

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 28th March, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. F. Dias, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.E. (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. A. M. Edun (Nominated).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 22nd of March, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

LEAVE PASSAGES FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICERS.

The PRESIDENT: Arising out of the minutes on the question of Leave Passages debated last Friday, I have consulted the Deputy President and subsequently the Executive Council on Tuesday last, and the Deputy President agreed that the best procedure was to have a small Committee who should try and get down to some practical proposal or alternative and have that, perhaps, discussed with the whole body of Unofficial Members. The Committee, we propose to appoint, will have the Colonial Secretary as Chairman with the hon. the Deputy President, the hon. Members for Central Demerara and Georgetown South and the Second and Fifth Nominated Members, and I ask that Committee to proceed to consider the matter as expeditiously as possible.

One particular question I did raise in the discussion was that of Officers of the Unified Colonial Service. The particular point about the Officers of the Unified Colonial Service is that they are under compulsion to accept transfer. That is to say, an Officer may be in Nigeria and the Secretary of State for the Colonies wishing to send him to Kenya he may not refuse. The condition is that in the opinion of the Secretary of State the value of the new post is not less than the one the Officer presently holds. But in a matter like this the provision of a guarantee of leave Passages is worth a good deal more than the apparent financial value, and is just that kind of thing to make the Secretary of State apply his power. I raised that in a Committee and in the Executive Council.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

RICE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION BILL.

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to provide for the establishment of the British Guiana Rice Producers' Association and for purposes connected therewith".

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. McDavid): Hon. Members will recall the discussion, which took place in the Council quite recently, when the Rice Marketing Bill was under consideration, on this question of the establishment of a Rice Producers Association. That discussion was prompted specifically by the fact that the eight members of the Rice Marketing Board who are to be rice producers are to be selected by the Governor from the Council or Governing Body of the Rice Producers Association, which is defined in the Rice Marketing Bill as

"An association of rice producers to be established by the authority of the Governor for the protection of the interests of rice producers under an enabling Ordinance to be hereafter enacted",

The Government consequently gave an undertaking to this Council that the necessary legislation to provide for the creation of such an association would be put through as expeditiously as possible. I think, hon. Members would agree that agreement has been fulfilled in as much as I am today to move the second reading of this Bill actually in advance of the publication and the coming into effect of the Rice Marketing Bill which was passed by the Council.

The reason I have just given for the introduction of this Bill is, of course the primary objective but an equally important objective, is the very vital necessity for the formation of such an association in order to protect the interests of the rice producers of the Colony. Attempts have been made from time to time to found such a body either for the Colony as a whole or for separate districts and, I think, a great deal of the credit is due to those persons who sponsored such attempts and endeavoured to maintain what they started. This Bill is just an effort to do what is referred to in a proper and appropriate manner; that is to say, by and through the authority of an enabling Ordinance with Regulations made thereunder, and I sincerely hope that this Association when established, if this Bill is passed, would prove to be a live body fostering in every way possible the interests of rice producers and — what I think is equally important — entusing in them that spirit of co-operation and self-help which is so very necessary if this industry is to progress and prosper. In the words of the hon. the Attorney-General's statement at the end of the "Objects and Reasons."

"The Bill proposes to confer on rice producers a substantial measure of self-government in their own industry which should begin the education necessary for ultimate control of their affairs".

The general conception of this Bill is that upon the proclamation by the

Governor all of the rice producers in the Colony, whether they be rice farmers, rice millers, landlords or tenants who are engaged in rice farming, become a body corporate in the name and style of the Rice Producers Association. That is a somewhat theoretical conception. The actual functioning of this Association will be by means of, firstly, District Associations—any number of them as may be established under the provisions of this Ordinance—and, secondly, a Central Council or Governing Body. Last week a meeting of the members of the Central Rice Committee was held for the specific purpose of discussing the terms of this Bill in order to afford me and two other members of the present Rice Marketing Board an opportunity to explain its terms and to listen to any suggestion which might be made, and I am pleased to say that all the members at that meeting very favourably accepted this Bill as a very fine effort towards the things that we and they themselves have in mind. They did, however, make a few valuable suggestions for amendment of the terms, and I have circulated on a paper before Members those amendments as suggested by the members of the Central Rice Committee. I may say, they have been accepted in their entirety by the Governor. I propose when the Bill is in Committee stage to move those amendments as listed on the paper, and I shall refer to them very briefly as I go through the Bill. If hon. Members turn to the Bill I would suggest for their consideration a few of the points which are important.

In the definition clause, that is clause 2, I would like to invite particular attention to the definition of the words "District" and "District Association." As is stated there, "District" means one of the districts into which the Colony is sub-divided for the purpose of this Ordinance. Later on in the Bill it is provided that the Council itself will

recommend to the Governor the number of districts which are necessary. Obviously the Council would be wise to divide the Colony into such districts as are practicable having regard to the rice producers in the various areas. We know, for example, that Essequibo and Islands form, perhaps, one composite block, but I do think that the Council of the Association would be wise to divide that area of the Colony into three districts—Essequibo Coast and the Islands of Leguan and Wakenaam as separate districts. I merely mention that, as it is not a matter for me or Government. The Council of the Association would in the first instance determine what should be the appropriate districts into which the Colony is to be divided. "District Association" means the association of rice producers which is set up in each of those districts. Lastly in that particular definition clause the term "rice producer" has the same meaning which is given to it in the Rice Marketing Ordinance. That is to say, it comprises all individuals—the rice landlords, the present rice farmer who farms his own land or land given to him or allowed him for planting, and also the manufacturer or, as we call him, the miller. All persons engaged in this industry are rice producers.

Clause 3 is the governing clause of the establishment and, as I said in my opening remarks, it is lawful for the Governor by proclamation to make all rice producers a body corporate to be known as the Rice Producers Association. Hon. Members will see in that clause the phrase "perpetual succession" is also used, and I do hope that the idea of everlasting life for this association will not necessarily detract from its merits.

In clause 4 the functions of the Association are set out. The first paragraph deals with the general functions and advancement of the interests of rice producers generally, and the other paragraphs are specific functions.

Firstly, the Association is to propose any measures, including co-operative schemes of all kinds, it considers fit; next it is to represent the rice producers on the Rice Marketing Board, which hon. Members know is provided for in the Rice Marketing Ordinance itself; then it is to make representations to the Governor concerning any criticism or matters affecting the operation of the Rice Marketing Board or affecting the protection of the industry; and lastly, it is to act as a sort of reporting body in matters referred to it for explanation and enquiry by the Governor, or any Government Department or any body lawfully concerned with the rice industry.

Clause 5 vests the management of the affairs of this Association in a Council and subclause (2) of that clause defines what the membership of that Council shall be. That is the first amendment to which I wish to draw attention. As provided for in the printed Bill, the Council is supposed to be composed of twenty-four (24) rice producers, at least nine of whom are to be rice farmers and at least eight are to be rice manufacturers. The members of the Central Rice Committee drew attention to the fact that an important factor in the industry is the landlord. They said there were landlords who were millers and there were millers who were not landlords. They rather drew a comparison between the value of either of those two and seemed to come to the conclusion that the landlord is more important. Their suggestion is that we should ensure that the landlord or the landlord-manufacturer is provided for in this clause so that he should not in any case fail to have some representation on the Council. Accordingly, the amendment which I shall move in Committee will provide that of the twenty-four members of the Council at least nine are to be rice farmers, at least five are to be manufacturers or millers and at least four are to be landlords,

That makes eighteen, and the remaining six of the twenty-four I would call free for all; that is to say, they may be selected from any category.

Sub-clause (3) says that the Council is to be elected by electors who are to be appointed by the District Committees. I will not go into that at the moment as it comes up later in the Bill. The Council, having been elected, at its first meeting selects and appoints its own President and Vice-President from amongst its number. The Council so constituted remains in office for two years. There are provisions in this clause for the filling of temporary vacancies during the two years' period of the life of the Council, and there are also provisions for vacating the seats of members on certain eventualities. In clause 8 hon. Members will notice that those eventualities are—failure to attend three consecutive quarterly meetings of the Council or insolvency of a member. At a meeting of the Central Rice Committee the members insisted on this point that provision be made for a member vacating his seat if he went to gaol. I do not know why they should so insist, whether they felt it was possible for a member to commit an offence to justify such punishment. Nevertheless they asked the Attorney-General to introduce the provision that any member suffering imprisonment shall vacate his seat. That will be moved in Committee.

In sub-clause (9) of this clause it will be seen that the Council has power to appoint a General Secretary. I would like to emphasize that a General Secretary of such an Association should be a person of capacity and intelligence and ability, not only to be a servant of the Council, which he will be, but also to be the guide and friend of the Council and of the District Associations. I am suggesting that this Officer should be most carefully selected by the Council. He should be a man who has the inter-

ests of the rice industry at heart, as upon him rests a good deal of the future running of this body. I made the same remarks to the Central Rice Committee and they fully appreciated the point I was making. And so again they made a surprising request. The sub-clause, as printed, provides that the Council may appoint the General Secretary, but they insisted that I should recommend that the appointment be made subject to Your Excellency's approval as Governor. They felt that it is quite possible that the Council might be formed with a majority of manufacturers and the appointment made by that Council of a General Secretary would be very welcome to that section of the industry, but they conceived that the next Council might have a different complexion and might not like the General Secretary and would wish to determine his services. Accordingly they felt it would be right and proper that the appointment of the General Secretary, important as it is, should be safeguarded by some proviso as "appointed with the approval of the Governor," and they went further and suggested that he should not be dismissed except with the approval of the Governor. Consequently an amendment has been tabled which will provide for their request to be granted.

Then in sub-clause (1) of clause 5-- the clause which deals with the subdivision of the Colony into Districts--as hon. Members would see, this is to be done by the Council itself but subject to the approval of the Governor. It was also felt by the framers of the Ordinance that the Governor should have a hand in determining with the Council those districts. Here again the members of the Central Rice Committee felt that is not going far enough. They thought it so important that the Governor should take advice from his Executive Council on it. They felt that on the Executive Council there are Elected Members capable of advising on the distribution of the districts, and they would like to see instead of

approval being vested in the Governor alone that it be vested in the Governor in Council. Consequently I will also move that amendment in Committee. Sub-clause (3) deals with the management of the affairs of the Association. Hon. Members will see that each District Committee is to consist of six members -- Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and three other members-- all elected by the Association. I need not go through all the various sub-clauses of this clause. They provide easy rules, so to speak, for the working of the Committees but I would like to draw particular attention to clause 7. ✓

Clause 7, as printed, provides that each District Association Committee may perform the functions of the Association, but it limits entirely the scope of the Committee to the words which make it necessary that every decision of the Committee is to be communicated to the Council itself and, if thought fit, then action is to be taken. Here again the Central Rice Committee put forward quite a reasonable case. They said that each District Association should have some autonomy, it should have some power to deal with matters arising in its own district and have those matters carried through. So an amendment is to be moved also to that clause which permits a District Association to come to a decision on matters affecting its district and to communicate it to the Council but action thereon to be only through the Council. It is felt that it is not necessary for the Council itself to decide whether or not that decision should be carried into effect.

Clause 8 deals with the power of the Governor to make regulations. It will be seen that the matters on which regulations are to be made are very wide. I may say that the regulations have been already drafted and with a little revision will be put into effect within a week or two of the passing of the Ordinance.

Clause 9 deals with finance and accounts. Speaking of the funds of the Association, it sets out that the funds shall consist of the grant which is to be made to the Association by the Rice Marketing Board and payments by Members. There was a good deal of talk during the discussion of the Rice Marketing Bill about this grant, and here it is provided that the Association be provided with a reasonable sum of money from which, for example, the salary of the General Secretary will have to be paid. There will be other expenses of management, but the General Secretary's salary will be the principal expense. Then the District Associations will be enabled to collect fees for registering members. As I have said before, every rice producer is eligible for membership of the Association but he will have to be registered as a member, and that registration will demand a fee. We discussed the question of this fee and, I think, the members of the Central Rice Committee felt that the fee should be very nominal and not more than one shilling a year. I feel similarly that one shilling may be a suitable fee to start with, and each District Association will be allocated some small part of the grant which the Council will receive from the Rice Marketing Board. Here again in this Bill, as in the Rice Marketing Bill, there is a special provision that reasonable travelling expenses and subsistence allowances to members of the Council will be paid out of the funds of the Association.

The last important clause is clause 10 which contains what are called "transitional provisions." I know the hon. the Fifth Nominated Member will, perhaps, have preferred that these Associations start, as he will say, from the bottom and go up. We would all like to think that all the rice producers in the Colony can get together and have one meeting, decide formally on the creation of an Association, and after accepting that, form Committees in the districts and from those Committees

elect a Council. Everyone would agree that however good in theory it may be, in practice it is hardly possible. So we have to start from the top and come down.

The Governor is given power under clause 10 to appoint the first members of the Council. Having done that the Council can carry on as if it were an elected Council. It divides the Colony into districts and proceeds with the work of forming District Associations. The Governor is also given power initially to appoint the first members of each District Committee on the recommendation of the Council. That having been done the Committees get together and start enrolling members, taking all the necessary steps to have the District Association working as it should, and they proceed before a certain date to elect a Committee. All elected Committees having got together they select electors, and a meeting is held at which an elected Council is formed. As soon as that elected Council is formed the first Council appointed by the Governor ceases to function, and the elected Council takes its place.

That is the scheme for starting this body, and as I said, I do not see how it could possibly be avoided. Someone must start it, and I think it is proper that it should be started by the Governor and gradually work down to a completely democratic body. I do not think I need take up any more of the Council's time. If in the Committee stage any further explanation is required of the working of the Bill I should be pleased to give it. I would like to conclude by repeating my statement that this Association will really be a strong and live body, alive to the interests of rice producers, and working harmoniously together, putting forward proposals and measures for the improvement and progress of the rice industry. I formally move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

The PRESIDENT: Before throwing the debate open, I would just like to say one word. I say it here because I was not present at the final stages of the Rice Marketing Bill. It is that I should like to record the opinion which I am sure is shared by many Members of this Council, that during those difficult years of the war the Board which is now dissolving has performed most excellent service to the industry, to the producer, to the consumer, and to the communities in the West Indian islands who might have been very short of the commodity in the difficult years of the war, and they got it from us at a very equitable price. I am quite sure, from my own personal knowledge, that these services have been widely appreciated by the vast majority of the ordinary people in the industry in this country. It is also well worth recording that this appreciation realises that the policy of the Board has been a long view one, to establish the industry on a good footing for the future, with an export trade at reasonable prices which may have good chance of surviving, and that this aim has been a better one than that of will-o-the-wisp fancy war profits.

At the same time, throughout these war years I have been conscious of many criticisms that might properly be made of the Board, and I did not fail to record these on the papers, though I preferred to permit an efficient machine to continue to function in the war years rather than upset it by insisting on any radical change. One criticism was that the Board functioned far too much as a bureaucratic war-time control organisation run from the top at headquarters, and far too little identified with the industry and the people who get their livelihood from it. That criticism was partly met by the institution of the Central Rice Committee.

The two new Bills, that passed some weeks ago and that with which

we deal today will, it is my very sincere hope, in a real and effective manner identify the whole community engaged in the rice industry in this Colony with the organisation which is going to handle the marketing. It will take a little time to get that fully going in the democratic manner as provided under this Bill, but there is no reason why there should not be an effective reality soon operating.

There are, I would like to record, certain aspects which are very much more likely to be in the minds of the ordinary producer and persons engaged in the industry in the country districts, and less than in an organisation which functions in Georgetown. There is the question of prompt payment which I have myself emphasised, the sovereign importance of prompt and on the nail payment to the small farmer. And this has been lacking, I am afraid. We have been having a drive for production, and production which mostly comes from the small farmer, and for that there is one prime necessity, that is payment on the nail. It has been a good deal lacking in our arrangements over these last years, and though I have no doubt that the system of payment seemed excellent and convenient to the officials of the Board at Georgetown, it had a very different aspect from the point of view of the individual small farmer. I very strongly recommend that the Board set about immediately arranging so that payments for padi can be made on the nail in cash, not paper, and on the spot. It will be well worth it if we are going to get an increase in our production and export.

That is one side of decentralisation. Another is grading. I am not going to dogmatise on this matter, and I know the Board have what they think are excellent reasons for grading and blending in Georgetown only; and yet I think that, as in so many things in this country, we tend to aim at some

fancy ideal standard arrangement in Georgetown and forget the practical politics of things in rural districts. I very strongly recommend the new Board to try their utmost to decentralise operations and avoid excessive centralisation here.

A third point is transportation and export. It seems to me absurd that all rice for export has to be transported over our clumsy and expensive transportation system by lorries and ferries and railways to be shipped from Georgetown. I cannot conceive the possible advantages of that system which would outweigh the plain commonsense of shipping by schooners from our various rivers. I know that it is an old subject, but any step that can be taken in the future to facilitate it will have my utmost sympathy.

I do commend these things to the new Board, and I hope that these and any other claims of the man at the country district end, will receive every possible consideration through the new co-operative organisation now to be set up. Now we can proceed with the debate on the second reading.

Dr. SINGH: The rice producers at Windsor Forest, West Coast, Demerara, sent me a letter yesterday in which they made certain observations on the Bill and asked my assistance. I handed the letter to the hon. the Colonial Treasurer. Unfortunately I arrived late in Council and did not hear his speech from the beginning.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I received a communication from the hon. Member which I have read, but I found it very difficult to understand. I spoke to the hon. the Attorney-General about it and I will mention what I conceive to be the idea in the letter when we are in Committee.

Mr. EDUN: Sir, I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for the observations you have just made, and I

think the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, who I hope will be the Chairman of the new Board, should take cognizance of those observations. Decentralisation is perhaps creating the bottlenecks in the present transportation system of the Board. Be that as it may, I wish to make a few comments on the proposal to set up a Rice Producers Association. In the first place I wish to commend the draftsman of the Bill for the good work he has done, and those who have influenced him are also deserving of praise. As a trade unionist and the leader of the largest labour organization in this country, I know what is democratic procedure and how it should be carried out. Therefore I want this Rice Producers Association to succeed. At the beginning I thought it would be a statutory organisation sponsored by the Government, but having examined the whole machinery and listened to the explanation given by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer, I think it is only right that the rice producers should operate their own machinery, and whatever defects may be found in the actual working of it could be rectified in due course.

If I had the opportunity to examine the Regulations provided for by clause 8 of the Bill, and satisfy myself regarding them, I would simply give this Bill my blessing if that would be worth anything. As has been rightly said by the hon. mover, many attempts have been made to publish a Rice Producers Association. I, too, have given serious attention to the matter, and an Association was actually formed and functioned for some time. It was founded on the 5th October, 1940, at Johanna Cecilia. An excellent constitution was provided for that Association, but after a year of inaction nothing was done, and subsequently on the 5th September, 1944, the Association, if I am right in saying so, was handed back to Georgetown where I hoped eventually to make it function. I actually took the opportunity to ask Government to recognize it. That was done on the 5th October, 1944, in a letter

to the acting Colonial Secretary, who is now Commissioner of Local Government. In his reply to me the acting Colonial Secretary wrote, on October 6, 1944:—

“Government is entirely sympathetic with the idea of the establishment of an organization of rice producers in the Colony with a view to the protection of their interests and the advancement of the rice industry.”

He proceeded to state:—

“ . . . Government proposes at the earliest practicable moment to reconstitute the Board by an Ordinance in a manner which, while providing for the continuation of full control, would nevertheless secure greater participation of the rice producers themselves in the activities of the new organisation; and in order to make available the necessary machinery for securing proper representation of the rice producers as well as to ensure ample protection of their interests it is also proposed to enact simultaneously the necessary enabling legislation to provide for the establishment of a Rice Producers' Association having statutory powers and functions.”

Hon. Members will observe that every attempt was made to foster the Rice Producers' Association of which I was head. In concluding his letter the acting Colonial Secretary wrote:—

“You may rest assured that, as has always been the case, Government will in the meantime not fail to give consideration to representations from any source which have as their object the furtherance of the best interests of the rice industry.”

I consider that not having given that Rice Producers Association the recognition it sought Government actually killed the organisation then. That Association had as its organ a newspaper known as *The Peasantry*, which was subsidized by the Association in order to do its propaganda work, but even then the attempt failed.

I agree with the hon. the Colonial Treasurer when he says that in order to have stability and continuity of policy the General Secretary of the Association should be a permanent official. There must be some degree of permanency in

his job, otherwise there would be bickering which would not give the Association a chance to live. That has been my experience in trade unions. I consider the proposal to have a Central Council with district branches and District Committees is a step in the right direction, but it should not be left to the District Committees to function without examination from headquarters. Without proper guidance from the Central Council it would be difficult for the District Committees to function properly, and for that reason I agree with the transitional provision whereby the Governor will have the right to appoint the members of the first Council and its officers. I endeavoured to do it, and the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) and Mr. H. G. Seaford also made attempts to form a Rice Producers' Association. For an Association of this kind to function properly in the interest of rice producers it must have proper leadership and proper guidance. I therefore hope that Government will be careful indeed in its selection of leaders.

A Rice Producers Association should function in such a manner as to be a sort of safety valve to the Rice Marketing Board. It should constitute itself a sort of vigilant organization watching the marketing side of the industry. I agree with this transitional arrangement but I trust that when the people of British Guiana secure self-government they will in due time assume full control of the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Producers' Association.

There is one further point I wish to make before I take my seat. Having referred to my failure to establish a Rice Producers Association, I wish to say that it is a man's job and a strenuous piece of work to organize the masses in any part of the world. The object of this Bill is “to establish the British Guiana Rice Producers Association charged with the duty of promoting and protecting the interests of the rice

producers of the Colony." I have been dreaming of the day when the workers and peasants would be able to form a strong organization, and that if the Members of the Legislative Council were found to be reactionary such an organization would be able to squeeze them out of existence. I have neither the time, the inclination nor the energy to attempt this kind of work any longer and I am glad to see that Government has assumed the responsibility to teach the producers, the illiterate masses, to govern themselves. I heartily commend those who have been responsible for the drafting of the Bill.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I think the principle of the Bill is a good one and should be adopted by this Council. I wish first of all to express my appreciation of the remarks Your Excellency made in respect of the hardship suffered by the people in Berbice through lack of transportation and of prompt payment for padi supplied by them to the Rice Marketing Board. In that connection I have to report a very sad incident which occurred during the past year, where writs for levies were actually issued by Local Authorities against property-owners on the Corentyne Coast for rates while the Rice Marketing Board had not paid them for their rice delivered to the Board. On that occasion, sir, representations were made to me by a good many of those who were threatened with execution sale of their property to intercede in their behalf for some relief pending the settlement of their claims on the Rice Marketing Board. I approached the then District Commissioner in Berbice who, unfortunately, could not assist me in any way. I thought it very unsatisfactory and I felt rather disappointed that no help could be obtained from such a responsible officer. As far as I recollect, I sent a telegram to the Colonial Secretary inviting his sympathetic consideration of the matter and I received a reply to the effect that proceedings against those people were stayed. They were thereby relieved of the threatened

humiliation of having their properties taken away in satisfaction of their indebtedness to the Local Authorities. The Local Authorities had forgotten that the Rice Marketing Board, which is part and parcel of the Government, had the people's rice in their bonds and made no attempt at payment in respect of that rice and as a result those people were handicapped in meeting their financial obligation to them.

That brings me to the point of prompt payment for padi or rice delivered to the Rice Marketing Board. There has been some delay in such payments. I know it has been met in part, but some time ago the Berbice Chamber of Commerce wrote the Government on this important question and drew attention to the necessity of having some grading office established in the County of Berbice to facilitate the transportation of produce to shipping points. May I be permitted to read one paragraph of a letter which was handed to me yesterday afternoon and was addressed to the Rice Marketing Board? It states:

"In view of the fact that the County of Berbice produces a greater percentage of rice at the present time than any of the other areas, as borne out by the report of the Rice Marketing Board published for 1943, and in view of the expansion programme contemplated for the industry, it is urged that strong representation be made to the Board for the establishment of a branch of the Board in the County of Berbice which would be responsible for grading, shipping and prompt payment for rice supplied."

With respect to grading, I do not think anything has been done in that direction. With respect to facilities for storing padi, efforts have been made as certain buildings have been erected as bonds for the purpose of receiving padi from the producers. With respect to prompt payment, I understand that some effort has been made in that direction, an advance being given upon the production of the grading receipt. But that is

not all. Before that grading receipt can be obtained the rice has to be despatched to New Amsterdam and actually put on board the railway. So you see the people on the Corentyne Coast suffer much disadvantage in that respect, as it takes some time to have the padi milled into rice, the rice transported from the rice mill to New Amsterdam and shipped from the New Amsterdam stelling to Georgetown where it arrives before full payment is made for the produce. Your Excellency will see how irritating it was to those people to be made to suffer that indignity and humiliation by the threat to have their properties taken in execution for non-payment of their rates when they had sufficient security held by Government.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I have listened for a long time to the hon. Member. I know the case very well. May I remind the hon. Member—

The PRESIDENT: Do you rise to a point of order? There is too much interruption. There must be a specific point of order.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I rose to point out that the rice of which the hon. Member spoke was in the hands of the millers and not in the hands of the Board.

Mr. LUCKHOO: According to the Government Regulations they had to deliver all their produce, and at that particular time the people's padi was in the bond. I am not opposing the Rice Marketing Board, but I am pointing out the inability of the Board to make prompt payment to the producers of rice for their produce. If there are no rice-growers no rice will be obtained and there will be no necessity to have rice-millers. In this particular case the people had delivered their produce and had no money to pay their dues. The complaint they made in which I am not associating the Rice Marketing Board is that they sought the assistance of the then Commissioner of the

District who with a shrug of the shoulder dismissed the matter. I had then to get in touch with the Colonial Secretary in order to get the relief sought. It was a lawful levy on the people's immovable property in satisfaction of the debt, but in view of the circumstances of the case is it encouraging to the producers of rice to be made to suffer such indignity? It was due to the tardiness of the Officials in rendering assistance to the growers. I feel that those growers should have been protected. Timely intimation should have been given them before such execution was taken against their property. They had to meet other liabilities. Their padi had been milled and stored and there was no launch or boat to take it away. I made every effort to see what could have been done, and the rains came down and some of those people suffered financial loss through their padi being kept in the bond. I am supporting the view Your Excellency expressed that prompt payment be made. They could not sell to an outsider to their benefit. In Berbice where the people produce a large quantity of padi which is milled into rice and sent to Georgetown for the export trade, some provision should be made to have a branch office established there, say in New Amsterdam, for the grading of the rice and prompt payment for the rice delivered.

I do not intend to say anything disparaging about the Rice Marketing Board, but this is a question, I feel, I should bring to the attention of Government. I feel that if these people are encouraged to grow rice or anything, they must be given the encouragement of prompt payment for their produce so that they can meet their liabilities and discharge their responsibilities. Your Excellency, I am quite aware of the great interest you have taken in the rice industry, your recent visit to the Corentyne and your knowledge of the activities of the people in that locality. I have read through this Bill and I feel it should receive the support of

bers of this Council. The principle is good. Rice-growing has become an important industry of this Colony and every encouragement should be given to the growers. Some time ago I remarked that we should have co-operative associations, whether you call them associations or marketing pools. This Bill carries out the idea of the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance, and I feel sure it will get the support of all rice-producers.

With regard to the appointment of a General Secretary great care has to be exercised. I agree with the hon. Mover in respect of the selection of that individual. He must be one free to act independently and able to proffer proper advice. It is a very important position to fill because so many persons are concerned in the growing of rice, and in order to give satisfaction the people must have confidence in the individual who may be appointed to fill that position. We are endeavouring now in the County of Berbice to expand the rice industry, and I feel sure Government is doing all it possibly can in order that this industry should rest on a substantially firm basis. That can only be done through a properly controlled organization. This is a step in the right direction. I certainly commend this thing to the people of the Corentyne, the rice-growers. Probably amendments may be made here and there, as suggested by the hon. Member on my left who has some points to bring forward to this Council. That will certainly receive the attention of this Council. The Berbice Chamber of Commerce has been encouraging the people there to do as much as they can in the cultivation of padi and so expand the rice area in the locality.

One cannot help feeling, that in spite of adverse weather conditions those rice-growers have displayed the utmost courage, fortitude and resolution in the prosecution of that industry, and they deserve every help and encouragement. With respect to grading,

that can be conveniently done in New Amsterdam. Why should samples of rice be sent to Georgetown to be graded before the rice delivered is actually paid for? Why all this centralization in Georgetown in meeting the needs of the people who are the growers of the produce? Surely they are entitled to some consideration. I know they will get sympathetic consideration from Your Excellency on this particular question. This point was made before. With respect to the rice bonds, I am glad to say that rice bonds are being established in the country districts and I commend Government on it. But only milled rice is allowed to be taken into those bonds while the padi remains exposed to the weather. Now that the matter has been brought to the attention of Government, I feel sure that Your Excellency will give it your sympathetic consideration.

Mr. FERREIRA: We are very grateful to Government for introducing this Bill. I cannot for a moment believe that anyone will oppose it. The objects of the Bill are clearly stated. The Bill confers a greater measure of self-government on the rice producers, and I go further and say that this is a challenge to those directly interested in the industry to prove their mettle, and I have no doubt that those selected to the Board will prove that they are capable and will justify the confidence Government is now placing in them. I have no doubt that these Associations and future Boards will be the success we all hope for. I feel that in view of the various schemes which are being carried out throughout the Colony, particularly on the Corentyne Coast, rice production will increase and rice will be able to play a much bigger part in the economics of this Colony. I would therefore like to join in the remarks which Your Excellency made in regard to payment in Berbice and to join the last speaker in his representation. I thoroughly endorse all he has said in regard to the necessity of giving an honest deal to those people. It is not

today but for years, from the inception of the Rice Marketing Board, the question of payment on the spot has been raised. The Berbice Chamber of Commerce on more than one occasion made representation to Government, but for reasons better known to those in control those representations were thrown aside. For the life of me I cannot see, and I refuse to accept the view, that rice cannot be graded, cannot be blended and cannot be exported at the Berbice end.

We have had all sorts of fallacious arguments put up. We have been told in the first place that the type of rice coming from Berbice must be graded with Demerara and Essequibo rice in order to find a market in the West Indies. I am amazed at such a statement, when before the Berbice River Bar came into being Berbice exported rice to the West Indies and would have continued to do so had it not been for the bar at the mouth of the river. What is the big idea? Is it done to pay 20 cents on every bag of rice conveyed from Berbice to Georgetown by railway, though we have been told that the railway system is overburdened? Is it done to afford employment to persons in Georgetown? Is it done for someone's benefit? If you are going to be honest to the people on the Corentyne Coast, then afford them the grading of their rice and payment on the spot. Those rice-growers are all small men many of whom are very poor. Why should they have to wait two or three weeks for their money?

I am not accusing the Board of deliberately holding them up, but on the contrary I congratulate the Board for doing an excellent bit of work. But why should we in Berbice be inconvenienced? Surely if we produce more rice than the other two counties, why not ship Demerara and Essequibo rice to Berbice and have it graded and blended there? It is grossly unfair that this state of affairs should continue. I have been told that there are

no shipping facilities at Berbice. Well, possibly no effort has been made to afford such facilities. But it just strikes me that we have to get people from abroad to come here and show us what should be done. Until the last few months we have been shipping bauxite from Berbice direct to the United States. Berbice has no harbour, it is said, but if a private individual or concern wants to save 20 cents on every bag of its produce those facilities will be found.

I say, Your Excellency should not give your assent to this Bill until that point is clearly settled, until we have a clear-cut decision that Berbice will get a fair deal, that the growers will be paid promptly and their rice graded, blended and shipped from Berbice. At the estimates meeting of this Council in December last I put up a suggestion that this Colony should have its own Intercolonial shipping. I had this idea then at the back of my mind. In pre-war years the Dutch steamers took rice and cattle from Springlands. Why cannot rice be taken from there too, and why not from New Amsterdam? It strikes every Berbician that this thing is being continued merely to put extra dollars into several pursuits in Water Street.

Mr. JACKSON: I rise to express my decision to support this Bill and to compliment Government on bringing it forward. Anything that makes for the advancement of the interest of the people and at the same time will give them a large hand in any project with which they are concerned will always have my support. I think this is a democratic Bill. There are certain hon. Members who speak very frequently of democracy and, I believe, as this is a democratic Bill it will be accepted by this Council. But there is one section of it which has given me some thought. I refer to clause 9 sub-clause (5). I am wondering whether this is in keeping with Government's recently implemented policy. I do not know, sir,

whether Government has found out at last that it is the proper thing to reimburse those who have spent money in doing Government's work. I notice in this clause that it is intended that reasonable travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of members of the Council and of the Committee of the Association be paid. I think it is a very good thing indeed. At first I thought I should oppose it, that I should move the deletion of that clause when we come to consider the Bill clause by clause, but on reflection I now think that those who have been suffering from want of consideration in respect of a similar matter will have a very strong case to put forward if this clause is passed. Therefore I will let it go through as, perhaps, Government will realize, if it has not yet, that it is the best thing to refund the money spent by Members of the Legislature in doing work for the benefit of Government. A very good friend of mine has just handed me a slip of paper asking what about the railway passes. I can give him a secret. As Government is satisfied, by the clause I have referred to, to pay the travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of members of the Rice Council and Committee attending meetings of the Board, Government will refund his expenses so long as he can produce the vouchers. I support the Bill.

Mr. de AGUIAR: As I sat here and listened to the enconiums showered on Government for the introduction of this Bill, I could not help reflecting on the debate we have had in this Council until quite recently on what was then characterized as Government interference with the rice industry. It seems to me now that we have reached a stage where a decision has been taken to establish the Rice Marketing Board on a statutory basis and to form a Rice Producers' Association on a more stable basis than was the case in the past, Members of this Council feel that the time has come when Government should be praised for the steps it endeavoured to carry out within the last few years.

Of course it does afford the opportunity to some Members to criticize in a strain we are so accustomed to listen to in this Council. I have heard one speaker refer to the irritation that some people suffered on the Corentyne Coast through the non-payment of money by the Rice Marketing Board, yet those Members have failed to make comparison between the system as it exists today and the system as we knew it to be until the Board came into existence. Let us be honest to ourselves, and before we criticize merely for the purpose of record or publication and indulge in destructive criticism let us make comparisons. It is true that, perhaps, certain improvements are to be made, but to say that the present system is one of irritation is to my mind so unjust, as it is better than what used to happen.

Some Members made reference to the rice producer on the Corentyne Coast. In the selling of his rice, whether he went to the merchants in New Amsterdam or in Georgetown, that producer had to follow his shipment personally. He travelled by train with his rice, waited his turn to take delivery from the Railway, made delivery of the rice to the merchant and had to wait on the merchant to be satisfied with the quality of the rice. Very often he found him against it and, I know from experience, he spent ten to sixteen days in Georgetown before he could return home with the money.

Mr. JACOB: May I rise to a point of correction! If the hon. Member reflects he would see that statement is not correct.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I challenge the hon. Member to say my statement is incorrect. The hon. Member knows, as well as I do, that the statement I made is correct. If the hon. Member desires proof I am willing to lay that proof at his disposal. I can probably remind the hon. Member of certain things in respect of his own transactions which he should know better than I do. How-

ever, that is the position as it was then. There can be no doubt about it, the position today is very much better and what, I think, we ought to do is to try and improve upon it and make it better still. But to come here and use such strong adjectives as irritating, it seems to me is not the spirit that this Government is looking for in introducing this Bill. I had hoped that Members would have said: "Now that Government has taken in hand the establishment of the Board on a permanent statutory basis, now that Government has decided to establish Rice Producers' Associations throughout the country on a more permanent basis, we will endeavour to get those people who are concerned with this industry to co-operate and make the Associations a success, make the Rice Marketing Board a success" instead of complaining about conditions which they know only too well are an improvement on what existed before.

Although I have no authority to speak for Government I am sure I voice the sentiments of Government when I say that it is hoped that the introduction of this measure will provide a guiding hand to the people engaged in the rice industry, and that they will co-operate with those persons who will carry out the functions of the Association and thereby make it a success. Government does not want an Association of this kind to die like the many Associations which have sprung up in the past, and that is the reason why efforts are being made to establish it on this basis.

I was surprised to hear the remarks of the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) when he endeavoured to establish a case for the shipping of rice direct from Berbice. I can hardly refrain from reminding him of the fact that the efforts he referred to in the past to make such shipments were not as successful as he thinks. Those of us who are in the trade know only too well the anxiety at that time to obtain full cargoes—in fact to obtain any cargo at all,

Mr. FERREIRA: I certainly question that statement. The records are there.

Mr. de AGUIAR: The hon. Member, like my friend the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob), is not familiar with the subject.

Mr. FERREIRA: I beg to differ.

Mr. de AGUIAR: The hon. Member is quite correct—the record is there to prove that what I have said is correct. As regards grading, will he deny that there is a distinct improvement in the grade of padi and rice coming from the Corentyne area, and will he deny also that that improvement has been gradual and has been taking place within the last 10 years? I do not think the hon. Member would deny that statement. If he does then I shall have to remind him of the time when most of the No. 2 and No. 3 grades of rice exported from this country came from that particular area. We are all very proud to see the improvement that has taken place, and we all hope that it will continue, and that the Corentyne area will produce one of the best grades of rice we can hope to produce in this country; but this is all in the transition stage. When everything is perfect and steamers can enter the New Amsterdam harbour freely, that is the time when the people of Berbice could raise their voices in the way they are doing and claim the right to make their shipments as they used to do. Of course nothing that I have said should be interpreted to mean that the possibility of making shipments from Berbice in future should not be explored. I have no doubt that the matter will be fully explored, and if it is found practicable I have no doubt that steps will be taken to give that relief.

I wish to remind the hon. Member that the Rice Marketing Board is not a purchaser of padi; it only buys rice. Of course when he used the word "padi" he was thinking more in terms of the

industry, but I thought I should make that point very clear lest his remarks be misunderstood by people outside. I wish also to amplify the remark made by the hon. Mover of the motion when he rose to a point of correction in regard to an incident referred to by the same hon. Member, and to remind him, too, that it is not the practice of the Board to purchase rice in mills. The law provides that the rice must be delivered to the Board, but with respect to the incident quoted by the hon. Member, if a person produced a railway receipt, provided it is of course genuine, the Board would make payment on account of that rice. Hon. Members will appreciate the danger that would be involved if the Board attempted to purchase rice in the mills. It cannot be done and I do not think it should be expected. The incident to which the hon. Member referred is unfortunate. There may not have been undue pressure on the part of some authority in regard to those people, but at the same time I do not think it is fair to say that the Board was at fault and was responsible for the rice being left open. The Board had nothing to do with it at all. If the man did not complete his contract he could not expect to receive payment.

On the question of payment I think it was stated before that the present system is that advances are made, and I think the hon. Mover has said before that efforts were made to improve on that system. Hon. Members may be assured that as soon as it is possible to carry out those improvements they will be done. At the same time we can only hope for success in all these efforts we are making, either by the Board or by the Association, if we receive the full co-operation of the people concerned, and the least we can do is to point out to those people the advantages to be gained, because I do not think it can be denied that these measures are of great advantage to the people who are engaged in this industry. The Bill has my full support, and in accordance with what I have said

before, I sincerely hope it will work successfully, and that we will receive the co-operation of the people engaged in the industry.

Mr. THOMPSON: I rise to say that Western Berbice especially is enthusiastic over this Bill. I am heartily in agreement with the observations made by Your Excellency. There are facilities in Berbice for the shipment of rice. If bauxite can be shipped from Berbice why can't we ship rice and other articles? The facilities are there and can be improved. I see no reason why Berbice should be neglected and denied such facilities. Let us have our rice graded on the spot and our bills paid readily, and the Board will have all the co-operation it requires. The necessity for this Bill is quite clear. We have had meetings in Western Berbice, and District Associations are being formed. Members are actually being enrolled in anticipation of this Bill being passed. The concluding sentence of the Objects and Reasons reads:

"The Bill proposes to confer on rice producers a substantial measure of self-government in their own industry which should begin the education necessary for ultimate complete control of their affairs."

That declaration by Government has met with general approval. There is enthusiasm everywhere, and the rice producers of Western Berbice have pledged their wholehearted co-operation. The only disagreement I heard was in respect to the constitution of the Council of the Association. They suggest that of the 24 rice producers to form the Council 12 should be actual rice growers. I pointed out to them that the clause says: "of whom not less than nine shall be rice farmers", so that there was nothing to preclude the election of 12 rice farmers.

I can assure Government that from Berbice it can expect the greatest support for the Association and the new Rice Marketing Board. On the lower West Coast 300 persons have enrolled

as members of the District Association and paid their entrance fee of a shilling, in spite of the fact that the Bill has not yet been passed. That alone is evidence of their interest in the proposal, and their appreciation of the fact that through the new organization their interests will be safeguarded. On behalf of the Berbicians I support the Bill wholeheartedly.

Mr. JACOB: I did not intend to say anything on this Bill because I am satisfied that as framed it will not render very much assistance to the rice growers, but having listened to the remarks of those hon. gentlemen who are so enthusiastic about it I am inclined to vote against the Bill simply to have my dissent recorded. If after 13 years of Government control (one hon. Member said "interference") and assistance we find the rice industry no better off than it was 13 years ago I hesitate to think that the formation of this Association will make it prosper in the way suggested by several hon. Members. The Association is going to perform wonders; it is going to have members throughout the Colony—District Associations scattered all over the Colony, from which members will derive certain benefits on payment of a nominal fee—and the Secretary of the Association will be appointed and paid by the Rice Marketing Board. I am told that such an Association will enhance the production of rice. When I examine the functions of the Association, as provided for in clause 4 of the Bill, I see nothing that will give real tangible help to the producers of rice. The functions of the Association will be:—

"(a) the protection, promotion and advancement of the interests of rice producers generally;"

Very good general terms I may say. Then we have paragraph (b) which reads:

"(b) the proposal of any measures including co-operative schemes of all kinds conducive to the maintenance or extension of production in the industry."

There again we have very good phrases, but what do they mean? I pass on to the other paragraphs which read:

"(c) representing rice producers on the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board through and by means of members of the Council appointed by the Governor to be members of the said Board in manner provided by section four of the Rice Marketing Ordinance, 1946;

(d) making representations to the Governor concerning any matter affecting production in the industry, the operations of the Rice Marketing Board and the interests of rice producers generally; and

(e) inquiring into and reporting on any questions relating to the industry which may be referred to it by the Governor or by anybody lawfully concerned with any phase of the industry, and advising on any matter connected therewith."

Very good phrases, very good objects I should think, but the real thing, such as financial assistance to the industry, efficient drainage and irrigation, reduction of freight rates, communal machinery and things like those are not mentioned. I may be told that all those things are included in the verbiage I have read which comprise the functions of the Association. Too long have I listened to speeches of this kind in this Council and outside, but what do I find? After all these years I find practically no improvement in this Colony in regard to agricultural industries. That is the line I propose to take up this afternoon. That is how I propose to look into this Bill. I have read and re-read it. It looks harmless on the face of it but it is going to be a millstone around the necks of the rice producers, and will not give them what they at least expect.

As has been asked by certain hon. Members, why can't we export rice-direct from Berbice? The fact is that the rice is not there. It would be uneconomical to export rice from Berbice. The Rice Marketing Board buys Super,

Extra, No. 1, and other grades of rice, but it does not ship those grades as they are bought. It blends the rice so as to make huge profits from the rice producers, and what it has done with those profits in the past? If there had been a uniform system of buying rice and exporting the same grades it would have been practicable to export rice direct from Berbice. It is not practicable at the present time, and I wish those hon. Members who are thinking of that would realize that.

In addition there are various facilities which would have to be provided. At one time it was felt that in view of the fact that the Rice Marketing Board proposed to purchase all rice and to handle the entire export of rice it would have been a practical proposition, but the Board has manipulated things in such a way as to make it impracticable and uneconomic. In the past exporters of rice have shipped rice direct from Springlands and New Amsterdam to the French, Trinidad and Barbados markets, saving a good deal of expense in transportation, but the Board has proved itself incapable of doing what several individuals have done in the past. It can be done again but not at present, because of lack of facilities, incompetence and shortage of supplies of rice. At one time the Board was in great difficulty to find rice to supply local needs.

I say that while this Council may be very enthusiastic about this Bill—that it is going to cure all our ills, and that rice producers are going to be prosperous and contented—I wish to sound a note of warning that that will not be the case. Possibly it is a long rope for those who want to hang themselves. Is Government satisfied that the production of rice has increased? Is Government satisfied that the passing of this scrap of paper in the form of a Bill is going to give us all the rice we want and bring prosperity to the industry? All these scraps of paper will have to be thrown away, and we will have to get down to practical politics. The farmers

must be provided with properly drained and irrigated lands, machinery, and efficient mills, and in spite of all the experts in these matters I say that we have not yet started to do these things.

The Mahaicony scheme has collapsed. The quantity of rice being produced there now should be recorded and compared with what was produced years ago. Of course figures mean nothing to Government except, of course, financial figures which mean increased salaries &c., but when it comes to figures of production costs and selling prices those mean absolutely nothing to Government. I have heard of the wonderful mill to be erected at Mahaicony. Let us hope it will not turn out to be like the mill at Anna Regina. This Bill, when it becomes law, is not going to give the producers the great relief they so earnestly expect. I was tickled when I read the concluding sentence of the Objects and Reasons in which the Attorney-General states:

“The Bill proposes to confer on rice producers a substantial measure of self-government in their own industry which should begin the education necessary for ultimate complete control of their affairs”.

I think it is time we stopped this hypocrisy. You are giving people self-government in their own affairs under Crown Colony rule, under a single Administrator or a Governor of the Colony who has the right to do as he likes. You will only do that when the Constitution of the Colony is changed. The people must not be misled by such empty phrases; they mean absolutely nothing, and you know it better than I do. The constitution of the Rice Marketing Board provides practically no self-government. The Governor's nominees can do whatever they like, and if the people do not agree with Government's policy the whole thing will collapse. Associations have collapsed in the past because, as the hon. the Fifth Nominated Member has said, they did not get Government recognition. Of course if they had Government

recognition it would have meant agreeing *in toto* with whatever Government wished. This Association will get funds provided it carries out the dictates of the Rice Marketing Board.

The Rice Marketing Board will continue to function under that Ordinance, provided certain things are done which Government wants done. That is the whole thing in a nutshell. I am not going to be bullied, and I will not accept that this Bill is going to give a measure of self-government to those engaged in the industry. If it were an association organised and carried on by the people themselves without Government interference, without Government collaboration and without Government funds—I use the word advisedly as the Rice Marketing Board's funds will be Government funds—then it ought to succeed. As it is being framed, as it is to be carried out, I am sure this Government is not going to give the help to the producers which they expect. I think I will be alone in my opposition. I prefer to stand alone. It shall not be said that the whole Legislature approves of something that I am certain will not give the desired results. I am sorry I cannot support this Bill.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Sir, like the hon. Member for North-Western District I did not intend to take any part in the discussion on this Bill whatever, as I felt certain that it would have received the support of the entire Council. I must admit, however, I am not so much disappointed because up to now there is but one dissident to the Bill before this Council. I really could not follow the hon. Member's argument, neither could I follow the attitude he is adopting. Being a Trade Unionist himself I thought he would have adopted an attitude of co-operation in the formation of other associations in every industry or in every walk of life which will ensure security for that body of people who get together to ensure success for any one industry in which the association is able to function and to do so

properly. The success of this Bill depends on the people themselves. I think the hon. Member has placed his own interpretation but, as has been drafted in the Bill, the Association will be formed by the people themselves, will have its own committee, will arrive at its own decisions and, if those decisions require the assistance of Government, then representation would be made by the Association itself to Government. If that is not democracy as is being preached by the hon. Member himself, then I really cannot follow his democratic outlook at all.

But, sir, I hope this Bill will be an incentive to the rice growers throughout the Colony to form themselves into the Association and endeavour to look after their own interest to the best of their ability. Opportunity has been taken to level criticisms against the Board now in existence, but I doubt whether those criticisms were made on right premises, whether they were made on facts. Most of the criticisms that have been made were based on wrong premises. The facts were not correct. I know, it is a sore question so far as Corentyne, Berbice, is concerned, that the rice produced there should be brought into Georgetown to be graded and blended. The hon. Member for Central Demerara has touched upon that point. I agree that it may be possible, perhaps, the day is not far off when the rice may be graded, blended and paid for in Berbice, should the improvement made in the industry during the past four or five years continue. The hon. Member for North-Western District touched upon the very point when he said that the Board has a uniform system of grading. It is quite right that an organization of that kind should have uniformity in its grading, and that is one of the contributing factors of the system of grading and blending the rice in Georgetown. It is because of the fact that the Board will not be in a position to sell to the West Indian Islands a uniform No. 1 or Super or any grade of rice if the rice is to be blended and graded also

in Berbice. The blend cannot be uniform. There must be a difference. In the case of a single selling organization the grading has to be uniform and on that uniformity the success of this Board lies. I hope whenever it is decided to grade and blend in Berbice the organization will be able to do so on a uniform standard. I think, sir, that is the greatest complaint that has been made against this Board, and I hope that with the co-operation and with the continued improvement of padi in Berbice the Board will be able to ship rice from Berbice.,

So far as the Association is concerned, it has been mentioned by the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member that the Association in Western Berbice was not started in anticipation of this Bill coming into force but was started long before. I think it was in existence for nearly a year now. The farmers there know very well that their interests will be far better served if they form themselves into a body. I hope by this Association having recognition from Government there will be associations not only in Western Berbice but throughout the Colony in the interests of the rice industry as a whole I may mention that grading and blending were not done in Berbice because of any interest in Georgetown but solely in the interests of the rice industry as a whole. It is because of the fact that if there is no uniformity of grading there can be no confidence in the organization so far as the Export trade is concerned and, I hope, not because of the continued representation that will be made from Berbice, grading and blending will be started in Berbice when the time is ripe for such. If a start is made before that time, I am sure it will not succeed because of the fact that if the organization makes a shipment of rice from Berbice and one from Georgetown of the same grade, to the same Colony, that rice will not be uniform in its blending. Therefore, I say, grading, blending and shipping at the Berbice end should not start too early in the interests of the industry, not until the time is ripe for it.

If I follow the representation as has been put to me by the rice growers on the Corentyne Coast, it is not so much the ready money they want for their rice as that has been met for some years by an advance being given them. It is the delay in transportation not only from New Amsterdam to Georgetown but from the various areas, especially during the war period. To meet that, Your Excellency has actually placed motor control there and I feel certain that during Your Excellency's visit to Berbice you also must have heard the dissatisfaction expressed over motor control in that area. If transportation becomes easy, I feel certain that the people there would be quite satisfied should payment, grading and blending be done within a reasonable time. But, sir, we know that during the war period there was difficulty not only in transportation but in many other things, and it was during that period the Board was operating under a great handicap. My hon. friend on my left always places the Board's existence at 1932, for what reason I do not know. He knows, as well as every Member of this Council, that the Board only came into existence in 1939, and during those strenuous years it could not be expected of the Board not only to perform the duties entrusted to it but to make one produce a better grade of rice and to improve the industry 100 per cent. though the Central Government had undertaken the responsibility of providing irrigation and drainage during a short period of years. I hope the Bill would receive wholehearted support in this Council and from the rice farmers throughout the Colony.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I shall be very brief. I rather think that the debate has strayed somewhat widely from the principles of the Bill before the Council, but there is reason for that, having regard to Your Excellency's statement after I spoke, and I would say that the hon. Members for Berbice have used the opportunity very

well, doughty fighters as they are, to press the case for autonomy of the rice industry in Berbice. I would say that if I were a Berbician probably I would have done the same thing. Though I sympathise with them I do not consider that the correct method to deal with Berbice while that county remains a part of British Guiana. Of course, I do not want to be drawn into an argument or a controversy on this very vexed question. It is a very technical and difficult one. There is much to be said on both sides, but there are other points of view the hon. Members for Central Demerara and for Western Berbice have indicated. The representations which have been made have weight and must be dealt with, and I feel sure that the new Board is going to take those representations into full consideration and do their utmost to meet them, provided always that what is done is not only in the interests of the rice industry as a whole but in the interests of the county of Berbice itself.

The hon. Member for Western Berbice did use a wise word when he said that in this particular matter we should go slowly. One hon. Member recalled the time when rice was shipped from Springlands in large quantities to the French Islands. I am glad to think that no such rice is now produced in the county of Berbice, because that rice which was shipped comprised probably the most inferior type of rice produced in this Colony. It was rice which could be sold nowhere else but in the French Islands, and the opportunity of doing so by shipping from Springlands was a very valuable one as that rice was got rid of. I do not want to enter into a controversy on that particular matter. It is one which has to be gone into very carefully. Every aspect of prompt payment is being dealt with by a system of advances, and this dying Board has already placed on record its decision to open a district office at Springlands and one at New Amsterdam where payments can be made on the spot even quicker than the advances are paid in Georgetown.

As to the Bill itself, I appreciate very fully the remarks which were made by those Members who spoke in favour of it, and particularly the remarks of the hon. the Fifth Nominated Member. In this connection I find a strange conflict of views between the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun and the hon. Member for North Western District. Here we have these two gentlemen, both imbued with Trade Union ideas, both full of knowledge and ideas of democracy, yet we find Mr. Edun praising the Bill and seeing in it the beginning of something useful, something desirable, something co-operative, something democratic, and the other gentleman seeing something hypocritical, something evil. This Council can decide between those two points of view, but I feel that on this occasion Mr. Edun is very right.

There is one thing Mr. Edun has said which is important, and that is that the District Committees are going to be the real meat of the Association; it is up to them to work hard and to produce and represent the needs of the rice producers in their various districts. He also said that these District Committees would need guidance. That is why in my opening remarks I emphasized the need for a capable and efficient General Secretary, because it is up to that individual to keep it going, not only to help the Council itself but to extend a guiding hand to all District Committees and see them all functioning properly so as to make this Association a real live, hard working, useful body. I do not think there is any question of principle which I need answer.

The PRESIDENT: I have been exceedingly entertained. I remain unrepentant as regards the observations I made in throwing open the debate. I cannot believe that every pound of rice to be exported from British Guiana must come to Georgetown and be graded by the gentlemen in Water Street. It simply does not seem to me practical. It is overdoing things. That is one of the reasons why we have not got as

much rice within these few years as we should. It is this rigid mentality and temperament. What we want is production at all cost. Risk a little. Give loans. Do not humbug too much in respect of loans. That has not been the mentality of the Board. That is one reason why we have not seen the rice coming forward as it might have with our loans and a more ideal organization. It seems that every pound of rice coming to Georgetown to be graded and exported presupposes some policy in which it has to get something. Where it is well known that a half-dozen places, some Islands, which are not only taking the best quality and you have got a quality which measures up to that acceptable by those particular places, why not send it direct? I will not dogmatise, but I think the members of this Board should have a little flexibility of mind in dealing with that matter.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

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

Clause 2—*Interpretation.*

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that with respect to the definition of "District" and of "District Association" the letter "s" be added to the word "purpose" in the second lines thereof. The idea is just to make the word plural instead of being singular.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause passed as amended.

Clause 5—*Management of affairs of Association vested in a Council.*

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that sub-clause (2) be amended by the substitution of the sub-clause as printed on the paper which has been tabled. The new sub-clause reads:

"(2) The members of the Council shall be twenty-four rice producers elected as hereinafter provided, of whom not less than nine shall be rice farmers, not less than five shall be manufacturers and not less than four shall be landlords."

I have already explained the reason for that in my opening remarks. I will take this opportunity to refer to the statement made by the hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo, the object of which, I think, is to make the number of rice farmers eleven instead of nine. No particular reason has been given for it, and the proportions in the Bill have been rather carefully worked out and, as some Members have said, the rice farmers may get more in the membership of the Council. Nine is the minimum, but in the course of election they may get more than that. Then opportunity has been taken to meet the statement that 50 per cent. of the rice farmers should be what he calls "leaseholders" and "tenants." I am not quite clear as to what he means, but the definition of a rice producer in the main Bill includes all classes and particularly the tenants of ricelands. So there need be no fear; the rice farmers who find themselves on the Council and on the Committee will be those who are strictly speaking tenants of ricelands.

Dr. SINGH: "Rice producers" really means "farmers, millers and landlords," but we know that the majority of rice producers are farmers who lease lands from the landowners or from the Government. They are really in the majority, and my opinion is that instead of having nine farmers on the Council there should be eleven and the remainder divided between the other two classes.

The CHAIRMAN: No specification of the millers and landlords?

Dr. SINGH: Yes.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: In answer to that, I must say that the members of the Rice Committee were

very keen on having the landlords mentioned in some numerical strength for fear that they may be kept out.

The CHAIRMAN (to Dr. Singh): Do you wish to move an amendment?

Dr. SINGH: Yes; that instead of nine rice farmers there be not less than eleven.

The CHAIRMAN: We have two amendments—one as stated in the paper and the other by the hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo that not less than eleven shall be rice farmers and the rest of the sub-clause be omitted. I shall put the last amendment first.

Dr. Singh's amendment put, and not agreed to.

The substituted new sub-clause was next put, and agreed to.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that sub-clause (8) be amended as shown on the paper by substituting a semicolon for the full stop at the end of paragraph (b), adding the word "or" thereafter and the following new paragraph (c)—

"(c) if he suffers any term of imprisonment for any offence whatever."

I have already explained it.

Question put, and agreed to.

Subclause passed as amended.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that sub-clause (9) be amended by inserting a comma after the word "may" in the first line and adding after the comma the words "with the approval of the Governor." I also move the insertion of the following new sub-clause (10)—

10. The General Secretary shall not be dismissed by the Council without the approval of the Governor.

As I have already explained, it is the desire of the Central Rice Commit-

tee that the Governor should have some say in the matter of the appointment of the General Secretary, and that he should not be dismissed without his approval.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 6.—*Constitution of District Associations.*

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that sub-clause (1) be amended by the insertion of the words "in Council" between the words "Governor" and "sub-divide" in the second line. The effect of those amendments is that the word "Governor" should be replaced by the words "Governor in Council." The people concerned seem to think that the Governor should be aided by his Council in coming to decisions about the sub-division of districts.

Amendment agreed to.

Sub-clause (2) was similarly amended.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that sub-clause (5) be amended by the insertion of a full stop after the word "months" in the second line, and the deletion of the remainder of the sub-clause.

Amendment agreed to.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I also move that sub-clause (6) be renumbered (7) and the following new sub-clause (6) be substituted:—

- (6) The seat of a member of the Committee shall become vacant if—
- (a) he fails to attend three consecutive quarterly meetings of the Council; or
- (b) he becomes insolvent; or
- (c) if he suffers any term of imprisonment for any offence whatever.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 6 as amended put, and agreed to.

Clause 7.—*Functions of Committee.*

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move the deletion of clause 7 and the substitution of the following:—

7. A Committee may with respect to its own District perform any of the functions of the Association under paragraphs (b) and (d) of Section four of this Ordinance, but the decision of a Committee on any measure to be proposed under paragraph (b) or any representation to be made under paragraph (d) shall be communicated through and by the Council.

The reason for this amendment is that the printed clause puts all the power in the hands of the Council and does not allow the District Association sufficient freedom of action. The new clause allows the Association to decide certain things; to make proposals and communicate them to the Council who would have to submit them to the proper quarter. Under the clause as printed, if the Council thought fit it need not act at all. That is considered to be autocratic. The new clause provides a certain amount of freedom of action.

New clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8.—*Power to make Regulations.*

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that sub-clause (2) (a) be amended by deleting the words "enrolling of rice producers in a District as" and substituting therefor the words "registration of." That is a simpler phrase and will be used in the Regulations.

I also move that paragraph (f) be amended by inserting between the word "by" and "a" in the second line the words "the Council or."

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to,

The CHAIRMAN: Treasurer, you have not mentioned that the Regulations are ready.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes, sir, they are ready.

The Council resumed.

The PRESIDENT: Do you wish to take the third reading now? We have a rather depleted Council. I have no objection.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: With the permission of the Council I beg to 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.

SUMMARY JURISDICTION (OFFENCES)
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 1946.

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Ordinance by increasing the imprisonment which may be awarded for larceny of bicycles and similar offences in relation thereto; by prohibiting kite flying in Georgetown and New Amsterdam; by providing for the imposition of penalties on persons smoking on wharves in contravention of a notice forbidding such smoking; by prohibiting roller-skating on public ways in Georgetown and New Amsterdam and on public roads; by providing for the imposition of penalties for the release of animals lawfully seized to be impounded as strays and for the unlawful rescue or release of such animals when impounded; And by making further provision for the control of brothels."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill seeks to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Ordinance with regard to certain matters which appear in the long title. As will be seen from the Objects and Reasons, the term of imprisonment which may be imposed by a Magistrate for the larceny of a bicycle or a similar offence in relation to a bicycle, cannot now exceed six months. In view of the prevalence of such offences it is considered desirable that the maximum term of imprisonment should be increased to 12 months. I know that some people think that the proper deterrent against the larceny of bicycles should be the introduction of

flogging, but it will be appreciated that that would be an extension of the scope of the application of corporal punishment, and I am sure hon. Members will recollect that some time during last week there appeared in the Press a statement made by the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies on the question of corporal punishment. The report in the Press states:

"The British Government are taking active steps to abolish flogging for juveniles and to reduce it to narrow limits for adults in the Colonies, Mr. Arthur Creech-Jones, Colonial Under-Secretary, told the House of Commons last night."

"Speaking for the Colonial Secretary, Mr. George Hall, who is ill, Mr. Creech-Jones said that the campaign waged for several years by the Colonial Secretaries to diminish flogging would be increased, and the Colonial Office were pursuing a social and economic policy for the prevention of crime rather than attaching over-emphasis on the punishment of crime."

"He was replying to Labour Members who had questioned the re-imposition in Trinidad, deploring it chiefly because they said Britain was the only European country retaining such punishment, and the British Empire the only Colonial Empire which still found it necessary to flog natives."

"Mr. Creech-Jones said the Trinidad decision was taken only after consultation with the Governor, Sir Bede Clifford, of Trinidad. Legislation authorising flogging was to be effective only for two years, and reports of its use to be submitted every six months."

It will therefore be realized that steps are being taken not to extend the scope of the application of corporal punishment but rather to reduce it wherever it is applicable. Consequently, in order to deal with this prevalent crime of bicycle stealing steps are being taken to increase the term of imprisonment. I am sure it would go a long way in providing a very desirable and necessary deterrent.

The next point dealt with in the Bill is in clause 6 (a) which seeks to prohibit roller-skating in Georgetown and on public roads. As hon. Members will agree, the practice is considered dangerous not only to those who roller-

skate but also, to all other users of the roads. Consequently this provision will commend itself to hon. Members.

Clause 6 (b) seeks to prohibit kite-flying in Georgetown and New Amsterdam, and introduces the Defence (Restriction of Kite Flying) Regulations, 1942, (No. 18) into the Statute Law of the Colony. Those Regulations have been revoked and therefore it is necessary that we should have a similar provision in the Statute Law of the Colony.

Clause 6 (c) seeks to impose penalties on persons who disregard the "No Smoking" notices put up on wharves and stellings. I need hardly emphasize the necessity to provide some penalty for those who disregard those signs. It is a measure which is calculated to reduce fire hazards.

Clause 7 seeks to re-introduce section 159 of the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Ordinance, as it appeared in the 1930 edition of the Laws. It is considered necessary because Magistrates have held that section 8 of the Pounds Ordinance, Chapter 93, does not go far enough.

Clause 8 seeks to strengthen the ordinary law of the Colony in respect of the suppression of brothels, and is taken from Regulation 3 of the Defence (Offences against Morality) Regulations, 1943, (No. 4). It makes it an offence for a person in charge of premises to permit those premises to be used as a brothel, or for a landlord to let premises knowing that they are to be used as a brothel, or for a landlord to be a party to the continued use as a brothel of premises let by him. I think hon. Members will agree that a measure of this kind is desirable.

Opportunity is taken in clause 3 of the Bill to provide for the imposition of a fine in the case of conviction of the offence of larceny by a clerk or servant, or of the offence of embezzlement.

I do not think it is necessary for me to go further into the details. I am sure hon. Members realize the necessity for those matters to be dealt with by way of legislation which is now before Council. With these observations I move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr. ROTH: I would like to make a few remarks on three aspects of the Bill. With regard to bicycle stealing I am afraid I cannot agree with the remarks of the hon. the Attorney-General. Hon. Members will recollect that some months ago I brought a motion before Council for the introduction of flogging for bicycle stealing, and while a fair proportion of the Members were in favour of it the motion was not carried, but it was very significant that after that debate bicycle stealing dropped immediately, and it is only now that the fear of flogging has passed off that these thefts have begun to increase again, almost to as great an extent as before. I am not a lawyer but I understand the basis of our law is the sacredness of private property. In ancient days it was the King's deer; today it is the sacredness of the poor man's bicycle which I think should be protected as much as the King's deer in the old days. A large section of the public is in favour of the penalty of flogging to put a stop to this most prevalent and annoying offence. I am surprised at the Attorney-General's remarks as regards reducing the scope of the application of corporal punishment, because I observe in one of the sections of our law that it is proposed to impose a flogging for a more serious offence than bicycle stealing, I admit.

With regard to the use of roller-skates I consider that whilst there may be a certain amount of danger both to the skater and to the public there is not as much danger as that caused by the jay-walker or the crazy cyclist. The

worst that can be said of the roller-skater is the noise he makes at night on the asphalt roads. In Committee I will move an amendment that roller-skating be prohibited on pavements. I do not think roller-skaters should be allowed to use the pavements but I do not think it is fair to turn them off the streets. I have a recollection that some time ago there was some talk of allowing them to use the concrete extension on the northern side of the Bourda Market, but I noticed this morning that it is now fenced and I understand that for some time it has been more than occupied for its original legitimate purpose.

My final remark has reference to the unsavoury subject of brothels, a subject on which I consider some plain speaking is necessary. I am not one who believes that we can control or put a stop to what is known as the oldest profession in the world by legislation. It is a question of economics and education. However, it is but right that we should do what we can to put a stop to that kind of thing, and as we are going to strengthen the hands of the Police in this matter I trust that if and when they start another campaign for the suppression of such places they will be entirely impartial and not confine themselves to the purlieus of Lombard Street, but will give some attention to those well-known houses of ill fame in other Wards of the City.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

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

Clause 2.—

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. Member wish to move an amendment for the introduction of flogging?

Mr. ROTH: No, sir, I will not press the point.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 6.—

Mr. ROTH: I move that paragraph (a) of clause 6 be deleted and the following substituted:—

(xxia) roller-skates in the City of Georgetown or the town of New Amsterdam at any time on any footpath adjoining a public way or after 10 o'clock p.m. or before 6 o'clock a.m. on any public way in the said City and town."

The effect of that amendment would be to make it illegal for roller-skates to be used on any pavement or footpath, but except between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. they could be used on any street.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I understand that to mean that it would be allowed between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. My point is that it is less dangerous on the pavement than on the highway where there is traffic and liability for the skater to be injured or cause other users of the road to be injured.

Mr. ROTH: From personal experience I think it is less dangerous than the jay-walkers and cyclists.

Mr. deAGUIAR: I think the hon. Member intends to include a penalty against the jay-walker rather than exclude that against the skater. I am asking him not to press it. The intention is to remove the danger, but the suggestion of the hon. Member is that we might allow roller-skating to go on because the traffic is less.

Mr. ROTH: I have excluded those hours because the roller-skates disturb our rest on account of the noise they make at night.

The CHAIRMAN put the question that clause 6 as printed stand part of the Bill. The Committee divided and voted:—

For—Messrs. Thompson, Peer Bacchus, Austin, Critchlow, deAguiar, Dr. Singh the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—9.

Against—Mr. Roth—1.

Amendment lost.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the title and enacting clause be amended to read as follows:.

A Bill intituled "an Ordinance further to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Ordinance by increasing the imprisonment which may be imposed for larceny of bicycles and similar offences in relation thereto; by prohibiting roller-skating on public ways in Georgetown and New Amsterdam and on public roads; by prohibiting kite-flying in Georgetown and New Amsterdam; by providing for the imposition of penalties on persons smoking on wharves in contravention of a notice forbidding such smoking; by providing for the animals lawfully seized to be impounded as strays and for the unlawful rescue or release of such animals when impounded; and by making further provision for the suppression of brothels."

Amendment agreed to.

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.

The PRESIDENT: I would suggest that we adjourn *sine die* but we have business including the Income Tax Bill. Mr. Treasurer, when will you be ready to take that Bill?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Some time during the coming months, sir.

The PRESIDENT Therefore I cannot give any indication of the date of our next meeting. We also have the Landlords Bill and the Co-operative Loans and Factories Bill.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There is also the Excess Profits Tax Bill.

The PRESIDENT: I adjourn the Council *sine die*.