

SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Thursday, 26th May, 1960

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT :

Speaker, His Honour Sir Donald Jackson

Chief Secretary, Hon. D. M. Hedges

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

Financial Secretary, 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. R. B. Gajraj	—Nominated Member
„ 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 :

Mr. S. M. Saffee—Member for Western Berbice — on leave.

The Clerk read prayers.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 25th May, 1960, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ORAL ASKING AND ANSWERING OF QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S VISIT TO CUBA

Mr. Bowman: I beg to ask the hon. Minister of Labour, Health and Housing Question No. 9 standing in my name on the Order Paper: Will the Honourable Minister of Labour, Health and Housing say whether her recent visit to Cuba had the full approval of His Excellency the Governor and the Executive Council, and whether the expenses incurred were met from public funds? If so, how much was the amount?

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): His Excellency was informed of my intended visits to Trinidad, Cuba and Jamaica, and leave of absence was granted. The expenses incurred in respect of the visit to Cuba were not met from public funds.

Mr. Bowman: I would like to ask a supplementary question. I do not think the answer to my question is satisfactory. Would the Minister agree that P.P.P. Ministers have done more travelling in and out of this Colony—

Mr. Speaker: That is not a supplementary question.

Mr. Bowman: It is.

Mr. Speaker: I say it is not. The main question is whether the visit to Cuba had the full approval of the Governor and the Executive Council, and the answer is "Yes". Then you ask whether the expenses incurred were met from public funds; if so, how much? The answer to that is "No." "The expenses incurred in respect of the visit to Cuba were not met from public funds."

A supplementary question must relate to the principal question and not to something else.

Mr. Bowman: My question relates to travels abroad.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it will not be allowed. It is not a supplementary question and it cannot be allowed. It is an entirely different question. There is nothing to prevent you from moving a Motion to be debated on something else. That is the ruling of the Chair; the only ruling.

Mr. Bowman: I am just giving the text of the question.

Mr. Speaker: What is the supplementary question? I will tell you whether it is in order.

Mr. Bowman: The question is whether the Governor approved.

Mr. Speaker: I understood the answer to be "Yes". Am I not correct?

Mrs. Jagan: My answer is that His Excellency was informed of my intended visit and leave of absence was granted.

Mr. Bowman: The Minister says the Governor was informed; informed is not approval.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter of argument. If you like you can ask whether the visit was approved.

Mr. Bowman: That is my question—whether the Governor and the Executive Council approved.

Mrs. Jagan: No Minister, as I understand it, has to get approval, but merely leave of absence, and my leave was approved on the information given of my destination.

Mr. Bowman: Another supplementary question. Was that visit in the interest of this country, and did the

people ask the Minister to go to Cuba to represent them?

Mr. Speaker: think that is a separate question.

Mr. Bowman: It is a supplementary question, Sir. It concerns the trip to Cuba. If it is not accepted now I will bring it again.

Mr. Speaker: You are at liberty to do that. You can table it this afternoon. It is not a supplementary question.

ORDER OF THE DAY

RICE MARKETING (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan): I beg to move the Second Reading of the Bill intituled:

“An Ordinance further to amend the Rice Marketing Ordinance and to make a minor consequential amendment to the British Guiana Rice Producers Association Ordinance.”

The main purpose of this Bill is to give greater representation to the rice farmers of this country on the Rice Marketing Board. A great deal of controversy has raged in the past concerning the activities of the Rice Marketing Board. In fact, on today's Order Paper we see Item 11—a Motion by the hon. Member for Georgetown South requesting this Council to recommend to Government the introduction of legislation to provide for the Rice Marketing Board to be converted into a co-operative organization of rice producers of this Colony. There has been a great deal of controversy as to the activities and, indeed, the composition of the Rice Marketing Board, and from time to time representations have been made to Government either to make the Board a co-operative marketing organization or to democratize it to such an extent that the rice farmers would have preponderance in the conduct of its activities.

I hope it will be possible for hon. Members to keep in mind the remarks made by Members of the Government on this Bill in view of the Motion by the hon. Member for Georgetown South—Item No. 11 on today's Order Paper—because the two measures aim at democratizing the organization or making it a co-operative marketing organization.

First of all, as hon. Members should know, the Board at the moment comprises eight members who are nominated by the Governor and eight members who are nominated by the Governor on the recommendation of the Rice Producers Association. In addition to these, there is the Chairman, who is also appointed by His Excellency the Governor.

In the past farmers have claimed that either the Board should become a co-operative marketing organization or that farmers should have a larger representation on the Board itself. I recall putting this matter to Mr. Gordon, an expert who came here, who was later Head of the Co-operative Department and who some time ago left for a higher post in Jamaica. Both Mr. Gordon and an individual who is also supposed to be an expert in co-operatives advised that for an organization such as this it would be far better to add more Farmers' representatives, taking all the circumstances into consideration. By placing the Board in the hands of a majority of people who belong to a farmers organization such as the Rice Producers Association this purpose would be achieved. In other words, the people who produced the rice would have a big say in the marketing of it.

What is the fundamental difference between a co-operative set up and what is happening at the moment? One of the principal objectives of a co-operative organization is that the members should control the organization by their own delegation of authority. Another cardinal principle of a co-operative organization is that whatever profits are made should be returned to the members of that organization. In other

[DR. JAGAN]

words, it should not be given to anyone as a dividend or as a profit, as in the case of private corporations, in which people have invested money. Many co-operative organizations take their profits and put it back to reserves. In other cases money is spent on new buildings, new machinery and any further balance of profit would sometimes go to the members in the form of a bonus on the basis of their patronage if it is, say, a consumer store. If it is a producers or marketing co-operative this "dividend" is given according to what is contributed.

For instance, if one man sends in 100 bags of rice and another individual sends in 1,000 bags of rice to the Board, the profits made by the Board and the "dividends" shared would be in accordance with the amount of rice supplied. That is the way a true co-operative operates. This is not being done by the Rice Marketing Board at the moment. The individual who sends rice to the Board is paid for his rice. He is not given a "dividend" in the same year if the Board makes a profit; however, the profit, if it is made, is added to the pool of the organization, and as such it is passed on in the following year, when it determines what the purchase price of his rice is going to be. If there is a drop in the export price, as happened in 1956, the Board can maintain the old price paid to the producer through profits held in reserve.

So that one can say that the Board, as at present constituted, does not put profits into the pockets of any private individual or in the pockets of any shareholders who have invested money—there are no shareholders. Therefore, the only difference between the Board and a Co-operative as far as profit-sharing is concerned, is that the Board does not give out profits in the same year but they are held back for later "distribution". This is reflected in the price paid for rice in subsequent years.

While it is true that the Board passes on its profits made in one year

to the rice producer in subsequent years, there is nevertheless grave dissatisfaction over the way the Board is operated and managed, and this, I would submit, is due to the fact that it is felt that the Board is not democratically constituted. There is not enough producer representation on the Board and indeed in a certain period members of the Rice Producers Association were not directly elected by the people but nominated members were serving and no elections were held. Then there is the manner of appointment of members of the Board, to which I referred earlier.

It is felt by this Government that if the Board were democratically constituted other matters would fall into their proper places. This is what is sought in this Bill.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Georgetown South is not here. Anyway, let me continue. Some years ago when the People's Progressive Party was in the Government it agitated that the Rice Marketing Board should be made into a co-operative organization. It was not done because there was no hope of changing the composition of the Rice Marketing Board in order to make it a body chosen directly by the producers in majority control. We saw no hope although promises were made when this Board was constituted. We found that nothing was done and, so far as we were concerned, we did not see that there would have been any changes in the Rice Marketing Board.

Since we are now in a position to introduce legislation the position has changed and, therefore, it is no longer necessary, as far as we are concerned, to change the Board into what may be termed a full-fledged co-operative organization. If the Board or the management wants to operate as a co-operative it can give dividends in the same year as the other co-operatives. There is nothing to prevent it from doing so. At the end of each year, by balancing its books, it can decide to give, as a co-operative, dividends to those who have sent rice to the

Rice Marketing Board. By an administrative decision the Board can function as a co-operative. The only difference will be that in a true co-operative all of the members on the Board would be elected by the Rice Producers of the country.

Hon. Members will recall that when the Rice Producers (Amendment) Bill was discussed not so long ago, Members opposite pointed out that it was necessary to have producer members who were manufacturers in this organization; that the landlords were the people to rule in the rice industry and so on. Members will notice that in this new legislation provision is made, as I had promised when the other Bill was being debated, not only for rice producers, but for rice millers and people who have experience in the industry. That is the only difference between what is before us now and what can be regarded as a true co-operative. I have already said that in a true co-operative the farmers would elect all of their representatives to the Board; they will manage it, and when the present statutory powers are placed in their hands they could give dividends to members the same year rather than holding them over for a subsequent year.

I think I have said enough on the general principle of the Bill, and I do not think there is any other point in dispute as far as the principle of the Bill is concerned. I will now deal with some of the points in the various Clauses.

Clause 2 seeks to place in the hands of the Minister powers which were formerly held by the Governor. The Minister of Trade and Industry will be the person responsible for the affairs of the Rice Marketing Board.

Incidentally, in Clause 12 you will see a minor amendment to the Rice Producers Association which is also proposed. In that Ordinance provision is made for the Minister in charge of agriculture to make recommendations to the Governor for appointments to the Board. In other words, when members are selec-

ted for the Rice Producers Council their names are submitted to the person in charge of agriculture. In order to make it a tidy operation, it is felt that one Minister should be responsible. That is why a consequential amendment to the Rice Producers Association Ordinance is proposed. The Minister of Trade and Industry will now be substituted for the Minister in charge of agriculture.

Clause 3 seeks a change in the composition of the Board. At present the composition of the Board is: eight producer members recommended by the Rice Producers Council; eight nominated by the Governor who has the power to appoint a chairman. The new proposal will be as follows: The Minister shall appoint two officers in the public service. The Bill originally provided for twelve rice producers. I assume that hon. Members have seen the proposed amendments to this Clause which have been circulated. It is now proposed to substitute in Clause 3, line 8, the word "person" for the words "rice producers" between the words "twelve" and "appointed". The reason for this is that in Clause 3 (3) (iii) it is stated "one rice producer nominated by the British Guiana Rice Development Company, Limited;". Instead of one rice producer we are proposing one person, because in the past the Manager of the Rice Development Company represented the Company on the Rice Development Board. In addition to that there will be nine rice producers elected by the Rice Producers Council who are manufacturers; one member appointed by the Rice Development Company, and two persons who have commercial experience so that the Board will have the benefit of their commercial knowledge.

Slight consequential amendments will have to be made to other Clauses. One Clause deals with the removal of padi, and others deal with deductions for impurities such as straw, mud and foreign matter found in rice. We find that at the moment people are removing rice from mills without the permission of the Board, and that is contrary to the law.

[DR. JAGAN]

On rare occasions when there is a shortage of rice in the country, for one reason or another, we find that people move rice from one place to another and sell it without the Board's permission. Under the law the only persons entitled to remove rice are those who are shipping it to the Board, or taking it home for consumption. A miller or farmer can take home a reasonable quantity of rice for his family. It is known that several people are moving rice contrary to law. However, the law states that a man must be caught more or less moving the rice without proper permission, and that is a very difficult task for the Board to handle. The Supervisors employed by the Board are not always in a position to catch people red-handed, so provision has been made to amend the Ordinance to enable such offenders to be prosecuted in future.

There is another Clause dealing with the removal of padi. We find that on many occasions farmers lodge padi in mills for the purpose of milling, and sometimes it is either milled, sold, or sent somewhere else without their permission. The farmers are therefore made to suffer great losses from time to time. Provision has now been made whereby permission to remove padi must be granted by the Manager, the Assistant Manager, the Secretary, or persons authorized in writing by the Board.

Clause 9 deals with impurities. At the moment deductions are made for rice when it is infected with pests, fungi or possesses an objectionable odour. The Board has made representations that it should be permitted to make deductions for rice which contains impurities such as straw and mud. Clause 9 permits the Board to do so.

In Clause 10 there is a minor amendment authorizing the Minister to approve the Board's recommendation to suspend the purchasing of rice. You will see, therefore, that provision has been made in this Bill to democratize the Rice

Marketing Board by giving farmers greater representation on the Board, to ensure that millers will be represented, that business men with commercial experience will sit and help to guide some of the farmers, if such guidance is necessary, and so on. I commend this Bill to Members of this Council, and I beg to move that the Bill be read a Second time.

The Minister of Community Development and Education (Mr. Rai): I beg to second the Motion.

Mr. Bowman: I am wondering whether the real motivating reasons for the introduction of this Bill are those which the Minister has stated in this Council. A few weeks ago the Minister told us that he wanted to give the rice producers of this Colony absolute control of their own affairs. Why then does he want to substitute the word "persons" for the words "rice producers" in Clause 3 of the Bill? The reason is this: the Minister anticipated what was likely to take place, and something took place today with respect to the Council of the Rice Producers Association. The Minister correctly anticipated what actually occurred today, and as a result he is trying to negate what has happened by changing the words "rice producers" to "persons". It means that any person could be nominated to the Rice Marketing Board by the Minister, and not nominated by the Council of the Rice Producers' Association. If the results of today's elections to the Council of the Rice Producers' Association were favourable to the Minister this proposed Amendment would not have been brought, but he saw the straw in the wind and anticipated the results of the election. I am opposed to this Amendment. The rice producers themselves are going to decide whether they want persons other than rice producers to sit on the Rice Marketing Board.

Mr. Davis: I see in this Bill a lot of cause for major concern. I heard the hon. Minister, when introducing the Bill, make use of the words "democratic

representation". If the new constitution of the Rice Marketing Board is approved, as suggested in this Bill, I think it would reduce to nothingness the term "democratic representation", because all I see being done democratically, perhaps, is the creation of a powerful autocracy in the sense that of the 16 persons to be appointed to the Board nine are to be "rice farmers." The irony of the situation is this—perhaps I am allowing my ego to get away with me, but some years ago when I had the privilege of sitting as a member of the Rice Producers' Association I initiated a Motion, the effect of which was that rice producers would gradually assume more responsibility and control in the Rice Marketing Board. I did so then in good faith, and I still believe that it is the correct attitude to adopt towards the rice industry, but when I see in this Bill that of the 16 members of the Board nine are to be in the category of what are known as "rice farmers" I feel that I must sound a strong note of caution. I urge that perhaps the Minister of Trade and Industry is being unduly influenced in the sense of being abundantly grateful to the rice farmers who put him into power, first in the Rice Producers' Association and eventually into the Government, and this effort to appease them is with the object of remaining there for a long time.

In thinking this matter over I wondered whether the Minister has not allowed his efforts at "freedom fighting" to warp his judgment, his sense of justice and fairplay towards an industry which is contributed to by more than one section of people. I would like to say again that I think it could be that he is pandering to the numerical strength of the rice farmers, and doing so at the expense of the other categories of rice producers. I would suggest that such an attitude should be avoided at all costs, because I see in it a grave threat to the well being of the rice industry. If the democratic system is to mean anything in the rice industry, would it not be fair that not only numbers be considered but also the amount of stake, the amount of finan-

cial as well as other interests held by all sections of the industry, and that efforts be made to hold the scale of justice evenly and with equal poise?

Members of the present Government among others—and I am one of them—have condemned very strongly the attitude of another industry in which absentee proprietorship is firmly entrenched, but is this not an industry in which the people who have a great interest—I refer specifically now to the landlords, the rice millers or manufacturers—have exceedingly limited representation? Let me at once remind hon. Members that whilst I am a member of the Rice Millers' Association, many Members on the other side of the Table know that I have been recently liquidated, and that I am no longer a member of the Executive. But as a member of the Association I speak objectively on this very important issue.

Let me for a moment delve into the history of the rice industry in this country. I rather suspect that some of my friends on the other side have been too busy recently with politics and their other commitments to keep themselves *au fait* with some of the things that have happened in the past. The rice industry was originally started by East Indians who came to this country principally as indentured immigrants, and who found it necessary to produce rice which was their staple diet in their homeland. They got small plots of land and started what is today our rice industry, and let me pay tribute to those people who, with practically their bare hands and a cutlass, got down to the job of producing rice for their own consumption. After their period of indentured labour they acquired more land, and after they had satisfied their home requirements they introduced it to people of African descent who found in rice a very desirable and cheap staple diet. Thus the project got underway, and that is how our rice industry started. They first satisfied the local trade, and Africans eventually joined these pioneers and also got on with the job. After the

[MR. DAVIS]

markets were fully satisfied locally, then they commenced to export some of our rice to Trinidad, where East Indians were also settled, in sizable numbers, but where the soil was not considered quite suitable for growing rice. That began our first adventure into the field of exporting rice, and another reason why the people of Trinidad did not grow their own rice themselves was because they had other industries, particularly oil, where people found other forms of employment, and therefore this activity eventually spread in British Guiana.

World War I came along, and history tells us that some wonderful and fantastic prices were paid for rice, and that people started to work with more gusto at this industry. They produced even more rice for Trinidad, and exported to the other West Indian islands. Then the Eastern Asiatic producers got into stride and started to swamp and affect the West Indian market, and the prices slumped considerably. This also introduced highly competitive conditions, and brought into the picture certain Water Street merchants who were known as middlemen. This had a damnable effect on the industry.

Who bore the brunt of those hard days? Admittedly all categories of rice producers. At one time the price of padi went down to 60c. per bag. The records are there for all to delve into and satisfy themselves. It is the millers, the manufacturers and the landlords, the producers who had to stand up to those awful moments in the industry. They did so not only in their own interest, but because the opportunities for earning a livelihood in other directions were, even in those days, very limited.

I have heard the Government criticizing the West Indian markets for not remembering those days, especially those of World Wars I and II, when the British Guiana rice industry came to their rescue and fed them abundantly. Would it not

be also true that Government is forgetting that the landlords and millers stood up and held the fort in those woeful and chaotic days? It would be a tragedy, worse than witchcraft, if they are not remembered and honoured and treated in a manner which, I submit, should pertain and apply to millers and landlords.

I want to say again, I am not speaking with a mandate from the rice millers. I say again that I am no longer a member of the executive of a rice millers organization. I merely speak from the conviction that the industry needs the help and support and experience that the rice millers and landlords have always been able to offer to the industry, which contributed to the thriving state the industry is in today.

Then came World War II. The Government, during 1946, under the Defence Regulations, initiated what is known as the Rice Marketing Board. It was a wholly nominated Board, and a leading figure in it was Sir Frank McDavid. Let us pay tribute to him for the work he did. He made his contribution. Some of us feel that he made mistakes; admittedly he may have, but one of the blessed things he did was to constitute and create the Rice Marketing Board, with its commodious building on Water Street which the industry regards with pride and satisfaction.

The Rice Marketing Board as a single selling organization has its faults and I hope they will correct them. The Government is trying to do this, and I would urge them not to destroy entirely, something which has stood the test of the passing years.

The Minister of Natural Resources spoke of the advantages of making the Board into a co-operative organization. He is not the first to think along those lines. I have myself had rosy hopes in this direction, and it may be that one day it will happen. Some of the best people in co-operative have thought about it, including an Adviser who came down here on the sponsorship of the British

Government. A Jamaican, Mr. Gordon, and others spoke to me about it, and they left me completely convinced that a co-operative organization is not something that is created from the top, but is usually started small, and as members developed 'know-how' the resources and scope grew and made it something bigger. Anyway, I still hope that it would be done at some date in the future. You cannot have a co-operative by classifying a body of men or an organization as such. It is not and cannot be done in that manner.

To continue: all through successive Boards there have been rice producers, that is to say a fair mixture of landlords and millers and rice farmers. Let us examine the number that was elected in 1946.

Mr. Speaker: Three minutes to go.

Mr. Davis: I thank you, Sir. I may have to ask you for some indulgence. As I see it, in 1946 there were:

Hon. Peer Bacchus
 „ C. A. McDoom
 Mr. A. Raymon
 „ Deeroop Mahraj
 „ Ramjohn
 „ S. Harecourt
 „ M. H. Chan
 „ Hurril.

In 1949:

Hon. C. A. McDoom
 Mr. Deeroop Mahraj
 „ R. E. Davis
 „ R. Sharma
 „ T. P. Jaundoo
 „ Badrinauth Maraj
 „ Hurril.

That, Sir, was the only time, and I am sorry to say it, that there was a preponderance of millers and landlords, because it evidently created a certain amount of misunderstanding and misgiving. Let me suggest to the hon. Minister that if it was wrong then it will equally be wrong now.

In 1951:

Mr. T. P. Jaundoo
 „ Gajraj
 „ Ramjohn
 „ Persram
 „ Thingoor
 „ Harry Sukhu
 „ Lackhan
 „ R. Sharma.

You had four millers and the rest were rice producers. I merely referred to that to show what took place in those days. You are now suggesting that the Board should be comprised of nine members who are rice producers, two who are members of the Rice Mills Association, one person from the Rice Development Company, and two other persons to be elected or nominated by the Rice Producers Association, an organization which is predominantly made up of rice farmers.

We are now told that of the sixteen people suggested, two are to be public officers, nine rice farmers, plus the Government having more than an average share in running the Rice Development Company. That is what is likely to take place in a very short period. Government may have on the Board persons who may dominate the members of the Rice Producers Association.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr. Tello: I beg to move that the hon. Member be permitted to continue his speech for half an hour.

Mr. Fredericks: I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker and hon. Members, I thank you for your indulgence. As I was saying when I was interrupted by you, Sir—

Mr. Speaker: I did not interrupt you; I stopped you in accordance with the Standing Orders of this Council.

Mr. Davis: I apologize, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: You must not make that mistake again. The Standing Orders are clear, and they are known to you.

Mr. Davis: It would appear to me from this set-up, that the Rice Marketing Board will be predominantly dominated by the rice farmers and the people selected or suggested by them. I think it is unfair to the industry that the proportion should be left in this ratio. I pose the question, who are the rice producers? To produce a bag of padi it takes three categories of people, sometimes operating together, and sometimes separately. There is the landlord who owns the land, the farmer, a very necessary element, and the manufacturer. If the operations of these people do not mesh there will be chaos and the industry will be ruined.

Why is it so important that the scales of justice should be held evenly among rice producers? Let me give hon. Members an instance. The price of rice is fixed by the Board, and the grades are fixed. In the past it was found that two bags of padi made one bag of rice. The price of rice was fixed at a certain figure on that basis. It was accepted that the average price of rice would be based on No. 1 rice. Let us say that the price of a bag of No. 1 rice was \$17 to \$20. Let us fix it for the purpose of my argument at a figure of \$17. The Board work out how much it would take a manufacturer to manufacture and process the rice, taking into account the cost of transport, twine, and so on. They then add to the processing cost a few cents as the profit for the miller. The more efficient millers will get a little more than the less efficient millers. The balance remaining is then divided between two bags of padi which go to rice farmers. That was the principle used in the past.

Today the Board will fix the price of rice. Let us imagine under the new set-up a Board that is predominantly dominated by rice farmers. It is easy to visualize what will happen to millers and landlords, because every half-cent

that is given to the miller will mean less to the rice farmer for his bag of padi. I should like to give a concrete illustration as to what can happen to the rice miller and landlord under the new composition of the Rice Marketing Board. In the past the balance was held more evenly. There was one year when the preponderance was on the millers' side, but after that we had four millers or landlords and four rice farmers on the Board. We also had two nominated members on the Board, who were referred to as representing the consumer section as distinct from the rice producers section, holding the scales evenly and giving the farmer as well as the miller what they thought was their due. Can we say that this Rice Marketing Board, set up along the lines as tabled here, will do the same thing? I say no; it is unlikely that that will happen. This is one of the strongest reasons why the hon. Minister should reconsider this matter.

The hon. Minister of Trade and Industry talked about the profits that will be passed on to the farmers. The farmers cannot make profits fast enough to deal with things like overdrafts and so on. Let me say at once that I am proud of the building we have in Water Street, and I am proud that, as a rice producer, I have made my contribution. I know that we have an organization that is worthy of producers of rice, but I have not seen the profits to which the hon. Minister speaks so glibly that will flow to the rice producers. These people have to meet overdrafts and other debts, and these things will take care of most of the profits. That is as it should be. At the moment there are members of the Board sitting around this Table. Perhaps if they will take a look at a very recent Balance Sheet of the Board they will see that what I am saying is correct.

Enough has been said about the constitution of the Rice Marketing Board. I do not desire to tire Members, but let us direct our attention to page 2 of the Bill, Clause 3 (3) (b) in which it is proposed to substitute the

words "one year" for the words "two years" in Section 4 (4) of the Principal Ordinance. At present membership of the Rice Marketing Board is for a period of two years while elections to the Council of the Rice Producers' Association are held annually. The result of that is that occasionally a person who lost his seat on the Council of the Rice Producers' Association after serving one year, was still a member of the Rice Marketing Board. I believe that this proposed Amendment is intended to correct that situation, but I suggest to Members that one year is too short a period for members of the Board, possibly a new Board, to understand the workings of the Board. It appears to me that the correction should be the other way round, that is, that elections to the Council of the Rice Producers' Association should be held every two years to coincide with nominations to the Rice Marketing Board which, in my view, should take place every two years and not annually. I think if Members would consider that aspect of the matter they would agree that the amendment should be made along the lines I have suggested, rather than as proposed in the Bill.

I am a little worried by the proposal in Clause 7 of the Bill to amend Section 23 of the Principal Ordinance by the insertion after the word "factory" in subsection (3) of the words "or is found in possession of". The whole object of the control of rice is that in the event of any shortage of supply, artificial or otherwise, the merchants should not take advantage of the situation to the detriment of the consumer. Control was introduced in the days when rice was, generally speaking, in short supply.

We had the West Indies markets, and artificial shortages were sometimes created, but my point is that the introduction of such a harsh measure, particularly at this time when rice is in rather full supply, will create — I do not want to suggest a police state — an unnecessary hardship. Rice being

in full supply I consider that this provision in the Ordinance is outmoded, and I shall move the deletion of the proposed Amendment.

Clause 9 of the Bill proposes an amendment of Section 28 of the Principal Ordinance by the insertion after the word "odour" of the words "or to contain foreign matter or impurities of any description". I think I know what has been bothering the Rice Marketing Board. Sometimes very good rice which has been reaped by a combine is found to contain grass seeds or bits of straw, and it is very difficult for millers to remove those things from the rice as it is processed. I admit that it is quite wrong for the Board to have to pay for such impurities in the rice, but I suggest that the Amendment proposed in this Clause is too harsh a remedy. I would therefore ask Government to give the matter a second thought. It appears to be that a more realistic and sympathetic approach would be for the Board to have such rice passed through a blower, the cost of the operation to be debited against the person who sends the padi to the mill. In my view the remedy proposed in the Amendment is like taking a sledge hammer to kill a mosquito.

There is one other observation I would like to make. In other Ordinances reference is made to the "Member who has been charged with this portfolio", but I notice that there has been a change in this Bill in which reference is made to "the Minister". I do not suggest that there is any sinister reason for the change, but I would like to know the reason.

I do not propose to say much more. I trust Members will agree that, as I have always endeavoured, my contribution to this debate has been objective. Any criticisms I have made have been made in good faith and, in my view, entirely in the interest of an industry which is of very great importance to the economy of the country, and to me personally.

Mr. Gajraj: May I just say a few words. The Rice Marketing Board, of which we have heard so much this afternoon, is a creature of Statute. It was created by the Legislature, and such powers as it exercises are laid down in the Ordinance. It has been suggested, perhaps correctly, that in the exercise of some of those powers the bulk of those people who are known as the producers of rice may not, at some time or another, have been completely satisfied. I have been a member of that Board and Chairman of it only from August, 1956, and I took office at a time when there were in the air rumblings of dissatisfaction by farmers who felt that their point of view was not adequately expressed on the Rice Marketing Board because those who had been elected to the producer branch of the industry, the Rice Producers' Association did not have their full confidence.

Both the Rice Producers' Association and the Rice Marketing Board were created by Statute, and the argument that many people used at the time when there were those rumblings by rice producers, was that the organization was theirs, and if rice producers as members of it were dissatisfied with those who were running the affairs of the Association, they had a democratic right at the proper time to place in positions of leadership in that Association those in whom they had confidence. So early during my Chairmanship there were elections to the Rice Producers' Association, and we then experienced the first major change in the membership of the Rice Marketing Board.

Many people felt at the time that with an almost complete change among the producer-members of the Board the organization was going to be in trouble and that its usefulness to the country would perhaps cease after a while. Time has passed by and the organization known as the Rice Marketing Board is still in existence and is still doing its duty to the industry as the marketing end of that industry. It is true that at times we find points of view expressed by members of the Board which have to be care-

fully considered and related to what others consider to be in the best interests of the industry, but I say this, that the experiment of having people who are producers sitting in such positions of responsibility on the Board has proved to be a good one because there are some members of the Board who came there for the first time and did not have any experience whatever in making decisions affecting the Rice Marketing Board, which caters to a multi-million dollar industry.

They have learned, they have accepted their responsibility, and I think the industry as a whole has benefited.

My friend, the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, has done this Council a favour by speaking at length on the history of the industry, and he has very correctly paid tribute to the early pioneers who converted the swamps into rice fields. We must bear in mind those who worked hard to lay the foundation for the future, but we must also bear this in mind, that conditions in each stage of development must be related to that particular age or stage, and as we advance further we must make changes if we are to proceed along the path whereby what ever was originally intended might be achieved. I say "whatever was originally intended might be achieved" deliberately, because the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, did say that the idea of converting the marketing end of the industry into a co-operative set-up is not a new one.

To that view I subscribe completely, because I recall listening in this Council a few years ago to the reading of an extract from the *Hansard* in which a speech was made by the then Financial Secretary Mr. E. F. (now Sir) McDavid when he introduced the Rice Marketing Bill. In that speech he made it clear that it was the intention of the Government of the day at some future date that the Rice Marketing Board should be turned into a co-operative enterprise.

It is quite possible that the co-operation which the hon. Financial Secre-

tary of that day had in mind was different from what we understand co-operation to be today. It is quite possible that what was thought of was co-operation between the various segments of the industry and the consumers themselves. For we find that in the composition of the membership of the Board eight members are chosen from the producer section and there are eight other members. In the case of the producer section, my hon. Friend was quite right. In the terms of the Rice Producers' Association Ordinance rice producers embrace three categories of producers—landlord, miller, and the farmer who tills the soil himself.

The membership of the Rice Marketing Board comprised all three categories, perhaps in various percentages, and others who were not interested financially in the rice industry but had some experience in commerce generally and in marketing in particular; together with Government officials such as the Director of Agriculture—who is responsible for the production of rice—the Deputy Financial Secretary—sitting there because finance plays so large and important a part in the operations of the Board and it is useful to have him there—and others like the General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department—whose field, transport, is so necessary to the movement of crops—the Director of Land Settlement—sitting there not only because of his being the holder of that post but because of the advice he can give and the experience he has had in the affairs of the country. So we have had a good combination in the past and it has always been felt that the consumer interest must be considered alongside of the producer interest.

With that I agree, because as the consumer is compelled to buy the rice he is sold by the Rice Marketing Board, this question of the product he is called upon to eat and the price attached to it are factors which, from the consumer point of view, must be taken into account.

I see in the proposals before us all, that the various groups will have a say in the work of the Rice Marketing Board, but the weight has been shifted. Instead of there being two equal halves—producers and non-producers—we find that the proposals of the Government are in favour of producers. If we are to accept the statement made at the time when the Rice Marketing Bill was introduced into the Legislature, it seems to me right, because the people who are engaged in the industry must have as time goes on, more and more say as to what happens to the products of their labour. If we are to have a co-operative organization based from the ground, so to speak, around the people who produce the crops—as the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, said, and I agree with him—if we are to have something like that, then we must realize that it would have to be a voluntary effort on the part of such producers.

But my hon. Friend knows from his years of experience that at no time and at no stage whatever in the evolution of the rice industry has it ever been possible to bring the producers together on a voluntary basis whereby they would put all of their efforts together for the common good, and no doubt that is why the Legislature showered praise on Mr. McDavid (as he then was) for having been the architect of the Rice Marketing organization.

Let me say from my own knowledge and experience that there were certain important persons connected with the rice industry from the producer end as well as the processing end who realized that senseless cut-throat competition in the export field was causing the farmer himself to work for little or nothing. Even when rice was offered to the market in the West Indian islands at cut prices, this did not mean that the exporter himself was left out-of-pocket: he made sure that he made a profit, and ultimately it was the producer who felt the brunt of this senseless competition. I remember as a younger man hearing the late Mr. C. A. McDoom—who, when he died was

[MR. GAJRAJ]

a Nominated Member of the Legislative Council—speaking time and time again, almost interminably, on this.

There was need for an organization which he used to call “a single buyer and a single seller”, and I think that the persistence of that individual together with the support and assistance he commanded from many others planted the seed into the brains of Members of the Government of that day. Then they took the advantages offered at the time of World War II when this country I am told was called upon through its Government to feed the West Indian islands with their requirements of rice. First they created a Committee to issue grades for rice for export and then later they increased the powers of that Committee, bringing marketing within its scope.

That, I think, is putting the record straight. I feel that the decision to have a single buyer and a single seller has been a good and useful one for the industry. Those who have given of their time and labour to the Rice Marketing Board are to be thanked for the work they have put in. If the time has come when people, who have no direct stake in the industry, must give way to others who have a stake in it, then they should say that they have done their part as citizens charged with a public responsibility.

But let me make it clear at this stage, because there is a misconception in the minds of many people that members of the Rice Marketing Board are paid for their services. Neither the Chairman nor any member of the Rice Marketing Board is paid a halfpenny for his services. It is true that there is provision in the Ordinance that those who live outside the city limits be paid travelling and subsistence allowances. When this measure is passed it is quite possible that some people will find themselves no longer on the Rice Marketing Board, but I want it to be known that they gave their time, energy, knowledge

and ability gratis as a public contribution to the advancement and prosperity of this important industry in British Guiana.

I have said here before, when discussing another matter in which rice was mentioned, that it was a right move for the people directly connected with the industry to be given every opportunity to gain experience, develop more knowledge and wisdom in this branch of the industry's activities known as the marketing side. I think that the Government in its proposals has recognized the fact that in a matter like this, no matter how desirable it is to place ultimate and full control in the hands of the people who produce an article, it must be done by stages in order to give them an opportunity of learning and gaining experience as time goes by.

The proposal to have two public officers on this Board is a good one. I do not know who these officers will be, but I hope—I throw this out as a suggestion—that one of them would be and should be the Director of Agriculture. I say this, not merely because of his post of Director of Agriculture, but we are very fortunate in having as incumbent to that office an individual who is a Guianese. He is a young man, comparatively speaking, and, like all Guianese should be, he is interested in this country and has the prosperity and progress of its people very much at heart. When we have such officials holding high positions and having such loyalty, they give us the support we need to enable us to move forward as a people to greater heights as the years go by.

I should still like to see some official from the Financial Secretary's Office as the other Government official on the Board. Although my hon. Friend has spoken of the overdrafts and the amount of interest that have to be paid on such overdrafts, it must be recognized that when the Rice Marketing Board was started it was understood that it would have to function on borrowed money.

In order to be able to pay the rice producer cash for his rice, the Board has had to get the backing of the Commercial Banks to provide it with funds to pay for rice until such time as the rice was sold.

As long as we have to help the farmer, as we have to do very often in order to keep him away from the clutches of money-lenders, we must let him get the returns for his crop as quickly as possible. So long as we are forced to do that, we will always have a sizable overdraft at both Banks on which interest will have to be paid. Of course the cost of such operations is a legitimate expenditure of the Board. If it were able to build up enough cash resources to obviate having to pay interest charges on loans at the Commercial Banks, then the industry would see, in the returns of the Rice Marketing Board, more profits accruing to everybody. When fixing the price for the coming year, the Board takes into account the surplus existing on the previous year's operation.

I would like to assure hon. Members that the Rice Marketing Board as an organization is endeavouring to do its duty to the industry and to the country. I would like to pay tribute, at this stage, to its senior officers who have spent many years in the marketing side of the industry, have been loyal to the industry, and have made their personal contributions outside of the scope, let us say, of their jobs. As Chairman of the Board, I want to pay tribute to them in the same way as tribute has been paid to the earlier producers of rice.

I must make it very clear that no matter how much wisdom, knowledge and ability members of the Board may have, such knowledge or ability is used for the purpose of making decisions on policy. When policy has been decided upon, it is the officers and employees of the Board who have to put it into effect. In order that the policy will prove successful we must have the full co-operation of all the employees of the Board.

I say that because I want hon. Members to appreciate that in the same way as permanent civil servants in a Government have to carry on the functions of Government irrespective of which Party is in power, similarly the officials and employees of the organization will remain the backbone of the organization even though members of the Board of Directors may change. It is on these officials and employees that the work of the Board must rest to a great extent. The policy will be decided upon by the Board, and that is as it should be.

We may find, of course, that from time to time policies may be changed or slightly altered, but that should be done in accordance with the circumstances of the day. If we are going to progress, then we cannot stand still. What was good for us twenty-five years ago may not be good for us today. We must recognize the change of times and the need to change, if we are going to find the progress that we need for the industry and our country.

Much has been said by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, about the contributions that the landlords and millers have made to the industry. I join with him in paying tribute to them. They have done their bit, but he must appreciate this: in the modern context the landlord is not responsible for the creation of an industry, if all he is doing is to let his lands out to someone else. He has certain responsibilities to the tenant, and he does not have a direct responsibility to the employees in the industry. When their tenants were poor people and were unable to find money to help them plough the land or purchase seed to sow their land, if the landlords had loaned them the money to do that, in such circumstances they may be looked upon as having acted as bankers. But today, of course, with the new arrangement whereby the farmers have formed themselves into a Credit Union, they can borrow money from the Credit Corporation at lower rates of interest than they have paid in the past. The situation has changed, and today we find that—

Mr. Speaker: Three minutes more.

Mr. Gajraj: I thank you very much. The situation has changed, and I think that landlords who, of course, in some cases are also millers must place themselves in the processing category. They are producers, and they should hang their claim merely on that association with the industry. In the meantime, of course, the definition of rice producer still holds, because there is no amendment to change the definition.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Ajodha Singh: I beg to move that the hon. Member be allowed to continue for half an hour.

Mr. Davis: I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Gajraj: I was saying that landlords who are also millers should associate themselves with the industry in the category of producers. They are eligible for election to the Council of the Rice Producer's Association, and in accordance with the proposal before us, if they happen to gain such election they become also eligible for nomination to represent the producer section on the Rice Marketing Board. I know that it will be argued that because of the preponderance of numbers of the actual rice farmers in each District Association it may be difficult for a landlord or a miller to gain election to a District Association firstly, and to the Council of the Rice Producers' Association secondly, but it is not impossible unless, of course, it is found that the interest of the landlord or the producer are so diametrically opposed to the interests of the rice farmers.

Of course I have never been in the position of a landlord of rice lands, a miller or a farmer, therefore it may be said that my thoughts are not practical ones, but I claim that simply because I have not been in any one of those positions I

can think of the matter more objectively. I believe the time has come, if it did not exist before, when the persons who are defined as belonging to the three categories of rice producers should cease to be at war with each other and endeavour to get together in the common interest, and so satisfy each other that each is only out to make a reasonable return from the end product and create conditions on the land and in the mill whereby the country as a whole would benefit.

In the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance references are made to good husbandry and to the responsibilities of the landlord and the obligations of the tenant. When those responsibilities and obligations were set out in the Ordinance surely it must have been concluded by those who recommended such provisions in the Ordinance, that they were reasonable provisions, and that if they were carried out in the proper spirit they would make, first of all, for better relations between a landlord and his tenant, and, secondly, would give a tenant no excuse for saying that because of his landlord he had to lose a portion of his crop. It was hoped that there would be no bickerings and no differences of major importance between landlord and tenant.

Leaving that aspect for the time being I will pass on to the question of the processing of rice. It is very well known that the way in which padi is handled in the mills is not uniform throughout British Guiana. In some parts of the Colony the practice is for toll milling. That is to say the farmer grows his crop, reaps it and takes it to the mill, with the owner of which he has previously come to some arrangement for the payment of a fee for milling the rice. In some cases the miller provides all of the services; in other cases he provides only the machinery and fuel, the farmer and his family providing the labour. In other cases millers arrange to buy padi from the farmers, taking it to the factory or the padi bond and then making payment by instalments. There are still other mill-

ers—and among them I believe are the two Government mills—who buy padi at a price agreed upon, and within a relatively short period of time pay cash for the padi. There is no uniform system.

Where the padi is owned and has been paid for by the miller, it stands to reason that in his own interest he will endeavour to process it and produce rice of the best quality in order to gain the highest financial return when he sells the rice. That, I think, is in the interest of himself and in the interest of the industry and the country. There have been cases where millers who have agreed to buy padi have received it into their bonds, but have not been able to pay for it in full. They have to attempt to mill that padi as quickly as possible and send the rice to the Rice Marketing Board in order to get payment for it, and then after perhaps a considerable delay they dole out to the farmers from whom they bought the padi, small sums of money, because they cannot mill all the rice at one time. That system, fortunately, has come to an end because of the activities of the Rice Development Company who have come to the front in paying cash for padi. As a result, unless the private miller who wishes to buy padi is able to make arrangements to borrow money from the Bank or some other source, he is unable to compete at crop time with the Rice Development Company in getting all the padi he wishes to process.

But where the problem arose, and where we of the Rice Marketing Board are plagued from time to time with appeals from farmers, is in the private mills where toll milling is done. In spite of the Rice Marketing Board having imported glacial acetic acid, and having taught those millers to use it in order to prevent an unpleasant odour emanating from the rice when it is milled in wet weather, yet we find where toll milling is concerned the miller invariably does not make use of the opportunity he had to produce his client's rice free from odour, and rice coming to the Board sometimes looks as doubtful as ever and smelling to

high heaven. That is where the farmer has his grouse against the miller, because where the miller is responsible for the milling and is paid a sum of money agreed upon as being reasonable, in all fairness he is expected to take every precaution to produce a proper grade of rice.

In other cases and in other circumstances we find that the miller, desiring to use his machinery to produce the maximum number of bags of rice within a given period of time, causes pressure to be applied to grain which has been over-baked in the sun, and we get a sample of rice 50 per cent. or more broken. We get many variations of these things because the system which is in existence causes these things to happen. Because a miller wishes to gain as many times his dollar back he would run his mill without regard to the output, and the poor farmer suffers.

I make these observations from my knowledge and experience on the Rice Marketing Board, to indicate that there is room—a lot of room in some cases—for the processing end of the industry and the farming end of the industry to try to get together, to understand the problems each other has to face, and create conditions whereby there would be better satisfaction between them and a greater return for the farmer, for the miller and for the country.

If these things happen I cannot see myself any real reason why a landlord or a miller cannot have the confidence of the farmer members of his District Association and become elected in due course to office in those Associations, to the Council of the Rice Producers' Association and subsequently nominated to the Rice Marketing Board. But it will not happen if there continues to be a sharp division of interests between those three categories of rice producers. I would like those three categories to understand that there are rights as well as there are obligations. If they could come together a lot of the quarrels and disputes that take place, and a lot of the appeals on

[MR. GAJRAJ]

which the Board spends so much time will be dispelled. We would be able to spend more time planning for the increased productive side of the industry than we are able to spend today. I can assure hon. Members that members of the Board—either the Executive Committee or the full Board—spent a great deal of time in dealing with complaints which really result from bad human relations between the various sectors. That is all it amounts to. I would like to see us have more time to devote to the real objectives of the Rice Marketing Board, to spend more time planning beforehand the extra markets we will need for an increased production each year. But if we have to deal with these complaints we will not have enough time to do a real job.

I do not see any reason why the proposal in the Bill for a greater number of rice producers to sit on the Board should not work satisfactorily. We must give it a trial in the same way as how we have had producer-members with no previous experience on the Board coming in and giving valuable advice, making themselves *au fait* with marketing affairs and there was no difficulty at all.

To turn to the question of millers. Those who feel that their voice will not be sufficiently heard on the Rice Marketing Board body would note that it is laid down here that two rice producers who are manufacturers must find a place on the Board. So at least there will be two, but the possibility is that there may be more, because the term "rice producer" does not exclude any of the categories—they may be landlords, millers or farmers. And of course the third one, the nominee of the Rice Development Company, Ltd. cannot be helped because this was one of the terms of the Agreement between the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Development Co., whereby this Company would always have one nominee on the Board. I am therefore quite prepared to agree to this.

In the case of the two other persons, provided for in sub-paragraph (c), "two other persons nominated as being persons experienced in marketing by the rice producers...", here again the Government has shown wisdom in agreeing to two such people. Let me make it clear once again that these people are giving of their services free, *gratis* and for nothing to the industry, and while it may be said that it is an honour for a person to be nominated to serve such an important industry, it nevertheless must be appreciated that those who serve have got to be asked to serve.

There are going to be some people who have served for years on the Board and will feel the loss of companionship—put it that way—after all this time. It does not mean that they should cut themselves adrift from the industry because it is necessary for the Ministry to take on the ultimate responsibility. The Ministry can seek advice from these persons. Even members of the Board may unofficially seek their advice, and I do hope that such persons would not hesitate to give it, if and when it is sought.

We must not forget that while it is only the rural people that produce the rice, the rice industry, so important to the economy of this country, must not be considered a rural one. For those who toil in the field there are many others in the urban community who toil not in the field but occupy very important and very profitable positions in the Rice Marketing Board organization, so that all the people, producers, consumers, even perhaps the merchantmen, the bankers and everybody else, have got a stake in the industry and they must all join together in pulling their weight. We must prove to people inside this country and outside of it that British Guiana is a land which will progress and prosper, and that its people, when given the opportunity, will not fall short in any way for ingenuity, for wisdom and for native common sense.

Mr. Jackson: We have been privileged this afternoon to hear from those who are very closely connected with the

Rice Marketing Board; from the Minister first of all, from the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board (the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj), and from the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis. For many of us who are laymen, it was a good opportunity to listen to men who are closely attached to the industry, either in the capacity of a neutral person, as a member of the Board or as a rice miller.

Mr. Davis tried to give one aspect of the matter when dealing with the part of the Bill relating to foreign matter—a straw may be found in rice. Consumers, however, have found something else. There is scarcely a consumer of rice in this country, and perhaps outside, who has not had the unfortunate experience of having bitten a bit of gravel found in rice cooked, and one knows what an experience that is! How does that happen? We find a bit of stone has gone into our mouths. It has been said to me by one miller that the padi that goes into the factory carried with it earth, stone, etc. It has also been said by Mr. Gajraj that a bit of odour results from the padi being processed in bad weather, but this miller who spoke to me indicated that the farmer also soaks his padi before it is taken to the factory, and that this is also responsible for complaints about odour. This miller indicated that the difficulties do not lie mainly with the miller but are also attachable to the farmer, who used more than one method in getting about his work.

I am neither landlord, miller nor farmer, but I know that consumers are very much put out when they have to eat rice which more or less, according to Mr. Gajraj, stinks "to the high heavens". The unfortunate part of it is this, that the consumer has no voice in this industry. One was proud to hear Mr. Gajraj talking about the co-operative attitude which should exist between the farmer, the landlord, the miller and all the others who work in this industry at all levels because it is an industry of a national kind; yet, although we heard all this and even though we have come into this Council

to debate a Bill relating to the Rice Marketing Board, the slant has only been on the producer, the landlord, the farmer and the miller. There has been absolutely no consideration of the fact that the consumers also play a part—one which is very important—in the existence of this industry. If we are talking about an industry of a national kind, then such a slant is lopsided.

It would seem that what is wanted is a Board with two parts, one which would represent the producer and which would include the farmers, the landlord and the miller, and the other representing the consumer. In which case we would have the point of view of the consumers heard fully and strongly and we would have the point of view of the producers heard fully and strongly. The consumer is compelled to buy the rice on the market. Then there are several producers of rice in the Colony, but only one seller, the Rice Marketing Board. If the Rice Marketing Board wants to increase the price of rice tomorrow, it does so without any consideration of the interest of the consumer. All that happens is tomorrow one will see a schedule published in the newspapers to the effect that the price of rice has gone up, and the consumer will have to pay so much more per pound for it. The consumer has to pay whatever the Board charges, because there is no alternative.

Whenever a body is established in the manner in which the Rice Marketing Board has been established, it is to my mind an error of judgment when those who are responsible for its establishment consider only one arm, either the people in the industry or the establishment. If you have no consumer, you will have no rice producer. If the consumers of rice were to find another method of satisfying their needs, then there would be no rice industry in this Colony. No one wants to say that the rice industry must not be encouraged and supported to the hilt. It certainly adds to the economy of the country, but if we are going to continue finding ourselves living under circum-

[MR. JACKSON]

stances of this kind where the Government establishes a Board under the law of the Colony and the consumer has to pay what is demanded, then it is only fair that consumers should be placed on the Board to look after their interest. The consumers are the people responsible for the existence of the Board.

I recall that this point of view was expressed when we were debating the Bill which was introduced by the hon. Minister of Natural Resources some time ago, when it was found necessary to amend the Rice Producers' Association Ordinance. It is rather unfortunate that, in this case, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry did not consider it wise or necessary to make such amendments as would give consumers a place on the Rice Marketing Board. It is true that it could be argued that to do so would create some difficulty, as it may be necessary to show that consumers are organized. That is the reason why I have said that the Rice Marketing Board should now be converted from a one-arm organization to a two-arm organization. The difficulty which would be found now would not be any greater than when this Board was first established. I do not think the difficulties are insurmountable.

I wish the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry would consider deferring further consideration of this Bill in order to give consideration to this aspect I have mentioned. I am not accusing him of having any particular motive for amending the Bill. Whatever is his reason for bringing these amendments—I assume that he has logical grounds for doing so—I feel that the consumers should have a voice in the operations of the Board. If the hon. Minister agrees to defer consideration of this Bill, he may be able to amend the relevant Clause in order to provide for the appointment of consumers to serve on the Board.

Mr. Tello: After listening to the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, the

hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, and, of course, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, who must be numbered among the experts, I am still in a state of conflict. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Davis, speaks as one who is qualified to speak on this subject because of his experience, knowledge and intimate connection with the industry. He states clearly that there is cause for fear, because in the anxiety to democratize the function of the Rice Marketing Board, Government may destroy its efficiency and, possibly, not only the economy of the rice industry but the economy of the Colony as a whole.

On the other hand, the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, a business man who has experience in marketing, was drafted into the industry because of his special knowledge of marketing. He has assured this Council that everything has been done that could be done to make the industry a success, and that he would like to pay tribute to those who were doing this wonderful job of collective marketing for some years. He also said that he agrees with the policy of democratizing, but that it should be gradually done.

In taking this step by step policy of democratizing the Board, he admits that it will take a tremendous amount of experiment in order to bring strange people into an arena, who are unused to this special field of work, and make them run things properly. For some period, at least, the burden will have to be thrown on those who have the necessary knowledge. During this process of training the newcomers would learn to understand why major decisions must be taken, why certain decisions must be taken quickly, why other decisions must be postponed and so on. He has been in the commercial world for some time, and he admits that it is not an easy thing for one, who is not accustomed to taking decisions on matters involving thousands of dollars, to go into a multi-million dollar industry like the Rice Marketing Board and contribute something to its functions.

When the Amendment to the Rice Producers' Association Ordinance came before this Council, I felt that we were creating some difficulty in this special, technical matter of marketing, because I see that some of the primary machinery employed for the selection of representatives on the Rice Marketing Board are retained. That is, you have to be selected by the Rice Producers' Association Council, but because of the Amendment to the Rice Producers' Association Ordinance that does not exist any more. It has become a Rice Farmers' Association, and in this modern age one rarely sees people elected from outside. What is needed in this Rice Marketing Board is people sufficiently knowledgeable to deal with the marketing of the product that means so much to the economy of British Guiana.

Let us for a moment divorce our thoughts from the Rice industry, and forget that it is made up of many of the people who are registered in this country as electors. Let us think about it as something like the Sugar Producers' Association, and that the whole matter is a question of investments. The people gathered themselves together into an organization to produce rice and to market it as efficiently as possible in the interest of those who have invested their time, money and interest. What would have been the position in this structure? You would have appointed the people who are qualified to advise you on the most technical and efficient manner in producing rice and processing it; you would also have turned to the people who are best qualified to advise you on marketing the rice. You would have appointed such qualified people on the Board, and the industry would have been under the control of people who could take care of it from its infancy and through every stage. You would have had every sector fully represented and the people would have been qualified to watch their interest.

What is the position now as expressed in this Bill? You are going to democratize the Board; you are going to

let certain people control the industry; and you are going to pander to the people who are greater in numbers regardless of their knowledge or experience.

Sir, it is now five o'clock, and I would like to say a few more words on this Bill.

ADJOURNMENT AND PENDING BUSINESS

The Chief Secretary: I beg to move that we adjourn until two o'clock tomorrow. The meeting will have to be short as I understand that there will be a meeting of the Finance Committee.

The hon. Financial Secretary has suggested that we adjourn at 3.30 p.m. tomorrow so as to permit the Finance Committee to sit.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Chief Secretary has suggested that we meet tomorrow at 2 p.m., and adjourn at 3.30 p.m. I understand that there are urgent matters to be dealt with in the Finance Committee. It is a matter for the Council to decide.

Mr. Kendall: From what I have seen, there will be a heavy meeting of the Finance Committee tomorrow. Even if we adjourn at 3.30 p.m. tomorrow we will not be able to complete the Finance Committee business by 5 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: So far as I am concerned, I am willing to be here at any time, but if Members cannot agree we will have to adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Dr. Jagan: This Bill is of some urgency, and we would like to complete the discussion on it. If Members feel that they would like to speak on the Bill tomorrow and we would not get through in time, then we could take the Finance Committee business tomorrow and adjourn Council until Wednesday next week. I know that Wednesday is Member's Day.

Mr. Speaker: It is for Members to agree.

The Chief Secretary: I beg to move that Council adjourn until next Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker: That will be Members' Day. This question was raised some time ago, and Members complained that they could not have their Motions heard. They will have the right to deal with their matters first, unless there is an agreement.

The Chief Secretary: A week ago we gave Private Members an opportunity to discuss their business on three consecutive days.

Mr. Speaker: Do you wish the adjournment until next Wednesday?

The Chief Secretary: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Council is adjourned until Wednesday, 1st June, 1960, at 2 p.m.