

SECOND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Monday, 29th December, 1958

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

Speaker, His Honour Sir Donald Jackson

Chief Secretary, Hon. M. S. Porcher (acting)

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

Financial Secretary, Hon. F. W. Essex.

The Honourable **Dr. C. B. Jagan**—*Member for Eastern Berbice*
(Minister of Trade and Industry)

B. H. Benn —*Member for Essequibo River*
(Minister of Community Development and Education)

„ „ **E. B. Beharry** —*Member for Eastern Demerara*
(Minister of Natural Resources)

„ **Janet Jagan** —*Member for Western Essequibo*
(Minister of Labour, Health and Housing)

„ **Ram Karran** —*Member for Demerara-Essequibo*
(Minister of Communications and Works).

Mr. **R. B. Gajraj** —*Nominated Member*

„ **W. O. R. Kendall** —*Member for New Amsterdam*

„ **R. C. Tello** —*Nominated Member*

F. Bowman —*Member for Demerara River*

L. F. S. Burnham —*Member for Georgetown Central*

S. Campbell —*Member for North Western District*

A. L. Jackson —*Member for Georgetown North*

„ **B. S. Rai** —*Member for Central Demerara*

S. M. Saffee —*Member for Western Berbice*

„ **Aiodha Singh** —*Member for Berbice River*

„ **J. N. Singh** —*Member for Georgetown South*

„ **R. E. Davis** —*Nominated Member*

A. M. Fredericks —*Nominated Member*

„ **A. G. Tasker, O.B.E.** —*Nominated Member.*

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

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

ABSENT:

Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard—on leave.

The Clerk read prayers.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Monday, 22nd December 1958, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: I am glad to say that I am very pleased to see so many Members out this afternoon after the Christmas holidays. Everyone seems to be fresh and invigorated. I have every confidence that I may have to make the same pronouncement at our first meeting in the New Year.

I have to announce that the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard, has applied for leave from the 27th December, 1958, to the 11th January, 1959.

PAPERS LAID

The Attorney-General (Mr. Austin): I beg to lay on the Table the—

Third Report of the Land Registration Committee.

The Financial Secretary (Mr. Essex): I beg to lay on the Table the—

Report of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held on 7th November, 1958, covering the Supplementary Schedules of Expenditure for September/October, 1958 (Recurrent and Development).

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Report having been laid on the Table, the question is that the Report be adopted.

Question put, and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Financial Secretary: I beg to give notice of the introduction of the—

Appropriation Bill, 1959.

The Minister of Communications and Works (Mr. Ram Karran): I beg to give notice of the introduction of the following Bills:

- (i) Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 1958.

- (ii) Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) (Amendment) Bill, 1958.

ORDER OF THE DAY

BILLS—FIRST READING

The following Bills were read the First time:

- (i) A Bill intituled:

“An Ordinance to appropriate the supplies granted in the current session of the Legislative Council.”

- (ii) A Bill intituled:

“An Ordinance to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance”.

- (iii) A Bill intituled:

“An Ordinance to amend the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Ordinance”;

MOTIONS

IMPORT DUTY ON MATERIALS FOR PACKAGING OF LOCAL GOODS

CUSTOMS ORDER IN COUNCIL
No. 71 OF 1958

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move the following Motion:

“Be it resolved: That this Council in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order in Council No. 71 of 1958, which was made on the 24th day of November, 1958, and published in the Gazette on the 6th of December, 1958.

The first part of this Order deals with the import duty on packaging materials for products of local manufacture. Under item (I) of the second proviso to Part I of the first schedule to the Customs Ordinance common wrapping paper, paper bags and various other articles designed for packaging products of the territory are admitted at the low rates of 2% and 5%. Before the present tariff was enacted a wider variety of paper materials was allowed in at this low rate of duty, but as the tariff now stands there are certain types of wrapping paper in use for the packaging of locally made products, which do not qualify as common wrapping paper. For instance, cer-

tain types of grease-proof paper and kraft paper which are used extensively for this purpose.

The intention of the first part of this Order is to restore the position to what it was before, so that instead of the rates of 20% and 36% charged on these specialized types of wrapping paper, as Government is obligated to do under the present tariff, they will enter at 2% and 5%.

CREAM OF TARTAR SUBSTITUTE EXEMPT
FROM CUSTOMS DUTY

The second Amendment is to allow cream of tartar substitute which is used in the local manufacture of baking powder to come in duty free, if from Scheduled Territories. There is a small baking powder industry in the Colony, and cream of tartar substitute comprises about 50% of the cost of the ingredients of baking powder. It is not a big industry, but in pursuance of Government's policy to assist small industries it is proposed, at the request of the industry, to allow cream of tartar substitute to come in duty free instead of at 20% and 36% in accordance with the present tariff. I am sure that both parts of this Order will find favour in this Council.

The Chief Secretary: I beg to second Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

ESTIMATES FOR 1959

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move the following Motion:

"Be it resolved: That pending the passing of the 1959 Estimates, this Council approves of such expenditure for Recurrent and Development Expenditure in 1959 as may be required for the maintenance of existing services and the continuance of works in progress on the basis approved by this Council in the Annual and Supplementary Estimates for the year 1958."

As I explained last week, the passing of this Resolution is essential if the work of Government services is not to come to a full stop at midnight on the 31st December, 1958. It is most unfortunate that such a Resolution has had to be brought to this Council. From 1944, 1957 was the only occasion on which Government was able to have the Budget passed by the Legislative Council fully by the end of the year—I think that is the only time during the last 14 years.

This year there have been various administrative and financial difficulties in producing the Budget, and I am sorry that we have not been able to bring it earlier. I hope that we will be able to take the Second Reading of the Bill towards the end of next week—probably on the 8th January, 1959. It may sound a bit late to hold a meeting on the 8th, but I believe that it has been held as late as the 8th January on a previous occasion. Although we took the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill on the 6th December last year, nevertheless, we did not get the Estimates finished until some time in March this year. I hope that, as I have apologized for my part in the tardiness in bringing forth the Budget, I can rely upon Members to speed up things in Finance Committee.

I am very sorry for the necessity of bringing this Motion, but there are, as I have said, reasons which made it impossible to bring the Budget before this Council earlier. I do not think Members will have any objection to the Motion as it stands, and I commend it to the Council. I may add that nothing new which is in the Draft Estimates will be started until the Estimates have been passed by this Council.

The Attorney-General: I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

CONTINUANCE OF MEDICAL
PRACTITIONERS (TEMPORARY
REGISTRATION) ORDINANCE

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): I beg to move the Motion appearing in my name and listed as item 4 on the Order of the Day, the resolve clause of which reads:

"... Be it resolved that the Medical Practitioners (Temporary Registration) Ordinance, Chapter 135, shall continue in force for a further period of one year from the 1st January 1959."

Notice of this Motion was given on 22nd December, 1958, and in moving it, I would like to point out to Members that it is intended to continue in force an Ordinance passed in 1947.

Under this Ordinance, persons with medical degrees which are not registrable or recognized in the United Kingdom have been given temporary registration. In section 4 the points are outlined under which a person may be registered: one, that he must be of a good character, two, that he holds a medical diploma granted anywhere outside the Colony which, for the time being, will be recognized by the Medical Board, and, three, that he must be employed in the Government Service or in any other approved institution — and for this purpose the St. Joseph's Mercy Hospital and the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital have been named.

At the moment there are seven Medical Practitioners listed under this Ordinance, six of whom are no longer in the Colony, so that this temporary registration now concerns only one Medical Practitioner. He is a Guianese and happens to have had his training in a University whose degrees are not acceptable in the United Kingdom.

This question of acceptance of medical degrees and diplomas does not necessarily reflect on a person's ability or on the institution at which that person has been trained, but it relates to the reciprocity between countries and the universities of those countries.

During this year we have been examining the possibility of being able to dispense with this Temporary Registration Ordinance. I had hoped to be able to remove it from our books and bring in a form of permanent legislation for such medical practitioners whose degrees may not be recognized by the United Kingdom but which can be acceptable to our Board, and for medical practitioners in this category who have given a specified number of years of acceptable service as a doctor.

However, this met with strong opposition from the British Medical Association, which prefers that we should continue with temporary legislation rather than introducing new legislation or amending present legislation whereby such persons can be registered permanently. Their contention is that there are sufficient Guianese medical students abroad who should be coming back to British Guiana. This controversy is still continuing. However, there can be no doubt that this Temporary Registration Ordinance is necessary, because from time to time there would be required in the institutions of British Guiana doctors — good medical practitioners and perhaps specialists — who may not have studied in universities which are accepted by the General Medical Council of Great Britain.

Therefore I ask Members of this Council to again support the continuation of the Medical Practitioners (Temporary Registration) Ordinance, Chapter 135.

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

Mr. Burnham: Of course, we are going to pass this Motion, but, of course, some of us like myself are entirely unimpressed by the reasons adduced by the Minister for going through the routine year after year of extending the life of this Ordinance. We are not convinced either, by the arguments allegedly put up by the local branch of the British Medical Association, for it seems that if it is

necessary to come here from year to year to extend the life of this Ordinance in order to keep on the register these particular persons who fall within the ambit of this Ordinance, you are admitting that they are good enough to be entrusted with people's life and limb, and therefore they should be good enough to be put permanently on the register to save time.

To talk about diplomas not recognized by the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom is not to say anything new. As a matter of fact it seems to show a lack of originality. Although we in many respects accept British standards, we are not tied to accept only what is accepted in the United Kingdom, and I cannot see why every year we must be going through this routine.

Last year when the Minister was not present and the Motion was piloted by the Minister of Trade and Industry there was an understanding that the matter would be carefully considered in order to have permanent legislation introduced. I cannot understand how this Government is now dissuaded from introducing sensible legislation because of certain arguments strongly put forward by the B.M.A.

The B.M.A., we are told, feels that we should not have permanent legislation instead of this temporary legislation. It is true that when dealing with matters that have to do with certain professions the opinions of the professional bodies must be canvassed and respected as far as possible. But this is not an instance where the Government should be dictated to by the local branch of the B.M.A., and it is a sign of weakness that the Government has not carefully considered this legislation and consequently is not in a position to introduce legislation to meet the circumstances.

There is no hope of the paucity of doctors vanishing here. We read of a few people leaving quite recently, and more are to leave. We definitely will need people who come under this Ordinance, and it is to be devoutly hoped that in the year of our Lord 1959 we will not have this display again, that we will

not have some specious arguments, some passing reference to the B.M.A., and some weak and tendentious argument about reciprocity between the United Kingdom and other nations. For goodness sake we ask the Government to get on with governing instead of politicking.

Mr. Tasker: I remember the debate on this Motion 12 months ago. I can sympathize with what I imagine is the B.M.A.'s attitude: professional status must be maintained and the prestige of the medical body should be upheld. What I do not see — and this is why I find myself in sympathy with the remarks of the hon. Member for Georgetown Central — is what difference it makes to the patient. If a doctor is not recognized by the B.M.A., as I understand the hon. Minister to say, but he is recognized by the Government and is temporarily registered as a medical practitioner and is working in the Colony, there should surely be no distinction.

I endorse the view of the hon. Member for Georgetown Central that it should not be impossible within another 12 months to bring together the views of the B.M.A. — an entirely responsible and praiseworthy body — and those of the Government, in order to give us the number of doctors we need, and to bring to an end this temporary legislation, once these doctors meet the minimum prescribed standards. If these doctors can be given a temporary permit, then I submit that they should be allowed to be put on a secure basis, and that the B.M.A. should be invited again to work out a method whereby this can be done.

Mrs. Jagan: I appreciate the remarks made by the two hon. Gentlemen. The last speaker suggested that efforts should be made to work out some sort of satisfactory solution with the B.M.A. But as far as I can see from their last expressed opinion, they are very clear on their point of view, that it is to protect their members from outside competition. They are also leaning quite heavily on the fact that it stems from the decisions

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taken by other branches of the B.M.A. in the Caribbean, which are against permanent registration.

At the moment it is not really a burning question because only one person is involved, and no harm is being done by retaining this type of legislation in force. But it has irritated one or two Members, and I have made a note of their opinions. I am sure that when we do come up with legislation they would be the first to support it, and not find some reason for not supporting it — perhaps because of pressure groups.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

CONTINUANCE OF RENT RESTRICTION ORDINANCE

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing (Mrs. Jagan): I beg to move the Motion standing in my name which reads:

“Whereas the Rent Restriction Ordinance, Chapter 186, came into operation on the 8th day of November, 1941;

And whereas Section 33 of the said Ordinance provides that the Ordinance shall continue in force up to and including the 31st day of December, 1951, but that, prior to the expiration thereof, the Legislative Council may, by Resolution published in the Gazette, declare that the said Ordinance shall continue in operation for a further period of one year;

And whereas the said Ordinance has been continued in operation until the 31st December, 1958;

And whereas it is considered expedient that the Rent Restriction Ordinance, Chapter 186, shall continue in force for a further period of one year:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Rent Restriction Ordinance, Chapter 186, shall continue in force for a further period of one year up to and including the 31st day of December, 1959.”

The extension of the Rent Restriction Ordinance has become necessary each year because of the acute housing shortage, and because of the perennial need to peg rents and what would be the rising cost of living if rents were not pegged. Those two considerations, I

think, are the most important factors in asking that the Rent Restriction Ordinance continue in force for another year.

We have had a report on the Ordinance which I mentioned to Members of this Council last year. At that time I told the Council that I was waiting on the report of the Sharples Committee. Unfortunately they have laboured but their labours have not yet resulted even in the production of a mouse. I have had talks with members of the Committee, among whom are certain prominent citizens. The Committee was fairly widely representative, but its examination of the Ordinance seems to be taking an endless period of time.

At my conference with the members of the Committee some months ago I suggested that rather than be cluttered up with the rather intricate examination of the Sharples Committee they should try to assist in producing some recommendations of incentives for house-building, which I think is extremely important at the moment. There is no doubt that many landlords feel restricted and rather resentful of the Ordinance which has to a great extent kept down the profits which they ordinarily would have made in the period of acute housing shortage. But when one examines the great deal of protection which the Ordinance has afforded the lower and middle income tenants one feels that the shortcomings, as far as landlords are concerned, are fully justified in the tremendous assistance which the Ordinance gives to the smaller man. The Sharples Committee's report did of course recognise that control of rents must be retained. In paragraph 20 it states:

“20. The Committee was nevertheless fully satisfied that under the present housing conditions in the Colony, some form of control over rents had to be retained, and that such controls should be kept in existence until such time as there was sufficient number of new buildings erected, and the interplay of supply and demand could once more automatically regulate the relationship between landlord and tenant”.

That is as I see it today; we must have control over rents. Further the Com-

mittee recommended in paragraph 22 of its report :

"22. After the most careful examination, therefore, the Committee unanimously resolved that a further increase of the present Standard Rents by the addition of a percentage, was undesirable, as such a method might result in hardship to the landlord or tenant, and fail to remove the existing dissatisfaction which is so very apparent in the relationship between landlords and tenants".

With our acute housing shortage which is increasing with our growing population, there must be two types of protection, one being the control over rentals,—the pegging of rentals, and the other, the protection of the tenant from being evicted by a landlord for reasons other than those listed in the Ordinance.

There have been comments by the Landlords' Association that the Rent Restriction Ordinance is preventing house-building. However, an examination of the house-building that is going on, particularly in the urban areas, does indicate that the Ordinance has not really stopped house-building. Every square inch of land in the urban area is being taken up and used for house-building. Quite a bit of it is going on now, but the unfortunate thing is that the house-building which is going on is not that which would assist the lower income group, with the exception of the Government housing schemes.

During the year there were two important changes in the Rent Restriction Ordinance, one of which was its extension to the whole Colony. By its extension it has afforded protection to the rural communities which evidently require the same protection as the city and suburban areas. It has provided quite a bit of protection to the areas which it now reaches, and I have known of a considerable number of cases in which tenants of house lots or houses, who would have been evicted, or who would have had to pay excessively high rents, were protected. That is an indication that it is not yet time for the Rent Restriction Ordinance to be taken off the Statute Book.

Members will recall that there was an amendment of the Ordinance during the year when Section 20(4) was repealed, thus abolishing the right of a landlord to charge premiums in respect of leases for a term of five years and upwards.

I am asking hon. Members to agree to continue in force the Rent Restriction Ordinance for one more year.

The Minister of Communications and Works (Mr. Ram Karran): I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

INDIAN LABOUR (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Minister of Community Development and Education (Mr. Benn): I beg to move the Second Reading of the Bill intituled :

"An Ordinance to amend the Indian Labour Ordinance".

Section 141 of the Indian Labour Ordinance, Chapter 104, provides that if an Indian who has been converted to Christianity desires to have his or her marriage legalized by a Christian minister, such person is required to produce from the Immigration Agent General a certificate called a non-impediment certificate, showing that no previous marriage still existed. Under the Marriage (Amendment) Ordinance of 1957, however, a Hindu or Muslim may have his or her marriage legalized without recourse to this process. The Bill which I am asking hon. Members to support is to remove that requirement from Christian Indians who wish to have their marriages legalized.

This matter was the subject of considerable correspondence between certain Christian ministers and myself. Just over a year ago the Vicar of St. Philip's Anglican Church, the Rev. Canon Worlledge, wrote a letter to the Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan) asking that the Section of the Ordinance which requires

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a Christian minister to secure a non-impediment certificate should be removed. Some time later, on the 22nd September this year, the Rev. J. W. L. Hoad, representing the East Demerara Free Church Ministers, wrote a letter to me in which, after congratulating the Ministry for removing racial statistics from school registers, he suggested that one other step in that direction should be the removal of this requirement from the Ordinance. I therefore have very great pleasure in asking hon. Members to support the removal of this outdated Section from the Ordinance, so that those Indians who have been converted to Christianity will be able to have their marriages legalized without recourse to the Immigration Agent General for a certificate of non-impediment. I beg to move that the Bill be read a Second time.

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan): I beg to second the Motion.

Mr. Gajraj: I wish at the outset to offer my congratulations to the hon. Minister for what I consider his courage in bringing forward this amendment of the Ordinance which not merely among the Indians themselves but in the office of the Immigration Agent General has long been regarded as sacrosanct, and efforts which have been made in the past to bring about conditions for Indians which would place them on exactly the same footing as other people in British Guiana on the basis of common citizenship, have always been objected to very strenuously. I myself have had the experience of having people worked up against attempts to bring Indians in the same position as others in British Guiana.

The question of the non-impediment certificate is one which has engaged the attention of people for a very long time, and I think the Minister is quite right in proposing that it should be removed, but I do not agree with the reasons which he has adduced, because he has referred to the Marriage (Amendment) Ordinance of 1957, wherein Hindu and Muslim

marriages under that Ordinance can be performed without the production of a non-impediment certificate. Had it been made compulsory under that Ordinance for such a certificate to be produced before marriage then Hindus and Muslims would have been placed under a disadvantage to the Christians who have been married under that Ordinance for over a century without the production of such a certificate. Merely to suggest that Section 141 of the Indian Labour Ordinance should be repealed in order to remove from Christian Indians the necessity to produce that certificate is again not being fair to Hindus and Muslims who are still being married under that Ordinance, because the mere amendment of the Marriage Ordinance in 1957 does not mean that Hindus and Muslims can no longer be married under the Indian Labour Ordinance. They have the choice of being married and having their marriages registered under both Ordinances—the Indian Labour Ordinance and the Marriage Ordinance.

If one were to check on the Indian Labour Ordinance—I have not had the time to go into the matter very carefully, but I have a copy of the relevant sections here—it would be seen that Section 137 refers to marriages which are performed by a magistrate. There are three types of marriages under the Indian Labour Ordinance: marriages performed by a magistrate, by a minister of the Christian Religion, and those performed under the personal law of the contracting parties. Up to now a certificate of non-impediment has to be produced for all three types of marriages. If we are going to remove the need for the non-impediment certificate, it would seem to me to be reasonable for us to remove that obligation from all three types of marriages. It would be necessary therefore to amend Sections 137 and 142 in addition to the Amendment proposed by the hon. Minister. I hope that he will look into the matter and, if necessary, I am sure that this Council would permit him to defer consideration of the Bill in order to give him time to consider the Amendments I have suggested.

I would like to repeat what the Hon. Minister said about the outmoded Sections of the Ordinance. The Indian Labour Ordinance is outmoded because it was put on the Statute Books at the time when Indian immigrants were brought here. They came here without any knowledge of the English language; they came here with their own religious customs and things of the kind, and it was fair then that legislation should have been put on our Statute Books in order to preserve their rights and customs.

I agree with the Majority Party in claiming that we want to build a new nation in this country. In British Guiana we have six peoples; we tell the world that it is a land of six peoples and that we live very well with each other. We want to continue that way and improve those relations, therefore, there should be a proper and complete integration of all the racial groups in the forming of this Guianese nation. I hope no one misunderstands me—I am not advocating miscegenation; I am speaking of integration, so that the peoples of this country would be able to join one another in this common citizenship which we want and the common obligation each citizen should take.

If this is to be our purpose, then we must get rid of these different types of legislation on our Statute Books which can bring about discrimination. The time, in my opinion, for the Indian Labour Ordinance has passed. We have no indentured Indians remaining from those who came in the last few ships in 1915, 1916, and 1917. By and large the great majority of those who are referred to as East Indians or Indians were born in British Guiana and are descendants of those hardy pioneers who built British Guiana. Today we are Guianese of Indian origin or Indian descent in the same way as Guianese of African descent or Portuguese who were born here. Since that is so, I think the time has come, in my opinion, when Indians should be given the same treatment as other races in British Guiana, having regard, of course, to the religious customs and so

forth of those who are not Christians. We can easily give those who are Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or people of Jewish descent the necessary protection for their religion and customs.

There has been expressed over the last few years the fear that, if this policy were to be followed with the keenness which it deserves, the Department of Immigration would go out of existence. I am sure that every one will agree with me that in the course of time it must go out of existence, because its usefulness is gradually diminishing. As the population increases in the Colony and more people continue to resent being considered as immigrants and desire to remove from themselves at the time of marriage the stigma of being married as immigrants, then the Department will no longer be necessary. We will have to face the facts of life. If the Department is closed down the work of recording births, deaths, marriages and so forth will have to be done in the General Registrar's Office, and the skilled services of those who formerly carried out those duties in the Immigration Department would be needed in the General Registrar's Office.

It is my hope that, if the hon. Minister wishes to pursue the repeal of this particular Section of the Ordinance, he will also consider removing the need for the non-impediment certificates from the two other classes of marriages. I appeal to the hon. Minister to give very serious consideration to the removal of the entire outmoded Indian Labour Ordinance from the Statute Books of the Colony.

Mr. Benn: I am most grateful for the remarks of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Gajraj, and I want to assure him that the Ministry has been working for some time not only on making Amendments to this Ordinance, but in re-organizing the Immigration Department. The hon. Member mentioned other persons who are affected by these non-impediment certificates, and I want to assure him that active consideration is being given to the question of making people realize that we want to build one nation. The hon. Mem-

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ber has enough experience to understand that these matters cannot be dealt with easily. I hope that he will give support to the Government when the time comes.

I should like the hon. Member to give the Government sufficient time to study carefully all of his suggestions before a firm decision is taken. The hon. Member knows that there have been conferences and discussions, and that decisions have been taken and reversed on the question of the Indian Immigration and the Indian Labour Ordinances. I would like the hon. Member to realize that work is being done in connection with the matter; that Government has taken note of his comments; and that progress will be seen as time goes by in the direction in which he has indicated.

Mr. Gajraj : May I ask the hon. Minister whether he intends to reply to the two points which I have made regarding the two other classes of marriages which, I think, should come within the scope of this repeal?

Mr. Benn : Consideration is being given to that at the moment. I hope the hon. Member will allow us to pass this Bill and, at a later stage, bring further Amendments.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause, and passed it without Amendment.

Council resumed.

Mr. Benn : The Bill having been considered in Committee stage without Amendment, I beg to move that it be read the Third time and passed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

ANTIBIOTICS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Mrs. Jagan : I beg to move the Second Reading of the Bill intituled

"An Ordinance to amend the Antibiotics Ordinance to provide for certain exemptions".

In doing so, I should like to inform Members that this proposed amendment of the existing legislation arises out of the recommendations of the Medical Board, which was considering an application from a Pharmaceutical Company in the United Kingdom to export lozenges containing antibiotics. These antibiotics are tyrothricin and benzocaine B.P., and either of them may be an ingredient. The Company pointed out that notwithstanding the fact that these were antibiotics they were sold in chemists' shops in England without a prescription from a medical practitioner and they put forward a certificate from the Ministry of Health in the United Kingdom to this effect.

However, Section 13 (1) of the Antibiotics Ordinance, Chapter 143 states that :

"Subject to the provisions of Section 6 of this Ordinance, no antibiotics shall be issued to any person except on the prescription of a medical practitioner, dentist or veterinary surgeon."

In this Amending Bill we are seeking, at Clause 2, to have the following proviso inserted after Section 13 (1) in the Ordinance :

"Provided that the Governor in Council may on the recommendations of the Board exempt any antibiotic from the provisions of this subsection. The name of the antibiotic or preparation so exempted shall be published in the Gazette".

In other words, we are adding to that Section an Amendment which would permit the Governor in Council to grant the necessary exemptions. In this case it will assist the general public to a great extent in being able to purchase a single antibiotic preparation, considered harmless by the Medical Board, without a prescription.

Many persons around this Table, I am sure, since we have very many politicians, have suffered occasionally from sore throats after having to address too many meetings, or after talking too much. In future people would be able to purchase from druggists' shops certain lozenges which would be of great assistance in healing throat ailments of a minor nature. This amending Bill will also broaden the activities of the Medical Board in their examination of anti-biotic preparations for use by the general public.

Mr. Benn : I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause and passed it without Amendment.

Council resumed.

Mrs. Jagan : I beg to report that the Antibiotics (Amendment) Bill has been considered in Committee without amendment, and I therefore beg to move that it be now read the Third time and passed.

Mr. Benn : I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

NEW AMSTERDAM ELECTRIC LIGHTING ORDER (EXTENSION) BILL

Mr. Ram Karran : I beg to move the Second Reading of the Bill intituled

"An Ordinance to amend the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order (Extension) Ordinance, 1957".

This is merely an extension Bill to take care of 1959. This Lighting Order dates back to 1900, and it was extended in 1930. It expired some 10 years ago, and since that time it has been extended from year to year.

Last year at this time, when the 1958 extension was asked for, it was felt that that would be the last time and that the franchise for the New Amsterdam Town Council would be written into the Electricity Corporation. This was the plan envisaged all along, but unfortunately last year the time was not considered appropriate because of the failure on the part of the Government to have this Corporation set up through the snag with the Demerara Electric Company. It was said at the time that negotiations were going on and there was no intention on the part of the Government to indicate what those negotiations were.

A little while ago we had a meeting with the Demerara Electric Company and negotiations, as we know from the newspapers, have been deferred until perhaps some time next year. That is why it is felt that this Bill should be introduced in order to allow the New Amsterdam Town Council to carry on as they have in the past.

The New Amsterdam Town Council has been complaining that the Bill as it is prevents them from taking care of domestic problems, and I think one of these problems is the loss of electricity by theft. My advice is that machinery exists for the offenders to be apprehended and punished. We at the Ministry are looking into the question, however, and we hope to help by introducing features which the Council feels are important to stop whatever malpractices might be obtaining at the moment.

In view of that, and in view of the fact that some authority must be given for the New Amsterdam Town Council to carry on with their franchise, I am asking this Council to pass this Bill as it is, and to look forward to amending the Ordinance further next year to provide for safeguards which the New Amsterdam Town Council feels are necessary.

The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Beharry): I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause and passed it without amendment.

Council resumed.

Mr. Ram Karran : I beg to report that the Bill was considered in Committee and passed without amendment, and I therefore beg to move that it be now read the Third time and passed.

Mr. Beharry : I beg to second the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT AND NEW YEAR
GREETINGS

The Chief Secretary (Mr. Porcher, acting) : I beg to move that Council do now adjourn until two o'clock on Thursday, next week.

Mr. Speaker : Before I put the question, I seize this opportunity to wish members of this Council and their families a very happy and a better New Year.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker : I therefore declare this Council duly adjourned until Thursday, 8th January, 1959, at two o'clock in the afternoon.