

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 25TH AUGUST, 1948

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir CHARLES CAMPBELL WOOLLEY, KC.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. A. T. Peters (Western Berbice).

The Hon. John Carter (Georgetown South).

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 13th of August, 1948, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPER LAID

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, laid on the table.

The Post Office Savings Bank (Amendment No. 2) Regulations. No. 23 of 1948.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES

RICE INDUSTRY ENQUIRY

Mr. DEBIDIN gave notice of the following motions :—

- (a) WHEREAS the Rice Industry is one of the major industries of the Colony and a large percentage of the population is engaged in rice production and are completely dependent on the industry for their livelihood.

AND WHEREAS there is vital need for increased production of rice and for greater encouragement to peasant rice farmers;

AND WHEREAS from present day figures the cost of production is much higher than the price obtained by producers in all grades except Super which grade is very rarely obtainable.

AND WHEREAS producers coupled with the mounting cost of living would operate as a serious discouragement to rice producers in the Colony to continue or to take up rice farming in the future and the industry would suffer thereby;

AND WHEREAS Producers have been subjected during war time to control of the Rice Industry by Defence Regulations and today the entire industry is governed by the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance which has taken the place of the Defence Regulations and all prices are controlled and fixed under this Ordinance;

AND WHEREAS there is grave dissatisfaction throughout the Colony over not only the price paid to producers but also the working of the Rice Marketing Board chiefly in the very high cost of the administration of the Board and the extremely low price obtained for our exported rice which is approximately one-third of the World Market price;

AND WHEREAS there is urgent need for a close public enquiry to be taken throughout the Colony into the whole question of cost of production and prices with a view to their satisfactory adjustments;

Be IT RESOLVED that this Council respectfully request Government to appoint a committee of five with the Economic Adviser as Chairman, —

- (a) To examine and enquire into the Rice Industry as a whole with a view of determining the cost of production and making recommendations to Government for the adjustment of prices to producers so as to ensure a reasonable profit margin for each grade of rice;
- (b) To examine and recommend on the prices for which rice may be sold for local consumption and for export trade;
- (c) To examine and enquire into the working of the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Producers' Association;
- (d) To examine and enquire into the working of the Mahaicony-Abary Rice Expansion Scheme and recommend thereon;

- (e) To enquire into the cost of milling padi and the question of fixing a reasonable price or fee for milling; and
- (f) Generally to recommend on any other matters pertaining to the Rice Industry.

SECURITY OF TENURE FOR SUGAR ESTATE LABOURERS' TENANCY.

- (b) WHEREAS a very large percentage of our population are resident upon sugar plantations in the Colony and supply labour for cane cultivation, sugar production and other subsidiary work on sugar estates;

AND WHEREAS the majority of these labourers are descendants of immigrants who came indentured to the sugar estates under a condition that "a suitable dwelling shall be assigned to the emigrant and family, if any, free of rent and shall be kept in good repair by the employer";

AND WHEREAS for generations each sugar estate had the somewhat exclusive benefit of the labour of the resident population by virtue of such residence — i.e. by their being provided with free dwellings;

AND WHEREAS the Sugar Estate Employers, regarding the tenancy of labourers on the estate as a Tenancy at Will under which any period e.g. a day's notice to quit can be given, have been evicting resident labourers from off the estate;

AND WHEREAS when once evicted from a sugar estate a labourer cannot find employment on any other sugar plantation in the Colony;

AND WHEREAS such insecurity of tenure could give rise to a form of "forced labour";

AND WHEREAS security of tenure has been provided for tenants of rice lands by legislation instituted by Government under Ordinance No. 10 of 1945:

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council respectfully request the Government of the Colony to introduce legislation to secure:—

1. That no notice to quit be given to or evictions be made of any sugar estate labourer in respect of any dwelling on a sugar estate unless, —
 - (a) All of the tenant labourer and his family have failed and/or refused without just cause to work on the sugar estate for a continuous period of not less than one year;
 - (b) One calendar month's notice be given; and
 - (c) Such notice is endorsed by the District Commissioner of the District in which the sugar estate is situated on being satisfied that there are sufficient grounds to justify such notice being given.
2. That all tenancies of rice lands and provision farms on sugar estates shall be deemed to be tenancies from year to year, and any notice to quit in respect thereof shall be endorsed by the District Commissioner as being justified to be given, and reasonable compensation for crops and/or improvements be paid in respect of provision farms.

ORDER OF THE DAY

BILLS — FIRST READING.

The following Bills were read the first time and notice given of their second reading:

- A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Magistrates) Ordinance with respect to Maintenance Orders."
- A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance with respect to lands which may be resumed by the Crown".
- A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Post Office Savings Bank Ordinance, 1947, with respect to the date of calculation of interest on deposits."
- A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to extend the powers of Co-operative Credit Banks for the purpose of the increase of food production".
- A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Licensed Premises Ordinance, 1944, with respect to the opening and closing hours of licensed premises and for purposes connected therewith."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Legal Practitioners Ordinance with respect to Articles of Clerkship". — The Attorney-General.

UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE

The Council resumed consideration of the following motion by Mr. LEE.

"WHEREAS certain members of the 1941 Franchise Commission recommended that the introduction of universal adult suffrage should be postponed for a period of five years, while other members thought that universal adult suffrage should have been introduced in 1944;

AND WHEREAS universal adult suffrage has already been introduced in the other two first class colonies of Jamaica and Trinidad in the West Indies;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Secretary of State for the Colonies be respectfully requested to approve of the introduction of an amendment to the Legislative Council (Elections) Ordinance, 1945, thereby giving the right to every male and female over the age of 21 years, resident in the Colony, to be registered as a voter."

The PRESIDENT: When the Council adjourned on the 13th August, the hon. Member for Essequibo River was replying to the debate on the motion standing in his name.

Mr. LEE: I understand the hon. Member for Demerara River would like to make some explanation.

The PRESIDENT: What is the point?

Capt. COGHLAN: I crave your indulgence. It is on Universal Adult Suffrage. There have been two amendments on the motion. The first was that there should be a literacy test in any language, and the second was that the literacy test should be in English. What we are concerned with is to know if the voter knows for whom he is voting. I have worked out a formula for approval by the Council. You may consider it. I know the Home Government is in favour of Universal Adult Suffrage.—

The PRESIDENT: I do not think the hon. Member is entitled to make that

statement, when he has got the statement of H.M. Government which I read to the Council. That is the present position, and the hon. Member cannot go beyond that.

Capt. COGHLAN: I am not going beyond that. The whole question is if the person knows for whom he is voting. We have heard from many speakers —

The PRESIDENT: What is the hon. Member's point?

Capt. COGHLAN: The point is to know how we can cut a way so that who may be illiterate will still be able to exercise the franchise.

The PRESIDENT: I am afraid the hon. Member is not in order. The debate has already been completed. If he has any question to raise in regard to the amendments before us or an explanation of them, I would give him that opportunity before I put them to the vote. If he wants to be clear as to where he stands when voting, I would do that for him as soon as the Mover has replied.

Capt. COGHLAN: Thank you!

Mr. LEE: Your Excellency, on the previous occasion, I was replying to the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North and trying to point out to you and this Council that according to the Report of the Franchise Commission of 1941, which was published in 1944, there was an obligation on this Government to rectify something that was not properly done by a previous administration or this Government. That was to rectify the question of illiteracy under the Swettenham Circular. If hon. Members have read the Report, which I hope they have, they would certainly see that it proves conclusively that the Administration in that year made a mistake in suspending the enforcement of compulsory primary education. It was wrong in my humble opinion, which I respectfully submit. This Council, knowing that and being cognisant of the fact that the advancement of political views is towards giving the masses the privilege and right of electing their representatives to every public body, I respectfully submit, will not be doing anything that is wrong in allow-

ing those people to vote who were not in a way compelled to receive that education which the Government had insisted upon and the majority of whom are of the working class of this Colony.

I further desire to say, what fear can there be amongst us because one section of the community is in the majority and desires to elect of their own class for the Legislative Council? If they come here what would happen? Let us assume for the sake of argument that they come here in the majority; if they do anything right or wrong the majority would be affected by it and that would be themselves. Let us not have any such fear when it comes to the good of the country. The population of this country is cosmopolitan. Let us realize they are human beings like ourselves who work equally with us, and not because they are illiterate in the sense that they cannot read and write they should be debarred from that privilege. As I have previously said, that privilege has been granted them in the minor administration of village areas, where any person who is the owner of property can vote because he has an interest in the particular village. He is given that right by law. Everyone of us is liable to whatever Duties are imposed and contributes to the revenue of the Colony, and the workers are equally interested in the welfare of the community, in the welfare of their particular industry, as anyone who has invested capital in the Colony. Why then should we say now that we cannot give them the right and privilege of voting when it comes to this Legislative Council?

Let us assume for the sake of argument that they are given the right and privilege of voting, they will not exercise that right until the next General Election unless there is a by-election. In the interim this Council can vote money to start a literacy campaign so that they will not have only that knowledge of reading a simple sentence that is required. The Commission that was set up to enquire into the Franchise required only a simple sentence to be read in the language under which they feel they should be given the right and privilege to vote. Your Excellency, I feel that if this Council should deny them that right and privilege it would be casting a blot on

those Members who stand for political advancement for the benefit of this Colony. I appeal to Your Excellency as Governor of this Colony to see whether it is not possible in some form or fashion to convince those against the motion that it is in the interest of the Colony that that privilege be granted.

On the other hand, let us assume for the sake of argument that if that privilege is granted this Council would be flooded with the votes of that particular class and race. What would happen? I do not ask that they be given power to do anything that is not of benefit to this Colony. Under Crown Colony Government the last word is with Your Excellency and your advisers at all times. This life of this Council is only five years, but Your Excellency has the right to prorogue it at any time should you find its policy is not in keeping with Imperial policy. I am positive that no right-thinking person in this Colony would at any time stand up against Your Excellency exercising that right in the interest of the Colony. There are Elected Members who will say it is not in the interest of the Colony, but I feel sure that at no time whatever will they let down their own people.

When you talk of financial status, they have as much financial status as any of the others, save Booker Bros., McConnell & Co., Ltd., who have a lot of invested interest in the Colony. But no Member of this Council will in any way try to destroy or to belittle the efforts of any financial people coming into this Colony for the progress of the Colony. Does Your Excellency believe that at any time, whether the voters are literate or illiterate, this Council will throw out anything of a financial nature or an investment where the masses will be benefited by that investment? There will be new industries, new capital brought into the Colony. Would the masses permit any of the Elected Members to stand here and destroy the advancement of those industries? I do not feel that hon. Members of this Council have considered that question in detail. Why is there the fear of these people taking advantage of their majority in a district. When we started the British Guiana Labour Party we found out that all races must be united

together in order to bring about a forward movement for the progress of this Colony, and many Members know that the policy of the Party, as laid down, printed and published, aims at the progress of the Colony and is not to the detriment of financial interests or persons who desire to come into the Colony and invest capital. There was never any such idea, and I desire it to be known that the Labour Party and the Trade Unions will support any capital coming into this Colony for the development or progress of this Colony.

I do not see why we should be fearful when there is no need for fear at all. As the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice said, he contested with three other candidates who are Indians for his seat and he headed the poll. That showed that the people are exercising their right to elect the candidate who will give them the best service. There is no doubt that the hon. Member won by a majority which cannot be disputed. The Indians were in the majority in that division but they felt that the hon. Member, although of a different race, would give them the service they desired. Then we come to the Demerara River division. My good friend, the hon. Member for that division fought Indian and African candidates and, as he has said himself, the people's intelligence directed them to the election of the person who they felt would give them service. In that division there are seven sugar estates and several villages peopled by Indians and Africans. Therefore if these people are given the privilege of universal adult suffrage would they not act in the same way? As I understood, there were supporters of his who stood on public platforms and spoke to the people in Hindi in support of his candidature. I do not think my hon. friends are really thinking of the progress and advancement of this Colony when they oppose this motion.

When we come to the point made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Farnum, that those Guianese who went to the War were able to sign their names when drawing their pay while many other servicemen from the Caribbean area were unable to do so, I want to point out that some of those same illiterate people have

been granted the right to vote for the election of Members of the Legislative Council in their Colonies through the introduction of adult suffrage. Are we to say that those people cannot judge rightly in matters relating to the political progress of their respective Colonies? Are we the only right thinkers in the political arena in British Guiana. With the exception of Georgetown and New Amsterdam, Mr. Jacob, a former Member of this Council, and I travelled to the various parts of the Colony and held meetings relating to this and other matters. We sent to this Government copies of resolutions passed at those meetings and they showed that in every instance the people were asking Government for this right of universal adult suffrage. I feel that if every Elected Member goes to his constituency and puts this question in a proper way to the voters he would be given a mandate to vote in favour of this motion. I feel that hon. Members would be making one of the greatest mistakes if they vote according to their own judgment and without consulting their respective constituencies, because I have visited all the constituencies and I know that the voters are willing to give their representatives mandates to vote for adult suffrage. If Elected Members care to vote against the motion without consulting their constituencies, they would be exercising their own consciences and their own judgment — not the judgment of the people in the constituencies.

As regards the amendment urging that there should be a literacy test in English only, I regret very much that it should have been introduced into this Council because it cuts strikingly — and I choose that word to show the kind and class of people we have in this Colony. Do supporters of that amendment feel that it is in the best interest of all concerned? The masses if left to themselves would not be able to develop the Colony; they have not got capital and it would have to come from other parts of the world to do so. Capitalists, however, have already enjoyed the fruits from the labour of the masses. The Imperial Government in order to develop estates owned by absentee proprietors, brought slaves to this Colony — immigrants from a country which now

enjoys its own freedom. Those estates were developed and some of them are now abandoned, and some of the absentee proprietors are among the people who have taken shares in local companies. The choice of the immigrants to return to their country has been taken away and they are granted the right to vote here in their own vernacular or language.

The PRESIDENT: Will the hon. Member please address the Chair?

Mr. LEE: Yes, Sir. I am saying that you gave to those immigrants the right to vote in their own language — Sanscrit or Hindi — and now you want to tell them that whether they are East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese or else, they must pass a literacy test in English if they want to exercise the right to vote.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: To a point of order! I do not think Government wants that at all.

Mr. LEE: I am talking about the amendment; that is what it suggests.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think it should be made quite clear that that is not the wish of Government.

Mr. LEE: It is not the wish of Government but it is the wish of a Member here that the literacy test should only be in English. I am trying to point out that is a retrograde step and an insult to those of us who are the representatives of the people who have given their lives for this Colony. I know that the suggestion cannot be expunged from the records but it should not be introduced here. I am sorry it has been put forward and I would like hon. Members of this Council to realise that whatever views or interests we represent we are one community, and unless we realise that we will not be able to make any forward step for the benefit of the Colony as a whole. I am sure the majority of the Members of this Council will not vote at any time in favour of such an amendment.

I will now deal with the last point which I regard as the hardest hurdle for me to go over, but I feel I shall be able to do so convincingly. The Royal Com-

mission came to this Colony and recommended to this Government that a local Commission be appointed to go into this question of the franchise. That was done and the members of the Commission represented all classes of the community, the majority of them being then Members of the Legislative Council. That Commission took time and went into the details, travelling to various parts of the Colony and taking evidence from many witnesses, after having been given the widest possible terms of reference. The Commission started its work in 1941 and reported in 1944, so one can realise how many difficulties it had to surmount in travelling to the various districts and so on. I was a member of that Commission, and we went right through to Berbice, to Essequibo — Bartica and other places. We took evidence with the object of finding out what was in the minds of the people as regards this particular question and you will see, Sir, that there are several paragraphs in the Report dealing with this particular aspect of the question — adult suffrage. In par. 53, the Report states:—

“53. Some of our members are of the opinion that the introduction of universal adult suffrage should be postponed for a period of five years, while others consider that the entire question of the franchise should again be examined before a final decision is reached on so important a question, and then only after a new Census — last undertaken in 1931 — has been taken.”

Now, Sir, having realised that this Commission reported in 1944, let us say that the 5 years would have taken us on to 1949; I am asking that adult suffrage should not come into operation until this Council is dissolved, and that would be in 1953. Therefore, if this Council is prepared to accept this recommendation it would be a matter of 9 years after the Franchise Commission has reported that it would come into operation. The Commission was appointed by Your Excellency's predecessor and the members were:—

The PRESIDENT: You are not quoting the entire Commission but the views of some of the members. You should make that point clear.

Mr. LEE: Yes; I have read the paragraph and it says “some of our members . . . ” It does not say how many, but I think it indicates clearly to Government and to this Council that the views expressed therein were those of the majority.

The PRESIDENT: I do not agree with the hon. Member; he seems to be straining the wording of the Commission's Report. He should state all the facts otherwise he would be misleading. He must not put on a construction which is not warranted by the actual wording.

Mr. LEE: If there was any dissenting vote with respect to that paragraph it would have been shown in the Report. The only dissenting votes were with respect to the minority reports, one of which was written by Mr. Edun and the other by Mr. Jacob, Mr. Gajraj, Dr. Singh and myself. What I am saying is that the Commission which represented all classes and sections of the community went fully into this question and expressed the views contained in par. 53 as regards universal adult suffrage, and the 5 years mentioned in that paragraph will have expired before there is another general election.

Now, Sir, the question of the census was also gone into fully by the Commission and the evidence obtained showed that there were no definite figures to prove the number of illiterates in each district of the Colony. Some of us were waiting to see whether we could have found out if the percentage of illiteracy had decreased appreciably in order to strengthen the argument that these people should be granted the right to exercise the vote. Up to recently one newspaper — the *Daily Chronicle* — disclosed that illiterates are in the minority among the population of the Colony, and I feel that we can with confidence give to these people the right of universal adult suffrage. I do not know whether Your Excellency or any other Member of this Council feels that this matter should go to another Committee, but the same questions would have to be considered and the memoranda sent by various persons to the Commission would also be there. If Your Excellency and the hon. Members of this Council look at the records it would be seen that the majority

were in favour of granting adult suffrage to the people.

The PRESIDENT: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but he must not draw such conclusions about a matter on which there was considerable difference of opinion. There is one thing which is undoubtedly correct and that is, the question of universal adult suffrage was considered; but the hon. Member cannot say that the majority were in favour of it. I do not want the public to get the wrong impression.

Mr. LEE: I was a member of the Commission and I can say definitely that the memoranda sent in by the Trade Unions which represent the majority of the workers were in favour of universal adult suffrage.

The PRESIDENT: That is a different matter.

Mr. LEE: Another question that was gone into was the question of the right of a wife to vote. It was suggested that a wife's allowance from her husband should be regarded as income in order to qualify her as a voter, but that was struck out. I mention that to show that the Commission went so far as to enquire into the income of husbands in an endeavour to give wives the right to vote. The Commission also considered the question of giving a wife the right to be a Member of this Council provided she earned an income equivalent to at least half of that of her husband. All these details were fully considered and, I think, the time has arrived when universal adult suffrage should be granted to the people.

The last question deals with the manner in which voting should be carried on. During the last 10 or 15 years the Imperial Government granted universal adult suffrage to certain Colonies as an experiment in order to find out whether people who are illiterate can vote according to their consciences and for the right persons. It was tried in Ceylon where the majority of the population were illiterate and it was proved conclusively that by a system of symbols the people can identify the candidates for whom they desire to vote and vote in secrecy. Similarly, in Jamaica where universal

adult suffrage was granted at a later date symbols were used with equal success at the general elections which took place some months ago. Universal adult suffrage has also been granted to the people of Trinidad and I have no doubt that it worked successfully there. Here we have two Colonies in the Caribbean area — Jamaica and Trinidad — in which it has been proved that voting can be done successfully by symbols and I do not see why we cannot do likewise in British Guiana. When there is legislation to be passed in this Colony we often find out how similar legislation operates in Jamaica and Trinidad and sometimes copy from what they have done, taking them as examples.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not agree with the hon. Member when he speaks about copying laws.

Mr. LEE: If we do not copy we often take Jamaica and Trinidad as examples in introducing new legislation, and it seems to me we can also take them as examples where voting by symbols has proved a success. No one can deny that there are spoilt votes at elections in every country in the world, even in those in which there is no illiteracy. I often blame candidates in this Colony for spoilt votes, however, because I feel that if they instruct voters how to vote during the course of their election campaign there would not be such a great number of spoilt votes as we had at the last general elections. With these remarks I feel that if hon. Members consider all the circumstances carefully they would not fail to grant to these people the right and privilege of electing their representatives in this Council.

The PRESIDENT: I shall now put the words of the question as in the original motion.

Council divided and voted as follows:

For: Messrs. Carter, McDoom, Debidin, and Lee, Dr. Jagan, Capt. Coghlan, and Dr. Singh—7.

Against: Messrs. Gonsalves, Peters, Kendall, Thompson, Roth, and Raatgever, Dr. Gonsalves, Dr. Nicholson and Mr. Wight—9.

Did not vote: The Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—3.

Original motion lost.

The PRESIDENT: I will now put the amendments and would like the Council to be quite clear in voting on these amendments. The first is by the hon. Member for Berbice River to the effect that the motion be referred to an *ad hoc* Committee "to consider whether, and if so in what form, and when, universal adult suffrage should be introduced." I think that is quite clear: Hon Members will find a copy of that amendment in the minutes. As regards the two other amendments they are, it seems to me, practically the same. There is very little difference except that in one of them—the one moved by the Second Nominated Member—it is stated that the literacy test should be in English only, whereas the one moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North states that the literacy test should remain as it is at present. I hope that it is quite clear to hon. Members so that when they vote they would understand what the implications are. I will now put the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Berbice River.

Amendment put, the Council dividing and voting as follows:—

For: Messrs. Peters, McDoom, Kendall, Roth, Lee, Wight, Debidin, Dr. Jagan, Dr. Gonsalves, Dr. Singh and Capt. Coghlan.—11.

Against: Messrs. Gonsalves Thompson, Raatgever, and Dr. Nicholson—4.

Did not vote: Mr. Carter, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—4.

Amendment carried.

Mr. LEE: May I enquire from you, Sir, when the Committee will be appointed?

The PRESIDENT: I would ask the hon. Member to give me a little time. I think in my opening remarks I said that the matter, in my opinion, called for close study and thought, and I am certainly

in no position to express any considered opinion on the matter at the moment. I regard the question as one of vital importance, and I do hope the hon. Member will not try to rush me into expressing any opinion on it now. It is a matter which I propose to study very carefully, and I do suggest to the hon. Member that being so vitally important it should not be rushed. There is not that great urgency about it. We are proposing to take a great step forward, an important step forward, and I am as anxious as every hon. Member of this Council that the step we take should be the right one. I can assure the Council that I will not only give the matter most careful thought and consideration myself but I shall report the views of hon. Members to H.M. Government, and that is, I think, what we all want.

Mr. LEE: Thank you, Sir.

WHOLLY ELECTED COUNCIL.

The next item was a motion by Mr. LEE as follows:

"WHEREAS certain members of the 1941 Franchise Commission recommended "that the 14 Electoral Districts should be redistributed to allow of 24 Elected Members", as detailed on page 24 of the Report of the British Guiana Franchise Commission, 1941, Legislative Council Paper No. 10 of 1944;

AND WHEREAS the time has arrived for the Constitution of British Guiana to be changed so as to provide for a wholly elected Legislative Council based on universal adult suffrage and the attainment of complete self-government in internal affairs within five years;

BE IT RESOLVED that His Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to consider the appointment of a representative Commission to consider the whole question and to report before June, 1948."

Mr. LEE: Before I formally move the second motion standing in my name I ask permission to amend the resolution by substituting the word "December" for the word "June" in the last line. This Council is comprised of 14 Elected Members, 7 Nominated Members, 3 Official Members, with the Governor as

President. In dealing with the motion it will be necessary for me to make certain references to the Nominated Members as well as, perhaps, the Official Members, but I desire that those Members should not regard such references as personal to them. I regret that the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) is not present. He has been chosen to represent this Council at the meeting of the Empire Parliamentary Association at which constitutional development in the various colonies will be discussed. I sincerely hope he will make a study of the subject so as to be conversant with it when he goes to England. In order to do justice to the motion it is necessary for me to go a little into the constitutional history of the Colony to show that the present form of Government we have represents no progress at all. After the annexation of this Colony by the British from the Dutch there was the House of Kiezers who governed the three Colonies—Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo—which were joined together to form the Colony of British Guiana.

Mr. ROTH: That is quite incorrect. The College of Kiezers was a body which elected Members of the Council. The country was never governed by the College of Kiezers.

Mr. LEE: I do not know whether my friend can give me a quotation on that, but on the abolition of the House of Kiezers a Court of Policy and a Combined Court were established in this Colony. The Court of Policy comprised the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Immigration Agent General, the Receiver General, and three other persons holding public office, with the Governor as President, and eight Elected Members. There were therefore an equal number of Elected and Official Members in the Court of Policy which dealt with legislation. The Combined Court comprised the Members of the Court of Policy and six Elected Financial Representatives, which gave the people's representatives a majority of 14 to 8. It is for that reason that it has been said from time to time that the political constitution of the Colony has deteriorated, inasmuch as in the Combined Court the elected representatives of the people held control of the purse strings of the Colony.

In 1928 there was a change of the Constitution which gave the Government an "official" majority. The Legislative Council as then constituted consisted of the Governor as President, 10 Official Members, 5 Nominated Unofficial Members, and 14 Elected Members. In effect there was a Government majority of 15—10 Official and 5 Nominated Members—as against 14 Elected Members. This change was the result of the visit the Snell Commission which recommended that Government should have greater control of the finances of the Colony in order to pull the country out of the rut into which it had fallen as a result of the economic depression. The time came when we asked that the Official Members should be withdrawn from the Council, with the exception of the three principal Officers—the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Treasurer. The other Official Members were removed, but the Nominated Unofficial Members were increased from five to seven.

I do not say that the time has come when we should wipe out the entire Official Section of the Council. The three Official Members should remain for a period as the Royal Commission has suggested, but what I do say—and it is recommended by the Royal Commission—is that a Committee should be appointed to go into the question of the withdrawal of the Nominated Members and the putting of Elected Members in their places. Although the question was not included in the terms of reference of the Franchise Commission, Dr. Singh, Mr. Jacob, Mr. Gajraj and myself obtained the views of the people on the subject at various places in the Colony, and we refer to it in our Minority Report on page 24, on which we make the following observations in par. 84:

"Paragraph 84. We desire to amend this paragraph by recommending that although the decision was reached to confine our recommendations as to the sufficiency of the present boundaries and were not to include the manner in which any such extension or restriction of the boundaries, evidence was adduced by several representative organisations to the effect that the 14 Electoral Districts should be redistributed to allow of 24 Elected Members as follows:—

	Population 1939.	Voters 1941 42.	Proposed dis- tribution of Seats.
No. 1 Eastern Berbice . .	54,779	930	3
„ 2 New Amsterdam	9,739	527	1
„ 3 Berbice River	5,299	153	} 3
4 Western Berbice	14,506	566	
5 Eastern Demerara	36,000	1,120	} 4
6 Central Demerara	36,185	766	
7 Georgetown North	} 68,818	652	} 4
8 Georgetown Central		1,718	
9 Georgetown South		982	
10 Demerara River		920	
11 Demerara-Essequibo	27,849	710	2
12 Essequibo River	26,519	801	2
13 Western Essequibo	25,750	500	2
14 N.W. District	7,657	78	1
	341,237	10,423	24

Representations were made to the Commission that after 1945 the 7 Nominated Representatives should be replaced by 7 Elected Representatives, and after 1950 (one election period) the 3 Official Members should be also replaced by 3 Elected Representatives.”

As you are aware, Sir, the activities of the Bauxite Co. in the Berbice River, and the development of the timber industry have increased the population and the industrial activities in that district. It was therefore suggested that the Berbice River and the Western Berbice divisions should be re-arranged so as to have three representatives between them. It was also suggested that three seats should be allotted to Eastern Berbice which has the largest number of voters. In the case of Eastern Demerara and Central Demerara it was suggested that there should be four seats between them, and a similar number of seats distributed between Georgetown North, Georgetown Central and Georgetown South, and two seats each for Demerara River, Demerara-Essequibo, Essequibo River and Western Essequibo.

Why shouldn't there be more Elected Members in this Council? We feel that the Nominated Members should give place to Elected Members. If it is argued that Georgetown being the centre of our commercial activities, the commercial community should be represented in this Council, I say that the clerks in the stores, the residents in the City, the ratepayers of the City would see to it that they were represented at all times by persons who

would look after their interests. I submit that it is not necessary to have Nominated Members at all, and there is nothing to prevent the present Nominated Members from seeking election at the next General Election.

With regard to the three Official Members of the Council, they have been useful in directing the policy of Government, but the time will come when Elected Members would be qualified to take their places. I am not saying that that time is tomorrow, but that we should move a step forward, and the first step I suggest is the abolition of Nominated Members. It is claimed that nomination of Members of the Council gives the right of representation of certain interests and minority sections in this Colony. In every part of the world there are minority sections and financial interests, and as such have the right to go to the Electorate. Do you think that any right-thinking persons would permit their interests, which are always inimical to that of the majority, to be destroyed by the Elected Members of this Council? I do not think that has ever occurred. But I desire to point out to you, Sir, and Members of this Council that this is a Crown Colony and as such under the law you, Sir, have the right at all times if you do not agree with the policy that is advocated in this Council, to refer it to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for decision. You further have the right to dissolve this Council and let the electorate decide on the issue. I say that, because I feel that action will not be taken in a hasty manner. But let

us assume for argument's sake that the masses have a majority in this Council and those Members seek to do all sorts of things not in keeping with the policy of Government, Your Excellency has the right to dissolve that Council.

But let us see whether minority interests cannot be given some voice in the administration of this government. You have, Sir, the right of nomination to your Executive Council and you will find that in 1928 the Executive Council comprised the Governor, two ex-officio Members — the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney-General — two other Official Members and three Nominated Unofficial Members. While there were eight members that number was not limited by Letters Patent and might be increased at the King's pleasure. But in 1943 there were in the Executive Council — yourself two ex-officio Members (the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General), four other Officials, who were the Heads of important Government Departments and usually included the Colonial Treasurer, and five Unofficial Members chosen from the Legislative Council (three Elected and two Nominated). So Your Excellency would see that there you had the right to nominate to the Executive Council.

The PRESIDENT: They were all Members of the Legislative Council!

Mr. LEE: They were all Members of the Legislative Council, but what I am thinking is that if you were thinking of the right of the minority or financial interests to have a voice in the administration of the government, it does not say that Your Excellency must nominate Members of this Council to your Executive Council. This present constitution only limits the number to seven, I think, but it does not say all should be chosen from the Legislative Council. But Your Excellency's predecessor had deemed it advisable to choose the members from this Council. But if at all we are going to wipe out Nominated Members from this Council, you would have the right as time goes on — and I feel sure Members of this Council will not object to it — to nominate representatives of minority interests until nomination is wiped out altogether and the Executive Council is chosen entirely from the Elected Members

of this Council. It is a matter not of tomorrow but of the future. Constitutional development is not obtained in a minute or a day. You must take a step forward at a time, and that is where I am respectfully submitting if a Committee is appointed evidence should be taken, and it should go throughout the Colony. Each Elected Member of the Council can then go to his district and explain what it is all about before the Committee goes there. That is why I have always advocated that Members should be remunerated so that they could do such things. The Royal Commission has impressed upon Government that it is an obligation on Government that all matters of public interest be broadcast to the public to the fullest extent and also what is Government's policy. It is the duty of every Elected Member of this Council as well as Government through its District Commissioners, who, when they were appointed it is said, were to be the father of their districts, to direct the attention of the people to the policy of Government in respect of every matter that appertains to the districts so that they can appreciate and understand the policy of the Government of the Colony. That is why I say the Elected Members of this Council have that duty to perform, to go to each nook and corner of their districts and inform the people as to what is required of them. Therefore when the Committee visits the districts the people will be in a position to give evidence and to decide whether they would like the abolition of Nominated Membership of the Council and, as time goes on, the abolition of Official Members and later the abolition of nomination to the Executive Council.

We are leading towards self-government and, therefore, we must take that step forward — that step which gives the right of the people to decide the policy of government. How can we do that when we have here 14 Elected Members, 7 Nominated Members and an official section of three Members, with five Members from the Elected and Nominated group on the Executive Council? I do not mean to imply that those Members on the Executive Council are not free, but that nomination carries with it in the minds of the people, from their way of thinking,

an obligation to follow the policy of Government and to adhere to it whether it be to their detriment or not.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member is incorrect. To give any impression of that kind is quite wrong. He is a Member of the Executive Council and must know that is not so. He has perfect freedom to come to this Council with any matter he does not agree with in Executive Council — he as well as every other Member of this Council who is on the Executive Council. I do not want such an idea to get abroad and, if the people believe that sort of thing, it is the duty of the Members to put them right.

Mr. LEE: I know it is so, as Your Excellency has said, but it is my duty to call Government's attention to certain things. I agree that I have all the freedom, because I have time and again expressed my opinion freely and conscientiously on the Executive Council and Your Excellency has listened to me quite attentively. But what I am saying is that if the Elected Members go into the districts and tell the people how it would lead to self-government and that we would like the election of Members for the Executive Council where there would then be the voice of the people, it would greatly assist. That is why I am trying to impress upon you that if the Commission is appointed it should be given such terms of reference as to obtain the feelings of the people and report accordingly to you as Head of this Government. That report when printed can be brought up again for changes to be made if so desired. I feel it will be a step towards that goal which we are all fighting for — political advancement towards self-government. We find it difficult time and again, when we come to this Council, in respect of our representation. By the Rules of this Council Elected Members cannot move any expenditure of money. I do not say Government will not listen to our representation, but if we are going towards the goal of self-government the little power given us should be extended. I feel if a Commission is appointed to go into this question and report before December, 1948, there would be that political advancement equalling that of our sister Colonies, and as such we would

have that voice that cries out for self-government.

There is no doubt that we need development, and it is there to be had if only we understand what we want and ask for it from you. Many of the people think that nomination is good for the Colony, but I can tell you, Sir, that political circles who are cognisant of political reform do not agree that there should be nomination in the Legislative and Executive Councils where the people's voices are to be heard. They do not agree with it, because they feel that nomination does not reflect the voice of the people. In practical politics nomination of a particular section does not occur in any British Colony save and except those which are now being developed, such as the African Colonies. We have passed that stage, I respectfully submit, and that can be proved and will be proved if a Commission is appointed by Your Excellency with the approval of this Council with as wide terms of reference as possible to enquire into the question of the change of this Colony's Constitution. I therefore respectfully submit this motion to Your Excellency and Members of this Council.

Mr. WIGHT: I am rising to second the motion for discussion, but before doing so I propose to suggest an amendment to the hon. Member who, I have no doubt, appreciates the fact that one of the premises of the motion refers to a particular phase which has received the veto of this Council. Therefore, that being so, he is unable to put that premise as it is. I refer to the fact that the second premise is based on the ground that there should be an Elected Legislative Council, Nominated Members should go and there should be universal adult suffrage. I submit he is not entitled so to do.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member is correct. It is based on universal adult suffrage and should be deleted in view of what has passed in this Council.

Mr. WIGHT: I am going to make a suggestion. Perhaps he will agree with me when he hears what I propose, and the amendment of his motion may be acceptable to him and will, I feel sure,

receive the support, unanimous I hope, of the Council, and thereby the time of the Council will be saved and we will have the opportunity to proceed to the other matters on the Order Paper earlier. With your permission, Sir, I would like to move this amendment that the first premise be deleted entirely and the second be recast. In other words that the motion be deleted and recast to read:

“Whereas a reform of the Legislative Council as at present constituted is desirable;

Be it resolved that His Excellency the Governor be requested to appoint a Commission or Committee to consider whether there should be a reform of the Legislative Council as at present constituted and, if so, what form or manner such reform should take.”

The substance of the amendment is that the first premise is deleted and the second premise and the resolve clause recast. The substance of the motion is of course unaltered. The motion is really for the purpose of having a Commission or Committee, and the amendment is also requesting a similar act. If that is agreed upon by the Council, I would suggest that, perhaps, the same Committee or Commission to be appointed by Your Excellency with terms based on the first motion as to whether there should be universal adult suffrage or not might also consider this particular question.

I may say that I support the view that there should be some form of constitutional reform as indicated at the beginning of the Council. I had intimated, when the question of Federation was being discussed, that I thought there is some need for a change in our Constitution. Whether we should rush into the form as suggested by the hon. Member—a total axing of all Nominated Members—or whether we should retain a dual house—two bodies — or what form of Constitution in the progress of development should be made, the Committee would decide. I did not like to take the hon. Mover of the motion seriously when in the previous debate on universal adult suffrage. If I heard him correctly, he suggested that the person who moved a motion to the effect that there should be a literacy test in English had taken leave of his senses, because I quite realise the

hon. Member would appreciate that he was suggesting that hon. Members of this Council might be demented. He knows that by the Rules of Debate he is not entitled to suggest that. The position is—in order to save any further debate I feel sure hon. Members will agree—there is need for reform, but there is no need to hurry that reform. It would need some consideration as to what the body should be which would take the place of the present Legislative Council. If we are to abandon the Nominated seats, as the hon. Mover suggests, then it would become necessary to have a dual Chamber or assembly such as the old Court of Policy and Combined Court. In the old days it had a considerable amount of legislative power and was really in effect one of the most progressive of the Constitutional assemblies in these parts. We lost that in 1928, hon. Members would only too well remember. With those few words I formally move the amendment I suggested and, I hope, the hon. Member will see fit to accept that

Mr. LEE: Would the hon. Member give a limited period to the reform?

The PRESIDENT: Hon. Members should pause before imposing any such limitations. If we are going to limit the Committee to two or three months, the effect would work both ways. It may well do harm to the Colony as well as good. We must not be too precipitate in these matters. Matters of vital importance to the Colony require considered thought, not only by this Council, but also by the public. To try and rush them through, I think, is unfair to any Commission that may be appointed to deal with them and unfair to everybody else. I hope the hon. Member will not press for that.

Mr. LEE: Your Excellency, why I am asking that is, that from recent reports Trinidad may be granted a change of Constitution as early as possible. I received a letter only last week from Dr. Solomon who is an Elected Member of the Legislative Council and went to England to present the people's case. He will be returning soon to Trinidad and there is a possibility of the Constitution of that Colony being changed. What I am thinking is, if the Commission to be appointed

can do its work and send in its report early the Imperial Government may consider ours at the same time with Trinidad's. I do not say it is not an important question. What I am thinking is that as events are moving forward that side, we should not delay. But if Your Excellency, as Head of this Government, thinks that we should not limit the time within which the Commission should report, I would certainly withdraw that part of my motion and accept the amended motion as the original motion.

Dr. NICHOLSON: I beg to support the amendment to the motion. We all feel that there is some need for reform, but we also feel there must be time to consider the steps to be taken very carefully. I will not prolong the debate. I support the amendment.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Sir, I notice there is an inclination on the part of the hon. Member for Essequibo River to withdraw his motion in favour of the amendment. I will advise him to do so, because I feel that this Council will support the very crisp and all-embracing amendment which has been moved by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo. I would like to say, however, that both the motion and the amendment have given rise to some very important issues, and I would just like to touch on one or two points. The first is this: I would enjoin upon Government that in the appointment of a Commission the greatest care be taken. I have no doubt that will be done, because I have in the past from experience seen that a government gets a constitution according to the Committee that is appointed. If the Commission which had been appointed to examine the question of the franchise in 1941 had been otherwise composed, this Colony might have enjoyed universal adult suffrage. Trinidad has got universal adult suffrage particularly because of the composition of its Franchise Committee.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I do not think hon. Members should make statements like that. It is true they go down in Hansard as their own statements, but these things are printed in our newspapers. That is not a correct statement — the composition of the Franchise Committee caused Trinidad to get universal

adult suffrage. As we all know it was by a very narrow margin — one vote — that it was passed. It was not due to the composition of that body, as the recommendation had to go to the Legislative Council.

Mr. DEBIDIN: We can play cricket on this point. My hon. friend can bowl and I will bat. It is clear that the Secretary of State for the Colonies did not disturb the findings of the Franchise Committees which had been confirmed by their respective Legislatures. That is clear and cannot be refuted. I know that as far as British Guiana is concerned our Committee's report had been discussed, and His Excellency the Governor at the time paid a visit to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and discussed the matter with him. Nothing was changed in the original report as submitted to the Legislative Council for discussion. The point remains that there is in every Colony, as there is in British Guiana, always a divergence of opinion, and that is inevitable. And because that is so, I am merely making the point that the greatest care be taken and, I have no doubt, Sir, that you will, when the time comes, satisfy all concerned with the composition or personnel of the Committee that is appointed.

The PRESIDENT: That will be a difficult task! (Laughter).

Mr. DEBIDIN: I quite agree it will be a difficult task, and I know, Sir, that you will make a success of that difficult task. The next point that I would like to refer to is the one touching upon the recital of the motion proper.

Mr. LEE: To a point of correction! I think I have accepted the amendment.

Mr. DEBIDIN: That is my mistake! I would like to deal with the question of the possible change of the Constitution. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo has referred to the days of the Combined Court, but now we are all thinking of the federation of the Caribbean Colonies possibly with British Guiana, so that our minds must be turned towards a better form of government. The very idea of federation seems to suggest constitutional

progress in the Colonies concerned, but so far as British Guiana is concerned I would urge very strongly that there should be no federation unless we obtain self-government, and unless the Colonies with which we federate are self-governing. I claim that such a view would be supported not only by labour interests but also by legal authorities. In all the statute books and the legal authorities, there is the expression of opinion that in a federation the states of the union must be self-determining and, therefore, before we think of federation we must exercise our minds in the direction of self-government. I am afraid, however, that self-government for British Guiana will have to depend on certain very important factors, and that is why I told the hon. Member when he spoke to me, that I was not prepared to second this motion — because I am urging the abolition of Nominated seats which are referred to in the recital.

I want to say that if we are to obtain self-government in this Colony one of the most important prerequisites is a complete understanding among the various groups and sections in the community so that we can attain a very high standard of unity and brotherhood. Unless we reach a very high pinnacle in this respect I think it would be dangerous to enter upon the task of achieving self-government. We must not be mere ideologists and confine ourselves to the realms of fancy; we must be practical, and unless the various groups in the Colony are prepared to unite and act as one — not only in things social and economic but also in things political — we should not venture to think about achieving self-government. That is why I am glad to support the amendment that we should discuss this matter soon for a change of the Constitution. I feel that consideration of the question is long overdue, and that we have every chance of success, provided we achieve unity of purpose among ourselves.

I was completely staggered by the fact that this Council, yesterday, hesitated to accept the principle of universal adult suffrage at this stage of the Colony's constitutional life. It has always been said that the people of this Colony are not yet ripe for an improved form of Government, and when one hon. Member of this

Council states that he fears capitalists would not invest their money in this country if illiterates are allowed to exercise the vote — something which he regards as a retrograde step — I think that is an unfortunate statement. To my mind, that statement seems to imply that if some other group who are more literate were in the majority it would have made no difference, but if people now concerned are granted the right to exercise the vote it would not mean that illiterates only would be voting for the reform of the Constitution. When it comes to the question of the present Constitution of this Council we should ask ourselves whether we can carry on our own affairs without the help of the Imperial Government. In other words, it is being suggested that if a certain section of the community can put a majority in this Council it would be all right, but if the reverse happens it would not receive the satisfaction of everyone. I am saying in all sincerity, however, that hon. Members who comprise this Council should not fail to realise that we are one in purpose here and in every other respect. We should not come here to serve the needs of any particular group, but as representatives to serve the interests of the entire Colony, and until that state of unity exists I am afraid we should not discuss the question of a higher Constitution. Some hon. Members might be surprised to hear me say that, but I will add that we cannot suck the cane at both ends and be satisfied if the other fellow hasn't got any.

Reference has been made to the 1928 Constitution but it is useless to go back to it except for the sake of comparison, since one should not cry over spilt milk. There can be no question about it that we bartered away our rights when we accepted what is commonly known as Crown Colony Government in 1928. Under the previous Constitution the Colony was in a position to make progress in the conduct of its affairs, but when the new Constitution came into being the Elected Members were put in the minority, and it was only through an amendment provided in 1943 that the Elected Members came into the majority. That resulted from the fact that the 10 Official Members were withdrawn, except for the 3 *ex-officio* Members who are here now. Therefore, seven seats were rendered vacant by the

withdrawal of 7 Official Members and the recommendation was that those seats be filled by persons nominated to represent various sections or interests in the community.

Mr. LEE: To a point of correction: There were already 5 Nominated Members when the 7 Official Members were withdrawn.

Mr. DEBIDIN: My hon. friend misunderstood me. I said that seven seats were rendered vacant by the amendment to the Constitution in 1943. If we are to follow the recommendations of the Royal Commission — that those seats should be filled by Nominated Members — we would find that we have lost five seats, because there are only 7 Nominated Members now. In other words, instead of filling the 7 seats rendered vacant by the amendment to the Constitution in 1943 Government have only filled two of them. The amending Ordinance provided for the addition of two Nominated seats whereas there should have been seven additional seats. I am going to suggest that those five seats should be filled by Elected Members making a total of 19 seats for Elected Members in this Council. I make that suggestion as a possible line of thought for the Committee which I hope will be appointed to consider this matter. At present there are 14 Elected Members as against 7 Nominated and 3 Official Members, so that if all the Nominated and the Official Members vote together it would require only 2 Members from the Elected bloc to go over to the other side in order to create an Elected minority, since the President has a casting vote which he can use in favour of the side on which the Official Members are. Therefore, those five lost seats resulting from the 1943 amendment should be added to the Elected bloc to make it much stronger.

My hon. friend has been speaking about a time limit for the production of the Commission's report, and after having heard what Your Excellency has said I would like to say that we have had some very unfortunate experiences as regards such reports, especially as regards the report of the Franchise Commission. We have had the necessity of calling public

meeting after public meeting to pass resolutions asking Government why the report was not published at all. I feel that if we are to have any change of the Constitution there must be acceleration not only as regards the appointment of the Commission but also as regards the submission of its report so that we should have a change of the Constitution before the life of the present Council is ended. In other words, the Commission should be asked to consider the matter as being one of some urgency.

There is one other point I desire to make as I anticipate that the motion will be carried: I feel that this very Commission can examine the question of the franchise also, and if it is appointed early to embark on both questions I think the status of this Council would be considerably improved as a result. I have very great pleasure in supporting the motion as it stands.

Mr. CARTER: I rise to support the motion which has been moved, together with the amendment. Although it appears that there is no opposition to this motion, yet I feel that Members of the Council can have their views recorded so that when the Commission is appointed the members would know what are the views of the people as expressed by their representatives in this Council. I think it is a very good thing that both adult suffrage and self-government should be discussed almost simultaneously, because in these two questions we find expressions of the highest aspirations of progressive people. The motion as it stands, and as amended, is divided into two parts, one dealing with the question of nominated seats and the other with the question of self-government. The majority of the previous speakers have stressed the need for the abolition of nominated seats; I intend to stress more the desire which I believe the people in this country have for self-government. I do not propose for a moment to travel into a graveyard amid the tombstones of bygone Constitutions and Councils. I would like to say, however, that British statesmen have in the past again and again expressed the view that the goal of Colonial Governments was that of self-determination. They have pointed with pride to the self-

governing Dominions as examples of British achievements in the field of government, and these declarations of policy have become more and more insistent, and even moreso recently with the advent of a Labour Government in Great Britain.

Leaders of Colonial peoples themselves have expressed the desire for self-government in various Colonies. They have not been ambiguous or inarticulate in this fundamental of Colonial policy, so that it appears to me that the question today is not so much whether the Colonies should be self-governing but when the Colonies should become self-governing. I do hope that is the main issue which any Commission appointed is going to determine. So far as British Guiana is concerned, I think the time has come when we must throw aside the apron strings of a mother who, however benevolent, continues to dominate us and to chill our aspirations. We find that being a Colony our economic set-up is geared to meet the needs of the Mother Country. I feel that the only test—the only yardstick—that can be applied in determining whether or not a country should be self-governing, is the insistence of the people for self-government, and the presence of Officials capable of guiding the destiny of the country.

The PRESIDENT: I do not want the hon. Member to give the impression that the whole economy of British Guiana is geared to meet the needs of Great Britain. That is another way of suggesting exploitation. It is far from the truth—it is absolutely untrue—and if the hon. Member does mean that, then I say it simply is not true.

Mr. CARTER: What I do mean, Sir, is that in this Colony we produce very many products all the time and yet we find that there is no great enthusiasm as a rule to industrialise the country, with the result that we have to continue to import manufactured goods from abroad and continue to be primary producers. In any event, Sir, I feel it is time that we in this Colony assume our full responsibility because, if we continue to accept Colonial status, I feel that the people who govern us might begin to feel they have some divine right and peculiar ability to govern other people.

On the question of Nominated seats I express the view of my constituency when I say that the time has come when Nominated seats must go. Like the mover of the motion, I do not mean to cast any aspersion on the present Nominated Members, for whom I have the greatest respect, and I feel that among them there are many who, if they seek election at the polls, would be successful candidates. I feel they should come out and face the electorate — they should mix with the dust of the hustings and seek the suffrage of the people. With those remarks, Sir, I beg to support the motion.

Dr. JAGAN: I feel, like the hon. Member who has just taken his seat, that in this very important issue the Members of this Council should express their views so that the Commission, if appointed, would have the opportunity of seeing what they are. I was at a loss, really, to follow the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara when he seemed to suggest that British Guiana was ripe and then, in the same breath, that British Guiana was not ripe for self-government.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. Member did not understand my argument.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. Member's reason for saying that British Guiana was not ripe for self-government was that if this Council voted against adult suffrage it was not competent to vote on the issue of self-government. I would not like to cast any aspersion on the Members of this Council, but it cannot be disputed that this Council is not truly representative of the people of the entire Colony, since we have been elected by only one-third of their number.

Mr. WIGHT: To a point of order! It is not proper for the hon. Member to say that we are not representative of the people. We have been elected, and it is all very well for the hon. Member to say he does not want to cast aspersions but at the same time, that is exactly what he is doing. We, the Elected Members, have been elected as representatives of the various constituencies, and the hon. Member himself has been elected by only one-third of the people of his constituency.

Dr. JAGAN: That is the point I am trying to make; the hon. Member has proved my point. He said that I was elected by one-third of the people in my constituency, and if the other Elected Members have been elected by one-third also — or even four-fifths — can he say that we are truly representative of the people? We are not “truly representative”, and those were my words.

On the question of Nominated seats I feel the time has arrived when this principle must be discontinued. I think that in the past the Government of this country accepted the principle of Nominated Members because they may have felt that the people in British Guiana had not yet reached a certain standard; that is, they were not capable of going to the electorate, and if they were chosen by the electorate they were not capable of presenting the points of view of the electorate. Another reason why they favoured Nominated Members in this Council was to give representation to certain interests, but on both points I feel the time has arrived when we can very well do without nominated seats. The last general elections have shown that there were many candidates who had good qualifications and would have been a credit to this Council, had they offered themselves to the electorate. I am sure that if they had been elected they would have been a credit to this Council. So that it cannot be used any more as argument that we have not people in British Guiana who are capable of giving service to the country.

On the other point that nominations are made in order that certain interests, let us say minority interests, should have representation, I also feel that the time has arrived when minority interests should submerge their feelings and submit to the majority rule. As the last speaker has said, if the Nominated Members were appointed to represent certain interests in this Council, and if those interests are to be preserved, they should by all means go to the electorate and face the tape. It is only a democratic principle that the people as a whole should determine the policies for the Government to carry out, and if that principle is to be preserved there should be all Elected Members in

this Council. This Council should represent British Guiana as a whole. If we are to have proportionate representation let us have it, and let Members say that they represent 50 per cent. or more of their constituents. Then it cannot be said that this Council represents certain interests only, or is not truly representative of the people as a whole.

As far back as 1774 Edmund Burke, in addressing an electorate, said that “Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; . . . but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole.”

Certainly, democracy means that very thing, and we are hearing so much about democracy these days. It is not a question of a conflict of interests but, as the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara said, there must be unity of interests and unity of action, and if we are to have that unity the only way is to listen to the voice of the majority. For that reason I feel that all educated people who claim to be democratic-minded will not hesitate to support the principle of abolishing nominated seats. Modern democratic countries have got rid of nominated seats, and I am sure the time has come when British Guiana should do the same thing. The hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee), in moving the original motion, said he did not want to see the abolition of the three Official Members in this Council. On the other hand the second part of his motion refers to the “attainment of complete self-government in internal affairs within five years.”

Mr. LEE: To a point of correction. I said that the three Official Members should remain for a period, and later they should be succeeded by Elected Members.

Dr. JAGAN: Nevertheless, the time has come when the people should be given an opportunity of self-determination; they must be allowed to say whom they want as their leaders to represent them in this Council. I definitely feel that on the question of nominated seats the Com-

mittee to be appointed can do nothing else but recommend that nominated seats be abolished.

Dr. GONSALVES: I would have preferred to say nothing but simply vote on the motion, but in view of the suggestion of the hon. Member for Georgetown North (Dr. Nicholson) that we should express our views so as to have them recorded for the benefit of the Commission, I feel that I ought to say where I stand in this matter. I shall be very brief, but at the outset I should say that I have never listened to such inconsistencies in all my life as I have just heard from my friend, the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin). As regards this democratic principle which the hon. Member has stressed so much and so long, it is either that I do not understand the meaning of democracy, or he has a new and distinct meaning of his own for the word. The hon. Member seemed to lay great stress on the point that the people do not have whom they want to represent them. I take very strong objection to that remark.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. Member has a wrong impression.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member is really referring to the last speaker.

Dr. GONSALVES: I am referring to the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan), who said that the people do not have whom they want to represent them.

Dr. JAGAN: I did not say that. The hon. Member has misconstrued what I said.

The PRESIDENT: I understood the hon. Member to say that this Council was not truly representative.

Dr. GONSALVES: If this Council is not truly representative then it is logical to say that I am not representative of my constituency. I therefore must ask: how are we to get about it? There is only one way for the hon. Member to get 51 per cent. of the votes of the people before he can consider himself representative of the views of the majority, and that is that

not more than two candidates should contest a seat.

Dr. JAGAN: I referred to the question of proportionate representation.

Dr. GONSALVES: I do not understand what the hon. Member is driving at. He says we are not representative of the people, but it has been brought out by one hon. Member that he was elected by one-third of the voting strength of his constituency. Be that as it may, he is the recognised representative of his constituency. I take very strong exception to the suggestion that I am not representative of the people in my constituency, because four candidates contested the seat with me and I beat them severely. For that reason there can be no other conclusion than that I am the rightful representative of my constituency. I therefore do not understand just what my friend is driving at.

The hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Carter) said it was not a question of a change of government but that the Colony should become self-governing. If that is the question then I believe the point we are stressing in this argument will come about after and when the Colony is ready for these constitutional reforms. What I mean is that it goes without saying that if we are to get a change of government then perhaps the Legislative Council as constituted would be changed to suit the form of government which we would have. For that reason I hardly see the need for stressing it. There is only one thing that perhaps I do not understand. It seems to me that some of us are approaching the question through the back door, and others through the window. I have already expressed my views on the question of self-government, and I believe it is the final striving of all progressive people.

On the question of nominated seats I think we should be fair. As Elected Members represent various constituencies I see no reason why other sections of the community should not be given representation in this Council. I do not think I am saying anything wrong in saying that If we are all working towards self-government the big issue is whether we should

have self-government before federation, but I have already expressed my opinion on that question, and a Committee is to be appointed to go into the whole question. I am in perfect agreement with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. Wight) that the Committee to be appointed should consider the subjects raised in the two motions, and I

am content to await the findings of the Committee. When the Committee reports I shall have more to say in the matter.

The motion, as amended, was then put and agreed to.

The Council was then adjourned until 2 p.m. on Friday, 27th August.