

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FRIDAY, 25TH OCTOBER, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., the Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C., Deputy President, in the Chair.

### PRESENT

The Deputy President, the Honourable E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C. (in the Chair).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum (Nominated).

The Hon. J. A. Veerasawmy (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday 24th of October, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

### ORDER OF THE DAY

#### WORKING CLASS HOUSING BILL 1946

The Council resolved itself into Committee to resume consideration of a Bill intituled :—

“An ordinance to make provision with respect to the housing of persons of the working class and for the purposes connected therewith.”

#### *Clause 30 — Assessment of compensation in case of compulsory acquisition.*

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : At the adjournment yesterday afternoon, we had just reached clause 30, and hon. Members have before them the proposed amendments in connection with this clause. The object of this clause is to prevent speculative transactions in connection with land required for the purposes of this Bill. From the amendments it will be seen that the period fixed for the basing of the valuation is 1939, which is the year of the beginning of the War. It will be appreciated that after the commencement of the War property values, owing to changes and fluctuations, did not represent the true basic value. That, of course, is understandable because, due to inability to import materials and the enormous demand for houses for War purposes, there was created a tremendous increase in housing values. I would suggest to hon. Members that when the prices are not normal they would not be suitable as a basis of values for peace-time purposes. May I add that these clauses are specially intended to meet that situation. The formula adopted is what is known as the Uthwatt formula, and which is the result of the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment, of which the Chairman was Mr. Justice Uthwatt. He is the adviser to the Secretary of State and the staff of the Development and Welfare organisation in the West Indies.

The relative section in the St. Vincent Slum Clearing and Housing Ordinance—section 2—says the 31st March, 1939, and it will be seen that in the suggested amendment we are following the line already pursued in other Colonies, and which has the approval of the Comptroller of Development and Welfare in the West Indies and also of the Secretary of State. I do not think anybody will gainsay the necessity or the desirability of having some such provision in a matter of this sort. I think it would be agreed that it is undesirable to encourage any speculation in land when this legislation is in the interest of the community as a whole.

With those observations, sir, I beg to move the amendments. I shall take them one by one, the first being related to clause 30 (2) (a). I would not delete the words "of the site" from this paragraph, since consideration for the purpose of compensation would only be given to a site as a declared site. I move, therefore, that the words "at the time when the valuation is made" be deleted from this paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members should understand that the amendments will be dealt with separately. Does any hon. Member wish to speak on this amendment? I thought the hon. Member for North Western District wanted to say something on this.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I cannot see the necessity for the deletion of these words. Apparently the whole of that is connected with the suggested amendment to clause 30 (7)—that the date should be changed from 1946 to 1939. As I indicated some time ago, if the time at which the Ordinance was being passed was 1939 under the English Act, there could have been no speculation. We are in the same position now—if the Ordinance is passed in 1946—to leave the date at 1939, and that is because nobody has bought with knowledge of this Bill. It seems to me, therefore, that there is no necessity to change the time from 1946 to 1939. The object is to stop speculation and, perhaps, a temporary warning could be given. Perhaps there are one or two Members who are advocating this change without due consideration. It is quite obvious these advocates may have in mind that we would not think they themselves are speculating. I would not for one moment entertain the thought that any Member of this Council would go in for speculation of that kind, but we must bear in mind that there is opportunity for speculation if we allow these purchases in the wide form as suggested. I am rather inclined, unless the hon. the Attorney-General can convince me to the contrary, to leave the wording as it is in the clause.

The hon. the Attorney-General knows that I have already made representation in that respect. Hon. Members would see from the proposed amendment to clause

30, (7), that there is to be added a certain percentage, and practising lawyers who are Members of this Council would know that in the majority of cases in which the percentage was added great hardship was created, in some cases on the side of the landlord and in other cases on the side of the tenant. I think I speak for the majority of lawyers. They should be in a position to give the Assessor an opportunity to go and assess. Probably we would be up against the same thing here. The Governor in Council will assess the percentage. On what basis are they going to assess that percentage and how are they going to arrive at it? Are they to have the comprehensive cost of materials and labour as between 1939 and whenever this Ordinance is put into effect? On what basis this percentage is to be arrived at; we are not told. Is it going to be a shot in the dark? You allow 3 per cent. under the Income Tax law and maybe we will get that 3 per cent. You have rates and taxes increased; you have a different form of assessment, and the assessed value of these things will affect the values as they are today. Our system is entirely different from what obtains in England. If 1939 is to remain, then I think the whole of this clause should remain as it is and these suggested amendments be disallowed.

There are one or two things we would see if we go into them, and I think the lawyer-members of this Council would appreciate that market value does connote something. While it is a yardstick it means something when it comes to market value. The proposed amendment to sub-clause (2) (c) is to delete the words "full market value at the time when the valuation is made" and substitute therefor the words "value thereof." That is a much wider term, I submit, for a lawyer to be allowed to play around.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: May I interrupt the hon. Member to point out that in the proposed amendment to sub-clause (7) it is stated that the expression "value" means "the value ascertained by reference to prices current at the thirty-first day of March, nineteen hundred and thirty-nine"?

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am glad for the interpretation there. Any dealer or merchant would appreciate that from 1939 to

1945 the cost of everything has considerably increased and not necessarily from a speculative point of view, but through circumstances outside the control of the speculator. In fact, one is inclined to say that building prices have gone up considerably and, therefore, we do not know what may happen. We talk about ruinous and dilapidated buildings; we also have to consider the effect of the new Ordinance on labour. Everyone got the benefit in 1936 of having a good property at a fair value. Those who have done nothing to their property for the past six to seven years will be allowed to get the market value of 1939. The reason why we introduced in this Council legislation that a landlord should keep his house in repair will be undermined by this Bill. There does not seem to be co-ordination of thought when we place these circumstances into the specific sections. We brought in an Ordinance compelling landlords to repair their houses. Nothing has been done to their property and nothing will be done unless a tenant comes forward and complains about the state of the property. Yet you have not given any definition for "unfit for human habitation". Under this Bill the landlord who neglects his property will get the benefit of that while on the other hand, the man who has increased the value of his property will get nothing. The hon. the Attorney-General might have very good argument in respect of that, but it seems we will be placing a premium on those persons who have allowed their houses to go into a state of disrepair since 1939. That is how it strikes me. We must also bear in mind that we have other Ordinances affecting this and the general question of repairs.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I think the hon. Member who has just spoken has put up a good argument against the proposal to base the price on the 1939 value, but I would just like to say in very simple language that the idea is this : The Central Authority is going to expend very large sums of money and should be able to purchase lands and, perhaps, buildings on the lands cheaply and at a reasonable price. At the present time there are obviously very false market values and this Bill should be administered for the benefit of the community and not in order to pay high prices to

a few individuals whose land may be selected for building and slum clearance under the scheme. I feel that justice should be done to the owners of the land and I am not accusing any owners of speculation. I agree with the hon. Member when he says there should be no speculation until it is known where we are going to work, but I want to put to hon. Members that if we want the money expended fairly and squarely let us be blunt about it. The reason why we put "1939" is — the hon. the Attorney-General may correct me, but I think I am right — we want to get the land at a reasonable cost. The hon. Member who has spoken pointed out that it would be difficult to assess in 1946 what the market value was in 1939. Perhaps he is right, but there should be a way out of it. Perhaps there are assessments in the possession of the Town Council of Georgetown, I do not know.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : To a point of information! The assessment in 1939 was based on appraised value which is known not to be as high as the market value, but today it is based on an assessed rental value. That is the point I am making. It is based on the rental value and that rental need not necessarily be the amount of rent actually received, as it is arrived at on a basis of so much per square foot. On the other hand you may be getting more than what the actual working out at a specific amount per square foot gives and the Assessment Committee will be entitled to take that increased rental.

The CHAIRMAN : The rental value of 1939 is taken into account in fixing the standard rent. There is not much difference between the appraised value and the assessed rental value.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : My point is, I want this Council to approach the matter from the broad point of view. I daresay hon. Members, particularly those who are lawyers and dilly-dally with complicated matters, can go on bringing in all kinds of opposition. To my mind everybody should support the 1939 value because we want the Central Authority to get land at a reasonable cost, and I think it should be possible to find a way of giving a fair market value to the owner of land now.

I have no doubt there is a way of doing it. I ask hon. Members very strongly to support the 1939 value. If you buy at the 1945-46 prices you would merely be putting, unnecessarily, an amount of money in the hands of the people from whom you are buying.

Mr. LEE : Sir, I agree with the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight). Let us for the sake of argument put it this way : The Central Authority desires to acquire a square for the purpose of slum clearance. There may be in that square two houses which were built or repaired after 1939 for the convenience of tenants or the owners. If you are going to assess those houses at the 1939 value you would be creating a hardship in respect of those owners because the value of the houses in 1939 is not the value now. That is the interpretation I put on the 1939 value because it includes paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of sub-clause (2) of this clause and therefore must include buildings. I do not say we should not buy land and buildings at a reasonably low rate. I agree with Government on that, but at the same time you cannot, because you are clearing a slum area, penalize certain people who have expended money on their buildings. You have also to take this into consideration—and I would like my brother Councillors to do so also—that the land value of property in Georgetown in 1939 was not what it is today, because since the introduction of assessment on the rental value, properties have increased in value, not because of the land itself or the inflation of property values, but on account of their position—essentially business sites. From the Canal in High Street to Water Street the land value of certain places was very little in 1939. The Regent Hotel, sold at \$26,000 then, was a good price, but today an offer of \$150,000 will be refused. Should you have to acquire that property for slum clearance that amount would not be declared the value to the owner.

The CHAIRMAN : The hon. Member's argument is entirely opposed to what the hon. the Colonial Secretary said—the interest of the community. That amount is the present inflated value.

Mr. LEE : The 1939 figure was not the real value; it was only the result of a

certain amount of depreciation that took place. Therefore you are creating a hardship on those persons from whom you will be taking away the lands. Government must find a way to give these people a fair value, but the moment you place it on the 1939 valuation I would not agree.

The CHAIRMAN : What do you suggest ?

Mr. LEE : If a definite percentage is added to the 1939 value in paragraph (b) of the proposed amendment to sub-clause (7), I would agree to that because I would see from the percentage you offer that a hardship is being created. If we leave it to the Governor in Council, I do not want to say what I fear. I prefer to see it in black and white so as to be able to determine whether it is reasonable or not.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : May I suggest, if we are going to consider any *media modus*, that we consider it with the Assessment Ordinance ? That seems to be a fair method of valuing it, taking the date when the Assessment Ordinance came into force, because on that day the basis of taxation was arrived at by which an all-round survey of the prices obtaining at that time was made. We had a fair average value. If we do that, we would then be able to say "In addition to that have a percentage," as proposed by the amendment. That percentage, as I see it without going into calculation or having it in front of me, will not be so high as it will have to be under this clause, as amended. Perhaps my friend, the hon. the Attorney-General, may consider it in that light.

Mr. FARNUM : I think the value should be based on 1939. The hon. Member said it should be based on 1945, but to my mind 1945 represents the peak. Also, it is well known that properties change hands over and over during the course of a year, and in each case the price rises. How are you going to arrive at the valuation of such property ? I think 1939 is the correct basis to work on, and added to that there should be whatever percentage you may arrive at. Going back to paragraph (a) of sub-clause (2), the point that strikes me is this : Supposing there are two build-

ings on that site, one in a dilapidated condition and the other perfectly sound; what would be the position? Would the area with the sound building be demolished?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member will see at the end of the sub-clause that there is a reservation with regard to buildings. It is the land site that is being dealt with.

Mr. FARNUM: Then the intention is to value it and take it over.

The CHAIRMAN: The object of this legislation is to determine the site value of premises only as land. There are other provisions dealing with buildings. The idea is this: The buildings will be removed. We are contemplating fixing the value of land where there are buildings unfit for human habitation. The idea is to try and arrive at the value of the piece of land on which there are buildings which it is not proposed by the Central Authority should remain there. We are to declare what should be the market value of that land.

Mr. FARNUM: That does not answer the point. What is to happen to the sound building?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. Member is dealing with two parts of the clause. The first one is with regard to land where there is a dilapidated building on it or a building believed to be injurious to the health of the inhabitants. In that case only the land is considered for compensation. The other one is with regard to a site on which are two buildings—one is in a dilapidated condition and the other is not. Assuming for the sake of argument that we have to remove the dilapidated building and you get nothing for it, paragraph (c) as amended provides:

“in the case of any other land and building, the compensation payable shall be the value thereof.”

In other words, where you have your building in a proper and livable condition that will be considered alone, but there is nothing payable in respect of the other building which is in a dilapidated condition. If I am permitted to refer to the comments of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo

(Mr. C. V. Wight), the point really is this: You are going back to the year 1939 and that is, before there were all sorts of conditions obtaining which brought about increased values of land and, perhaps, of houses. Those conditions resulted, as I suggested, from the war. Therefore, you should go back to a period of time when none of those conditions existed which brought about an inflatory set of circumstances in connection with land and house values. As the Nominated Member (Mr. Farnum) remarked, people in the outside world who had money could not put out their money in bonds and various things and, therefore, properties became valuable and changed hands very rapidly. A man would buy a property for \$10,000 and a few weeks or months afterwards sell it for \$15,000. It is perfectly true that in 1939 the assessment of property was on the appraised value, but on the coming into operation of the new Ordinance it is now on the rental value. The rental value must have relation to all those changes which took place, when “A” bought from “B” for \$10,000 and a few months after sold to “C” for \$15,000 and “C” later sold to “D” for \$20,000.

It must be borne in mind that the Rent Restriction Ordinance does not apply to rental value over \$50 per month. The change of the assessment from the appraised value to the rental value fortifies the argument which is being advanced for the fixing of the 1939 price, when conditions were such that people did not sell their lands with a fine margin of profit, and when you bought a house then you knew that someone would not come along the next day and offer more for it. Places worth \$20,000 or \$25,000 in 1939 cannot be bought now for \$50,000 and that is the strongest possible argument in favour of a matter of this sort, because no one in his right senses could consider that any such place would be worth the money referred to by the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee).

The object for which this Bill is being brought into existence is to provide housing accommodation for the public as a whole and the labouring classes in particular. I suggest that we should base our assessment on a back year and not provide that as the

result of speculation going on year after year, after the war started, people must get the benefit of that. We must have a sense of proportion—a sense of regard for the interest of the community as a whole. I submit that the time which is fixed—1939—bears a true and real relationship to reasonable and rational prices. The other prices have resulted from emergency conditions and you should not fix your period at 1945 or 1946. We are now coming out of the war years with their aftermath, therefore, we must fix a period of time when, perhaps, all those speculative tendencies are the other way about; and we find that the prices obtaining in 1939 cannot even be said to be on the downward trend. In a matter of this sort, when we are endeavouring to put legislation on the Statute Book, we should do it in the best possible way.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : May I ask the hon. the Attorney-General whether in his remarks he would oblige by saying what is the meaning of “such percentage” in the proposed amendment to clause 30 (7) (b)? I have no idea of what would be added and how it would be added.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : The words “such percentage”, I suggest, refer to change in money values. Sitting here at the moment it might be difficult to find what is the percentage but, as hon. Members have said, we had changes in prices which at the time may not have been a reasonable criterion along which action could be taken. You may have a reasonable percentage as a result of a reasonable demand, but in a certain period you may have an increase by X of 200 or 300 per cent. in order to get a big “rake off” and put it in the Bank.

Mr. LEE : This is a substantial amendment to sub-clause (7) and I would like to know whether any individual would be permitted to apply to the Governor in Council for a percentage on the increased value of his property.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : That provision is really for the purpose of giving elasticity to the working of the Ordinance and to that particular clause. In other

words, you are asking us to say that in the whole of Georgetown 10 per cent should prevail, or that in the whole of Water Street 10 per cent should prevail. It is clear that we must provide for some elasticity by way of the fixing of prices. The hon. Member referred to a building which was once available for \$20,000 and which could not now be obtained for \$150,000 but I am sure that no hon. Member sitting here would be expected in such circumstances to support this particular clause.

Mr. JACOB : I think we have been tinkering with this clause for the last three quarters of an hour.

The CHAIRMAN : It is very important.

Mr. JACOB : I realize that it is. I am always accused of trying to delay the work of this Council, but I am prepared to accept the amendment. Let us put the matter to the vote. I am wholly in agreement with the pointed remarks made by the Colonial Secretary, that it is time we consider that today's values are false. The hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) has given a very good instance of false values, and I think if he had read the suggested amendment which was printed on a sheet of paper a few days ago, he would not have pressed the point as he has done. It is stated in sub-clause (6) (b) that “references to land shall be construed as including references to buildings”. A case might be found where a person who owns a particular house or piece of land might suffer some hardship, but it would not occur if the matter is referred to the Central Authority or to the Governor himself. I have no doubt that if a man buys a house for double what it was worth in 1939 and he puts up a good case, he would get a reasonable value if that house or the land is taken over. As the hon. the Colonial Secretary has stated, we have to consider this thing in the interest of the working people. That is what I am concerned with; I am not concerned with the speculation that has gone on within the last four or five years, and it appears to me that that is one of the reasons why housing in Georgetown is in such a grave state.

Here we have all sorts of obstacles being put in the way of doing something

quickly. The Commissioner of Local Government stated yesterday that land could not be obtained at Wakenaam and other places, because of all sorts of wicked objections. My view is that the moment we find these irritating objections it should be the duty of this Government to take a firm hand. I am not going to be a party to such things being carried on, never mind who the parties are. It is time we make some progress, and if the Central Authority is comprised of men of real integrity and interest in the public welfare I would be satisfied with their activities, but I am not at all satisfied with the position as regards the Central Authority, as stated by the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Gonsalves) and I am going to say something more about that later. I think that this is a necessary clause, that the amendment is quite proper and that we should pass it if we want to make progress.

Mr. VEERASAWMY : I intended to rise, sir, to support the fears expressed by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) and the remarks made also by the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee), but having heard the explanation by the hon. the Attorney-General I think these two gentlemen should be satisfied. As the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) has said, sub-clause 2 (c) should provide sufficient compensation for any person who thinks he stands to lose having regard to an increase in the value of his property during these years. I am in favour of this clause—30—being passed with the amendment suggested.

Mr. CRITCHLOW : I strongly support the amendment that the year should be 1939 instead of 1945. Land was certainly cheaper in 1939 than it is now. I expect that certain Members of this Council would support 1945 because of their interest in the landlord class. We should, however, support the working class strongly and I believe Government is right in adopting this amendment for 1939.

Mr. GONSALVES : I desire to deal with this matter in two or three different ways, perhaps. Firstly, in regard to sub-clause (2) (a), I do not think it is equitable

to say that because a man has a lot of land and has a building which is not altogether in a fit condition or in occupation by anybody, he should lose the value of that building and is to be paid for the land alone. Those of us who have been on any local authority—Town Council or Village Council—would know that you may have, say in Georgetown, a two-storeyed building with rooms on the ground floor certified by the M.O.H. as unfit for human habitation. That portion of the building—the ground floor—might be declared unfit for human habitation, but the other portion would be quite fit. According to this sub-clause, however, if part of the building is declared unfit the whole would be taken over and compensation given only for the site.

The CHAIRMAN : In the case of a three-storeyed building, if the bottom is unfit the whole building would not be regarded as unfit for human habitation.

Mr. GONSALVES : This sub-clause does not say so, and if that is intended I think it should be made clear. Paragraph (c) meets the case of those properties which do not come under (a) and (b); and if you turn to sub-clause (7) you will find how the value is to be determined. I was thinking, sir, whether there is not likely to be some hardship where people who have been saving money and did not buy in 1939, but say in 1942, are the original purchasers and spent all they had. If the buildings are in a bad condition and you take away their property, would you pay them according to the valuation in 1939?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Yes; plus a percentage.

Mr. GONSALVES : The question is whether the percentage on the 1939 valuation would compensate those persons who bought without any idea of speculation. I do not mean a case such as that referred to by the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) where the value of a certain site went up from \$20,000 to \$150,000—probably because of speculation due to the fact that Government wanted to buy the property.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : That is the very point.

Mr. GONSALVES : , I quite agree that legislation should be provided to cover cases of that sort.

Mr. LEE : Sub-clause (2) (c) covers the point.

Mr. GONSALVES : The question is whether the percentage would be sufficient to compensate the owner.

Mr. RAATGEVER : I am in agreement with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) and I would ask Government to be consistent in this matter. As Commissioner for the burnt-out area I know that the year taken was 1945 and I see no reason why Government should take the year 1939 as stated here. My good friend here—the Chairman of the Burnt-out Area Committee—can tell you of the difficulty we had in arriving at the valuation of the land in that area and if this amendment is carried into effect it would create more difficulties. In the circumstances, I am asking the learned Attorney-General to withdraw this amendment.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : One appreciates the fact that a burnt child dreads the fire, but the whole point is this : In one case you are dealing with a restricted area—the burnt-out area—but this is for the whole Colony. This legislation is endeavouring to achieve a different purpose and has a different object in view. In the one case buildings were destroyed and you have a land tenure, but in this case the idea is proper houses and the Central Authority might require the entire removal of existing houses if they are dilapidated and unfit for human habitation. Hon. Members, I hope, would appreciate the distinction I have made. In so far as the burnt-out area is concerned, nobody expected the fire and no such circumstances obtained as the buying and selling of houses, etc. It is within the knowledge of hon. Members that there was only one site in that area — Geddes Grant's site—that was purchased recently before the fire. Having regard to the impersonal nature of this legislation, it would be appreciated that land and houses have been changing hands and all these houses are still standing, but the removal of some of them might be required. That is the

answer I desire to give to my hon. friend who is a member of the Burnt-out Area Committee.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : As the last few words, I desire to say I have had some experience as Chairman of the Committee. One of the principles of taxation—one of the principles of rating and one of the principles of compensation—is that the value for the purposes of taxation is always based on the market value, whether it is fair or not. I am quite convinced with the experience I have had that in certain cases in certain areas in this City the compensation value here will be below the assessed value for the purposes of taxation. That would create an anomaly and if such an anomaly is created, I would like to hear from the hon. the Attorney-General what he proposes to do and whether there will be an amendment of the Ordinance dealing with the burnt-out area. Perhaps he would be able to convince us that in this Ordinance we have evolved a sound and logical system—not a system as suggested by the hon. Member who is cursing everybody and swearing that everybody is dishonest except himself. We all know him.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I think that in a matter of this kind there is a lot to be said for both sides, but I think we ought to focus our attention on the fact that we should be fair and equitable, and so it appears to me that we have to do something which is practicable. I have read this amendment very carefully and the only conclusion I can arrive at is that perhaps this Central Authority would be comprised of a number of experts who would be able to arrive at valuations in prescribed areas in order to assess compensation. I do not know where these experts are going to come from, speaking with some experience—and, perhaps, a great deal of experience. Perhaps I can go so far as to say that I have more experience as regards valuation of property in Georgetown than any other Member in this Council Chamber, except the Deputy President.

The CHAIRMAN : It should be stated that your experience is only in relation to property on which you were prepared to lend a certain sum of money.

Mr. de AGUIAR : Apart from my experience in lending Companies, I have had experience in buying and selling properties in this City. I have sold one not very long ago, and perhaps I am on the verge of buying another. I would like to know how a valuer should interpret the words in the amendment relating to sub-clause (7) (a) — “the expression ‘value’ means the value ascertained by reference to prices current at the thirty-first day of March, nineteen hundred and thirty-nine;.....” I do not know to whom a valuer would refer as regards the value of property in Charlestown or Aibouystown—property which, perhaps, has not changed hands all these years. I would like to know how he is going to tell the Central Authority what value obtained in 1939. As a matter of fact, I challenge any competent valuer to turn his mind back six or seven years and give me the value of any property in a particular Ward, unless he is going to fall back and look at one or two valuations he had done or at a transport passed in the Deeds Registry. Then if he has any doubt, where would he be able to get a proper yard-stick? It is absolutely impossible for anybody—even a wizard—to value something backward.

I think the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) has in mind the Rice Tenancy Bill, but that is a different matter. That is to show how much a landlord-miller charged his tenants for milling rice in 1939 as compared with the value of the land. A tenant in doubt or in possession of receipts and things of that kind might try to get the valuation of property and might go backward in ascertaining its value, but I am afraid that if we allow this amendment to find its way into the Bill it would not work. It is going to take Government all its time to solve the problems that would arise. Even now, I do not know that Government can solve the value of half a dozen coconut trees burnt at Mahaica some two or three years ago, for the purpose of compensation. What is the good of saying “let us get on with the Bill” when at the same time we are putting in something that is going to impede its progress?

I do not know who is responsible for this amendment. I see here that it was

moved, but if it has come from the Government side I am sorry. Am I to understand—as the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) would say—that the reason for putting in this amendment is to make the Bill more difficult to operate? Don’t let us play with the value of words and the question of compensation. A man is entitled to full compensation for anything he might have in this world, and the moment one is going to part with possession it is a different thing. In dealing with loans it would be a different matter because you would not be taking away a man’s property, but in this case you will be depriving a man of something he has had all these years. In my opinion that man is entitled to full and just compensation at the time that property is acquired. To go beyond that, it seems to me, the amendment will not be fair and I earnestly advise Government not to allow it to go through because, if it does, I can see a number of difficulties that are going to arise—a number of petitions, probably, to the Supreme Court.

Mr. JACOB : I do not think the hon. Member, who has just come in, has read this Bill. May I ask that the question be now put?

The CHAIRMAN : I will not accept the motion. The point is of very great importance, and I think every ventilation should be given it. It is a very difficult point and I think we ought to arrive at some decision on it. Outside knowledge may be helpful.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I can well understand the anxiety of the hon. Member to have this amendment rushed. He would not have, perhaps, to carry out the burdens entailed in this Bill. Perhaps it does not worry him at all. I have indicated that if these amendments are passed they would lead to a lot of trouble because I cannot for the life of me agree that a valuer or assessor can be found, whether in the employ of Government or anywhere else, who would be able to assess the value of land dating backwards. I do not know what yardstick he is going to use. The hon. Member referred to some individual; I do not know who he is, but I can think of a dozen offhand who have these properties, one section of

which might be bad or unfit for human habitation. There again a man has the right of appeal as to whether a building is unfit or not. Then it seems to me that even if one section is unfit and the other is not, you cannot refuse to pay him some assessed value for the building. Supposing that individual has that property mortgaged and the Government only pays enough for the value of the land, and supposing the sum total of it is that Government's total payment for the property represents the amount of the mortgage only—

Mr. JACOB : There again, I am sure, the hon. Member has not read the amendments !

Mr. de AGUIAR : The hon. Member must be measuring my corn in his bushel. I have the amendments in front of me. The hon. Member knows me better than that. I am making the point that if this unfortunate individual happens to have his property mortgaged it may occur that the amount of compensation payable by Government is just enough to cover the amount of the mortgage, and in that case the individual would suffer. However, I am going to follow hon. Members if they wish to accept the amendment, but I advise Government against it. I warn Government that if these amendments go through this Council today, the practicability of this Bill would be destroyed and we would have no houses whether it is in 1950 or 1980.

Mr. JACOB : May I ask the hon. Member, who has just taken his seat and who is connected with a few lending companies that give mortgages, whether some percentage is not fixed when the mortgage is given on a property ? The hon. Member has not read the amendment and he is not talking sense.

The CHAIRMAN : It does not matter for the purpose of the hon. Member's view or my view whether you take 1939 or 1946 as the year. The great difficulty that Members have to address themselves to is the competency of someone to arrive at what is called the market value or the other expression, a fair market value. It differs in certain respects. Land has a peculiar value. It has a foot value in different parts of the world, relating to the

actual measurement. No one in this community can say on what basis land in the City is priced. The Public Works Department has tried for years to fix the value on the cubic foot measurement, but I have never agreed with it. Government has always adopted that. It is much above the ordinary value of the land and, therefore, in practice it is acceptable. I appeal to the hon. Nominated Members, Mr. Farnum and Mr. Raatgever, and also to the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. Percy Wight, who have had much experience in arranging the amount to be advanced by Insurance Companies on property. This is what happens: Two or three Directors would go and arrive at a certain value; then there is a conference of the Directors and it is approved. What is it based on ? It is based on what is considered the rental value, because the applicant for the mortgage has to send in what is the actual rental value of the property. It may be that the value of the land is also taken into account.

I can assure hon. Members that from my knowledge the value is usually based on the property as a whole and how it would be profitably occupied. That is my experience of the way in which property values in this City are arrived at. I feel that we ought to consider this matter very carefully. The hon. the Attorney-General is very anxious for 1939 to be fixed. I can assure him that whatever year we go back to, we will still be confronted with the difficulty as to who is there to arrive at the market value in that year. So far as 1945 is concerned we have the compulsory returns made by owners on their property showing what the rent was, and we may take that as the hon. the Colonial Secretary does not want Government to be held up in arriving at a reasonable market value and also Government does not want to pay what is not fair compensation for the land. The trouble is how are we to assess it ?

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : May I just say something arising out of what you say about assessed value ? The hon. the Attorney-General knows the system upon which we are now working in relation to the burnt-out area. I also happen to know that today in this City, despite what people say,

the records of the Town Clerk's Office show that the majority of the people, about 85 per cent., are paying around the same taxes or less than they paid in 1939. The increased taxes which have resulted from the new assessment have come mainly out of the Water Street merchants. About 85 per cent. of the property-owners are paying less taxes. It may very well happen, as I intimated to the Commissioner of Local Government that if you are going to assess and are going to purchase you may be purchasing at a higher value in 1939 than that in 1945. If your taxes and rates were higher in 1939 you have to purchase at a higher rate. Let us see the slum areas. Where are your slum clearance areas? They are the very areas in which there has been very little speculation. In other words, the areas held by some of the smaller proprietors and not, as the hon. Member thinks, by those persons who are entirely interested in speculation. Go and get the returns and you will find that most of the properties are owned by the smaller persons—widows and other poor people whom hon. Members are so considerate for. They are the people who have held on to their properties and have not speculated, and they are the people who may be affected by the 1939 valuation.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I do not quite follow the argument of the hon. Member. He is saying in effect : "Do not take the 1939 values which we regard and which everybody would regard as reasonable values before the extraordinary conditions arose due to emergencies of war, but take 1945 values, as the values in 1939 may in many cases be greater than those of the years following, up to 1945." I really do not see the argument in that. The hon. Member knows—he is Mayor of Georgetown and therefore these various matters are within his purview. So far as the question of slum areas is concerned, those are the areas with which we have to deal, and it is obvious—I do not know whether there has been speculation in regard to them—that some of these slum areas may be owned by people who may think that they should get an extraordinarily high price for their property, having regard to the relation of other land values in Georgetown. It is clear that if

we are to find some year, the year before any of those extraordinary circumstances took place should be a reasonable year. That is the point. The hon. the Deputy President says whether we take 1945 or 1900 the same difficulty would arise, consequently the year we are putting is the year in accord with reason and is outside any fictitious or possibly fictitious valuation. That is the clear position I have put to hon. Members. As to the difficulty of doing it, we have to find out. It will be an extraordinarily difficult thing to go back and value the land. The only time when you can honestly and fairly value it is at the immediate time.

Mr. de AGUIAR : That is correct.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : The hon. Member must appreciate the fact that in addition to the basic value in 1939 a percentage is provided, having regard to the locality, building and parcel of land. That, I suggest, is fair and equitable to all concerned having regard to the interest of everybody and to the object for which this Bill is brought into existence.

Mr. GONSALVES : All this argument seems to contemplate Georgetown only, but the Bill is going to operate outside Georgetown as well. In that case how is it going to work ?

The CHAIRMAN : I do not think we have reached universal agreement. The responsibility is Government's. Perhaps I had better put the amendment. If at some future time it is considered advisable to amend it, we would have the power and organization by which either to build or to delete. I think we should pass the Ordinance and think about the difficulties which would present themselves. We will have more than a skeleton Ordinance. I think that is the wiser course to adopt. No one has suggested an alternative amendment and, therefore, I take it this Council will pass the amendment without reservation. I think Members have expressed their views and called attention to what they think are the difficulties of the future.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : As I understand you, sir, I have already moved the amendment of sub-clause 2 (a) and in order to deal with the whole matter I can

move the other amendments according to the printed copy because they are inter-related. I move that in sub-clause (2) (b) the words "at their market value" in the sixth line be deleted; in sub-clause (2) (c) the words "full market value at the time when the valuation is made" be deleted and the words "value thereof" substituted therefor, and sub-clause (7) as printed be deleted and the following substituted therefor:—

" (7) For the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of sub-section (2) of this section,—

- (a) the expression "value" means the value ascertained by reference to prices current at the thirty-first day of March, nineteen hundred and thirty-nine; and
- (b) there shall be added to the value so ascertained such percentage thereof as may from time to time be prescribed by Order of the Governor in Council published in the Gazette; and
- (c) such Order may be made generally, or in relation to a particular building or parcel of land.

Mr. GONSALVES: I am moving an amendment to sub-clause (2) (a) to meet what I was saying. Insert the word "totally" between the words "are" and "unfit" in the first line.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: In several parts of this Bill there is the word "unfit", and consequently if the hon. Member draws a distinction here, then it infers that the Legislative Council considers the others as partially unfit. I suggest to the hon. Member to leave it as it is.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I do appeal to the hon. Member that if the word "totally" is inserted it would be a little bit redundant. If a thing is unfit, it means totally unfit.

Mr. GONSALVES: The point is being missed. The hon. Member for Central Demerara supported my view in that respect. You may have a building which is not altogether unfit but is unfit in part. If you say there "buildings which are unfit" and you further say that "unfit" means "totally unfit", then the whole thing goes. But I want to protect the person as regards

the value of the building in so far as it is not unfit. If the word "totally" is wrong, then someone may find a suitable word to substitute. A building may be dangerous but not totally dangerous. I see the tendency is to lean towards the Attorney-General's amendments, and if that is the idea I will go along with them.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I would not like that to happen. I am going to cite a case now. As a matter of fact I am seeing the building in front of my mind's eye. It is a two-storey building and the ground floor has rooms which are totally unfit for human habitation while the dwelling above is quite all right. What is going to happen to that owner?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Tell him to repair it.

Mr. JACOB: I do not understand these red herrings that are being drawn across the trail now. I am appealing to the Chair. We are not making any progress. If three rooms under a house are unfit for human habitation the Central Authority can be called in and they will order that they be closed. But that does not come within the scope of this Bill.

Mr. de AGUIAR: The hon. Member for North Western District would never understand. I am not talking about closing the building. We are talking about paying compensation for the building and not about closing it. I have cited a case and there are perhaps dozens or hundreds of them. I want to raise a question of procedure. I would like to know whether the hon. Member for North Western District is now endeavouring to prevent an hon. Member like himself from speaking on the amendments. If he wishes me to argue with him on that point there would be little or no progress on this Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Then I would have to put the question myself!

Mr. de AGUIAR: Not as long as a Member is speaking within the framework of the Bill. The hon. Member knows that. It is not a question of delaying tactics as are adopted by the hon. Member; it is a question of trying to protect the rights of

the individual. If the hon. Member does not want to do that, then all he has said in the past about protecting the rights of the individual is nothing but claptrap.

Mr. GONSALVES : I am not going to press my amendment because of the determination of Government not to accept any amendment.

Mr. THOMPSON : The debate seems to be drifting to personal and vested interests in discussing the Bill. I ask that the question be now put.

The CHAIRMAN : It is not an unusual feature of this Council. The hon. Member will have to get accustomed to it.

Amendments by the Attorney-General put, the Committee dividing and voting as follows :—

For—Messrs. Veerasawmy, Farnum, Thompson, Roth, Jacob, Peer Bacchus, Critchlow, the Attorney-General, and the Colonial Secretary—9.

Against—Messrs. Raatgever, de Aguiar, and C. V. Wight—3.

Did not vote—Messrs. Lee and Gonsalves—2.

Amendments adopted.

Clause 30 passed as amended.

*Clause 36—Recovery of possession of buildings within areas of approved schemes.*

Mr. LEE : As you know, sir, there may be fruit trees and other things besides buildings on the site, and I do not see any provision for compensation for these things. I am speaking about the rural districts particularly.

The CHAIRMAN : You mean fruit-bearing trees ?

Mr. LEE : Yes, sir.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : They would be part of the land.

The CHAIRMAN : Growing crops.

Mr. LEE : The Bill does not speak of anything like that. It only speaks of "site".

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I am glad for clause 33. This Bill is going to be a headache for lawyers and I am glad the hon. Member has raised this point.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I will make a note and consider the point and, if necessary, I will recommit the clause and get an amendment.

Clause 36 passed.

*Clause 39—Extinguishment of ways, and easements.*

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : There is a large outstanding question in the Town Council with regard to the payment made for the sewerage scheme and those buildings not connected to the scheme. The hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) has said we must go ahead—flout the law and take our own action—but that is not my opinion. The right to compensation here is extant, but perhaps we can pass this and Government or the Chairman of the Central Authority can note the point. I do not intend to go on if I can possibly help it, and that might satisfy the hon. Member for North Western District.

The CHAIRMAN : Order, order.

Mr. JACOB : May I rise to a point of order, sir ? These personal references—

The CHAIRMAN : I have already called the hon. Member to order

Clause 39 passed.

*Clause 45—Land and buildings within the area of a completed scheme to be conveyed to Local Authority.*

Mr. JACOB : There are certain words at the bottom of this clause which should be deleted.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Yes; the words "Authority shall be". It is a printer's error.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Clause 45 passed as amended.

*Clause 46—Funds of the Central Authority.*

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : This is the most important clause in this Bill. I have already

said what I had to say on this point, but I repeat that I do not think the funds are sufficient and that efforts will have to be made to raise more. Further, the Rural Housing Committee will have to decide how we are going to allocate these funds. It is also a question whether this Bill, in view of the discussion which I see taking place, would go outside the working class. Of course, "working class" is already defined in the definition clause and I take it that if necessary this clause will be reviewed in the light of the report of the sub-committee.

Mr. LEE : I desire to support the view expressed by the last speaker—that this scheme would require a lot of money. I only hope Government would take a note of that and not delay the progress of the scheme.

Mr. JACOB : I do not quite follow the remarks of the last two speakers. I see in sub-clause (1) (a) that "the proceeds of loans which may be raised by the Governor from time to time" shall be the funds of the Central Authority, and I do not know whether it is the intention of certain hon. Members to say that a loan of only a few million dollars will be required. I think the terms of reference of the Committee dealing with the 10-year Development Plan would show that it is for the Committee to put up its recommendations, and not that it should be limited to a particular sum of money. If those recommendations call for \$40,000,000, I think this Legislature has the right to raise the money if it is not available from the Colonial Development and Welfare funds. If this Legislature would act in a business-like manner, there would be sufficient money to do these things.

I do not know what has prompted the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) to think that sufficient money would not be available. If no schemes are put up, there could be no money. I think that from the first meeting of the sub-committee he attended he wanted to say that the work of the Committee is difficult. If he does not want to put up schemes to improve the various parts of the Colony he should say so. My membership of that Committee has not shown me that we should

give up hope financially, and I intend to review the whole matter and see what can be done. Government should say "we will do this now and do the balance some years hence." It is not for this Committee to say that certain things cannot be done. That is why I say we are advancing backward, and I have always said that. We should proceed with the development of this Colony, and I am surprised that the hon. Member for Western Essequibo should feel that there is no money and that we should do nothing.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : In reply to the hon. Member for North Western District I should utter a note of warning. He is quite correct when he says that it is the duty of the sub-Committee to put up schemes, but as Chairman I think I have already told this Council and the general body of the Committee that the recommendations of the sub-Committees would be dependent on a special allocation and not on the funds which were given to Government on the last occasion by Members of this Council. That special allocation would be from money available from the Colonial Development and Welfare and money available from surplus funds which this Colony could raise. I am no financier, but I can warn hon. Members that when it comes to raising the money on a loan it would not be so easy. It seems that however desirable schemes may be, we cannot just raise money on loans to carry them out until we get our finances in order. I do not want to be pessimistic, but no one should think that there is a lot of money and that all this Council has to do is to receive the schemes from the various sub-Committees and vote the money. It is not as easy as that. We will not, as far as I know, get any more money from the Imperial Government. They have told us what money we can get from the Colonial Development and Welfare, and we have to do what we can with that.

This Colony was given special allocations under housing, roads, and Public Works Extraordinary. Nobody expects these special allocations to disappear too rapidly, but if we are going to spend a terrific lot of money on housing, we would have to spend much less on roads. In other words, you have a certain amount of money to go on and you have to decide the best

way of spending that money and of allocating it proportionately, not only under large heads but in priority. I am not saying that as the years go by we will not be able to raise more money, but I am saying that the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) has made it appear more easy than it is.

Mr. LEE : The necessity for these houses and other things is there, and I do not see why we should be limited to recommendations of the sub-Committee. I think the scheme should go far beyond that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : We are not saying hon. Members should be limited in their ideas or recommendations. The Colonial Secretary has only sounded a note of warning that you must expect other recommendations to be carried out.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I want to say that if I, personally, have something to do with it, I would say "spend all your money on houses." Other people have different views, however, and it would be the duty of the main Committee which would be comprised of Members of the Legislative Council to decide how much money should be spent on each individual scheme. It would also be the duty of the main Committee to recommend how much money should be spent on further schemes. What I want to say is that it is not so easy to find the money as it appears to the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) and the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee).

Mr. LEE : I am not saying we should not take note of the warning given by the Colonial Secretary, but I do appeal to Government not to make our labours on the Committee appear to be in vain when we send in recommendations, otherwise I would not sit on the Committee any longer. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo knows the necessity for slum clearance, and I know also that it is necessary in my constituency. I am not going to sit down and make recommendations, however, only to find Government taking no notice of them.

Mr. JACOB : I think it is proper that the Main Committee should meet and receive the various recommendations made

for the raising of additional loans. Sir Gordon suggested a loan of \$10,000,000 only, but I think the Colony should raise a bigger loan so as to decide on a plan and carry it out. There should be definite allocations for each sub-Committee so that they would be certain to get a particular amount and, if possible, they might be able to raise more money for any important scheme. We should not be told to wait until the Committee's report is submitted and seen by the people in England who would also have to be told what the position is. So far as I am concerned, I am prepared to serve on the Committee but if that is the state of affairs existing other steps would have to be taken to get this country developed.

We cannot sit here and allow this state of affairs to continue, and I shall be the first to refuse to sign allocations and come back here in this fashion. I am not saying I shall not do other things. I have been labouring here for 25 years continuously and my labours have not been successful. I think it is time that we tell the Home Government that we are not prepared to go on like this any longer. I have heard many speeches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, but I think it is our duty to put up schemes and tell him to give us the authority to raise a loan in order to carry them out.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : It is unfortunate that the hon. Member should think he alone could lash out at people. I think the time has come to tell him that other people have rights too. I intend to exercise my rights to the full. I have already said here—standing on this very spot—that I thought the Colonial Development and Welfare people in England have let us down. I have already indicated also that I am not concerned with any Government in England—whatever Party it may have at its head—and I do not think it is going to do one jot more for this Colony than any previous Government. I have also indicated already that in the interest of the slum clearance and housing programme a survey was made in the City and as a result I do not think \$8,000,000 or even \$10,000,000 would be too much to ask for in order to carry out our housing programme. That is my personal

view, and I am not concerned whether Members of the Committee agree with it or not.

Mr. JACOB : May I ask whether the hon. Member is suggesting that the work of the Rural Housing Committee should not go on?

The CHAIRMAN : You are entirely out of order, and I must ask you to let us try and make a little progress with the Bill this afternoon.

Mr. WIGHT : I am not concerned with what happens to the Rural Housing Committee or anything of the sort. I am entitled to my own view and I would like to say exactly what the hon. the Colonial Secretary stated. There is an impression going around that the sub-Committees can call for whatever schemes and whatever amounts they like. I have actually heard it stated in another place that the \$5,000,000 should be utilised for the purpose of paying interest on a bigger loan. I am not a mathematician, but I would like the hon. Member to work it out and see what loan we would have to raise in order to pay \$5,000,000 as interest on it. Of course, I would love to see the Colony developed because the bigger it develops the more money I would put in my pocket. I just want to say that I do not think the vote for housing can be confined to any particular sum. This clause would have to be watched very very carefully.

Clause 46 passed.

*Clause 47—Financial and accounting matters.*

Mr. JACOB : I am not prepared to suggest an amendment to this clause now, because the Council is very depleted.

The CHAIRMAN : Would you like it to be deferred?

Mr. JACOB : I wanted to make that suggestion.

The CHAIRMAN : I may tell you at once that I propose to defer clause 47 with the amendment which appears in the Minutes. If you would like to speak on it now, you may give some indication.

Mr. JACOB : Yes. I do not know whether the Attorney-General is prepared to agree to certain amendments to this clause, particularly with regard to sub-clause (6).

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : We will give consideration to the suggestion of the hon. Member but, as the Chairman has stated, we will postpone consideration of the clause.

Clause 47 deferred.

*Clause 49—Report and audited accounts to be forwarded annually to the Governor.*

Mr. JACOB : I will be satisfied if the words "or such other auditor as may be approved by the Governor in Council" be deleted from the end of this clause. If the Government is prepared to approve of that deletion I am prepared to say no more, but if not I will give very good reasons why I think those words should be deleted.

The CHAIRMAN : You are going to move an amendment, if it becomes necessary, that those words be deleted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I, personally, would like a Government Auditor to do all the auditing, but to do so we will have to double the present staff and the pension emoluments will go up as a result. My opinion is that it should be left to the discretion of Government to find suitable auditors to do the work. I would like to challenge the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) on the position now. I would like those words retained.

Mr. JACOB : I am not going to accept the challenge; I have given a sufficient number of instances. The accounts of the Transport and Harbours Department are being audited by the Colonial Auditor. I want to surmount all difficulties there may be. Here you have a comprehensive scheme operating all over the Colony, and it will be far cheaper for clerks to go around and check the accounts. I ask this Government in all seriousness to do the right thing. I do not think it would require more than one or two Junior Clerks, and the Colonial Auditor would be able to direct what should

be done. We have had the Colony's best auditors—to put it in that way—or the most reputable firm of auditors auditing the books of the Rice Marketing Board. I am not saying that the books are not properly audited, but they have not got the time.

I have personal experience of that firm. Twenty years ago they refused to accept certain audits because they had not the staff to send into the country districts. I suggest to Government that it would be better, even if the Pension List is increased, to have all Government Funds, Government expenditure and Government books audited by Government Auditors, and I ask Government if it does not approve of it to postpone it until we meet again.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I agree with a great deal of what the hon. Member has said—that it will be far better to have Government Auditors. I hope the Government Auditors will be able to do it. All I say is that I do not want the words deleted. I do not want Government to be in the position that the Colonial Auditor has got to do it. I will see whether the Auditor can do it. Very likely he may be able to do it and may not want additional staff. The present tendency is to put more work on the Auditor. We have just put the Trade Unions' accounts on the Auditor. The Auditor and the Assistant Auditor can only do a certain amount of work. They cannot expand their work unlimitedly without increasing the number of clerks and acquiring another Assistant Auditor and that would be very expensive indeed. I would say, sir, if the Auditor can do this work he would do it even though it means additional staff. I do not want the words deleted, however.

Mr. LEE : What I would like—and it happens when a Government Auditor does the work—is that a thorough examination should be made in the auditing of the accounts, and not what is shown in this or that book accepted. It will be found in the Auditor's reports that on several occasions complaints are made about certain things which can be rectified. I feel that this will be calling for a large amount of money to be expended not only in Georgetown but all over the Colony, as the accounts will be

kept in the several districts. If the work is done by the Government Auditor it would be satisfactory, but if Government employs an auditor he might go down there, look over the accounts and not give the true aspect of the situation. That is why I would support the amendment by the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob). Even if it costs the Colony a few dollars more we would be quite satisfied when the work is done by a Government Officer. With respect to the accounts of the Trades Unions being audited by Government, I do not believe that the feeling of the Trades Union Council or of the Trades Unions themselves is that Government should do the auditing. That is what I would like to call Government's attention to.

The CHAIRMAN : Then leave the clause as it is. The intention of Government is that as far as possible this audit will be done by the Colonial Auditor. It is a question of public funds, but as hon. Members know this audit must be a very exhaustive one. I agree that if the necessity arises Government would increase the staff of the Audit Department.

Mr. JACOB : I am going to ask that this clause be deferred, and I am going to appeal to the hon. the Colonial Secretary to reconsider this matter. I had a personal interview with him—I am sorry I have to bring it up—and he approved of the Trades Unions' accounts being audited by Government. This clause has a far greater principle involved in it. These are Colony funds—

The CHAIRMAN : The clause will stand down.

Clause 47 deferred.

*Clause 64—Slum Clearance Committee to exercise powers of Central Authority.*

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I move the insertion of the word "and" after the words "Central Authority" in the first line.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 64 passed as amended.

*Clause 66—Closing Orders and dwelling-houses unfit for human habitation.*

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I desire to call attention to the effect of the overriding authority. The closing order is the same thing as is provided for in our Ordinance.

*Clause 67—Power to declare an area to be a special slum clearance area.*

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I move (1) the insertion of the word "the" before the word "health" in the sixth line of sub-clause (1) and (2), the deletion of the letter "e" at the end of the word "thereof" in the second line of sub-clause (3).

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 67 passed as amended.

*Clause 75—Expenditure by Committee to be defrayed by the Central Authority.*

Mr. JACOB : If certain clauses are amended, particularly the one that has been deferred, it may be necessary to have a consequential amendment to this clause.

The CHAIRMAN : We had better defer that too.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Yes; it relates to the other clause which has been deferred.

Clause 75 deferred.

Council resumed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : That being all the business, I adjourn Council to 2 p.m. on Thursday, 31st October.