

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Constituted under the British Guiana
(Constitution) (Temporary Provisions)
Order in Council, 1955.)

TUESDAY 29TH MARCH, 1955.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

His Hon. the Speaker, Sir Eustace
Gordon Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C.

Ex-Officio Members:—

The Hon. the Attorney General,
Mr. F. W. Holder, C.M.G., Q.C.

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,
Mr. W. O. Fraser, O.B.E.

Nominated Members of Executive Council:—

The Hon. Sir Frank McDavid,
C.M.G., C.B.E. (Member for Agriculture,
Forests, Lands and Mines).

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Member
for Labour, Health and Housing).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (Member
for Communications and Works).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.
(Member for Local Government, Social
Welfare and Co-operative Development).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie.

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj

The Hon. R. C. Tello.

Nominated Officials:—

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O

Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

Nominated Unofficials:—

Mr. T. Lee.

Mr. W. A. Phang.

Mr. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.

Mr. C. A. Carter.

Mr. E. F. Correia.

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb.

Mr. H. Rahaman.

Miss Gertie H. Collins.

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Dr. H. A. Fraser.

Lt. Col. E. J. Haywood, M.B.E., T.D

Mr. R. B. Jailal.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.

Clerk of the Legislature—

Mr. I. Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature—

Mr. E. V. Viapree (acting).

Absent:—

The Hon. the Chief Secretary,
Mr. F. D. Jakeway, O.B.E.—Indisposed.

Mr. W. J. Raatgever, C.B.E. Deputy
Speaker—Indisposed.

The Speaker read prayers

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council, held on Friday, 25th March, 1955, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: There are one or two absentees, and I think they will be temporary. I see Mrs. Dey is here now. I left Mr. Gajraj in another part of the Public Buildings. Mr. Correia is out of town and I hope he will be here tomorrow.

GOVERNMENT NOTICE

PENSIONS (AMENDMENT No 2) BILL

The Chief Secretary (Mr. Jake-way): I beg to give notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled:

“An Ordinance further to amend the Pensions Ordinance, 1933.”

UNOFFICIAL NOTICE

INVESTIGATION OF WOOD PULP POSSIBILITIES

Miss Collins: I beg to give notice of the following motion:

“Be it resolved: That this Council recommend: the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate the possibilities of establishing a wood pulp industry in the Colony.”

Mr. Speaker: I would like to inform the hon. Member who has just given notice of a motion, as well as other Members, that it is quite hopeless to give notice of a motion relating to some controversial question, or to a subject that will be much debated, in an effort to get such a motion discussed at this Session of the Legislature. While it is quite possible that it may be discussed at some future session, it is not likely to be at this Session, for on the conclusion of this debate the Hands Salaries

Revision Report will come up for discussion. I do not want to discourage the hon. Member, but in that case the motion may lapse and she may re-introduce it at the next Session, if we are here.

Miss Collins: I appreciate all that you have said, Sir.

ORDER OF THE DAY

Mr. Speaker: Items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 on the Order Paper will all be deferred.

BRITISH CARIBBEAN FEDERATION

Council resumed the debate on the following motion by the Rev. Mr. Bobb:

“That this Council, having noted the steps which are being taken by other Caribbean Governments and by Her Majesty's Government towards the creation of a British Caribbean Federation, and the statement of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Parliament to the effect that the constitutional instruments will provide that British Guiana and other territories which might care to do so will be quite free to join the Federation, is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined.

“This Council further prays His Excellency the Governor to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding towards the setting up of the Federation, and to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation.”

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member, the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Raatgever) was speaking when we last adjourned.

Mr. Raatgever: When the Council adjourned last Friday I was pointing out that it would be in the Colony's interest to take the money that we would be contributing to the Fed-

eral set-up to finance the raising of a loan of \$100 million to develop the Colony.

A few Members of this Council seemed concerned that if this Colony did not federate it would lose the market for rice in the West Indian islands. That, in my opinion, is nonsense. We will not lose the market in the West Indies for rice if the price and the quality of our rice are competitive. I speak with a certain amount of authority. I know as much about rice as any expert in this Legislative Council, because I have been dealing with rice for a long number of years, processing as well as selling it.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. Member not to use the word "nonsense". It is not unparliamentary, but it is considered to be too personal on some occasions. Try to use another word. I do not want other Members to interrupt you.

Mr. Raatgever: I said "nonsense" because I meant it. It was ridiculous, then. Anyway, I am only giving the facts, because there are certain experts (I am not speaking about the hon. Member, Mr. Jailall, who will attempt to contradict what I said. I know what I am saying. I did not hear this from a third party. I am relying on my own knowledge of the rice industry over a number of years. I sounded a note of warning last year.

Sir Frank McDavid: Three warnings.

Mr. Raatgever: I think there were three. My friend, the hon. Member, Sir Frank McDavid, said so. The first was that we must put our house in order because we would have to face competition from the East. From the information I had, India and other Eastern countries were preparing to

produce rice in tremendous quantities to swamp the world markets, and I advised that we should adopt other measures in order to meet that competition. My appeal apparently fell on deaf ears, because up to now nothing has been done to make the rice industry economical. We are still going on in the same wasteful way, and the result is that at the present time we have no first quality rice in this Colony. We have to deprive the people of the Colony of first quality rice in order to fulfil contracts outside.

I am aware that I approved of it when the matter came to the Rice Marketing Board, but this is just an example of what I was trying to put over last year. If we have a rice industry that is competitive with that of the Eastern countries, there would be no question of the loss of markets, because it is more convenient to get rice from British Guiana than from the East. The buyer of rice from the East would have to carry large stocks because the goods take a long time to arrive. It would be like buying from Australia or New Zealand. I myself paid an invoice for goods from those parts three months ago, and I have not received full shipment up to now.

I will concede the point that we would have some advantage in dealing with the West Indian market if we federate, because the rice would be duty-free, but their products would have the same advantage in our Colony. I will show just now how our purchases from the West Indies are very considerable, and that there is no question of our losing the market if we do not federate. That is a mare's-nest put out to fool people and get them to vote in favour of Federation.

The people of the West Indies have been painted in glowing colours

by certain Members. If they had such regard for the people of this Colony would they have started in Jamaica and Trinidad to grow their own rice? This Colony had not then decided not to federate with the West Indies. We did not decide that until 1952.

I will read from the most recent Report, for the year 1953, of the C. D. & W. Organisation in the West Indies. At page 30, paragraph 35, it says:

"The Agricultural Development Corporation which was set up in Jamaica in 1951 has hitherto devoted its attention largely to rice production, in accordance with the aim of the Government to make the island self-sufficient in rice within a few years. In 1953 good progress was made with several schemes. The Corporation conducted experiments with the possibility of taking three crops in one year, using different varieties."

Now, Trinidad. At page 33, paragraph 47, the Report says:

"Like Jamaica, Trinidad is aiming at a substantial increase in the production of rice for local consumption, with self-sufficiency as the ultimate goal. A survey of production was carried out during the year by the Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Central Statistical Office. The possibility of developing areas in the Oropouche Lagoon and the Caroni swamp for rice cultivation was investigated."

Since then they had two experts who gave them further advice, and I think they left Trinidad last month.

In 1951 I met representatives of all the West Indian islands at the Regional Economic Conference. I had met them before in 1950. The representatives of Jamaica particularly discussed rice with me. I was then a member of the Rice Marketing Board. They asked what were the possibilities of Jamaica getting rice from British Guiana in the future, and I assured them that this Colony

would be able to supply them with all of their requirements after 1953. I was certain we could supply them with all the rice they wanted. In view of that assurance, why did Jamaica embark upon the cultivation of rice? There was another reason which I will go into later. For the present I would just like to emphasise what I said by reading from the Jamaica "Advocate" of March 6, 1954. I read it in this Chamber before, but I think it would be best to read it again. It says:

"It was officially explained this week that Jamaica's decision to seek financial assistance from the United Kingdom Government for expansion of the rice industry will in no way affect grants to the Island for other purposes from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. Jamaica has made its bid for aid on advice from the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"The position is that the U.K. Government is setting aside a special £3 million, so that investigations can be undertaken in any colonial territory which considers that it has a potential in rice production. If the £3 million is exhausted the British Parliament, according to the Secretary of State, will be asked to vote more funds. It has been made clear to the Government of Jamaica and other Colonial territories that the rice grants will in no way affect the usual assistance from C. D. & W."

In another issue of the "Advocate" it says:

"ADC SHOWS 30,000 TONS RICE PER YEAR POSSIBLE HERE"

"It has now been estimated that if Jamaica undertakes a programme of investigations and experiments to develop the best methods of cultivation and the propagation of strains which will be suitable for use here, local rice production can hit the figure of 30,000 tons per annum in three years. Optimism is based on what the Agricultural Development Corporation has been able to accomplish in a short time.

"Financial assistance is to be sought from London in keeping with a statement

made by the Secretary of State, to set the rice industry on a sound footing here.

"At the present time there are approximately 10,000 acres of land under cultivation in rice, yielding about 5,000 tons of clean rice a year. The island's potential consumption of rice is about 25,000 tons a year, and the difference between the local production and the total annual consumption of some 20,000 tons is imported.

"The ADC both undertakes production of rice and assists farmers with credit for rice growing. The Department of Agriculture is responsible for education work amongst the farmers. With the activities of the ADC, and assuming that an experimental programme is undertaken, it should be possible to reach the target of 30,000 tons annually, already mentioned, in three years without further assistance to the industry than loans for purchase of machinery, and subsidies for the acquisition of minor equipment."

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development): Will the hon. Member tell us what quantity of rice is provided for in our contract with Jamaica?

Mr. Raatgever: Twenty thousand tons. Jamaica hopes to produce 10,000 tons.

Mr. Speaker: Is it not packaged rice—a special rice?

Mr. Tello: Is the hon. Member not reading from the official organ of a Party in Jamaica which did not obtain a single seat in the Legislature at the last elections?

Mr. Raatgever: Mr. Bustamante was Prime Minister of Jamaica when that statement was made, and several members of his Party have been returned. Mr. Bustamante's Party is the Opposition today, and what he has done for Jamaica I hope Mr. Manley will do. Mr. Bustamante pulled Jamaica out of the slough of despair.

I know that because I visited Jamaica on several occasions. Let us hope his successor will do as well as he did.

Sir Frank McDavid (Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines): That is heaping coals of fire on Mr. Bustamante's head, because he said rather unkind things about—

Mr. Raatgever: He has done that to everybody who has gone to Jamaica. I did not quite catch what Your Honour said just now. Did you ask whether the contract with Jamaica is for packaged rice?

Mr. Speaker: I was asking whether it was not for a better quality of rice which was shipped in packages.

Mr. Raatgever: The contract is for 20,000 tons of ordinary rice.

Mr. Speaker: I can assure you that Sir Frank McDavid was present in 1944 along with myself at the first West Indian Conference at which the representative of Trinidad spoke about the cultivation of rice in that Colony, and what they proposed to do about its production. The same thing happened at the Conference in Jamaica in 1947 when the leading East Indians told us about the rice that was being grown there.

Sir Frank McDavid: In those bad days we were quite unable to supply rice, so that there was every justification for what Trinidad and Jamaica were doing.

Mr. Raatgever: There is a headline in the "Advocate" of Jamaica—"ADC Undertakes Production of Rice to Assist Farmers." That shows very clearly, in my humble opinion, that there is no need to fear that this Colony will lose its rice market. (At this point the Attorney General made some comment *sotto voce*). I wish the hon.

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the Attorney General will not interrupt me. If he allows me to finish what I am saying he can get up and say anything he wants.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. Raatgever: I promise that if he interrupts me I shall interrupt him when he is speaking.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said "Order, order!"

Mr. Raatgever: The cost of producing rice in Jamaica is more than twice what it costs to produce it in British Guiana. They can go ahead trying to make themselves self-sufficient, but it is going to involve a tremendous cost. I believe they have got to continue to produce rice whether they make themselves self-sufficient or not. During the last war H. M. Government encouraged the sugar producers to increase their production of sugar cane. Jamaica was greedy and over-expanded its sugar industry. Cane-farming in that island is largely in the hands of peasants. In this Colony the sugar producers plant the cane themselves for the most part.

As a result of the excess sugar production in Jamaica last year (I think it was 100,000 tons, nearly one-half of our production) the sugar producers there have advised the cane-farmers to turn to general agriculture, rice being one of the crops they were advised to cultivate instead of sugar cane. But for that the ranks of the unemployed in Jamaica would have been greatly swollen. I think the number of unemployed in Jamaica was between 100,000 and 200,000. At least it was that in 1952, and in order to provide other employment rice production was started in that island. So they have to continue to produce rice even if they

do not produce the quantity they require, and it will be to their advantage to buy rice from this part of the world where they can get supplies faster than from India, if the price is competitive and the quality is equal to what they can get elsewhere.

I will now read from the Report of the Mission of the United Kingdom Industrialists which visited this Colony in 1952. On page 3, paragraph 12, under the heading "General Survey" it says:

"We were impressed with the range, extent and scope of industrial development which has already taken place, and we are satisfied that the bulk of it is soundly based and will continue to expand. In Trinidad there are nearly 400 industrial undertakings, and in Jamaica nearly 700, which come under the definition of "factories" as laid down by the Ministry of Labour. Many of these, of course, are small, employing only two or three people, but there are a number of modern establishments, well managed and equipped with first-class plant and machinery. It is true that there have been one or two recent cases where modern factories have not as yet achieved commercial success, but this seems to have been due either to failure to make an adequate market survey of the possibilities of sales before erecting the factory, or to failure to get competent technical advice."

Jamaica and Trinidad are highly industrialised, if we may call it that, and in some cases they have duplicated the things they should have. As I have said in the article I gave to the Press, I tried to get zoning of industries to the Colonies best suited—the rice industry to British Guiana and other industries to the various other Colonies. At the present time there are textile factories in Jamaica and Trinidad, and in Trinidad the raw material comes from the U.S.A. There is a milk condensery in Jamaica, and also one in Trinidad. There are breweries in Jamaica and in Trinidad, also cement factories in Jamaica and in Trinidad, although one cement factory can

provide the requirements for the whole Caribbean area. There are shirt factories in both places and also shoe factories making very nice shoes. There is a paint factory in Trinidad—I think the hon. Member, Rev. Mr. Bobb, knows about that—and another paint factory is being erected in Jamaica by one of the large English concerns. They have got canning plants all over the West Indies producing canned grape fruit and orange juice. We can do the same in this Colony.

There are factories in Trinidad and Barbados manufacturing margarine and lard. Regarding these factories, under the Oils and Fats Agreement this Colony has to take all its supplies of margarine and compound lard from the West Indies, and the people of this Colony, as the result of that Agreement, have to pay between six and eight cents more per pound for margarine which can be imported from the United Kingdom of a much better quality at 6 or 8 cents less per lb. That is a lot of money the poor people of this Colony have to pay for subsidising industries of Trinidad and Barbados.

Mr. Kendall: Who —

Mr. Raatgever: I am not giving way. When I am finished the hon. Member can speak.

Mr. Kendall: I just wanted to know who was the Colony's representative on the Regional Economic Committee when the Oils and Fats Agreement was made.

Mr. Raatgever: I did not represent this Colony at any of the Oils and Fats Conferences. Officials did—Mr. Croucher and others. In the Executive Council I moved the rejection of the Agreement, and I said it was a disgrace to send as representatives of the people of this Colony officials who had no knowledge of what they

were doing. I am sorry to say this. I said the Agreement should be rejected because it placed a burden on the people. It is recorded in the Minutes of the Executive Council. I am not afraid to express my views. That is well known. As long as I feel they are correct I express them without any fear.

The amount of rice exported last year to all the West Indian Islands, including Jamaica—I have obtained these figures from the Rice Marketing Board of which I am a member—is valued at \$8,461,219. That was on contract, and there was an additional supply valued \$1,068,752, making a total of \$9,529,971. On the other hand we imported from the West Indian islands goods to the value of \$7,826,305. The largest importation from the West Indian Islands was gasolene etc., from Trinidad, valued \$5,066,969, and lard and margarine from Barbados and Trinidad, valued \$844,608, which can be bought cheaper in the outside markets than from the West Indian Islands, but we have to buy them at any price they are selling at, because of the Oils and Fats Agreement.

Rice was supplied by us to the West Indies below the world's price. Margarine, as I have pointed out, is supplied to us by the West Indies at a price of 6 to 3 cents more per lb. than the United Kingdom's price; and it has been so for a long time. Margarine can be bought cheaper from the United Kingdom and from foreign countries, though with foreign duties the price may be more. The West Indies are doing us no favour in taking our rice. Before the War, when they could have bought rice from the East at a quarter cent per lb. cheaper, they did not buy from this Colony. During the War we fed them; we gave them rice when they could not get any from anywhere else at any price, and when the

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present contract was made the price was below the world's market price. The contract, however, will expire at the end of next year. I mention these things to show what we have done to help them. I am positive that if we do not federate, the Islands in this area would not refuse to buy our rice. I do not think they would attempt to do that. I think too much heavy weather is being made of the allegation that if we do not federate we would lose our rice markets. If even we do, we would get other markets.

I am not happy over the quality of rice this Colony is producing. When I was Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, acting for Mr. Fernandes who was out of the Colony, I advocated that the Board should take over all the padi and mill it, and that the Colony should erect central mills, as we are doing now, to mill the padi so as to get a better quality of rice. Had we done that then, this position would not have arisen. That has to be done. That is going to be the salvation of the industry with the cultivation of a new strain of padi which would enable us to get markets in Brazil and Venezuela, and also to supply rice in package to the United Kingdom and Canada. There is no reason why this Colony cannot do that. The United Kingdom has 50 million people, and though it is true that they do not use rice as a vegetable but in pudding, they do eat a lot of rice. That is a market we can get.

We have a very efficient officer of the Rice Marketing Board in the person of the Manager. He has all these ideas in his head, and I am certain that he would agree with what I am saying. (*Hon. Members: He is in the gallery*). I am sorry, I did not know he was there listening. But he knows what I am saying is correct. Anyway, even if we

lose the West Indian markets, this Colony is not going to shut down and go bankrupt in so far as the industry is concerned.

Mr. Jailal: The hon. Member is charging the Manager with dereliction of duty.

Mr. Raatgever: I am still standing. The Manager has to carry out the dictates of the Board. He cannot do anything on his own. I know he has a lot of progressive ideas, but he is not given a chance to put those ideas into practice. I am certain he would be able to put them into practice if he is given the proper assistance. I maintain that even if we lose these markets in the West Indies we could get others. It is a question of getting the quality of rice for the markets, and once we get the required quality we can get those other markets. There is no difficulty in getting those markets. I think I have made the point on rice.

I would like to refer to the interview I gave to the Press on March 6, when I contradicted the statement that this Colony stands to benefit more than any other from political federation. I mentioned then the number of industries in Trinidad and in Jamaica, and I went on to say —

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member does not mind me interrupting. I cannot allow the hon. Member to read the actual contribution. I will permit him to look at and refresh his memory.

Mr. Raatgever: This was commented on during the debate.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot prevent the hon. Member looking at it, but he must not read the actual words.

Mr. Raatgever: I just want to read the actual words, and then make my point.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member may look at it as often as he likes so as not to be incorrect, but he must not read it.

Mr. Raatgever: All right, Sir. I will not worry with that. I know it by heart, but I did not want to make any error in what I have to say.

Mr. Speaker: That is why I want the hon. Member to refresh his memory. He has dealt with rice and has experience of what is happening in the neighbouring territories. He is entitled to speak, perhaps with more experience than almost any other Member.

Mr. Raatgever: The hon. Member, Capt. Smellie, also. His firm exported rice for many years.

Mr. Gajraj: And so has my firm.

Mr. Raatgever: And Mr. Gajraj's firm also.

Mr. Speaker: I have heard the hon. Member's father explain in this Council how many thousands of dollars his firm, Messrs. Garnett & Co., lost on rice. I am sure Capt. Smellie himself can confirm that.

Mr. Raatgever: I was employed there and I can support that. Before I move on to what I am going to say next, perhaps this will be allowed, because it does not concern me. I am going to read from a copy of the "Daily Chronicle." "Trinidad to be Industrial Heart of Federated W.J." This was a headline in the "Daily Chronicle" of March 22nd, 1955—something supposed to have been said by Mr. Albert Gomes,

Trinidad Minister of Labour, to the Chamber of Commerce in Port-of-Spain. The report following, said —

"Mr. Gomes said that he was convinced of this because of the Colony's geographical position, and because Jamaica, the only other Colony which could have aspired to that status, was too far removed from the other territories.

Mr. Gomes however felt there was need for a greater stimulus in hotel industry because "there was now too much of our depending on oil."

Well, if Trinidad is going to be the industrial centre of the federated territories, what are we going to get out of Federation? We have 70,000 sq. miles of forest in our Interior, with untold wealth. I have always maintained in this Council and outside of it, that the future prosperity of this country depends on the development of the resources of the interior. There is no question about that at all. First we must have hydro-electric power, and then we can process raw materials here rather than ship them out of this Colony, giving the bulk of profit to people outside. Charity begins at home.

When we have hydro-electric power, then we can have woodpulp and plywood industries. The hon. Member, Mr. Carter, drew attention to the possibilities, and he was scoffed at by certain Members, but I am positive this Colony can have a plywood industry and many other industries, having acquired hydro-electric power. And we can get it.

Recently I saw in the newspapers that a concession had been granted to a manganese mining company involving 60 sq. miles, for a period of 30 years.

Sir Frank McDavid: Thirty-three years.

Mr. Raatgever: With a right of renewal for a further 30 years, His Excellency the Governor was shown in the papers as signing the lease. It just bears out what I am saying about the interior. I am not in the Governor's confidence, but I sincerely hope that in this lease there is a clause which will make for the processing of manganese in British Guiana, and so avoid the mistake we made in granting bauxite concessions. The wealth of this country is going out of it. It is all right to say to people, "why don't you come into the Colony and invest money?" But this is nonsense; this is ridiculous when we do not—

Sir Frank McDavid rose.

Mr. Raatgever: Do not interrupt me.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member did not use the word in relation to any particular person. The hon. Member is perfectly justified in using that term in the way he did.

Mr. Raatgever: I am not going to be personal, and nothing the hon. Member does will make me get personal. The point I was making was that I hope there is a clause in the contract—

Sir Frank McDavid: I think the hon. Member's hopes are not likely to be realised, because there is no such clause.

Mr. Raatgever: The Administration of this Colony has blundered again. The people's rights have been given away. I would have thought that after the mistakes of the past this Administration would have been alive to its responsibility to see that the heritage of the people of this country is looked after, and I am

really surprised that this is not so. It is no wonder that they are seeking to federate this Colony with the West Indies. It is no wonder they are seeking to sell the birthright of the people for a mess of pottage. It astounds me that the Administration would do such a thing when this Colony can provide hydro-electric power.

I remember when Sir Gordon Lethem was in the Colony and Committees were set up to formulate the Ten-Year Development Plan there was a Trade and Industries Committee of which Colonel Spencer was the Chairman, and I succeeded him. The Demerara Bauxite Company at that time applied for permission to gauge certain falls to see if hydro-electric power could be obtained from them. The Committee recommended to Government that the Company should be encouraged to gauge other falls on behalf of the people of the Colony, and we were told that it would take seven years to gauge those falls. I think it is now about seven years and we have not been told anything at all. I understand now that it is going to take about 15 years in all. If that is the case, it is a very sorry day for this country, because it seems to me there is somebody deliberately preventing hydro-electricity from being provided here.

As a Member of that Committee I discovered that an engineer, Mr. F. X. Coomber, had recommended in 1919 that certain falls in this Colony—or one fall; I cannot remember now—be surveyed. I think it was the Great Falls on the Demerara River.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, there is a report on it.

Mr. Raatgever: The Government of that day asked Mr. W. T. Lord and Mr. Cunningham to make some preliminary surveys. I believe those

surveys were made, and I have been trying to get the reports in that connection, but I was not successful. However I was handed some other reports but I have not been able to study them. It seems to me that if the Administration of this Colony was interested in the development of this Colony in those days, we would have had hydro-electricity in this Colony. This country would then have been one of the wealthiest in this part of the world, because of available cheap power to industrialise the interior. We still need that cheap power. Anyway, the deed is done, and I suppose the people of this country will realise who are their friends.

I see we have also found iron ore in this Colony. Hydro-electric power will be needed to process it in this Colony. Or are we going to ship the ore away without refining it? One of the first things the Administration must attend to is hydro-electricity. This must be realised, otherwise this Colony will not be industrialised in the near future.

Now, some hon. Members said that unless we federate we would not be able to borrow money to develop this country.

Sir Frank McDavid: Who said that?

Mr. Raatgever: I am not speaking of the hon. Member. I said "some Members".

Rev. Mr. Bobb: That is not on record.

Mr. Raatgever: It is on record.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: It is on record. That has been referred to several times in this Council.

Mr. Raatgever: Anyhow, I want to say that it is ridiculous (I nearly said "nonsense") because I took care

to find out how this Colony's credit stands. It stands high, even if it was affected by what happened in 1953. Her Majesty's Government will still advance us money for development, because we have assets in the interior. We have untold wealth. I want to explode the idea that unless we federate, we cannot get money to borrow. We are borrowing money from the Crown Agents and other sources at 2½ per cent.

The Financial Secretary: I am not aware of that.

Mr. Raatgever: The Financial Secretary told us that in Finance Committee.

The Financial Secretary: That is in a case of borrowing with a promise of repayment in six months.

Mr. Raatgever: All right, but the British Government will nevertheless lend us money. After all, Britain is the Mother Country, and as we are part of the British Empire she must come to our assistance. We are not foreigners. I said in 1953, in the State Council, when we were having trouble with the P.P.P. Government, "Thank God the Union Jack, the emblem of justice and freedom, still flies over this country, and may it ever fly." I will say it again. Surely the Mother Country will come to our assistance with money to develop this country. Do not tell me otherwise, for it would be wishful thinking for anyone to feel otherwise.

I now propose to deal with the motion proper. If I may be permitted to say it, this motion is ill-timed and ill-conceived. It looks simple, but in my opinion it is not. I will analyze the motion and show, from what I said in the interview I gave the Press, that this Council has not got the power to com-

[Mr. Raatgever]

mit this Colony to Federation. I am not a legal man, I am a business man. Law is commonsense. The motion states —

“That this Council...is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined.”

The Members of this Council can express their individual views. That is all it means, and that is all this Council can do, but it is worth nothing so far as this colony is concerned. Committing this Colony to Federation has got to be done by the people of the Colony.

I will go to the second paragraph of the motion, which will prove what I am saying. It says:

“This Council further prays His Excellency the Governor to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding, towards the setting up of the Federation and to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation.”

That is redundant. His Excellency has already taken steps, because the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, went to Trinidad — and he is already back here. The point I am making is that we have not got the authority. The authority of this Council is limited.

In 1953, when the Governor of this Colony wanted to send an observer to the Federation Conference in London, the Colonial Secretary came into this Chamber and moved the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders to proceed with a motion in that respect. The motion was carried by one vote, the voting being 11 Members for and 10 against. Those against lost because Dr. Singh, who was then a Member of the Council, and who had spoken against the motion, got a telegram from his constituency asking him to come. He

had to leave by the 4 o'clock ferry, before the voting took place. He asked that his vote be recorded, but I know it could not be done, because a Member cannot have a vote recorded in his absence. Mr. Lee asked that the discussion on the motion be sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The point is that when an observer was to be sent in 1953 His Excellency sent the Colonial Secretary with a motion to the Council. Today an observer has been sent to Trinidad, and all this Council knows about the matter is what appeared in the newspapers. I am Deputy Speaker of this Council and I had to read it in the newspapers, for that was the only intimation I had. I do not know if other Members were told anything about it. I know His Excellency, and I respect him very much indeed. I like him. But would he have done that if he felt that this Council had the power as other Legislative Councils of this Colony had? No, he would have sent here and got permission to send an observer.

When in 1948 my motion concerning Closer Association was passed in the Legislative Council, the Council was asked by His Excellency Sir Charles Woolley, who was President of the Council, to approve of observers being sent, and to select them. The Legislative Council selected Mr. Wight and Mr. Lee by vote. You know very well, Sir, how it was done in those days because you yourself were on another occasion selected by the Council to go to Jamaica as a delegate, and other Members were selected to go elsewhere. I read in the newspapers—and again, I have to read it in the newspapers — that we will be sending delegates and advisers to the Caribbean Conference next month. This Council has not been asked to appoint those delegates, or to approve of their being sent. It used to be done that way. Dr. Jagan was selected at one time for one of those Caribbean Conferences. I may be wrong but I think

it is in the Constitution of the Caribbean Conference that the various Legislatures should select their representatives to be sent. I mention this again because, if this Council had power, if it was a sovereign body. I am sure His Excellency would never act without consulting this Council. I know him too well to think he would do anything that was undemocratic. So it shows that this Council has not the power.

I say that this motion should not have been moved; it is not only untimely but it is unconstitutional. I have in my hand the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953, section 48 (2) (b) of which provides that before any Member can move the suspension of the Standing Orders of the Council he has to get the permission of the Governor. That has never happened in the Legislature before. I have been a Member of the Legislative Council for some years and I know that a Member could move the suspension of the Standing Orders to discuss urgent matters, and as long as it was carried he could move any motion and have a vote taken on it. I recall that Dr. Gonsalves, a Member of the last Legislative Council, moved the suspension of the Standing Orders and successfully moved a motion to give priority to the reconstruction of the Corentyne road instead of the East Bank road. He moved his motion at 2 o'clock when there was a bare quorum in the Council, and it was carried.

If this Council has full authority why is it necessary to get the permission of the Governor to move a suspension of the Standing Orders? It shows that we have limited authority. Why should this motion be brought here? I am giving facts from my knowledge of what has happened in this Chamber.

The Speaker: A wrong interpretation is being put on this motion. Assum-

ing that it will be carried, it will not involve a decision to federate. That is the way to look at it. Even if this motion is carried it will not impose an obligation on the Colony to be integrated in the Federal structure. It is only an expression of opinion of this Council. That is the accepted construction to be placed on the motion.

Mr. Raatgever: All I can say is that we have wasted three weeks of our time in which we could have been doing more valuable work in connection with the development of this country, which is so badly needed. It is a waste of time. People outside are grumbling and complaining that nothing is being done. They are not seeing tangible evidence of what is being done, and here we have been wasting three weeks. It is my duty to give these facts, and I never shirk my duty. I could have supported Federation and been one of the people to be given a nominated seat in the Federal Legislature, but I could not do that, because I do not believe in Federation. I could have closed my mouth and perhaps got something.

Sir Frank McDavid: The hon. Member may still become a Member of the Federal Legislature in spite of his speech.

Mr. Raatgever: Having made that point and got Your Honour's ruling that it is really a waste of time—you did not say that in so many words, but that is what it amounted to --

Mr. Speaker: Are you also against what may be termed the second resolution, the deletion of which has been moved by the hon. Mr. Luckhoo?

Mr. Raatgever: I am coming to the other part of the motion. Before I do so I would like to say that I have sat here and listened for nearly three weeks, but I have not heard one reason ad-

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vanced that I had not heard before, as to why this Colony should federate with the West Indies. Nothing new has been brought forward here ; it has been the same old story. I was about to say something for which Your Honour might have called me to order. I might have used the word "nonsense" again. The same old views which were expressed in 1948 and 1951-52 have been repeated here again. Nobody can bring forward anything new. My friend, Sir Frank McDavid, gave us the economic side of Federation. That was the only point I heard advanced since we began this debate. He said that the first thing was unity. I made notes while he was speaking. I say that one must have unity at home before going outside to seek it. We have not got unity at home, and that is nothing to federate for. Let us be united in our own home before we attempt to federate with the West Indies.

The next point is the constitutional and political way to achieve self-government. This Colony can and will get self-government in the future. We are big enough and important enough, and that is why the Islands want to federate with us—because of the wealth that is in this country.

The hon. Member then referred to the social and moral aspect. I would say that that is a matter for the Church, and that the Church has failed in its duty to the people over a period of years. It has failed in its duty, and a lot of what has happened here—

Sir Frank McDavid: May I intervene at this point? What I said had nothing to do with the Church. I will read from the *Hansard* report just what I did say. I said:

"And, on its social and moral aspect in my view it is the means, to me the only means by which the peoples of the British Caribbean can secure for them-

selves the national dignity which they do not now possess in the eyes of the world."

It had nothing to do with religion.

Mr. Raatgever: The Church has to do with social work; there is no doubt about that. The Church leads us where social work is concerned. Then the hon. Member went on to refer to national dignity. I say that we must first attain national dignity in our own country before we go outside to try to attain it. All those things must be done here first, and, if I may say so, there are no reasons whatever why we should federate. I am not opposed to the West Indian islands federating among themselves. I think it would be an excellent thing for them to do. They are scattered all over the Caribbean Sea, and if they are federated it would be better for H. M. Government because, instead of sending 12 dispatches to the small islands, it could send one to the Federal set-up. It would relieve H.M. Government of a lot of work. That would be an ideal set-up. Let them federate. We do not want to federate with them. This is not the time for us to federate.

I think it was the hon. Member, Mr. Macnie, who said that the islands should federate first, and that as far as he was aware the structure had been laid down—that we cannot get in on the ground floor, but will have to go in later. What is the hurry? H. M. Government has said that provision will be made for British Guiana and British Honduras to join the Federation at any time. Now is not the time to join the proposed Federation. We would have to go and beg now. Beg for what? Let them federate and try to make it work. I am positive that the Federation cannot work without British Guiana joining in. Let them come to us. This is the Colony for them to come to. This country is of the same size as the United Kingdom. It is capable of supporting a population

of 20 millions or more, and so long as we get money to develop our country people will flow here as a natural event. We can get as many people as we want, but our first duty is to the people of this country. They must get the benefit of their heritage. I would be a traitor to my people if I stood quietly and allowed this to be done.

Mr. Ramphal: Would the hon. Member agree to Federation if the Islands asked us to join?

Mr. Raatgever: I say: let the Islands federate first, and then we could be approached in course of time. I am saying no more than that. This is no time for us to go hat-in-hand and beg them, because we cannot get in on the ground floor.

Comments have been made during this debate about the Rev. Mr. Peters who is a personal friend of mine, a gentleman for whom I have a high regard. He has travelled extensively in the United States and has acquired considerable experience. With your permission, Sir, I would like to read two paragraphs from the *Hansard* report of the speech he made in this Chamber on the 16th January, 1952, which I think are quite appropriate. He said:

“Why should we be in such a hurry to give up our political identity—or at least a measure of it—to despise our territorial and continental integrity because we have been tempted to walk along with leaders dripping wet with desire to get what the Islands, by association, have to offer us? I venture to say that what they have to offer us would be comparatively little. Perhaps the time might come when we would be the people to offer a great deal to them. But, at the same time, we should reserve for ourselves the privilege of considering any question about the merging of their destiny with ours.”

Then a little later in his speech he said:

“If British Guiana must need be mixed up with any sort of Caribbean in-

veiglement, the day is not yet. We here should not be afraid—should not be so cowardly as to decline to seek to work out our own salvation, even if it be with fear and trembling. I know that so far as I am concerned, if I am to be a weathercock over this matter I would say: “Let us take Federation and try it.” But in these days my own belief is that the day of the politician as such is past and over. Our Colonies and nations are calling for statesmen — men who would forget all personal interests, subdue the cry for their own personal action and stand up—walk and shout—for the good of the Colony and, particularly, for the good of the people whom they claim to represent.”

I would ask hon. Members to take those words to heart and study them.

Before I deal with the final portion of the motion I would like to read some extracts from a letter I received from Sir Gordon Lethem, a former Governor of this Colony. I am asking to be allowed to do so because of the remarks made by a Member with reference to the interview I gave to a newspaper, in which I said that Sir Gordon Lethem had said he did not think Federation with the West Indies was a good thing for this Colony. Sir Gordon has told me I could make whatever use I wished of his letter. I have never used it before, but I think I should use it now. It is dated October, 1951, and he writes:

“Though certain historical affinities, English occupation and language, and immigrant African and East Indian population, are with the islands, the ‘natural’ affinities are with the continent, and I believe that these fundamental and almost physical facts will be the more important in Guiana’s future.”

“I think that British Guiana should make up its mind that, not being an island ringed around with water, it should not be so treated. It should aim at retaining its individual entity as a quite substantial bit of South America, with a future and a future economy different from those of a West Indian island, and it should develop rather than restrict (and restriction would be probable if in an island federation) its contacts with the continent.

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This seems to be quite compatible with its being an ultimately self-governing unit within the British Commonwealth—if that were in question. That point may well arise some time, from the initiative of American republics which even now inveigh against European powers' control of any American continental areas. But ringing round Guiana in an island combine will not help; it may rather make greater and potential difficulties."

"My view, therefore, is that Guiana, while entering readily in the present into every possible useful co-operative move with the islands, economic, customs, civil service special services, etc., should aim politically at reserving its individual entity as an American continental country, and so be in a far better and more effective position to co-operate and trade, and even bargain with its continental neighbours and other American countries."

"I write all this with the rather special experience of having been a Governor for five and a half years in a West Indian island group, when I became more and more convinced of the desirability—and the possibility, if certain premises were respected—of federation, and then doing five years in Guiana where, as the years and growing experience taught me, conditions were fundamentally different, and federation on the balance not desirable. When I first came to Guiana my inclination was to preach the possibility of federation, and I made some reference to it in my first address to Leg. Co. on 7th November, 1941. If I remember correctly one of the papers—I think the "Argosy"—commented not favourably. I think my attitude then may have been typical of the first inclination of people who may come to Guiana with quite a good knowledge of the West Indies as a whole. One has learned to favour federation and has not appreciated that there may be strong reason that it is not so easy to apply to continental Guiana. Even people connected with Guiana and knowing it well, even perhaps resident, but whose first interests are with industries such as sugar, which also dominate in West Indian islands, may see little difficulty in Guiana—thinking of it as the coast strip—being a unit in an island federation. The upshot of my own experience is that, having had the question

in my mind throughout my five years, I came to the conclusion that, taking Guiana over all its aspects, the balance of advantage is not for political or administrative federation with the West Indies."

Now, Sir, here is a letter from a man of wide experience, highly respected by the masses of this Colony, as you know, Sir. This gentleman is a friend of mine. He is a man I respect and is well respected, a man with the highest integrity. When I wanted guidance I gave him my views and asked his advice which he always gave me. He told me I can use his letter just as I like, but I have never used it before. I think the time has come to use it, in view of what has been said here—that he wanted Federation with Surinam. He fought for closer association with Dutch and French Guiana, but he thinks that British Guiana should stand on its own; that it is capable of doing so with its potentialities and possibilities. I agree with him wholeheartedly, and I would be a traitor to my country if I thought otherwise.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry the hon. Member for Agriculture is not here.

Mr. Raatgever: He is there listening (pointing to the door).

Mr. Speaker: I can confirm what you say. I have a more recent correspondence than that you have read. He said he was definitely of the opinion that there should be a trinity of closer association between the three Guianas. I understand the hon. Member for Agriculture said he never heard that from the Governor. Will the hon. Member read that part where he said emphatically that he was against Federation?

Sir Frank McDavid: Sir Gordon made a formal statement on Federation in the Legislative Council in 1945. It is recorded in the *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: He was the first Governor who ever invited the Administra-

tors of Surinam and of French Guiana as guests of the Government, and the first man to cultivate such cordial relationship throughout the whole of his tenure of office. Read that part of the letter in which he made the statement about Federation.

The Financial Secretary: Sir Gordon may have changed his views since then.

Mr. Speaker: I have seen him since 1951 and he has not.

Mr. Raatgever: I read that letter because it came from a man who was one of the most beloved Governors of this Colony. That was the feeling of this man for this Colony and towards the people of this Colony. I think hon. Members who did not know him personally should know of it. Sir Gordon likes to hear about this country and loves its people. I know that if anybody from British Guiana goes to the United Kingdom, he makes it his duty to go to London to meet that person, to have a chat about British Guiana and to invite him to his home in Scotland. He did that when Mr. Lord and I were in the United Kingdom. He came to London especially to see me when he heard that I was there, and chided me for not informing him that I was there. He invited both of us to his home and we went. Recently he wrote me to the effect that he had the Editor of the "Daily Argosy" at his home at his invitation. Anybody from this Colony is welcome to visit Sir Gordon.

Before I go to the last resolution of the motion, I have a note here that the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, had laboured the point that we have as good men in this Colony as in the West Indies. Nobody got up here and said we are afraid to be associated with the West Indian Islands because the leaders there have more brains than we have. They may be better dictators, perhaps. What we said here was that the dice

were loaded against us by virtue of the number of seats allocated to Jamaica and Trinidad—more than 50 per cent. of the total seats. It did not matter whether you are a superman or not, you could do nothing against people who have the majority of seats, making it possible for their views to be carried. I am not afraid. I can hold my own.

Mr. Ramphal: I know that to be true of Mr. Raatgever, more than anybody else.

Mr. Raatgever: Thank you. I come to the last part of the motion—to ascertain the state of public opinion in this Colony towards its participation in the Federation. If I may say so, this is the dangerous part of this resolution. In my humble opinion the only way the views of the people can be ascertained is by plebiscite. You, Sir, suggested a general election, but we cannot have a general election now.

Mr. Speaker: I must correct the hon. Member. I expressed an opinion, not as regards this Colony, that there are only two ways I know — one was by plebiscite, and as the result of a general election the problem is made the feature of a Party's manifesto or something of that kind. You go to the public on that question and so get public opinion which would be that of the electorate. I have heard recently about a Commission, but I very much doubt whether that could produce the result that the electorate of this Legislature would produce. I do not know. There may be precedent for that.

Mr. Raatgever: Thank you very much. I am indeed very glad to hear you say that. That was the point I intended to make.

Mr. Speaker: I do not say that I am right.

Mr. Raatgever: Your Honour is a legal man with vast experience and knowledge. I would put your knowledge against that of any other legal man.

Mr. Speaker: I would not say that. I have heard many debates on it.

Mr. Raatgever: My point is that H.M. Government having given universal adult suffrage to this Colony, it is still in existence. It has not been taken away. The Minister of State, Mr. Hopkinson, when asked about it at a Press Conference, said:

"It is very difficult to take away universal adult suffrage from people once it has been given. H.M. Government has not taken it away."

The position today is different from what it was in 1948 and 1952. The people have got to decide because the power is in their hands. They are the only people who can sell their birth-right if they want to. I maintain that it cannot be done by any other means than by a plebiscite. It cannot be done by a Commission, as it would be most undemocratic, and it would split this Colony again. It would cause trouble in this Colony of ours, if any attempt is made to force the people into Federation without their being consulted. In order to get the views of the people we will have to bring the electoral roll up to date, which will cost a lot of money.

I can see no other way of obtaining the views of the people than by going direct to them. Today, that would be very dangerous, as His Excellency would have to revoke the Emergency Regulations, because the people would have to get together and discuss the matter, and they would have to be told what it means. No more than five persons can meet together under those Regulations. The Governor would have to see that the people are given correct information. I do not think the establishment of a Commission would be a democratic action, and I mention that because the hon. the Chief Secretary, when he spoke here, said—I read from a Government Bul-

letin dated March 16 and not from a newspaper:—"The motion is in two parts."

Mr. Speaker: I have seen inaccuracies in that publication.

Mr. Raatgever: It should be correct as it is a Government paper. If it is incorrect I am going to be incorrect, as I am reading from it and will argue on it—

"The Motion is in two parts. The first part is an expression of opinion—the opinion of this House. The second part of the Motion makes it plain that it is intended to be no more than that. For the second part is a prayer to the Governor that H.E. should take steps to ascertain the state of public opinion in the country towards participation in the Federation. In other words, the House does not claim to be in a position to represent the will of the people in a matter so vital as this.

It may be asked how, if the Motion is adopted, will H. E. implement this prayer? I do not think it would be right for us to attempt to read H.E.'s mind on this, or to anticipate what steps he would take. All I would say is that there are more ways than one of finding out what the country thinks on this subject. An obvious way is by means of a plebiscite—but this is not the only way, or necessarily the best. Another way would be the establishment of a Commission which would hear the views of representative groups not only on the principle of whether British Guiana should participate or not, but also on the terms under which it should participate. But, as I say, this is a matter which in the terms of the Motion must be left for determination by the Governor. One thing is sure,—whatever steps H.E. may decide upon will take time to fulfil their object. During this time a British Caribbean Federation will, we hope, be evolving into reality...."

When I read this paper (I did not hear the hon. the Chief Secretary when he spoke) I was alarmed because it means that we would be descending to a dictatorship if a Commission were appointed to take the views of some of the people and to commit this country's future, and the future of our people, their children and children's children to Federation without the consent of the people themselves.

That cannot be done in a Democracy. It is done in dictatorship countries but not in a democratic set-up. The people have adult suffrage and, therefore, will have to give their consent. I stand here and warn the Administration that if any attempt is made to federate without the consent of the people, it is going to split this country. I say this with all seriousness and sincerity.

In this same Bulletin of March 16 the hon. the Chief Secretary is reported as saying :

"In the face of all these developments — which suggest that Federation may become a reality at no very distant date the Government has had to consider rightly or wrongly — that there has been a swing of opinion in the country towards participation in Federation. But the constitutional position in which we at present find ourselves makes the interpretation of the opinion a matter of some difficulty. Legally this House—nominated though it is—is competent to resolve the country into Federation; but none of us here today. I think, would claim that we have a mandate to do so. Does this mean that we should do nothing? We think not. We cannot expect, at this late stage, to call a halt to the West Indian islands' march towards Federation so that the whole question of British Guiana's participation can be re-examined. I am sure that none of us here would wish to do or say anything which would impede or prejudice the fulfilment of the London Plan for Federation."

I never said anything to imply that West Indian progress towards Federation should be stopped or altered in any way if British Guiana did not participate. I am not against the West Indian Islands federating. Let them federate. But the point I am making is this, Sir: Who asked the Government? I have not read about any meetings among the people which decided to send petitions to the Administration asking to re-open the question. I have not heard anything over the radio. I have received dozens of letters from people entirely

opposed to it, who want to know who started it. Who asked the Rev. Mr. Bobb to start it? It is for the people of this Colony to feel that it is the right thing for them; to say what is to be done with their birthright, and whether it is to be sold for a mess of pottage. It is for the people to ask that Federation be discussed again—not the Government or a Member of the Legislative Council.

Finally, before I take my seat, I will read an extract from the "Daily Argosy" of March 25, which states :

"Mr. Cummings at once revealed that he had for some time been in favour of Federation (though not before consulting the people), and the Executive Council had considered the motion before the House and had decided to support it, which means that every Member of the Executive Council will vote in its favour at the end of the debate."

Mr. Cummings: I would like the hon. Member to make it clear that he is not reading a report of my speech, but from the Editorial.

Mr. Raatgever: That is perfectly correct. I am reading the Editorial of the "Daily Argosy" of March 25. But, Sir, that means that the motion will be carried. I knew before I entered this Legislative Council Chamber, when I read the motion—you, Sir, were the first person who showed me the text of the motion—and heard that the Executive Council had discussed it and was going to support it, that there will be 10 votes in favour and the motion will be carried. But that did not deter me from coming here and making my views known, although I was fighting a losing battle. It is my duty to point out the facts as I see and know them. Might is not right, and right will always prevail.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

Mr. Gajraj : Mr. Speaker, Sir—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, will seek to give a report, I

[Mr. Speaker]

daresay, of what occurred in Trinidad. I have given him permission.

Mr. Gajraj: Thank you very much, Sir. As hon. Members know fully well, I did speak on the motion before I left for Trinidad many days ago, and it has been my desire since my return to seek some opportunity to say a few words to this Council on what took place there; and a request having come from one or two Members of this Council, I thank Your Honour for allowing me to speak at this stage.

In spite of the fact that much has been said here that this Council had no part in my going to Trinidad as an observer to that very important conference, and in spite of the views expressed here that it would be a waste of time for me to say anything to this Council, I feel sure it is a single minority view, and that it remains so up to now. For I am certain that all the other Members would like to have on record what took place. It is well known that His Excellency the Governor nominated me to go as an observer to the "freedom of movement" conference as it was known in Trinidad. It is also well-known that this Council was notified and the Council did not disapprove.

The question may be asked: why it was that an observer was sent? The answer is, if we are to keep in touch with the developments proceeding along the lines of federation of the British Caribbean, then it is necessary for this Government to send someone from time to time to hold a watching brief for and on behalf of the Legislature of this country. I was not a fully accredited delegate because this Colony did not decide to join in the proposed Federation, but I would like to make this very clear, because of the strictures passed by Members of this Council in opposition to my attendance there as an observer—that I was not a dummy. I had the opportunity to

speak and to let Members of the assembly know what is happening here in our Legislature, and what were the views up to then expressed. I think I should say also that when my colleague, the hon. Member, Captain Smellie, attended the London conference as an observer, he also had an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Smellie: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, Sir, but I made it clear in my speech that I did my duty to represent the majority view of the Legislature, and that I expressed no opinion either way.

Mr. Gajraj: I am sorry my friend thought I meant he expressed an opinion. What I meant was that he was not muzzled, because that is what people know a dummy means. I want to say that I was given the fullest opportunity, and I spoke to delegates before the Conference started, and during the course of the conference itself; and that I was welcomed and accorded the fullest equality, even though I was merely an observer. I think it is necessary that that should go down on the records of this Council, in view of some of the views expressed.

The conference was called for the purpose of discussing differences of opinion between two of the proposed Members of the Federation, namely Barbados and Trinidad, on the question of the freedom of movement of persons. It was explained during the debates that the principle of freedom of movement was bound to be enshrined in any federal constitution drawn up, but because of the fears expressed by some of the islands, that if there was freedom of movement of persons from one territory to another there would be large-scale movement of persons from one territory to another, thereby making it difficult for them to have sufficient housing or jobs, there was considerable discussion and give-and-take. It was finally decided that in the preamble of the constitu-

tion of the Federal Government it should be recited that there should be the greatest possible freedom of movement of persons and of goods between the territories. That is, subject to the qualification that during the first five years of the life of the Federation, legislation by unit or local governments would prevail, but at the end of five years all such legislation could only have effect if it were passed by both Houses of the Federal Legislature.

I should also mention that, whereas in London it had been proposed and agreed on at that time that the subject of freedom of movement of persons should be placed on the Exclusive Legislative List, that is to say, only the Federal Parliament could legislate on that subject, at the Trinidad conference that was changed, and the subject goes to the Concurrent Legislative List whereby all unit legislatures will have the right to pass legislation on that subject; and the Federal Parliament will have the right as well, and if there is any difference of opinion between a unit Legislature and the Federal Legislature, then, of course, the will of the Federal Legislature will prevail. That, in essence, is what took place at the conference itself.

But I would like to say this, that when Members who were present there expressed their concern over the possibility of large-scale movement of persons from one place to another, the Hon. Mr. Norman Manley, Chief Minister of Jamaica, made it clear that so far as movement of population from Jamaica was concerned, Jamaicans would not be looking to the smaller Islands for work, because they were looking for a higher standard of living which they were finding easily in the United Kingdom. He made that as clear as he could so as to allay the fears that existed in

the minds of some of the members there, and even Mr. Grantley Adams, Premier of Barbados, whose Island has been charged with wanting to export some of its surplus population, also held that his Government did not want its surplus population to become a burden on any territory, but if there was work which gave Barbadians a decent standard of living there was surely no objection to anyone going there and getting work, especially if the territory was able to absorb more labour in commerce, industry and agriculture. But he was willing to give the assurance to fellow delegates that if there was any period of time when Barbadians could not find work, the Government would be prepared to pay the cost of their repatriation.

I state this so that Members of this Council would be able to see the spirit which existed. It was not a spirit whereby any member wished to force anything down the throats of others. They began to look at the federal territory as one whole, and, as Mr. Manley pointed out, when there was a federation Jamaica alone would not be his concern, but the entire British Caribbean area. That gives us an indication of the wide point of view that developed from the views of British Caribbean statesmen.

I want to say this, without creating any ill-feeling on the part of Members of this Council, that I believe it would do this country a great deal of good if our people could go out and rub shoulders with those bargainers from the Islands, in that it would help us to be better bargainers for our selves.

Another point raised to allay fears was that when there is a Federal Government it would be the duty of the Federal Legislature to make arrangements, where there is surplus

[Mr. Gajraj]

population in one area, for proper accommodation and travel of that surplus population to another area, so that if it became necessary for any area to take additional population it would be the duty of the Federal Government, in consultation with the unit Government, to make plans and to find the funds necessary to so carry out this development that the movement would take place in an easy and economical way, without detriment either to the exporting or the absorbing country.

I shall go on to a point which I hope I will be permitted to make, because it is outside of my visit to Trinidad. I had opportunities of discussing this absorbing topic of Federation while in Trinidad, and I found that some of the people were still strongly opposed to Trinidad being federated with the other West Indian Islands. I take the opportunity to mention it because in this Council we were deluged with references from the speeches of some Members of the Trinidad Legislature pointing out angles and thoughts which they brought to bear upon the subject, and which they could use to say that they were not in favour of the proposed Federation. I went there on behalf of this Government to hold a watching brief during the conference but, as happens on such occasions, one did meet other people, and it was interesting to exchange views.

I would like to say, if it would help any of the Members of this Council, that the Hon. Ranjit Kumar, the Hon. Bhadase Maraj and the Hon. Mitra Sinanan who had spoken for the Opposition in Trinidad, have now changed their outlook, and I heard them saying that when the Hon. Albert Gomes, Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce in Trinidad,

submits the report of the Freedom of movement Conference to the Trinidad Legislature for ratification, he would find them on the supporting side. That, of course, shows a complete change of thought, and I think it also shows only too clearly that people can have second thoughts. I mention that only for what it is worth.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: May I rise on a point of correction? The *Hansard* shows that they were always in favour of Federation, that is, on the 10th December. So the hon. Member is not bringing anything new to this Council.

Mr. Gajraj: May I say, Sir, that I do not think that at this late stage of the debate I will allow myself to be drawn into an argument with the hon. Member. It is not my place and duty to delve into that at this time.

While I am on my feet I would like to express an opinion and say that the amendment before this Council so reduces the value of the original motion, that if it is passed we would have nothing to act upon. The first part of the amendment removes certain words, and this would prevent this Council from expressing an opinion on the subject. I do not know what is the intention of the hon. mover of the amendment, but I do feel that it is important that we should find out what is uppermost in the minds of Members, and what are the terms under which we go forward in relation to any proposals to enter Federation.

If I interpret his speech correctly, that has to do with one of the main pillars of his contention that the six seats allocated to this country in the Rance Report are inadequate. On that I say, not only I but every other Member of this Council is in agreement. With that as a basis we could now give consideration to the propos-

als, because I feel sure, taking all things into consideration, we must get an upward revision in order that we may take our rightful place in the Federation.

Mr. Speaker: May I say there is agreement on that. You should not advance arguments like that which have been dealt with. I have sufficient time left for another Member if it is possible for him to conclude his speech this afternoon. I do not propose to adjourn to tomorrow, but until Thursday. So if the hon. Member can possibly find it convenient to restrict his remarks it would be helpful. A decided majority has already expressed itself in favour of the motion. Does it matter much what argument was put forward in favour of the amendment? I just mention that because I do not think you know it.

Rev. Mr. Bobb: Before the hon. Member continues I would like to ask him to indicate along what lines he made any contributions affecting British Guiana.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot allow the hon. Member to do that. He went there for a special purpose and he has already given us a fair idea.

Mr. Lee: I think those discussions are highly confidential.

Mr. Gajraj: I quite appreciate the anxiety of hon. Members, but what I can say is that my opinion has been reinforced; that this is the time for us to make our bid to get into the federation. The climate for negotiation is still at its best, and I daresay hon. Members will draw from my statement what perhaps they would like to hear me say quite openly. I can say that, and I say it with all the force and conviction at my command. I shall accept your suggestion, Sir, and say nothing more on the amend-

ment. I appreciate what you have said but, as Your Honour knows, I was not here all the time to listen to the speech of the hon. Member. May I therefore wind up my statement by making one point? I think the hon. Member, Mr. Ramphal, in the course of his speech did indicate that perhaps I was in a better position to mention it than any other Member — that there has been an expression of fear by one section of the Muslim community that Federation would be inimical to their interests. That body is a religious body and the only way I could—

Mr. Lee: Is this in respect of the amendment?

Mr. Speaker: I have already asked the hon. Member to restrict his remarks as much as possible. I think he is quite right to mention that point, as it arose during the debate. I know that the hon. Member will respect my ruling that he should not go further than that, for the reason I have given. I think he is entitled to state the attitude and status of the Muslim community.

Mr. Gajraj: The body in question is a religious body, and I certainly would be the first to appreciate their point of view if they said that Federation would mean the withdrawal of their right to worship God in their own way. In other words, that freedom of worship would be withdrawn from them because of our going into the proposed Federation. After all their concern is with the practice of their religion. I found that in Trinidad there was a similar feeling that their culture would suffer, and that their religion would suffer, and I think it is incumbent upon me to say in this Council that inherent in every British Constitution is the fact that all its citizens are free to worship God in any way they choose. It has been so since East Indians came to British Guiana as indentured immigrants, and that freedom of wor-

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ship persists up to today; and no one would attempt to suggest that they should change their religion or form of worship. Perhaps a statement to this effect will remove the fear which perhaps has been put before them, because there is no doubt that people who believe in their religion believe very tenaciously in its tenets, and would like nothing to be put in the way of their carrying it out. They can be perfectly sure that their mosques and temples would be able to teach their religion as they do now.

Fear has also been expressed that in a Federation their racial identity would be lost, because they would be forced to marry their children to people of other races. I cannot conceive of anything being farther from the truth, and being more inimical to the close and good relations between racial groups in this country than for such a statement to go around. Since I have heard of it I have told individuals and small groups that the question of inter-marriage is one for the individuals themselves. Who can now prevent anyone who belongs to one racial group from marrying into another? It is the freedom which we enjoy to choose our partners for ourselves, and that freedom would surely not be lost in any Federation whatsoever. You, Sir, and I well understand that, but I think it is necessary that that should be explained in a place like this, so that it may be removed from the minds of those who carry that fear.

One last word I would like to say is that we are citizens of this country. We say we are Guianese, and I believe that everyone who says he is a Guianese is honestly loyal to his country. But there cannot be divided loyalty. If we are loyal to Guiana then we must show by our every action that we are loyal to this country, the country which has given us birth, our infant nurture, and our living; the country in which I believe we

shall die and our bones buried. So that I am urging that our people of all racial groups who constitute the people of British Guiana, should have no mental reservations whatsoever on this question of citizenship. We cannot be citizens with our tongues whilst our thoughts are directed elsewhere. If that is so then we must brook no outside interference in the affairs of the people of this country.

FEDERATION — DEBATE CONTINUES

Mr. Jailal: As I indicated some two weeks ago, I rise to support the motion, and I do wish to clear the air, because it was suggested during this debate that the Administration had canvassed certain Members to vote for the motion. I wish to say clearly that whenever the day arrives when people have to make up my mind for me I shall be pleased to resign my appointment to this Council. Perhaps I am a little younger than most hon. Members here, but my experience has been wide. I have grown from a very wayward youth into a very wilful man. My experience has covered a wide sphere, as I have had the opportunity of living abroad for a considerable number of years, and as a result of that experience I can have no other view than that Federation is something to which we should immediately attach ourselves. This has come to me as a result of living together with people of other countries over a period of years. I have lived very closely with Trinidadians, Jamaicans, St. Vincentians, St. Lucians and people from all the other West Indian Islands. I have also lived among people from Dutch Guiana, Venezuela, and other parts of the globe, and this opportunity has enabled me to assess the value of living closely together.

In Aruba I had the opportunity to serve with other representatives of employees in what was then known as the Lago Oil Company's Advisory Council

which represented about 8,000 workers. I remained on the Council for about six years, during which time there were several changes. At the outset there were a group of Surinamers who held tightly to their opinions, and there were people from Curacao who did the same thing. The result was that the management was always able to get the better of our divided opinions, and for about two years our representations were of no avail. We failed in almost every matter that was put before the management, as each group was asking for something different. Eventually one smart fellow who saw that things were not going right called the others together and told them that that separatism was the cause of their failure. He proved to us that we were not getting what we deserved because of that separatism, and, peculiarly enough, the British Guianese were the most separatist. We took his advice and accepted his leadership. The result was that within a few short years we secured nearly double our wages and many perquisites. Our working conditions were improved, and supervisory jobs which were previously closed to those who were known as "local employees" were made available to them, and there was seemingly no limit to the concessions which were being offered to the local employees.

That was perhaps one of the greatest lessons I had had up to that time. We had come together in certain things but in other things we were still separated. However, in the main things, the broad issues, we had federated. That is what has closed my thought of any separatism for British Guiana. I feel that if in a foreign country that coming together had worked successfully, there is no reason why the people of this Colony and those of the West Indies who belong together should not join in a Federation. There is no reason why we should continue to be apart.

One hon. Member raised the question of contiguity of lands. When I learned geography the West Indian Islands and British Guiana were not near to each other, but with the development of modern aircraft and the radio we have been brought into contact with the world almost at the same time. We know what happens today in England within a few hours of its happening, and very much faster if it happened in Jamaica, Grenada or St. Vincent. Besides that, British Guiana today is the hub of air transport. Through the British West Indian Islands we have been able to have practically a daily air service, and besides that we have the British West Indian Airways service which has brought British Guiana quite close to the West Indian islands, so much so that it is easier to get to Trinidad than to cross to Adventure, and easier to travel from Georgetown to Jamaica than to get to our North West District.

There is only this difference—that you pay somewhat more. Naturally that should be so, because it entails more travelling and the comfort in travelling provided. It is unreasonable for anyone to think how much it costs. That does not enter into the picture. It is easier to get to Jamaica now than it is to get to the North West District from Georgetown because you can only go there by plane at any time, if you have enough money to do so, or fortnightly by steamer if you have not that much money. Therefore I feel that the West Indian Islands are as contiguous as any part of British Guiana now, because of modern machines. We can get to the Rupununi just as fast as we can get to Barbados. So there is no problem of contiguity.

I have heard it said that there is a difference in size and population, but that is a negative point, because we cannot compare our 90,000 square miles with our 400,000 people, with much bigger areas. If Grenada has 200,000 or 300,000 people, there is nothing wrong

[Mr. Jailal]

about that. She has been carrying that load of population with the help of England, but that does not necessarily mean that all the people of Grenada would shift into British Guiana immediately we federate. I think that view is exceedingly ridiculous. I submit that the transplanting of human beings is a difficult matter. The older people do not transplant readily, and the young ones take a long time to grow when transplanted. For example, we have people living at Bel Air—families who have been living there 20 or 30 years. Try to move those people into a better housing site on lands behind Le Repentir, and see how difficult it would be. Those people living in Albouystown in squalor do not want to go to the “paradise” planned for them.

Take what sugar is doing for the people in the industry in terms of housing. We are told of the ridiculous housing conditions, and the estate authorities are willing to lend them money and to give them the opportunity of building more comfortable homes, but what do we find? The people are still refusing to remove from their abode of 40 years. The reason is that transplanting of human beings is a difficult thing to accomplish, and no amount of inducement, except it is going to be in terms of pay, six or eight times as much, will make people shift easily from where they are. I would agree that a few adventurers would try, but they would fail if no provision is made for them.

I cannot believe, I will not believe that a Federal Government would permit people to be removed from Barbados, Jamaica, or Trinidad, into British Guiana except special provisions are made to take care of them. Is it not the point Trinidad made—let us provide the housing and let us know there is work. I am sure the hon. Members who made this point will agree with

me that that was what Trinidad was stating. That is where the freedom of movement business is tied up. Again, it will take money and planning to move people. People are not animals, and even for animals we make good pens and stalls to put them in. I do not believe any Federal Government would permit the movement of masses of people into a place unprepared for them and, last but not least, with no jobs for them.

It has been said here that our country is a grand place and has all the potentialities desired. There is so much gold, iron ore, bauxite, and all the things in the ground. I have lived 40 years and have not seen success here. I have had to run away from this country in order to gain my first stage of success, and several others have had to do that. I want to see all these things done in my lifetime. I have come back to British Guiana because I have abiding faith in my country. I doubt very much if there is any other person in this country who has greater faith in it than I have. The only method by which British Guiana can be developed is by having first of all money, next people, and besides that we must have the technical skills. There should be a change of outlook. I charged this Council a few weeks ago with lack of vision. I would charge this Council and the people of British Guiana as well, with lack of vision, if they do not see Federation in the light that I see it.

I feel that if we have a Federal Government, if there is a joining of forces, a joining of money, a joining of statesmen, we would have a better opportunity than the opportunity the hon. Member, Mr. Raatgever, spoke about—the borrowing of \$100 million. It is quite easy to talk about a loan of \$100 million, but obtaining it is another matter. More than

that, I would not like to live in British Guiana as a borrower of \$100 million, because it means we would be going back to Treasury control. I do not believe that is what is intended for this country. If we are able to link our forces I see a better opportunity, a more favourable opportunity, for us to borrow loans from or through the Federal Government. Then there would be no one to offer us Treasury Control. The money would be loaned to the Federal Government and would not be lent to us but granted to be spent in the place where it is best and most needed. I cannot conceive of any statesman of the Federal Government deliberately setting out to give all the tricks to Trinidad, or Jamaica. I really cannot believe it.

Perhaps, I am putting the waggon in front of the horse, but it is sometimes necessary to go backwards in order to come forward. I believe that this is the one chance, the one opportunity left for the entire peoples of this primitive land and of the West Indian Islands to get together and arrive at Dominion status. With 400,000 people we are not going to get a seat in the United Nations Assembly to bargain with the great Nations, but in the Federal Government we can at once bargain for our seat. Basically the peoples of these parts are the same. Our history is the same. Our economy may have some difference, but the reasons for our being in these parts are the same. There is no reason to stress all the unfavourable circumstances that may be. What I am saying is that with Federation we would become a nation. We have posed a problem to the Mother Country for a long time.

With the help of the Mother Country and the renaissance throughout

the West Indies and British Guiana there is a march forward towards the Birth of a nation. Don't you see it in the very form of Government we have? Don't you see it blossoming out in the University College of the West Indies? Don't you see it in the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad? Don't we also have it in other forms—in most recent times our economic conferences, our closer association, etc., and our politics? A new nation is being born. When we shall have federated we shall come together and give birth to a new nation; we shall have exploded a new theory. We shall have shown the world the possibility of a fusion of a complexity of peoples who, through force of circumstances and time, have been able to iron out and smooth out all the difficulties of the various evils of race and class hatred that have been bleeding the life-blood of the peoples of this earth.

I believe that this is one of the great tests, one of the great problems we have had, and I feel that the work that is being done here is timely. It is going to bear rich and glorious fruit. Perhaps it shall be a signal, as India's Dominion status has been a signal. When Dominion status was offered to India I was at that time out of this Colony, and it was my feeling that it was not a time for Indians but for the coloured peoples of this world to have it. I feel similarly now.

Mr. Speaker: I think this is a convenient time for the hon. Member to stop, unless he is not going to be much longer.

Mr. Jailal: Yes, Sir, I shall be long.

Mr. Speaker: Council is adjourned until Thursday at 2 p.m.