could dredge the outer and inner bars at the same cost at which we are dredging the Berbice-Canje canal then the cost of dredging the outer and inner bars would possibly be three-quarters of the estimated cost of the Berbice-Canje canal which is 1¾ million dollars. That is just excavating the sea channel. While you do that it is beginning to silt up. In fact you would have to carry out your initial dredging operations in a comparatively short time. It would take two to three years in the initial stage. The dredge **Sir Crawford** is a toy more or less, and I estimate it would take 15

years for that dredge to carry out the dredging of the bar. Quite obviously then, the existing plant we have is incapable of doing a job like that. The dredge **Demerara**, which is operating in the Torani Canal area, is a suction dredge, and while she may be suitable for dredging the inner bar she would be quite unsuitable for dredging the outer bar. That is a job for a bucket dredge with Hopper barges which would discharge the silt at sea.

It would mean that we would have to face up to the problem of purchasing suitable dredging plant. An estimate was prepared in 1941, I think, based on pre-war prices for suitable dredging equipment to tackle that problem, and the estimated cost was \$600,000. At to-day's prices the cost of such dredging equipment would be at least a million dollars. The cost of such plant has increased round about 80 per cent. on pre-war figures. Then roughly it would cost 1¼ million dollars for initial dredging, one million dollars for plant plus capital charges, about \$80,000 a year, and for the expenditure of 2¼ million dollars plus your capital charges you would possibly accomplish your initial dredging, but you must not forget that the dredge would have to work for many years hence in order to keep the channels free. We have no figures and very little information with regard to the rate of accretion, but we do know that on the Demerara River during a period of 7 to 8 months' dry weather 34 million cubic yards of silt passed between Georgetown and Mackenzie.

In similar rivers in other parts of the world, and particularly at Westport in New Zealand where they have been operating dredges for the last 30 years, removing 400,000 cubic yards of material and fighting a losing battle, they find themselves in a position where they cannot face up to the cost of dredging. They called in experts, and from the latest report by the late Director of Public Works I see that they have put up no less than five separate schemes running into hundreds of thousands of pounds, for improving the entrance to the Westport harbour. Three dredges were incapable of dealing with the accretion at the en-

trance to the harbour. The rate of accretion is estimated at $1\frac{1}{2}$ million cubic yards a year. The Buller river carries practically no silt. The silt is brought along the coast by the currents and deposited in front of the harbour. We have similar conditions here. The silt is on the foreshore and is washed in and out by the tide, and if conditions are favourable it goes to the upper reaches of the river. That happens in the case of the Demerara River. Twenty-four million cubic yards of silt were deposited by the flood tide, and that is again swept out by the falling tide.

For that reason you will see that once we dredge the inner and outer harbour in Berbice we are faced with the continual problem of re-silting. I am not prepared to say or even to guess how long it would take for the channels, if they were left alone, to re-silt, but I am suggesting that re-silting would occur within three or four years if the channels were not constantly dredged. That would mean that in a period of 12 months you would at least have to remove possibly a quarter or half of the total quantity of silt you removed in the first dredging. At any rate your first cost would be round about $1\frac{1}{4}$ million dollars, and if we assume that we have to remove an equal quantity of silt from those channels in three years it would mean that we would be faced with an expenditure of about \$400,000 a year to maintain those two channels. That, added to the capital charges on your plant, would amount in round figures to half a million dollars.

I am not saying that these estimates are firm. They are little more than a guess, but I have given them to indicate how we stand in approaching the problem of attempting to maintain the Berbice harbour, or to maintain the channels in the Berbice harbour. As a dredging proposition I would say it is economically impracticable. That is a very dismal picture, but there is a practical approach to what, I take it, is the main concern of the mover of the motion, that is, the silting of the foreshore up to New Amsterdam and possibly the blocking of the Canje Creek. The reply to that is that it may be possible to carry out some

dredging to give access to the wharves and stellings in front of New Amsterdam. If it is economically impracticable to carry out dredging operations then an alternative would be the extension of the stellings or the removal of the stellings further up the river where the rate of accretion is not so heavy.

I suggest that as a practical proposition one might well forget about the dredging of the bar and see what can be done about the accretion in front of New Amsterdam. In $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 years time we hope to release the dredge **Demerara** from the Torani canal, and she would be available for carrying out dredging operations. That is if the dredge **Sir Crawford**, is not available for work in the Berbice harbour. It might be possible to maintain the approach to those two stellings by dredging, but before we can say that, it would be necessary to make a survey for the next year or two in order to determine the rate of silting in front of the stellings. I have no information on that point. No doubt I may secure that information in twelve months or two years, when I will be able to say whether it is a practical possibility to put on the dredge to dredge the approaches to the stellings. If that is not economically practicable, then the other alternative seems to be the extension of the existing stellings or the construction of new stellings further up the river. I will say with all seriousness, Sir, that I have very carefully studied all the reports that have been written on the subject of the Berbice Harbour, and I have come to the conclusion that it will not be economically practicable to dredge and maintain channels through the outer bar.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: May I ask the Director of Public Works, when he says an alternative is to continue the length of the stellings as the accretion takes place or select a new site for the stellings, I assume that he means to continue the length of the stellings until stability is reached. In other words, the course of the river by piling and dredging on its one side will form a channel which will become swifter and permanent. If he is telling the Members of Berbice that they should continue to lengthen their stellings they would like to know how long that is to continue, if it is to be until

they get right across the river. I think he should make that clear.

Mr. SMYTHE: I see it is figured I have not made it clear as to whether it may be necessary to lengthen the stellings until they reach the left bank of the river, Rosignol. I thought I had made it clear that in the stabilized condition the accretion would ultimately cease. The amount of the silting will decrease until the river stabilizes itself on the right bank along a line from Stanleytown to the western foreshore of Crab Island.

Mr. KENDALL: Before the motion is put for discussion by the Council I do not know if I may be allowed to ask through you, Sir, the Director certain questions.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I would suggest that, perhaps, I hear if any other Member desires to say anything on the motion and if not then with the permission of the Council the hon. Member can ask any question he desires to ask of the Director.

Mr. KENDALL: I believe that the replies to the questions asked will assist hon. Members to come to a conclusion.

Mr. GONSALVES: That is exactly what I think. On hearing the questions and answers it will assist Members to come to a conclusion and probably to say what they have in their minds. Members may have come with one fixed view, but after hearing the questions and answers they may change that view.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It is exactly a matter for the Council. I will put it, if you so desire. If the motion is discussed and the questions are asked and answered, it might possibly influence a Member to vote against the way in which he has spoken. From the appearance of Members of Council, I do not think we will have many more speeches and, perhaps, the hon. Member may be permitted to ask his questions. Is it the desire of the Council that the Member be permitted to ask his questions?

No objection indicated.

Mr. KENDALL: I would like to know from the Director, what is responsible for the more noticeable amount of land at the mouth than at, say, Stanleytown where work has to be carried on? It is less than a half mile, and you will see from that there is something responsible for this formation at the mouth. Would the Director tell us if the blocking up and diverting of the water has had more force in assisting the silting at the mouth which is more noticeable there?

Mr. SMYTHE: I think the question refers to the blocking of the eastern channel behind Crab Island; that is, on its southern side?

Mr. KENDALL Yes.

Mr. SMYTHE: If I may venture an opinion on that, I may say the blocking of the Canje River on the southern side will accelerate the accretion from Stanleytown to New Amsterdam.

Mr. KENDALL: As regards the Director's suggestion about the economic implications, has he ever studied what will be the cost of blocking that channel as against the cost of extending the stellings.

Mr. SMYTHE: I do not think that arises because the blocking of the channel on the southern side will simply accelerate the accretion in front of New Amsterdam. As I say, that will make conditions worse.

Mr. KENDALL: Would the force of the water take away more silt formation in the falling tide through the diversion?

Mr. SMYTHE: If a mole is constructed between the right bank of the Berbice River, or a point between the Canje River and the Berbice River, and Crab Island that would absolutely block the flow of the water even in the main channel. It would divert all the water from the Canje River into the eastern channel between Crab Island and the right bank of the Berbice River, because the tendency is for the river to stabilise itself by continuing that main channel in line with Crab Island. My opinion is

that the construction of that mole will not improve conditions. I have not gone into the question of cost.

Mr. GONSALVES: As regards that last answer, is the Director suggesting that the river will stabilise itself when you block the channel? When it links up Crab Island you will then have a straight line from Everton to Crab Island?

Mr. SMYTHE: Yes.

Mr. GONSALVES: That being so, what about cutting through the channel, as was first said, at Sisters where there are 5,000,000 cubic yards and it is contemplated the cost will be something like \$1¼ millions? What I can see, the fear of the mover of the motion is that New Amsterdam is dying a sort of natural death; it is being strangled. The line of least resistance is what makes many rivers grow. I do not know if the line of least resistance makes that river accrete. It seems to me that cutting through the channel at Sisters will augment the flow of water and very likely contribute to the deepening of the inner and outer bars. Take the Demerara River for instance. One of the points at Yaruni was cut some time ago and that did not in any appreciable manner deepen the river at the bar, because we had the s.s. "Arakaka" quite recently running aground and also a few other ships going aground at the bar. I do not know if all these questions can be answered all in one block.

Mr. SMYTHE: The tendency for the Berbice River would be to establish a stable right bank from Stanleytown right on to Crab Island, and the Canje River would then discharge itself along the eastern channel between Crab Island and the right bank of the river. But, as I said, the approach to the problem seems to be to keep the mouth of the Canje River open by dredging. I know of no other way in which it can be done. I should be very guarded by offering to relieve the flow of the Canje River at that point. At present the up-flow of the Canje goes down the eastern channel of the river without entering the main river.

If we close the section which flows into the main river we simply make conditions accrue which would tend to more rapid accretion and by the same action would be stopped the improvement of conditions in the eastern channel. If for any reason it is necessary to keep open the southern channel of the Canje, then the only practical way of doing it is by dredging, and I am suggesting that we must have a survey extending over 12 months or a couple of years to find out the rate of accretion in that area.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like to say at the outset that this motion is not without a great deal of merit, and I would like to inform the mover and seconder that much as they have their local interest in the ancient county by reason of their representations, we in these other parts of the Colony have quite a great deal of interest in and regard for the problems of Berbice and, if for nothing else, this motion has focussed attention on some of the difficulties and problems immediately touching the town of New Amsterdam and relating to the whole county of Berbice. There is no doubt, and I have noticed it myself, a great deal of waning of interest in the town. All the businesses are going down, and that town generally is taking the position of a glorified village. There is no doubt also — I have seen two stages of additions to the New Amsterdam stellings — of the rapid silting there. It seems to me from what I have noticed quite recently, there may be need for further extension within a very early period. What is operating in my mind at this moment is whether it will be a cheaper job for this Colony to have the Berbice River bridged, not in line with the stellings but in two stages — from Rosignol to Crab Island and from Crab Island to the eastern mainland of Berbice, the western boundary thereof. I feel that there is a great deal in favour of such a move, and it is very important if we can think of such a thing that the whole question of cost be carefully gone into. I have listened with very careful attention to what I regard as being a very able exposition of the problem from its technical angles by the Director of Public Works. I think that in a very simple and lucid way he has

unravelling the difficult side of this very technical question. and for that reason I feel that our job is half done, when one studies the resolution part of this motion which speaks of —

“Be it resolved that this present Legislative Council, at its earliest opportunity, investigate the advisability of blocking the channel to the south of Crab Island..”

From what I have heard it seems that technical opinion will be against “blocking”, and from what has been said too the whole question of costs must be carefully considered. I am going to make a suggestion, that this motion be deferred to when we can consider not only the statement made today by the Director of Public Works, but when a proper report can be submitted; that this motion be allowed to go to a Select Committee of the members of the Public Works Department Advisory Committee and, if necessary, added to that some other Members be appointed so that not only the question of the “blocking” because that has been wiped away by the statement of the Director of Public Works, but the whole question of the Berbice River being made serviceable as contemplated and desired by the mover and seconder of this motion, and the whole question of the problem of the river and transportation between the two counties be gone into and a report come up for the consideration of Members of this Council. It is not a matter to my mind which should be brushed aside.

There are manifold problems which must be considered in conjunction with this question of the dredging or blocking of the Berbice River. There is the question of the Demerara Railway Service. Much has been put into it and it is doing much of the transporting of luggage. Then we have to consider the question of the productivity of the Berbice River so far as minerals, bauxite, etc., are concerned and also in respect of agricultural products like sugar and rice. The question is how best these things must be transported. If we are to use steamer and rail transport, then it seems to me important to have this whole matter considered very carefully so that we can determine how best to achieve that by

either having the Berbice River bridged or the stellings extended from time to time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: From the point of enquiry, would bridging the river assist in opening the harbour for big ships?

Mr. DEBIDIN: It seems to me that can be done. I have known great bridges to be constructed over much larger rivers than the Berbice River where ships do enter those rivers. Even the Canje Bridge permits of certain size ships going up that river. I think engineering skill might be able to meet that. I do not know whether it would be out of place to say that the points made by the hon. Members about New Amsterdam in relation to Demerara were not as forceful as one would expect when dealing with this vital question, because it seems to me that Georgetown being the Capital City, the seat of administration of this Colony, must of necessity be of greater importance, and because that is so many other things flow. That is, this is the place from which, I believe, the question of imports and exports must take place in a larger measure, and if we are considering today the question of the dredging of the Berbice River we must have to consider the question of the Demerara River at the same time. I would like to mention this as against the motion and in favour of the suggestion, that a report be made on it for consideration and action possible and that we have in hand much greater problems than that. The roads of this Colony take a considerable amount of traffic, not only passengers but also freight. That to my mind is of primary necessity which we are unable to tackle at the moment and to consider because of finance. Then there is the question of the Demerara Bar. If any Bar is to be considered and tackled immediately it is the Demerara Bar, otherwise we will not have shipping companies being encouraged to send their ships to this Colony, and that will result in a much lesser volume of freight being brought to the Colony and taken away from the Colony.

I feel that this whole matter can be

put, so far as my views are concerned, into two categories. One is that it is a useful motion; it is a necessary motion, which should be considered for possible action in the right way and in the light of all technical details. At the moment this motion should not be allowed to take precedent over what I regard as vital necessities at the moment, and I respectfully move that this motion be referred to a Select Committee in order that all the implications of this motion may be studied carefully. I would suggest that the hon. Member for New Amsterdam and possibly the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice be added to that Select Committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Does the hon. Member mean the Advisory Committee or a special committee?

Mr. DEBIDIN: A special committee which will have the Advisory Committee of the Public Works Department as the nucleus to which may be added the two Members I referred to. I suggest that and beg to move that the matter be deferred.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I did not intend to speak, but to my mind the debate has omitted the most vital factor in the issue. I think, in the first place we are surprised at the aspirations of the two Members for Berbice who so ably championed the motion. I am sure the Council is indebted to the Director of Public Works for the very capable explanation of the technical aspects of the problem of dredging the Berbice River. But he has in fact told us what we already know — that New Amsterdam as a port is really fighting the inexorable laws of Nature.

The important factor I refer to is the economics of the question. Sir, it is no disgrace to any section of a country, any internal section, that its produce both inwards and outwards has to move through a port in another section. That is the case in all large countries in the world. The port is situated at that point on the sea coast through which transport can move more cheaply, more economically, than at any other point.

Hon. Members would realise that in the U.S.A., for example, the great productive section of the Mid-West must have all its produce flow to the ports on the coast. It is no disgrace to them that they cannot be directly connected with the traffic on the seas. Here in our little way we have found the port of Georgetown on the Demerara River is the most convenient economic point from which to take goods in and to send goods out. Georgetown is a very poor port.

The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has just said forcibly that the Bar should be immediately and quickly dredged. Notwithstanding that Bar, Georgetown is the best and most economic port in British Guiana. New Amsterdam was a port in a small way many years ago, but today it is completely uneconomical to use it as such; even if we spend all this money on keeping its bar open, I doubt very much whether many big ships will be attracted to the port of New Amsterdam. I doubt it, even though it is true to say that a large percentage of our production comes from the county of Berbice. I visualise myself the possibility of a port springing up at the other end of Berbice on the Courentyne River, and it would be quite wrong to go against the tide of progress and force the maintenance of New Amsterdam on the western side of Berbice as a port, if there is great possibility of the main port of the county of Berbice springing up at the eastern end on the Courentyne River.

I return to my point. It may be quite a natural thing that the produce of Berbice should flow towards the port of Georgetown. Many many years ago a very great predecessor of yours as Colonial Secretary, Sir Cecil Clementi, was very much wedded to the idea of continuous transport by rail throughout the coastlands of British Guiana, and buried in the Secretariat's files you will find his plans for bridging not only the Berbice River but also a continuous bridge from Parika across to the Islands and right on to Supenaam on the Essequibo Coast. Up to a few years ago I used to see, when I went to New Amsterdam, the point on Crab Island where the surveyors got through to make their survey and plan for

the project to bridge the river from Rosignol to Crab Island and then on to the mainland of the county of Berbice. The bridging of the Berbice River is a very old idea. Of course, that will kill the objective which the Members who sponsored this motion have in view. New Amsterdam will definitely then cease to be a port. The bridging of the Berbice River will be followed by carrying the railway across the river and extending it further along the Courentyne Coast to take in the sugar estates in Berbice. I have just risen to say, it is not only a question of the technical problems of silting and the problem of dredging the Berbice River, there is the economic factor.

Is it an economic proposition for the Colony as a whole to have a second port at New Amsterdam or somewhere else? At the present time, I frankly do not think so. I think that if we spend money on a second port the charges that would fall on that harbour to meet those costs would kill any possibility of ships going to that port. I would like to end on this note — that a good deal of the speech made by the seconder of the motion was concerned with the right of Berbice to its fair share of the facilities which Government provides and with that, Sir, I think the whole Council would certainly join with him. If I were a Berbician I would insist that I get an equal if not a greater share of the amenities enjoyed by the people of Demerara — roads, hospitals, and so on. I think the people there are entitled to it and, having myself suffered from transportation on the "Hassar", I feel that there is justification for the claim by the people of New Amsterdam that better means should be afforded them to cross the river.

Mr. McDOOM: I have listened very attentively to the various speakers on this motion and I agree that the people of the Corentyne and New Amsterdam should enjoy a fair share of the facilities provided from the expenditure of Colony funds. After having heard the views of the Director of Public Works I have no doubt that it would not be economic at all for us to think of opening up the port of New Amsterdam and, as stated by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer,

I think the time is not far distant when we shall have to concentrate on the Corentyne river. I happen to know that Berbice, as already stated, produces a large quantity of sugar and rice; and I think that these two products can, in the not too distant future, be shipped from the Corentyne river. I agree that the people of New Amsterdam and the Corentyne, being producers of a large percentage of these products in the Colony, are entitled to the expenditure of a fair share of the Colony's funds for their benefit, but I feel that the mover and seconder of this motion or any other Member of this Council would not say that because people are entitled to a certain portion of expenditure in their district that money should be spent regardless of whether it brings any benefit or not. That being so, I cannot but agree that this matter should be dealt with as suggested by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara. We join with the idea of opening up a port in the Corentyne river and until that is done I do not think it would be wise for us to go any further.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Are you seconding the amendment by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara?

Mr. McDOOM: Yes, but not in its entirety.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: You will have to second it in its entirety or move another amendment.

Mr. McDOOM: I am seconding it then, sir.

Dr. SINGH: I am sorry I was not here to hear the whole of the speech made by the Director of Public Works; nevertheless, I am in sympathy with the motion. I know the people of Berbice; the days were when the harbour used to be humming with activity by steamers and other craft, but today there is no such sight. As a result of the progressive silting up of the New Amsterdam harbour wharves have had to be extended from time to time, and similar measures have had to be taken with respect to the Government ferry stelling for the benefit of passengers. If these facilities are to be continued then the stelling would have

to go farther into the Berbice river and I feel sure we should do something to prevent that from taking place. The hon. mover of the motion stated that the channel should be blocked from the southern part of Crab Island to the mouth of the Canje creek, but that would need the assistance and guidance of an expert and the only alternative I can see to prevent further silting in the harbour is to dredge the area in the vicinity of both of the channels. I feel that this matter should not be left here; it has been suggested that it should be considered further and I think a Committee should be appointed to see what can be done.

Dr. NICHOLSON: Has the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara formally moved an amendment to the motion? So far as I have learnt he has made a suggestion but has not formally moved an amendment.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am not amending the motion at all; I have just moved that it be referred to a Select Committee.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It seems to me that we have to approach this matter from a practical point of view and I feel that what the Colonial Treasurer has said is the only logical approach. We have before us the report of the Main Development Committee in which it proposed that the sum of \$20,000,000 be expended over a period of years and now it is suggested that a Committee should be set up to consider what should be done with the harbour of New Amsterdam. That project would entail the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, whatever the Committee decides should be done. We have, in my opinion, enough Committees and Commissions already and I think hon. Members are fully occupied. If they are not, I am and I would hate to be on the Committee suggested. In my opinion the Colony cannot afford the considerable expenditure which the dredging of the harbour at New Amsterdam would necessitate.

Further, are we going to consider the question of dredging and opening the harbour of New Amsterdam when our chief port of Georgetown needs dredging

and when we know that a considerable sum of money — millions and millions of dollars — was spent by the Imperial Government within recent years in trying to dredge the Demerara river and the project proved a failure? We know also that there is the suggestion that the Demerara bar should be dredged and are we going to send this matter to a Committee for it to be put in cold storage for number of years — until after the \$20,000,000 has been spent by the Main Development Committee — or are we to give priority to it when we know that there is the project for the Demerara river bar. Should we think of dredging the New Amsterdam harbour before we think of dredging the Georgetown harbour?

Everybody is in sympathy with New Amsterdam and while the hon. Member has made an eloquent appeal for the town I can also make one for the Essequibo river which needs quite a lot of dredging; but if I do, where are we going to end. Whilst I am in sympathy with the motion I feel that we must approach the matter from a practical angle. The debate has served its purpose; it has called Government's attention to the condition of Berbice and the harbour of New Amsterdam, but would the appointment of a Committee serve any useful purpose? I do not think so and I do appeal to hon. Members not to pursue that suggestion.

Mr. THOMPSON: In the light of the very useful explanation given by the Director of Public Works may we not ask that he give us his considered opinion as to the best way of improving conditions at the New Amsterdam harbour? I also feel that we have been having too many Committees and Commissions and if we can block the point suggested at a reasonable cost I think it would go a far way to relieve present conditions.

Capt. COGHLAN: The Director of Public Works has dealt with this matter as an engineering proposition while the Colonial Treasurer has dealt with it from the economic point of view. I think the first thing we have to consider is what is the width of the Berbice river. I understand it is approximately 2,590 yards or

1½ miles wide. Accretion has been taking place constantly and that being so we are told that the stellings have to be extended regularly. In view of the fact that it is proposed to dredge the Berbice river at some future time, to my mind it would be better to leave the hand of God to take its own part and let the silting go on, in which case we would have a much shorter space to bridge in the course of time as the river would stabilise itself. Nobody seemed to emphasise the point that the more the river silts up the nearer the town of New Amsterdam would come to the county of Demerara, and that is what we want. What I would suggest is that instead of throwing mud at the mouth of the Berbice river it should be thrown alongside the town of New Amsterdam to build it up so that the people who have transport for lands at the mouth of the river would gain more land, so to speak, because their transports would relate to the low water mark of the river. When we speak of a river we speak of the river proper and not of the tidal wave which is influenced by the moon. Even if we say that there is what is called high water mark, no land surveyor can give you a definite boundary if he puts down his paals by what is called high water mark. You have a neap tide which runs for one-half of the month and a spring tide which runs for the other half; therefore, if paals are put down at high water mark it would mean that they would have to be changed once a month.

The dredge "Sir Crawford", according to the Director of Public Works, would take 15 years to dredge the harbour and it would silt up again as quickly as it is being dredged although the cost would be something like 1¼ million dollars. That means that dredging would have to be done every three or four years and neither the "Sir Crawford" which would take 15 years or the "Demerara" which is only a bucket dredge would be able to do the outer bar. It is better to give up this idea of dredging unless you take the mud and build up the banks of the river so that when you come to build across it you would only have half the distance to cover. Another thing we have to consider is whether a bridge across the Berbice river would be an economic proposi-

tion. Would the population be able to pay for it? I would not like to refer to the Demerara river now because of a motion which I intend to bring forward later on, but if you build a bridge across the Demerara river one can get into a train at Rosignol and by-pass Lamaha Street and go to Parika without changing until he reaches the West Coast. At the moment, however, if you get into the train at Kitty you have to get out at Lamaha Street, and if you want to go to Best Hospital you have to use other means of transportation. In other words, in order to travel a distance of three or four miles you will have to use three or four conveniences. From what the Director of Public Works has told us I agree that it would hardly be of any use to appoint a Committee to go into this matter and I think it would be better to get expert opinion to advise us rather than adopting the motion as it is.

Dr. NICHOLSON: I do subscribe to the views expressed by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer. I agree that better travelling facilities should be provided for the people of Berbice, but I do feel that we should concentrate all our energies towards making the port of Georgetown the port of the Colony. I do not believe in passing this question on to any Committee; we are already filled with Committees and Commissions and I do not think any good purpose would be served by dealing with it that way.

Mr. KENDALL: I am very glad I have tabled this motion so early in my life as the representative of New Amsterdam. I have listened to the various speakers and some of them have expressed the views that were operating in the minds of the people of New Amsterdam and which prompted me to bring this motion. This is the first time I have heard that where the welfare of the community is concerned it must be regarded in terms of dollars and cents and the economic factor must come into the forefront. It is known that in other parts of the Colony where projects were carried out by Government no thought was given to the economic side, and this strengthens my conviction that there is

an opinion among a certain section of the community that New Amsterdam should be a dying town. I am going to give one instance. I was endeavouring to see whether it was possible that in the decentralisation of the Rice Marketing Board rice could be graded in New Amsterdam, but I was told that the idea was to carry out the decentralisation project at Springlands. Those of us who know the situation realise that when it comes to Springlands that port is harder to navigate than New Amsterdam. Then again, that port is associated with private interests and if the town of New Amsterdam is to suffer because of private interests I say that this Government is not carrying out its duty to the inhabitants of the Colony. I am not an expert but I understand that whenever you make certain blockages in a channel the flow of water would increase and I am satisfied that as far as New Amsterdam harbour is concerned the flow of water would be increased by diverting it into the Berbice river. If one looks at the mouth of the Berbice river he would see that more silt has accumulated there than at the centre of New Amsterdam. The force of the water reduces as it reaches the mouth of the river and that is why one finds very much more accretion there.

There is another aspect I should like to mention for the benefit of those Members who feel that this matter should be thrown aside, and it is an old and burning question as far as New Amsterdam and the county of Berbice in general is concerned. I am satisfied that the county of Berbice is not being given the consideration it deserves. The hon. Member for Georgetown North has said that the port of Georgetown should be considered first and we are somewhat in agreement with that. It is because of that priority that Berbice has contributed to the sewerage scheme although it does not benefit from it, but we would like to see certain Government projects carried out in the county of Berbice so that our boys and girls there would be able to find more employment, among other things. When it comes to the question of dollars and cents, I would say that money should not be the controlling factor where the welfare of the people is concerned. If a

community is good enough to yield revenue for the benefit of the Colony, then there is no reason why it should not be given proper attention. I am very much disappointed in the way certain hon. Members have approached this question and I can assure you, sir, that the result of this motion would determine my future action as a Member of this Council.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I would like to explain how I propose to put the motion and the amendment. I shall first of all put the original motion, which means that if it is affirmed the amendment goes. If the motion is negatived, then I shall put the amendment.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Before the division is taken I would like an explanation. Where a motion is not intended as an amendment but merely to refer the subject of the original motion to a Select Committee, doesn't it take precedence of the original motion?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have ruled and I intend to stick to my ruling. If you look at Rule 17 you will see that I am correct. I am dealing with your motion as an amendment under Rule 17.

The Council divided on Mr. Kendall's motion and voted:—

For — Messrs. Carter, Kendall, Debidin, Dr. Gonsalves and Dr. Singh—5.

Against: — Messrs. McDoom, Farnum, Thompson, Roth, Dr. Nicholson, Capt. Coghlan, the Colonial Treasurer and the Colonial Secretary — 8.

Did not vote — Mr. Gonsalves, Mr. Lee and Dr. Jagan. — 3.

Motion lost.

The Council then divided on Mr. Debidin's amendment and voted:

For — Messrs. Gonsalves, Carter, McDoom, Kendall, Debidin, Farnum, Thompson, Capt. Coghlan, Drs. Nicholson, Jagan, Gonsalves, and Singh. — 12.

Against — Mr. Roth, the Colonial Treasurer and the Colonial Secretary.—3.

Did not vote — Mr. Lee.

Motion carried. ✕

RECALL OF ELECTED MEMBERS.

Dr. JAGAN: Sir, I beg to move:

“WHEREAS the Constitution of British Guiana provides for the election of Representatives to the Legislative Council every five years but does not provide any guarantee to the voters that those elected will give honest and sincere representation;

“AND WHEREAS it is a recognised democratic principle that voters should at all times have an opportunity to pass judgment on the conduct of their representatives who are merely agents of their popular will;

“AND WHEREAS the aforesaid democratic principle has been embodied in the Constitution of several states and countries by the provision known as the Recall;

“AND WHEREAS it has been recommended that unofficial members will be provided with an allowance from public funds of a sum of one hundred and fifty dollars per month from January 1st, 1948;

“BE IT RESOLVED that Government enact legislation to give to the electors of every Constituency the right to recall members of the Legislative Council at any time after elections.”

In bringing this motion before the Council I am fully conscious of all the implications, in fact even the repercussions. I remember reading an article in one of the local newspapers some time ago on this question of the recall of Elected Members, in which the writer said, I believe jocularly, “Wouldn’t it be a joke if the mover of the motion was the first Member to be recalled?” I think that would be a joke indeed. However, as you, sir, have said, I am here representing only a minority of my constituents. Perhaps other Members are more fortunate to represent the majority of their constituents. Nevertheless, I am not afraid, because I feel that this should be a democratic Government, and if the people have the right to vote for me as a Member of this Council, then they should reserve the right, if they are dissatisfied with my re-

presentations, to call upon me at any time to resign, or the right to forcibly make me withdraw from this Council. This Council has been elected normally for a period of five years. Most hon. Members have pledged themselves to their constituents to give honest and sincere representation, but it has been the experience, perhaps not in this Council or this country, but in other countries, that legislators have given similar pledges, but when they got in Parliament or in Congress or Legislative Councils, they forgot all about those promises and in fact flouted the wishes of their constituents. For that reason, in certain countries in the world voters have the constitutional right to recall their representatives if they so desire.

During the recent election campaign many persons felt that the recall was a necessary principle. They said so openly, and I can assure this Council that although there is such a provision in the Constitution of the Soviet Union it had been in existence in the United States of America long before the Soviet Union came into being. The recall provision was introduced in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., as long ago as 1903, and within a short space of time several other States adopted it. Today 25 of the 48 States have made provision for recall, and over a thousand Municipalities have adopted the provision, and even State officials who are elected can be recalled. In Switzerland, the people have the right to ask for the dissolution of the entire Canton. I feel that we can do no less than follow those countries by giving our people the same right. Some individuals are fearful that if the right of recall were given the people of this Colony there might be a series of recall petitions, but I am not afraid of that, because experience has shown that even though advantage may have been taken of the recall provision in the United States, on the whole it has been used with discretion. With your permission, sir, I would like to quote a passage from a textbook entitled “American Government and Politics” by the great historian Charles Baird. Writing about the recall provision he states:

“Up to 1930 there were only 155 cases in which recall petitions resulted in elections or resignations, and only 72 ejections from office—certainly a

small number in view of the fact that there are about one thousand political sub-divisions entitled to employ the recall, and that each of them is free to resort to the device practically at any time."

That bears out my point that I am not afraid that the electors of this Colony would abuse the recall provision. I feel that no democratic-minded person would seek to deny them the right. Democracy implies government by consent, and if the people who elected us to represent them in this Council become dissatisfied with our representation they should have the right to call upon us to resign.

There is another point which I think I should mention so that Members may be acquainted with the method by which the recall is put into operation. A group of voters in a constituency may petition the Government expressing their desire that their representative be recalled. The percentage of voters required varies. In the United States it varies from 15 to 35 per cent., but the average is around 25 per cent. of the voters in a constituency. If a recall petition is sent to this Government, for instance, it could be heard by officers who are assigned to each district for the registration of voters or the revision of the voters lists. If the required percentage of voters is fulfilled Government could do one of three things. It could hold what is known as a Recall Election in which the representative whose recall is sought stands alone. If he secures a majority, he continues to sit in the Council. Another method is that if the required percentage of voters for a recall is forthcoming, Government could call for a new election in which the Member whose recall is sought is allowed to take part, and the electorate would be free to vote for any of the candidates.

It was suggested by some Members some time ago that the life of this Council should be reduced from five to three years. That is a matter which could be considered by the Committee which is to go into the question of the change of the Constitution. I personally feel that five years is a very long time in which many things can happen in this Council. Even I may run counter to the wishes of the people in my constituency. Therefore, I

am appealing to Members that as elected representatives of the people it is our duty to carry out their wishes at all times, and we should give the voters of this country the right to recall Members of the Council at any time if they feel that they are not being given adequate representation.

Mr. DEBIDIN: For the purpose of discussion I desire to second the motion. This is another motion which is not without some merit. I speak as an Elected Member myself, and I think no Member, if he is conscientious and faithful to the pledges which he made to his constituents, should fear such a motion being passed. Today the emphasis is on a representative of the people being truly representative. I regret to say that at this very important juncture in the history of our Colony most of us are not truly representative of the people. I do not mean in the sense to which exception has been taken to the remark in this Council—that we have not secured the votes of the majority of our constituents. I mean that most of us who have made pledges to the voters of our constituencies that we intend to do so and so when we get into the Council, have done the opposite.

At one time I felt that this motion would merely create nuisance machinery in the hands of the people to put up opposition to Members from time to time, and I decided that it should not be supported at all, but when the debate took place on the question of universal adult suffrage I changed my mind, and if this motion had come up then I would have supported it in even stronger terms than I am doing today. There are at least two Members of this Council who not only pledged themselves to their constituents verbally but in writing, to support the motion for adult suffrage, but they came to this Council and voted against it at a time when, if their votes had been cast in the way in which they had pledged themselves to the people, the motion would have been passed. Instead of the voting being 9-7 against it would have been 9-7 for the motion. Because of the peculiar behaviour of those Members who were untrue to their pledges and their cause this Colony has been deprived of its constitutional and democratic right at this stage of its constitutional history. It seems

to me, therefore, that there might be some good reason for some corrective in the form of a recall provision, but I am not supporting the motion. (laughter).

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: To a point of order. Can a Member second a motion and oppose it?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: You can second a motion for the purpose of discussion. The hon. Member said he was seconding it for the purpose of discussion. He is in order.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I did so after a great deal of reflection. First and foremost my view is this; that when the votes on this occasion—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member but I wish to point out that had the motion not been seconded it would not have been entered in the proceedings of the Council. As you have seconded it, of course it has to go down.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do not support the motion for constitutional reasons. As a lawyer, and one who feels that the right thing should be done at the right time, I feel that the motion should not be supported at this time. I therefore suggest to the mover, and to those who may be sympathetic towards it, that it could be brought up more effectively before the Committee or Commission which is to enquire into the reform of the Constitution as well as the franchise question. I feel that the voters went to the polls and voted for Members of the Council for a term of five years, and as oaths have been taken by Members to serve for that period, we cannot legislate to alter that situation without the consent of the people or the voters in each constituency. In my opinion it is not proper to pass a motion of this kind at this stage, but it might be recommended for future action. There are other minor reasons, and in the evolution of things we have to take into consideration what might be the reaction of the people of the Colony to such a motion if it were passed. It seems to me that if we are aiming at greater things we should not import into our Constitution a provision which may be very applicable to a foreign

country, such as the United States of America, but not applicable to this Colony. We have to proceed along such lines where the people can be fully 100 per cent. persuaded that such a power, as suggested in this motion, be put into their hands, because it will mean this: A people may tell you to do something which in their opinion is in the best interest of themselves or of the majority of them at the time, but which on a careful and scientific approach to what they ask, it is not impossible to grant and so Members may be opposed to it. That may be the foundation to my mind for a Recall, and it seems to me we are not dealing with the mind of so many people. Because a few are not faithful and good that should not be the means of the destruction of the progress which this Council has got accustomed to or is about to achieve by its present Members.

If I am to oppose this motion, as I said, I should end with a note and that is this: Just as I have instanced that some Members when they are thinking of Federation know that Federation cannot come without Self Government and Self-Government cannot come without Universal Suffrage, and that policy has not been supported, just so I am going to appeal to Members of this Council that there should be nothing done in the five years' period that is ahead of us which will militate against the best interests of the Colony. It is an important thing to us to always bear in mind the composition of our Colony with its various sections, etc., and the great objective to which we are aiming, and if we are to keep closely in our minds this thought we cannot help doing one thing, and that is to be true to the people whom we are supposed to represent. We cannot be true to a section or a particular ideology; we have to be true to the Colony, and in doing that we have to be true to every individual. If this motion is to go, I think Members should keep in mind the appeal which I am making, an appeal to my mind which will be to some extent for an accomplishment of what is intended by this motion. We must be true to our cause and the cause for which we were supported and returned to this Council.

Dr. GONSALVES: I believe it is the

custom to clear a point. Laudable as the motives might be which prompted the mover of the motion, I cannot help feeling that there is a mischievous element in the whole structure. I pride myself to be an Independent Member of this Council. I am proud of it and, therefore, I have no party pledge whatever. I know, too, I have never given any promise that I will support Universal Adult Suffrage. That must be clearly understood. I did not and I will not now in the circumstances. I feel, too, that after I have been elected to represent a group of people, if those people wanted me to carry out a specific mandate it should have been so stated before I accepted their proposal to stand as their candidate. But be that as it may, I did not make any pledges and, therefore, what the hon. Member who seconded the motion said certainly does not bring me into that category. It seems to me that whatever the good points in favour of this motion may be, if a certain element in the community who, perhaps, did not vote for me of the hon. Mr. X, and this motion should be passed, this very same group who opposed me might feel it their rightful duty to enter a recall against me without anything being done by me. What is to prevent them from being so destructive? That is why I say, I see a mischievous element in the motion. I do not mean to say, however, the mover of the motion is mischievous. I think too that if I am representative of a people and cannot be entrusted to make a decision at any time and to be able to say "Yes, I do this because I feel it is in the best interests of all concerned," but I have to find out what the people think first or be recalled, I should not in the first place be elected at all. Therefore I am not supporting this motion.

Mr. LEE: I desire to move an amendment to this motion, as I feel that it should be given some consideration. I am moving it to the resolution clause, and I do not know whether the mover will accept it as his motion in which case I will support it:

"BE IT RESOLVED that a Committee be appointed to consider whether legislation or regulations of the Legislative Council are necessary whereby a Member can be recalled at any time after his election for reason."

I would like to say that the mover of the motion should have enlightened this Council about the laws in the several places that he cited in order that we could judge whether those laws could be enacted or passed in this Colony. We have a peculiar form of government which is not the form of government that passed those laws in those countries, but at the same time we have democratic principles which we desire and to a great extent practise in this Colony. Therefore, I feel that perhaps the Member is right in bringing to the knowledge of the people that there is necessity, if a Member does not perform his duty in a particular way—that is, after representation has been made to him in a particular way by a majority—or if any action of a Member tends to cause discontent among the people in the country, for the people to have the right in a certain form or fashion to have that Member placed before a Committee of Privileges to see whether that Member was right and just in his action. There is no rule in this Colony to indict a Member for what I may term a breach of privilege—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is the hon. Member suggesting that we have no Privileges Committee? If so, I may inform him that we have, but it has never functioned.

Mr. LEE: I am not saying that. I am saying that we have no Committee of Privileges that can call a Member to book if he commits an act which, in the opinion of his electors or any of the Members of this Council, is a breach of privilege. I am saying that I move this amendment in order that the regulations may be changed whereby, on a petition of more than 50 per cent. of the voters after their signatures have been verified, a Member can be brought to the Privileges Committee and, if found guilty, he can be recalled. But as the hon. mover of the motion says, a certain number of electors can petition the Government through the District Commissioners, or the Revising Barristers, or the Registering Officers—I don't know which the hon. Member was referring to. If it is the Registering Officer, how is he going to satisfy himself that that petition was made and signed by the people who have affixed their signatures to it? I feel that should be the first

thing, the verification of the signatures of all petitioners. After that the charges laid against the Member should be answered accordingly. My hon. friend, the Member for Central Demerara, must consider that all elections cost money to the Government. It is the people's money, and we cannot sit here and permit that money to be spent at the will of a few people. I feel that if he accepts my amendment it would be in keeping, as the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara says, with the functions of the Committee that has been appointed to consider the question of the changing of the Constitution in respect of Nominated Members, and that Committee would be able to consider this question in its broad aspects.

It is always right that Elected Members should win their spurs in this Council, but there are occasions when a Member makes a mistake; even senior Members have made mistakes, as far as my memory serves me right, in their voting. It is because of that, the electors should be able to bring a petition, asking for a Member's removal from the Council, which might eventually result in that Member having to fight a by-election for the retention of his seat. The hon. Member must further consider that fighting an election creates a lot of discord among the inhabitants of the particular area, and if that is not allowed time to cool off it would continue, and the hon. Member should know what the consequence would be. I would suggest to him that in all fairness to the electors of this Colony he accepts this amendment whereby this question would go before the Committee which is to consider the changing of the Constitution. I would like to join in sounding that note of warning of the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara. He has fully put it before this Council in the manner in which it should be put as regards violation, if this is passed, of the rights of Elected Members of this Council at the whims and caprices of a small number of people.

Mr. DEBIDIN: To a point of explanation! Is the amendment of the hon. Member for Essequibo River to the effect that the substance of this motion be referred to the Committee to be appointed

by His Excellency the Governor for examination along with the Reform of the Constitution? If that is so, I believe there are Members who would like to second that.

Mr. LEE: I am asking the mover of the motion to accept the amendment as his instead of the one that he has put forward. If he does not I would move it as an amendment and would accept the suggestion of my friend, the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara, by adding a further resolution that it be referred to the Committee that will be considering the other matter.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: In order that I should know where I am as regards the amendment, I would be glad if the amendment be handed in. I might point out that the question of rising to a point of explanation is a very narrow one. It is usual to rise to a point of order, but on a question of explanation it is to ask an hon. Member to explain what he means. I take it that all hon. Members mean what they say and say what they mean.

Capt. COGHLAN: I would like to clear up some confusion that exists in the minds of some of the speakers who have gone before. The mover of the motion says Members make promises to the electorate which they do not keep, and there ought to be some machinery by which they can be recalled. In the first place, that is assuming that a man belongs to a particular party; but the man who does not belong to any party cannot be subjected to the discipline of a party to which he does not belong. Therefore, as regards the allusion that promises on adult suffrage were made, those promises were made, I take it, by members of the British Guiana Labour Party, but there are others who succeeded at the elections who belonged to no party at all. Whilst I am aware that if you belong to a particular party and you do not live up to the traditions of that party there is one thing that party can do to you—expel you from the party—but though you are expelled from the party you cannot be expelled from the Council Chamber. There-

fore, I would like to make that point clear.

The next point is how can you make it work. The mover of the motion said that if 25 per cent. of the electors signed a petition to have a Member recalled that should be sufficient. Let us take it that there are 6,000 voters in a constituency and there are five candidates for that seat in the Legislative Council. The successful candidate gets 1,500 votes while the other four get the other 4,500 votes between them. In other words, the successful candidate succeeds by 25 per cent. of the voters in his election, and so 75 per cent. of the voters are against him notwithstanding the fact that he has won. If there are 75 per cent. of the voters against him already, it is a very easy matter to get 25 per cent. to sign a petition to have him recalled, considering that 75 per cent. had already signed such a petition, as it were, in view of the fact that they did not vote for him. If you are going to make that practical, you should say that 25 per cent. of the 25 per cent. that voted for him at the election should sign the petition. That would be commonsense.

But, Sir, we have had enough of trouble already with election petitions and, I think, to have recall petitions on top of election petitions we will have nothing but one turmoil from the beginning of one five years' period to the end of it, and it will be the happy hunting-ground of political parasites. That is exactly what it amounts to. It would be the easiest thing in the world, as I have said, to find 25 per cent. of the voters to sign such a petition. But who is going to check those signatures? Would the District Commissioners, who have enough work already, be made to play into the hands of political parasites by checking that 25 per cent.? We want another set of machinery for that, as there will be nothing but election petitions and recall petitions. As soon as a man is elected to the Legislative Council there will be no need any longer for an election petition to unseat him. It will be cheaper to have a recall petition, and the machinery will be a little more complicated. What it would mean is

this: When a Member has been in the Legislative Council for one or three months there would be this recall petition against him, and in the five years' life of the Council you might have 12 persons having been elected to one seat. They will be always coming and going. It reminds me of the lady who always had six servants — three were always coming and three going. It will be the same way with Members of the Legislative Council.

The next point the hon. Member has made is that Members vote contrary to the wishes of the people. With regard to that, I know I am indebted to the people who have put me to represent them in the Legislative Council by giving me their votes at the election, but I have yet to learn that I am indebted to the same people for the intelligence given me by Almighty God to represent them. Therefore, if I use my own intelligence, my own reasoning powers, my own judgment, through which they have put me here to represent them because they thought I was the most able among the candidates to represent them, I have done nothing wrong and I do not see why I should always go back to them for them to dictate to me or to direct me how to vote in the Legislative Council, as long as I vote according to the dictates of my conscience and use my own intelligence, reason and judgment. Furthermore, if there are to be these recall petitions would it not be relieving the people of the constituency of their responsibility in selecting candidates? The responsibility rests on them to select as their representatives in the Legislative Council persons who they think will give them the best representation for five years, but if they can elect them for only a month or until such time as some political agitators or parasites get up petitions to throw them out, then after their election to the Legislative Council and after all the expense of the elections to Government no Elected Member would be sure of his seat for three months.

Mr. GONSALVES: As it is approaching 5 o'clock I will not say much. I am against the motion in its entirety. I see nothing good can come out of it. It would be, as described by one hon.

Member, a nuisance motion. Its only value is the nuisance value and, as the last speaker has just put it, it will be a playground for political parasites. Put in a nutshell, Elected Members of this Council will be threatened by these political parasites and will have to be giving them grants all the time. It is a very simple thing to get 25 per cent., of the electorate, if 75 per cent. had voted against a successful candidate, to make a recall petition. I am bold enough to say what this motion is intended to do or has as its object, or the outcome of this motion, is the getting at one particular Member. I had the pleasure of listening in at a street corner meeting recently and hearing it said that one particular Member had got into the Legislative Council at the last elections on a Labour ticket and had voted as a Capitalist. With the passing of this motion following on those lines, it can be seen that we are heading towards confusion and that this Council will have no *staid* regime. After a Member has been elected to the Council and

has been appointed to several committees, before he has served several months he might be thrown out and on another being elected in his place not very long after he too might be thrown out. We are heading towards disaster. Nothing will be settled, and this Council will be just a playground for political parasites. With that I move that the question be now put.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It is 5 o'clock. I do not know if Members would like to continue in order to finish this motion or to adjourn the debate, as I propose adjourning until tomorrow at 2 o'clock in order to meet the convenience of the Members for Berbice who seem to think they are not always considered. I think it is more convenient to them for us to adjourn to tomorrow instead of Friday.

The Council was adjourned to Thursday, 2nd September, 1948, at 2 p.m.