

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

FRIDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1948.

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

PRESENT.

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Campbell Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

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

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. M. Duke (acting).

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

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

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E., (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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

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

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

The Hon. W. A. Phang (North Western District).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

PRINTING BREAKDOWN

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Before we proceed with to-day's business, I should like to explain that owing to a breakdown in the office cyclostyling machine, we have not been able to produce an Order Paper for to-day. However, yesterday's Order Paper will serve the purpose, subject to the deletion of item 1 of the Schedule, and I hope hon. Members will agree in the circumstances to makeshift with that. I am afraid the minutes of the previous meeting have not been circulated for the same reason.

ORDER OF THE DAY

PHARMACY AND POISONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1948.

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance with respect to the power to enter and search shops and stores."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that the Bill be read the first time, and the COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Bill read the first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill has been published since the 17th of January this year, and the only reason why it has not been read for the first time before to-day is that the Council was busily engaged in the debate on the Estimates. The Bill is of some importance and I move that the relevant Standing Rules and Orders be suspended to permit it to be read a second time and taken through all its remaining stages to-day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Subsection (1) of section 34 of the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, Chapter 103, provides for inspection and search of any shop or store belonging to any person registered under the Ordinance or employing any person so registered. That is to say, a person registered as a chemist and druggist, or employing any person so registered. There is no provision in the Ordinance for inspection or search of shops and stores which are not under the control of registered persons, and in which certain drugs and patent or proprietary medicines may be sold. The Board of Examiners for Chemists and Druggists has reported that country shops of all sorts are selling drugs and poisons in flagrant contravention of the law, and in order to meet that this Bill provides that the power to inspect and search, which is provided for by subsection (1) of section 34 of the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, shall be extended to all shops and stores, whether or not they are shops and stores belonging to persons registered under the Ordinance, or whether those shops and stores employ any persons who are registered as chemists and druggists. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without discussion.

The Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

TEACHERS PENSIONS (AMENDMENT
No. 2) BILL, 1948.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move the first reading of

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Teachers Pensions Ordinance to allow further time in special circumstances for the exercise of an option by certificated teachers for a gratuity with reduced pension."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill has been published since the 10th of January this year, and has been circulated to hon. Members nearly six weeks ago. I move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rules and Orders to permit of the Bill being read a second time and taken through its remaining stages to-day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill, as stated in the long title, is intended to provide that there should be further time in special circumstances for the exercise of an option by certificated teachers for a gratuity with a reduced pension. Section 3A of the Teachers Pensions Ordinance, as amended by the Legislative Council during last year, provides that this option to take a reduced pension with a gratuity must be exercised either within one month of the teacher's name being placed in the Teachers' Pensions Register, or within one month after a teacher becomes a certificated teacher, as the case may be, but circumstances have occurred, and will continue to occur, in which a teacher is not at all to blame for not exercising this option within one month. As a matter of fact a teacher may be employed in a school in a remote part of the Colony, like the North-West District, in which it may not be possible for him to exercise that option within the time specified in the law. The object of the Bill is to give the Governor power in such cases to extend the time specified in the section. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr WIGHT: Government has before it the question whether the entire pension scheme with regard to teachers should be revised, and whether they should be put on the same or a similar basis to that of ordinary civil servants. I take it that that matter does not interfere in any way with the present Bill. I would just like to have that on record so that there may not be any misunderstanding outside.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member can have the assurance he seeks, that this Bill has nothing to do with the question of teachers' pensions, which is subject to special consideration.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that clause 1 be amended by the substitution of the word "(Amendment)" for "(Amendment No. 2)".

Agreed to.

The Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the Bill be read a third time and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

PENSIONS (TEACHERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1948.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move the first reading of

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Pensions Ordinance, Chapter 204, with respect to the pensions of public officers, who have served as teachers in England and Wales."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill was published on the 24th of January this year, and I now beg to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rules and Orders to permit it to be read a second time and taken through all its remaining stages to-day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The object of this Bill is stated in clause 2 which reads:

2. "Section twenty of the Principal Ordinance is hereby amended by the addition thereto of the following sub-section—
4. "In relation to any public officer, who has been employed in service in respect of which a superannuation allowance or gratuity may be granted under Part II of the Teachers (Superannuation) Act, 1925, this section shall have effect as if such service were His Majesty's service within His Majesty's dominions."

A provision similar to this was enacted by Ordinance 21 of 1936, but the section which was amended by Ordinance 21 of 1936 related only to officers who were appointed to the public service on or before the 4th June, 1921. Section 20 of the Pensions Ordinance, Chapter 204, however relates to officers who were appointed to the public service after the 4th June, 1921, and the object of this Bill is to give such officers the same facilities and privileges afforded to officers appointed to the public service after the 4th June, 1921, by the Ordinance passed in 1936.

Clause 3 of the Bill provides that the Ordinance shall be deemed to have come into operation on the first day of January, 1933, that being the same date as that provided by Ordinance 21 of 1936 in relation to officers appointed on or before the 4th June, 1921. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: A matter has since arisen in connection with

this Bill. An officer with previous service as a teacher has had his pension computed under Chapter 204, and it is now being considered by Government and might involve an amendment of Chapter 204. I have spoken to the hon. the Attorney-General and he suggested that if that is the case it would be better to defer this Bill for a short time so as to include that amendment. Chapter 204 is almost a defunct Ordinance, and it is not desirable to have too many amending Ordinances. If the Council agrees I would suggest that we do not proceed with this Bill in Committee to-day.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest that we defer further consideration of the Bill while that amendment is being considered.

Bill deferred.

PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1948.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move the first reading of

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Pensions Ordinance, 1933, with respect to the computation of pensions, and by providing for payment of pensions to officers with pensionable service as teachers with respect to that service."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill was published on the 10th January, and I now move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rules and Orders to permit of its being taken through all its remaining stages to-day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The object of this Bill is to provide that if a teacher who is on the Teachers' Pension Register joins the Civil Service two-thirds of his pensionable service as a teacher may be taken into account in the computation of his pension as a member of the Civil Service. That, very simply, is the object of this Bill, and I

think it is a very good proposal. The hon. the Deputy President has already pointed out that consideration is now being given to the whole question of teachers' pensions, but I would suggest that there is no reason why consideration of this Bill should be deferred. As a matter of fact there is one teacher who is due to retire on the 25th April this year, and if consideration of the Bill is deferred that teacher would certainly suffer. I move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr. FARNUM: I observe from the Objects and Reasons that it is proposed to give a teacher who is transferred to the Inspectorate and becomes a civil servant, only two-thirds of his pensionable service as a teacher. That seems to me to be different from what obtains in the West Indian islands where a teacher who is transferred to the Civil Service carries the whole of his service as a teacher for the purpose of calculating his pension. It does seem strange that a teacher who is promoted to the Inspectorate should lose thereby, because as a teacher he can remain in service up to the age of 60 years, but when he is promoted to the Civil Service he can be retired at 55. It therefore appears to be a disadvantage when he is promoted to the Civil Service. In view of what has been stated by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. Wight) I would ask that this Bill should also be deferred until the matter is dealt with.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. Member is quite correct when he says that two-thirds of a teacher's service counts for pension when he is appointed a civil servant. That is a concession which the Council allowed some time ago. It should always be borne in mind that a teacher is not a public employee in the same sense as a civil servant. He is in a different service under different conditions; consequently when he is appointed to the Civil Service it is almost as if he came from a distinct service. In such a case he is not entitled to more than two-thirds of his service as a teacher.

There was an undertaking that this Bill would be brought before the Council. It is nothing new; it hinges on the concession of granting two-thirds of the ser-

vice as a teacher in the computation of pension under the Civil Service Pension Ordinance. I do hope, Sir, that the Bill would not be rejected at this stage. The previous Council insisted that this Bill should be brought and it is in pursuance of an undertaking given that this has been done. I am sorry I cannot give all the details now, but there was an undertaking.

Mr. WIGHT: I take it from what the Colonial Treasurer has said that this would not preclude any consideration of the point raised by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Farnum. because if it transpires that Government is prepared to adopt a certain course then the particular teacher concerned would come under this Ordinance when it is enacted.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There has been no promise or undertaking whatever by Government that the service of teachers would come under the same conditions for the computation of pension as that of Civil Servants. What was said is that such a proposal has been put to Government by the Teachers' Association and it is under consideration now. I do not want it to be inferred that there is any undertaking whatever that a Bill would be introduced to that effect. The matter is being considered. There are many important points to be settled, some in the interest of the teachers and some against, but there is no definite undertaking that a Bill would be introduced in this Council to make the pension of teachers computable on the same basis as that of Civil Servants.

Dr. NICHOLSON: There is a point which some hon. Members do not understand because they are not in the teaching profession. It is that the basis of calculation of a teachers pension is different altogether from the basis for the calculation of a Civil Servant's pension. According to this Bill, if a teacher had been teaching for 24 years and he enters the Civil Service, two thirds of the 24 years would be added to his pension. The basis of calculation of a teacher's pension is entirely lower than that of a Civil Servant, so a teacher would be somewhat better off if the present proposal is adopted. At the same time, if his entire service as a teacher is counted in the West Indian Islands, I do not see why it should not be counted in this Colony also.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think it has been completely settled as yet what the teachers' pension would be. Government has said that it is re-examining the whole position and anything we do here should not prejudice the situation. The fact is that this Bill amends the pension that would be granted to any teacher if transferred to the Civil Service. It is true, as the hon. Member for Georgetown North has said, that the pension rights of a teacher are entirely different from those of a Civil Servant and so are his conditions of service. Teachers are not Civil Servants in the true sense of the word. This Bill amends their pension conditions considerably—if transferred to the Civil Service — and I think that is correct.

Mr. WIGHT: I think in view of the fact that the Council might pass this Bill, if there is any reconsideration later we would discuss the other point if the Bill comes up to improve the pension rights of teachers generally.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill without amendment.

Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

RIVER NAVIGATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1948.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move that the following Bill be read the first time:—

A Bill intituled 'An Ordinance further to amend the River Navigation Ordinance with respect to the power to make Regulations.'

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill was published more than six weeks ago—on January 10, this year—and I beg to move that the relevant Standing Rules and Orders be suspended in order to permit this Bill to be read the second time and passed through its remaining stages to-day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The object of this Bill is stated in clause 3 which reads as follows:—

“(2) There may be annexed to the breach of any regulation made under this Ordinance such penalty, not exceeding two hundred and forty dollars, as may be prescribed, and such penalty may be sued and recovered under the Summary Jurisdiction Ordinances.”

The River Navigation Ordinance controls the navigation of the rivers of the Colony and there are many types of offences which are covered by regulations made under that Ordinance. Some of the offences require a heavy penalty and others require a small or nominal penalty. The object of the Bill is that the rule-making authority would have the power to prescribe a different penalty for a different kind of offence. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill without amendment.

Council resumed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I beg

to move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES BILL.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I beg to move that the following Bill be read the first time:—

“A Bill intituled “An Ordinance to provide for the formation and to regulate the operations of Co-operative Societies.”

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

GUARANTEED MINIMUM PRICES TO FARMERS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We have proceeded rather more rapidly with the Order of the Day than I anticipated and I am therefore not as fully prepared as I might have been to move the motion standing in my name. However, in so far as this question of guaranteed minimum prices to farmers is concerned I think it is sufficient for me to draw the attention of hon. Members of this Council to what is stated in Your Excellency's Message, No. 5. Your Excellency informed this Council at its first meeting that you proposed to introduce proposals for long-term guaranteed prices to farmers and, in fact, those proposals have been given some publicity and I think I can say they have been well received by the farmers. The prices are set out in Your Excellency's message. The prices guaranteed are substantially higher in every case than in the former 3-year guarantee of prices and are actually above those now being paid by the Produce Department. That guarantee has been in force since 1944 and I think I can safely say there has hardly been any time during that period that there was greater need for encouraging food production. That is a subject on which Your Excellency has made a full statement and I do not think I need

add much this afternoon. I think hon. Members are well aware of the facts. I therefore beg to move :—

“That, with reference to the Governor’s Message No. 5 of the 19th of February, 1948, this Council approves of the guaranteed minimum prices to farmers as set out in Column (2) of the Schedule to the Message.”

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Mr. FARNUM: I would like on behalf of the farmers—the majority of them—to express my gratitude to Government—and I think more particularly to Your Excellency, because I know that you have given very close attention to this matter and that it is one very close to your heart. I think farmers are very grateful for these guaranteed prices—this 3-year guarantee. The complaint was that a one-year guarantee was not good enough to enable them to do much planting but I think this would enable them to do so and I can assure you, Sir, that there would be a much larger quantity of farm produce as a result. I think the difficulty that would face Government is to deal with the surplus. Some difficulty, I think, is already existing in that respect and investigations are taking place with a view to shipping some of the surplus to the West Indian islands. There is one other feature I would like to mention and that is, there are certain persons who do not own lands but want to engage in farming and find it difficult to do so because of the high charges and other conditions attached to certain lands. Several persons have been to me—young men who want to engage in farming—and have stated how they paid land rent, got tools and so on, and in some cases their crops failed but they were treated very badly indeed by the landlords. It is a matter which I would like Government to go into. I think Government had to look into similar conditions some years ago with respect to rice tenancies and I think the same remedy which was applied then should be applied now. Perhaps Government would also consider the question of acquiring a cold storage plant owing to the large quantity of provision which would be forthcoming under these new guaranteed prices. I think we would be able to supply the Colony and the West Indian islands as well.

Dr. JAGAN: I also want to place myself on record as congratulating Government for giving farmers a long-term guarantee of prices for three years. I am quite sure that this would afford some measure of security for the farmers and stimulate production in the long run. I have no basis on which to question these new prices inasmuch as they seem to be an increase on the prices paid previously. I have recently discussed this matter with a few men who are technically qualified in agriculture and I posed this question to them: Why is it some of them do not go in for farming on a large scale, having the technical knowledge and skill to do so? They told me that it does not pay to do farming under present conditions and present prices, and that leaves me to wonder on what basis have these new prices been calculated. Do they take into consideration the amount of money required to bring an acre of land into cultivation in order to produce a certain amount of crop, or have these new prices been figured out merely as an increase on the prices which obtained during the last few years? I would much prefer that some scientific basis of evaluation be designed so that these prices could be arrived at — taking into consideration the cost of production — the amount paid for land rent, the question of the adequate amount of fertilisers and so on. If these prices are based on such a scientific calculation, then I would certainly agree that they are just and that they would stimulate production in the long run since that is the intention of Government and the desire of the Colony as a whole. I have tabled some questions relating to this matter and I hope I will receive the replies as early as possible. Until then, Sir, I would not make any further comment.

Mr. SEAFORD: Neither the Message nor this motion states when these new prices would come into effect. I think that might well be included.

Dr. SINGH: As far as I can remember the introduction of guaranteed prices for farmers was a war measure. There was a Food Production Committee when the measure was first introduced and those prices have remained up to the present time. I congratulate Government on this step to protect the farmers for another three years.

Mr. WIGHT: I would like to associate myself with those hon. Members who have given a meed of praise to Government for bringing forward this motion. I see that the Message sets out the increased prices to be given to farmers over a long-term period, but I also observe that there was some decrease during the period of the one-year guarantee and I take it that the Committee responsible is perfectly satisfied that these prices offer a fair remuneration to the farmers. The hon. Member for Central Demerara quite rightly said that we are in a stage of progress with regard to farming and I hope that the farmers would stave off a large portion of the crisis which would strike us. I hope that local production would be able to meet the requirements of, and bring satisfaction to all concerned. I also hope the farmers would appreciate that that is one of the objects of this measure and that they would throw heart and soul into their efforts in order to alleviate any crisis which might hit this country.

I know that as a result of Government's policy, Your Excellency has had to consider the question of the availability of land for cultivation. It is all well and good for us to say we would increase prices, but the farmers must have land available — properly irrigated and properly drained land—if they are to increase production, and in this respect I have written to the Colonial Secretary during the last few days about certain placed before Government. I am speaking generally, but I would refer specifically to the backlands of Pln. Devonshire Castle. The greater part of those lands seems cultivable and the farmers in the district are demanding more land for cultivation. Rice farmers occupy some of the land for six months in the year and after that they have nothing further to do with it. I think we should make all backlands available to farmers and I think we should start in Essequibo where it is not as difficult to obtain land as it is in other parts of the Colony where sugar estates are in operation and where there is general employment for farmers throughout the year. In Essequibo farmers would be able to occupy themselves for half of the year with rice lands and for the other half with provision lands. On the Essequibo Coast and in the Pomeroun district there is no regular income being received by the residents from the Public Works Department ~~or~~ from grinding sugar

estates. I think the experiment should be started on the Essequibo Coast and if it proves successful it can be extended elsewhere. One sees signs of temporary success and some progress in these matters and I hope that with the availability of these lands the policy would be set up by Government. With regard to the question of sending farm produce to the West Indian islands, I agree entirely with the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, because we were told at the conference in Barbados that they were willing to pay as much as 10 cents for a plantain. It seems that if we can obtain transportation for sending surplus produce to Barbados we would not only be saving the loss being sustained by the Produce Depot, but we would also be benefiting the economy of the country. I do hope that would be Government's policy and that it would be taken up expeditiously and successfully.

Of course the difficulty may be transportation. We hope it will be forthcoming and that we will be able to get transportation. I think, Sir, that those three main propositions ought to be borne in mind. I do not see that the funds will be placed in a perilous and parlous condition as it had been in the past. After all, someone has to be considered, and the farmer has been considered and should be considered the backbone of the produce of a colony or any particular sect of society. I do hope he will realize now that this Government's intention is to see that he is placed on a firm footing and the industrial development of this Colony will be achieved and also a great agricultural development as well.

Mr. FERNANDES: I would just like to say a few words on this matter, first as regards the availability of transportation. There is sufficient transport available to take all the surplus plantains that British Guiana has to Barbados. As I was leaving my office to come here I saw several carts taking plantains to a vessel which is leaving this evening. If one looks at the newspapers one would find articles of foodstuffs of which we seem to have a great supply and plantains are not among them. You have yams, potatoes and eddoes, but those are articles that cannot be shipped to Barbados as they do not last long enough and will be a total loss to the exporter if shipped.

But plantains are being shipped to Barbados and will continue to be shipped so long as there is a surplus. The question of shipping is no problem. There is plenty of shipping opportunity available, at least twice a week. Schooners take them on the bunch and there is no question of packing as they are carried uncovered on deck and they usually arrive at their destination in very good condition. The price of plantains in Barbados, according to what the hon. Member for Western Essequibo has said, is something new to me. I did not think it was so high. Usually when they have strangers in Barbados you have a little bit of exaggeration of the situation.

Mr. Mc DOOM: Some little while ago I had the opportunity of speaking to the Chairman of the Union and discussing the prices. A good many of the members were also present and I was not able to get from them whether the prices were adequate or not, but I asked them to get in touch with the Members of the Council if they thought the prices were not adequate. I do not know if they have done so. It was some time ago and I have not had the pleasure of hearing further from them. Other Members of the Council have also had no information from them. That makes me feel that the prices which are now put forward are satisfactory to the people who are growing provisions.

As regards the remarks made by the hon. Member for Central Demerara, I myself do not know whether the prices that have been fixed were arrived at after consideration of the cost of production and an adequate return to the farmer but, I take it, it must have been. I take it that is the only way the prices can be arrived at by Government or anybody.

As regards the remarks made by the hon. the Deputy President in connection with the lands in Essequibo which he is under the impression, cannot be now cultivated with ground provisions, I happen to have lived in that district for some years and I know that the lands there are drained and irrigated as the best lands are in any district. In my opinion it would appear that we have not the number of people in Essequibo to occupy really usefully those lands — I am referring now specially to ground provisions. Maybe I may have the oppor-

tunity of speaking to you personally in the matter. In my opinion the lands are there but the people are not there to grow any provisions on the lands. You should have no fear in so far as Essequibo is concerned of any shortage of land for growing ground provisions. I was hoping to take the opportunity along with other Members of the Council to put up a proposition whereby probably we may be able to get more people settled in Essequibo. It is a very good opportunity to bring in people to the Colony especially those who grow ground provisions best.

I want to make this last remark. I would like to add that Government and everybody else in this country should do their best to grow as much plantains as possibly can be grown in this Colony. Plantains cannot only be exported to Barbados, but there is a great demand for plantains in Trinidad. I do not know whether we will be able to grow as much plantains that we can take up that export trade in a short time. I hope we will all do our best and plant more plantains, plant more eddoes and other things, as we will then be able to relieve the rice situation in this country. The more eddoes, the more yams we use the less rice we will use. As the hon. Member for Central Georgetown has said, we have a very good export market for plantains, and I would like to see every other man in this country growing more plantains.

Dr. NICHOLSON: The hon. Member for Central Demerara asked some very pertinent questions which give much food for thought. He wanted to know whether the prices are arbitrarily fixed or whether they are fixed in relation to the prices obtaining in the past. He also spoke of the area required to grow certain crops that certainly must be taken into account. He wanted to know something of the time factor and whether that is taken into account, also the amount of labour to produce certain crops, and also whether the expense in producing certain crops is taken into account as regards fertilizers, etc. I can assure him that some or all of those factors were taken into account by the Agricultural Department in arriving at the prices fixed, but some prices were fixed rather high so as to encourage the farmers to grow certain crops, such as potatoes for example. There are certain crops which do not require

much labour after the planting of the seedlings. We are told that one only has to scratch the soil, put in a yam head or stick and leave it alone. But there are other crops in respect of which the farmer has to attend to the plants throughout their growth. Those are all important points to take into account in arriving at the prices—the area, the time factor, the amount of labour and the expense of production—but I think I can assure the hon. Member that the Agricultural Department, which is a scientific body of men, considered all those things in arriving at the prices.

Mr. PHANG : I represent the North-West District and, I think, it is generally known that the North-West District sends a lot of ground provisions to the Georgetown market. Looking at these prices I am quite satisfied that a proper investigation must have been made in order to fix them, because they are fair and reasonable. As far as the farmers are concerned, I think they are satisfied with the prices—corn, \$4.68 per bag; eddoes, \$2.88 per bag; plantains, 90 cents per bunch; sweet potatoes, \$4.50 per bag; tannias, \$4.50 per bag; yams, \$6.50 per bag. I think those prices are fair and reasonable and I have reason to believe the farmers in the North-West District are quite satisfied with those prices.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : As no other Member wishes to speak I would just like to reply to some of the points raised. Several of the points have been answered in the course of the debate. The hon. the Fifth Nominated Member spoke of the danger of surplusage. That is a real problem that can be met to some extent by export, but the possibility of storage is being considered and all other methods will be considered, and I have no doubt that the Central Food Production Committee, the appointment of which has recently been announced, will give this question every consideration.

As regards the question as to how the prices have been calculated, this has already been dealt with fairly fully by the hon. Member for Georgetown North, but I would just like to add this, as I have in front of me a statement made by the Department showing how the prices have been worked out : So many working days for bushing, so many working days for forking, so many working days for

tillage, so many working days for planting, so many working days for weeding, so many working days for collecting and transporting the stuff, so many working days for reaping and so many days for marketing; then you add so much for land rent and work out the cost of the yield, and from those figures you find out the cost per pound of the produce. All those details are before me in respect of each of the items covered by the guaranteed prices.

The only point I would like to refer to is the question of the date which the hon. the First Nominated Member referred to. I am sorry that is not in fact made clear in the Message. It should have been for a period of three years from the 1st January, 1948. I think that is a convenient date, and I would like with the permission of hon. Members to amend the motion to read as follows :

“That with reference to the Governor's Message No. 5 of the 19th of February, 1948, this Council approves of the guaranteed minimum prices to farmers, as set out in Column (2) of the Schedule to the Message, to remain in force for a period of three years.”

I beg, Sir, that the motion as amended be approved.

Mr. Mc DOOM : The hon. the Colonial Secretary suggested that the period should begin on the 1st January, 1948. It does seem to be very difficult to begin then. I do not know, except in the case of rice you have records of the rice and padi sold from the 1st January, that you have that in respect of provisions which have all been sold already.

The PRESIDENT : The actual prices prevailing at the moment and paid by the Marketing Department are higher than the minimum prices. It is very gratifying, hon. Members, to see the support which has been given to this motion in the Council, and there is very little I can wish to add to what I have already said on one or two different occasions. But I would like to say I can assure the hon. Member for Central Demerara that the greatest possible care was taken in fixing these prices from three points of view —

- (a) to give farmers a square deal;
- (b) to see that the consumer was not adversely affected; and

(c) to see that the Government was not imposing an obligation on itself which it cannot meet.

In recommending these prices to the Council I cannot say that in the final result the Government may not lose money and it may not be necessary to come to this Council for a vote to meet any loss there is. As things are at the moment, there is the possibility of losing money, but there well may be a change in affairs. I may remind hon. Members also that the Marketing Department, while it is doing excellent work, is at present running at a slight loss; not only in the prices it is paying for the produce, but it is assisting the farmer in many other ways. It transports much of his stuff to the market for him and in every way facilitates the marketing of his produce. That calls for money and there are heavy costs on that which Government at the moment is bearing, but if it will have the desired result and if this increased production will be permanent as we hope, then I think that expenditure is worthwhile.

I have already referred on a previous occasion to the efforts which we are endeavouring to make to get over this problem of glut during the period of a year. That is really a very difficult question. We all know quite well that at a certain time of the year the market is flooded with certain of these commodities and we cannot get rid of them. Hon. Members themselves have suggested the answer to that. There are two answers—one is to endeavour to find some way of preserving those perishables, as in the case of cassava converting it into flour, and we are exploring the possibilities in that direction. The second way is export. As one hon. Member mentioned, there is no good talking about exporting yams and most perishables as they cannot stand the journey, but if we cannot find some way of disposal in our own market all the year round, we can also export. Experiments are taking place in Trinidad at the moment in regard to the question of the preservation of perishables, and one of our Government Officers will shortly go there to see the experiments and to see what the prospects are of applying the results to this Colony.

Another difficulty in regard to export is the question of shipping. I gather,

shipping is still short and we cannot depend altogether on getting shipping to take this produce to the neighbouring Islands. I do want to assure hon. Members that we are not going to just fix these prices and do no more, but we are going on and considering all these other ways of helping the farmer and of finding markets for his produce. I do thank hon. Members for the support which they have given to this motion.

Mr. FERNANDES: Just to a point of correction! Shipping is not short at the present time. You have the Transport and Harbours Department running a service to Trinidad. Two boats are going this week. They take stuff for Trinidad Schooners leave for Barbados definitely twice a week.

The PRESIDENT: I mention it because it has been reported to me that there is difficulty in getting freight for Trinidad. Only a week or so ago in regard to some commodities such difficulty was found. If the position is as the hon. Member says, and he knows better than I do, I am very pleased to hear it.

Mr. FERNANDES: As regards the question of other commodities the position is different, but not for plantains and vegetables. The Transport Department ships are contracted to carry rice to Trinidad and they are filled entirely with rice. If the other commodity or article is something that has to go below deck it is a different matter. Plantains are carried on deck, and there is plenty of room on deck on both vessels of the Transport Department to take plantains. There is plenty of room on deck to carry plantains and vegetables as far as Trinidad. On the schooners for Barbados there is room for carrying anything.

Mr. SEAFORD: I think I can support that. I know there are coastal crafts in the Colony to-day which can be used, but there has been no offer of freight for them.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion passed.

SUMMARY JURISDICTION (OFFENCES) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1948.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the following Bill be read a first time:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (*Offences*) Ordinance."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

SITTING OF COUNCIL.

The PRESIDENT: That concludes the business for this afternoon. I propose

that the Council meet on Wednesday next and just take those two Bills relating to revenue measures and the balance of the Budget. I think Wednesday will be the first day of the Cricket Test Match, and I assume Members of Council prefer to meet at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, I am entirely in the hands of Members of Council. Is that the consensus of opinion of the Council?

There being no objection the Council adjourned to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, 3rd March, 1948.