

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FRIDAY, 21ST JUNE, 1946

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT:

The President, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson (acting).

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).

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

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).

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

The Hon. W. J. Raatgever (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th of June, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed,

PAPERS LAID

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. D. J. Parkinson, Acting) laid on the table the following document:—

The Report of the Official Receiver and Public Trustee for the year 1945.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Holder) laid on the table the following document:—

The Legislative Council (Elections) (Amendment) Regulations No. 12 of 1946.

ORDER OF THE DAY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (MAY-JUNE, 1946)

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the Schedule of Additional Provision for May-June, 1946.

LEGISLATURE

Item 10—*Temporary Official Reporter, \$700.*

Mr. JACOB: I notice this amount is required "to provide for the extension of the employment of the Temporary Official Reporter from the 1st June to the end of the year. Not only has the work of the meetings of the Legislative Council throughout the year been very heavy but the second Official Reporter proposes going on vacation leave for which he is eligible from mid-September." I think this is a very wise though belated effort to bring the debates of this Council up-to-date, but still I think there is something wrong. I do not know, as I am not familiar with the internal arrangements, but I have taken up this question of the printing of the Debates for some time now. I do not know whether the manuscripts are ready, but I think the printing is very much delayed. I have not been able to check the printed Debates for the whole of 1943, but it does appear that the whole of 1943 Debates is not printed, the whole of 1944 Debates is not printed, but a part of the 1945 Debates is printed. The last one I have received is that of the 25th July, 1945.

I think I was informed quite recently that the idea was to leave the 1943 and 1944 Debates to be printed in due course and to have the subsequent ones printed promptly so that Members would be able to refer to them within a few months after the Council has met. Perhaps that will be explained. I do not think that will be so difficult if the manuscripts are up-to-date and are sent forward to the printers. I have an idea that the manuscripts are not up-to-date as the reporting staff is not adequate. However, that is not for me to question. I may be able to get some explanation as to whether the staff is adequate.

This provision of \$700 for June to December makes me feel that the staff is not adequate. I understand one of the Official Reporters is going on leave. If the work is behind hand with two men, one man is going on leave, and you have to replace that one only, then I think the work would lag behind. I suggest that the matter be gone into and the reporting staff be strengthened so that we get the Debates printed in time. I do not know what is the position in the sister Colonies, but I am reliably informed that in Jamaica there are five Official Reporters and in Trinidad there are three. I do not know if those figures are absolutely correct, but it does appear to me that we want more than two Official Reporters in this Colony.

Then, sir, under this Head—Legislature—I would like to refer to something which has been shown to me only to-day. As Your Excellency knows, I had to curtail my stay abroad and return here through an unfortunate misunderstanding, very unfortunate from my point of view. But since I have been here within the last few days I am not happy about what is going on. I am not in favour of the Elections being delayed. I think they should be held as early as possible, but the way things have been done during the last six months I would not be surprised if the elections are delayed for an indefinite period. My idea was, and it is the universal idea, that everything should be made so much easier for people to be registered as voters. The whole idea was that as the franchise was being extended things would become easier, but the way in which the Regulations are

framed things are becoming very much harder. Claimants to be registered as voters up to 1944 were required only to provide two statutory declarations, one by the claimant and one by his employer. Claimants are now required in addition to those two statutory declarations, which are outmoded and should have been abolished long ago, to provide another certificate by their employers. The employer must make a declaration that he employs the person and must give a certificate printed on the back of the Registration form. I do not quite follow what that means. These things are going to hold up the Elections.

I notice from the Order Paper that the Regulations are to be laid on the table. That gives Members an opportunity to give notice of motion within twenty-one days in respect of them. If I find they are going to be a source of delay in the registration of voters, I would have no alternative but to give notice of motion and have these Regulations debated, so as to arrive at some proper decision and so as to have all those people registered who used to be voters.

Mr. EDUN: I think I have to support the last speaker in so far as the printing of the Debates is concerned. I am not happy about the explanation given by Government. If there is need for an extra Reporter making the total three, I do not think it should be a matter for financial quibbling on the part of Government because, sir, this Council is supposed to be the premier democratic institution of this Colony, and reference to previous contributions in this Council is, I must say, a desideratum of democracy. The arrears of printed Debates are about two years, and since the Debates for 1943, 1944, 1945 and 1946 will not be in the hands of citizens of this Colony, it will be impossible for the average voter to examine the credentials of Members who have spoken during their term in this Council. Now that is a natural thing for every citizen to aspire to—to examine what a Member did for all the years he had been in the Council—and I want to remind Government seriously, in view of the fact that the Elections are coming on, that a citizen has the right to examine what Members did during their term in the Legislative

Council. I am in sympathy, deep sympathy indeed, with Government when it comes to the loss of certain printing paraphernalia when the *Argosy* was destroyed by fire. We are all in sympathy with Government, but some effort should be made before the Elections to let us get the Hansard reports at least for 1943. That will suit my purpose very well indeed.

Relative to the Elections I must say, perhaps, the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) is not aware of all the facts. Government has done everything possible to accelerate this question of making the registration very easy. If he discusses the matter with the hon. the Attorney-General he will find that things are progressing very well indeed. I see that he has referred to this matter of three separate declarations. I think that will be very easy if concentrated efforts can be made to overcome it. I do not like these restrictions myself. They are before us. Why waste more time instead of working very hard indeed to get all the eligible persons to be registered and so make way for the Elections to be held very early? I think a little discussion with the hon. the Attorney-General will satisfy him. With these few observations I think Government should consider the advisability of appointing one more Official Reporter so as to facilitate the reporting of the Debates and the getting out of the manuscripts.

Mr. LEE: If I may add my little quota to the remarks of my hon. friend, the Nominated Member, I must say that the hon. the Attorney-General has done all he could in order to facilitate matters and has tried his utmost on the Government side to bring the registration of voters into effect as early as possible. It is a difficult job, and he and the Chief Officer, Mr. McCowan, have done all that lay in their power. They are not responsible for the whims of the smaller Officers of Government who have taken upon themselves to dictate to those people who want to be registered as voters. I will be very much obliged if publicity can be given—it can be done through the B.P.I.—that any person who is making a declaration that he is earning \$120 per annum will not be required to verify it by his

employer. If he makes a false declaration to that effect and any person desires to prosecute him for so doing, that will be his 'bad luck. The reason for that is, there are many of the smaller Officers who have refused voters' applications for registration because they are employed on a sugar estate or in a rice factory or sugar factory and their employers have refused to make any declaration or to give a certificate to the effect. I am saying to Government that a man making a declaration that he is earning \$120 per annum does not need a declaration or certificate from his employer to that effect. I ask Government to consider the matter in that light and give instructions accordingly.

The Registering Officer is to take the voter's application and, if he knows that the qualification is not sufficient, he can reject it. Provision has been made by the hon. the Attorney-General for rejects and that they be made public. But those other small fry of the Government think they are better than the Head of the Department. For instance, I was struck when I went to Wakenaam quite recently—this week Wednesday—to learn there had been no forms there until my arrival and the arrival of the District Officer. Government is not to be blamed for that, however, because three days before I had telephoned Mr. McCowan and was told that he had given instructions that 1,500 forms were to be sent there, and from information I have received they were sent. I will not say the Head of the Department is to be blamed in this matter, but I do say Government can facilitate by advertising through the B.P.I. that all forms handed in by voters claiming registration must be received by the Registering Officer, and not sent back for declaration by the claimants' employers. If I were the Manager of an estate I would refuse to make such declarations, because it might mean that I have to sign 1,000 forms which would be a waste of my time.

Your Excellency, I must tell my friend, the hon. Member for North-Western District, that I have had an interview with the hon. the Attorney-General and Mr. McCowan and they have done all they can on the side of Government to facilitate the registration of voters. It

only wants a little more publication, as to how it is to be done and to whom the form is to be handed in the several areas. Several applicants have complained that they have to pay three cents to post the voter's form from Wakenaam to Bartica. I have not had time to speak to Mr. McCowan about that, but I will do so. I learnt from the District Commissioner for West Demerara that he has given instructions to the Police to receive registration forms from the people on the West Coast Demerara. I can only tell Government and this Council what I know of my own knowledge. The people can go to the Police Station, make their declaration and hand in their forms, or wherever Government thinks there is a responsible officer the forms can be handed in to him and the declaration made before him.

Mr. JACOB: I am sorry to think my remarks are interpreted by the last two hon. Members to mean that I made a complaint against the very hard work the hon. the Attorney-General has put into this matter. If that is so, I would like to clear away that misunderstanding. I had a discussion with the hon. the Attorney-General for nearly two hours and I am 100 per cent. satisfied that he is doing his best. I am also satisfied that the Principal Officers are doing their best in this matter. But they are not the only parties interested in this matter. At 1.30 to-day two persons came in to me and drew my attention to these certificates. I did not see them before. I did not know what the explanation is, and so I thought I should make reference to it, because it is holding up the registration in the two districts those persons came from. I do not think the requirement of two declarations and a certificate should be placed on the voter's form.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I rise to a point of order! I am not at all willing to prevent Members making remarks on what facilities are made for obtaining registration, but I would suggest that no further discussion be allowed under this item until when the hon. the Attorney-General lays over the Regulations. I mention that not because I am punctilious about matters before us. I confess that sometimes I offend in not observing the Rules myself.

To a certain extent I am allowed to do so, but unlike some Members I readily confess to having done so and ask permission to continue. But the trouble about further discussion of this matter is this: When we have to examine what a Member said or what the complaints were—and this is the point I wish to make—there is always the danger of referring in the future to the publication of our Hansards and to what one said, and the index will not help us because the remarks will be indexed under the provision for an additional Reporter.

What remarks are made now you will not be able to find easily. I might have something to say myself and I would suggest that although the notes are being made now, the Official Reporter in making his report should transcribe them, not under this head, but make them appear under a specific head. With the Council's permission that could be done, and I think it should be done for future reference.

Mr. JACOB: Now, sir, may I speak on this particular question?

The CHAIRMAN: Carry on.

Mr. JACOB: I am finished.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I do support the provision asked for, but there has been some reference to the value in the publication of reports of these proceedings. It has amused me, sir, to listen to the hon. Mr. Edun with his apprehension that the remarks made here by hon. Members might not be available to voters—and I presume he means voters in the Colony's potential districts who, he hopes and thinks, would read all the wisdom he has expressed here from time to time. He is a Nominated Member and I can assure him, sir, that he would be considerably disappointed if he imagines that the voters in any electoral district are so much interested in our affairs as even to read about them. I know from experience -- taking cases of which I know personally -- that pages and pages of speeches were made by us during a Budget Session and they did not appear in the newspapers. I do not think one should expect tired voters to read everything; I think they

would pay more attention to what is told to them and they would also listen to what is said from a platform. I do not think hon. Members should use speeches made here for catching votes; I think that should be the least of our intention. I might say that there is nothing to prevent speeches from being printed and given to voters if it is felt that that would help a candidate. I may explain that Members of Parliament who are anxious that their constituents should read what they say, do not merely depend on the newspapers as some speakers do in this Council. I am not saying this by guess, but from what I know.

The hon. Member who wishes his remarks to get prominence in the newspapers and not to be forgotten, should read what Members of Parliament do. They go there prepared and do not make rash speeches on things, they have not studied, (laughter), neither do they speak for the delight and pleasure of seeing their speeches in the Provincial newspapers. Hon. Members here will have to learn when they become Parliamentarians to be satisfied with the reports they get. I know Members who have had their elaborate speeches reported at their own expense, but we have not got to that stage here. Personally, however, I think there is wisdom in having accurate reports published, and I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Roth, to a speech I made here a few days ago and which was so inaccurately reported in the newspapers. I know that my hon. friend has a special interest in the newspapers I read and I did not wish to go so far as to write to the newspaper concerned asking for a correction of the remarks I made. They were made in relation to the Mitchell Trust and the report stated wrongly, first of all, that the fund was one of seven to eight thousand dollars. I said “£s” and not dollars.

Then I was made to say that the administration of the Trust was being passed around to certain beneficiaries and that they were receiving treatment which the testator did not intend. Of course, it was a summary of my remarks, but it was a gross libel on this Council and on you, sir, that I should have been made

to charge the administrators of this Trust with not doing their duty. If I had not been a public man I might have got very offended at such an inaccuracy. Yesterday I was able to get the Hansard report at very short notice and I must say that it is a credit to the Reporter. I came into the Council and asked the Reporter to get a copy of my remarks and I took them over to the hon. Mr. Roth. I can say now that the remarks I was reported in the newspaper to have made, I never made. I therefore hope that instead of causing me to write to the Editor of the newspaper asking for a correction, the hon. Member (Mr. Roth) would see that that is done.

I support the suggestion made as regards this particular item, sir. I think we do need the services of another Official Reporter, but I am going to suggest before the appointment is made that this is a matter in which the Members of this Council will be allowed to assist in making the selection. I do so for very many reasons. This post has become a pensionable one—it has been absorbed into the Service—and the last man who held it was a Class I Officer. The point about it is that Members know or have seen work which I do not think was very well done from time to time, and that was simply because of pressure of work on the part of the Reporter. I do not think an Official Reporter should be put in that position. If his duties were only confined to debates and meetings of Select Committees it would have been a different matter, but that is not all these gentlemen have to do. They have these usual duties and they are also called upon to perform other duties. I think their status should be raised and that what they are doing should be known. I also think they should be given better accommodation for doing their transcription and, if necessary, to interview Members as to the accuracy of their remarks. At present, it is only with difficulty that the shorthand writers are able to get to Members.

Every Member of this Council has a right to see the remarks he has made and, within certain limits, to be able to correct them. Therefore, I am saying, sir, that we should have the privilege of advising Government not so much as regards the

salary for the post if it becomes necessary to make the appointment, but as to the necessity for providing certain amenities in relation to his work. Before Your Excellency assumed office here there was an outstanding candidate for this post. There was no question as to his educational ability or his shorthand speed and his ability to transcribe the speeches made by Members during the course of debates here, and the only reason for his rejection—and I regret he is not in the Service—was that he was found to be suffering from heart disease. I should not like to see a Reporter faint at the table here, and perhaps he might be so overcome by the oratory of Members that he might even die. I do think, however, that the candidate in question had the mental qualification that should be a pre-requisite for the post and that he should have been appointed.

The CHAIRMAN: To a pensionable post?

Mr. WOOLFORD: My view of the matter is that it should not be a pensionable post. I hope I am not mistaken; there may be some way out of it. I am not at all pleading for anyone; I am simply saying that a person who is appointed to a post of this kind should be provided with proper emoluments. I do ask that the post be regarded as one in which Members of this Council are entitled to be consulted before the appointment is made.

The CHAIRMAN: Would any other Member like to speak on this subject of Official Reporters? I would like to give Members some information as to the need for a third one. The Clerk of the Council informs me that the debates have been transcribed by the Official Reporters for 1943, 1944, and 1945, and that they are up to date. I do not think the delay in getting the Hansard printed has anything to do with the Official Reporters, but with the printing difficulties that have arisen as a result of the fire. Further, there is no room, physically speaking, for a third Reporter where the Official Reporters now occupy. I am seldom in a position to have extra staff and not accept it. If the Council wants a third Reporter, and if I can find room for him, and also vote the

money, I can always find work for him to do—plenty of work. But, I want to tell you quite clearly that you will not get your debates printed any quicker than they are being done at the moment.

As regards this problem of printing the debates, the question is, of course, how soon we can get over the arrears, and I can say that the printers are working very hard indeed. The hon. Member for North Western District and myself went very thoroughly into this matter some time ago and the position is that before the fire the Argosy Coy. was instructed by me to pay overtime for work on the debates in order to get them through quickly. Then, we had the fire which set everything back to a very great extent. The *Chronicle* have undertaken to print the debates for 1943 and 1944, and this they hope to complete—I have a note here—by October or November, this year. Therefore, you are sure to have the 1943 and 1944 debates printed this year. As soon as that is done work will be started on the 1945 debates. I have also instructed that when the Argosy Coy. reconstruct their premises and begin to work on debates, such arrears must not be allowed to take place again. It was really not the fault of the Reporters that there were arrears in the printing of the debates. They got the manuscripts prepared, but they were held up for months by a Senior Officer of Government who wanted to make quite sure that every statement made by him was accurately recorded.

That is the true story of how the arrears started. I must tell you again that if you want a third Official Reporter it would be your responsibility and that I would certainly find work for him. Where I could find room for him however, I do not know. If you want a third Reporter, I agree with the Deputy President that before he is appointed the questions of his qualification and pay should receive the consideration of the Council but, of course, Government must select the man. I do not know whether it would not be best to leave the matter for further discussion, but my advice to hon. Members is not to press for a third Reporter now. The question could always come up for consideration later, and then we might really give you some better information.

I can see no use in rushing it at the moment; we are up to date with the debates. I will now ask the Attorney-General to reply to those hon. Members who touched upon the question of the forthcoming elections.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am sure hon. Members appreciate the fact that it is the view of Government that all those who have the necessary qualification should be able to register as voters, and that is the reason for enlarging the personnel who would be in a position to administer the statutory declaration. Opportunity was taken to give effect to it in the course of the debate on the legislation dealing with the Elections and which has already received Your Excellency's assent and has now become law. I think hon. Members have it before them; it deals with the additional Commissioners of Oaths to be appointed under the Regulations for the purpose of taking the statutory declarations and the result of that is to obviate the difficulty of persons having to find Commissioners of Oaths to swear them and receive their statutory declarations.

As regards the point raised by the hon. Member for North Western District, I think it was fully answered by the hon. Member for Essequibo River. If hon. Members turn to the Regulations they will see that Regulation 6 (1) refers to the particular form to which the hon. Member for North Western District drew the attention of this Council—Form No. 2. The relevant Regulation referred to—Regulation 6 (1)—states:—

“The claim shall be supported by a statutory declaration made by the claimant that the particulars given in his claim are truly and correctly stated to the best of his knowledge and belief. The statutory declaration shall be in Form No. 1 in the Schedule.”

If hon. Members pass on to Regulation 6 (2) they will find that it reads as follows:—

“Where a claim is based on the receipt of salary or wages, the claimant may, as evidence in support of his claim, produce to the registering officer a statutory declaration or certificate

made or issued by the employer, or by an agent of the employer, who can declare or certify as to the salary or wages of the claimant. The declaration or the certificate, as the case may be, shall be in Form No. 2 in the Schedule.”

The reason why it has been stated that the claimant “may” and not “shall” produce a statutory declaration or certificate made or issued by the employer, becomes obvious as soon as it is read. It is not obligatory, but any worker will be in a position to say “my employer has given me this declaration”, and he will have complete evidence in support of his claim once that declaration is handed in. It is not obligatory and therefore the hon. Member can quite clearly see that it might be done or it might not be done. It would be a matter for the Registering Officer to test the claim and see that the applicant is working for not less than \$120 per annum. The object in putting it that way is that we want everybody to be in a position to produce the evidence, so that when the Revising Officer comes along he could have the claim verified and see the evidence supporting it. I hope I have satisfied hon. Members on this point.

Mr. JACOB: Is it intended that an employer may either make a statutory declaration or issue a certificate? If it could be either one of the two things, then I think it should be properly explained. I have an idea that the word “may” is usually interpreted nowadays as “shall.”

The CHAIRMAN: That is not so.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. Member will appreciate the fact that in Regulation 6 (1) it is stated that “the claim shall be supported by a statutory declaration made by the claimant.” That is obligatory, but when it comes to the question of supporting evidence from an employer or from his agent, then the word “may” is used, which is not obligatory.

Mr. JACOB: I think the Press can be of great service to the community by emphasising that point in tomorrow's newspapers, because I know as a fact that some Registering Officers are refusing to

accept the forms alone as they stand. Some employers are declining to give certificates to their employees and if it is a case of "may" and not "shall", then the Registering Officers should accept the forms without any declarations or certificates from employers.

Mr. LEE: I would like to support the statement made by the last speaker. As he has stated, Registering Officers in certain districts have refused registration to applicants who did not produce certificates from their employers. If the Regulation carries the word "may" as regards the production of a statutory declaration or certificate from an employer, then the Registering Officers should be made to accept all claims tendered, whether or not they are accompanied by statutory declarations or certificates from employers. If a Registering Officer wants to reject any claim he should accept it and then write the word "Rejected" on it, leaving the Revising Officer to deal with it.

Mr. CRITCHLOW: It is true to say that some workers are finding it difficult to get certificates from their employers. Although the employers know that the workers concerned are earning more than \$10 per month they would not find time to sign the certificates, but would tell the poor workers "come back tomorrow" and things like that. The result is that some workers have given up the idea of getting registered as voters. What we desire is a little more co-operation on the part of the employers, since some of the workers are getting disheartened. I am glad for the explanation that has been made and I think that if there is a little more co-operation between employers and employees in this matter, all would be well. It should be quite easy for employers to get some of their clerks to sign the certificates on their behalf.

Mr. LEE: I welcome the remarks made by the hon. Nominated Member (Mr. Critchlow), but would like Government to give instructions to the Registering Officers to receive all claims submitted by workers whether signed by employers or not, and then leave it to the Revising Officer to say whether any of those claims should be rejected.

Mr. CRITCHLOW: I am not against that at all.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I am at a loss to understand why a Registering Officer would refuse to accept a claim from a worker because it is without a declaration or certificate from his employer. Even if a Registering Officer has knowledge that a particular claimant has not got the necessary qualification, he has no right to reject his claim. For instance, a claimant has the right to send his claim by post and if it goes to the Registering Officer is he going to refuse to accept it? I do not think any Registering Officer would go so far.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It seems to me that there is some misapprehension—not in the minds of hon. Members, but in the minds of those to whom the Third Nominated Member (Mr. Critchlow) referred. First of all, it is desirable that all those who are qualified and have the right to be registered should be registered. That is a basic fact, and so far as Government is concerned I think it intends to do everything in its power to facilitate matters and to see that all those who are qualified are placed on the register. The second point is that in order to do that by way of the Regulations which hon. Members have before them, there has been an enlargement of those persons who would sign and take the statutory declarations. These persons would not be concerned with what the claimant says. If he says "I work for \$120 a year" that would be a matter for him.

After the declaration is made the claimant goes to a Registering Officer and he is the person to say whether that person, by reason of his qualification on the claim, should be put on the register. It may be stated at this point, that this question of putting in certificates from employers was suggested by the Franchise Commission which considered the matter. I think it would also assist if the Press could be asked to publish the Regulation on which Form 2 is based. It is Regulation 6 (2) and it reads:

"(2) Where a claim is based on the receipt of salary or wages, the claimant may, as evidence in support of his claim, produce to the registering officer a statutory declaration or certificate made or issued

by the employer, or by an agent of the employer, who can declare or certify as to the salary or wages of the claimant. The declaration or the certificate, as the case may be, shall be in Form No. 2 in the Schedule."

"(3) Any statutory declaration made for the purpose of this Regulation shall be exempt from Stamp Duty and no fee shall be charged, paid or received for taking it."

That is equally important.

The CHAIRMAN: I would suggest that hon. Members should not rely on the Press nor rely on the B.P.I. Let hon. Members who are interested, let the people themselves, do so. They know what they want to do.

Mr. LEE: There is one question which I would like Government to consider and decide, and let us give publicity to it. The Ordinance says Registration must be filed by the 15th July. Let us take for instance, a man might post his registration form on the 15th July at Leguan. The Post Office stamp on the envelope will show the 15th July, but the Registering Officer will not receive it until the 17th. I am asking the Government to consider that posting on the 15th is sufficient delivery to the Registering Officer.

The CHAIRMAN: Why should you encourage people to wait until the 15th to post their forms?

Mr. LEE: Your Excellency, you do not know the difficulty that occurs in my constituency. There may be a man working in the Potaro District who desires to be registered. He posts his registration form in the Potaro District on the 15th. The Registering Officer is at Bartica, and the mails do not go down to Bartica in time for the Registering Officer to receive that form on the 15th.

The CHAIRMAN: If you put down the 30th people would still post on the 29th.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Just for clarification! I take it that the certificate by the employer on the Schedule

has been placed there to facilitate the employer by not giving him the trouble of making a declaration. He has to appear before a Commissioner of Oaths to make the declaration, but the certificate can be given without the need to appear before a Commissioner. That is the facility that has been given and, I think, most employers will make use of the certificate instead of the declaration.

Mr. WOOLFORD: As I am the only Member but one alive who was a member of the Commission which suggested the adoption of this particular clause in our Regulations—the other Member is the hon. Major Bain Gray who is at St. Helena—I have risen, because I wish it to be placed on record that this particular Regulation was done at my suggestion and against much opposition. The minutes of that Commission prior to the 1923 Constitution will support what I say. I have risen because I wish to say that prior to this, \$300 per annum income was required and many an employer in responsible positions in this community made representations that there appeared on the List of Voters clerks and other people in their employ who were not in receipt of \$300 per annum. They questioned the sufficiency of their qualification, and it seemed to me at that time—and I wish to state my own personal reasons for it—those men of the community in those days did not want to see an addition to the Voters' List.

When this particular form of certification was suggested by me, it followed that many an employer said he was not going to subscribe to such a declaration for the reason given by the hon. Member for Western Berbice. Then the alternative was given, that he should give a certificate just to prevent any excuse being made. The word "agents", I think, was used in order that a person in the employ of a responsible man might be able to get the information from the book-keeper who could sign the certificate. But it is opposition from people who ought to know better and who are opposed to the clerks in their employ appearing as voters. They would not give them permission to go and vote because they did not wish them to vote in a certain direction. It was followed in many an administration here. We had so-called associations, and there

was much political activity at the time. In these modern days and at a time like this you do not expect to hear employers refusing to make a statutory declaration and saying they have no time to issue a certificate. I had suggested at the time there should be a penalty on the employer, and I have lived to see the day when that provision has become necessary. I regret I did not press for that.

I am not opposed to Adult Suffrage as a proposition. I am not opposed to the question, but I say "Go slowly." But that does not preclude me from saying that I view with disappointment the attitude taken by responsible members of the community in this matter. They are not giving the Government, and the public, the co-operation they should in this respect, and I deplore that there is nothing to compel them to do so. That is why I do appeal to you, notwithstanding you have expressed the proper view that those interested in the Elections should do something to encourage it. There is difficulty of getting the personal act. No one can sign for him. No one can make him do it. How is it to be done? There are places in Water Street where no clerk can approach an employer—some of them are fast disappearing. He is not allowed to do so, and I say something has got to be done to see that these men are allowed to register.

But that is beside the point. I am surprised to know with all the elucidation given on the subject, it having been discussed *ad nauseam* before, it is not known what is the duty of the Registering Officer. He can object in certain circumstances, but he receives the declaration and then objects. He can make a note on the list as published "Objected to by the Registering Officer." It often happens. I think there is a clause to that effect. The point is, we should not have an interruption of the machinery for getting this Register, and the most surprising thing to me is that it is being done in places where we would be surprised to know and not by the poor man who is ignorant and should not be allowed to vote but who sometimes exercises a judgment in certain matters far better than many of those above him.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I would like to say something in regard to the Registering Officer. It appears in Regulation 8 (1) and reads:

"The registering officer shall inquire into, examine and investigate the qualification in respect of which a claim is made, and he shall receive and consider such evidence as he may think fit to establish the validity of a claim."

That follows the point made by the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee). When a person's claim is before the Registering Officer, if the certificate or declaration by his employer is not made it still remains for the Registering Officer to enquire into and examine the qualification in respect of which the claim is made. The Registering Officer may accept the claim right away. He may know how much the man works for—\$15 per month—and that being more than \$10 per month he therefore passes the claim.

Mr. JACOB: I wish to make one other point. In an outlying district it might not be possible for the Registering Officer to receive the claims by the 15th July, and I think that instructions should be sent out advising Registering Officers that so long as the declaration was made on or before the 15th July such claims should be accepted as coming within the prescribed date. For instance, in my constituency a man at Arakaka or Barama may get hold of a Police Officer or Head Teacher and have his claim attested to, but his claim may not reach the Registering Officer at Mabaruma within a week of the date of attestation, and so that claim may be out of date altogether. So long as the declaration was made before a Commissioner on the 15th July or before that date, that claim should be accepted as coming within the prescribed date, though it might reach the Registering Officer after the prescribed date.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am not prepared to give a definite answer to that. I appreciate the hon. Member's point that owing to difficulty of communication a claim may not reach the Registering Officer in sufficient time to enable

all the requirements to be got through by the 15th July. I appreciate the hon. Member's point and will give it consideration.

The CHAIRMAN : We had a very interesting discussion though entirely foreign to the matter before the Council. It is however very useful to Government, and I hope the Press would do their best to give an account of the points raised. I hope the BPI in consultation with the Attorney-General would also elucidate the position for the information of the public. I again ask Members to do the work themselves.

Schedule passed without amendment.

The Council resumed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I move —

That this Council approves of the Schedule of Additional Provision for May-June, 1946, which has been laid on the table.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Council thereafter adjourned *sine die*.