

SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Friday, 20th May, 1960

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

Deputy Speaker , Mr. R. B. Gajraj	
Chief Secretary , Hon. D. M. Hedges	} <i>ex officio</i>
Attorney-General , Hon. A. M. I. Austin, Q.C.	
Financial Secretary , W. P. D'Andrade (acting).	
The Honourable Dr. C. B. Jagan	— <i>Member for Eastern Berbice</i> (Minister of Trade and Industry)
„ B. H. Benn	— <i>Member for Essequibo River</i> (Minister of Natural Resources)
„ „ Janet Jagan	— <i>Member for Western Essequibo</i> (Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)
Ram Karan	— <i>Member for Demerara-Essequibo</i> (Minister of Communications and Works)
B. S. Rai	— <i>Member for Central Demerara</i> (Minister of Community Development and Education).
Mr. W. O. R. Kendall	— <i>Member for New Amsterdam</i>
„ R. C. Tello	— <i>Nominated Member</i>
„ F. Bowman	— <i>Member for Demerara River</i>
„ L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C.	— <i>Member for Georgetown Central</i>
„ S. Campbell	— <i>Member for North Western District</i>
„ A. L. Jackson	— <i>Member for Georgetown North</i>
„ E. B. Beharry	— <i>Member for Eastern Demerara</i>
„ Ajodha Singh	— <i>Member for Berbice River</i>
„ Jai Narine Singh	— <i>Member for Georgetown South</i>
„ R. E. Davis	— <i>Nominated Member</i>
„ A. M. Fredericks	— <i>Nominated Member</i>
H. J. M. Hubbard	— <i>Nominated Member</i>
„ A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.	— <i>Nominated Member</i>
Mr. E. V. Viapree—Clerk of the Legislature (acting)	
Mr. F. A. Narain—Assistant Clerk of the Legislature, acting.	

ABSENT :

His Honour the Speaker, Sir Donald Jackson—on leave
Mr. S. M. Saffee—Member for Western Berbice—on leave.

The Clerk read prayers.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council, held on Thursday, 19th May, 1960, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY

FREEHOLD TITLE ON HIRE-PURCHASE BASIS

Motion—

“Whereas the social and economic system which prevails in British Guiana is patterned on that of the Western World, India and Pakistan and provides for free enterprise and the ownership of property; and

Whereas the policy of the Majority Party of the Government is opposed to freehold ownership of land:

Be it resolved: That this Council urges upon the Government that freehold title on a reasonable hire-purchase basis be granted to—

- (i) farmers in respect of land they now occupy in Government Land Settlement Schemes; and
- (ii) persons occupying Crown Lands for farming.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When the hour of adjournment was reached yesterday afternoon, we were still debating the Motion calling for the granting of freehold title on a hire-purchase basis. The hon. Member for Georgetown North was then addressing the Council.

Mr. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, in his address yesterday the Minister of Natural Resources indicated that tenants of the Government owed large sums of money, and this circumstance was used as an argument against a change in the policy of the Government. The sum owed \$120,000, is a very sizeable one for any section of people to owe to Government. It is a very difficult situation for Government to admit, for while on the one hand Government allows this amount of money to be outstanding from people who are tenant farmers, the same situation does not apply to tenants of houses on the Government housing

estates in the environs of Georgetown. We have known of cases where people owing rents for Government-owned houses have been distressed by the Government; one wonders why such a situation should be permitted with the tenant farmers. If the Government is closing its eyes to the lapse of some people, then it should close its eyes to the lapse of other people.

The Government has protested time and time again against accusations that it has acted partially with respect to the inhabitants of this country, but here again is partial treatment! Perhaps one is entitled to ask whether the people who owe \$120,000, contributed a bag of padi each to the “padi for progress campaign” which was launched by the People’s Progressive Party. We must also ask if the Government is interested in the situation, for it borders upon negligence. Rather than ask farmers to make a gift of a bag of padi to the P.P.P. for the benefit of the Party, it would have been a more positive campaign if the people were asked to contribute a bag of padi towards the liquidation of the debt that is owed to Government.

We heard yesterday that the Government should be allowed to govern. In an almost frantic manner, the hon. Minister of Natural Resources said, “This Government will govern!” No one denies the right of the Government to govern, but it appears to me that the Government is now ruling, and not governing, for it discriminates between one set of people and another.

We were told by another speaker that Crown and Colony lands are lands of the people. So also are housing estates—they are lands and houses of the people.

It would appear that while the Government is denying the right to freehold property, it has, on the other hand, given acquiescence to that principle, for by its failure to collect rent to the extent of nearly \$120,000 it has no doubt

handed over lock, stock and barrel the lands occupied by tenants. Yesterday we were not told that any steps would be taken to collect the rent outstanding. It is for Government to govern and the Government will decide what measures should be adopted to collect the rent.

We, on this side of the Table, are entitled to form our own conclusions. My conclusion is that the Government is encouraging this situation. That is my conclusion, and it is for the Government to rebut it. In the absence of any statement as to what is being done to collect the rent, it is clear that Government is encouraging this situation.

We have listened to the history of slavery, and we have been told that those who are advocating a freehold title for land are, perhaps, desirous of having another stage of slavery in our lifetime. I said yesterday that history is being used by some people in a one-sided manner, for if it were not so we would have been told yesterday that prior to 1953 the holding of land under freehold conditions was a requirement of a political nature.

Prior to the introduction of universal adult suffrage, if a man wanted to become a voter and exercise his franchise at the Elections it was necessary for him to have certain qualifications — one of those qualifications was the possession of land to the value of “X” dollars. It is true that with the introduction of adult suffrage there is no longer any need for this type of qualification. But there are other reasons why people in this Colony desire to have land under a freehold basis. The possession of land is a strong incentive to home attachment. With your permission, Sir, I should like to read from page 159 of Johnson’s “The Disappearance of Small Land Owners” published by the Oxford University Press. It states:

“In France the poor man hoarded and bought land. To him the land was everything, and it had been from time immemorial, hence that strong attachment to his home.”

The possession of land is an encouragement to the owner to feel proud of his existence. He feels that he is tied to his family, and that their love for him is centred around the possession of land and property. No one in this Council can dispute the fact that this is also the basis upon which people in this Colony have been endeavouring to acquire their homes and land. No one can dispute the fact that the small man has been hoarding money to buy land, so that he can feel this attachment to family life. If anyone fails to recognize this, that person will be living outside of our experience and society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A Motion will have to be moved to permit you to continue.

Mr. Kendall: I beg to move that the hon. Member be permitted to carry on for half an hour.

Mr. Burnham: I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please continue.

Mr. Jackson: I was saying that in this country many small landowners have been doing what people were doing in France: hoarding money for the purpose of purchasing land, so that they can have this strong attachment to family life. It is my view that any policy which is going to destroy this system will be destroying this attachment to family life. It will be a pity to destroy something that most of us are so very proud of.

I believe that private ownership of land makes one feel that one belongs to the country in which one resides. Individual ownership is different in every respect from communal ownership. Who would look back with pride upon the possession of something owned by everybody? There can hardly be any

[MR. JACKSON]

comparison between the two types of ownership when one thinks of value and the results which will accrue from individual ownership as against communal ownership.

May I have your permission, Sir, to read from page 119 of the same book? It states:

"In the shifting and rapidly changing society in England, ownership of land has long been considered the only stable and certain proof of possession."

It is therefore conclusive evidence, as far as it can be examined, that ownership of land on a freehold basis makes one feel that one has a share in one's country. I am pained at heart to hear the people who once talked so much about the landless giving us certain views nowadays. They once told us that people should be given land to work. Today they tell us that occupying land under a leasehold tenure is better than freehold.

I have been told that he who owns the land has a stake in the country, and that the stake is greater when the ownership is individualistic. If our policy is to build up British Guiana as it should be built up, then we must encourage the means whereby people can demonstrate that they have a stake in the country of their birth. We are aware of the fact that the people in this country do not put any interest or zeal in something that is not owned by them. The people will take good care of their individual properties. The man who owns a house pays much more attention to it than he would if he were only a tenant. At the same time I do not agree with the people who are not prepared to care other people's property. Nevertheless, we are dealing with hard facts in a practical world, and we know that it is true.

I should like to read from page 157 of the same book. It states:

"Arthur Young once said that ownership will turn a desert into gold."

This is in support of the statement I have just made: "That people who own land under freehold conditions enjoy a greater degree of pride than under leasehold." Under freehold conditions the people are prepared to expand their ambitions, and they will develop the land much better than if they were working it on a leasehold basis. If you walk about the streets and villages you will find that almost every Guianese wants to own land so that he can pass it on to his family. We do not want to change this pattern of life which we have been following for years. Leasehold tenure is something new in our society, and people are trying to practise it on a larger scale than hitherto.

Let us look around ourselves as we go about from day to day and see the bright spots owned by people individually and not collectively. Collective ownership is fraught with danger, for it does not take into account human nature, psychologically. We know to some extent, perhaps limited or otherwise, that human nature is very often, if not always, opposed in principle and in practice to the thoughts and beliefs of other people; and that also is one of the reasons why individual holdings on a freehold basis would be, by far, a better policy than a leasehold one.

The Minister said that the large owners of land are today disposing of their land, and in this respect we have heard of a Mr. Deeroop Maraj in Essequibo. I am not aware of what Mr. Maraj is doing. Perhaps, he is singular in his attitude, perhaps he is not. But for every action there is a cause, and I would have been happier if the Minister had given the cause; if he had attempted to analyse why.

Perhaps the cause may be similar to that which existed in England some years ago where very bad financial circumstances had forced large farmers to sell what they had. Perhaps in this case they want to leave the Colony. Perhaps they do not want to have a stake any longer in the country. Perhaps they are doubtful of the future and they prefer to

cut and run. No one knows. Perhaps, too, management of estates of large assets is causing a headache to some people, and, perhaps, since the Government has power to acquire land which is not used beneficially, the people are saying: "Let us get what we can." But, of course, they, too, may want to cwe the Government; for if some lessees can owe large sums of money, why should not others? If "Mr. X" can owe, why "Mr. Y" cannot also owe?

But the Motion is one which has nothing to do with the large proprietor of land who is a private individual. I would have thought that the Minister of Natural Resources would have taken a hint from his Colleague, the Minister of Community Development and Education, but he did not choose to do that. He brought into this debate several factors which are irrelevant; therefore, we who have listened to them are bound to reply to them. But coming down to the basic principle of the Motion, it has nothing at all to do with land under 3,000 acres.

The Motion is asking the Government to change its land policy from leasehold to freehold ownership, and that does not envisage the owning of 1,000 acres of land; it does not envisage the owning of 500 acres of land. I think the Government's distribution policy is 15 acres of land per individual: I am not quite sure. Therefore, what is wrong? Why should we have to hear what Mr. Deoroo Maraj has done on a Motion of this kind when all that is being asked is that Government's policy be changed from leasehold to freehold ownership? The people on the estates who are tenants of the Government for years would feel happier and prouder of the situation, for while it is true that they owe — and we have heard it said yesterday that the people would have to borrow so as to cultivate their land—it would be better if they owned the land. If those who are tenants cannot pay, it is clear they have broken the conditions under which they hold their leases and that they have not the right to tenancy.

Whenever a man has a desire to improve upon what he possesses, he is going to take every step — his love for his possession would make it imperative to him and his family — to improve it beyond the point where he owes a debt to other people; and it is my conviction that those people who have owed money would never have owed to any one person \$120,000 collectively. It is a challenge. If the Government feels that those people with leases cannot have possession because they owe money to the people from whom they borrowed, then there is an easy way out. Let Government decide to lend them money so that there can be no aggregation of several holdings by monopoly. The Government need not have any fear. They have the power; and I submit in support of both the Amendment and the Motion, which seek to have the same thing in effect, that the Government should consider a change of its policy and let freehold ownership be substituted for leasehold, as at the moment is their policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any other Member who wishes to speak to the Question? Otherwise, I would invite the mover to say whether he wishes to exercise his right of reply.

Mr. Bowman: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would reply, but this debate being such an important one, I think there may be other Members wishing to speak. In fact, one Member has indicated, not to me but to a friend of mine, that he intends to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member must have heard me enquire of the Council whether anyone wishes to speak. No one having volunteered to speak, I now call upon you to reply. If you do not wish to, then I shall put the Question.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but I am speaking to the hon. Member for Demerara River.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER]

I would like to make it clear that this Council has business to be transacted. Persons who are Members of this Council must be in the Council Chamber if they wish to take part in the debate and, when the time comes, they will be given the opportunity to do so. If, through their absence, they have not done so, then they will lose their chance.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: We are grateful to Your Honour for the warning given to Members regarding their absence in the Council Chamber when they should speak.

To start, the remark was made in this Chamber yesterday that this Government must be given the opportunity to govern. At once I must ask myself: which Government must be given the opportunity to govern?—this Government or the imperialist Government which has been running this country for all these generations? For over 150 years this country has been under the heels of imperialism, and there has been no change in the imperialists' policy of keeping people in a very servile state—in a state of instability on the question of their attachment to the land.

Those who own land in British Guiana happen to derive their title largely from the old Dutch system of transport. Since then, there has been the Letter of Decree. But then, we heard yesterday from the hon. Minister, a very important statement which says, and I hope I am reading correctly from what is stated in "The Daily Chronicle": "The Minister asked if the Government were to sell its Crown lands what would happen to future generations?"

British Guiana has 90,000 square miles of land and a population of 550,000. I wonder what generations the hon. Minister is referring to — the 10th generation from now or the 200th generation from now? In these days of jet planes and sputniks, can the hon. Minister really and truly say that the people in this country would have land problems? Those of us who have travelled through

the continents would know that British Guiana, with its great natural resources and riches, only requires men with ability to make it a great country with a great future. For the next 200 years this country will never have a land problem if we have governments of the people, by the people and for the people. I do not see that of the Government we have today. In my concept, it is a mockery of a Government as responsibility is not in their hands. In some respects the Motion is somewhat hazy, but the meat is to be found in the resolution which urges upon the Government that freehold title on a reasonable hire-purchase basis be granted to—

- " (i) farmers in respect of land they now occupy in Government Land Settlement Schemes; and
- (ii) persons occupying Crown Lands for farming".

Paragraph (1) has my whole-hearted approval in that it seeks to give title to farmers now occupying small tracts of land varying from 5 to 20 acres on Government land settlement schemes.

As regards paragraph (ii) I know that huge areas of Crown land have been held in reserve for many years by the sugar companies, and that although they have been held for the purpose of farming they are not actually under the plough, or likely to be so for a very long time. This part of the Motion will not receive my support because I know the inequity which has been practised against many people in this country by those who have held on to large areas of Crown land.

On the question of leasehold versus freehold I would say that under the laws of this country the Government can change any system of land tenure. In Cuba the Government has seized many acres of land, and there was necessity for that Government to act in the way it has. There are individuals in that country who owned 40, 60 and 100 acres of land, and Cuba is about half the size of British Guiana with about eight times its population. So that the circum-

stances of land reform in Cuba cannot be put on the same footing with British Guiana. I do not think this Government would be well advised to continue the British imperial system of leasehold on Government land settlement schemes with the hardships which past imperialist Governments had brought upon the poor people of this country.

At Windsor Forest I happen to know that past Governments agreed to rent farmers land at \$6 per acre under lease for 99 years. As time went on Government was able to find loopholes in the leases whereby the term of the leases was reduced from 99 to 21 years with the right of renewal. In addition to that, whenever the opportunity presented itself the rental has been increased from \$6 to \$15 per acre. If a private individual had done that, Government would have shouted from the roof tops about the inequity of it. I do not necessarily refer to the Majority Party but I blame them for following the lead of past Governments.

I propose to show how dangerous the leasehold system is for this community and the hardships it imposes on the people. When the Vergenoegen Land Settlement Scheme was started the settlers were charged a rental of \$7 per acre which went up to \$11 and is now \$15 per acre. At the Cane Grove Land Settlement Scheme the rental was increased from \$7 to \$11.20, and is now \$15 per acre. Who knows, it may go to \$50 per acre. Therein lies the inequality on the people of this country, and I think this Government would be well advised to revise the land policy of the past imperialist Governments. I am sure that this Government is very much concerned about the economy of the country and about not being able to give more lands to the people, but by the policy it is pursuing it is robbing the poor to give the rich.

The Estimates for 1959 show that every one of the Government Land Settlement Schemes is losing money

while fat salaries are being drawn by those who administer them. In 1959 the expenditure on the Essequibo Estates, Anna Regina and the rest, was \$91,800, while the revenue was \$75,000, representing a loss of \$16,800 for the year. At the Windsor Forest, La Jalousie and Hague Scheme the expenditure was \$43,300 and the revenue \$21,600, Government losing \$21,700 on the year's transaction. On the Vergenoegen Land Development Scheme the expenditure was \$44,300 and the revenue \$37,900. At the Cane Grove Settlement the expenditure was \$102,600 and the revenue \$69,500, a loss of \$33,100 for the year. This is a case of gross mismanagement of the affairs of this country. No Local Authority in any part of this country incurs anything like the expenditure on these land settlement schemes, far less the loss they show.

I would ask: why have the rentals of lands in these land settlements been increased from \$6 or \$7 to \$15 per acre? Is it because rates, taxes and maintenance charges have gone up; if so, why have they gone up? It is because the leasehold system is rotten to the core, the imperialist system which keeps the people subjugated. There is no question of communism in it; it is a lot of nonsense to talk about communism. Government is simply following the old imperialist system. Let us make a survey from Crabwood Creek to the Essequibo Coast and find out what is being paid as rates and taxes on lands which are producing rice. We will find that it is not more than \$5 or \$6 per acre in any district. If that premise is correct, may I ask whether Government is charging those high rentals on land settlement schemes without any intention of giving the settlers an opportunity to purchase their plots?

The Minister of Community Development and Education should know what is the amount of rent and taxes being paid by people in the villages. I am sure that on the East Coast of Demerara, where the land is higher, they do not pay more than five dollars per acre for drain-

[MR. JAI NARINE SINGH]

age and irrigation. The excessive amounts which people have to pay should go to their credit as purchasers of the land instead of renters.

If Government wishes to impose restrictions against the fragmentation of land, I am sure such action would be accepted by all the people who know about the problems of land. Of course, in a place like India, they have done differently, and that is where the great Nehru has failed: he has continued the imperialist system. India today is a charity nation. Why? Because she has not adopted the new system. China, with 650 million people has done otherwise. Nor are we in the same position as China.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member making a comparison between this country and China, with 650 million people.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: One is a giant nation and the other is under imperialist systems. Today India is a greater slave than she was under the British.

Mr. Benn: Shame!

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: If you do not know, go back again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please address the Chair.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: It is generally accepted that the revenue from rice-producing land, considering the expenditure, is one which hardly reveals enough profit. It is the small man who plants rice. He does so largely to employ himself because he cannot find work elsewhere. If it were not for that today he would not have been in the rice fields. That is why I think Government would be well advised to look into this matter. Government would also be well advised not to think in petty terms of the greatness which awaits this

country of Guiana. We have vast areas of land, and you can fly over them for three-quarters of an hour and still see land covered with bush and jungle, and swamp. We do not, like Jamaica and Trinidad, have a lot of arable land. We have a vastness of land that is unimaginable, and those who are interested enough fly around to see this for themselves. Those who have gone to the North West District know the tremendous amount of territory you have to cover to go there. People have to travel there by ship and not overland. But our land is second to none in fertility and quality of production. We do not have to cultivate on mountains which erode and cannot produce tomorrow. We have flat lands with beautiful silt capable of producing for generations and generations.

When they talk about land, let them tackle the giants of the Rupununi, and then they will be tackling the correct problem. Thousands and thousands of acres of land are under lease. I think great days will come to the Rupununi. That land will be rehabilitated and will produce what the coastlands can never produce. Fertilizers will be used. People will come to the city to market their goods. These are matters that will engage the attention of the Government.

Do not press the small man. He needs your pity and your comfort. He does not need you to press him so that he can never rise again. Do not let us have any theory to press him. Theory cannot run a government. But I cannot blame what is called the Government. I have to blame our imperial masters. They have been keeping from our hands the national evolution of the people to get them where they want. While the lands are awaiting the know-how of skilled hands we cannot borrow on our own. No matter how many trips the Financial Secretary and the Minister of Trade and Industry make, they cannot get money to borrow. They must have the permission of the Imperial Government to borrow in order to do what is to be done in our land. They will get out and get out they must, because that is the only way happi-

ness can come—happiness in the true sense—to the people of this country.

Mr. Tasker: I do not wish to delay this debate any longer than I can help. If this debate has done nothing else, it has brought out the concern, the fundamental concern of the people over Government's intention about land. One or two speakers on the other side very properly pointed out that much of the debate has ranged beyond the confines of the Motion. But I would say that Government have only themselves to blame for this state of affairs, and if there is confusion of the issues it is because Government have not thought fit to bring forward a clear statement of policy with regard to land.

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources dealt with this yesterday, when he said that work was proceeding with regard to a policy: he said he had referred to this in the Budget Debate. I only feel that everything that has been said in this Chamber in the last few days, if it has done anything, has at least brought home to Government the very real urgency for such a statement at the earliest possible date.

The Minister of Natural Resources spoke yesterday on the question of land being held in public trust. Land is a natural resource in the same way as mineral resources or forestry resources. It is entirely true, as Government have argued, that where minerals are concerned, since they cannot be put back into the earth they should carry some form of royalty as a compensation to the State for that extraction, similarly, it has always been recognized that in respect of any agricultural land, he who owns it or works it should put back something into the soil. If the land which belongs to this country and its people is to be used for the greatest good of the greatest number, it follows that principles of good husbandry must be applied. I do not think any honest-minded person would quarrel with that.

One or two speakers have suggested that in this context the sugar industry has been or is to blame. I do not propose to make any apologies for the Sugar Industry. Looking back at history I have no doubt that the Sugar Industry, like other landlords in this country, was not so alive to its responsibilities in earlier years as it is today. What I would say, however, is that looking at the land resources of this country and more specifically at the land already in productive use on the coastlands, that the Sugar Industry's record today would stand up to the most searching examination. There is no doubt about the quality of the soil which is being tilled, nor about the way in which the soil is being renewed for the benefit of British Guiana through this particular industry. There is no doubt either that in spite of the many loose criticisms about the vast quantities of land lying idle, the responsible Ministers of this Government know all there is to know about that land. They have, over the past three years, had numerous discussions with the sugar industry about many parts of it, and they are well informed about such remaining parcels of land as may or may not have alternative use.

In its own way the sugar industry has also been making efforts to provide land in order to make a small contribution towards the solution of the problem of unemployment and underemployment which is the direct result of our growing population. Much can be made of the policy of labour stabilization. Very little, I notice, is made of our population growth rate.

It seems to me that in terms of the specific Motion on freehold **versus** leasehold of Crown lands, the hon. Minister of Natural Resources might have made a very effective case for Government's policy had he used, as he did in this Chamber in October last, a thoughtful quotation from Professor Arthur Lewis. I make no apologies for introducing a quotation since, if I do not, I shall be the only Member on both sides of the Council who has not done so. I refer to the debate on the Land Bonds Bill,

[MR. TASKER]

and the quotation appears in the *Hansard* for 1st October, 1959, at column 1965. With your permission, Sir, I would like to read this brief quotation on the subject of the terms of tenure. The article was entitled "Issues in Land Settlement Policy". Professor Lewis wrote:

"There has been considerable discussion in the West Indies as to whether tenants should be settled on freehold or on leasehold tenures. In fact, the use of these terms is unfortunate. There are many different types of freehold tenure, and, since these types overlap, the battle between them is largely a battle of words.

There are two principles at the basis of a good system of tenure: first, the good cultivator must have security, and secondly, the bad cultivator must be subject to dispossession; these two follow from the principle that the welfare of the land is paramount in any community where land is terribly scarce. These two principles can both be fulfilled under either a freehold or a leasehold system. Freehold tenure can be made subject to dispossession for bad cultivation, and is in fact ringed around with this and other prohibitions in some countries. And, similarly, leasehold tenure can be made secure, by law, to all good cultivators."

If we accept the argument that Professor Arthur Lewis puts forward, it seems to me that what we are talking about in every case where Government land settlement schemes are concerned is either a conditional freehold, or a conditional leasehold. If you extend this in a logical way, you come out with precisely the same terms of holding. The only point is: do you call it leasehold, or do you call it freehold? If that is true, and I believe it to be generally so, it seems to be a good case, in theory, for leasehold tenure on land settlement schemes.

I said a good case in theory, because there are two factors, especially in British Guiana, which qualify it. Firstly, we should remember that Professor Arthur Lewis was talking in the context of the West Indies, the great bulk of which, in terms of units, are composed of small islands. That is why in this context he refers to the welfare of the land as being paramount to any community where land is scarce. But with the best will in the

world we cannot pretend that land is scarce in British Guiana at the present moment, or for some time to come. We know that under cultivation on the coastlands are some 350,000 acres, and I am informed that nearly twice as much again is potentially available. In other words, heavy expenditure is required for drainage, irrigation, land clearance and so on.

In dealing with this question of acreage, the hon. Member for South Georgetown mentioned the acreage per person in terms of Trinidad. I think we would be well advised to remember that, in terms of British Guiana, we are roughly in the same position at the moment. If we deduct the urban population, in terms of our coastlands, we have roughly 350,000 people on 350,000 acres of land at the present moment. The point is that as much land again is potentially available, without taking into account riverain development, the development of the North West and other parts of the Interior. A point in favour of British Guiana is that land is not scarce. Land is plentiful. What is scarce is the finance for the proper development of the land and the skills with which that finance can be put to work in a short time.

The second point is a psychological one, and I believe it is at the root of the whole issue. There is surely a very strong psychological advantage in the word "freehold" as against "leasehold". Certainly, judging from the speeches that have been made here and the comments I have heard outside this Council on this matter, this country is very much alive to this psychological problem. It may be that this Government, or another Government, can convince the Guianese peasant, on whom this development is going to rest, that words mean nothing, and that the concept of leasehold is as good as the concept of freehold. It may be that the two terms, conditionally brought about, can be brought so close together that all of us will see there is no difference. I suggest, however, that there is still a very big difference, and

that is what this Motion indicates. I suggest, therefore, that in looking ahead in this problem of land policy, not only for land settlement schemes but also in a broader sense, it might well be worthwhile examining the similar problems that have been dealt with in other countries. Some examples have been given. One of the best which, to my knowledge, has not been given is one which I believe has been tried extremely successfully in the Middle East, whereby freehold is acquired after a conditional.

In Israel, vast quantities of public funds, as in British Guiana, have been used and are still required for expensive Land Settlement Schemes. In order to keep a perfectly justifiable and necessary check on the value that the nation as a whole will get from the land, they have produced a scheme whereby a tenant who occupies land for 10 or 12 years, or for any length of time that may be regarded as proper, should at the end of that time get a freehold right to that land. The point here is that he has an incentive, and I do not believe that we are going to find any more potent incentive in British Guiana than ultimate freehold ownership.

It seems to me, therefore, that in order to bring about the most effective use of our land, and to provide this incentive for the pioneering spirit of development, we must keep freehold intact. To what extent should a farmer be required to give a full account of his potential before he acquires freehold? That is something that can be worked out. Some period of time seems to me to be entirely reasonable.

If we cannot bring about some system whereby we can exercise a control over land which will be recognized as being entirely proper, and at the same time grant freehold titles under certain conditions, I do not believe that our land settlement schemes, or any development schemes, will ultimately produce as much as they can and they should. It is for these reasons that I propose to vote in

support of the Amendment moved by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Fredericks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? I will invite the hon. Mover of the Motion to exercise, if he so desires, his right to reply.

Mr. Bowman: I have decided to preface my reply to this debate by recapitulating an undisputed historical definition of the difference between leasehold and freehold for the benefit of the Government. Yesterday the hon. Minister of Community Development and Education, in trying to define leasehold and freehold to this Council, gave us a very ambiguous definition. I shall, with your permission, Sir, recapitulate what I have read to this Council when I opened the debate on the Motion, and I will quote from the Australian Encyclopaedia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not general, of course, for a Member, in replying, to repeat what he has said before. It is the normal practice for him to reply to any point which has been raised by any Member, to straighten things out but, in view of the importance of this discussion, I will exercise my indulgence and permit the Mover to read a portion of what he has quoted so that Members would form a proper opinion on the subject. I would not, however, permit him to read out everything.

Mr. Bowman: As I said, the Minister's definition is, to my mind, very ambiguous. I quote from the Australian Encyclopaedia:

"Freehold. The form of tenure known as a freehold was so called because it was the holding of a free man. A distinct from the tenures which were allowed to villeins or serfs, a freehold was heritable—it descended to the heirs of the tenant. The most important freehold tenure—in fact the most important of all land tenures—is the estate in fee simple. It is mainly distinguishable from other forms of tenure in that it is capable of enduring for ever. An estate in fee simple comes to an end only when the current owner dies intestate without leaving an ascertainable lawful relative. It is then said to escheat to the Crown.

[MR. BOWMAN]

Estates in fee simple are said to be the nearest approach to absolute ownership of land, the owner having almost complete dominion over it. The tendency of modern statute law, however, is to restrict not only the owner's power of disposing of his land but also the uses to which he can put it."

That is in regard to freehold ownership of land. I am going to read the portion which deals with leasehold:

"Leasehold. An estate in land the duration of which is measured by a term of years or other specified period of time, is called a leasehold. Originally terms of years or leaseholds were peculiar to the unfree section of English society, who were not allowed the dignity of bringing a real action for recovery if they were dispossessed. A lessee was obliged to proceed for compensation against the person who dispossessed him. Leaseholds accordingly became classed as personal property, a classification that still has some significance. A leasehold can be created only out of some larger estate such as an estate in fee simple, or out of a longer term of years. Thus A, the tenant in fee, could grant a lease for 50 years to B, who could grant a lease of the whole or part of the same land to C for 20 years, who could grant a lease to D for 10 years, and so on, indefinitely. In the above illustration the leases to C and D would be called subleases or underleases; A would have a freehold reversion and B a leasehold reversion. Each tenant looks to his immediate landlord, and *vice versa*; there would be no direct relationship, for example, between A and D.

The basis of most leases is that the tenant is let into possession in consideration of his agreeing to pay a periodical rent and to observe certain covenants and conditions relating to maintenance, repairs and so on. There is frequently a condition that the tenant will not transfer his tenancy nor create subleases without the landlord's consent. Normally a failure to pay rent or a breach of any other covenant or condition would entitle the landlord to forfeit the lease and to eject the tenant."

These are the two differences.

During yesterday's debate, Members of the Government and a Member on this side spoke strongly of the leasehold system. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Hubbard, in support of the Govern-

ment made mention of large plots of land which are held by the sugar estates, and he even reminded me of being a former sugar worker and of the conditions sugar workers had to endure on sugar estates where land was concerned. However, I want to say I made reference to them sometime ago. I said, at that time, too, that this Government is determined to foster State feudalism and not to give freehold title to its tenants but to give them lease under certain harsh conditions; and according to the dictatorial tendencies of this Government I am saying that the time would come when it would resume lands according to its whims. We have seen, clearly, indications of things to come. I am saying without fear or favour, this Government is only sparring for time. When independence is given I hope they would not be in Office. In fact, I am sure they are not going to be.

The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Benn): Well, don't worry!

Mr. Bowman: I must.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Member please confine his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Bowman: I feel like—[*Laughter*] As I was saying, one Member of the Government—I would be point blank in calling his name, the Minister of Community Development and Education — said the system which we are advocating is outmoded. Freehold is outmoded.

The Minister of Community Development and Education (Mr. Rai): I did not say so.

Mr. Bowman: I heard it distinctly and I took up the question with him here. He did say that this system which we are advocating — the system of freehold as opposed to leasehold — is out-dated or outmoded. I am saying that the system which they are trying to per-

petuate dates back to the Norman Conquest in 1066; and if this Government is progressive as it claims to be, it would give to each sugar worker a piece of land, because it is human nature to try to own something.

There are three Government estates on the West Coast of Demerara — La Jalousie, Hague and Windsor Forest. These estates were leased since 1912. My friend, the hon. Member for Georgetown South, made mention that these people got their leases from the Government for 99 years, that the original lease was \$6 and that if a man worked from then to now—48 years—and decided to change his vocation and sell his rights to another man, the Government would not allow him to sell his rights for the remaining 51 years. Immediately a man decides to sell his rights, the 51 years should be transferred to the man who buys from him. But no; what is the Government doing? The lease is reduced to 21 years and the rent is raised to \$15. This so-called Socialist Government is doing that. If something was in existence before they came into office, they have no right to change it.

Before the Socialists were in office, they told the electorate in Britain: "If you put us in we are going to do this, that and the other", and they tried to fulfil all those things when they got in. When they were campaigning in 1951, the Conservatives said: "You put those people in and they nationalized this and that; if you put us in we are going to denationalize those things." This Government has the power to do anything. Saying that they do not have the power is only throwing dust in the people's eyes. Even when I was with them I told them so. These people are misfits. They are unfit to be in the Government. They claim to have commonsense but I can do more than they.

I do not want to prolong this debate because this is a question which is going to be decided outside. In spite of the arguments which they have adduced, the

bone of my contention is not only freehold *versus* leasehold, but what I desire to see is that the rents that are paid by the tenants should be credited to a lease-purchase account so that when the value is paid the land should be transferred to them

Let me re-emphasize this point. It is true that I did not put that in the Motion because it would have made it too lengthy, but what I am urging is that rather than condemn those people to paying rents perpetually, the rents they pay should be credited towards the purchase price of the land when it is assessed. It is like purchasing a bicycle on the hire-purchase system. Those people have been cultivating their lands for about 48 years yet they do not own one inch of it. I am not arguing freehold against leasehold only. (Laughter). Members may laugh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that if the hon. Member would concentrate on his reply to the debate through the Chair he would not be disturbed by any remarks that are made aside. In that way we will get through the business much more quickly.

Mr. Bowman: I am not worried, sir, because I know the time will come when the people will decide. When Sir Frank McDavid introduced the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Bill it was a God-send to the P.P.P. for he did the dirty job which they intended to do, and that is why they introduced the Land Bonds Bill. I will remind them of something that took place in England in 1278. The Earl of Warren was called upon to show how he inherited certain lands. He had to present his title to those lands before a Court, but what did he do? He produced a rusty sword, about 200 years old, and said "This is my warrant. My ancestors came over with William and won the land by the sword, and with this sword I will keep the same against anyone who tries to seize it from me." I am quite sure that even if the P.P.P. have at the back of their minds the idea of taking people's lands away, the people will rise up against them.

[MR. BOWMAN]

Regarding the question of the sugar estates, I am not thinking of lands already developed; I am thinking of lands which are to be leased now by Government. I do not have the sugar estate proprietors in my mind. They know that in Egypt and other countries lands are being limited. I am in complete agreement with land utilization; that land should not be held by persons unless it is beneficially occupied. I am not worried about all that. All I am asking is that Crown lands which are being given out to farmers, and lands which are now occupied by settlers on Government land settlement schemes, should be made freehold. If the Majority Party want to condemn the poor farmers to the fate of paying rent perpetually, let them proceed on that line. There is a local saying "*Moon ah run till day catch um.*"

I have almost forgotten to make another quotation at this point. Here in British Guiana, where we have an abundance of land, we are thinking of confining our people to the leasehold system, but I have here a Communist magazine entitled "Polish Facts and Figures" dated 17th October, 1959, from which I propose to make a quotation to show that while our so-called Socialist Government is endeavouring to deny our peasant farmers the right to own land, the Polish Government, in the heart of Communism, is giving the peasants freehold title to their lands. This magazine is issued by the Press Office of the Polish Embassy in London, and on page 5 there is a news paragraph headed "Farmers Buy Land", which reads:

"More than 51,000 acres of land were sold by the State Land Fund this year. Last year farmers bought about 42,000 acres. A total of 99,000 acres of land has been sold by the branches of the agricultural bank since the decision concerning the sales of land was taken by the Government. Over 3,000 farmers bought new independent farms, particularly in the Western Territories."

This is a record of the Polish communists. The regime in Poland is a Communist regime, but in that country the Govern-

ment is selling lands to individual farmers. Here in British Guiana where we do not have a land shortage, our so-called Socialist Government is trying to confine our peasant farmers to the perpetual payment of rents. It has been said that settlers on Government land settlement schemes are not paying their rents. What is the reason for their not paying their rents? They are careless about paying their rents because they know they do not own anything, and they know that if they did not pay, nothing will come of it. But if they were *bona fide* owners of their plots they would pay their debts. [*A Member: Why worry?*] I must worry, Comrade. Please forgive me, Sir, I have been with them for such a long time —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know of your comradely feelings. [*Laughter*].

Mr. Bowman: The hon. Member asked why it is that the people in the villages owe so much rent. I think I have said enough, but let me make one last quotation before I close. I quote from "Inside Europe" under the heading "Interlude in Spain" on page 161:

"The political doctrine which has represented the loftiest endeavor toward common life is liberal democracy. It carries to the extreme the determination to have consideration for one's neighbor. Liberalism is the principle of political rights, according to which the public authority, in spite of being all-powerful, limits itself and attempts, even at its own expense, to leave room in the State over which it rules for those to live in who neither feel nor think as it does, that is to say as do the stronger, the majority. Liberalism — it is well to recall this today — is the supreme form of generosity; it is the right which the majority concedes to minorities and hence it is the noblest cry that has ever resounded on this planet."

I want to remind my friends — they are my friends although politically we are deadly enemies—that in spite of the feeling they enjoy of being all-powerful, they should watch their steps. The same hand that lifts you up will throw you down. All things in this world are subject to change, and the human mind is most susceptible to change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will put the question.

Mr. Benn: Sir, the hon. Member for Demerara River made reference to this Government leasing land under harsh conditions, and since this statement reflects adversely on the Government, I would crave your permission, under Standing Order 33 12(b), to say something further to my reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remember on a previous occasion when I had the privilege of occupying the Chair I did grant a Member of the Executive Council precisely what the hon. Minister of Natural Resources now seeks permission to do. However, it is my view that this Standing Order refers to permission to be granted to a Member of Executive Council who did not take part in the debate. The hon. Minister of Natural Resources has taken part in this debate, but I would be quite prepared to let another Member of the Government take the opportunity of replying to the charges made.

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan): Sir, two references were made, one by the hon. Member for Georgetown South and the other by the hon. Mover of the Motion in connection with harsh conditions imposed by Government in renting land. The Member for Georgetown South referred to the fact that the Government has raised the rental and has now charged people exorbitant sums for the rental of rice land, sums higher than those people paid for the rental of rice land, in other parts of the country. Then the hon. Member went on to regale us with the fact that Government was losing money and that, judging from the Estimates, Government was in a sense subsidizing farmers.

We must have constructive criticism and consistency of criticism. Let us examine the criticism of charging \$15 per acre in relation to the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance. The average basic rental laid down in that law is \$10 per acre; but there are a host

of other charges—for drainage and irrigation, maintenance, local authority charges and what not—and when these are added we find that in many or most cases the rental exceeds \$15 per acre.

Mr. Davis: On a point of correction, may I remind the hon. Minister that the rental for rice lands between the Mahaica and the Abary Rivers is \$7 per acre, and not a basic \$10; and there are areas where the rental is even lower. I take it that the hon. Minister is aware of the facts.

Dr. Jagan: I said I was speaking of an average, because in Leguan and Wakenaam the rental is \$12, while in most parts of the country it is \$10; and in other parts conditions make it even lower than \$10.

If Government is a rapacious landlord, then why is it that people in land settlement estates today are resisting the move which the Government has made to move out completely and hand over the lands to them in order that they should run them? If Government was being rapacious it would demand that every penny spent on a land settlement scheme should be recovered. A private landlord would have closed down long ago estates which were losing money. But the fact is, Government is endeavouring to help the settlers. If the rental and other fees are considered too high, then Government would be quite prepared to hand over to the settlers; but I can tell you now, Sir, the people do not want to accept the responsibility.

Now for the criticism of the hon. Member who moved the Motion. He said that the people would be called upon to pay perpetual rental. As the hon. Minister of Natural Resources indicated a moment ago, land rental at land settlement schemes take into account the clay soil existing and the average figure is \$10 per acre. There is an equivalent in the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance in the basic figure of \$9.75.

[DR. JAGAN]

How did this figure of \$9.75 come into being? Because we want to approximate what Government was charging with what landlords were charging. But I would like to say that the services offered in these land settlement schemes are far better than what is being offered by the landlord in most cases for a basic rental.

Let us take Black Bush Polder, where the average capital cost of developing this land is around \$500 per acre. What are we asking farmers to pay? Interest charges alone on the figure of \$500 per acre at 6% is \$30 per acre. The Government is only calling on farmers to pay a development charge of \$9.75 per acre. If the land is pegasse, it will be reduced accordingly, but \$9.75 is the maximum. Assuming that the cost of development of one acre was \$500, a farmer renting from a private landlord would have had to pay the full \$30 as well as charges for drainage and irrigation and maintenance, and if the area was being run as a village he would have had to pay rates.

Government is helping out the farmer who is indigent; he is given seed padi, money to buy machinery and loans through the co-operative societies. My hon. Friend says that he would be paying for those things perpetually, but all he is paying is 25c. per annum. How many years would it take him to pay \$500? Nobody can say, having regard to the facts I have given, that these are harsh conditions. One can say, as someone argued, "let the farmer pay it." But where is he going to get the money from? Twenty-five cents? One Member a little while ago criticized the Government for its land policy. Land is an asset to the community and it should be used properly. If farmers are willing to work the land they will get security. Government is prepared to give a farmer security for 21 or 25 years at a time as long as he is a good farmer.

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tasker, has given us the correct picture

of the situation. Everyone has agreed that we cannot have unrestricted freehold. Add restrictions to freehold, and you will arrive at approximately the same thing. I notice that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara is laughing, but in the days when he was administering this matter he used the same word Mr. Tasker used today. He used the word "psychological". We do not want to fool the people all the time; we want to give them something to hold on to.

The hon. Member for Georgetown North said that collective ownership is fraught with danger. In Africa the natives are saying that "when the white man came to Africa he had the Bible and the Africans the land. Today the Africans have the Bible and the white man the land." It is a known fact that in the past the holding of land in Africa was on a communal basis, but with the introduction of the new system all sorts of trouble arose. Go to Kenya and find out what is happening there.

Mr. Burnham: We do not have to go there to find out what is happening.

Dr. Jagan: We are prepared to give the farmers security for their land, but we do not see any reason for changing our policy. Despite what has been said in this Council, the Minister is receiving applications day after day from people who want land—no mention is made about freehold in the applications from the people. The agitation in this Council is for political purposes only. Go outside and ask the farmers what they want. They want land, financial assistance and machinery to help them develop the land. I taught a lot of people, but some of them do not seem to have taken in their lessons well. Perhaps some of the seeds fell by the wayside, and some fell on stony ground.

I think hon. Members will agree that the Government is pursuing an intelligent policy in this respect. Do not let us make this a political forum. There is no justification whatsoever for referring to this Government as a rapacious landlord. At

one time it was said that Government was spending far too much money in this sector, but Government regards it as vital to the development of this country that land should be made available to the people.

Despite the fact that Members have spoken about the vast areas of land in British Guiana, it is true that there is still land-hunger at the moment. Exorbitant prices are being charged for land, and that is causing a lot of trouble. I hope that Members will keep these facts in mind, and let us get on with the business of developing the Colony.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, you will recall that the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Fredericks, moved an Amendment to the substantive Motion. The hon. Member moved that the resolve clause be deleted and that a new clause be substituted, so that the Amendment reads as follows:

“Be It Resolved: That this Council recommends to Government that requests from persons desirous of obtaining freehold titles be granted and that payment for such titles be accepted in instalments over a reasonable period of time in respect of —

- (i) lands occupied on Government Land Settlement Schemes, and
- (ii) Crown Lands beneficially occupied for farming.

And Be It Further Resolved: That the condition of any such sale of land be such that continuous maximum utilisation is guaranteed not only in the interest of the purchaser but also that of the common good.”

I shall, therefore, put the Amendment first to the Council. The question is, that the Amendment stands. As many as are in favour please say “Aye”, and those of the contrary opinion will say “No”.

I think the “Noes” have it.

Mr. Bowman: Division, please.

The Council divided and voted as follows:

For

Mr. Bowman
Mr. Beharry
Mr. Tasker
Mr. Fredericks
Mr. Davis
Mr. Jackson
Mr. Campbell
Mr. Burnham
Mr. Kendall—9.

Against

Mr. Hubbard
Mr. Ajodha Singh
Mr. Rai
Mr. Ram Karran
Mrs. Jagan
Mr. Benn
Dr. Jagan
The Financial Secretary
The Attorney-General
The Chief Secretary

— 10.

Did Not Vote

The Deputy Speaker — 1.

Mr. Burnham: Mr. Gajraj has a vote.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not vote on such matters. The Motion is lost. I will now put Mr. Bowman’s Motion. The preamble I shall not read; I shall just read the resolve clause which states:

“Be It resolved: That this Council urges upon the Government that freehold titles on a reasonable hire-purchase basis be granted to —

- (i) farmers in respect of land they now occupy in Government Land Settlement Schemes; and
- (ii) persons occupying Crown Lands for farming.”

As many as are in favour please say “Aye”, and those of the contrary opinion will say “No”.

I think the “Noes” have it. The Motion is lost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The next item on the Order of the Day is in the name of Mr. Saffee who had been granted leave. He has written to me intimating that the hon. Member for Berbice River will move the Motion in his place.

FLAG, ETC. FOR AN INDEPENDENT BRITISH GUIANA

Mr. Ajodha Singh: On behalf of Mr. Saffee, I beg to move the following Motion:

“Be it resolved: That this Council recommends to Government the appointment of a Committee to—

- (a) design a national flag and a coat of arms; and
- (b) recommend an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana.”

[MR. AJODHA SINGH]

This Motion speaks for itself. It merely asks the Council to agree to recommend to Government the appointment of a Committee to design a national flag and a coat of arms for British Guiana when we shall have received our independence.

The second part asks that this Council recommends an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana. At the recent constitutional talks in England it was agreed, in principle, that British Guiana should be a free country. Since that is so, I am appealing to hon. Members to support this Motion, because I am sure that in the distant future British Guiana will be a free country. We must, therefore, begin to design a flag and find a name for this country now.

Mr. Rai: I beg to second the Motion.

Mr. Benn: I beg to move an Amendment to the Motion by inserting a new clause "(b) compose a national anthem", and re-lettering Clause (b) as Clause (c). The Motion will then read:

"Be It Resolved: That this Council recommends to Government the appointment of a Committee to —

- (a) design a national flag and a coat of arms;
- (b) compose a national anthem; and
- (c) recommend an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana."

Dr. Jagan: I beg to second the Motion. In supporting this Motion, as the hon. Mover of the original Motion has said, I think it is necessary that these things be done in advance. I know from experience that when certain territories received their independence they did not have a coat of arms or a national anthem. So that since the independence movement is moving so rapidly and may, in spite of some, overtake us very, very quickly and overtake the plans of some people, I think

we will do well to embark very quickly upon this commendable objective — that is, the points stated in this amended Motion.

Mr. Ajodha Singh: I would accept the Amendment.

Mr. Burnham: The spirit behind the Motion enjoys my unequivocal and unstinted support. I should like, however, to observe that the designation of a flag and the appropriation of a name are matters of national concern and interest, and in the circumstances I feel that, since it has been accepted time and again that this Council is representative of the various opinions and attitudes in the country, a Committee should be drawn from this Council and that it should be a representative Committee. Otherwise, there is the possible accusation, if not a reality — I prefer to stress the former—that the Government of the day has selected a partisan Committee. In the circumstances, I beg to move an Amendment to insert after the word "Committee" in the second line, the words: "from this Council."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I cannot accept that Amendment from the hon. Member. In point of fact, this Legislature cannot say this Government should appoint a Committee from among its Members.

Mr. Burnham: They can ask Members of this Council to serve on a Committee and they can say that they will limit the Committee to persons who are Members of this Council. I am most grateful to Your Honour for pointing out my weakness in my earlier proposal.

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): I cannot agree with the Amendment of the last speaker for the reason that the task of designing a National Flag and Coat of Arms, as well as a National Song, is beyond the talent of the Members of this Legislature. It seems to me that we shall have to call upon those Guianese who are talented in

the fields with which we are dealing. For example, I may be wrong but I envisage that a group of artists would be the correct persons to design a flag, a group of musicians would be the correct persons to select or, for that matter, consider the selection of a National Anthem. I do not think political considerations should be apparent in the question of the selection of a Committee. I believe that Guiana has sufficiently qualified artists in the various fields and a sufficient number of persons with a broad national interest who would be willing to serve on the type of Committee or Committees to be established. I cannot imagine that a Committee would be chosen of, say, P.P.P. persons or P.N.C. persons to design a national flag. Certainly, I think we are far above that type of consideration. This is a task for those persons in our community who have developed their talent; and I think we all agree that talented Guianese are what we want.

Mr. Jackson : I wonder whether this Committee envisaged by the Members who are supporting the Motion is going to design a national flag, compose a National Anthem and find a name, then make a declaration, or whether this Committee they envisage is one who is going to work, as it has to do, and report back to somewhere. According to the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, one is given the impression that this Committee they have in mind is going to do the task and make a declaration in "X" time. I thought the intention was that this Committee would be given a task and when that has been completed it would report back to this Council or whichever one succeeds this, and then a decision would be taken. What is wrong with this?

In my knowledge of Committees, they are appointed to set the machinery in operation, and there is nothing wrong in a Committee being appointed from this Council. While I admit that the Minister is quite honest to say that none of us here is so talented to do this job, it appears to me that we could be a

means of working together to choose the best people. That alone would be one of the grounds; and I am glad for the assurance that whoever is asked to be on this Committee would have no political considerations.

I cannot see the contention of the people on the other side of the Table. Who could say that because we are here we are not talented. The membership of the Committee could be drawn from this Council after which the persons to do the actual job would be joined by actual consultation and thought.

Mr. Campbell : From the views which have gone before, I have come to the conclusion that the whole Council agrees with the Motion. Once again I want to be the exception to the rule. I am not supporting the Motion.

Yesterday, the hon. Minister of Natural Resources said in this Council Chamber: "Communism is a must; we cannot stop it. You can easier stop tomorrow than stop Communism". If we are going to have Communism as the order of the day in British Guiana, then there is going to be no real independence for the people, political or otherwise; for Communism is a heartless, totalitarian state of affairs which does not recognize the dignity of man. I am expressing it here today, that 90 percent. of Guianese—the Minister of Trade and Industry said it a while ago—know that things that are said here are only political. The new name for an independent British Guiana, the designing of a coat of arms and the rest of it are just sheer politics and not the wishes of Guianese as a whole.

I have been about my country. The primitive Amerindians and the others not so primitive do not want independence now. We do not know anything about theoretical politics any more than the people of Georgetown for that matter. The commercial men have said they do not want this dubious independence. Take a plebiscite — a referendum—and see how many would sign for independ-

[MR. CAMPBELL]

ence. I challenge this Council to go around and tell the people the truth and see if you will get a large number of people to say they want a forced independence foisted on them. Can beggars be choosers? Nkrumah of Africa can go to England and say: "I have \$70 million in my coffers to pay my way, give me independence! What have we to say to England? Can we say: "We are \$160 million in debt, therefore give us independence"? Independence is a wonderful aspiration of a people, but everybody must deserve and clamour for it. Because a few politicians in the whole country want independence for their own ends, must the whole country agitate for it? You tell the people you will bring about a Utopia through independence. I have said before, political independence without the cash is farcical.

My people are not evolving yet. They are still dense. If you throw off the British Crown it might be like jumping from the frying-pan into the fire. If Georgetown and the coastal strip want independence give them independence, but we would not be independent as a people. We will just be transported from one hand to another hand. We prefer the devil we know to the devil we do not know. Why such indecent haste? Let us wait another three or four years and in the meantime let us educate the people of British Guiana to a realization of their responsibilities.

I am one of those people who do not know a little of what is meant by Communism. In my view 95 per cent. of the people of British Guiana do not know what Communism means. Because of the ignorance of the people of British Guiana politically, some people want to get into power to dominate. Absolute power corrupts. That is the fear I entertain. Thousands of Guianese do not want independence for this country now. I have the moral courage to say what I think. Thousands are leaving the shores of British Guiana — why? Because they are afraid of the political

powers-that-be with their communistic bias. The Minister said that only the brave ones will remain to fight for independence — meaning their Party, I suppose.

I do believe that independence will be a good thing when Guianese really become responsible citizens. Because 80 per cent. of Guianese are literate does not qualify them for political responsibility. Signing one's name or writing a few phrases does not mean that one has a balanced mentality or balanced judgment.

Great Britain is only too glad to give her Colonies independence. She wants to give us independence, because we are too much of a charge on her finances. So why the great hurry? It is coming in time. Meanwhile there are so many things of immediate need that could be given priority consideration with profit to all.

There is too much racialism and sectionalism in this country. The leader of the P.P.P. has been elected to this Council as a representative and a Chief of his people. The leader of the P.N.C. has also been elected as a representative and a tribal Chief. I can also say that I, in a lesser way have been elected as a representative and a tribal Chief. [*Laughter*]. There are really seven races in British Guiana — the East Indians, Africans, Portuguese, Chinese, Amerindians, Europeans, and mixed people who have their own culture and outlook. The result is a clashing of different cultures and a pulling against one another. Before we get independence in British Guiana we will have to bring all the races together. The leaders will have to get together and teach the people how to build a nation, whether they are Africans, Chinese or what. I am not supporting the Motion.

Mr. Fredericks: In spite of the giggles and wise smiles from the other side of the Table, I would like to offer my congratulation to the last speaker for his sincerity and the warmth with which

he stated his reasons for not supporting the Motion. I would like to associate myself with almost all of his remarks. I am not satisfied that the present Government is trying to work the present Constitution. I am not satisfied that this country is moving properly along the road to independence, and I think this Motion is inopportune, and I cannot support it.

When I accepted nomination to this Council I did so because I felt that with my experience I could help this country by assisting the Party in Government in their endeavour to run this country. I said earlier in the debate on the Motion just concluded, that instead of trying to run the country, and instead of trying to emulate other countries which are trying very hard constitutionally to achieve independence, the Ministers of this Government are going on long leave all over the world and the Government left to run itself. No one seems to be in charge of the reins of Government.

Quite recently I noted that this Government was wasting quite a lot of money — literally throwing it away. I observed that particularly in the Public Works Department, the Transport and Harbours Department, and almost in every sphere of Government spending, and I came to the inevitable conclusion that the present Government is not making any effort to curb this waste. Morale in Government Departments is deteriorating at an alarming rate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Has that anything to do with the question before the Council?

Mr. Fredericks: I submit it has, sir, because we are asked to design a national flag. The point I am trying to make is that it is inopportune at the moment, and I am not going to support the Motion. I would have given this Motion my whole-hearted support if I felt that the time was ripe for it.

Mr. Kendall: I do not know whether it would help the hon. Minister

of Labour, Health and Housing if I move that the Motion be amended to read:

“Be it resolved: That this Council authorises the appointment of a Select Committee of this Council charged with the responsibility for —

- (a) designing a national flag and a coat of arms;
- (b) composing a national anthem; and
- (c) recommending an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana.”

I think that might be helpful because I feel that no Member of this Council would be able to compose a national anthem. We may be able to compose the words but not the music. I also do not think any Member is capable of designing a coat of arms. I think a Select Committee of this Council should co-opt those persons who, in their opinion, are capable of assisting in determining what proposals should be presented to the Council. It is an important matter and I think the representatives of the people of British Guiana in this Council should form a Select Committee and co-opt other persons in the community to assist them in carrying out this function.

Mr. Rai: I thought this would have been a non-controversial Motion, but as it has turned out, it seems that different people have different points of view. The suggestion made by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central and the Amendment moved by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam would have been excellent in themselves, but from what has transpired here this afternoon it is quite apparent that no one can help in designing a national flag or composing a national anthem unless that person believes in independence and is prepared to fight for it.

We have Members in this Council who do not believe in independence. Many of them speak of independence, but in another place they say they want internal self-government. Those who wish to associate themselves with the designing of these national symbols must qualify by their past record, or they must

[MR. RAI]

show that a change has come about in them. It is not apparent this afternoon that they are fit persons to help in this matter. They have disqualified themselves from participating.

Mr. Burnham: Speaking on the Amendment—

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour of Adjournment seems to have been reached and it does seem as though there is no likelihood of this matter being resolved satisfactorily within a few minutes. I would have been prepared to allow the debate to continue for a few minutes longer if it appeared to me that this matter could be resolved in a manner satisfactory to all concerned, for one must agree that this is a matter of national concern,

and as such hon. Members will forgive me if I should say a few words at this time before the Adjournment.

I believe that all Members of this Council are of the view expressed by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central in that in spirit he was for the Motion. We want, however, not to rush through a Motion which can be made better in the circumstances. I feel we can at this stage profitably take the adjournment and, with the pause over the week end, give further thought to the subject before returning here on Wednesday next.

The Chief Secretary: I beg to move that this Council do now adjourn until next Wednesday, 25th May, at two o'clock

Agreed to.

Council adjourned accordingly.