

SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Wednesday, 25th May, 1960.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

Deputy Speaker, Mr. R. B. Gajraj.

Chief Secretary, Hon. D. M. Hedges

Attorney-General, Hon. A. M. I. Austin, Q.C.

Financial Secretary, Hon. W. P. D'Andrade (acting)

} *ex officio*

The Honourable Dr. C. B. Jagan

—Member for Eastern Berbice
(Minister of Trade and Industry)

B. H. Benn

—Member for Essequibo River
(Minister of Natural Resources)

„ Janet Jagan

—Member for Western Essequibo
(Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)

„ „ Ram Karran

—Member for Demerara-Essequibo
(Minister of Communications and Works)

„ „ B. S. Rai

—Member for Central Demerara
(Minister of Community Development and Education).

Mr. W. O. R. Kendall

—Member for New Amsterdam

„ R. C. Tello

—Nominated Member

„ F. Bowman

—Member for Demerara River

„ L. F. S. Burnham

—Member for Georgetown Central

„ S. Campbell

—Member for North Western District

„ A. L. Jackson

—Member for Georgetown North

„ E. B. Beharry

—Member for Eastern Demerara

„ Ajodha Singh

—Member for Berbice River

„ Jai Narine Singh

—Member for Georgetown South

„ R. E. Davis

—Nominated Member

„ A. M. Fredericks

—Nominated Member

„ H. J. M. Hubbard

—Nominated Member

„ A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.

—Nominated Member.

Mr. E. V. Viapree—Clerk of the Legislature (acting)

Mr. F. A. Narain—Assistant Clerk of the Legislature (acting).

ABSENT :

His Honour the Speaker, Sir Donald Jackson—on leave

Mr. S. M. Saffee—on leave.

The Clerk read prayers.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The Acting Financial Secretary, Mr. W. P. D'Andrade, took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance, after which he was welcomed by the Deputy Speaker.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, 20th May, 1960, as printed and circulated were taken as read and confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY

MOTIONS

FLAG, ETC. FOR AN INDEPENDENT BRITISH GUIANA

Council resumed the debate on the following Motion:

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

(a) design a national flag and a coat of arms; and

(b) recommend an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When Council adjourned on the last occasion, we were debating a Motion which was moved by the hon. Member for Berbice River on behalf of the hon. Member for Western Berbice. At the hour of adjournment, the hon. Member for Georgetown Central indicated his desire to speak. He is not here at the moment. He telephoned me before I came to the meeting to say that he would be engaged in the Supreme Court until about half-past three this afternoon. If there is any other member who wishes to speak to the question, this is a timely opportunity for him or her to do so.

Mr. Tasker: I had not intended to speak on this Motion, but, in the light of some of the points made when the debate commenced, I feel that I should express an opinion. While I share many of the views expressed by the hon. Member for North Western District and the

hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Frederickicks, those views lead me to a different conclusion from that at which my hon. Colleagues have arrived.

It seems to me that the position is now absolutely clear regarding the principle of independence for British Guiana, and in my view it would be pointless and negative to pretend that the situation is other than it is. All of us, I think, are enormously encouraged by the results of the Constitutional Conference in London. While it is true that the Report signed by the delegation has been issued, I, for one, have found it odd that up to the present time no Member of the Government has thought it advisable to make a statement in this Council on the results of that Conference.

However, the principle of Constitutional advance for British Guiana in 1961 has been clearly established, and all of us welcome that whole-heartedly. It seems to me, therefore, that following from that principle a Motion such as that moved by the hon. Member for Berbice River on behalf of the hon. Member for Western Berbice is entirely proper. While one might argue that the timing or the priority is debatable I warmly support the Motion.

As to how the Motion should be put into effect, however, I am in some doubt, in view of the contradictory recommendations made by certain Ministers as regards the composition of the Committee. The hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing suggested that an appropriate Committee to undertake what is recommended in the Motion should be composed of artists, musicians and other talented people of that sort. That seems to be a highly dangerous proposition. I yield to no one in my admiration for gifted artists of all types, and certainly they should be available to the deliberations of the Committee, for their advice and talents; but I do not agree that a Committee of artists, as such, should be charged with this responsibility. Artists, I suspect, like chartered

accountants, are valuable for their advice as specialists, and are far better when they are used in this way rather than when they are invited to take over and run a project.

The Minister of Community Development and Education put a somewhat different construction on it just before the Council rose on the last occasion. His suggestion was that nobody who had not taken part in the "fight for freedom" should be permitted to have anything to do with the workings of the Committee. I am not quite clear what he had in mind. He may have been speaking loosely, and may have had in mind the sort of Committee that organized the Guianese History and Culture Week under his portfolio; or he may have meant that nobody should be considered for this Committee unless they were "progressive". We did not have an opportunity to continue the debate then, to find out what he meant, and I see he is not here today.

My point is simply that I think the hon. Member for Georgetown North (Mr. Jackson) produced the most sensible and most suitable suggestion—that there should be a Select Committee of this Council. This, after all, is not a party matter; it is essentially a national matter, and I think it would be entirely wrong if it were suggested that any one party should be given the right to make recommendations on this score, and I am sure that nothing could have been further from the mind of the hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Saffee) when he tabled the Motion.

If the suggestion by the hon. Member for Georgetown North were accepted—that there should be a Select Committee of this Council—then that Committee could invite such advice as it needed from the persons best qualified to give it; and at that point the suggestion of the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing would come in, as the people who could give the greatest help would be those who not only know who our most talented artists are, but also how to use them.

Finally, I support warmly the idea of the hon. Member for Georgetown North, and I do hope that this Motion will be the first of many designed to bring about a greater awareness of the realities of independence for British Guiana, and to bring about a greater sense of preparedness and of urgency. I hope, for instance, that when we come to another Motion that commends itself so obviously—the Motion by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central for the preparation and the implementation of an intensive training scheme—we shall have just as much active and urgent support from the Government side as they seem to give the Motion now before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not wish to disturb the trend of thought of the hon. Member when he was making his excellent speech, but just for the purpose of putting the record straight I would point out to him that the suggestion he referred to was made by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam, and not the hon. Member for Georgetown North.

Mr. Tasker: I am grateful for the correction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bowman: I wish to state that in principle I am in total agreement with the Motion. I doubt whether any Member of this Council can justifiably say that he is more patriotic than I am. I am a Guianese patriot; I am a Guianese born and bred. I was born at Plaisance on the East Coast of Demerara, and I challenge anyone to say that he has a greater desire than I have to see British Guiana become independent, but I am one who believes that first things must come first.

Your Honour may say that this is irrelevant, but I want to bring it to the attention of this Council. Two weeks after I left the People's Progressive Party last year I tabled certain Motions which I consider to be of greater interest to this country than the one we are now discussing. We have a large number of unemployed people—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member must confine his remarks to the terms of the Motion.

Mr. Bowman: When I am finished, sir, you will see that what I am referring to is relevant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please stick to the Motion.

Mr. Bowman: There are other Motions more important which should have been brought up for discussion in this Council, but instead of doing that the Majority Party have brought up this Motion which is of less importance. I am not saying that this Motion is not important, but that there are matters of greater importance at the moment.

For instance, I tabled a Motion last year seeking to increase the tax concessions to provide greater incentive to investors to come here and provide work for our people. The Session was prorogued and that Motion lapsed. I tabled it again on the 5th of January this year, but up to now it has not come up for debate. Isn't it far more important to increase our tax concessions so as to encourage the investment of capital in this country, than to make preparations for something which we have not yet achieved? Ghana got her independence before she thought in terms of composing a national anthem and designing a coat of arms. Other countries have done the same thing.

I moved a Motion early last year requesting that a Trade Mission be sent to Brazil, to ask the Brazilian Government whether they were still interested in having a port of entry through British Guiana. Is it absolutely necessary that this Council should debate this Motion now when other Motions of far greater importance have been thrown aside? Who are the members of the Majority Party trying to fool? I do not want the impression to be created that I am saying this now that I have left the P.P.P. When I was a member of the Party I told them that we should look

after the more important things first.

Let us get independence, and when we have got it all these things can be done. We have thousands of unemployed people and I tried to bring forward a Motion to increase our tax concessions so as to encourage investors to establish industries here. Why has that Motion not been brought forward? I do not know what is happening; I do not know what they are trying to prove. Their sins are going to catch up with them. They have committed lots of political sins. They have made many promises and they are going to suffer for those broken promises. I am saying that the P.P.P. will never come back here as the Majority Party. I am confident that what you are depending upon will not put you back here. I say so and you are going to see it come true.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member having his own meeting with the members of the P.P.P.? You must speak to the Chair.

Mr. Bowman: These little asides must come in, sir. I do not see the necessity to discuss this Motion at all. Although I am in agreement I will not support the Motion. I do not want Guianese to believe that I do not want independence for this country, but at the proper time I will support such a Motion. Until then I shall not support it.

Mr. Fredericks: I have already spoken on the substantive Motion, and with your permission, Sir, I desire to add a few remarks on the Amendment moved by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam. While I adhere to the viewpoint I expressed earlier that this country was far from being ready for independence, yet one must not lose sight of the fact that this country can only progress and achieve its true destiny as an independent nation of the British Commonwealth, either individually or as a Unit Territory of the West Indies Federation.

I have said that this country is not yet ready. This is supported by the

actions and irresponsible statements from the Majority Party in the Government. I have already referred to the prematurity of this Motion, as independence is an important and progressive goal and we must prepare ourselves for its achievement. By preparation I mean we must act responsibly, and we must at least try to put this country—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I will have to ask the hon. Member to take note that he has been allowed to speak on the Amendment moved by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam, which merely seeks to change the request of the Mover for the appointment of a Committee to the appointment of a Select Committee of this Council. Then there is a consequential amendment whereby the verb is changed in its tense because of the wording in the preamble and this does not really mean much. If the hon. Member wishes to deal with the whole principle of the Motion again, I am afraid I cannot permit him to do so. If he would just realize what the Amendment seeks, and say whether he is prepared to support it or not support it, or suggest further change in those respects, he will have the full right so to do.

Mr. Fredericks: Thank you, Your Honour. I was just trying to explain my position in so far as it relates to the Amendment; as I had said earlier, I would not support the Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The reference to the Amendment was only made by you in the first stage to get the opportunity to be on the Floor. But let us not abuse it.

Mr. Fredericks: I do not wish to appear to be against the principle of independence. That being so, I was actually giving the reasons to this Council why I will support the Amendment. I had said earlier that I would not vote for the Motion, and I wish to give the reasons for my stand now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Fredericks: I shall close, Sir, but before doing so, I would like to make it clear to this Council that while I support the Amendment, yet I feel that any form of independence would lead to chaos if the present Government is in control. I also think that this Motion constitutes a subtle attempt to stampede the British Government into granting independence too early.

Mr. Jackson: In connection with the Amendment: on the last occasion I spoke supporting the Amendment moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central, who sought a Committee appointed by and from this Council. Since then, the hon. Member for New Amsterdam moved the Amendment which I seconded.

Some people are of the view that it is too early for us in this country to consider a name for an independent Guiana, the composition of a national anthem and the design of a flag to be used on the attainment of independence. I am very glad that Mr. Tasker has made his points, because it is clear for all to see that the principle of independence for this country has already been accepted, and it would be unwise for anyone to attempt to think to the contrary. If we fear tomorrow it is for us to know exactly what to do in order to make tomorrow more certain, in our way of thinking, than it is at the moment.

Yet, it appears to me, there is nothing wrong in taking decisions in this matter. Designing a flag may take quite a few years — before something acceptable to all concerned is accomplished. What should be the colours of the flag? What emblems should be on the flag? The time to make decisions is now. We have heard that some people have chosen a composer for a national anthem, and this composer, it is understood, has brought one into being. That is something which may be a rumour, with which this Council has no concern. A name may also take a long time to find, and we should benefit from the experience of The West Indies

[MR. JACKSON]

in this matter, and pass this Motion, as amended.

For if the Motion is passed in its original form, then Government in its majority will act upon the decision, leaving no opportunity for this "Opposition" to put in a voice or make suggestions as to what ought to be done. It is my view that Council should refer the whole matter to a Select Committee as is suggested in the Amendment, in which case one section of this Council would not be by-passed in any shape or form. Nothing can go wrong in this way, for deliberation and decision by Select Committee represent a pattern already set.

The question of a flag, a national anthem and a name for an independent Guiana is one which concerns every person who has been born here, or naturalized here or who has an interest in this country of tomorrow. I hope that Members on the opposite side would be willing to accept this Amendment in view of the fact that we are dealing with a question of a national kind. I would appeal to them to accept this Amendment, and to remember that we have had before this Council on previous occasions matters which were above Party politics and that we have approached them as such. Let us again have such unanimity, and not a deaf ear from the other side.

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): I rise to speak on the Amendment. I agree with the last speaker that this is a matter of national concern and certainly one which can be brought forward for discussion at a level at which the whole Council can be represented.

It is however regrettable that some Members in discussing things like a name for an independent Guiana, a national song and a national flag could have chosen this occasion to display a very low grade of spite. Such behaviour we have seen frequently of late, and some Members are so practised in it that they can

start off and go on like a mechanical doll which has been wound up and set off. The hon. Member for Demerara River has no occasion to pat himself so much on the back. More of that and I feel that he would have fallen overboard.

I agree that this is a national issue. Let us all get together and not squabble about it. For that reason we will accept the Amendment proposed by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam. This is not an issue over which we should shout at each other. Let us be friends: let us work together in this very important national issue. I feel that it is sufficiently important to have its place on the Order of the Day. For anyone to suggest that a matter of this importance should be thrown into the waste-paper-basket, or wait until others come up and give certain Members an opportunity of expelling their spite and frustrations in this Council, is rather ridiculous.

I think we have had, with a few exceptions, quite a worthwhile debate on this Motion. I am willing to accept the suggestions made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Tasker, although I do not agree with him completely, that artists are incapable of dealing with matters on certain committees. We have a number of capable musicians in this country, and several of them have shown that they are hard-working, sensible, individuals although they have a flare for artistic genius. I am counting on the fact that the Select Committee will call in our prominent artists and musicians for consultation and advice, so that they can play their part although they are not on the Committee.

I will urge the Select Committee to move at a somewhat faster pace than they did when dealing with the Land Registration Bill. They took a longer time than was necessary to deal with that piece of legislation. I regret to say that a number of Members did not turn up regularly at meetings of the Committee, and for that reason a number of meetings had to be postponed because of

the lack of a quorum. I hope that, in future, Select Committees to be appointed by this Council will have a much better record and a quorum at every meeting.

Mr. Bowman *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On what do you wish to speak?

Mr. Bowman: I wish to speak on the Amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have already spoken on this matter. As long as an Amendment has been moved and seconded in this Council, and subsequently Members have spoken on the Motion and the Amendment, they cannot be permitted to speak again.

Mr. Bowman: When I spoke just now I was speaking on the Motion. I want to speak on the Amendment now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That may have been your desire, but I have to follow the rules of procedure in this Council. Will the hon. Member take his seat while I am standing? [*Mr. Bowman took his seat*]. I was saying that the Chair must follow the rules of procedure which govern Parliamentary Debates. The Standing Orders set out that Members, who speak after an Amendment to a Motion has been moved and seconded, must cover the entire range of the Motion as well as the Amendment if they wish to do so. They cannot, at this stage, have two bites at the cherry. You have already had your opportunity to speak. I think the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara wishes to speak. Let it be known that I will not permit any Member to flout the ruling of the Chair while I am in it.

Mr. Beharry: It is not independence that bothers me; that, I know, must come. I know that when we do not agree with the Government and the People's Progressive Party we are considered as reactionaries, imperialists,

capitalists and so on. If you do not agree with them *in toto*, then you do not want independence.

I would like to assure the incompetent Government that we have today that it is not independence the people of this country fear, it is the incompetence of the leaders of the country and the people who run the Government at the present moment. That is the fear of the country and the problem confronting British Guiana today. The problem that confronts British Guiana today is not independence, it is the problem of incompetence on the part of the Majority Party that has found itself in power by working on the emotion and frustration of the people.

I have heard the hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing talking about frustration on this side of the Council. I can see frustration existing not only in the country, but in the very Party controlling the Government today. The Party we all see is dying—dying slowly, not because anyone desires to kill it.

Mr. Benn: In 1961 you will see.

Mr. Beharry: I can hear the rumbling noise of freedom gaining momentum in this country. Some of us are deaf and cannot hear. As time goes on you will hear it becoming louder and louder, and the dying Party will become more ferocious as its death knell draws nearer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. Member to point out that we are debating a Motion wherein a recommendation has been made for the appointment of a Committee to do certain things. The things which the Committee is expected to do include the designing of a national flag, a coat of arms, a national anthem, as well as to recommend an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana. It is conceded that British Guiana will get independence. I think that it will be an abuse of the privileges of this Council for the hon. Member to do what he has been doing just now.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER]

We have very important work to do in this Legislature. There is enough time and opportunity outside of this Council, at street corners and elsewhere, where one can voice one's views about the ability of the Members of the Government, but whilst we are here let us direct our thoughts to the business of this Council. The business of this Council on this occasion is set out in the Motion. I do not think it is necessary for me to tell the hon. Member anything more.

Mr. Beharry: Unlike you, I find it very difficult to disassociate this matter from the leadership and running of this country, if we are to discuss the question of a flag and a national anthem which is complementary to independence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not said that I cannot disassociate them. I asked the hon. Member to deal with what is contained in the Motion, and to leave aside the things which are certainly not in keeping with the matter before us. I find no difficulty whatsoever in this matter. If the hon. Member finds difficulty, that is his business.

Mr. Beharry: I thank you for your observation, but I would like to claim my privilege as a Member of this Council.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall deny no Member his right or privilege; all that I seek to do is to keep Members within the ambit of the subject under discussion. I will, at all times, try to dissuade Members from going outside the ambit of any matter under discussion.

Mr. Beharry: If I am to deal with a Motion which advocates the designing of a flag and a national anthem, I find it difficult to disassociate these things from the administration or leadership of the country. The question of designing a flag and a national anthem was brought up because we hope to get independence at some time or other. If we are going

to have independence we must have proper leaders, and, if I am to make an observation on the flag we must have, I must be permitted to make my observation on the leaders of the country. If I cannot do so I will take my seat, and allow you to conduct the Council to the best of your advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Inherent in this office is the right to control the Legislature. You will not be doing me any favour if you decide to take your seat and leave me to control the Council. I have not attempted to deny any Member his right to speak within the ambit of the Standing Orders or Parliamentary Procedure. All I have tried to do is to prevent hon. Members from using opportunities like this to introduce something foreign into the debate.

It has been admitted by Members on both sides of the Council that the designing of a flag and a national anthem are things that affect all of us. The question of leadership is merely transitory. The people who are leading today may not be the leaders of tomorrow, and the leaders of tomorrow may not be leaders during the third term and so on. What is going to be permanent, we hope, are the symbols by which an independent British Guiana will in due course be known to the world.

Mr. Beharry: Independence brings more privileges, and that is why I made an earlier remark that everyone wants independence in this country. What I would like this Council to understand is that independence also brings responsibilities. That aspect of independence is the reason why we are now talking about designing a flag, and a national anthem, and that is why I claim my right to speak on matters touching this aspect.

My problem and the problem of a great cross-section of the people of this country has not been independence. It has been the inability of the Government to carry the people to independence. This Government, no one can deny, has failed miserably to carry every section of this

country with it to independence. Any man who denies this statement is either a fool, or an ignorant man who does not know this country.

I should like to repeat that this Government has not the confidence of every section of the Guianese public, hence it is not yet qualified to lead this country. I said earlier that independence brings great privileges with it, but it also brings responsibilities. The Members of the present Government who have accepted responsibilities from the people of this country have proved themselves incapable of carrying out those responsibilities. Today they want a national anthem and a flag, but they are not anxious to grant freehold lands to farmers; they condemn freehold. They want independence because they say they have no power now to do what they want. History will record that the present leaders of the Government have always tried to shift the blame for the country's backwardness on to some individual or another Government. They are out to show that they have not made a single mistake because they have skillfully shifted the blame on to others.

I say that the present Government or the Majority Party have all the power necessary to carry the entire country with them in their demand for independence, but is the country solidly with them for independence? It is not that everybody does not want independence, but the people have fears about the ability of the leaders of the country to take on the responsibilities of independence. It is not for the want of power that the present Government has not been able to demonstrate to the people of this country that it is capable of running the country. The Government has power to acquire people's land without paying for it; that is by issuing non-negotiable bonds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I cannot allow the hon. Member to continue in that way. We are not dealing at this juncture with the question of independence for British Guiana or not. The question before us, as I see it, is that in-

dependence having been agreed upon as the stage to which British Guiana might legitimately aspire, certain steps should be taken. The Council is being asked to authorize the beginning of the first stage, and it is upon that we must concentrate our thoughts. If we were debating now whether it were right to ask the British Government to grant us independence or to remain as we are, then by all means the hon. Member's arguments would be proper at this time, but I do not agree that they are proper arguments in this debate. If the hon. Member wishes to speak to the Motion and the Amendment there is plenty of matter on which he can spend many minutes, but if he wishes merely to confine his remarks to the suggestions he made just now I am afraid I shall have to rule him out of order.

The Minister of Trade and Industry: (Dr. Jagan) I suggest that Your Honour has been very charitable to the hon. Member but I do not think he can comprehend what you have just said.

Mr. Beharry: The Motion calls for a debate on the question of the designing of a flag for this country, the composition of a national anthem and the selection of a name for a politically free and independent British Guiana. I should be the most popular man standing here — popular in the view of the people on the other side of this Table — if I were to suggest that this country should be named Jagana, but I know that I would not be doing this country justice. I feel that one of the greatest injustices done to this country was my association with such backward forces.

I can assure you, sir, that I find it very difficult to deal with the question of the designing of a flag for an independent British Guiana, because we have not yet achieved independence. If I am to deal with flags and a national anthem then I will have to deal with leaders in this country. If Your Honour will not permit me to deal with the leaders I will have to take my scat. I cannot speak on flags without reference to Members of the Government, and do justice to my conscience. I was never a nincompoop.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Since the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has now made it very clear what he wishes the Chair to rule on, I have no hesitation whatsoever in ruling that my suggestion to him before was the basis of my ruling. I will have the hon. Member confine his remarks to the words of the Motion, and any references in that context to leaders and leadership will be ruled out of order. If the hon. Member wishes to take his seat that is his business.

Mr. Beharry: I thank you, sir, but I wish to make it clear that I am being denied my privilege as a legislator today, and I would like this Council to take note of it. Because I am to speak on flags I am not allowed to speak on the leadership of the country if we are to have independence. I take my seat because of your Ruling. I am denied my privilege as a Member of this Legislature.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member is entitled, like all other Members, to an expression of his opinion. I say very categorically that the hon. Member has not been denied any privilege, but has been attempting to abuse his privilege and right to speak. It was to stop that abuse that the Chair has had repeatedly to rise and call him to order. The hon. Member for Georgetown South wishes to speak?

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: I wish to state from the outset that I am in support of this Motion. Although the Motion is somewhat belated — it should have come before us long ago—it deals with a matter which must engage our immediate attention. I have been working on this matter for a long time, and it is now my privilege to place the results of my research before this Council. I have here a flag which I have designed for Guiana. (*Hon. Member holds up a design*). It is of gold, white and green with three stars representing the three Counties of this land. I have not only designed a flag but a coat of arms, which I also have here.

I am sometimes astounded to know that men who call themselves leaders stand in this forum and say that we have no competent leaders in this country. Such men do no justice to themselves but a great injustice to this country. At the Constitutional Conference in London I said that we stand equal in intellect and capacity and inferior to none in any other country. Let those who wish to continue to be stooges under the imperial system carry on; they will die slaves. We shall go on and we shall design a coat of arms that depicts this nation. We shall go on and design a flag to be flown alongside the flags of other nations at the United Nations. No longer shall we be second-rate citizens but citizens of equal standing with those of other nations.

I devoted some of my spare time to the composition of a National Anthem. Let those who feel that their time should only be devoted to national issues when they come to this Council understand that there are others who are prepared, whether they are standing, sleeping, walking or eating, to think of nothing else but of their nation and the future of their nation. Let my friends understand that whatever peregrinations I have made have been only with the object of learning, and hoisting our flag with those of the United Nations. The sovereignty and greatness of my nation are second to none. They should be placed before the life of every man, because while we die our country lives on. But it is the thoughts of men who are going to work out something for tomorrow, for time immemorial, and for perpetuity. I am burned to the core when I see men, men who are supposed to know, from their travels, education, and sympathies, what freedom means, still so steeped in the imperialist system that they do not want to turn away from colonialism.

I feel this is a simple Motion. As a matter of fact I do not think it requires a lengthy debate. I had thought that the Motion would have met with the willing approval of every single individual

around this Table. Possibly the only reason for debate is the question of who shall constitute the Committee.

So far we have no flag or standard which is our own. We have been using a flag which is foreign to us, and it is only when it is removed that we will become a first-class country. You cannot become free with wavering minds. We must really forget the men whose souls are steeped in slavery.

Mr. Campbell: They know not what they do.

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: Thank you very much. Abraham Lincoln was undoubtedly one of the best Presidents of the United States. He took his nation into civil war because half the country was in slavery and the other half was free. It is our duty at this stage to design such emblems, such coat of arms or flag, to compose such a national song and find such a name for an independent Guiana as would be respected everywhere and would inspire rejoicing and patriotism within the country.

I have here with me a coat of arms which represents the characteristics of this land of waters, and its great fertility of soil. The very name it bears has to do with water. This has been done on the initiative of the Guianese Independence Movement, which, after all, is in itself a symbol of the fight for Guianese Independence. We have also designed a flag.

I also want to make it clear that independence is not a privilege. We did not go to London recently to obtain the privilege of independence: we went there in the interest of justice and for what is our right. God did not create one man to be subjected by another! Never!

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jai Narine Singh: Privileges are not meant for those who cannot protect themselves or run their affairs. The leaders of this country — all of them

— are capable of ruling this country, whether to-day or tomorrow. Let us do the things that this Motion asks in accordance with the aspirations of this wonderful land of Guiana.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any other Member who wishes to speak? wonder if the hon. Mover wishes to reply.

Mr. Ajodha Singh (replying): I never thought that this Motion would have aroused the passions of certain hon. Members of this Council. It just goes to show how some Members of this Council are thinking. In his speech one hon. Member attacked this side of the Council by saying that we were incompetent, that we cannot run the Government and what not. But I would like to inform that hon. Member that when the time comes to go to the polls we will win the majority of the seats. I know what is passing through the minds of those hon. Gentlemen, and that is, that their days are numbered and there is no chance of their winning a seat in the next Council. Anyhow I leave that to the electorate in 1961. Another hon. Member said that we on this side of the Council never agree with the other side of the Council.

Mr. Beharry: On a point of correction: I never said that. I said that unless you agree with that side of the Council you are very unpopular.

Mr. Ajodha Singh: As I was saying the hon. Member said that this side of the house never agrees with the other side of the Council but if that hon. Member was paying attention to this debate when the hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing was speaking, he would have heard her say that she was in favour of the Amendment moved by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam. But hon. Members just want to attack this Party, this Government, and this side of the House. That was all that was done by certain Members. In my address on the Motion I mentioned that it was agreed in principle that British

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Guiana would be given independence and since this was so British Guiana should be prepared for that time by designing a flag and coat of arms, composing a national anthem and finding a name for this country.

It is mentioned by another hon. Member that these things are only done after independence. If that is true, we would not like to be like Ghana. We would like to do things as they should be done. In India a national flag was designed many years before independence was achieved. We want to be like nations which are going ahead, not like people who believe in remaining static and who cannot believe in independence. We are looking forward to the day when this country would be free, because we realize that when independence is given to this country we would be able to solve the problems of this country far better.

I rose to speak because, as I said before, I thought this Motion would have been non-controversial. With these few words I would like to take my seat. I would like to indicate that I am in agreement with the Amendment moved by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Amendment having been accepted by the mover of the Motion and we having had the indication that the Government is willing to accept as well, it seems to me that the Motion as Amended would now read as follows:

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

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

Question put, the Council divided and voted as follows:

<i>For</i>	<i>Did not vote</i>
Mr. Beharry	Mr. Campbell
Mr. Tasker	The Deputy Speaker.
Mr. Hubbard	—2.
Mr. Fredericks	
Mr. Davis	
Mr. Tello	
Mr. Jai Narine Singh	
Mr. Jackson	
Mr. Kendall	
Mr. Ajodha Singh	
Mr. Rai	
Mr. Ram Karran	
Mrs. Jagan	
Mr. Benn	
Dr. Jagan	
The Financial Secretary	
The Attorney-General	
The Chief Secretary.	
—18.	

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Motion is carried.

Standing Order No 45 states:

"45. (1) A Select Committee other than a Sessional Select Committee shall be appointed on motion made after notice given, and shall consist of such Members as may be nominated by the Speaker".

Since it seems very clear that this is a job which should not be unduly delayed — as a matter of fact it has been expressed in the course of the debate that it is hoped that the Committee will not take an unduly long period to carry out its work — I have very much pleasure in nominating the Members of the Committee:

The hon. Minister of Community Development and Education,

The hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing,

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

The hon. Minister of Communications and Works,

The hon. Member for Georgetown Central,

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam,

The hon. Member for Georgetown South,

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. R. E. Davis.

The quorum will be fixed at fifty per cent. of the Members of the Committee.

LAND BONDS ORDINANCE, 1959 : REPEAL PROPOSED

Mr. Bowman: I beg to move the following Motion :

"Whereas enactment of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959 (No. 21) has caused dissatisfaction and grave concern among the landed proprietors of the Colony;

Be it resolved: That this Council recommends the repeal of the Land Bonds Ordinance, 1959 (No. 21)".

The Motion we are about to discuss is asking this Council to repeal this Ordinance. Since the introduction of the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance and the Land Bonds Ordinance landed proprietors in this country have become disquieted. They have doubts in their minds, and they have become very suspicious of the intention of this Government. I would like to remind hon. Members of what the Land Bonds Ordinance sets out to do. It states as follows

"Section 2. In this Ordinance unless the context otherwise requires—"acquisition" with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions means acquisition in the exercise of powers conferred by any law for the time being in force in relation to the compulsory acquisition of land;

"land settlement scheme" has the meaning assigned to that expression by section 2 of the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, 1957".

"Cap. 32. "Statutory claims" has the meaning assigned to that expression by section 2 of the Deeds Registry Ordinance.

"vendor" means any person to whom any purchase price or compensation is payable in respect of the purchase or acquisition of any land".

Section 3 states:

"Where any land is purchased or acquired by the Government the purchase price or compensation payable to any vendor in respect of such land may by agreement between such vendor and the Government be paid either in whole or in part by the issue to such vendor of land bonds to a nominal amount equal to the whole of the purchase price or compensation or to such part thereof as may have been agreed to be so paid as the case may be."

Section 4 states:

"Subject to the provisions of section 5 of this Ordinance, where any land is acquired by the Government for the purpose of a land settlement scheme the compensation payable to any vendor in respect of such land may in the absolute discretion of the Governor in Council be paid either in whole or in part by the issue to such vendor of land bonds to a nominal amount equal to the whole of the compensation payable or to such part thereof as may be determined by the Governor in Council, as the case may be".

It is the feeling of landlords in this country generally that, if the Government want to acquire lands for the purpose of establishing land development schemes, they should pay for such lands in cash. The argument adduced is that a man may take his entire life savings and invest the money in land, since we are living in a society of free enterprise, with the hope of capitalizing on the land some day. Everyone knows that the price of land is likely to go up every day. If a man is unable to develop his land after he has invested his life savings in it, and the Government wish to acquire it he will find himself in a terrible position. The Government will send around their investigators who will send a report to the Governor in Council. After consideration is given to the report, the Governor in Council will decide whether or not the land should be acquired compulsorily. If they do not have the money to pay the owner in cash, they can issue bonds for twenty years. Nobody will sell land under such conditions, unless he is forced to do so. That is why landed proprietors feel that if they are unable to develop the lands they have, the Government should set up an Agricultural Bank so that they

[MR. BOWMAN]

can get money to borrow to develop the lands.

It is true that we have the small Loan Banks and the Credit Corporation, but I am sure from my own experience that these two Banks discriminate between certain people. Certain people can easily obtain loans, but unless one is prepared to toe the line when one applies for loans one will not get them. Many people can testify to what I am saying. I repeat that, unless you are prepared to toe the line, when you apply for a loan at the Corporation or at the Loan Banks in the rural areas you cannot get it. That is why these people feel that when they hold agricultural lands which are not properly developed or utilized, Government should make an Agricultural Bank available to them.

Mr. Hubbard: On a point of order. I wonder whether the hon. Member will state exactly what he means by "toeing the line"?

Mr. Bowman: I have nothing more to say; let Members read between the lines. The hon. Member knows what I mean; we have certain lines to toe in this country. I will say what I want to say, and nobody can tell me what to say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should not allow himself to be disturbed by remarks in that way.

Mr. Bowman: Nobody can tell me what to say. I will say what is in my mind. I am not a stooge; I am an individual who is always willing to express what is uppermost in my mind. The people feel that it is an unfair, legal advantage which this Government is inclined to take by proceeding under the Land Bonds Ordinance in order to acquire lands compulsorily. They are not so much opposed to Government acquiring the land compulsorily, but they feel that Government should pay them in cash instead of issuing bonds. The people want to keep their land, so that they can capitalize by getting a few dollars more

than what they paid for it in days to come. My hon. Friends opposite are opposed to anybody making a profit. The people feel that they should be paid cash for their land when it is acquired by Government, and I agree with them.

I wish to quote some of the argument adduced by the Minister of Natural Resources when he introduced the Land Bonds Bill last year. In the course of his speech, which is recorded in the *Hansard* Report of the 1st October, 1959, at column 1962, the Minister said:

"When we adjourned yesterday I had reached a stage where I was referring to Hansard, and I re-quoted a Minute by Sir Gordon Lethem appearing in the speech of Sir Frank McDavid at col. 1863 of the Hansard of 5th April, 1957. That Minute dealt with 'Powers of Land Acquisition,' and I feel that there are one or two other points that must be made before I conclude on this note. In doing so may I quote from col. 2051 of the Hansard of 24th April, 1957, where Mr. Jailal quoted from page 208 of the World Bank Mission Report (on British Guiana) as follows:

"A stronger policy on the disposition of neglected freehold land will be needed if agriculture is to continue to develop. In the irrigation and drainage works now under construction, considerable areas of such land are encompassed. The new agricultural land to be made available by these works will soon be exhausted, and all the abandoned freehold land will be needed. Such basic resources should not be kept out of economic use."

It may be true that certain lands are being kept out of economic use, or may not be properly utilized, but a point which must be borne in mind is that those who own land may not be in a position to develop it through lack of funds. They may be ardent farmers but have not the means to develop their lands. There should be some means whereby they can be assisted to do so, and if they fail to take advantage of the opportunity Government would be right to acquire their lands. But the Members of the present Government who want to impress upon people that they can project their thoughts into the future, so much so that they want to design a flag although we have not yet achieved independence,

have not thought about providing means whereby people can develop their lands.

The Minister of Natural Resources went on to say:

"From those quotations it should be clear to hon. Members that the efforts of this Government to acquire land should not be suspect."

That is exactly what has happened. I can assure this Council that landlords in this country are worried today because they know how unscrupulous these people can be. I am one of those who have been fooled by them. I took for granted most of the things they told me in the past, but as time progressed I saw the light of day—that they were not what they pretended to be. They impressed certain people who are finding them out, not only by their deeds but by their utterances. Today people are more than suspicious when Members of this Government applaud the action taken by Fidel Castro who recently confiscated, by one stroke of the pen, private property in Cuba worth \$60 million. These are handwritings on the wall. These are things that are making our people become doubtful and suspicious of this Government. We have a Minister, the one we saw in the cartoon with the big mouth—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member must refer to other Members of the Council by their proper names. In the case of Ministers they have certain responsibilities, and the hon. Member knows perfectly well how to refer to them. If he attempts to bring into this Chamber remarks he may have heard outside, or statements which he may have read which are derogatory to another Member or to a Minister I shall have to rule him out of order. I do not want to do that now, but merely to issue a warning.

Mr. Bowman: I said "the hon. Minister."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Amongst other words. Please refer to him as the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Bowman: It is only one Minister I am referring to. The hon. Minister said further in that debate:

"What is being done here is in accordance with action taken in the United Kingdom—legislation passed in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, which has been described as the Mother of Parliaments. Yet some people think that as a result the Government will be the only land-owner and people will be in slavery."

I agree. It is good to follow the United Kingdom, but right here and outside of this Council I have heard Ministers of this Government say that we cannot follow slavishly what is done in the United Kingdom, so that in one breath they say one thing and in another breath they say something else.

I would like to draw the attention of this Council to what I would describe as an exhibition of inconsistency on the part of the present Government. I recall that in the case of the Constitutional Committee which was composed of all except the Official Members of this Council, the Members of the Majority Party were opposed to hearing the views of members of the public, yet we heard the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing suggest last week that members of the public, such as musicians, composers, artists and so on, should be invited to assist us in designing a flag and composing a national anthem. She did not want to hear the views of members of the public as to what sort of Constitution this country should have, but members of the public are now to be asked to assist in designing a flag and composing a National Anthem in preparation for the day when this country becomes an independent nation.

I made the point last week when we were discussing the Motion for freehold title to land, that this Government is opposed to freehold ownership because it is determined to have the people under its control and to bring political pressure to bear on them. As a matter of fact the Members of the Government feel that they are invincible, and that they are

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going to sit in this Chamber for a considerable time, but, contrary to their false notions, I know that their stay will be short, and perhaps they will never come back here as the Government.

I want to remind my colleagues that the people are very much worried about the question of land tenure, and that in spite of the fact that Government is trying to impress upon the public that land will be acquired for the purpose of distribution among the poor people, the real purpose is that land is acquired in that way to hold the people in servitude because Government is practising State feudalism. The idea is that Government should own the land so as to exercise control over the people and squeeze those who do not conform to its way of thinking. In other words the P.P.P. Government wants to use state ownership of the land as a sort of sword of Damocles over the heads of the people. Those are some of the reasons why the iniquitous Land Bonds Bill was introduced.

My contention is that if land is to be compulsorily acquired Government should pay for it in cash. No person would be satisfied to know that after he has invested perhaps his life savings in a piece of land, and because he has not the means of developing that land Government, like a big bully, can take it away from him and give him a piece of paper in the shape of a bond redeemable after 20 years, with a possibility of that period being extended for another 10 years. That is the position with which owners of land are faced, so that people are suspicious of Government's intentions. I commend this Motion to the Council with the hope that it will be favourably considered.

Mr. Tello: I beg to second this Motion, and I crave your indulgence, Sir, to speak later if I so desire.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is before the Council. Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause].

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If no one else wishes to speak, then I think I shall have to put the question.

[Pause].

The Minister of Communications and Works (Mr. Ram Karran): All this afternoon we have been listening more or less to attacks on the People's Progressive Party, the Government and on individuals. It does appear to me that there was much emptiness in the debate — reminiscent of the emptiness of the gallery which was remarked upon some time ago. Today we have listened to a lot of words, to which we have grown accustomed; words which may be put on a tape recorder and played back to this Council when necessary.

I understood that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara was going to speak on the origin of the Land Bonds Bill. I think he had made it clear that he was in favour of the Bill before it was introduced into this Council, at a time when he was Minister of Natural Resources in this Government. We have not yet heard it this afternoon, but perhaps we shall: that the Bill reflected the Communist tendencies of the People's Progressive Party. I wish, however, to assure Council that the Bill has been described as the brain-child of the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara. What was the purpose behind the Bill? It has been explained that it was introduced in order to put teeth into the legislation passed by the Interim Government, and it was passed for very good reasons and was supported by this Government. In introducing the previous legislation, the Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines, mentioned that there was need to acquire certain lands and to provide land for the land-hungry of this country. If that legislation had not been introduced, this Government would have out of necessity introduced it instead.

The hon. Member for Demerara River, who said that he was speaking for the landed proprietors of this country,

knows there are large numbers of people who wish to get a piece of land in order to make a living and maintain their families. I am sure he also knows that in this country of ours, with 89,000 sq. miles, a piece of land which is properly drained and irrigated, with reasonable communications in settled areas is not easy to find.

The charge has been made that the Land Bonds law was an attempt to "communize" the country. Yet under this law no lands have been taken away from anyone, and no bonds have been issued, but on the other hand we have seen landlords, whose land had been acquired (not by this Government) winning back their land in the Supreme Court. It is there for all to see: the guarantees provided by the Court for the protection of anyone who feels that the Government can be autocratic and take away lands without good reason are still there. Despite all of this some hon. Members take every opportunity to misrepresent the situation and to dispose of their garbage at the street-corners. One hon. Member went so far as to insult the Members on this side of the Council.

What is the situation with land in this country? Who owns the land? This Party has been accused of being opposed to the freehold system. We have on many occasions discussed this question of land. They want to know the Government's land policy. How many times have we to disclose what is the Government's land policy? This Government is not opposed to the freehold system, and is not opposed to anything that is in existence at the moment. People who live on lands and on their house lots are free to hold those house lots. We are talking about agricultural lands bought specifically for the purpose of settling farmers, most of whom are from the sugar industry, with which they can no longer find employment. Those are the people and those are the lands we are talking about.

The hon. Mover said he represented the landlords. He would wish us to sell

these lands and so allow speculators to displace these people who will then be left penniless on the road.

I admit that the Land Settlement Schemes are not very well run, but they are inheritances of ours. We are told that we must call the people in the country and give them transports for 100 and 200 acres of land. We know that the population is increasing by leaps and bounds. We know that while this Government and future Governments will try to industrialize the country, for a long time to come most of the people will have to depend on the land, and so we are trying to avoid greater problems for the people now growing up. Perhaps the hon. Mover cannot think of the future, but only of his position in this Council.

The Motion queries the system under the Land Bonds Ordinance. There are large numbers of people who are unemployed. Should the Government require to purchase a few hundred acres of land, as it thought fit, as has been enunciated by the hon. Minister, it must be done with the agreement of the seller of the land, under certain conditions.

As far as the fear expressed by the hon. Member that the Government is going to take away people's land arbitrarily and give them a piece of paper is concerned, I can assure him, on behalf of the Government, that there is no such intention. The Land Bonds Bill was introduced to put teeth into the legislation which was drawn up earlier and passed by this Council, so that Government could move quickly to acquire land to settle people who were badly in need of land. This is something in the interest of the country as a whole, and that is why the Bill was introduced.

We, on this side of the Council, feel that the Bill was justified, and that it was the correct thing to be done. Government must make sure that the interest of the majority is satisfied, that there is no oppression of the minority, and that all sides are taken care of. That is the

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principle of the Bill, and I do not see any reason why Members of this Council should oppose the decision taken when the Bill was discussed and passed. It is true that on that occasion certain Members opposed it, but they must have known that it was something for the good of the country. I cannot see the need for this constant belly-aching and grumbling over the alleged sins of the P.P.P.

Mr. Beharry: I spoke extensively on this issue when the Land Bonds Bill was introduced in this Council. I have decided not to repeat what I said on that occasion. I propose, however, to put the record straight by mentioning certain things. The hon. Minister of Communications and Works has skilfully and subtly by-passed the principle involved in the Land Bonds Bill.

The issue is not a question of trying to protect large holdings. When one man has extensive holdings and another man has nothing, I see nothing wrong in the Government making sure that the man who has nothing gets some of the land. What is wrong is this Government's inability to see the real issue involved. By purchasing a man's property by way of land bonds, this Government will be converting freehold land into leasehold land because it is committed to leasehold ownership. That was the intention of the Government, and it was the brain-child of the then hon. Minister of Natural Resources. The intention was that one man should not own extraordinary large areas of land.

However, in view of this Government's inability to raise money, I had to think of ways and means whereby lands could be purchased without money. I had to teach this Government how to acquire land without money, and if it were not for me the Party would not have known how to do it. You can use democracy to subvert democracy, and that is the principle of this Government. This Government is now using that as an excuse for covering up certain things.

Only this month we read of the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry saying that the British Government is responsible for his not obtaining money to purchase the Demerara Electric Company. We understand that there is a man here who can find the money to take over the Company, but the people who are responsible for carrying on the Government are unable to do so. I can give you several reasons why Government is pressing its case for land distribution. The first time land was ever given out was in 1953 when the present Minister of Trade and Industry was the Minister under whose portfolio land fell. He was in office for three months, and he could not have seen the wisdom of distributing land to people.

When I held the office of Minister of Natural Resources it only took me two months to distribute land. When I distributed the first portion of land, the present Minister of Communications and Works told me that if I gave the people in Essequibo land we would lose votes in the Corentyne, if we failed to give the people in that area land as well. It is now a question of doing things to catch votes.

Mr. Ram Karran: On a point of order. The hon. Member is not correct. He has made a statement alleged to have been made by me, and I hope I will be given an opportunity to say that he is not telling the truth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You may ask the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara to give us more information on the matter or something like that. One cannot expect Government to wind up a debate and then answer a number of questions.

Mr. Beharry: I said earlier this afternoon that this Government can always shelve its backwardness on somebody else. I want to repeat that because it is my conviction and belief. I think it will also become the conviction and belief of some people in and outside of the Majority Party as time goes by. I have no doubt in my mind about that. I am already hearing a rumbling noise.

Only this morning I read in the newspapers that one man says he can raise the money to purchase the Demerara Electric Company. A week ago I also read in the newspapers that the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry said it is the fault of the British Government that he cannot get money to run the country. He is incapable of getting money, and everybody in this country should realize that.

I want to put the record straight. The real purpose why I am opposing this Motion is because the intention of the present Government is to purchase freehold land by way of the Land Bonds Bill. Since the Government is committed to leasehold ownership, then the purpose of the Bill is to convert freehold lands into leasehold lands. That is the real issue and the reason why I am supporting the Motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A moment ago you said that you were opposing the Motion. You are now saying that you are supporting it.

Mr. Bcharry: I am supporting the Motion, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Motion is asking for the repeal of the Land Bonds Ordinance.

Mr. Bcharry: I am supporting this Motion because the purpose of the Land Bonds Ordinance is to convert freehold ownership into leasehold ownership. It is a question of purchasing the big estates and dividing them among the small people. If you are giving the small man land, you should give him freehold ownership so that he will have the land in his old age. The intention of the P.P.P. or this Government is to keep the people in slavery. The intention is to maintain the landlord and tenant system, because if Government takes land from the big landlords and then distributes it among the people on a leasehold basis the small man will never own it.

I feel that this Motion should be supported because the legislation is iniquitous and obnoxious, and should be removed from the Statute Book of this country. Many of the people in this country believe in the freehold system and private ownership of property. I will give my hon. Friends across the Table a bit of advice. There is a local saying in British Guiana: "*Hassa tell houri dry weather coming. We go meet at stop-off dam.*" They do not know that we will meet at stop-off dam.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

Mr. Tello: I desire to speak on this Motion because fate was not kind to me when the matter was dealt with in this Council in the form of a Bill. I would like to say that, if I were not hospitalized at the time, I would not have lost the opportunity of opposing the Bill. Let me put the record straight. The hon. Minister of Communications and Works has pointed out that in a previous debate the hon. Minister of Natural Resources mentioned that I had supported the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance when I was a Member of the Interim Government. That is perfectly true and I am extremely proud of it.

I feel that a Land Acquisition Bill is necessary in any progressive country where there is evidence of people monopolizing land for use by only a few. In those days several Members of the Executive Council and myself were convinced that certain land practices were not in the best interest of the small man and the landless people in British Guiana.

I supported that Bill wholeheartedly at the time because, in my opinion, it was the most progressive Land Acquisition Ordinance throughout the Caribbean. I feel that any Elected Government coming into office, and seeing already drafted such a progressive piece of legislation, would have gone on to the next step and prepared the people for enjoying the full benefits of the Ordinance.

[MR. TELLO]

Any progressive Government, any sincere people's Government, having inherited such a progressive piece of legislation, would have moved at once to make secure the lands which were already owned by small people, so that they would not be in the slightest doubt as to the object of the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance. Any progressive Government would have hastened to assure the small peasant that his land was not at stake, and that as long as he found his land a profitable investment and a delightful thing to work he could go ahead while the Government provided markets for his produce.

I thought this point was so obvious that this Government, a popularly elected Government, would have moved to make a thorough investigation of the possibilities of local and foreign markets. It is a positive fact that without the present subsidy the Government Marketing Centre would collapse and the poor farmers would be exposed to further exploitation. There is not yet an assured local market, and with the rising unemployment it would become even more precarious. What has the Government done? Instead of establishing confidence or consolidating the confidence it won at the polls by providing markets, Government hastily proceeded to pass the Land Bonds Bill so as to make certain that it could acquire any land at any time whether it had the money or not.

What is the position with regard to the small man? Why is it that many people who have invested their savings in the purchase of a sizeable piece of land are not working their land? If I were the owner of 50 acres of land, and knowing that the Interim Government had passed the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance, and that this Government has hastily passed the Land Bonds Bill, I would have sleepless nights if I did not have the wherewithal to develop my land to its fullest

capacity. Small land-owners cannot feel happy in the circumstances. In another debate I pointed out that the Governments of Barbados and Trinidad had investigated the reason for the failure of peasants to exploit their lands to the fullest, and had discovered that the problem was that money was not available at a low rate of interest. But the Governments of those islands did not pass a Land Bonds Bill; they moved to correct that unfortunate situation by helping the poor people to obtain loans at a low rate of interest.

In Barbados, in the late 1890's, an agricultural bank was established by law to provide financial assistance for the large plantations, but sooner or later it became apparent that workers who had lived frugally and cultivated their small plots of land, had the ambition to become independent peasants. The Government, recognizing the contribution those people could make to the economy of the island as a result of a thorough exploitation of the land, moved to assist them. In the early days when the doors of the agricultural bank were not open to peasants the situation in Barbados was similar to what it is here. Those who advanced money to farmers at a high rate of interest foreclosed their mortgages and took the lands away when they could not pay their instalments.

The Government of Barbados amended the Ordinance to allow the peasants to obtain loans at as low as 3 per cent. interest to enable them to develop their lands. Later it was found that there were still quite a few people who did not have the money to purchase their lands outright, and the Government provided funds to be used for paying off all mortgages so that lands could be bought outright, provided the price was approved by the bank and the loan required did not exceed 60 per cent. of the value of the land.

What I am trying to impress upon this Council is that there was no need for a Land Bonds Ordinance. What

was urgently needed, and is needed up to this moment, was provision whereby small people who owned land could get loans at a low rate of interest so as to be able to make the fullest use of their lands. Some people have to resort to pledging their jewellery or obtaining loans from moneylenders at 35 per cent. interest. It is a known fact that while a few people do obtain loans from the Credit Corporation they have to have the faith and patience of Job to wait on the slow-moving machinery of the Corporation.

I am appealing to the Government to repeal the Land Bonds Ordinance in order to restore confidence in the small people, and make some provision to enable them to obtain loans at a low rate of interest so as to develop their lands. Those who do not have their own land would be able to achieve their desire to purchase a small piece of land, and there would be no need for them to clamour to the Government to purchase land for distribution to them on a leasehold basis.

During the debate on the Budget the hon. Minister of Natural Resources said that lands acquired by Government and paid for either in cash or by bonds would be added to the pool of Government lands, and the present policy of leasing lands owned by Government would continue. That is recorded in *Hansard*. In other words the Minister indicated that it was his Government's intention to perpetuate the system of leasing lands owned by the Government or by the Crown.

Two things were primarily responsible for these people having their lands forfeited and put up for sale. They planted and Government slumbered and did nothing to help them market their bountiful crop, which eventually had to be sold at uneconomical prices. The main obstacle is lack of money first to develop the land and then to pay oppressive mortgage charges — and it is the devil's own job to meet both. The solution this Government now offers is to introduce the Land Bonds law which, in effect, says, "If you

people cannot develop your land for lack of money, we shall take it from you." That is the way the people look at it.

What has Government really done to educate the people towards the diversification of crops? Has there been an educational campaign? Has the Government done a Government's job? Surely we do not expect the Government to carry on a campaign like a small society with small means. What has Government done to protect the future of the land-holder? Has Government encouraged the farmers, by way of its agricultural activities, to attempt farming in the more scientific and modern manner? Government should first be satisfied that it has offered every incentive to people to own and keep lands before making provisions to take land away from them. The Land Bonds Ordinance was therefore premature.

The *Hansard* is the only proof, but if my memory serves me correctly, the hon. Minister of Natural Resources quoted some Muslim gentleman from Egypt to the effect that the best land policy is to confiscate lands and redistribute them in the interest of the people. Well, I am beginning to think that this statement and the Land Bonds Ordinance is somewhat connected.

Mr. Benn: To a point of order: I said nothing of the sort, and I would not like the hon. Member to mislead this Council. If he did not understand me, I cannot blame him.

Mr. Tello: Please, Your Honour, I do not know whether the *Hansard* is yet in typewritten form. but I would crave your permission to be supplied with the relevant part at the next sitting so that I can quote the hon. Minister of Natural Resources in all fairness to him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not know if there is a typescript copy of his speech, but I think the practice in this Council is, if one Member suggests that another hon. Member said "so-and-so", and that Member in turn says that he

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER]

did not say so, in the absence of any comment to the contrary by the person in the Chair, it remains so and is accepted.

Mr. Tello : Is that a Ruling, Sir? In another place, the person would have to correct him and make the true statement. Anyway, I am at your discretion, Sir, and I accept your Ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Minister of Natural Resources wishes to say what he said, he may do so.

Mr. Benn: I have come to the conclusion that the hon. Member may say what he pleases.

Mr. Tello: The truth is that the hon. Minister did make reference to it, and I am in the awkward position of not being able to produce it. It is rather important when we take into consideration the position held by the hon. Minister. Also we find that this Government was not satisfied with the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance and brought forward the Land Bonds legislation, and masses of people are nervously fearful of the intentions of the Government.

The Minister of Communications and Works said that Government stated its land policy on repeated occasions. Exactly what that means, I do not know. Perhaps in this Legislature, any slight reference to a matter must be regarded as a statement of Government's policy. I am advised that when Government wishes to make a firm statement of policy, it can do so through a Sessional Paper, or through a Statement by a Member of the Executive Council. If my memory serves me correctly, and speaking without having thoroughly studied the *Hansard* from 1957 to now, this Government has never tabled a Sessional Paper in this Council stating clearly Government's policy on land.

Aud it is not for the want of beseeching them. I am not an eloquent speaker, but in my own humble way I have begged and pleaded, and, if I may use the word, even needled them to bring forward an exposition of their land policy, and I have failed. I would be very grateful if Government—either in the Legislature or through its Ministerial Offices would point out sufficiently clearly for feeble-minded people like me what Government's land policy is, as explained previously to this Council.

Sir, the masses tremble at the words, "Land Bonds Ordinance". I have half a minute to go and I would ask your permission, Sir, to permit me to continue at a later stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has spoken for 35 minutes. He may resume tomorrow if the Council gives him permission.

Hon. Members, the hour of adjournment having been reached, I think we need a Motion for Adjournment and the fixing of the date of the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT AND PENDING BUSINESS

The Chief Secretary: Sir, I beg to move that this Council do now adjourn until tomorrow at two o'clock. I would also like to add that tomorrow afternoon there will be the presentation of medals to the Police Force, at Eve Leary, and it would be convenient if it could be agreed to adjourn at four o'clock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would also like to point out that tomorrow Government Business is to have priority, and it is proposed to deal with the Georgetown Sewerage and Water (Amendment) Bill and the Rice Marketing (Amendment) Bill, thereafter resuming debate on the Motion moved by the hon Member for Demerara River.

This Council is adjourned until two o'clock tomorrow afternoon.