

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Friday, 20th April, 1945.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon LETHBRIDGE, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethbridge, K.C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C., K.C.

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

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C. (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E. (Georgetown North).

The Hon. J. A. Luckhoo, K.C. (Nominated).

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E., (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. H. C. Humphrys, K.C. (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North-Western District).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. A. M. Edun (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

The PRESIDENT administered the Oath of Allegiance to Mr. M. B. Laing, C.M.G., O.B.E., Colonial Secretary (Acting) who then took his seat.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 19th April, 1945, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.**GOVERNOR'S VISIT TO BARBADOS.**

The PRESIDENT: I will be leaving Georgetown this afternoon and will be going to Barbados to-morrow morning for the week-end, returning on Monday morning, so I shall have a short time in Council. I shall ask to be excused and shall ask the Deputy President to take the Chair. I am going to Barbados particularly to have a consultation with the Comptroller of Development and Welfare on some of our more important projects and to see what immediate progress can be made with them. I am taking the Colonial Treasurer and the Director of Education, particularly the latter, for discussion with the Comptroller's Advisers so as to expedite our own projects and the Treasurer for the various questions for discussion.

I am taking a copy of the Draft Bill on planning the devastated area to see if the Town Planner might be able to give us any help on that and

other proposals of that kind. We will proceed with the motion by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun. Certain Members are attending Court and will attend later.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INQUIRY.

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion:—

WHEREAS the recent Public Works Conspiracy Case that was heard and concluded in the Supreme Criminal Courts of British Guiana having very clearly disclosed that grave irregularities in the general administration and in the expenditure of Public Funds by that Department are being committed.

AND WHEREAS the very nature of the such and said existing irregularities is absolutely inimical to the best interests of the tax-paying element of the Colony, aforesaid, and that the said tax-paying element continues to experience and exhibit a very deep feeling of uneasiness;

AND WHEREAS not having since or subsequent to the determination of the said case made, in fact, any public announcement or otherwise given any information, knowledge and/or intelligence to the said tax-paying element of any course of action which it may consider desirable to prosecute, with the view to restore the people's confidence in the aforesaid Department of Public Works;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommends to His Excellency the Governor the desirability of setting up a Competent Committee of Inquiry to investigate and report on the broad and detailed functioning of the Public Works Department, aforesaid, in relation to all works of a public nature undertaken and carried on by the Department aforesaid: e.g., the Drainage and Irrigation Board, the Pure Water Supply, the Transport and Harbours Board and other Boards connected and entrusted with Schemes within the Colony of British Guiana aforesaid;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommends to His Excellency the Governor the appointment of a VIGILANCE COM-

MITTEE comprising of Members of the Legislative Council to act as watch and ward on the expenditure of Public Funds by the Departments aforesaid.

Mr. EDUN: Sir, yesterday I mentioned about instances of wastage and irregularities in the Public Works Department. I had intended to refer to graft and nepotism that are being carried on in that Department. You will remember that I expressed the desire that the Chairman of the Advisory Committee should particularly attend the debate on this motion in order that he should grasp fully the importance of what will be discussed here so that he will be able to advise the other members of his Committee, although this Chairman happens to be an Elected Member of this Council representing a part of Essequibo. It is simply because of the fact that I have placed some faith in the functioning of these Advisory Committees I have taken that course, so that it cannot be said that things were said here in his absence and he would not be able to reply to them. Perhaps he may see the result of the debate, but as an Elected Member of this Council and Chairman of the Advisory Committee of this Department he should be in attendance. He was present yesterday and I expected him to be here to-day.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I do not think the hon. Member heard what His Excellency the President said. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo hopes to be here by 2.30 o'clock.

The PRESIDENT: Would you like to postpone your opening until the hon. Member arrives? We can get on with some other business in the interim. Are you willing to do that?

Mr. EDUN: It is a matter entirely in Your Excellency's hands.

The PRESIDENT: I do not want to stop you speaking, but if we are to wait for the hon. Member we can

go on for fifteen minutes with one of the motions standing in the name of the Treasurer. With the consent of Members I call upon the Treasurer to move the motion standing in his name.

Further consideration of the motion deferred.

CONVERSION OF 4% BONDS INTO 3½%

On a motion by the COLONIAL TREASURER seconded by Mr. SEAFORD, Standing Rule and Order No. 9 was suspended to permit of items 2 and 3 on the Order of the Day being taken at this stage.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move the following motion standing in my name:—

That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 34 dated 9th April, 1945, this Council approves of an offer being made to the holders of 4% bonds of the 16th and 18th issues under Loan Ordinance No. 6 of 1916 to convert their holdings into 3½% bonds of the proposed new local loan.

This motion is purely formal, and it is put before Council in this form merely to draw Members' attention to the action which is proposed as forming part of the scheme for raising a new loan which was approved in this Council yesterday. In the course of my remarks yesterday I mentioned that this effort will be made. I referred to the fact that there were \$38,150 outstanding in those 4 per cent. bonds and that we had given notice that we will exercise the option of redemption prior to maturity on the 1st January, 1946. I also stated that the Sinking Fund has so far an estimated yield of \$200,000 and that normally the balance required to complete the redemption will be charged against the new loan. I also went on to say that we will make this effort of conversion and I have every reason to expect that practically all

the bondholders will accept and, therefore, the \$200,000 will become an accretion to our new loan. As I said, sir, the motion is purely formal. I do not think it does require formal authority of this Council to make such an effort, nevertheless it is put before the Council for consideration and approval. I beg to move it.

Mr. SEAFORD seconded.

The PRESIDENT: The Treasurer said that this motion is largely of a formal character, particularly in view of the fact that we had passed the principal motion yesterday. Would any Member, however, care to address Council on this particular aspect of the proposed loan? If not, I propose to put the question.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion passed.

CHURCH ENDOWMENT SCHEME.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move—

That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 35 dated 9th April, 1945, this Council approves of the proposals as set out therein providing for the surrender to the Churches concerned of the surplus on the sinking fund established for the repayment of the Church Endowment Bonds issued under the Churches (Financial Assistance) Ordinance, Chapter 228, now Government Bonds to be issued to the holders thereof on redemption in lieu of cash and of the introduction of the necessary enabling legislation.

This motion is very much more important than the one I have just previously moved. Twenty-five years ago the Legislature of this Colony, then the Combined Court, disestablished the Church in British Guiana. It did so on the basis of a comprehensive scheme which was prepared by a Committee headed by a former Colonial

Treasurer, Mr. Clifton Grannum. The scheme was a most reasonable and proper one in that it provided for the creation of an Endowment Fund and also for the continuation of financial assistance to the religious denominations for over a preliminary period in order to allow them reasonable time to set their affairs in order in view of their changed situation. The scheme did so by providing for the issue to the Churches of special 5 per cent. Church Endowment Bonds. Those Bonds were allocated to the various Churches in certain specified proportions which were arrived at on a suitable basis determined by that Committee. At the same time actual cash grants were made in annually reducing amounts; the last of these cash grants is payable in the current year.

Hon. Members will remember that under the Head "Ministers of Religion" three sums payable to the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland have been regularly appearing year by year in reducing amounts and, as I said, the last instalment is payable in the year 1945. At the same time the Church Endowment Bonds to which I referred mature on the 1st January, 1946. One feature of this setting which I consider was unfavourable to the Churches was the fact that the amount of money required to meet the annual contribution to the Sinking Fund established to repay those bonds—a sum of \$15,000 per annum—was charged against the grants payable to the Churches in arriving at the total of the capital of the Endowment Fund. In other words, the Churches themselves were made to provide the Endowment Fund; it was not provided by contribution direct from public revenue.

About two or three years ago when the Churches realized that the time had arrived for the redemption of those bonds, the Heads of the Denominations were greatly concerned

over the position. It was quite obvious. This large sum of money, \$639,000, to be divided among the Churches, would be payable in cash to them on the 1st January, 1946, and they had been receiving the interest on this money at 5 per cent. per annum. It seemed clear to them that they would have little means of reinvesting the proceeds of this Fund in any security which would yield anything like 5 per cent per annum, and so they faced considerable diminution in their annual increment. They were greatly concerned and to their credit, it is said, they took steps promptly to try and raise their own endowment fund as much as possible. I remember the Bishop of Guiana taking the lead in trying to enhance the Church of England's own fund. Nevertheless whatever they did it seemed clear they were going to face a substantial loss. At that time I myself called a meeting of the Churches together in order to discuss the situation, and the Heads of the Denominations readily consented. We held a meeting at which I pronounced the origin of the scheme which is now before the Council. I proposed to the Heads of the Denominations that the Government would issue to them bonds in lieu of repayment in cash. I felt sure that at some time—I was speaking in the year 1943, I think it was—that the opportunity would arise very shortly for the Government to issue a loan of some sort, either a big loan as recently approved or a small loan designed merely to redeem outstanding 4 per cent. Bonds to which I referred, and I told the Churches it might suit their purpose if they would undertake to receive new Government Bonds in lieu of cash on redemption of the Church Endowment Bonds. That is the first point of this scheme. The Churches have agreed and Government has agreed to issue to them new bonds in place of cash on redemption of these Church Endowment Bonds, and the new bonds, now that we have agreed to issue a new loan at 3½ per cent., will form part of that loan.

The next point is this: The Sinking Fund which has been accumulating during the past 25 years for redemption of those bonds is full. That is to say, it has already obtained a sum in excess of the amount required to repay the bonds. That is very definite because up to last year, I think, the Sinking Fund was valued at something like \$720,000 whereas the capital of the bonds to be repaid amounts to only \$639,000. Now I propose, and the Government has agreed and the Secretary of State also has agreed, that it is equitable that the total amount of the Sinking Fund should be paid to the Churches and not only the precise capital of the bonds they hold. That Sinking Fund is anticipated to reach a total of \$720,000 on the 1st January, 1946, and this motion before the Council asks for authority to pay not only the precise capital of the bonds held by the Churches but also the surplus on the Sinking Fund, that surplus to be allocated to the Churches concerned in proportion to the bonds held by each.

I have already said that this scheme by which the Church of British Guiana has been disestablished was put through by means of the creation of an endowment fund. I also said that the annual contribution to create that endowment fund is derived by a deduction from the grants which would otherwise have been payable to the Churches and, therefore, properly speaking the whole of this endowment fund, the whole of this sinking fund to repay the bonds, to some extent belong to the Churches. Therefore this proposal is one which is equitable. I feel that Members will agree that the continuation of the work of the Christian Religious Bodies in this Colony in a proper manner is vital to the life of the community. I myself make no apology for having been the originator of the scheme which has been accepted by Government. Of course, State Aid to the Churches is a matter of controversy. Fortunately no controversy arises here for the reason stated. This money is an endow-

ment fund already provided in connection with the disestablishment of the Church in British Guiana. I hope therefore that the motion commends itself to Members of Council. If it is passed a Bill which is on the Order Paper will be introduced in order to go into it. I beg to move the motion.

Mr. SEAFORD seconded.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I had tabled a motion dealing with this matter and I do not wish to refer to it except to say that I was not asked to serve on this Committee. I was told a Committee was going to be appointed, but I was never asked to serve on it. I have risen for the purpose of calling attention to the Congregational Body. I had hoped that the opportunity would have been given me then and that they would have been represented at this Committee. It is true they have never received State Aid. It was always against their principles to receive State Aid. The position in this Colony is such that it is being forced on them to appeal to the community and in that respect to the Government for financial assistance. The London Missionary Society used to discharge almost all their obligations and this Government helped in the matter of their churches and missions and still does a great deal of good towards that direction, but their immediate need is active financial support in the maintenance of their churches. They simply cannot go on. I know that not being the recipients of any grants from outside in relation to endowment their position has become very difficult. It would appear from a letter which I have received from a very prominent member of that Church—the Chairman of that Body is up the Berbice River and I do not know the source of his information—that some time ago it was suggested to them to apply to Government for inclusion among the recipients of grants to Churches and they did so and were informed that their application could not be enter-

tained at the time, but if the subject was reopened some time later their application would be considered in the general scheme. There has been no general scheme and I do not know who could have induced them to think they would have been supported by a grant in aid. But, sir, that is the position unfortunately.

I think it is true to say they were the first people to erect a church building in this Colony, and it was the first religious body to ordain a native minister. The usual ordination would suggest that he was a preacher. I believe that is the popular expression of the Congregational Body. I do invite you, sir, to endeavour by some means to devise some means whereby these churches, and there are many of them, will not go out of existence. It is impossible for them to be supported by their own congregation and, whatever the cause, I feel this position should not arise. I do hope that it will be possible for some assistance of some kind to be rendered them in some particular way without offending the disestablishment question which I am not at all anxious to raise.

Mr. EDUN: I am tempted at this juncture to make a few observations. You will appreciate the fact that I happen to be not a Christian. I am a Mussulman, a follower of the religion of Islam. I take pride in its teachings and doctrines and I want my community of people to live in accordance with the principles of its doctrines. The Christian Churches were propagated in this Colony by missionaries with organized societies behind them. A lot of money was spent to proselyte the people in this Colony. So far as British Guiana is concerned the Hindoos and Mussulmen have not been able to do propaganda work at all. As a matter of fact there is no missionary among them except the Aryan. Coming here as mere labourers they have withstood the onslaught of proselytism and today it is difficult to find a Hindoo or Mussulman becoming a Christian. I appreciate when the hon. the Colonial

Treasurer said we all agree that everyone should have a religion. It is a definite moral background. But I hate to think that you will change a Hindoo into a Christian and make him a better citizen. I know that now-a-days there is no idea of making people Christians at all but just to decentralize them and get them out of their natural surroundings. You more or less make them half-castes or half-breeds in religious ideas.

I think all religious bodies should be given equal consideration in a question of this kind. I am thinking of the "Wakf" system or endowment for the Muslim authority. Perhaps Your Excellency knows more about the "Wakf" system in the Arabic sense. An endowment similar to this would help those religions I am pleading for, and I hope the time will come very early when Government will be broadminded enough to give those bodies financial assistance.

Motion put, and agreed to.

PUBLIC LOAN BILL, 1945.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that the following Bill be read the first time:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make provision for raising in the Colony a loan not exceeding five million dollars."

Mr. SEAFORD seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

CHURCHES (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)

BILL, 1945.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that the following Bill be read the first time:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to vary the manner of redeeming the Bonds issued under the Churches (Financial Assistance) Ordinance; to authorise the issue of debentures to certain religious Bodies; and for matters connected therewith."

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO P.W.D.

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion by Mr. Edun:

WHEREAS the recent Public Works Conspiracy Case that was heard and concluded in the Supreme Criminal Courts of British Guiana having very clearly disclosed that grave irregularities in the general administration and in the expenditure of Public Funds by that Department are being committed;

AND WHEREAS the very nature of the such and said existing irregularities is absolutely inimical to the best interests of the tax-paying element of the Colony, aforesaid, and that the said tax-paying element continue to experience and exhibit a very deep feeling of uneasiness;

AND WHEREAS not having since or subsequent to the determination of the said case made, in fact, any public announcement or otherwise given any information, knowledge and/or intelligence to the said tax-paying element of any course of action which it may consider desirable to prosecute, with the view to restore the people's confidence in the aforesaid Department of Public Works;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommends to His Excellency the Governor the desirability of setting up a Competent Committee of Inquiry to investigate and report on the broad and detailed functioning of the Public Works Department, aforesaid, in relation to all works of a public nature undertaken and carried on by the Department: aforesaid: e.g. the Drainage and Irrigation Board, the Pure Water Supply, the Transport and Harbours Board, and other Boards connected and entrusted with schemes within the Colony of British Guiana; aforesaid;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommends to His Excellency the Governor the appointment of a Vigilance Committee

comprising of members of the Legislative Council to act as watch and ward on the expenditure of public funds by the Departments, aforesaid.

Mr. EDUN: I am very pleased indeed that the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) is here, because he happens to be the Chairman of the Public Works Advisory Committee. I have some little confidence in these constitutional innovations. I consider that an enlightened opposition to discuss these things, move motions and advise through the Chairman and members of the Advisory Committee is in the interest of the Colony as a whole.

I said yesterday that there was a great demand for action by Government after the conspiracy trial. Were I in the same position to leave a matter of this kind in the hands of the Department alone I would have said that it was customary for a Government Department to keep shy of the issue. Nobody would like to set up any organisation to condemn itself, but in conformity with this demand for action on the part of Government what did the Advisory Committee do? I am tempted to ask: Has Government any obligation to allay public feeling in a matter of this kind? Why was this purposeful conspiracy of silence engendered by Government? If a Departmental Head had done that I would not have bothered at all to question the issue, but the silence was engendered on the part of the Advisory Committee. The Committee did not say anything about it, and there is where I feel that these innovations will not be worth the paper on which their constitution is written.

Apart from that issue, would you believe me, sir, if I told you that I have met with a rebuff from members of the Advisory Committee? They informed me that as members of the Advisory Committee they could not second a motion of this kind. If membership of an Advisory Committee precludes me

from exercising my rights as a Member of this Council I should keep shy of those innovations. Am I to understand that this is simply another form of administrative tomfoolery, or is the Advisory Committee a sort of *liaison* between the Department and this Council? That is where I feel somewhat perturbed.

I spoke yesterday of multiplying instances of wastage and irregularity, and I think I should do so in spite of the time that will be taken up because, in the interest of a clean public service and in the interest of the Advisory Committee itself, this Council should know the facts. It is incumbent upon me to say here everything I feel about it. Let me give one of the instances. There was a bulldozer for sale by the American authorities. I think the first offer should have come to this Government, but Pln. Uitylugt bought it. What was the Advisory Committee doing? I will give another instance. A man was working at the Seba quarry doing four different jobs, but not very difficult jobs. He was time-keeper, store-keeper and first-aid assistant. Today four men are employed to do the same jobs. Those are the things that contribute to the wastage. It does not matter, it is public funds, you can waste as much as you like!

I will give another instance. In crossing the ferry daily I see stone being unloaded at Vreed-en-Hoop. I ascertained that the prices paid the contractors for the stone were \$6.25 per cubic yard for $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, \$6. for $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, and \$5.90 per cubic yard for 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch stone. The stone was mixed with dust, and apart from that I gathered that it is not measured at all. The amount to be paid is simply arrived at by adding 3 and dividing by 3. That is the kind of chicanery we get. Nobody is prepared to measure the stone to check the quantity delivered. In another case a launch was bought

from a businessman in Georgetown for \$1,200.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I would like to follow the hon. Member's remarks. He said just now that the stone is never measured but is paid for by adding 3 and dividing by 3.*There must be some measurement or weight. It seems to me that if the stone is not measured or weighed there is no system at all. By simply adding and dividing by 3 what will you get?

Mr. EDUN: I think it is very easy to follow. There are three grades of stone $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, but the whole lot is dumped together. What they do is add \$6.25, \$6 and \$5.90, measure the entire lot of stone by cubic yards, divide the total by three and arrive at the amount to be paid. I want the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to investigate that.

The PRESIDENT: I have stayed a little longer than I intended in order to hear something of the hon. Member's speech, but I am afraid I must leave now and ask the Deputy President to preside. There is one thing I would like to say before I go. We are not making very great progress sitting as we do only two hours a day, and every invitation I have made to Members to come back after dinner has met with a very cool response indeed. I feel that with the heavy Bills which are to come before us we should make very slow progress unless we sit longer. My proposal would be that we should at least sit for three hours. I would like Members to consider that, because in a few days we will come to a Bill which will entail a lot of work.

Mr. EDUN: I think we should stick to the Standing Rules.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think we should argue it now. We made very good progress in December by sitting at night, but nobody wishes really to

sit at night. However, we will think it over.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT PRESIDES

The PRESIDENT then left the Chamber and the Deputy President took the chair.

Mr. EDUN (resuming): I was about to refer to the purchase of a launch for Bonasika. It was bought for \$1,200 but shortly after it was bought an officer of the Department told the man who purchased it that he would not have paid more than \$200 for that old hull. Those are things which the Advisory Committee ought to have been able to ferret out. Some people will say that there is nothing in these things, but I am guided by experience that where there is smoke one must look for fire, and if there is need for anybody to look for that fire why not have a public inquiry? I maintain that if the Department, or this Government, has acted according to the true principles of justice those few persons who went to jail as scapegoats should not have been the only ones to face that trial. It appears to me that in this country there is escape for some people from anything they may do. Is that the reason why Government has been so silent? Is that the reason why the members of the Advisory Committee did not say anything about it? That is the reason why no public or departmental inquiry was held into that matter—because some high-ranking officials would have been implicated. It was sufficient to appease the public by putting up a few scapegoats.

I think the time has come when we ought not to lend ourselves to this sort of chicanery. I had hoped that when the Advisory Committee was appointed a new order had come, but it seems to me that it is simply a shadow of the substance. It would be hard to believe that

in the Public Works Department there is a system of ducking letters. If a letter is addressed to the Director of Public Works he never sees it. Perhaps it has changed now, but there seems to be some evil genius within that Department who contrives not to place these things before the Director.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: Can the hon. Member give us an instance?

Mr. EDUN: I will. A letter was sent to the Director of Public Works on the 7th December, 1944, but no reply has been received yet. When I asked about it the Director said he had not seen it. What else can that be termed but ducking of letters? If I am to give another instance I will have to charge the Chairman of the Advisory Committee himself. A poorer man than he, and having more work to do than he, perhaps, I took the trouble to put things before him, but the result was that I had to wait until the 15th October before I received a reply to a communication sent to him on the 17th May. I had to remind him by letter and threaten that if nothing was done I would publish it. I do not blame him; I blame the system.

Somebody might ask why in my motion I suggest the appointment of a Vigilance Committee when there is already an Advisory Committee? I had great hopes in these Advisory Committees because I felt they were an innovation which would bring conciliation and harmony between Government and the governed, but they have not helped at all. But that does not mean that I condemn these Advisory Committees altogether, because I feel that at the next General Election, when a new set of Members will be elected to this Council on a proper franchise, the right type of representatives will be elected and a new order may see the dawn. But as things stand now I fear that no matter what Committee is formed the old order remaineth.

I thought I had said sufficient yesterday. I gave references to what the Press had to say about the matter. I referred to several extracts in order to impress on Members what the public thought about these scandals, but Government remained unperturbed. It irks me to think that a scandal of this kind had occurred and Government had not considered it its duty to say something about it, but feeling was allayed because a public trial was about to begin. Everybody waited to see what would be the outcome of the trial. Feeling ran high; all sorts of rumours began to spread as to how much money was involved. One rumour was that it was \$16,000, while another was that the figure might reach \$100,000. Rumours spread throughout the country, yet nothing was done.

When it devolves on a Member like myself I ask myself, "What is the duty of a legislator in a crisis like that?" What should a Member of this Council do when such a scandal occurs and the Government does nothing?" Perhaps some people expect that Members of this Council should act as a Police Informer and try to tell Government who and who may have committed those scandals. But, sir, I refused then and I shall refuse ever after to be dragged in as a Member of this Council or as a private citizen, or as a Police Informer to tell Government who is the culprit. As I stand here this afternoon I can put some people in trouble, definitely so. As a Pressman—It is said that Pressmen have ears all around their heads.—I know many things, but do you expect me, a Member of this Council, to prostitute this position of trust I hold by running and telling the Chairman of the Advisory Committee who did this act or that act? He knows fully well. I gave him one instance of the purchase of materials. I told him to look at such and such a locality and he would see the materials, and to see if there was not something wrong in the purchase of those mater-

ials. He acted promptly indeed and that attempt was stalled. I think he was satisfied that there was something wrong. Subsequently those same materials were removed to another quarter and I informed him again. I can go no further than that, but even that I am not prepared to do any longer and not again in my life. I do not intend to drag my name down by being a Police Informer.

In this motion I have asked for an inquiry into all public works — all works of a public nature undertaken and carried on by the Department. I have here before me some papers dealing with works under the Rice Expansion Scheme. I can prove to anybody that one Contractor made \$10,000 in 43 days, and I am tempted to believe that some persons higher in the Service than the Contractor were a party to that contract and the booty shared among them. In a matter of this kind I do not think a cumbersome advisory committee would assist at all. You want a Vigilance Committee, a committee composed of five members who can be selected from this Council and who will be able to examine the contracts and the sums involved, check them up with the previous contracts and see whether or not savings cannot be made, whether or not some kind of chicanery is being practised. That is the thing I want—some committee that will be able to examine these things within a short period of time even if they have to go to the locality to examine the works. They should be able to do so. I do not think it would be impossible. I think the only way to do that is to have a small flexible committee responsible to the Government, for after all \$2,500,000 is involved in the functioning of this Department. That is a huge sum of money which will perhaps take a man his whole lifetime to reckon if he has to do so in shillings.

I now come to the stage when I shall ask, "What is the true state of affairs?" Sir, having related to this Council what occurred, what was the feeling after the conspiracy trial? Government remained silent. I think the stage is set where the public demand an enquiry in order to ascertain the true state of affairs. What is an essential ingredient of a Democratic Government? It is a public enquiry when the situation is so dark, dense and gloomy that no citizen will be able to say where we can put our fingers on the leakage. Shall we set up a check sluice to stop this flow of wastage? When this Department is suffering from acute financial "diarrhoea" what antidote should be used? I want this committee of enquiry to investigate and proclaim what should be done, and if there are culprits right at the top who are possibly involved in this scandal they ought to be given their dismissal. This is a Democratic country, and what I am asking for is a competent committee of enquiry. At first I said a judicial enquiry but Government told me that a judicial enquiry is a high thing in England. I cannot comprehend that legal brain. I want some judicial probe into the heart of this Department to find out where the leakages are and how they can be stopped in the future, and let us have a clean public service. I would suggest that we have the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member, Mr. J. A. Luckhoo, K.C., as Chairman of such a committee and, I think, he should be able to get along quickly and make a report. We can then proclaim to the world that we are finished with the past and intend to handle the Department in its true perspective so far as finances are concerned and to see that the taxpayers' money is secure. It is an ordinary democratic right I am asking for.

What is the true state of affairs? There is urgent need for an investigation. Perhaps some people may want to tell me that after the scandal and after the trial things will subside and there is some assurance that the Service will be administered properly. But just recently, a matter of weeks, at the Head Office of the Department monies in the custody of responsible Officers and left in a safe went into thin air. Who is responsible for that? Up to now we have not heard anything. I took the opportunity to telephone the hon. the Colonial Secretary about it and all he told me was "Well, the matter is in the hands of the Police." I asked him whether or not Government will be telling the public about the scandal at Anna Regina, and the hon. the Colonial Secretary told me that matter is also in the hands of the Police. These things do not tend to have the taxpayers in a happy frame of mind, and it is no use fighting against the fact that these things tell on the nerves of every Officer of this Government. It ought to tell on the Heads of the Departments when the taxpayers begin to feel they cannot trust them. I do not say the Heads of the Departments are guilty of such scandals, but I do say that as long as they are Heads of Departments they are responsible for the funds of the people. In my endeavour to do my duty I have asked this Council to recommend to Government the appointment of a committee of enquiry in order to take evidence. But apart from that I want the terms of reference to be so broadened that this Committee not only will examine how to check corruption but examine problems of this kind.—how to stop the sum of \$35,000 being used as an experiment in the Bonasika Scheme. \$35,000 is being thrown away there in experimentation through bungling between the experts. I expect the experts to tell this Committee of Enquiry how to offset destruction of the sea defences. Do you want

to tell me that there is no such expert in this Colony who can tell us that in a period of ten years accretion will be so severe in one place on the foreshore and in another place it will be depleted? If they do not know that, then they do not know their job and ought to get out of the country. It is Science, and if they just study it according to scientific principles they can say whether the current in the course of ten years will be at De Willem sea-front. We had a calamity at Nog Eens and in the course of another cycle of years we had a calamity at Leonora resulting in the wastage of thousands of dollars in sea defences because the experts have bungled. Those are things I want this Committee to examine and put a stop to.

To ensure that this Committee will be competent put some experts on it too. Let them examine whether or not certain works cannot be given out as piecework, why any building programme cannot be done under the piecework system, why there is no supervision to see that a carpenter does so much work for a day's pay and receives his pay in accordance with the piecework system. I have seen the kind of work which is being done, and here I must confess that I had seen the work done by the Transport and Harbours Department at the Vreed-en-Hoop Stelling and was pained to see how the workmen in this country do work. They mark time. Therefore, why should not a system be promulgated whereby you could give a carpenter certain piecework with just supervision to see that the work is done properly? The planters have succeeded on the sugar estates with the piecework system which is second to none in the world. Can they not help us with their experience in the Public Works Department to have the piecework system there too? The Committee particularly should see also that the works are given out to competent

men, and not to one man holding a contract somewhere on the East Bank, another on the West Coast and another on the East Coast and running around to all three places as boss of those contract works. Do you know why that is being done? That man is a favourite of the Head of the Department, or the Deputy Head, or some Engineer, and so gets all the contracts. There is no efficiency there and, therefore, this Committee ought to see that competent men, and not one or two but half a dozen or more, are given contracts throughout the Colony. They should see to it also and make certain recommendations that when an Engineer leaves his district on transfer to another district he does not take with him workmen from his former district. There is reason for that. There is horse sense reason for that. When he gets set in a district he makes friends and favourites. I have seen Engineers transferred to another district carrying with them the foremen and drivers. The same set of men who were working on the East Coast had to be employed on the West Coast, whereas it is a set policy on the part of the Department to help the people in a locality with employment on the work that is being done there. The workmen on the East Coast should be employed there and the workers on the West Coast should be employed there. There should be no transfer of the workers at all. The Committee ought to explore that and also make certain regulations which should not be brushed aside by the Engineers.

The question of materials is an important one. It is an essential item in the Department's functions--the purchase of materials. In that respect it is easy for anybody to get away with the goods. I have related an instance where I asked the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to intervene and see whether or not materials

were worth the money paid for them, and I am sure in that case there was something definitely wrong. So, sir, it will be in the best interest of this Department that the purchase of materials should be done by responsible Officers. In this case, as I have aforementioned, the Head of the Department at that time did not know that the materials were being purchased, yet the materials were requisitioned for. So you see, sir, it should be an essential function on the part of responsible Officers to purchase materials. The allocation of stores is another important work; that is, certain stores should be allocated to certain districts in accordance with their need, and those stores should be fully checked up and only given out by competent authority. I have found that recently there has been a change, but in the past anyone could go to get stores when it is needed somewhere. That is not good enough. Therefore under the terms of reference of this Committee the question of the allocation of stores, the giving out of stores, should be fully gone into and specific recommendations made in order to assist the Department, the Officers and the Advisory Committee. Those are suggestions I have got in my mind.

Whatever may have been the defects in the past, it is an old story now and an old sore. We all feel bad about it, but first and foremost this Committee of Enquiry should ascertain whether or not those who were put before the Court on trial were simply made scapegoats for an entrenched system of fraud. I use the word "entrenched" advisedly. In this case I ought to be guided by the experience of other progressive countries. Perhaps, sir, you more than anybody else would know what the Truman Committee has done for America. Mr. Truman happens to be now the President of the United States of America. It was a kind of Vigilance Committee and it saved millions and millions of dollars during the New Deal and during the war for the United

States Administration, simply because men were thrown on that Committee who made public their opinions on certain facts, who were businessmen more or less, who knew something about the works and who could go to the locality and give advice. It is something equivalent to that I want. Do not tell me this is a small country and therefore we cannot have a Vigilance Committee. The smaller the country the better we can do work. Therefore I do not see that a Vigilance Committee will be defeating the object of the Advisory Committee at all. The Advisory Committee will be administrative. Perhaps, I think the Advisory Committee will be only concerned with the expenditure of \$54,000.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: To a point of order! The hon. Member is continuing along the lines that the Advisory Committee is not only administrative but executive. The whole idea of these Advisory Committees is that they are advisory bodies and not executive bodies.

Mr. EDUN: I want more than that. I want a little bit of executive power in that Advisory Committee. Let us have it in another Committee. Let us have it for the whole public works, the roads, the sea defences, the pure water supply, public services like the Rice Expansion Scheme, the Drainage and Irrigation Schemes. All those things should be examined and their finances watched by this Vigilance Committee. That is what is passing through my mind—something not perhaps only for the Public Works Department but for every kind of public work carried on by any Department. After all, the Public Works Department, perhaps, is the nucleus for the other Departments on the question of engineering and so on. I agree with the hon. Member the Advisory Committee is just advisory and just makes suggestions. That is not good enough. Therefore I do not want anybody to get away with

the idea that I want a superseding committee. No, I want something definite. The Advisory Committee will be there advising the Public Works Department, perhaps the Police Department, perhaps the Medical Department, also the Education Department and the Post Office Department, and so on. Those are little committees revolving around the bigger one, but I want one big specific but not unwieldy Vigilance Committee responsible perhaps to the Legislature. That is what is passing through my mind. Maybe I am not able to define it more than I do, but I feel it is a move in the right direction.

But, sir, there is one bitter grievance which I have against the Department, and that is on the question of Trade Union representation and the Public Works Department and other such Government Departments where labourers have to be employed and do earn wages. I have before me, sir, an article and I would just give you a small extract from it, where the writer says that while you can deal with an employer in the matter of Trade Union representation, actual and otherwise, it is difficult to deal with the Head of a Government Department. That is true. I think it is the policy of the Imperial Government to have collective bargaining throughout its possessions, yet so far as the Public Works Department is concerned the tendency of its officers is to pose as Hitlers. That reminds me of that very trite saying:

"But man—proud man
Dressed in a little brief authority
Most ignorant of what he is not
assured
His glassy essence like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before
high heaven
As make the angels weep."

That is exactly what is happening when these officials employ labour. I have had to deal with them and I

have only succeeded because of my position as a Member of this Council, otherwise I would not get a hearing. I deprecate the attitude of any official who, when he is written to, has not even the courtesy to reply. It is stated in this cutting:—

"How would the workers fare in the case of a dispute in the Public Works Department? You can argue with a private employer, but when you argue with a Government employer you meet with a brick wall."

In my experience as a trade unionist I have hit my head against that brick wall several times, but I have succeeded because I happen to be a Member of this Council, and they feared that I might be able to get them ridiculed. I merely say: "I know what I will do, I will go further." I want this Inquiry Committee to examine whether or not these Departments are really sponsoring collective bargaining. There are instances where sea defence employees who were able to speak for other employees have been victimized. Strange enough, the private employers of labour are more amenable to reason than the Public Works and Sea Defence Departments. I am ashamed to say that in this Council, but I feel strongly about it and I want this Committee of Inquiry to examine that phase of the matter. After all it is the policy of the Imperial Government to encourage trade unionism and collective bargaining as a right.

I have taken up much of the Council's time. I think I have touched on all phases of the question, but before I sit down I want to make it as clear as I can that I do not intend to throw mud on any officer of this Government, and that this motion has been prompted by the pure and simple motive of securing a clean public service in this country. We want to be assured that if an officer makes a mistake he has erred honestly. If that much is engen-

dered in the hearts of the taxpayers so far as the public service is concerned then I think something will have been achieved. But before I sit down I wish to tell this Council that the appellation "Public Waste Department" was justified. Government remained quite silent after the conspiracy trial; its utter complacency could not be understood, and the public was alarmed and agitated. The people of this country need to know the true state of affairs. In my humble position as a Member of this Council I ask this Council to recommend to Government the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry, a competent Committee, to investigate the functioning of the Public Works Department, and to recommend also the appointment of a Vigilance Committee. I think I have done my duty and I shall sit down feeling that Members will give their support to my motion.

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: I intend to make a few general remarks on the motion of the hon. Member. I am sorry I was not here yesterday to hear his opening speech on the motion, but I feel that with respect to the first two preambles of his motion he stands on very solid ground. It seems to me that no one can ignore the fact that gross irregularities have occurred in the general administration of the expenditure of the Public Works Department, and that it is absolutely inimical to the interests of the taxpayers of this Colony. The recent conspiracy trial has disclosed certain facts, but the public is only aware of what has been disclosed. The object of the motion is to have a full investigation into the affairs of the Department so that there might not be a repetition of what occurred quite recently. I am not going to charge anyone—it is not my duty to do so—who was not a party to that trial. I am not going to say that some persons who did not face that trial were not *particeps criminis*, but I think I could make the statement without fear

of contradiction that there has been gross negligence in that Department, which has resulted in the loss of a great deal of money to Government, and I think the mover is quite justified in using the language he has employed in the first preamble to his motion.

I do not agree that Government was lying idle until this motion was tabled by the hon. Member. Those of us who have considered this matter know that Government was very much concerned, and I think Government will welcome a Committee of Inquiry into this Department in order to see that the frauds which have been committed, and which have been disclosed, and also those which have not been disclosed should not continue to be perpetrated. I think that a small Committee of the Advisory Committee might be appointed to inquire into the affairs of the Department. I am not going to blame the Head of the Department or his Deputy, but it came out at the trial that too much work was thrown on the Engineer of the particular district whose terrain extended from Kitty on one side to Ithaca from other, approximately 70 miles. He could not properly supervise the various sectional overseers who were employed under him, and I must say that in the course of the trial some of the overseers engaged in that district did not shape well at all.

It seems to me that a different system ought to be instituted by this Department, and a closer watch kept on votes which are passed in this Council from time to time. One thing that I can point to is the evil which has existed in this and, maybe, in other Departments of the Service, is the transfer of expenditure from one vote to another—the utilization of funds under one vote and charging the expenditure to another vote. Monthly reports submitted from time to time

by overseers are not properly scrutinized by the Engineers, and do not give a true picture of the work being done in the districts. As a matter of fact, from my knowledge gained at the trial, some of those reports were intended to deceive the Head of the Department, and the Government, that money voted was being expended judiciously and was not being taken from other votes. Things like those should be remedied.

I would suggest that a Committee composed of some of the members of the Advisory Committee should be appointed to investigate and put these matters right. I feel that no honest person, no Member of this Council knowing what has occurred, would object to the motion. I feel that the only amendment that should be made is:

“That this Council recommends to His Excellency the appointment of a Committee composed of Members of the Advisory Committee of the Public Works Department to investigate.....”

I feel that if such a Committee is appointed it would really be a good move on the part of Government, because other Departments which have large sums of money to expend in the various activities of the Public Works Department would take care in the future to see that no funds are lost in the system of work done by that Department. With those few general remarks I second the motion.

Mr. LEE: I was not present when the mover of the motion was addressing the Council, but whether a Committee of Inquiry composed of members of the Advisory Committee is appointed, or an independent Committee is appointed, I think that unless Government gives the Committee the power to hold its inquiry *in camera* the inquiry would be a farce, as nothing would be disclosed. I say that from experience.

Before the disclosure of the irregularities on the East Coast was made at the trial it was brought to the notice of certain Members of this Council that irregularities were going on there. The Advisory Committee had not yet been appointed, and those Members of the Council took the trouble to inquire into the matter and bring certain things to the notice of Government and the Head of the Department, but nothing came of it, except that somehow the names of our informants got to the knowledge of the Engineers, and they were dismissed. That reminds me that it was said to me that if a man wants a job and he can “pass the buck” certain people can give him a job. It is a disgraceful thing to say in public, but I was told so. I was further told that a certain clerk could get such a person a job.

It was not disclosed at the trial but I would like it to be noted here that many of the Engineers give to subordinates responsibilities which they should undertake themselves, with the result that difficulties and irregularities are created. The smaller employees of the Department will not say anything against those above them, through fear of being victimized, especially if, as the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Luckhoo, suggested, a Committee of the Advisory Committee is appointed to make an inquiry. Disclosures are made to Members of this Council, and I can say publicly that they have been brought to the notice of the Head of the Department, and the matters are being rectified. I have asked the Director to go after working hours to investigate certain things, and he has done so.

Responsible officers of the Department should not delegate their authority and responsibilities to subordinates who receive small salaries. If Government desires to give responsi-

bility to subordinate employees receiving small salaries they should be given some allowance to supplement their salaries, so that they should respect their positions and their responsibility.

I feel that no Committee of Inquiry into this Department would secure any disclosures at all. If Government desires to get information about these irregularities the Governor should appoint an experienced person and give him a roving commission to do as he likes and report only to the Governor. Several things would be brought to light in that way. A Committee of Inquiry would not bring those things out, because the subordinate employees would not say anything through fear of losing their jobs. Many of those subordinates are used by higher officials for the purpose of those irregularities. I know that statements are written by higher officers and subordinates are told: "You must write this statement."

An experienced person who knows about engineering work could go about the country and pay surprise visits. In that way many irregularities would be brought to light and checked. Government cannot expect to pay a clerk \$40 or \$50 per month and allow thousands of dollars to pass through his hands every week or fortnight. It takes a young man of very good character to withstand that temptation. I repeat that no Committee of Inquiry would bring to light what the mover of the motion desires to be brought to light. It can only be done by the employment of Inspectors who should report direct to the Governor—not even to the Head of the Department or the Chairman of the Advisory Committee. In that way public funds would be safeguarded, otherwise this motion would be a waste of time, and I cannot support it.

At this stage the Council was adjourned until Thursday, 26th April, at 2 p.m.