

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Friday, 30th January, 1942.*

The Council met at 12 noon, His Excellency the Governor, Sir GORDON LETHBRIDGE, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

### PRESENT :

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,  
Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General,  
Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C., K.C.

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

The Hon. J. S. Dash, Director of  
Agriculture.

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

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, K.C.,  
(New Amsterdam).

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

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

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

The Hon. W. A. D'Andrade, O.B.E.,  
Comptroller of Customs.

The Hon. N. M. MacLennan,  
Director of Medical Services.

The Hon. G. O. Case, Consulting  
Engineer.

The Hon. B. R. Wood, Conservator  
of Forests.

The Hon. F. Ogle, Director of  
Education (Acting).

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E.,  
(Georgetown South).

The Hon. J. I. deAguiar (Central  
Demerara).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western  
Berbice).

The Hon. H. C. Humphrys, K.C.  
(Eastern Demerara).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson (Nominated  
Unofficial Member).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequebo River).

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

### MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 29th January, 1942, were confirmed.

### ANNOUNCEMENT.

#### P.W.D. Re-Votes.

The PRESIDENT : Before proceeding to the Order of the Day I would just like to refer to a matter I mentioned yesterday in reply to a question raised in the Council. I said yesterday that unless the Council had objection to it I would authorize the Public Works Department to proceed with those works which were approved on last year's estimates in respect of which the money provided had not been entirely spent. That money is regarded as savings on last year's estimates, but technically, it will have to be re-voted, and that will mean a supplementary estimate later in the year. Rather than going to the expenditure and trouble of putting up a supplementary estimate now, I have suggested that I should simply authorize the Department to go on with those works which will be set out in a list later, together with a little additional money which will be required to complete them owing to the rise in the cost of materials and labour.

The items include the construction of a new Trade Centre at Fellowship, West

Coast, Demerara, in respect of which a sum of \$100 is to be re-voted. There is also the construction of quarters for the Schoolmaster and Matron at the Industrial School at Onderneeming, for which a re-vote of \$112 is required.

Under Police a re-vote \$6,100 is required in connection with the construction of the Central Police Station, Alberttown, improvements to the Market Police Station, shed for Fire Brigade equipment and improvement to station buildings, and alterations and improvements to the Charlestown Guard House. A re-vote of \$200 is also required for the provision of garage accommodation for five lorries at the Eve Leary compound. There is also an item of \$3,658 which is to be re voted in connection with the construction of a new police station at Charity, Essequibo, \$,700 for the reconstruction of 400 ft. of heavy type fencing at the New Amsterdam Prison, and under Medical Department a sum of \$500 for the provision of the new burial ground at the Maharuma Hospital.

Altogether a total of \$16,038 is required to be re-voted, and with the consent of the Council I propose to authorize that expenditure with an additional sum of \$3,775 which is new money. I think it would be proper to circulate a list of those items before I authorize that the works be proceeded with. I take it that the Council has no objection to that procedure.

#### OFFICIAL MAJORITY.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Sir, before the Order of the Day is proceeded with I wish to get some information. Yesterday, in speaking of the Governor-in-Council, I referred to that body as the Government, and stated that we were being governed by an Official majority. Your Excellency then told me that there was nothing of the kind in this country. I have always used the term since we have had the present Constitution, because there are five Unofficials and six Officials, ex-

cluding the Governor, on that body. I have always looked on the Executive Council as the Government, and I would like to know whether I was wrong or right. I think I was right, and I am asking Your Excellency whether you have considered it in that light.

THE PRESIDENT: If I remember correctly, what I drew the hon. Member's attention to was that he was using the words "Official majority," and I pointed out that on the Legislative Council, as it now stands, there is no Official majority; there is an Unofficial majority. There are 19 Unofficial Members and 10 Official Members. That is why I made the point that "Official majority" is not strictly correct. I accepted the hon. Member's explanation that the five Nominated Members were, to all intents and purposes, part of the Government majority, though I do not think any of them would like to be called Officials. It is just a form of words. I did not like your use of the term "Official majority" which I heard you often use, because, strictly speaking, there is no Official majority. Of course, if you like to refer to the Nominated Members as merely "Yes-men," I appreciate your point, but I do not admit that they are. Does that meet your point?

Mr. ELEAZAR: No, sir. I am referring to the Executive Council as the Government. Whenever I speak of the Government that is what I mean. I do not regard this Council as the Government. The Governor-in-Council is the Government as distinct from the Legislative Council, and on the Executive Council there is an Official majority.

THE PRESIDENT: If I remember what the hon. Member said correctly, he spoke several times about the "Official majority" in this Council who, he said, said "Aye" or "No," according to the way the Governor nodded his head. (laughter). I certainly understood you to refer to

the Legislative Council. On the Executive Council the matter does not arise. The Executive Council is an advisory body consisting of a certain number of officials and unofficials who advise the Governor. That is the constitutional position, and strictly speaking there is no voting on the Executive Council. On the Executive Council a member may express different views from those of the Governor, and they do, but we do not proceed to a show of hands or record votes on the Executive Council. You may quite rightly describe the Governor-in-Council as the Government, and if you like to say that those Unofficial Members are Officials perhaps you are entitled to say so, but I do not know what those Members will say to that. (laughter).

#### ORDER OF THE DAY.

##### APPROPRIATION BILL, 1942.

Mr. McDAVID (Col. Treasurer: I move that "A Bill intituled an Ordinance to appropriate the supplies granted in the current session of the Legislative Council," be read a first time.

Mr. AUSTIN seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: I take it that I have the consent of the Council in authorizing the first reading of this Bill.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

Notice was given that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read a second time. (Mr. McDavid).

##### REVISED RATES OF TEMPORARY WAR BONUS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.): I move:—

THAT, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 3, dated 27th January, 1942, this Council approves of the following revised rates of temporary war bonus being paid to Govern-

ment employees in receipt of salaries or wages not exceeding \$720 per annum with effect from the 1st of January, 1942:—

##### *Employees in receipt of monthly salaries.*

15 per cent on the first \$240 of salary p. a.  
10 " " " " next \$240 " " " "  
5 " " " " " \$240 " " "

Employees receiving between \$720 and \$792 per annum shall be paid at the rate of \$792 per annum.

##### *Employees other than those in receipt of monthly salaries.*

15 per cent on the first 80c. of wages per day.  
10 " " " " " 80c. "  
5 " " " " " 80c. "

This Council further approves of the cancellation of Resolution No. III. of 19th December, 1939.

In view of the further increase in the cost of living owing to present world conditions, it is proposed that junior Government employees should receive some further financial assistance. At present officers and employees of all description in the Service drawing not more than \$480 a year receive a bonus of 10 per cent., and it is proposed now that the limit should be raised from \$480 to \$720 a year, and that there should be paid on the first \$240 a bonus of 15 per cent., that is 5 per cent. more than at present, and that 10 per cent. should be paid on the next \$240 salary, and 5 per cent. on the third \$240 per annum. That is in respect of employees in receipt of monthly salaries.

The second part of the motion deals with employees other than those in receipt of monthly salaries. It is proposed that on the first 80 cents per day a bonus of 15 per cent. should be paid; on the next 80 cents 10 per cent., and that on the third 80 cents 5 per cent. should be paid. It is taken for granted that there are 300 working-days in a year, which is a reasonable figure to take having regard to the fact that there are 52 Sundays, and 12 public holidays named in the Public Holidays Ordinance, Chapter 20, making a total of 64 days. I think 300 is a reasonable number of working days to allow for in a year. It will be seen, if Members work it out, that by taking 80 cents per day and multiplying it by 300, the rate of 15 per cent. on the first 80 cents would

give the wage-earner \$276 at the end of the year. That is what a monthly salaried employee would get if he received a salary of \$240 a year. The limit will be \$720 a year in regard to monthly employees. It is possible for a monthly employee to receive as much as \$792 at the end of the year, and the daily employee who works for \$2.40 per day for 300 days will also receive \$792. I think it will be seen that these two tables are on a par with each other.

The third part of the motion authorizes the cancellation of the Resolution passed in 1939. I now formally move the motion.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: In supporting the motion I would like to say that at a meeting of the Town Council we unanimously agreed to adopt the scale which Government is now introducing. There is a feeling that perhaps the bonus might have been applied to salaries above \$720, but it is a question of finance. That is my personal feeling as far as the employees of the Town Council are concerned.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I think it would be well if some further consideration were given to the word "next" and its meaning. The word "next" can only mean that a man must get \$240 per annum before he can get a bonus of 15 per cent. Supposing, for instance, he gets \$360 a year, is he not to benefit?

THE PRESIDENT: He gets 15 per cent. on the first \$240.

Mr. WOOLFORD: Next must mean that he must get another \$240. In the case of labourers we do not want any trouble. Supposing a man gets 80 cents per day, but during his next term of employment he only gets another 40 cents per day, surely he is entitled to some bonus on that extra 40 cents.

Mr. McDAVID: The hon. Member is being very juristic. The income tax scale is exactly similar—on every dol-

lar so much. I do not think it is necessary to adopt such precise language in a resolution of this character.

Mr. JACKSON: I rise to say that the motion is a timely one, and one that ought to be supported. I think Government should be congratulated on taking a step forward to assist the people in these strenuous times, but I wonder if by reference to 80 cents per day Government is laying down a minimum wage of 80 cents per day. It strikes me that it implies that the minimum wage will be 80 cents per day, and I should like to be informed on that point.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that in the draft submitted to the Secretary of State I used the term "not exceeding 80 cents per day." Anyway, the intention is perfectly clear not to fix a minimum wage of 80 cents per day. It simply means that on 80 cents per day or anything below that 15 per cent. will be paid. That is the intention, and it can be clarified, if necessary, in the wording of the motion.

Mr. JACKSON: I am sorry to say that my hopes have been dashed to the ground.

THE PRESIDENT: I can only state what was the intention. The motion refers to Government employees in receipt of salaries and wages "not exceeding \$720 per annum." Actually it is the same wording as published in a Circular in Trinidad. Perhaps we were wrong in slavishly following the wording used in another Colony, but I am quite certain of the intention.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I happen to know that Government employs people and gives them 80 cents per day, and I think Government was the first sinner in giving people less than 80 cents per day. People were paid 60 cents per day on the Sea Defence works, and it went throughout the Colony as if that should be the minimum wage.

No man in this country can exist on 60 cents per day to-day, and the hon. Member was quite right in asking Government whether it intends that 80 cents per day should be the minimum wage. I remember that on the East Coast sea defences a junior overseer was secured from an estate to superintend work which he knew nothing about, and it was said that he was employed because he knew how to handle labour. Able-bodied men were paid 60 cents per day in keeping with what was paid on the estates. I do not think Government should emulate what is done on the sugar estates. When Government employs an able-bodied man he should not be paid less than 80 cents per day. That would be an example to other employers of labour.

Notwithstanding all the strikes and disputes which are going on, there is no doubt about it that those people are being squeezed. If Government wishes to assist the junior officers in the Service it must not forget those who happen not to be in the Service but are also individuals who have to live according to their station. Government should employ them on the same scale as those who are in monthly employment. I do not think the motion needs any alteration, but Government should direct the Director of Public Works not to pay labourers less than 80 cents per day.

Mr. LEE: I notice that the motion refers to "Government employees in receipt of salaries or wages not exceeding \$720 per annum." May I enquire whether "salaries or wages" include civil servants who are on pension? If not, I would certainly ask Government to consider former civil servants who are now in receipt of pensions.

THE PRESIDENT: No, the motion does not include pensioners.

Mr. LEE: I therefore ask that the motion be amended to include pensioners.

THE PRESIDENT: You would have to put that up separately. I cannot accept it, nor can I put it into effect. That would have to be moved separately.

Mr. LEE: The difficulty we are placed in is that we cannot initiate money votes here.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not mind its being brought into the Council in that way.

Mr. LEE: After all, pensioners are people who have given service to Government. It is not their fault that the cost of living has gone up, and they should also be considered.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: May I ask if the hon. Member refers to resident pensioners or pensioners generally?

Mr. LEE: A principle is a principle, and should be accepted as such. I think it should be general.

Mr. JACOB: I agree that this motion is timely, but I do not like the wording of it. I do not know whether the intention of the motion is to create the impression that 80 cents per day is about the smallest amount paid to workers in this Colony. It has already been stated that certain able-bodied workers get 60 cents per day. I think I can safely say, too, that some female workers get 28 cents per day, and lads under 21 years are paid 28 and 32 cents per day. Young men and women below 20 years are paid 28 cents per day.

THE PRESIDENT: Please remember that we are considering the Government Service only. I am not aware of anyone in the Government Service getting 28 cents per day.

Mr. JACOB: Well, sir, what about the workers under the Public Works Department, the Drainage and Irrigation Board, the Sea Defence Board, or the Transport and Harbours Board? I think the principle has already been

established that all workers employed by those Boards are Government employees. As daily wages are included I do not see how you can draw the line, but perhaps I may be enlightened on that point. I think Your Excellency is not properly informed on this matter. If Your Excellency has been so advised then there is something wrong. It is a fact that certain employees are getting only 28 cents per day while others are getting 80 cents and \$2.40 per day.

Mr. SEAFORD: As regards the Drainage and Sea Defence Boards I wish to point out that all the people employed on those works are really employed by the Public Works Department and work under the District Engineers and Overseers of the Public Works Department. Those Boards are Advisory Boards and do not actually look after the employment of labourers.

Mr. JACOB: I am glad for the explanation which puts the onus on Government direct. I am saying that they are Government employees and I should like a distinction to be definitely drawn that when you are getting 80 cents per day you are a Government employee, but when you are getting 28 cents per day you are not. The point I wish to make clear is that those employees are strong, healthy people who are giving service. On definite and persistent representations which were made to me I addressed a letter to the Director of Public Works on the subject but, unfortunately, I have not a copy here.

THE PRESIDENT: Are you addressing yourself to this motion?

Mr. JACOB: Yes, I am addressing myself to the daily rate of wages.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, that is not relevant.

Mr. JACOB: Your Excellency rules?

THE PRESIDENT: I have ruled that it is not relevant. Address yourself

to the bonus and the increase of the percentages.

Mr. JACOB: I am afraid that I do not follow. I am making a point on the second part of the motion. I am submitting an amendment that it should be 80 cents of wages per day or less.

THE PRESIDENT: I have already included words to meet that.

Mr. JACOB: And I am submitting that there are employees under the Public Works Department who are getting 28 cents per day. The hon. Member for Georgetown North (Mr. Seaford) has made the position clear—

THE PRESIDENT: We are not considering what their rates of wages are, but what bonus should be paid to them on the existing rates. If you keep your remarks confined more or less to that you may speak, otherwise I must rule your remarks as not relevant.

Mr. JACOB: Your Excellency, I must say that during the last few months I have seen very peculiar distinctions drawn when I have risen to speak in this Council, and I shall have to reconsider the whole matter very carefully. Only yesterday—

THE PRESIDENT: I must ask you to address yourself to the motion, otherwise resume your seat.

Mr. JACOB: Am I not permitted to make an explanation and say a few words?

THE PRESIDENT: Will you speak to the motion?

Mr. JACOB: I am speaking to the motion but you have ruled me out of order. I am submitting that I am wholly in order, but if you rule that I must sit down I shall.

THE PRESIDENT: I so rule.

Mr. JACOB: I shall sit down, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Please. I suggest the addition of the words "or

part thereof" after the figures "\$240" and the word "cents" where they appear in the motion. Will that meet your point?

Mr. WOOLFORD: I think so.

THE PRESIDENT: With the consent of the Council the motion will be amended by the insertion of the words "or part thereof" after the figures "\$240" in each place. Those words should be in brackets, I am advised. I will answer the question raised by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) by saying that the figure of \$720 was considered proper by Government in view of the fact that it is the pensionable point in the Government Service. Officers receiving \$720 and above get the full benefit due them under the Pensions Ordinance, while those receiving under \$720 can receive a gratuity under certain Regulations.

The second point I wish to make is that although I have raised it with the Secretary of State I was quite unable to persuade him that anything above \$720 should be considered for a bonus on the merits of our financial position, and also because the present figure is in strict accord with other Colonies in this part of the world, except Trinidad, where a very special reason was emphasized to me in the correspondence. What I would like to say is that I hope some day there will be a re-organization of the terms of service of junior Government employees, which do not seem to me to be entirely satisfactory, apart from the question of pay. I think that with better organization their prospects in the Service might be improved, but that is a matter which will require a great deal of time, thought and money which we cannot undertake at the moment. The only alternative is to increase the bonus. I now propose to put the question.

Mr. LEE: May I enquire whether this motion affects the employees in the Transport service?

Mr. Mc DAVID: Yes, there are no exceptions at all. All Government employees will benefit under it.

Motion as amended put, and agreed to.

#### SUBSIDIZATION OF FLOUR.

Mr. WOOD (Conservator of Forests):

Sir, I beg to move:—

That, this Council approves the expenditure from Colony funds of a sum not exceeding \$200,000, to be applied to the reduction in the price of flour to the consumer by one cent per pound, for a period.

Sir, I feel at this moment like looking the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Eleazar) in the eye as if I were a member of that large and hypothetical Official majority which has nothing to do except say "Aye" or "No," but as it appears to be my misfortune to have to say more than that to-day I should like to explain shortly what this motion for a subsidy on the price of flour means. Your Excellency explained the reason for it yesterday, but I know that there is a certain amount of misapprehension in the minds of some Members and definitely in the minds of the public in regard to it. Therefore I would like to draw attention to the wording of the motion which says that this subsidy will be applied to the reduction in the price of flour to the consumer by one cent per pound.

People are very fond of using the word "pegging" when it comes to prices, but I wish to make it clear that the proposal is not to "peg" the price of flour. If it were, the motion would have read to the effect that this Council agrees to a sum of money being spent to hold the price of flour at a certain figure. Now "pegging" has certain advantages. Its principal advantage is this: that if you "peg" the price of any foodstuff at a certain point, the consumer then knows that that is going to be the price of that foodstuff until the policy is changed, or something of that sort happens. On

the other hand, where money has to be provided and where money has to be voted to enable that to be done it becomes a matter of great difficulty, because it is impossible to estimate what the cost will be, it being dependent on the ruling price of the commodity which is to be "pegged" in the future, and we all know that if we could budget backwards we would all have made our fortunes long ago. It is impossible to know what the price of any foodstuff is going to be in the future. That, therefore, is one of the reasons why it is we consider it preferable to reduce the price of flour by one cent per pound from what it is at present rather than "peg" it at that. The disadvantage of that is this: that if shortly after, by means of subsidy, we have reduced the price by one cent per pound world prices rise by one cent per pound, the price to the consumer would rise by one cent as well, and he might well say "What is the good of your subsidy? It reduced the price for a week or two and now it is back where it was." We would be accused of putting the subsidy into our pockets. It has that drawback, and it is a drawback that has to be considered.

I find that out here we are not able to do these things in the way they are done in the United Kingdom. There all the subsidizing of foodstuffs is secret; nobody knows the extent to which the Government is subsidizing foodstuffs. But not only that, there is a large population with a very large consumption, and they are highly organized. The result is that Government purchases foodstuffs which go into the market secretly. Nobody knows who the Government buyers are. Nobody knows that anybody is buying on Government account or on his own account. Hon. Members will appreciate, I feel sure, that it would be impossible for Government to indulge in operations of that nature here. So that we must, if we can, maintain competition between traders. If we "peg" the price of flour at a certain figure we

have to approach the importers and say "When you import flour we will pay you the difference between what it costs to import it and the loss you make in selling it at the price we fix." The importer then says to himself "It does not matter a hoot to me what I pay for flour, my friends on the other side can invoice me at a higher price." The agents who get a commission on the amount of money expended are quite naturally going to try to increase the price. Therefore we must, if we can, try to maintain competition between the importers, and by paying a straight subsidy of one cent per pound we can do that. All we say to the importer is "As the flour comes into the Colony and has passed through the Customs you will be paid one cent per pound on what you import." The Prices Control then sees that that cent is passed to the consumer and there will still be competition between importers.

If we "peg" the price it would admittedly be possible still to maintain that competition, but it would be extremely difficult. We could not pay each man the difference between what it cost him to import and the subsidized price, because he would not worry about what price he paid for the flour. So that we will have to say that for a period of each month we will pay a subsidy on the average cost of the flour imported during that month in order to maintain competition. If the price of flour was subject to violent fluctuations we might have to try to do it by "pegging," but with flour that is not the case. Flour prices ordinarily remain remarkably steady. Furthermore, flour is ordered usually a reasonable distance ahead of consumption; not quite as much as it used to be in peace time, but still a reasonable distance ahead. Our position at present is that we have about normal stocks of flour in the Colony—at least three weeks' supply. We have a considerable consignment in the river awaiting discharge, so that we can fairly say that we have a month's supply



in our warehouses or alongside our wharves. In addition to that we have firm orders placed at firm prices for a supply sufficient to last about four months and one week. We can therefore say with a very considerable degree of certainty that the price of flour to the consumer, on account of world prices, is not likely to undergo any alteration for the next four or five months. Therefore the disadvantage in a straight subsidy of the risk of sudden price variations does not arise in this case.

There are certain other questions which I know are going to be raised and which have actually been raised with me by various persons. In that connection, although I do not want to startle the Council with any unusual piece of news, I would say that the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) has sent a letter to Government. I have his authority to discuss the letter. I know he is going to raise points based on the announcement made by Government of the proposed reduction of the price of flour by one cent per pound. In his letter he says:—

“I do not know how it is proposed to give effect to this action, nevertheless in order to give some assistance to Government I beg to recommend the following method:—

The non-collection of duty, surtax and Bill of Entry Tax on flour as from first March 1942. Refund of duty collected on all flour on hand in all parts of the Colony at the close of business on 28th February, 1942, after a signed return is taken by the District Commissioners. This method will automatically reduce the cost of living by  $\frac{3}{4}$  cent per pound on flour and bread to be consumed as from 1st March.

As it is the intention to reduce the cost of living by one cent per pound on flour, and as the duty is only  $\frac{3}{4}$  cent per pound, I recommend further that the same principle be applied to the prices of potatoes, salted fish and cooking butter, the duty on these being one-half of one cent per pound on potatoes, one and a quarter cent on fish and three cents per pound on butter.

I am confident that this method would be appreciated by the public and the reduction would be evenly distributed among all classes of the community.”

That is a helpful and constructive letter, and I know that the various questions which are raised in it are exer-

cising the minds of the public. I would like to deal with them because they are all points which have been considered. It was suggested at an early stage that we should help to reduce the cost of living by remitting duties. I am not going to suggest that we are against that system entirely. On the contrary, the Control Board has recently been taking it up in regard to certain specific instances. The case arises where in peace time a certain prohibitive duty may have been put on some article from some particular country or group of countries to prevent dumping of very cheap goods. That country may be overrun by the enemy, and instead of the dumping of cheap goods being a problem, the problem is how to get cheap goods in. Therefore, in specific cases like that, the removal of specific duty is advantageous, but in any general broad scheme for reducing the cost of living the remission of duty has grave disadvantages.

By our calculations the duty on flour actually amounts, as flour is imported at present, to about .63 of a cent, but accepting the hon. Member's figure of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent, the first drawback immediately arises that when the flour arrives we take off the Bill of Entry tax of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent to pass it on to the consumer who buys flour by the pound or two pounds, and unfortunately we do not possess a coin of  $\frac{3}{4}$  cent value. That is one of the difficulties we have to face. It can be faced to some extent with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cents by seeing that the consumer gets 2 pounds for 9 cents, but when it comes to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent it becomes very difficult.

It has another drawback. If we wish to have any broad scheme of reducing the cost of living we have to consider primarily by how much should the cost of living be reduced in any particular case, and after consideration we may say it ought to be reduced by one cent or two cents per pound, or by some definite amount like that. Surely the way to go about it is to work out what reduction is necessary, and then

to make that reduction. If, however, you tie yourself to remission or reduction of duty you cannot do that; you are bound to be carried along by what the duty happens to be, and what the duty happens to be does not bear relation to the cost of living. If we decide to reduce the price of flour by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent, not having a fraction of a cent we have to go on reducing by another  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent to be able to pass it on to the consumer. We would have to take off our Customs duty and also subsidize, so that we would have two jobs of work to do instead of one.

Another thing about a straight subsidy as against remission of Customs duty or remission of duty plus subsidy is that if later on I have to justify what we have been doing I would have to get up here and explain that this has cost so many thousand dollars and also, if we did not remit the Customs duty, we would have collected so many thousand dollars of Customs duty. It is not easy to explain to the general public, whereas with the straight subsidy we are in a position to say that it will cost so many dollars, and at the end we can hand the taxpayers a Bill for so many dollars.

There is another question about remission of duty which is of very great importance, and that is trade treaties. Customs duties on a great many articles are based on trade treaties and trade agreements to which we and the other side are not the only parties. There are groups of Colonies which subscribe to various trade agreements, and we cannot in a great many instances juggle about with Customs duties without a great deal of arrangement and discussions with the other parties to those trade treaties, which are in force in war time just as much as in peace time. All sorts of questions can arise which seem obvious, but would need discussion. If we start trying to help the cost of living by remission of duties we see ahead of us long and difficult negotiations and complications

in regard to our various trade treaties. It seems simpler to take the revenue from our Customs duties as we do and incur a straight subsidy with a straight bill of expenditure which we can produce for it.

The hon. Member also suggests the remission of duty on potatoes, salt fish and cooking butter. A great many people eat flour who do not eat salt fish, but everybody who eats salt fish eats flour. The same applies to cooking butter. The moment we come to potatoes we get on dangerous ground. I selected potatoes when I spoke in this Council some time ago, and pointed out that they were the staple food of one class of people. It is an important point whether potatoes are really worth worrying about, because they can be substituted by locally produced articles. It is therefore an arguable question. Government prefers to subsidize flour because it is absolutely in universal use.

There is another point which I have seen raised elsewhere, and I may as well tackle it while I am on the question. There seems to be an impression that this \$200,000 asked for will be \$400,000, and that that expenditure will be in addition to remission of a large sum of money which, with civil servants' bonus, will reach seven figures almost at once. I want to make it perfectly clear that so far as our calculations go—and the consumption of flour is at a pretty steady rate—\$200,000 will cover the cost of this subsidy for an experimental period of six months, with a small margin to allow for a reduction in price causing a slight increase in consumption, although we do not anticipate any large increase in consumption. Where we would get a large increase in consumption immediately would be if we brought the price of flour below the price of rice, because I think any Water Street dealer in flour would say that the moment the price of flour drops below the price of rice

there is a large increase in the consumption of flour. That, however, will not be the case here, so that we do not anticipate any large increase in consumption.

There has been another misapprehension which we thought we had carefully guarded against when the notice was issued by Government that it proposed to apply this subsidy after legislative sanction had been given. We worded the notice very carefully so that nobody could possibly get the impression that flour was one cent per pound cheaper from the moment that announcement was seen in print. In spite of that members of the public have demanded flour from the retailers at a cent per pound cheaper because, they said, Government had so ordered; and the retailers have gone to Water Street and made a similar demand for the same reason, although we tried to make it so very clear in our announcement. The price of flour has not yet been reduced by one cent per pound.

The scheme will not present any administrative difficulty at all. As the flour flows out the subsidy is paid, and the flour flows through the normal channels of distribution, but for the change over we have to check stocks of all flour in the Colony. That is going to be a most difficult thing to do. We cannot take stock of retailers' flour. There is an enormous number of small retailers scattered all over the Colony. Those who carry stocks at the end of any month of 10 bags or more have to make returns of their stock. Those who carry smaller stocks do not have to return their stocks. The retailer carries a small stock; he lives more or less from hand to mouth with his flour. It is proposed, if this measure goes through to-day, that the date on which the change over will come into force will be February 12.

Another point which is going to be raised is that it is going to be difficult to pass this cent on to the consumer.

As regards super flour, which is consumed by the East Indian community, it is quite simple, because supplies are ample, and the amount on order ensures that the supply will be ample for a good long time to come. There are 73,000 whole bags on order. Therefore, as regards half of the flour imported, that is super flour, the cent will go straight through to the consumer. As regards baking flour it is not so easy. A certain proportion goes to the villages where it is used for making dumplings. Some of that flour also goes into the interior where the working people do not bake bread but make dumplings. In both those cases it is comparatively simple to pass the cent on to the consumer, but it is when it comes to bread that it is definitely difficult.

There has been, I understand, some uneasiness among the bakers, but I want to pay tribute to the bakers of the Colony. I think that if anybody selling any commodity in this Colony has really co-operated with the consumer in the course of this war it is the bakers of the Colony. If there was a prize competition for that I think the bakers would walk away with the first prize.

I would also like to pay tribute to the staff of the Control Board which seems to be able to produce statistics dating right back with almost nothing. I have here statistics showing the weight of a cent loaf of bread at 24 bakeries in Georgetown at a certain date in every month since March, 1940. I would like to point out that the price of flour in Trinidad is cheaper than it is here. Bread is controlled in Trinidad where the minimum weight of a cent loaf is 2 ounces. In spite of that, out of the 24 bakeries in Georgetown only two produce a cent loaf below the minimum weight in Trinidad, although the price of flour is dearer here; and there are six bakeries which actually produce a cent loaf of more than 2½ ounces. So that I do feel that the public cannot expect that when the price of flour is

reduced by one cent per pound the price of bread will be reduced or the weight of the cent loaf will be increased in that exact proportion, because flour is not the only ingredient of bread. The moment more flour is added the baker will have to add more of other and much more expensive ingredients such as shortening. When you are baking more flour you also have to use more fuel. Those are things to be taken into consideration. I think we can say with reasonable certainty that as regards the bread problem, it will be quite possible, with the co-operation of the bakers, to see that the public get their full share of that one cent off the price of flour through their bread as well.

I was rather interested to notice that while the price average by weight of bread was 6 cents per pound in Georgetown in September, 1939, by December 1941, it had only risen to 6.6 cents per pound, less than the price of flour had risen. I know that many people do anticipate great difficulty in passing the price reduction of one cent per pound on flour through the bread to the consumer, but I believe it will be possible for us to do it without any great difficulty. I say quite frankly that I believe we will get the co-operation of the consumers in doing so.

In conclusion, I will say that it is very easy indeed for me or anybody else to see a great many objections to any course of action. The problems are not only difficult, but they are all new and all coming together, but I believe that if in spite of the objections we resolve to take a steady line and try to go through we will be successful. I formally move the motion.

Mr. D'ANDRADE (Comptroller of Customs) seconded.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I would like to ask the Conservator if any consideration has been given to the Bread Ordinance, Chapter 70?

THE PRESIDENT: Are you seconding the motion?

Mr. WIGHT: No, sir. I would like to ask the mover if any consideration has been given to the Bread Ordinance, Chapter 70, which dates back to the year 1850, and if not, why not? I do so because I see in that Ordinance several materials of which bread may be made. What about cassava and plantain flour? I would like to see local substitutes used so as to give the producers a fair return. I do not think the mover has considered the Bread Ordinance.

THE PRESIDENT: I think he has.

Mr. WOOD: In regard to substitutes or adulterants, I may say that early in the war we tried experiments with 25 per cent. of rice and cassava flour as adulterants in bread making, but not for sale. The difficulty about those adulterants is that they cost more than the wheaten flour itself, and therefore the price of the mixture is increased above the price of the wheaten flour:

Mr. WIGHT: Would it not be cheaper to subsidize those special ingredients used in making bread instead of subsidizing flour? It is anticipated that there will be a large surplus of wheat in Canada, and I take it that flour comes within the trade agreements referred to by the hon. Member. Under the Ordinance bread can be made of any size and sold at any price, but it must be sold by weight.

Mr. WOOD: There is legislation providing for bread to be sold by weight which will help us, but I do not know how many prosecutions have been brought since 1850 against bakers who sell cent loaves of bread not by weight. I believe that 80 per cent. of the bread consumed in this Colony is sold by loaf and not by weight, in spite of the Ordinance.

Mr. JACOB: I am against this motion in the way it is worded. I am wholly in favour of reducing the cost of living,

but the method of approach is not the right method. It is going to be a costly experiment, and I am not sure whether the amount that will be spent will go directly to the consumer. I have always been told that my methods were bad and always bad, but I had a little bit of consolation when I heard the mover say that the suggestions I had made were a little helpful. I cannot be in favour of this method of spending public money. The hon. Member referred to the remission of duty, but I made no such mention in my letter. I suggested non-collection. I am not in favour of collecting money and paying it out again. It will be necessary to have machinery for the paying out of this money, but we have not been told what the machinery will cost to set up. Even if we are told that it will cost nothing, that present officers can do the work, it means that they will do a little less work in other directions.

The figure of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent has been worked out as follows: The duty on flour is \$1 per bag of 196lbs. with a 25 per cent. surtax and a 3 per cent. Bill of Entry tax which is based on various prices. The suggestion was made that you cannot allocate  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent, but how can you fix the price of flour without passing it on by cents or half-cents? The price of flour varies from time to time by 10, 15 and 25 cents. It beats me to understand how Government is going to take the price factor and cannot take the duty factor. Here you have duty being collected at approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cent per pound. By various methods which I think will not be appreciated and cannot work satisfactorily, Government says it is reducing the price of flour by one cent per pound, whereas in fact the price of flour will rise next month by  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent. Where will the subsidy come in? The public pays 4 cents per pound for flour. Next week when the motion comes into effect the public will expect to pay 3 cents. A month hence the price goes up and they are asked to pay  $3\frac{1}{2}$  or possibly 4 cents

per pound. Where is the value of the subsidy?

I have been accustomed to listening to political speeches over a long number of years. The speech I have heard sounded like a political speech, but if it is analyzed I do not think the candidate would get 25 per cent of votes. It was more like window-dressing, but the public cannot be so easily misled. I agree that there is a genuine desire on the part of Government to reduce the cost of living which has risen on account of the various duties that have been put on various goods. The hon. Member says that the price of flour in Trinidad is cheaper than in this Colony. Why? Because the duty there is less. I think the safest and most statesman-like method would be to collect no duty on certain articles of food. My methods have always been wrong and are wrong again in this instance. In the past I suggested that the marginal system of price control should be adopted. After two years I am glad to see that that system will be adopted now. But five weeks have gone and no definite statement has been made.

I did not raise the question of potatoes but the mover raised it. The price of potatoes is not fixed, the price of flour is fixed. Is Government aware that the price of potatoes to-day is about 12 cents per pound while it was 4 cents last week? Since the sinking of the *Lady Hawkins* the price of potatoes has gone up. I enquired about potatoes and one or two other items so as to be able to offer constructive assistance, but I am afraid that whenever I say things here they are simply brushed aside, and the taxpayers pay in the end.

On the question of bread, I think the mover will admit that he has made out no case at all as to how the consumer will benefit. How is the reduction of one cent per pound of flour going to be distributed to the consumer of bread is something he has not been able to explain and will not be able to explain.

If he will give the Council a satisfactory explanation as to how this \$200,000 will be paid out I think every Member will be grateful. I must confess that he has made out a hopeless case, and the consumer has my greatest sympathy. I cannot approve of the expenditure of \$200,000 on such a doubtful project.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I am afraid I have risen to express agreement with some of the views expressed by the hon. Member who has just resumed his seat. I fully understand the object of the Government in submitting this proposal, but I would ask for a closer examination of the article that has been selected. It is undeniable that flour figures largely in the diet of every person in the community, but it does so in different forms. In the case of the East Indian consumer I think I am right in saying—I know something of their habits—that flour is not consumed by them in the form of bread, but is made into roti, a form of unleavened pancake which is used as an article of diet with various forms of currie which is rolled into the roti. The East Indian who goes into a shop will insist on getting a pound of flour, and will insist on getting it at one cent per pound less. That type of consumer is going to benefit because he buys his flour in bulk and will get the value of the bulk and the value of the reduction in price. The East Indian is not a dumplingeater. I like them myself. Some people like them sweetened and others unsweetened. There are other people who buy flour for the purpose of converting it into pastry in their homes. Those people, like myself, are going to benefit; but are persons in my position being considered in this motion? The cost of living is being felt, of course, by people like myself, but I think the aim and object of the motion is to reach the poorer consumer. In what form is this reduction in the price of flour going to reach them when they buy bread?

It is admitted that bread has for years been sold in this Colony in certain

sizes—one cent, penny, four cents, and even six cents. It is also sold in the form of sweet bread. People do not go and ask for flour; they ask for bread or biscuits of various kinds. Biscuits are sold by number. There are two biscuit factories in Georgetown—Messrs. Wieting & Richter and the B. G. Biscuit Factory. How are the consumers of biscuits going to benefit by the reduction of the price of flour? It is not possible for them to benefit. Is it suggested that the bakers are going to give them a larger number of biscuits or two loaves of bread for one cent? The reduction in price will not permit that. Therefore, I feel that if you take into account the various forms in which flour is being dispensed you must arrive at the conclusion that the poorer consumer is not going to benefit. I am unable to see how many other persons are going to benefit by this proposal except the importer of flour and the bakery owners.

There is another class of persons who use flour and have direct association with the consumer. I refer to the many women in this community who buy flour and sell small cakes. They will benefit, if they exact from the places with which they deal, flour at the reduced rate, but is it expected that those women will in their turn make these cakes any larger? I am quite sure that they are not going to benefit to such an extent as to be able to do so, as it would mean in many cases very heavy expenditure on the size of their pans and the various methods they have to adopt in order to prepare the articles for consumption. I do not think the community would grudge those poor women making what benefit they could out of the reduced price of flour, but I am speaking on behalf of the consumer. Is he going to get any benefit? I cannot see it.

Then there is the consumer in the "bush" who is dependent upon a shop. The shopkeepers do sell bread, and many men have improvised ovens and

make and sell bread. I doubt very much whether the reduction is going to reach the wholesale dealer in the interior whose freight has been increased. A reduction of one cent per pound in the price of flour will not necessarily mean any reduction to them owing to the cost of freight. People in the interior eat biscuits; they do not manufacture them there, and unless they are going to get a larger quantity of biscuits the benefit of this proposal will not reach them.

I think myself that the wrong article has been selected. I am not prepared to say which articles would reach the consumer to a greater extent, but I am in agreement with the hon. Member when he selected cooking butter, because it is an article of food which enters into the daily diet and the cost of living of every working person in the community. They fry fish with it or convert it into oil.

I hesitate to suggest that if the price of firewood could be controlled that that would largely benefit the working man. A small piece of wallaba wood which previously cost one cent now costs three cents. It is a very necessary article to prepare the diet of the consumer. If in some way or other the price of firewood could be controlled it would be of considerable benefit, because every day at least one piece of wood or two pieces are used by those people. It has been suggested to me that it would not benefit the people in the country districts because they use courida wood which they get from the seashore, but it would benefit the people in Georgetown.

Whilst I am not going to oppose the motion I do feel at the moment that it is a direct subsidy to the importer and will not reach the consuming public. There is a class of importer who imports flour purely on a commission basis. It does not matter what increase there is in the price of flour, he is paid a commission on his importation. He is not

concerned about passing on the benefit of a cent to the consumer, although he will be called upon by the bakers to sell them flour at one cent less per pound.

Mr. DEAGUIAR: I am not really enamoured with the proposal of Government, but Government having decided that some effort should be made in order to reduce the cost of living, I am quite prepared to say that the motion will benefit those people it is intended to benefit. I hope hon. Members will realize that what I am about to say is really in order to render some assistance to the debate in this Council, and that I am not at all championing the cause of the importer or seller of flour. I make that observation because one is very often accused of self-interest in this Council when you either advocate or attack a proposal of Government. I feel, with my knowledge of the trade, that what I am about to say will be of some assistance to the Council.

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) referred to the classes of poor people who, within his knowledge, are likely to benefit by this proposal, but ended up by stating that he entirely agreed that two of them will benefit though he had fears that the third will not benefit. The third class he referred to are the manufacturers and sellers of bread and biscuits. At first blush it may appear that there is something in what he said, but on careful examination of the situation there is no reason at all for him to have the fears he has described. I would like to invite him to consider that a reduction of one cent per pound of flour represents in round figures a difference in price of \$2 per bag. Does any hon. Member feel that such a concession of \$2 per bag will not reach the consumer?

I am going to suggest in what form the consumers of bread will receive benefit. One hon. Member referred to

the Ordinance of 1850 in which it is stated that bread should be sold by weight. That is one of the things which make it so difficult to operate that Ordinance. In this country no bread is sold by weight. One cannot, except by special order, ask a baker for half a pound of bread. The greater quantity of bread sold in the shops is known as the cent loaf. That is precisely how the consumers benefit. When the price of flour is high the number of cent loaves per pound is less. In other words, if a baker makes six loaves which work out at six cents per pound, when the price of flour is higher he will only make five loaves per pound. He supplies a larger loaf for a cent when the price of flour is cheap. When the price of flour is high he naturally makes a smaller loaf of bread for a cent. I ask the hon. Member if that is not a way in which the consumer benefits?

The same argument is true in regard to the sale of biscuits. Biscuits are made so many to the pound for so much. It naturally follows that if you have a smaller number of biscuits to the pound the size of the biscuits is greater. What the hon. Member does not know is this: If he is accustomed to a size of biscuit three inches square and when the price of flour is cheap he expects a biscuit five inches square that, of course, will not be possible. What really does happen is this: In one instance the biscuits would be half an inch thick and in another three quarters of an inch thick. Therefore he obtains an advantage in that way.

I want hon. Members to realize that \$2 on the price of a bag of flour must be passed on to somebody. A reduction of 10 cents on a bag would make no difference, but when it comes to a reduction of \$2 on a bag of flour it must be passed on to somebody, otherwise there would be something wrong with competition. It would be wrong to say that this is a direct subsidy to the importers of flour. I cannot under-

stand any hon. Member making such a statement. In what way can that be so? We know that the price of flour is controlled, and how it is controlled. Unless the gentlemen of the Control Board are not going to do their work properly it naturally follows that they are going to see to it that this cent on the pound will be fixed, and knowing them as I do I think they will probably want to get 1½ cents out of it. The motion in its present form will be a direct benefit to the consumer.

On the general question raised by the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) there are a number of weak points in his suggestion about non-collection of duty. As a matter of fact I think it would raise a number of points as regards policy. Of course, if we were debating free trade this morning that would be an entirely different matter, but I would warn Government to consider very closely now or in the future any proposal to remit the duty on any article without taking all the circumstances into consideration.

Mr. JACOB: I rise to a point of correction. The suggestion I made was not to remit duty, but that it should not be collected.

Mr. DEAGUIAR: That is exactly the word I used. I looked at my notes. If Government remits duty the questions of policy I am thinking about at the moment would certainly arise if it is decided not to collect duty on flour or on any other article. As a matter of fact I was surprised to be interrupted by the hon. Member, because I wanted to say that if we were discussing free trade I would support him entirely. In this form there is no doubt that the consumer will benefit from this motion. Although personally I am not too enamoured with the proposal, I am willing to support the motion because I feel that Government's intention to pass on the benefit of the reduction of one cent per pound



on the price of flour to the consumer will be realized.

Mr. SEAFORD: I am entirely in favour of the motion because I feel that flour is the most universally consumed article of food in the Colony. What has been said by the hon. Members for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) and North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) may be perfectly correct, but if there is any possibility whatever of the public getting the benefit of this, for Heaven's sake let us try to give them any assistance we can, as I think it is our duty to do. The motion refers to a period, and I think if Government finds that it will not work it will not hesitate to cancel it. The mover referred to the difference between "pegging" the price of flour and a straight subsidy. If we control the price of flour I do not see very much difference in the two.

The mover referred to the retail shops being cleared by Thursday, which would give them plenty of time to re-stock. I am wondering if that will be possible in the country districts. The interval of time seems to be rather short.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I do not like to oppose anything that comes from Government with the best intention, but I know that the road to a hot place is paved with good intentions. When Government makes some attempt to do something for the benefit of the community one hesitates to dissent, because it may be of some benefit to somebody. If this motion to give \$200,000 to the importers of flour is intended to benefit the poor people I am afraid that that is not going to be achieved at all. I have known the time when East Indians and everybody in the Colony only used bread on Sunday morning, but after a time bread became the lazy man's diet. He failed to take advantage of the things that were grown here with plenty of vitamin. Nowadays some people eat bread at almost every meal, and Government thinks that the best

thing to do is to subsidize flour. Why shouldn't the people resort to what they have been doing before? Plantains are there and rice is there. Instead of paying a subsidy to the importers of flour Government should reduce the duty on flour and so avoid setting up machinery to pay a subsidy. The benefit of this money will not go to the consumer. There is not a baker in the country to-day who has a scale for the purpose of weighing every loaf of bread. Whether the price of flour goes up or down the size of the cent loaf remains the same. The baker makes the same cent loaf and puts the profit into his pocket. There was a time when there were a few prosecutions against bakers for selling bread other than by weight.

I do not propose to oppose the motion, but Government's object is not going to be achieved. Government is going to give the importers of flour a concession which it believes will be passed on to the consumer, but he is not going to get it. Government's intention will be frustrated. Some people will be made richer than they are, and others will be encouraged to continue to eat bread when there is so much local produce that can be more profitably utilized.

I do not want to prevent anyone from having his cake, but people can do with a pound of cake less per week because flour is expensive. One does not mind paying an extra cent for one's cake once in a while, however, if one can get one's plantains sold or turned into flour. During the last war a Portuguese gentleman in this Colony, a good baker, converted rice into flour and made bread with a certain proportion of wheat and rice flour and it was well received by this community. To-day I do not hear a word about that only about subsidizing imported flour in this country. The poor man in this country should be told that he cannot buy wheat flour because it is too expensive, and he must go back to rice and plantain flour as formerly. Dried

plantain converted into flour is very nutritious. I have read in the "Tropical Agriculture" that one pound of plantains has more nutriment than three pounds of beef. There are very few who cannot consume a pound of plantains at one meal, and very few who can consume 3 pounds of beef at one meal. Will you subsidize beef so as to let him have his piece of beef every Sunday morning, and let the plantain grower go hang? My plea now is not so much against the motion, since Government has the idea that it will benefit somebody, as it is to see that local products are encouraged to be grown and utilized by the people. If possible put a tax on all things imported that can be grown here, but Government has not the temerity to stand up and tax some of those things coming in here. Why? We can produce some things better in some respects than those imported. It is a matter of the greatest good for the greatest number, and I do implore Government once more to do something.

On the very day that we had intimation here that war had broken out I from my place in this Council besought Government to take steps immediately to get an increase of local production. The then Governor acted very promptly, but it became mere fun. I am telling Your Excellency in all sincerity that what you are doing now will not last very long. It is such a large amount that if it had been distributed amongst the people who are producing there would have been no need at all to worry whether flour comes to this country or not. I am not sure that Government should not begin to take steps from now to keep out all flour from coming in. What would happen if the sugar producers say their production is without other means of getting help? In this Council one fails to get the best informed opinion because there are so many importers looking after one thing or another. I deprecate this kind of thing. That had given rise to all the trouble in the past. We want something to

benefit all the people. When Government brings forward something of this kind I feel that Government ought to be complimented. Government is acting on the best advice of its officers. The Officer who is bringing this motion is doing so with the best intention. But is he to be blamed because his best intention would not reach the poor people who are suffering and whom he wants to help? I am speaking here not to disprove what he has said nor to find fault, but because I see his efforts will be frustrated on account of prevailing conditions. Those conditions should not be allowed to continue. The people should not be complaining that they do not get sufficient work and sufficient extra money because they have to pay excessive prices for things imported which can be produced here to the advantage of those people and their confreres. Four pounds of flour at five cents per pound cost 20 cents. That alone cannot keep a man for a week, but give that same man 20 cents worth of plantains and he will have substantial food for a whole week: yet you are subsidizing flour and leaving the plantain grower to starve.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I do not intend to oppose this motion because it is clear that it is the intention of Government by this motion to assist the poor consumer throughout the Colony. At the same time as it is a Government measure, Government thinks the relief will meet the general consumer of this Colony, which I doubt very much. That I do not intend to support. I would, however, like Government to try out this experiment, and I would be only too pleased if it succeeds, but I feel certain that the community would have much preferred this subsidy of \$200,000 to be spent in some other way. This money is given as a subsidy to increase the campaign that has been carried on for some time by Government for increased production. Government is aware that representations have been made over and again to get mills in

this Colony whereby such things as plantains and cassava can be made into flour. I doubt whether such an experiment would have required \$200,000 to commence with, and I feel certain that even if it had failed it would have been more appreciated by the general public.

The mover of the motion has told this Council to-day that it is a certainty that we will get flour in this Colony for the next five months at a fixed price. There is, therefore, no fear that we will not have a supply. Orders have been booked at firm prices. Does Government consider 5 cents per lb. for flour so high as to be beyond the means of everybody? If that is so, I beg to differ. I do not think, compared with the prices of other articles, that the price is so much higher and also that the quantity used by each individual is greater. I say that as there is a quantity of flour to be had at firm prices it will be much better for this \$200,000 to be spent in some other direction.

I entertain the same fear as the hon. Member for Georgetown North (Mr. Seaford) that if this scheme is put into operation on Thursday it will not reach the country districts by Saturday. I believe that this motion is going to be put through the Council to-day, and I suggest that some consideration be given to its commencement in the country districts. I think the District Administration Scheme may assist the Control Board in respect of the stocks in the country districts, but I fear that in those districts the consumer will not benefit until the stocks there have been exhausted. It would be then unfair to charge those shopkeepers for selling goods which they had stocked at the higher prices.

Like the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) I have a complaint in so far as the margin system is concerned. I am disappointed and I may inform Government that the

general public is disappointed too that the system is not put into effect until now. We have been told by the hon. Conservator of Forests (Mr. Wood) when moving the motion in this Council that as soon as approval is given to it the machinery will be set in motion immediately, and if the proposal is delayed by one day it would put out the proposal he had in mind. But a start has not yet been made, though weeks have passed since then. I think it should be put into effect as early as possible.

Mr. GONSALVES: I do not want to add much to what has been already said except to draw attention to the size and quality of the bread which is being sold. In view of the doubts expressed as to the success or otherwise of the project, I wonder whether Government will accept the suggestion that the amount which is asked to be voted be reduced by one-half in order to see to what extent this venture will prove a success. If that is not accepted then it may, perhaps, assist Members in voting on the motion if an assurance is given by Government that when the scheme is put into operation and it does not prove successful within three months it will be withdrawn.

THE PRESIDENT: I said in my opening remarks yesterday that that will be done. As soon as I find that it will not benefit the consumer the whole matter will be reconsidered.

Mr. GONSALVES: If that is the position then it seems that the motion should be regarded as a token vote which may or may not be used to its fullest extent. That rather clears the matter in so far as I am concerned, and the matter will get my support and should get the support of those Members, who have more than once argued here and asked Government to help some people in regard to some other industry. It seems to me that if the motion is carried, it opens

the door for the subsidizing of people engaged in similar industries and the protection of other products through assistance from Government. If the motion is carried the principle of subsidization will then exist. For those reasons I will support the motion.

Mr. LEE: In adding my quota to this debate I would like to point out this fact. When there was trouble between the bakers and the workers in bakeries I had to study Chapter 70 of the Laws very carefully in order to do certain prosecutions. I can assure Government that under that Ordinance provisions are made as to weight and size. Section 4 of the Bread Ordinance reads:—

(1) Any baker may make and sell to his customers bread made of any weight or size he thinks fit.

(2) All bread shall be sold by weight, and in case any baker sells, or causes to be sold, bread in any other manner than by weight, he shall for each offence forfeit any sum not exceeding ten dollars, which the magistrate before whom the offender is convicted orders and directs:

Provided that nothing in this Ordinance shall extend to prevent or hinder any baker from selling bread usually sold under the denomination of French or fancy bread, or rolls, without weighing it.

The only difficulty, therefore, in this proposal is, as has been put forward by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford), whether the bakers are going to give more bread to the public as a result. On the other hand, the bakers have asked me during this week whether it is Government's intention to introduce any legislation in order to limit them to the weight in the make and sale of their bread. I told them there was no proposal by Government to that effect and it would be to their discretion to make and sell bread as they like. But Your Excellency has power under the Ordinance as well as under the Defence Regulations, if the bread is not to the satisfaction of the public, to order that they cannot sell bread less than a certain weight for a cent. If that is done I feel sure that the public would benefit in the reduction of the cost of

living by Government's proposal, I heartily support the motion.

Mr. JACOB: In view of the remarks made—

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member has already spoken.

Mr. JACOB: I rise to move an amendment. I beg to move—

That this Council approves the non-collection of duty on certain articles of food that are being controlled to the extent of a sum not exceeding \$200,000 with the object of reducing the cost of living for a period.

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot allow you to speak again. I will just take your amendment.

Mr. JACOB: I am just going to refer to an Ordinance. There is unanimity here with regard to the cost of living and—

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. Member is not moving an amendment. It is in effect a substantive motion.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is correct. Do you want to move it as a substantive motion? We can take it at another time.

Mr. JACOB: Very well, sir.

Mr. WOOD (Conservator of Forests) I do not think there is very much for me to say. The hon. Member for North-Western District asked what the machinery would cost. It would only cost a very small amount as we would not require an additional staff. The principal item of cost would be the purchase of sample loaves. The cost would be almost negligible. He has accused me of making a political speech and stated that I would not get more than 25 per cent. of the votes. I believe the hon. Member in the past experienced difficulty in attracting votes and he may do so in the future. To-day I think, sir, I would get the votes of his constituency because I am advocating they should get their flour

cheap and he is advocating that they should continue to get it at a dear price.

One point he has raised—it was also raised by the hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Peer Bacchus)—and that is the margin system which we hope to bring in is not yet in force. That is true, but I propose to accuse the hon. Member for North-Western District as being responsible for that delay. Most of the Defence Orders to be brought in are non-contentious orders, and when the Bills are drafted and put before this Council a large number of amendments are proposed and those Bills have to be argued out and the sittings of the Council last a longer time through many hours being taken up by speeches, with the result that it is not possible to get our orders fully worked out as yet. Every time the hon. Member speaks he does so for more than an hour, and he does not remember that by so doing he uses up the hon. Attorney-General's time which he should employ to do other work.

He also raised, as customary, the irrelevant question of potatoes having gone up in price to 12 cents per lb. That is quite true. Potatoes mysteriously began to rise in price about three days ago, and why, we do not quite know except that we and everybody else knew that a very large consignment was on the *Lady Hawkins*. As the news of the actual sinking of the *Lady Hawkins* spread around the price of potatoes leapt into the air, and the Control Board met this morning with a view to taking measures of control in the matter.

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) suggested that firewood should be subsidized. Firewood has its drawbacks. A subsidy to firewood will be a help to town dwellers but not to the country dwellers. I think the hon. Member would be astonished should I work it out.

The hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Eleazar) stressed the importance

of growing local products and so let the people eat local food and not imported stuff. I am with him there, and if we have got local food which we can substitute for flour I would be very strongly with him in our prohibiting imported flour; but sir, the question we are discussing now is an immediate one. Potatoes take three months and cassava longer. What are we going to do? The moment we have sufficient supplies of our own then we can prohibit the importation of other foods.

The hon. Members for North-Western District and Western Berbice raised the question that on the change over on Thursday some of the country shops would find difficulty in getting in stocks by Saturday. I frankly think that is quite impossible, but I am quite willing that we should go into the question again as it is easier for us to do so now. The difficulty about country stocks is that if we employ every Government Officer we have got in the Colony on that job of visiting the shops in one day I do not think they would be able to get around to all of the country shops. That is a question on which I am perfectly open to conviction, and if hon. Members can suggest a better one to suit all concerned I am very willing to accept that.

The hon. Member for Western Berbice also raised another point, that flour is not expensive and the price has not risen to the same extent as in the case of some other foods, and the price is reasonably stable. There is no doubt that there is some force in that, but it does not really matter what the price of flour at present is in relation to pre-war days. It does not matter if the price subsidises right down to the old pre-war cost. What we are trying to do is this: if the price of flour adds a penny more on the cost of living we relieve it entirely so that the people can take that penny and use it for something else. It is really the weight on the cost of living that makes it desirable to reduce rather than to have

the price rising, since it is fairly stabled. I move the motion standing in my name.

Question put, and the Council divided, the voting being—

For :—Messrs. C. V. Wight, Lee, Jackson, deAguiar, Gonsalves, Eleazar, Wood, Austin, Seaford, Woolford, Dias, —11.

Against :—Mr. Jacob—1.

Did not vote :—Messrs. Peer Bacchus, Ogle, D'Andrade, McDavid, Dr. MacLennan, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—7.

Motion passed.

THE PRESIDENT : I had instructed Government Members not to vote. In view of the small number of Unofficial Members who voted on the motion and the numerous points of objection and criticism made against it, I shall authorize the Control Board to defer action pending consideration of any alternative whereby greater benefit to the consumer can be secured out of the expenditure of public funds. I would ask all those Members who have voiced objections and criticisms to submit constructive proposals to the Board for their consideration. If on the other hand, the Board assure me that they are satisfied that they can effectively pass on the benefit to the consumer and further consideration will not involve considerable delay I can, for example, appoint a committee of those Members to open investigation and accept their recommendation three months hence. If, however, the Board are satisfied they can pass on a substantial benefit to the consumer I am prepared to authorize them to proceed.

There are two points I wish to make quite clear as regards alternatives. The remission or non-collection of Customs duties can only be sanctioned by me, if I am completely satisfied that the full benefit would go through to the consumer, and that has been

always the weakness in every proposal put forward to me by the Chamber of Commerce for a reduction of those duties. It has almost invariably been stated to my apprehension that the benefit would not pass through to the consumer and, therefore, I did not approve of such proposals.

There is the other question of the encouragement of locally grown foodstuffs. Direct subsidization *e.g.*, by the creation of an artificial enhanced price to the grower, is not a proposal I can sanction nor is it one to which I can secure the approval of the Secretary of State to whom I would have to refer it. On the other hand, any question of the encouragement of local production of foodstuffs, *e.g.*, by the extension or increase of the present area or the improvement of marketing, would have my very full and energetic support. On the other hand, I would just, perhaps, mention this one instance, the production of rice. I have authorized the Departments concerned to put up proposals for the encouragement of increased rice production with the expenditure of Government funds. Such expenditure would be referred to the Council. I very much doubt whether there can be any such thing as subsidization price or increased price for local —I emphasize local—rice.

#### RE-CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL.

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion :—

*Be it hereby Resolved* with humble respect that this Council respectfully petitions that His Majesty may be pleased, by Order in Council varying certain provisions in the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1928, or by such other action as His Majesty may deem fit, to re-constitute the Legislative Council of this Colony so that it shall consist of the Governor as President and the following members, that is to say, the persons for the time being lawfully discharging the functions of the respective offices of Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General and Colonial Treasurer (to be known as *ex officio* Members), seven nominated persons not holding public office under the Crown (to be known as Nominated Members) and fourteen members declared to have been duly elected under the provisions of the afore-

mentioned Order in Council (to be called Elected Members);

*And be it further Resolved*,—That His Excellency the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of these Resolutions to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: When the Council adjourned I was discussing an aspect which, I think, may be shortly and succinctly put without unnecessarily going into any academic research or making any reference to academic theories. We have heard a lot about Federation. I commend to those exponents, who desire it and who are goaded by interest for federation, to consider before formulating or cementing concrete ideas on that subject, a very useful book—one used quite largely—“Introduction to the Law of Constitution,” by Professor A. B. Dykes. Federalism may be all right in certain ways but it is a weak form of government. There is also this to be considered when we discuss federalism in a Legislature, community or otherwise of certain peoples, it necessitates a very intensified degree of legalism. Of course, I may instance the United States of America. The Supreme Court there is often called upon to decide questions of administration as to whether the Constitution is being carried out in its true form. I may also refer to the fact that one of the strong reasons in supporting what I consider the interregnum period as suggested, is the fact that the British Constitution, as we know it today, has developed on lines which are unwritten and which are embodied in judicial decisions. Take the Cabinet System of to-day. It has no legal sanction in the British Constitution and is a development of the feudal times where the Head of the State surrounded himself with a number of individuals of his own choice. This was gradually evolved into a system whereby the Members formed themselves into a Party System. That is what, I submit, must be considered of paramount importance in considering any change of Constitution under the Crown Colony system, as we know it. The Party System controls for all purposes—as the

Cabinet System controls—the policy of Government. It is for that reason although I feel inclined to take the plunge myself for full representative and full responsible Government, that in the interest of the Colony one does not feel inclined to take that plunge without first satisfying oneself that it will have a beneficial effect on the interests of the people as a whole.

With regard to the amendments suggested by my hon. friend, the Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee), he proposes they should take effect in five years' time when the franchise has been formed on the opinion or opinions expressed to the Franchise Commission. I would like to remind my hon. friend, who no doubt is aware of the fact from his legal knowledge, that although we know the Legislature of the United Kingdom is omnipotent, yet we in this Council or any Legislature cannot bind our successors or its successors, and no Legislature should impose terms or obligations especially under its constitution on its successor. We may not be here five years hence, and I feel satisfied that perhaps those who are here may not agree to what we have done. It is perfectly within their purview and within the legal position for any Member of the then existing Legislature to move its removal. For these reasons I shall support this motion as it stands.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: This debate is now going into its third day and, I must admit, Government has given a good deal of latitude to the various Members who have spoken on the motion. That latitude is sound because the subject before the Council is one full of importance for various reasons. I had the pleasure of listening to some interesting speeches on this subject, and I particularly wish to pay tribute to the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) for his contribution to the debate, although in singling him out I wish to say the other Members who have spoken also have given valuable

contributions. On the other hand, I was surprised at the remarks of some hon. Members, because I look upon this motion before the Council as the stepping-stone to fuller change of the Constitution. I have no intention, however, to make any reference to the old Constitution of 1891, but would like to refer to the later one of 1928. One of my complaints is that this Government has not in exercising the various powers entrusted to it under that Constitution greater elasticity. As a Member of this Council under this Constitution—I was not a Member under the previous one but became a Member at a time when the present Constitution was brought into being—I have always felt that if the Government had given fuller consideration to the views expressed by the Unofficial Members of this Council there might have been lesser cause for complaint, although on the other hand I am prepared to admit at once that it is the aim of every community, whether it be that of British Guiana or another Colony, to achieve self-government.

But, sir, the present Constitution has given rise to a number of things. Some of the hon. Members who have spoken at one time or another passed reflection even on the electorate. I think, sir, it is a pity that Members of this Council in their desire to see a change in the Constitution should attempt to vilify the electorate as we know them at present. It is a slur on them when hon. Members state that Members of this Council are not elected by the people. As an Elected Member of this Council I desire to enter very strong and vigorous protest against the remark, because I consider it a slur on my constituents. It is common knowledge that the hon. Member who made the observation was refused by the electorate whom I have the honour to represent. I hope my electorate would know that he has taken this opportunity to go back on them for having declined to elect him at the time he sought their suffrage.

I regret I cannot allow the remark made by the hon. Member for Essequibo River to go out without making an observation. I want to say it was never my intention to accuse that hon. Member or any other hon. Member of not acting in the best interest, but I claim as a Member of this Council, as a Colonist, as one born here and expects to die here, to have as much interest in the welfare of the inhabitants of this Colony as any other single individual, whether he is a Member of this Council or of the community. I hope I shall never at any time be bold enough or foolish enough to get up here and challenge the *bona fides* of any particular individual. I claim to have the confidence of my constituency. The General Elections came on five years after I was here, and I was very pleased to see my constituency return me unopposed. When I speak in this Council I do so on behalf of my constituency. I have no need to be going around the country ascertaining the views of the people at meetings, although it is necessary at times. Because they held ten or eleven meetings throughout the Colony they are bold enough to say they are representing the wishes of the people. This country is very big and if one wants to obtain the views of the community by holding public meetings, I suggest, it requires not ten but a thousand meetings. But one meeting was held in my constituency. I know the result of that meeting. I do not think the hon. Member would like to know the feelings expressed at the meeting at Beterverwagting when a small number of people attended except a large number of children. (laughter). No Member can claim by going into a district that he represents the views of the people of that district. That is impossible. I want to refer to the Eastern Berbice District. The hon. Member held one meeting on the Corentyne and he claims that he represents the views of the people of the Eastern Berbice District.



Therefore, when hon. Members are bold enough to make statements of that kind I, as a reasonable man, must feel I cannot pay too much credit to the utterances or decisions made at those meetings.

So far as the Constitution is concerned, I had hoped that Members would have taken the view that the Government is now trying to put before the people of this Colony a change that would lead to what we are hoping for. I look upon the motion before the Council in the same way as I would look upon a person suffering from some ailment, and I hope hon. Members would take the view that the physician would take if called in. The attempt made reminds me of a surgeon who was called in to perform an operation. The operation was successful but the patient died. What I am concerned about and what I had hoped the hon. mover of the motion would have told us, is the form the necessary legislation would take to give effect to the terms of the motion. There is a Constitution Ordinance and there are a number of sections that are likely to be involved in this proposed change, and I had hoped we would have been told something about them. I know that when the legislation is ready for introduction in this Council, if at all, further debate will be permitted, but it may then be too late—

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, and the hon. Attorney-General will correct me if I am wrong, but the motion reads:

Be it hereby resolved with humble respect that this Council respectfully petitions that His Majesty may be pleased, by Order in Council varying certain provisions in British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1928, etc.

And I take it for granted that that would be the step to be taken if the resolution is accepted by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. If I am wrong the hon. Attorney-General will explain what will have to be done.

**THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL:** Chapter 2 of the Laws of the Colony is only a copy of the Imperial legislation. I do not know why it is referred to.

**Mr. DEAGUIAR:** I had it at the back of my mind that no local legislation is necessary. That is all the more reason why I am strong on the point that the Council should make representation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for an amendment of the Constitution.

**THE PRESIDENT:** That is precisely what is being done.

**Mr. DEAGUIAR:** I know that. What I fear is that if the only amendment we are going to get is in respect of sections 4, 5 and 6 of Chapter 2, then it seems to me that the day is farther away from us than I hope. Hon. Members have complained from time to time that one of the difficulties of Members of this Council is that they have no power to initiate money votes. That is dealt with under this Ordinance in a different section. Am I to understand that the recommendation will include that section 59 be so amended in order to remove the restriction that is there? Section 59 reads:—

“The Council shall not pass, nor shall the Governor assent to, any law, vote, or resolution the object or effect of which may be to impose any tax or dispose of or charge any part of the public revenue, or to revoke, alter or vary any such disposition or charge, unless such law, vote, or resolution shall have been proposed by, or by the direction of, or shall have the express approval of the Governor.”

There is nothing in this motion, and I have heard nothing from the hon. mover, that has led me to believe that the representation or petition to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies will include an amendment of that section. I think it is well for us to be informed now whether it is proposed to make that change. I would like to see a further change in regard to section 60. Your Excellency

has intimated that it may not be possible for you to preside over the meetings of the Council. I know, sir, that under this section in your absence any Member of the Council appointed by you in writing, or in default of such appointment, or in the absence of the Member so appointed, the Member present who stands first in order of precedence shall preside at every meeting of the Council. I would like to say that I do hope Your Excellency would be able to attend every meeting of this Council, but I know that especially at this time your hands are very full and it may not be possible for you to sit here and listen to some of the speeches made by Members from time to time. I think the remedy would be that you may appoint a Deputy President under the section so that hon. Members would know who would take the Chair in your absence. At the present moment in the absence of the Governor the Colonial Secretary takes the Chair. I think if it is made clear that the Colonial Secretary would be the Governor's Deputy to preside over the proceedings of this Council it would certainly have a very good effect.

I do not know there is any necessity to second the amendment by the hon. Member on my right (Mr. Peer Bacchus) that the words "interim measure" be inserted in the motion. If there is, then I certainly have pleasure in seconding it. I look upon the proposal as an interim measure, and I agree with him that we cannot sit here and bring about a radical change of the Constitution. I am afraid that if we ever attempt to do that our last position would be worse than the first. The matter should be very carefully considered before we attempt any serious change of Constitution. I think it is well that those two words be inserted in the motion, so that the people of this Colony would realize that what we are doing to-day is only the first step in the change of the Constitution. We

must travel along this rough road step by step. I am in favour of this interim proposal subject to the observations I have made, because I feel we should be able to offer some assistance to this Government in bringing about, what I consider, a good form of Government. We have had a lengthy debate on this question and there is no need for me to say more on it. I hope the petition to be sent forward to the Secretary of States for the Colonies would be granted.

Mr. JACKSON: I desire to say a few words on this most important motion. I have followed the debate very closely and I have actually heard nothing to prevent the passage of this motion. With reference to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. de Aguiar), I think his fear may be allayed because the resolution states—

That His Majesty may be pleased, by Order in Council varying certain provisions in the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1928, or by such other action as His Majesty may deem fit...

I think that is wide and elaborate enough. I take it that Your Excellency in forwarding this resolution may to a certain extent make certain recommendations that Your Excellency may deem fit.

In the course of this debate we have heard a good deal about Nominated Unofficial Members being compelled to say "Aye" to every Government proposal. It has been the custom of certain hon. Members to refer to Nominated Unofficial Members as Government Members. I want to say here and now that I have never in any way been asked to support any Government measure, and the support that I have given from time to time has been dictated by my judgment. I do not wish it to be thought that I have supported any project because I was coerced by Government. Let my sins fall on my own head. I do not think that any Member, however learned he feels he is in politics, has the right to tell me how to vote.

Reference has been made to resolutions which have been passed at public meetings. We have been told about those half-baked resolutions, which I would term them, that they had been drafted by one hon. Member and amended by another, and we have been told that they are the only two Elected Members who are alive to their interests and represent their constituencies. We have been told that meetings were held and those resolutions were passed in the different constituencies, and Your Excellency and this Council are asked to be guided by the resolutions passed at those meetings. If meetings are held and resolutions which have been prepared beforehand are submitted to them and carried, such resolutions may be regarded as spurious. Is Government to be guided by them? We have been told that great dissatisfaction obtains among the people of this Colony. I say that great dissatisfaction has been created and fostered by the self-appointed leaders of the people who are hon. Members of this Council, and I venture to assert that if a very careful investigation is made in respect of those meetings and the speeches made there, I am positive, it would be seen that those who voted at those meetings simply did as they were told.

Reference has also been made to what should be the ultimate aim of the Constitution of this Colony. The three Officials, as suggested by this motion to remain, should be ultimately removed, the various Departments of Government should be run by Boards headed by Elected Members and ultimately the Council should consist of Elected Members only and Universal Adult Suffrage should be given the people. I wonder if hon. Members of this Council visualize what what would happen if adult suffrage is given and an all Elected Council is established here, if hon. Members can envisage such a Council appointed by the Universal Adult Suffrage of the people? I believe that

such an Elected Council would have primarily the two hon. Elected Members, who are the only Members representing the Colony. It would be dominated by the two hon. Members and the other twenty-two seats occupied by their minions. We have had time and again samples of the speeches delivered by these two hon. Members and if we take into consideration the attitude they display and that they have done a great good in this Colony, as they have told us, and we are to be guided by public opinion super-introduced by them, then this Council should be grateful to those Members who have done so well. If I were Governor of this Colony and President of this Council I should recommend to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that His Majesty be asked to confer upon those hon. Members a knighthood (laughter). The motion is one which commands our respect and support, and I support it and request respectfully that it be forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:**  
There are not many points to which I wish to reply. One hon. Member asked what is the object of the motion now before the Council. I thought I had made it clear when I moved the motion. I will, however, repeat it now. The object of this motion is firstly to give effect to an undertaking given by Your Excellency's predecessor. I refer to a debate in June last when he undertook to bring before the Council Government's proposal regarding the Constitution so that Members would have an opportunity of expressing their views. It is a very common thing in this Colony for Governors and other Officials to be accused of having made promises which are afterwards broken. I go further and say that there is an inclination to accuse Governors and other Officials of breach of faith. It is for that reason I have risen to make these few remarks; I cannot allow to go unchallenged the statements made

by the hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee). With your permission, sir, I should like to read a paragraph which appeared in the "Daily Chronicle" of the 22nd January. It reads as follows :—

Mr. Lee also reviewed facts leading to the appointment of the Franchise Commission by Sir Wilfrid Jackson and complained that Sir Wilfrid promised at a conference with Members of the Legislative Council that the Commission would be given an opportunity to consider the question of a change of the Constitution, but no such power was mentioned in the Commission's terms of reference. Mr. Lee therefore alleged that Government had committed a breach of faith with the Electives.

Very careful notes were taken of the secret meeting which His Excellency Sir Wilfrid Jackson held with the Unofficial Members of the Council, and I wish to read a few lines from those notes. This is what is stated :—

"His Excellency said the more important question was the review of the Franchise and suggested that a Franchise Committee or Commission should be set up at an early date. Such a Committee would consider the question of the qualification for registration as a voter, the qualification for Members of the Council and, perhaps, also the distribution of seats in the Legislative Council. In the meantime it should be considered whether any changes in the Constitution of the Legislative Council were advisable as an interim measure pending the report of the Franchise Commission."

That is the only part in the record of the discussions to which the hon. Member may have been referring to as a promise having been made. Let us turn to the terms of reference of the Commission and see what is stated there. In paragraph 2 of the Commission dated 26th May, 1941, one of the terms reads as follows :—

"(b) as to whether any alteration of the boundaries of the electoral districts as at present defined is desirable."

A great deal of correspondence followed on that between the Commission and Government and between the Governor and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the matter was finally disposed of by a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Franchise Commission dated the 5th September, 1941. Paragraph 3 reads as follows :—

"With regard to the interpretation of (b) of the terms of reference, that is the question of alteration of boundaries of electoral districts, the Secretary of State has authorised His Excellency to give the assurance that in approving of the setting up of the Franchise Commission his intentions were that it should deal with only the question of Franchise and with any redistribution of the existing elected seats that might be necessary following upon an increase in the number of voters. It was not the Secretary of State's intention that the Commission shall be empowered to deal with the composition of the Legislative Council or the number of members constituting it. These matters are dealt with by Royal Order in Council and the proposals concerning them stand referred to the Legislative Council for their recommendations."

There has been no breach of faith. As I said a moment ago, the object of the motion is to enable Your Excellency to hear the views of Unofficial Members. Thirteen out of the nineteen Unofficial Members have spoken and Your Excellency will be able to size up the views of the majority of Members; there are only two Members likely to vote against the motion. Your Excellency also invited remarks in regard to the constitution of the Executive Council. In that connection, any proposal made will not affect this motion, as any change in the constitution of the Executive Council has to be carried out by amendment of the Royal Instructions.

There are one or two remarks made by the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) to which I should like to refer briefly. When speaking of the Executive Council he said that the Members have no regard for public opinion. I would take no exception to that if he had said "in my opinion." We would then understand and know what value to place on the remark. It is another reminder that there are only two Members who know the wishes of the people of the Colony. Another remark of his was that he would like Government to find out what the people want. I would like to know how the Governor is to find that out, unless he goes to the people who have been put in this Council by the electorate. It is

not for the Governor or any Official to go round the country with a handful of resolutions asking the people whether they agree with them or not. The Electors of the country have put fourteen representatives in the Council to express their views. Is it, therefore, not proper for the Governor to come to the Council and hear what the Elected Members have to say in regard to the motion?

I shall not say much about the hon. Member's remarks about certain Boards, as Your Excellency has ruled that out of order, but I would like to say something for the benefit of the Members serving on those Boards. The hon. Member said that those Boards are "a menace to the community". It should be realized by Members serving on Boards that unless the hon. Member is on the Board things are always "in a mess" and, in his opinion, the Board is "a menace to the community". He holds that view concerning forty-five Boards! In the Civil Service List there are forty-six Boards and the hon. Member's name appears in the list of members of the 46th, but unfortunately that Board is now defunct. (Laughter).

THE PRESIDENT: Before putting the question there are some comments I should make on observations made in the debate on the motion before the Council. I would just like to hinge my remarks on what appears to be a misleading headline in a newspaper over the original debate—"Governor wants retention of Reserve Power". There is nothing in what I said to justify that headline. What I said was that it is difficult for the Governor to preside and lead the Government side and also to be a kind of *deus ex machina* by the use of suspensory or reserve powers. I expressed no opinion either on the retention or otherwise of the reserve powers. It is true that the hon. Colonial Secretary in moving the motion referred to what is a mere matter of procedure. In the motion

itself there is not the intention of the withdrawal of the existing reserve powers, nor has it been seriously suggested in this debate. I merely make this comment on what appears to be a misleading headline in the newspaper report of the original debate, because I was very careful indeed to refrain from expressing any personal opinion on the immediate questions of constitutional reform.

My remarks were in very general terms. I welcomed the principle of constitutional reform towards self-government in the Colonies, but I refrained from making remarks on the immediate questions such as are under discussion in the Colony. My position is that I am prepared to work under any Constitution as laid down for me with or without the official bloc and with or without reserve powers.

An important question has been raised and that is whether this proposed reform is an *interim* one. I have already answered "Yes." That should be abundantly clear from what I said at the opening of this debate. I actually said:—

"My view is that Colonial Administration can only be justified if it keeps quite definitely in its mind the aim of development of self-government in any unit which has an individuality of its own, and that anything we do towards material development or social welfare is largely bootless unless there is this ever-prevailing aim to meet what is the natural political and human desire of all people to stand on their own feet, whether as individuals or as members of a community."

I have no objection to the insertion of the words in the motion which will indicate more clearly that this is an interim step. I think I had put it in another way, and used some such phrase as "transition stage." The motion aims at steps towards further constitutional reform. I would just repeat what the hon. Colonial Secretary and I have said: "This motion is a practical step to bring about the legislative reform which is possible within a very few weeks, if the specific object would be of benefit in the removal of the official bloc."

I think I should comment on the remarks as to the position of Nominated Members and Members of the Executive Council. I was somewhat shocked at the idea which was expressed that Nominated Members were expected to vote as Government directed and that Unofficial Members of the Executive Council were in a way tied to their actions in the Legislative Council. I have had eighteen years' experience in the Legislative Councils in other Colonies and I have never known a case of a Nominated Unofficial Member being expected to vote one way or another, or of any pressure being put upon him. I say in defence of Unofficial Members of the Executive Council, whether Nominated or Elected, that their position, as I see it, is that they are entitled to oppose a Government proposal, and further that they are entitled, supposing the proposal is accepted by the Executive Council as a whole and goes to the Legislative Council, to vote against it in the Legislative Council. It is not like the case of Members of a Cabinet. I, personally, have no objection to them saying in this Council that they had opposed a proposal in the Executive Council. That is not a matter of necessary secrecy. What they may not do is to say what the Governor said or what another Member said. I have often gone out of my way to make that general position clear.

As I said, I had refrained from making comment on the points of constitutional reform which has been so much discussed. I have listened with very great interest to the numerous observations of hon. Members as regards the future, but there is one thing I have noticed in the course of this debate and that is a very serious omission—an almost complete omission in looking forward towards constitutional advance—of mention of that system of checks and balances which every Constitution that has shown strength and longevity has possessed. I am a great believer in the influence of responsibility, and responsibility on members of a parliamentary

body is a very valuable corrective. They realize their responsibility and so there is formed a stability of mind in constitutional and political problems of development. But there is no Constitution that has succeeded that had not an elaborate system of checks and balances. Such checks and balances may be by way of a second chamber or by way of representation of minorities, or by communal representation, or by secondary voting, or by a very clear and definite statement of certain constitutional principles which would have the strength of law and which would require to be or could be safeguarded by a Judiciary.

The people of this Colony in throwing their minds forward to these new things must bear in mind the necessity for a system of checks and balances even though these were effected only by local arrangements. In other words, I have noticed a certain vagueness, a certain wishful thinking on the part of certain Members in imagining the future without such a system of checks and balances to face. There are but two ends. Democracy degenerates into Demagoguery with chaos and disorder, or relapses to the control of dictators. That is the whole history of constitutional development ever since we have recorded history.

Nor have I heard mentioned the very important question of financial stability. This Colony is obviously going to require financing from outside for fifty years, and we will be dependent on that. Weakness of our financial stability would again throw us back if constitutional reform were pressed to a point where our security would be suspect in the eyes of the world. Hon. Members will recall that the oldest British Colony had its constitution suspended for a period of six or seven years or more, because under a free Constitution it had lost a sense of financial responsibility. There was another Colony whose constitution was suspended for not dissimilar reasons.

To conclude, I will merely refer to what is meant by this resolution. It is to be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the gist of this debate and the ideas of the Members on the several points. In effect it means a desirable reform in the removal of the Official *bloc* which I myself have never used in the eight years I have presided over Legislative Councils, and I shall look forward without any qualms or hesitation to operating quite successfully the Legislative Council of British Guiana without any Official *bloc* and with the fullest co-operation of the Unofficial Members of the Council.

One or two points arise before I put the motion. One is an amendment by the hon. Member for Essequibo River, which is not seconded. Should it be seconded I can consider it.

Mr. JACOB : I beg to second it.

THE PRESIDENT : Parts of it are scarcely relevant to our motion. The first part reads :

That the proposed change of the Constitution shall be for five years after the Franchise Commission have made their recommendation and the Electoral Rolls have been made for the new Legislature.

There is also an alteration which is simply the insertion of the words "interim measure". The hon. Attorney-General advises that would be an attempt to direct a body over which we have no control, and therefore it would be improper in the wording of the resolution. I am quite prepared to submit it separately or to put it in my covering despatch. Does the hon. Member for Essequibo River wish to press his amendment ?

Mr. LEE : Yes ; or if you like it can be made to read "not later than 1948."

THE PRESIDENT : The same words used by the hon. Member for North-Western District ?

Mr. LEE : Yes.

THE PRESIDENT : The hon. Attorney-General advises that it is improper as part of the motion. On the other hand, I can put that in the covering despatch. Would you therefore move it as a motion to be forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies ?

Mr. LEE : I move that.

THE PRESIDENT : I will take that as an additional motion. Then the next part is that the Constitution should consist of 24 Elected Members. That is not relevant, but I will take it as a separate motion, if the hon. Member wishes.

Mr. LEE : You can take it as a separate motion.

THE PRESIDENT : The same thing applies to the amendment to transmit a copy of the resolutions to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies with a copy of the debate.

Mr. LEE : If I am given an undertaking that these resolutions will be forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the debate I would accept that, and you need not put the matter to the vote.

THE PRESIDENT : I think we have to put your motions and take the feelings of the Council on them.

Mr. LEE : We have no power in the changing of the Constitution save and except debating on it, and Your Excellency may make the necessary recommendation in your despatch. I do not want to hamper unnecessarily the motion as put. I accept Your Excellency's ruling that it is an interim motion and I would like the resolutions I have put as amendments to be forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. I do not see the necessity of putting them to the vote.

THE PRESIDENT : You can vote for the substantive motion and then you must take the opinion of the Council on those further things as to

whether they wish to commit themselves to them.

Principal motion put, and passed.

THE PRESIDENT: I will now put the other motions—"That the proposed change of the Constitution shall be for five years after the Franchise Commission have made their recommendation and the Electoral Rolls have been made for the new Legislature."

Do you wish to press that?

Mr. LEE: Yes.

Motion put and lost.

Mr. LEE: Your Excellency, I am not asking for the count. I have reasons for that.

THE PRESIDENT: The next motion is—

That the new Constitution after the expiration of the five years should consist of 24 Elected Members.

Motion put, and lost.

THE PRESIDENT: I now put the motion—

That the Committee System should be introduced not on an Advisory basis but with executive powers.

Motion put, and lost.

THE PRESIDENT next put the motion—

That payment be made to Elected Members of the Council not exceeding one hundred dollars per month and a reasonable amount for the Chairman of Committees.

Motion lost.

THE PRESIDENT then put the next motion—

That His Excellency the Governor be requested to transmit a copy these Resolutions to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies with a copy of the debate in this Council.

Motion passed.

Mr. GONSALVES: Having not been carried they are not resolutions and cannot be referred to as such.

THE PRESIDENT: They are not resolutions as they are not carried and we will amend "resolutions" to "motions" in the motion just passed.

Mr. LEE: The debate will show that the resolutions were not carried.

Amendment accepted.

THE PRESIDENT: There are two further points one of which I should have raised earlier. One was raised by two or three hon. Members—that the Director of Medical Services and the Commissioner of Labour should be Members of the Council. I could recommit the original motion which specifies the Colonial Secretary, Attorney-General and Colonial Treasurer. It was the intention of those hon. Members who spoke that those two Officials should be additional to the three I have just mentioned.

Mr. LEE: It was only a suggestion!

THE PRESIDENT: It is a point on which I wish to sound hon. Members. If it is the general feeling of Members here that there should be two additional Government Officials on the Council I propose to allow for that.

Mr. GONSALVES: When I suggested it for Government's consideration I thought the hon. Colonial Secretary would have amended his motion to include those two Officials. I was not asked to move it as an amendment and I understood when the hon. Colonial Secretary moved his motion that he wanted to hear the views of Members with regard to the Constitution. If Government and other Members approve of the suggestion I think it should be adopted.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: At the secret session that suggestion was made, and it was suggested then that the two Official Members it is being sought now to add to the Council might always be at hand and available to the Council in respect of their particular Departments,



THE PRESIDENT: That is the view I take. Any Official can be called to the Legislative Council to be present and express his views but he cannot vote.

Mr. JACOB: The further point raised is that there should be uniformity to a very large extent if not wholly among the Councils in these parts, and the Royal Commission made it perfectly clear that there should be a uniform system. Further, Jamaica and Trinidad have already adopted a Constitution with only three Officials.

THE PRESIDENT: I have been operating it since 1937 in the Leeward Islands

Mr. JACOB: I cannot see how you can resist having the Director of Agriculture and the Comptroller of Customs on the Council.

THE PRESIDENT: Unless there is a strong feeling on the part of Unofficial Members that we should have two more Officials on the Council, I am quite content to carry on with three Officials with the proviso in the Rules that any Government Official can be called.

Mr. ELEAZAR: The number recommended by the Royal Commission is three, and we have decided to have three. Let us have those three Officials and let the others come whenever they are required.

THE PRESIDENT: That is quite true. Unless there is some strong feeling in the matter, let it stand as it is in the original motion.

Mr. GONSALVES: I am not pressing it.

THE PRESIDENT: There is one other point, and that is in respect of the appointment of Members of the Executive Council. I will submit them to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The proposal that we should go outside the Members of the Legislative Council did not emanate from Government, neither my predecessor nor myself. It is the common practice in many Colonies and it was raised by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Frankly speaking for myself, I may say I am prepared to go on with the existing rule, and I am prepared to say that in my covering despatch.

Mr. JACOB: I think that Sir Wilfrid Jackson did in a despatch lay some stress on the point that Government need not necessarily follow existing custom and may go outside the Legislative Council for appointments to the Executive Council.

THE PRESIDENT: The matter did not emanate from this Government and that is the reason why I am prepared to go on with the present system. Another point is the proviso that the Governor should be present at all meetings of the Council. On occasions that he need not be present, it is acceptable that his Deputy should preside over a part of the proceedings of the Council. Therefore I will not raise that as a proposal. We will be satisfied with the Order in Council making it possible for someone other than the Governor to preside.

The Council was adjourned until 12 noon on Wednesday, 11th February, 1942.