

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.***Wednesday, 21st January, 1942.*

The Council met at 12 noon, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

**PRESENT.**

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.

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

The Hon. F. Dias, O.B.E. (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. J. S. Dash, Director of Agriculture.

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

The Hon. E. F. Mc David, C.B.E., Colonial Treasurer.

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

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

The Hon. W. A. D'Andrade, O.B.E., Comptroller of Customs.

The Hon. N. M. MacLennan, Director of Medical Services.

The Hon. M. B. Laing, O.B.E., Commissioner of Local Government.

The Hon. G. O. Case, Consulting Engineer.

The Hon. B. R. Wood, Conservator of Forests.

The Hon. F. Ogle, Director of Education (Acting).

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

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

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E., (Georgetown South).

The Hon. J. I. de Aguiar (Central Demerara).

The Hon. Jung Bahadur Singh (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

**MINUTES.**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on Tuesday, 20th January, 1942, were confirmed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS.****GOVERNMENT AND THE TRADE DISPUTES.**

THE PRESIDENT: I would just like to make brief reference to some remarks I made in Council yesterday on the question of certain existing trade disputes, and to say that there was brought to my notice to-day a very startling statement that Government was not sincere in urging very strongly that workmen who are not now working at the waterfront should return to work and await the result of the investigation that will be made. Now, that is an utter delusion, and I cannot understand how such a belief could be held by anyone. I have no other effective platform than here in the Legislative Council, and I desire to say these words and have them recorded to-day:

The idea that because Government has passed the Labour Bill it takes the view that trade disputes should go on, and that work should be interrupted is absolutely contrary to the fact. Gov-

ernment, in passing the Labour Bill, had precisely the opposite in view, and is of the opinion that there should be no excuse for stoppage of work, particularly now that we have an organization which will have the power to deal with trade disputes. As that has been partly attributed to me let me just say this: I am the servant of His Majesty the King and I am also the servant of the community of British Guiana. My first duty to the King is to prosecute and keep going anything which is of any value whatsoever to the war effort. That is not only my duty to the King but in the interest of the community of British Guiana which it is also my duty to serve.

In the prosecution of the war effort one of the most important things is the quick turning round of ships in order to make the maximum use of shipping, not only in England or in America but throughout the world and wherever the Allied Nations have their ships going. That is as important here as in other places and, as I said yesterday, Mr. Bevin, who is a very great figure in the Labour Movement, has pointed out that by speeding up the quick turn-round of ships the dock workers in England had added the equivalent of one and a half million tons to the available shipping of the Allied Nations. Therefore, I must stress the advice which has been put out officially in the Press by my order over the signature of the Colonial Secretary—that the right action in this matter is for all people who have anything to do with the working of ships to go back to their work on the clear understanding that Government takes step to appoint a Committee or Board of Inquiry to go into every kind of representation that may be made to it.

As to what may result from that inquiry Government and I will not make any promises which cannot be fulfilled. A fair inquiry will be made into the question of wages and hours of work, and on that I am not going to express any

opinion. For all I know, the present rate may be a very good wage rate. There may be other things like how much a man can earn and whether the amount of work is fairly shared.

I am quite prepared to believe that we want a proper organization for the registration of workers and a fair turn-round of work amongst all available people who are prepared to work. I cannot enter into any public arguments on disputes between one party and another, but I am always available to receive deputations from trade unions, labour unions, and other parties who possibly do not see eye to eye with the labour unions. If representatives are sent to me I shall be quite prepared to see such deputations.

The point I wish to make clear now is that no one can be right in this matter who does not take the proper advice to put the interests of the Colony first and to keep the work going. Any action otherwise will prejudice the future judgment on that matter because, as I said yesterday, somehow or other it is my duty to ensure the quick handling of ships in this Colony. I hope the Press has recorded these few words, because I would like to have them on record as the very definite attitude of Government and of myself.

I have one or two minor announcements which I will make later in the day. We will now proceed with the agenda.

## ORDER OF THE DAY.

### WARDEN, LEPROSY HOSPITAL.

Mr. Lee asked, and the Colonial Secretary replied to the following questions:—

Q. 1.—Will Government state who were the persons recommending the said Mr. Boyd for his post (a) on his entry in the Civil Service and (b) for Warden, Leprosy Hospital?

A. 1.—The answer is in the negative.

Q. 2.—Will Government obtain the birth certificate of the said Mr. Boyd and lay it on the Council table?

A. 2.—The answer is in the negative.

Q. 3.—Will Government state whether this promotion was considered by the Promotion Board and when; and whether it was a unanimous decision of the Board?

A. 3.—The appointment is not one in the Clerical Establishment of the Colony, and reference to the Board is not required.

Q. 4.—Will Government state what were the duties of Mr. Boyd (1), as clerk Out-patients Department, Public Hospital, Georgetown, and (2) as Warden of the Leprosy Hospital?

A. 4.—The duties are as follows:—

(a) The Out-patient Clerk, Public Hospital, Georgetown, acts as hospital receptionist and attends on the medical officer at the Out-patients Department. He carries out all clerical duties required and collects fees.

(b) The Warden, Leprosy Hospital, performs duties in accordance with departmental regulations—a copy of which can be seen by the honourable Member in the Colonial Secretary's Office.

#### RE-CONSTITUTION OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THE PRESIDENT: Before calling upon the hon. Colonial Secretary to move the resolution I should just preface a word or two to state again, as I have said before in this Council, that the attitude of Government is confined to practical politics, and that is to take such steps as are at this moment practical. As far as I am concerned myself, I am very new to the Colony, and the last thing I would suggest is that I wish to invent a new Constitution for the Colony or to lay down in any special way what the immediate lines of constitutional reform should be. The present measure of change is one which effects a certain definite advance, and was agreed upon to a considerable extent by the Members of this Council in discussion last year, and one which we have every reason to believe will be acceptable to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and without further argument which might delay action. In effect, what we are aiming at is the removal of a number of Government Officers from the Council and a certain change in the number of Nominated Members. Those and other points will be dealt with, no doubt,

by the Colonial Secretary—what the precise number of Government officers should be and the number of Unofficial Nominated Members.

There is the further question raised by myself as to whether the Governor should always preside. I have expressed the view that as constitutional development proceeds and the Legislative Council becomes more and more unofficial and elective, a rather anomalous position arises if the Governor is not only to be President of the Council and therefore independent arbiter in any matter of business, but has also either to lead the Government side or to authorize or direct in what way the Government case should be presented. That might be perfectly practical where there was a Government majority in the Council or, as we have at present, a number of Government Members who could be usefully used in voting, but when the Council is further developed it is difficult for the Governor to discharge those functions and preside and lead, and then in another capacity to be a kind of *deus ex machinâ* and use suspensory or reserve powers.

There is the further practical point that with constitutional development there will be more and probably longer sittings of the Council, and it is a great handicap to the Executive to have two of its chief officers, the Governor and the Colonial Secretary, occupied for long periods in sitting and preparing for sittings of the Council. I have felt considerably handicapped in that way in these last few weeks, and it is definitely handicapping to me now in the face of executive action required. It may be perhaps a little premature to exclude the Governor from the Council, or from this one public platform from which I have been speaking, but I should like some arrangement whereby the Governor need not, in practice, always and all the time preside at meetings of the Council even in Committee.

I would just say a word on the other question of the relation between the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. As I have said before, as we are asking for an amendment of the Order-in-Council which affects the Legislative Council only, it would not be in order to include in that resolution the question of any change in the Executive Council. That would be taken separately. What I would suggest is that there is no objection to any Member expressing any views he may have on that point, and I will refer them to the Secretary of State who took the initiative in suggesting certain changes in the Executive Council. I think the suggestion came initially from him, and not from this Government, that it might be unfortunate automatically to exclude senior Government Officers other than the Colonial Secretary, the Colonial Treasurer and the Attorney-General, from the Executive Council, and that it might be desirable not only to have certain Government officials available as Members of the Executive Council, though not Members of the Legislative Council, but also unofficial gentlemen who, as the future develops in our Constitution, may not be able for various reasons to accept membership of the Legislative Council. As I have said before here, I am not wedded to either alternative, and I should feel either alternative quite workable and quite fair to this Council.

✓ I might perhaps add a word on the general aspect of constitutional reform. My view is that colonial administration can only be justified if it keeps quite definitely in its mind the aim of development of self-government in any unit which has an individuality of its own, and that anything we do towards material development or social welfare is largely bootless unless there is this ever-prevailing aim to meet what is the natural political and human desire of all people to stand on their own feet, whether as individuals or as members of a community. When I

say self-government I do not mean some fictitious or comic-opera independence. When I was a law student and made some special study of Public International Law I can remember things as they stood thirty-five years ago with quite comic-opera independent states like Andorra and San Marino, which were either completely dominated by some outside interest in things that mattered; or in things that did not matter were just allowed to stagnate. Again, any small unit must have the financial backing of some greater power or unit, and as we have seen in these last years again, what is so terribly necessary is the question of military defence.

As for the future of British Guiana, whether in some distant future it may be a unit in a sea of American Republics, nestling somehow in with Latin-America which surrounds it, it is not very much use making guesses at this time. I happen to think our best hope for a really higher constitutional status for the West Indies is some kind of federal union, something like or approaching Dominion status. I do not see any good reason why British Guiana should not come within that and preserve the British traditions which it has had these hundreds of years. However, that may be merely the vapourings of imagination as to the future which I certainly do not want to pursue here.

What we are immediately concerned with is to make each step in constitutional reform easy, so as to facilitate the transition from the present status to any future advanced constitutional status. There will be pitfalls enough into which to tumble in the future, and errors enough to be paid for and retrieved. The step we are now considering represents the throwing of more and more responsibility on the Council in which Government will only be little represented, and that will form a very useful stage for experience with an eye on the future that is going to follow. I now call on the Colonial

Secretary to move the motion on behalf of Government.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.): Sir, I move:—

Be it hereby Resolved with humble respect that this Council respectfully petitions that His Majesty may be pleased, by Order in Council varying certain provisions in the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1928, or by such other action as His Majesty may deem fit, to reconstitute the Legislative Council of this Colony so that it shall consist of the Governor as President and the following members, that is to say, the persons for the time being lawfully discharging the functions of the respective offices of Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General and Colonial Treasurer (to be known as *ex officio* Members), seven nominated persons not holding public offices under the Crown (to be known as Nominated Members), and the fourteen members declared to have been duly elected under the provisions of the aforementioned Order in Council (to be called Elected Members):

“And be it further Resolved,—That His Excellency the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of these Resolutions to His Majesty’s Secretary of State for the Colonies.”

One of the recommendations of the Royal Commission which visited this Colony in 1939 was that official representation in the Legislative Council should be confined to the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Treasurer, and that the resulting vacancies should be filled by nomination. This would enable the Governor of the Colony to ensure that all important sections and interests of the community are adequately represented in the Legislature. The Commissioners, in paragraph 26 of their report, went on to say that they attached more importance to the truly representative character of Legislative Councils than to any drastic change in their functions at the present time.

In June last year Sir Wilfrid Jackson addressed a Message to this Council in which he set out certain proposals for the modification of the constitution of the Council, and he went on to say that it was considered by Government that it would be advisable to introduce some sort of modification at this stage rather than wait for the report of the Franchise Commission, as it might be two or three years before their recom-

mendations would be given effect to. Hon. Members will recollect that in that Message the proposals put forward were, firstly, that all Government Members should be withdrawn, with the exception of the three Officials referred to by the Royal Commissioners; secondly, that the number of Nominated Unofficial Members should be increased from five to seven. This would enable the Governor to choose from a wider field, if any particular section or interest of the community was not already represented in the Council.

If these proposals are given effect to the result would be that there would continue to be 14 Elected Members, seven Nominated Members, and three *ex officio* Members. You will see, therefore, that the Unofficial Majority would be very considerable, and that even if all the Nominated Members were to vote with the Government Members, the Electives would still have a majority of four. Compare that with the present constitution of the Council in which there are 14 Elected Members, five Nominated Unofficial Members, and 10 Official Members. If the Nominated Members and the Official Members vote together at present they can carry anything by a majority of one, and if all the Nominated Members vote with the Elected Members the majority is much smaller than it would be if the new proposals are put into effect.

It is proposed that the reserve powers vested in the Governor under Article 62 of the Order in Council shall be retained and reworded so as to provide, if it should be considered necessary, for immediate effect to be given to any measure enacted under the provisions of that Article. But, of course, any representations made by a Member or Members of the Council would be transmitted to the Secretary of State, as soon as possible afterwards. Article 62 of the Order as it stands at present provides that effect shall not be given

to any such decision until the Governor shall have reported fully to the Secretary of State.

If the suggested changes in membership of the Legislative Council are adopted it is proposed that steps should be taken to modify the Royal Instructions under which the composition of the Executive Council is laid down. It is proposed that provision should be made for the more usual practice under which membership of the Executive Council is not restricted to Members of the Legislative Council. As His Excellency has already said, although in the resolution there is no change proposed with regard to membership of the Executive Council, he has invited suggestions or criticisms of Members on that particular point.

This resolution, sir, has been moved with the object of enabling Members to express their views. That was the undertaking given by Sir Wilfrid Jackson in his Message—that at a later stage a motion would be moved so that Members would have an opportunity of expressing their views. Before I formally move the motion I would ask hon. Members to make a slight alteration in the last line but one. The second word “the” should be deleted; its appearance there is an error. It is not the intention of Government that the existing Members of the Legislative Council should remain Members of the Council indefinitely, and with the word “the” it might be read in that light. I now beg to move the motion.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: I had intended to make a brief announcement before the resolution is put, but in view of pressing executive work I would ask for a short session to-day, and I believe that will suit the convenience of quite a number of Members of the Council. Therefore, other things being equal, I propose to adjourn the Council at 2 o'clock.

Mr. LEE: Sir, the motion having been moved and seconded I would ask that certain amendments be made in order that the Secretary of State might see what are the views of the people of this Colony. After the first resolution as moved by the hon. Colonial Secretary, I suggest that the following be inserted:—

“that the proposed change of the Constitution shall be for five years after the Franchise Commission have made their recommendation and the Electoral Rolls have been made for the new Legislature,

Be it further Resolved that the new Constitution after the expiration of the five years should consist of 24 Elected Members.

That the Committee System should be introduced not on an advisory basis but with executive powers.

That payment be made to Elected Members of the Council not exceeding one hundred dollars per month, and a reasonable amount for the Chairmen of Committees.

Be it further Resolved that His Excellency the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of these Resolutions to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies with a copy of the debate in this Council.”

Those are the amendments to the motion I propose to move. As Your Excellency has just come to this Colony it is necessary that I repeat to you the history of this constitutional change that was proposed by Sir Wilfrid Jackson in Message No. 9. Some time in March or April, 1941, Sir Wilfrid Jackson summoned the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council to a private meeting in this Chamber, and in explaining the purport of that meeting His Excellency said he would like unanimity among the Unofficial section as regards the change in the Constitution as recommended by the West India Royal Commission. Before discussion began His Excellency said that the change would be a temporary one until the Franchise Commission, which he was about to set up to enquire into the qualifications of electors and Members of the Legislative Council and the change of the Constitution, had reported. When His Excellency was asked whether any discussion would take place with respect to the Executive Council he said: “No; it is only as regards the Legislative Council.” On

that understanding discussion took place and the proposals set out in the motion in respect of the number of Members of the Council were accepted. But that acceptance was on the definite understanding that it was going to be a temporary arrangement until the Franchise Commission had made its recommendations. That was in March or April, 1941. In May of the same year His Excellency set up a Franchise Commission to consider and advise—

- (a) on the qualifications of electors and members of the Legislative Council ; and
- (b) as to whether any alteration of the boundaries of the electoral districts as at present defined is desirable.

No mention whatever was made in the terms of reference, or no power was given to the Commission to inquire into the change of the Constitution. The Governor thereby committed a breach of faith with the Elected Members, and Your Excellency has perhaps heard or read of the dispute which occurred when the Franchise Commission started its inquiry. In June, 1941, Message No. 9 was laid on the table of this Council, and I will read it. (Mr. Lee began to read Message No. 9 on page 534 of the Hansard report of June 11, 1941). The Unofficial Members of the Council were summoned by Sir Wilfrid Jackson to a private meeting in March or April and in June the Message was laid on the table stating that we were consulted and those proposals were accepted. I would like to ask whether the proposals put forward by the Governor in April were sent to the Secretary of State prior to consulting us in April or subsequently? In my opinion, and from what I can gather, they were sent prior to consulting us. If I am wrong I would apologize. If I am right then it shows what the public felt at the time: that there were some people in this Colony who were advising the Government without consulting the public.

THE PRESIDENT: The Message is a printed document; you need not read it in full. Do you wish to quote any part of it?

Mr. LEE: Yes, sir. In paragraph 3 you will see it states:—

“The Commission is also empowered to advise on the qualifications which should be required for election to membership of the Legislative Council and as to any alterations which may be desirable in the boundaries of the existing electoral districts.”

That implies that the Commission was given power to inquire into the composition of the Legislative Council.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think I agree with you, but proceed.

Mr. LEE: You will see from later events how things happened. The facts must be brought to Your Excellency's notice. Later on, by questions at the Franchise Commission and correspondence with the Government, it was decided that the Franchise Commission could not inquire into the composition of the Legislative Council. Your Excellency will also observe that paragraph 8 of the Message deals with the Executive Council. What I would like to point out is that the public felt that if a change of Constitution was to take place they should be given an opportunity to discuss it fully before a Committee or Commission, but they have been denied that opportunity. They feel that the present Members of the Legislative Council do not represent their views, and in going through the whole Colony and holding public meetings I found that that is so; that many of the Elected Members of this Council do not express the views of the public whom they represent.

To deal with the motion itself, I will say at once that I cannot accept it. Let us assume for argument sake that, as is the practice here, Government (I do not say you will do that, sir) nominates what are termed “Yes-men” as Members of the Legislative Council, what do we find? Three Elected Members would be nominated to the Executive Council, thereby reducing the number of Elected Members to 11. In practice we find that in most cases,

except when the interests of the particular Nominated Members are at stake, they vote with the Government.

**THE PRESIDENT:** I dissent entirely. My experience of the last two or three weeks is quite different.

**Mr. LEE:** I have been asked how much some of them got. I am not saying that any of them are so base, but when it is a matter of interest to the public you find the Nominated Members voting with the Government, and if this proposed change takes place the idea of the Elected Members having a majority would not work out in practice although it would be so on paper or in principle.

You will not be here for all time, sir. At the present moment the public has confidence in you, but we may get another Governor who may exercise the powers given to him. I have to bring it most forcefully to the attention of Government that the proposed changes in the Constitution would not in practice give the Elected Members a majority as intended by the Royal Commission. Your Excellency has read the recommendations of the Royal Commissioners who desire that Elected Members should have more responsibility in the administration of Government, and also that all interests should be fully represented in the Legislative Council in order that Government should know the views of the whole public and not part of the public. As you know, sir, in practice you cannot get 14 Elected Members to agree with each other, neither can you get 11 Elected Members to agree. (laughter). If we accept this motion as it stands Government would always have a majority, which is not the principle advocated by the Royal Commissioners.

I would suggest a compromise which is my private view. I shall express the view of the public when I deal with the resolutions which have been passed in my constituency and throughout the

Colony. My personal view is that if Government desires to have a majority of Elected Members in the Council there should be at least 24 Elected Members, and if Government feels that nominations should still be carried on then it is left entirely to Government to accept the principle of seven Nominated Members, because that number can represent the various interests. What I do urge is that if the motion is to be accepted at all I would ask Government to increase the number of Elected Members to 24, and then we could say comfortably that the Elected Members under the party system would have a majority to join Government in the administration of this Colony.

I would like to point out the reason why those resolutions I referred to a while ago were drafted and sent to Government and to England. After the motion was laid on the table the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) informed me that he was consulting his constituency with respect to the Message, and in due course he went to his constituency to explain the position. While travelling he considered it advisable that he should have resolutions passed in his constituency after consultation with the prominent people there, and with that view he prepared certain resolutions which I will read to you, sir. Those resolutions were passed at his meeting. On his return to Georgetown he knew that I was going to consult my constituency with regard to the Message, and he suggested that I should also formulate resolutions and take them to my constituency to see whether the public would accept them or not. I can assure Your Excellency that at 10 meetings in my constituency the resolutions were passed unanimously.

On our return from the visit to my constituency we thought it advisable, in the interest of the public, that we should bring Message No. 9 to the notice of the entire public of the Colony and see whether the public



would agree with it or would accept the resolutions passed in my constituency. With that view, and after consulting some people from the other constituencies who invited us to go and speak to the public, we toured the entire Colony and held 10 other meetings in the several constituencies. We gave notice by handbills of the meetings, when they would be held and what was going to be discussed. I suggested to the hon. Member for North Western District to invite each representative of the several constituencies to be present at the discussions; and I may say here, by the way, that we were told by them that they were being invited to their own homes. We accept that, but in the interest of the public we considered it our duty to put the Message and the resolutions we had formulated to the entire public, and they were accepted. These are the resolutions —

THE PRESIDENT: Is it necessary to read those resolutions?

Mr. LEE: I am reading the resolution which was passed.

THE PRESIDENT: Is it a long document?

Mr. LEE: It is only two pages (laughter).

THE PRESIDENT: We may take it piecemeal, perhaps.

Mr. LEE: I would not consider two pages of a constitutional matter long. Members are afraid; they know fully well that it was their duty to consult their electorate in the matter.

Mr. DEAGUIAR: I rise to a point of order. Can the Member continue to say what another Member has done, is doing, or proposes to do? I suggest that the hon. Member might speak for himself.

THE PRESIDENT (to Mr. Lee): Will you let me see the document you propose to read?

Mr. LEE (handing the document to the Clerk of the Council): I know that several Members will feel offended because of their neglect of duty.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you wish to read the whole of this?

Mr. LEE: Yes; sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I am afraid it will take a long time.

Mr. LEE: I am asking you to allow me to read it so that it would be on record. That is why I ask in my amendment to the motion that a copy of the debate be forwarded to the Secretary of State along with the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT: You wish to put it on record; well one way is to read it.

Mr. DEAGUIAR: I think this Council has already had the benefit of hearing those resolutions read. I do not know whether the hon. Member wishes us to listen to them again. As far as I am concerned, I know the gist of them.

THE PRESIDENT: I will allow the hon. Member to read them in order to put them on record.

Mr. LEE: I thank you, sir. These resolutions deal with the change of the Constitution and have been passed in my constituency. I would like to bring them to the notice of the Government. I have already done so by letter, but I would like them to be put on record in this debate. The resolutions are:—

“Whereas we, the Electors and Residents of Electoral District No. 12, Essequibo River, are aware of the urgent need for changes in the Constitution, and we are dissatisfied with the manner in which it is proposed to effect such changes;

And whereas we are certain that if fuller representation and responsibility are afforded us and the Elected Members of both the Executive and Legislative Councils, better progress in the Colony's life would be achieved;

And whereas the proposed changes in the Constitution as announced by His Excellency Sir Wilfrid Jackson, K.C.M.G., in his Mes-

sage No. 9, dated June 9th, 1941, and in his speech to the Legislative Council on June 11th 1941, will not meet the wishes of the people;

And whereas the present terms of reference of the Franchise Commission are not wide enough to enable us to express our opinion as to the kind of Constitution we require;

And whereas the terms of reference of the Commission are inconsistent, when compared with His Excellency's Message No. 9, dated June 9th, 1941, paragraphs 3 and 4, and delivered to the Legislative Council on June 11th, 1941, as follows:—

"As Honourable Members are aware a representative Franchise Commission has been set up as recommended by the Royal Commission to review the position in this Colony and to make recommendations. The Commission is also empowered to advise on the qualifications which should be required for election to membership of the Legislative Council and as to any alterations which may be desirable in the boundaries of the existing electoral districts."

"4. It is hoped that the Commission will proceed with its enquiries with all possible despatch, but as some time must necessarily elapse before its report can be presented and new electoral rolls can be compiled, it has also been proposed that in the meantime the composition of the Legislative Council should be modified on the lines recommended by the Royal Commission;"

And whereas the dissatisfaction felt by us and others has had no effect on the administration of the Colony, under its present form of Government;

(1) Be it resolved that the Official Members of the New Legislative Council, viz:—the Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General, and Colonial Treasurer, should remain as Members of the new Council for a period not exceeding five years, from the date of the Constitution of the new Council; thereafter, all the Members of the Legislative Council should be elected by the people, on the basis of Universal Adult Suffrage;

(2) Be it further resolved that the composition of the Executive Council of British Guiana be restricted to Members of the Legislative Council only, the Elected Members to the Executive Council being elected and chosen by the Elected Members themselves, who shall be in the majority in the said Executive Council;

(3) Be it further resolved that in the proposed *interim* change of the said Legislative Council that the number of Nominated Unofficial Members should be increased from five to seven; that there should be a new nomination for these seven seats, and that the different interests and organisations should be entitled to send in a panel of names from which His Excellency can choose, provided that where there are no recognised bodies, His Excellency the Governor shall have the right of nominating any member of the public to serve those interests or organisations;

(4) Be it further resolved that the reserve powers vested in the Governor of British Guiana, under Article 62 of the Order in Council, should be withdrawn and the privilege of exercising those reserve powers

shall only be exercised by the Governor with the advice of the new Executive Council;

(5) Be it further resolved that each Department of the Government shall be administered by a Committee, the Chairman of which shall be nominated by the Governor from the Elected Members of the Legislative Council, in collaboration with the head of the said Department and two other members nominated by the said Governor;

(6) Be it further resolved that a Committee of the Franchise Commission should confer with the Franchise Commissions of Trinidad and Jamaica and the other West Indian Islands, with the object of obtaining unanimity in regard to the composition of the Executive Council, Legislative Councils, and the qualification of voters and the compilation of Electoral Rolls, so as to facilitate early federation of British Guiana and the British West Indies.

(7) Be it further resolved that the Franchise Commission should request the Governor to widen its scope of enquiry to include: (a) the qualifications of voters and Members of the Georgetown and New Amsterdam Town Councils, and of voters and Members of the Village Councils, on the basis of Universal Adult Suffrage; and (b) the number of members to compose the Legislative and Executive Councils of British Guiana."

In visiting my constituency I fully explained Message No. 9, the workings of the Legislative Council and the resolutions to the people. I told them that if they were satisfied with the resolutions they could pass them, and they passed them. It is my duty to say that it is the opinion of all the residents in my constituency that these resolutions should be accepted and adopted by the Government. On our return from my constituency the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) and I thought it advisable that we should bring the resolutions to the notice of the general public, and with that view we held nine meetings in the other constituencies of this Colony, at which we explained fully to the public Message No. 9 and the resolutions. The resolutions were accepted unanimously, and I wish with all the force that lies in me to bring it to Your Excellency's notice, that it is the opinion of the public of this Colony and also their desire, that after the expiration of five years all Members of the Legislative Council should be elected; that the

Legislative Council should be composed wholly of Elected Members, and that the number should be increased to 24.

If Your Excellency would look up the population of the Colony in the Registrar-General's report for 1939, you would find that the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Mr. Luckhoo) represents over 58,000 people. I feel sure that in spite of his ability he cannot properly represent that whole district. I am urging that in the interest of the people of this Colony Your Excellency should set up a Constitutional Committee whereby you would be able to get the views of the people. In that way you would be able to recommend to the Secretary of State the proper views of the public, and not those that have been expressed by Elected Members who have not consulted their constituencies.

If I felt certain that these are only temporary changes of the Constitution until the Franchise Commission has reported, or the Constitution Commission I have suggested has made its recommendations, I would have no objection whatever to their being given a trial under the recommendations of the Royal Commission with the Committee system in vogue. But in the Order in Council, it must be definitely stated for how many years this trial should take place. The people say it should only be for five years, but after Your Excellency has got the views of the people you will make the necessary recommendations to the Secretary of State. But as this motion stands it seems to me to suggest a permanent change of the Constitution, and I cannot sit by and allow it to be a permanent change which I know would be detrimental to the interests and progress of this Colony. If the Elected Members are to have some responsibility in the administration of this Colony then I say that the number should be increased, because the number of Government Departments is greater than 14.

I would like to tell those conservative Members of this Council that they need have no fear in going to the electorate, because I feel sure that the public knows fully well that Labour and Conservative interests must go hand in hand for the progress of this Colony. If they are fair and just to the workers they would return and look after the interests of themselves and the workers. But their consciences are speaking when they seek nomination and not election.

With regard to the Executive Council, I feel that after the three Official Members have been chosen by Your Excellency, in keeping with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, you should have the privilege of nominating two other members to represent other interests in the Executive Council, but for the remaining six seats I urge that the Members of this Council should be in a position to choose among themselves those gentlemen who would represent the people's views, and not their private views, on the Executive Council and give advice that would be of benefit to the Colony.

Your Excellency will see from the amendment I propose, that if we are to learn and know the working of the system of administration in this Colony, it is absolutely necessary that Elected Members should not only be on Advisory Committees but should have executive powers and be responsible in this Council for any motion that Government in its wisdom may deem advisable to put forward. If they are only appointed on Advisory Committees and their recommendations are not carried out, then they become as some of us in this Council "Yes-men" of the Government. An Elected Member should advocate the cause of the people under that Committee system, and not do as some of us say: "I cannot do this because Government does not accept the principle." If an Elected Member has the interest of the people at heart

and is advocating something for the benefit of the people which the Government refuses to accept in principle, it is his duty to vacate his seat, go to the public and ask for a mandate to return to the Council. In the meanwhile he should also vacate his seat on the Advisory Committee of Government, and in that way Government would realize the feeling of the people in respect of any policy put forward by Elected Members in this Council. Elected Members have no power to initiate money votes or votes of expenditure. What use are they to Government except only as critics? We can only come here and criticise. What is the use when we cannot place our constructive ability at the disposal of Government? Perhaps hon. Members who have been advising Government may have done so in their best interest, but they have failed in their duty to disagree with Government in matters of benefit to the people which Government will not accept. That is the system of government the West India Royal Commission is trying to inculcate in the minds of the people of the West Indies and this Colony—that the people should assume the responsibility of government themselves in gradual stages. How can that be if they are only to be on an Advisory Committee of Government? There should be something of the Party system which is in vogue in England. If a Party wants to carry out a policy and cannot do so, that Party has to go out of office and seek the wishes of the people in respect of that policy. That is the system whereunder the people will learn their political duties and their sense of duty to the Colony.

But that cannot be done here. The system of government is so weak and is not a forward movement towards the progress of this Colony. I, therefore, urge on you, sir, that in making your recommendations you should see the point of view of the public that they require power under which they can have executive powers to join in the government for the progress of the

Colony. Your Excellency, I feel sure that if you set up a Constitutional Commission to enquire into the change of the Constitution, that you would find that the public are alive to their interests. They would give evidence before that Commission as to what they need and with your recommendation the Imperial Government would be able to formulate a constitution on such a basis whereby the Elected Members of the Legislature could obtain an insight of the workings of Government in the administration of the Colony and have a responsibility to the people. At the present moment they do not hold themselves responsible to the public. None of them, save and except the hon. Member for North-Western District and myself, has consulted their constituency in respect of this question which is an important one. I have brought this to your notice so that if such a Commission is set up it should be found that we are right.

Mr. JACKSON: I would just like to ask one question, as to whether the resolutions read by the hon. Member for Essequibo River are those which he said were prepared by the hon. Member for North-Western District and formulated by him, the hon. Member for Essequibo River. I would like to know whether those resolutions are the ones he referred to at the beginning of his speech.

Mr. LEE: The resolutions are not exactly the copy of the resolutions prepared by the hon. Member for North-Western District, but a digest of them along with certain amendments which the hon. Member for North-Western District accepted.

Mr. JACOB: There seems to be a good deal of reluctance in debating this matter, and I would like to say at the outset that I am not in favour of the resolution so ably moved by the hon. Colonial Secretary. I am in favour to a large extent of the amendments suggested by the hon. Member for Esse-

quebo River, but as I have not got the exact wording of them it is not possible for me to say whether I agree with all that has been suggested. In the first place I agree, and I think the whole Council agrees also, that a copy of the debate should be forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and that suggestion can very well be definitely added to the end of the second resolution, which will then read:

"That His Excellency the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of the Resolution to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies with a copy of this debate."

I suggest that the words "with a copy of this debate" be added.

As regards the other amendments, when this Council is supplied with the exact wording of them, I think, we should be given an opportunity to move and second them so that they could be further discussed by other hon. Members. As I have said, I am not in favour of this motion. I would like to say at once that this is an historical event, an event on which hangs the future prosperity of this Colony. It is necessary to refer to some of the things that were done immediately before the West India Royal Commission was appointed and after the Commission submitted its report. I should like your permission, sir, to refer to one or two things and, I take it from Your Excellency's attitude, you are willing to give a little bit of latitude in this debate. It is necessary to place certain things on record so that future historians on the constitutional changes of British Guiana will be able from official documents to see what happened prior to this change of the Constitution. It is fortunate for me in some respects that while I was not a Member of this Council when it was called the Combined Court, I took very keen interest when the present Constitution was brought into being in ascertaining the wishes of the people before the old Legislature—the Court of Policy and

Combined Court—was changed to the present Legislative Council. I remember going through the whole Colony and getting the views and opinions of the people. I benefited greatly by that, and when I became a Member of this Council, through certain efforts of my colleagues and mine in various ways, we were able to influence the Imperial Government that a Royal Commission should be appointed to go into the question of the economic, social and political situation in this Colony with the view of changing the Constitution. I then thought I had the greatest opportunity to go to the public and find out their views, and then formulate those views and present them in a precise form not only to that Commission and to Government but to certain leaders of thought in England.

In 1937 there had been a good deal of trouble and unrest in this Colony and, as one of the Vice-Presidents of the B.G. East Indian Association, we took steps then to make arrangements to forward representations to the Imperial Government for the appointment of a Royal Commission. For some reason or other those representations were not made, and the matter was left in abeyance. In 1938 I was elected President of the B. G. East Indian Association and I was also Honorary Treasurer of the Man-Power Citizens' Association, a labour organization. I held one or two other executive positions in other institutions and organizations in this Colony. We did everything possible to carry the matter through, and by holding public meetings in the Town Hall and other places in the Colony it was definitely decided that representations should be made to the Imperial Government for the appointment of a Royal Commission. The Labour leaders of this Colony invited the Labour leaders of Trinidad, Barbados, Dutch Guiana and the other West Indian Islands to a conference in this Colony so that definite proposals could be made. A conference was held on the 7th June, 1938, and a resolution was moved by

the Hon. Capt. A. A. Cipriani, a Member of the Trinidad Legislative and Executive Councils, seconded by the Hon. A. C. Rienzi, a Member of the Trinidad Legislative Council, and carried unanimously at the Georgetown Town Hall. With your permission, sir, I shall read the preamble of that resolution :

“Whereas the social, economic and political situation in the British West Indies and British Guiana has become grave and precarious and has resulted into a crisis in consequence of which unrest, disturbances, rioting and economic upheaval have become periodical features in every part of the British Colonies in the Caribbean ;”

THE PRESIDENT : Confine yourself to the part touching the Constitution.

Mr. JACOB : The others touch very lightly on that and I shall leave them out. The first resolve clause reads :

*Be it Resolved* that this Congress of loyal British Citizens and Members of the—

- (1) All-Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factories' Workers' Trade Union and Oil-field Workers' Union.
- (2) Trinidad Labour Party.
- (3) Surinam Labour Federation.
- (4) British Guiana Labour Union.
- (5) British Guiana Workers' League.
- (6) Man-Power Citizens' Association.
- (7) British Guiana Post Office Workers' Union.
- (8) British Guiana Seamen's Union.
- (9) British Guiana Transport Workers' Union.
- (10) British Guiana East Indian Association.
- (11) Circle of Sunshine Workers.

requests that His Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom appoint a Royal Commission to enquire into the conditions of the Colonies as a whole, with Terms of Reference as follows:—

- (a) Reform of the Constitution of the Colonies to provide for a measure of Responsible Government in the form of Adult Suffrage and Elected Majority so that the Leaders of the people will govern in the best interest of the inhabitants ;
- (b) To explore the natural resources of the Colonies and to develop their possibilities in the interest of the British Empire generally ;
- (c) To provide for Railway Development, Land Settlement and Colonization for the Continental Mainland of British Guiana and British Honduras to absorb the surplus population of the West Indian Islands.

The last clause of the resolution reads :—

And be it further resolved that an accredited Representative of this Congress be empowered to proceed to Great Britain to state a case in favour of the inhabitants generally.

I happen to have been that representative. I proceeded to England as representative of the Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress, leaving this Colony on the 10th June, 1938, and interviewed large numbers of responsible people in the United Kingdom, including the Colonial Advisory Committee of which Mr. C. Roden Buxton was Chairman. I had a conference with those gentlemen and the change of the Constitution was particularly stressed. Lord Olivier was present and also Lord Farringdon and several M.P's, including Mr. A. Creech-Jones and Mr. Ben Riley. On the 5th August, 1938, His Majesty's Government appointed a Commission to investigate, as has been stated in the “West India Royal Commission, 1938-39 Recommendations,” social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago and the Windward Islands. It did not end there. I received a cable from British Guiana immediately the Commission was announced, authorizing me to ask that a change of the Constitution be also included in the terms of reference of that Royal Commission. After a good deal of trouble—it takes quite a lot of arranging to interview His Majesty's Representatives in the United Kingdom ; those of us who have been there know. You have to write many letters as the gentlemen are very busy, too busy to look after the affairs of these Colonies in distant parts, and to my mind it is not that they have no desire but they are overburdened with work of the Empire and work in the United Kingdom itself—I saw His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, presented my credentials and showed him the telegram I had received. Immediately I said political reform was not included in the terms of reference

of the Commission, Mr Macdonald hesitated a few seconds and said "They were not excluded." That I consider a very statesmanlike reply, and I hope hon. Members and the public would realize that it is not necessary to put in writing all the terms of reference of a committee, but that if any committee or commission is satisfied that certain things ought to be enquired into, they should be enquired into in the interest of the Colony.

There has been an unfortunate unwillingness in this Colony, in the highest circle possible, to listen to the wishes of the people without whom no colony and no empire can stand. I emphasize those few words so that Members of this Council would realize that it is only right and proper when any matter is to be discussed that the views of the people should not be excluded altogether. I agree that there should be some curtailment or restriction but the views of the people should be heard.

The Royal Commission was appointed, and came here and investigated. While it is generally admitted that the investigations could have been a little more exhaustive, it was realized ultimately that the job was so big and the ladies and gentlemen concerned had worked so hard that any little lapse in that respect would not matter. When we saw the recommendations—what had been published—we were fully satisfied in this Colony that the Commission had made what we would call a very generous report. As a result of the recommendations of the Commission we have this opportunity to discuss this motion that has been moved by the hon. Colonial Secretary to-day. I could have seen that the hon. Mover was somewhat embarrassed. Perhaps, he found himself in the position of receiving instructions from certain quarters. I think it is the wish of the majority of people in this Colony to let the Representatives of the people speak to the Representatives of the Crown, and I

should have liked this motion to have been moved by an Elected Member of this Council and not by a Government Member. Perhaps, though, it is thought that the Government represents the people of this Colony. So far as I am concerned, I have always, and will always, place the responsibility of this Government, whatever the condition of the Colony is, on the Government Members. As an Elected Member of this Council, while I have a certain amount of responsibility, a certain amount of privileges, I am not allowed to share in the responsibility of government. I had not been allowed in the past and am not allowed at the present time. When the hon. Colonial Secretary finds himself from his utterances here to-day in the position to move this resolution I can sympathize with him. If this Council had been differently constituted with Elected Members elected by a larger percentage of the votes of the inhabitants of the Colony, I would have no doubt as to the ultimate result of this motion, but at the moment I have extreme doubts about that. So far as I am concerned I shall vote against it, speak against it, and do everything possible to let the Imperial Government understand that the vast majority of the people do not wish this kind of Constitution, as suggested.

The West India Royal Commission recommended, which has been stated by the hon. Colonial Secretary, in paragraph 26 of their report at page 25—with your permission I shall read the whole paragraph and the whole of paragraph 28 so that when the debate is being read it will be seen what I am pointing out. Paragraph 26 reads as follows:—

We do not support either of the extreme proposals put before us for the grant of immediate and complete self-government based on universal suffrage, or for a wide increase of the authority of Governors which would convert the existing system into a virtual autocracy; the one because it would render impossible the financial control necessary if, as we consider to be inevitable, substantial assistance is to be afforded by His Majesty's Government through the West Indian Welfare Fund and otherwise; the

other because it would be politically a retrograde step. More, and not less, participation by the people in the work of government is a real necessity for lasting social advancement. At the present stage, we attach more importance to the truly representative character of Legislative Councils than to any drastic change in their functions.

Paragraph 28 on pages 25 and 26 reads

We recommend

(a) That care should be taken to ensure that all important sections and interests of the community receive adequate representation in the Executive Councils;

(b) That consideration should be given to the adoption of a Committee System on an advisory basis to give elected representatives an insight into the practical details of government;

(c) That official representation in Legislative Councils should be confined to the Colonial Secretary, the Treasurer and the Attorney-General and the resulting vacancies filled by nominations in the spirit recommended in (a) above;

(d) That in order to secure that the elected element in Legislative Councils shall be as truly representative as possible, the object of policy should be the introduction of universal adult suffrage. Some of us hold that this should be introduced forthwith: others that it should be reached by gradual stages and to this end recommend the appointment of local committees to consider the extension of the franchise, both for local and for central government. Such committees should keep in close touch with their counterparts in other West Indian Colonies, and should consider carefully whether, as is strongly desirable, their recommendations would assure substantial equality as between the sexes;

(e) That in all West Indian Colonies a careful examination should be made at an early date of the possibility of reducing substantially the margin between the qualifications for registration as a voter and those for membership of the Legislative Council, the latter being in many cases unnecessarily high;

(f) That a practical test of the advantages of Federation should be made by combining the Leeward and Windward Islands in one federation on the lines of that existing in the former group;

(g) That means be found for devoting more Parliamentary time to the discussion of colonial affairs and, if it is decided to proceed with the establishment of a Standing Parliamentary Committee to consider colonial affairs, to devise means for the association of delegates from the Colonies concerned with the work of that Committee.

Those are the two relevant paragraphs in that wonderful document issued by the West India Royal Com-

mission. Immediately that report was published in this Colony, our then President called the Unofficial Members together. My hon. friend, the Member for Essequibo River, made reference to that. Then a meeting of this Council was called and a Message dated 9th June, 1941, (No. 9) was read by His Excellency and a speech was also delivered. It is not necessary for me to refer in detail to the Message and Speech as they are on record in the debates of this Council. After that I thought it my duty to go to my constituency with the matter. I may mention that I am here on the suffrage of the electors of the North Western District and, when I speak, I do so on their behalf to the extent of 90 per cent. Before I went to my constituency, I addressed a circular letter to all the voters there. That letter was dated 13th June, 1941. I am not going to read it as it is lengthy, but that circular stated what I considered would be best for the Colony based on previous experience in my constituency. I went there on the 1st July, 1941, and held meetings on the 2nd and 3rd July. I would like with your permission, to read certain resolutions passed at those meetings.

THE PRESIDENT: Are those the same as we have had read?

Mr. JACOB: No; they are a little different. While the hon. Member for Essequibo River and myself agreed on major principles, there were certain principles on which we did not agree. I want to state definitely, sir, and to place on record what the people of the North-Western District have stated; and the resolutions passed are as follows:—

Resolution No. 1:—"Resolved that the Official Members of the new Legislative Council, viz., the Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General, and Treasurer, should remain as Members of the new Council for a period not exceeding five years from the date of the Constitution of the New Council; thereafter, all the Members of the Legislative Council should be elected by the people on the basis of Universal Adult Suffrage."



That resolution was passed at two meetings,—one at Kumaka, on July 2, 1941, and the other at Morawhanna on July 3—and was unanimously passed at both. At those meetings I took the number of persons present and at both more than 75 per cent. of the voters of the constituency attended. They were largely attended not only by voters but by residents of the district. They had been given previous notice in writing and the meetings were very widely advertised.

Resolution No. 2:—"Resolved that the number of Nominated Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council should be increased from five to seven, on the distinct understanding that the Members now serving retire, and that the seven Members be nominated by the Governor, with the advice of the new Executive Council, representative of interests and organizations not represented or not fully represented by the fourteen Elected Members of the Legislative Council."

Your Excellency, I am glad to say that since this resolution was passed on July 2 at Kumaka, with one dissident and on July 3 at Morawhanna unanimously, His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies has expressed the view that Nominated Members of the Council should in no case remain as permanent fixtures and in no case more than eight years.

Resolution No. 3:—"Resolved that the composition of the Executive Council of British Guiana be restricted to Members of the Legislative Council, with the Elected Members holding the decisive majority of votes in the Executive Council."

This resolution was carried unanimously at the one meeting at Morawhanna and with one dissident at the Kumaka meeting.

Resolution No. 4:—"Resolved that the reserve powers vested in the Governor of British Guiana under Article 62 of the Order in Council be amended and be exercised by the Governor, only with the advice of the new Executive Council."

This resolution was carried unanimously at both meetings.

Resolution No. 5:—"Resolved that the Committee or Ministry System of Administration be adopted forthwith, whereby Elected Members would be appointed as Chairman or Minister of certain Departments and Boards

to start with, and to be extended to include all Departments, particularly the Transport & Harbours Department, the Board of Agriculture, the Rice Marketing Board, the Copra Brokers' Board, the Public Works Department, the Central Drainage & Irrigation Board, etc., etc., and that the necessary legislation to amend existing legislation be introduced forthwith."

This resolution was carried unanimously at both meetings.

Resolution No. 6:—"Resolved that in view of the fact that Members of the House of Commons are paid an annual salary of £600, and that the principle of the payment of Members of the Legislative Councils has been recently adopted in Trinidad and Jamaica, this meeting of the Voters and Residents of the North-West District recommend to the Government that each Member of the British Guiana Legislative Council be paid a salary or fee not exceeding £250 per annum, and that legislation be introduced forthwith to legalize such payment."

This resolution was carried unanimously at the Morawhanna meeting and with two dissentients at the Kumaka meeting. I may state that it was not at my request nor had I anything to do with this resolution. It is purely a Trade Union matter. I was a bit surprised to find the electors and members of the public in my constituency advocating such a measure to be adopted by this Legislative Council and recommended for adoption by Government.

Resolution No. 7:—"Resolved that the Franchise Commission or a Committee of the Commission should confer with the Franchise Commissions of Trinidad and Jamaica and the other West Indian Islands with the object of obtaining unanimity in regard to the composition of the Executive Councils, Legislative Councils, Municipal and Village Councils, the qualification of Voters, the compilation of electoral rolls, and general Legislation and Regulations governing elections, with the object of adopting uniformity in regard to legislation and regulations, so as to facilitate early Federation of British Guiana and the British West Indies."

This resolution was carried unanimously at both meetings. Your Excellency, I would like to emphasize that all these resolutions were moved and fully explained, and that each individual at the meetings was asked to take a part in the meetings and to either raise his hand or not when the division

was being taken and the votes counted. In every case every man present or nearly everyone raised his hand in token that he was in favour of the resolution. I emphasize that in order that certain Elected Members of this Council would take note of that fact. In respect of the question of the names of those who attended the meetings, I may state that I have the names of those voters who attended and the names of the movers and seconders of the resolutions. They will be submitted, but I have not done so yet for certain reasons.

I came back from the North-Western District feeling fully satisfied that the people of that district wanted a proper change of the Constitution of this Colony. I consulted the hon. Member for Essequibo River and he said he would find out the wishes of the people of his constituency, the people who have placed him here. We decided he should draft his own resolutions, put in another way with a few deletions and additions but fundamentally the same as mine. We held seven meetings in his constituency and—he has read the resolutions that have been passed—I saw everyone present take part in the discussion. Those meetings were widely advertised by the distribution of printed handbills, and the resolutions were put and carried in almost every case unanimously. We then thought it advisable to consult our brother Electives and enquire of them what they would do in the matter. Two of them agreed in a way, but finally did not accompany us on our proposed tour of the country. We printed handbills and circulated them, giving the people due notice of our proposed meetings, and we invited and notified hon. Elected Members of each constituency by letter that we were going to hold meetings in their respective constituencies, but they did not avail themselves of the opportunity of attending. One hon. Member was absent from the Colony—the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. deAguiar)—and he may be excused.

Another hon. Member found it inconvenient to attend either of the meetings held in his own constituency or the other meetings. Another stated that he was going to hold meetings himself, but so far as I know no meetings were held by those who promised me or the hon. Member for Essequibo River. On the other hand, the hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Peer Bacchus) did hold two or three meetings and the one question of Adult Suffrage was put up, but I have a different account as to what happened. I say with all emphasis and most sincerely and truthfully that so far as I know no hon. Elected Member of this Council, save and except the hon. Member for Essequibo River and myself, consulted his constituency and passed resolutions or got the views of the people on the matter we are discussing to-day.

Whatever is the view of this Council in this matter does not shake the hon. Member for Essequibo River and myself as to the ultimate result of the changes in the Constitution of this Colony. I may mention here that in Jamaica the Secretary of State for the Colonies was good enough to grant the people Universal Adult Suffrage. That is what we want in this Colony, and I shall take objection to everything else until we get that. I shall constitutionally oppose by every means the Constitution as suggested in this motion. I have here a document from Mr. A. Creech-Jones, M.P., Chairman of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. It is a copy of the bi-monthly Record Journal of that Bureau, "Empire," for September, 1941. It states—

THE PRESIDENT: Have you the permission of the Council to read that document?

Mr. JACOB: I am going to ask permission.

THE PRESIDENT: I would ask to see it in order to determine whether it is relevant.

Document submitted for perusal.

THE PRESIDENT: The article is not very relevant to our present resolution. It is one of practical politics and a good deal of latitude can be allowed on a constitutional question. You may read it.

Mr. JACOB: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member would realize that his speech is without reference to practical politics. He is thinking of five years hence, and I am trying to get something done now. The hon. Member may proceed.

Mr. JACOB: As I have stated, Your Excellency, we want an opportunity to get up here and speak on matters of practical politics. I agree with Your Excellency and I have said that myself. What we want is accredited representation of the people. We should be given an opportunity. That is what I am pleading for. The Report of the "Empire" under the caption "Rejection of the Jamaica Constitution" states:

"On August 21st, 1941, the Jamaica Legislative Council rejected the new Jamaica Constitution which had been announced in Parliament last April. This was not altogether surprising. The new Constitution, though a distinct step forward in some respects, was not accepted in its entirety by any section of the community in Jamaica. The People's National Party, representing the progressive element, was prepared to accept it generally. But it insisted on certain amendments, particularly that effective steps to responsible government should be taken at once, to be completed within seven years."

The Jamaica Legislature rejected the very generous offer. I do not know if we would have done that here. It was not a practical thing that had been suggested by the Imperial Government to the Jamaica Legislature and it was rejected. In Trinidad practically, the same thing occurred. The Report goes on to say:

"The reactionary element openly objected to the extension of the vote to the whole population. And all sections of the people were worried about the Governor's reserved

powers. When the Constitution came for debate in the Council, the main objection raised was that the Governor's increased powers put him in a virtually dictatorial position.

I would not be too sorry if you assume some dictatorial powers at some times. It is necessary at times, but it must be, and it will have to be so conceded, for the benefit of a large majority of the people. When a dictator acts on behalf of a large majority of people it is practical Democracy but when a dictator acts just on behalf of a few people only, then I say that is Dictatorship. I just make passing reference to the fact that although Jamaica has been given a very liberal Constitution with Universal Adult Suffrage, the people of Jamaica through their representatives in the Legislature rejected that Constitution. I do not think that can be disputed, as it is a reliable official report by an institution the Chairman of which is a Member of Parliament and, I think, one of the Assistant Ministers of the Crown.

The Trinidad Legislature and people were not at all satisfied with what they had got, and so I say it would be very advisable for the Secretary of State for the Colonies to know, with the view of implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission, that there should be some general uniformity in regard to the qualification of voters, the qualification of Members of the Legislative Councils, the composition of the various Councils in the larger West Indian Islands at least, and this Colony. It puzzles me. I cannot understand the reason why such piecemeal and varying recommendations for the several Colonies. For instance, in my opinion and those best qualified to judge in Trinidad, the Trinidad Legislature that is in operation now is not as good as the British Guiana Legislature that is to go out of operation. So you have the Secretary of State for the Colonies giving Trinidad one thing, suggesting something else for Jamaica, and asking this

Colony to say what it wants. I think the Secretary of State for the Colonies should take the initiative in this matter; he takes the initiative in many things. He should give us something based on representation. Let him enquire and find out, and he will see that the vast majority of the people of this Colony want to take a greater share in the affairs of Government. I feel sure that while blunders will be made in the new form of government they will not be as bad as those made during the last century. So far as I see, the position here cannot be worse in many respects. In some respects, it is fairly satisfactory, but in most respects it is far from being satisfactory.

A Commission has been appointed to go into the qualification of voters and the qualification of Members of the Legislative Council. The relevant portion of the local law is the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1928, Section 25 of Chapter 2, Volume 1. I do not think it is necessary to refer to it as it is an official record, and so I would just say that the Franchise Commission is empowered to go into that. So far as I can see, the majority of people—speaking as a member of that Commission—who have come before that Commission up to the present are, in favour of Universal Adult Suffrage now or within five years. A small number has suggested that the qualification should be about \$5 per month. Whether there is a small income qualification and the other qualifications reduced or whether it is Universal Adult Suffrage, so far as I am concerned, whether the Franchise Commission reports against universal Adult Suffrage or not, I am confident that we will ultimately be granted Universal Adult Suffrage by the Imperial Government for the next constitution of this Council and the Executive Council.

THE PRESIDENT: It is desired at this stage to adjourn as previously

stated. There is one minor point I had just discussed with the Executive Council before coming into this Council which I would like to mention, as it is a financial matter. It is in connection with the appointment of the new Labour Officer—the Commissioner of Labour. Hon. Members will remember that in the Budget we allowed £1,000 a year for his salary. I have received a telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies pressing me to agree to make that salary £1,200 a year instead of £1,000. The reason for that is—I am quite sure it is not acquisitiveness on behalf of the officer on his part—the Secretary of State took this view that Labour Officers are now in demand in a number of Colonies and most Colonies are seeking men with good qualifications and experience. They are not easy to get at all, and I may say that I was a little bit surprised that this Colony should offer the salary proposed when Jamaica and Trinidad are giving salaries substantially greater than that. However, I made no remark on it. I suspected the Secretary of the State feels, now that he has chosen a very highly qualified and experienced officer to come here and certain Colonies to which that officer's colleagues are going offer a substantially greater salary, it is not quite fair and, perhaps, we should therefore come into line and give £1,200. The feeling of the Executive Council is that we cannot dodge out of it.

The other point is: that the original contract was proposed for one year. It is now proposed to make that three years, which also met with the acceptance of the Executive Council. There are two other minor points concerned. One is the passage, and I raise it as the question of payment of passages has been raised by resolution. Officers going out on contract are of course entitled to free passage out and back at the end of the contract, and I would like to be in a position to say that is existing here. Officers go out on contract for three years with the undertaking

that they will have free passage back at the end of that time. I must be in a position to assure the Officer that is the case. Where they join the permanent service of the Colony they will be entitled to leave back home.

The second officer who has been a Trade Union official for fifteen years, the Secretary of State desires, should obtain certain experience in the office of the Ministry of Labour in England. It is desirable that it should be over a period of three months, and for that purpose he is entitled to half salary and the ordinary housing or victualling allowance in England which is five shillings per day. I wish to be in a position to say that there is no objection raised to that here. Does any hon. Member of this Council desire to object to it? I feel it would be necessary to ask for a supplementary estimate to make it in order formally. If any hon. Member feels he wishes to object I would like him to represent it to-day before I telegraph the Secretary of State, which I would like to do this evening.

Mr. ELEAZAR: It seems that when a matter of that nature comes to us we should have an opportunity to meet and discuss it. I would like—

THE PRESIDENT: It only means delay in securing the officer.

Mr. LEE: May I enquire how long that officer will be in the office of the Ministry of Labour?

THE PRESIDENT: I should say three to four months. He may come out in about five months after the first officer. It is very strongly recommended by the Secretary of State.

Mr. LEE: I have no objection.

Mr. ELEAZAR: If the other hon. Members are agreeable I would not stand in the way, as my dissent would make no difference. I would like in matters of this nature to have time to think about them. I do not like them thrown at me in this way.

Mr. DEAGUIAR: I think in view of the necessity that exists for the early

appointment of this officer and the number of things that are awaiting his advice and general assistance to the solution of the Labour problems of this Colony, any delay in making the appointment may work unfavourably. I do not think we should be quibbling over the matter of paying the officer's passage back and things of that kind. As far as I am concerned, you can take it for granted that I give my support to the additional emoluments suggested by the Secretary of State and to the payment of his passage back when he has completed his service. I understand he will be appointed in the first instance on a three-year contract after which he will be entitled to some leave, even if there is the question of re-appointment. I have no objection to his passage being paid in these circumstances. I also think it would be a good thing if his Deputy receives the assistance or training in the Labour Department in England, because I am sure the experience he gains there will be very valuable to Labour conditions here generally.

THE PRESIDENT: I must apologize for bringing it so suddenly before hon. Members, but I only got the telegram late yesterday afternoon.

Mr. JACOB: I agree to Government's policy in the matter.

Mr. GONSALVES: In view of your recommendation in regard to the two officers, there can be no hesitation by this Council in agreeing to the suggestion. Some move on should be made in regard to the Bill just passed, and I think we should get on with it early.

THE PRESIDENT: I take it, it is the general feeling of hon. Members that I should proceed with the proposal made by the Secretary of State. I thank you, and I would wire him this evening. I therefore, now declare the Council adjourned to Thursday next week, and in the meantime I will put the amendments in circulation.

The Council adjourned accordingly to Thursday, 29th January, 1942, at 12 noon.