

THE DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF BRITISH GUIANA.
OFFICIAL REPORT
OF
*PROCEEDINGS OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE THIRD
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.*

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.
TUESDAY, 3RD JULY, 1945.

The Eleventh Session of the Third Legislative Council of British Guiana was opened in the Council Chamber, Guiana Public Buildings, at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 3rd July, 1945, with customary formalities and ceremonies.

PRESENT :

The President, His Excellency the Governor, SIR GORDON JAMES LETHEM, K.C.M.G.

The Honourable the Colonial Secretary, Mr. M. B. LAING, C.M.G., O.B.E. (Actg.)

the Attorney General, Mr. E. O. PRETHEROE, M.C., K.C.

„ the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDAVID, C.B.E.

„ E. G. WOOLFORD, O.B.E., K.C., (New Amsterdam).

„ F. J. SEAFORD, C.B.E., (Georgetown North).

„ J. A. LUCKHOO, K.C., (Nominated).

„ C. V. WIGHT (Western Essequibo).

„ J. I. DE AGUIAR (Central Demerara).

„ H. N. CRITCHLOW (Nominated).

„ M. B. G. AUSTIN, O.B.E., (Nominated).

„ F. DIAS, O.B.E., (Nominated).

„ PERCY C. WIGHT, O.B.E., (Georgetown Central).

„ J. GONSALVES, O.B.E., (Georgetown South).

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

PEER BACCHUS (Western Berbice).

C. R. JACOB (North-Western District).

A. G. KING (Demerara River).

J. W. JACKSON, O.B.E., (Nominated)

A. M. EDUN (Nominated).

V. ROTH (Nominated).

„ C. P. FERREIRA (Berbice River).

Clerk of Council—Mr. A. I. Crum Ewing.

Official Reporters—Messrs. H. A. Grimshaw and
F. A. Leubin.

The Venerable Archdeacon of Guiana (Rev. R. M. Pattison Muir) read prayers.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 26th June, 1945, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH.

The PRESIDENT addressed the Council as follows:—

Honourable Members of Council,

In opening this 1945 Session my first word must be in regard to the lateness of the date. As has been the case in the last two years, we have been left on the 31st December with a substantial amount of important financial business to clear, and in this particular year much of it relevant to financial liabilities of 1944. Moreover we had some extremely important legislation still on hand which would have lapsed had I prorogued Council. The occurrence of the fire and the approaching end of the war in Europe with Victory Day, a date that came in the end surprisingly early, have further plunged Government into unexpected business—some of it of a very urgent and difficult character indeed. I think I said in this Council at the time of the occurrence of the fire that quite apart from the

estimate of material damage done we would have to reckon on long months or even years with a burden of reconstruction of various kinds.

I do not, however, propose to speak in detail of these recent events nor of the details of Government activities in 1944 which are fully set out in the review laid on the table, but to address Council quite generally, and I hope quite briefly, on matters of domestic policy such as we have had in mind in the last three years and in particular which are likely to occupy us in the next two years.

THE FRANCHISE BILL.

The most important matter before Government and this Council is the amendment of the Franchise. The Franchise Bill has been seen by Members, and its passing into law

and the consequential election must be matters of primary pre-occupation.

I need not here go further into the debates of last year on this question. The record of that debate I took home with me and laid before the Secretary of State along with many other representations, urging the immediate adoption of adult suffrage. All these were given the most full and meticulous consideration in London. The final decision was the clear constitutional one of adopting the recommendations of this Council and of the Franchise Commission itself. That there will be further progress in this matter cannot be doubted. It is our duty in the meantime to make the very best use of the further step towards self-government permitted by the new Order-in-Council and the Franchise Bill.

My personal view after nine years in the Caribbean is that it is of the first importance to press forward seriously and earnestly with the progressive development of democratic institutions aiming at real self-government of the Colonies by their own peoples. It is not only a duty and an obligation to which we are in principle committed by statements on policy, but also in my view an essential if full benefit from every other kind of development is to be secured. However well-intentioned and competent any Government machine may be, it will always lack one fundamental basis for effectiveness unless it is ensured that the interests of the great bulk of the population are effectively bearing their full weight in the Legislature. The older constitutions, of which we sometimes hear even now, secured this in no way nor is it adequately secured in Caribbean conditions now even under the constitutions as amended in recent years. It has been left far too much for Government to stand for the interests of the mass of the people as a whole, and I repeat that under Caribbean conditions it is greatly

handicapped in this duty. All interests of course must be adequately represented, but the day is past when Government officials or a few important interests, however well-intentioned or competent in themselves, can claim to speak and act for the people of any colony.

It is very often said that the woes of the Caribbean countries are economic and not political, and are not to be cured by constitutional changes. That may be perfectly true. But the economic woes are not only the woes of individual and collective poverty in cash, and it is surely true that economic development and improvement will not bring lasting benefit unless it accords with the human feelings and aspirations of the people as a whole. It is absolutely necessary that all economic development be on lines which are socially acceptable to the people who are to carry them through. For all that kind of objective I see no proper safeguard except much more adequate representation of the classes previously unfranchised in the Legislature, and with its influence adequate on the Executive.

I know that many would be nervous of such developments and fearful of the mistakes which Government under pressure of ignorant and irresponsible opinion might commit. Yes—but the cure for irresponsibility is responsibility and I see no reason to believe that that principle would not work in these countries as in others. In this country I see and hear both in Georgetown and in the countryside a good deal of easy persiflage from people who are much more ready to write or talk than to read or listen and inform themselves. But that is a human vice everywhere. My personal experience with such bodies as village councils, country farmers and others of all classes, is that reason and argument and discussion, and the providing of factual information is as reasonably often effective as everywhere. I do not find, for example, that our local Govern-

ment organs when put upon their mettle are wholly irresponsible. They may have their weakness of course, but taken as a criterion by and large of what is possible among the common people of this country I think there is every reason for confidence. I have no doubt that democratic Government in the Caribbean countries will be capable of the most appalling mistakes and may very well plunge into them if the brakes are not effective, but we can also point to the appalling mistakes of democratic Governments and peoples of the highest standing. My advice to this country is to go on confidently, while realising the tremendous need of going to school to learn what a difficult thing and a responsible thing on everybody is the democratic form of constitutional Government.

CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL.

In opening what may therefore be the last session of this Council as at present constituted, I would say how very conscious I am, and, speaking both for myself and Government, most grateful to this existing Council for the generally public spirited manner in which it has carried its responsibilities in these years of war. It may perhaps have been well that we have been able to do so, remembering also that we had a very notable change in composition in 1943. I have never concealed my own opinion that it would have been definitely more satisfactory to have held general elections at some convenient date even during the war as I arranged in my former Colony in 1940. Had that met with any general acceptance by Council itself, I should most certainly have proceeded to dissolution. But not only had we a very real change in composition in 1943 but Members will remember that on my consulting them on more than one occasion the desire has been expressed that we should carry on until elections can be held under the new franchise. That has also been the view of the Secretary of State.

Accepting that position therefore, it is our business now to press forward with the utmost celerity with the passage of the Franchise Bill and the Executive action necessary to provide for elections under the new franchise.

Before passing to the responsibilities of the new Council, I would like here to record with satisfaction the constitutional advances which we have been able to make. The change in composition of this Council in 1943 made it possible to make certain much required nominations to this body in the first place. These have been definitely valuable. It further relieved a number of senior Government officers from the considerable burden of attendance at Council meetings, which do not become less frequent or more brief. That has been advantageous to the departments in question and I do not think that this Council has been handicapped though it has of course thrown somewhat extra burden on to the three departmental officers who do attend.

I foreshadowed in addressing this Council for the first time in November, 1941, my project that there should be an official member to preside commonly in this Council, and that move has been made with success and general acceptance though I think Members have not desired that I should yet remove myself completely from proceedings.

In December, 1941, I also foreshadowed the institution of the Committee system for important branches of Government work, and that too was introduced after the change in composition in 1943. I regard that move as very notably successful. We have in fact been real pioneers in colonial constitutional policy, and it must surely give us an increasing confidence in the possibilities of constitutional progress. I would like to express my particular gratitude to the three members of Executive Council who have so ably carried on this innovation.

My other proposal of a General Purposes or Finance Committee which could carry the double purpose of dealing quickly and expeditiously with the financial action that we have to take from month to month and so facilitate more easy and informative and up-to-date discussion of important matters of executive action and of policy, all without the laboriousness and formality of full meetings of Council, has not I am afraid met with very encouraging reception. I am in effect left with Executive Council tied as it is by certain rules and practices of procedure, as the one effective instrument for this purpose. For the time being, I must deal with financial matters in the formal manner and it may be better so, though it must mean that I shall have to anticipate approval of Council more than I should normally wish. However, we may try again.

The responsibilities of the new Council will be of the most difficult and onerous kind. As I see it we may regard them in two aspects. The first the carrying on of the administration of the country in the difficult post-war years, and the second the discrimination as to what major plans of Development and Welfare can be carried out in the first five or ten years. I will have a good deal to say on this second point as I have information of importance for the Council. On the first I need not here be long.

COST OF ADMINISTRATION.

The principal factor will be the reconciling of the cost of administration of the colony, the ordinary services which have increased alarmingly in recurrent cost in the last few years, and with a revenue probably falling. For example, the annual costs of educational services have risen from under half a million dollars in 1938 to \$1,474,000 in 1945, the annual costs of Health Services generally have risen from \$616,000 in 1938 to \$1,555,000 in 1945, and these

figures are apart from capital expenditure such as on buildings, etc., the increase in remuneration to Civil Servants represents an additional cost of about \$700,000 per annum, and rising with annual increments. Our Police Force will probably have to be maintained at a figure perhaps 25% over that of the pre-war years. These are examples only. Some of the inflation expenditure of war-time we can no doubt drop but in other ways the transition from war-time conditions to peace-time conditions will mean expense, certainly for a period of years. I might mention only demobilisation and the expense of Transport and Harbours which has been so heavily mounting up and in which if it has got to be got on to a proper footing may cost us much. It would be premature however, for me to speak at greater length on this matter though if time permits I may have more to say later on today.

DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE.

I would rather turn to the second aspect of this matter. The report of the Royal Commission, which will be published in full shortly, confirmed in an authoritative manner the very great needs of the Caribbean colonies if these were to take a proper place in the British Commonwealth. The achievement however hoped for in 1939 has been lamentably delayed owing to the war. I remember very well being in London in April, 1938, when the Royal Commission was being set up and I had a conversation on this very aspect with the then Secretary of State Mr. Malcolm MacDonald. While welcoming the proposal to set up the Commission I emphasized two things. The first, that there should be a definite certainty that action would be forthcoming as a result of the report when it came out, and secondly, that schemes of development and welfare already urged by Governors of the Colonies to be financed under the Colonial Development Fund, should

not be held up, because of the appointment of the Commission, in order to await the report. I instanced to Mr. MacDonald the matter of Education in the Leeward and Windward Islands, pointing out that we had had these Commissions and Reports since 1933 that it was time not to have a further report but to begin some positive action. As I have said the war has intervened and though by a most courageous gesture the United Kingdom Government set up the Development and Welfare Organisation in the dark days of 1940, quite inevitably achievement has lagged behind proposals, and though in many cases schemes have been approved and carried out effective start in many others has been very sadly delayed. It is also probable that the extension of the War to the Western Hemisphere had further greatly handicapped efforts even beyond what might have been expected in 1940. The increased difficulty of getting technicians and supplies since then, in particular has been a cause which has greatly handicapped actual efforts. No one deplores that more than myself and other Governors and the Comptroller himself. Nevertheless the full sum of money earmarked for the Caribbean Colonies has been allocated, in fact I believe rather more than the sum originally earmarked.

The position, as I understand it, is as follows. The provision of funds under the Development and Welfare Act of 1940 comes to an end in the present financial year. The new Development and Welfare Act with vastly greater provision, up to £120,000,000 does not come into effect until 1946. The provision of funds for the Caribbean area under the older Act was, I think I am right in saying, something like five million pounds. Of that this colony has had for expenditure something over a million pounds: other colonies have had some more, some less. I understand that by and large the funds provided under that older Act have been now completely

earmarked, or more than that, in fact I believe up to about eight million pounds. For further provision then we may have to wait on the new Act coming into effect. This is one reason why I shall propose to this Council the use of local funds, perhaps by way of advance, for any project which we may expect to be approved now in principle for operation under the new Act. I will revert to this later.

As Members of this Council are, I think, fully aware, Sir Frank Stockdale went home to the Colonial Office to take charge of the planning under the new Act for all the Colonies. On leaving the West Indies he asked me to endeavour personally to put up to him, no matter in how tentative or provisional a form, a complete overall picture of what this colony might require under the new Act in the ten years of its operation. As Members are aware, and in particular the Members of Executive Council are aware in detail, I have been pressing for much more than a year for the assistance of an Economic Adviser who could with me and Government departments and representative unofficial bodies in this Colony, plan in a fully co-ordinated way all the various aspects of the economic development of Guiana. I represented to the Secretary of State that the work would demand the full time attention of a qualified person for at least a year if it were to be done with thoroughness and exactness in fitting together a complete picture. I had said that the present Government machine was just unable to release or to find an individual for this purpose, a view which met with the whole-hearted concurrence of Executive Council and of Dr. Benham who did such a survey in Jamaica, whom I consulted. It has been suggested that the Advisers of the Comptroller could give such assistance to the Colonial Government, and Dr. Benham did so in Jamaica, while in matters of agriculture Mr. Wakefield, the Agricultural

Adviser, has been actually performing the duties of Director of Agriculture in that colony, and had also presided over an Agriculture Policy Committee in Trinidad. Guiana has not been able to claim that assistance and it has been a matter of very great regret to me that the continued efforts of the Colonial Office have been unable to supply me with the Adviser for whom I had hoped.

OVERALL SKETCH PLAN.

Nevertheless, in compliance with Sir Frank Stockdale's request I have now submitted to him an overall sketch plan of such projects as we can clearly see are essential or important in the development of this country. That has been submitted under pressure of time, but I have felt it imperative to supply Sir Frank with the picture he desired in view, of the action which I understand is being pursued urgently in London in regard to the new Act. It will now be my intention to submit that plan to the various Advisory Committees of Legislative Council in so far as particular departments are concerned, and also to form a committee representative of unofficial interests and opinion generally in the Colony to review it. It is in no way binding or final—in some cases I have had to include departmental proposals which are no doubt excellent in themselves but which I have not had the time personally to scrutinise in detail—but as I have already said, it has been imperative to supply Sir Frank Stockdale's department of the Colonial Office with something comprehensive for immediate consideration of comparative claims, not only as between various aspects of our own problems but as between one colony and another.

The sketch plan is arranged, in accordance with specific request, in four sections. The first is of projects of "Immediate Priority", that is, those which have been already submitted with formal applications for funds and

all of which have been seen by Members in the form of printed papers or papers circulated. The next two sections cover the "First Five Years" of the new Act (1946-1951) and the "Second Five Years" (1951-1956). To that I have also added after personal discussion with Sir Frank Stockdale a number of further projects which we know are desirable but which we cannot fit in within bounds of practicability and finance in the years 1946-1956, but which might fit into the picture in a second decade.

The figures of finance will not, I think, appear to anyone too modest. The total is a hundred and eight million dollars. For the "Immediate Priority" and the first two "Five Year" periods the total is over fifty-two million dollars of capital expenditure and over twelve million dollars to cover recurrent charges, say sixty-five million dollars in all. For the further proposals which might be feasible in a later ten years, the figures are almost thirty-two million dollars capital expenditure and another eleven million dollars on recurrent charges, say another forty-three million dollars.

It may be said without any hesitation even now that it is not possible to anticipate that finance of that order will be forthcoming as a free gift from outside the Colony, and it will be necessary to pick and choose which of the numerous projects should come first and which must be deferred in the hopes of greater things becoming possible in a more distant future. Two points I should make clear. No attempt has been made to distinguish between what might be provided by free grant and what might be provided by loan. On some large items of capital expenditure a great deal may well be by loan, *e.g.*, Housing costs are over ten million dollars in all but should be by loan to the extent of two-thirds. Nor have I attempted more than the most tentative suggestion as to the contribu-

tion that might be made from local funds, *i.e.*, our existing surplus and the loan now being raised. Firm recommendations on these points would be quite premature.

COST OF COMMUNICATIONS.

Of these very large figures the largest single item is the cost of communications, air, road and river, and figures at nearly twenty-three million dollars in the first decade and over twenty million in the second. Items to cover large scale road construction of both coast roads and roads into the interior are included. Drainage and irrigation, which was put in my comprehensive despatch of January, 1943, at twelve million dollars to be spread over a long period of years, is shown as nine and a half million in the first decade and under six in the second, a total raised somewhat to allow in full for the unexpectedly heavy costs of drainage on the East Coast, Demerara. It embodies I may say some projects which must undoubtedly be admitted to be uneconomic at this present time. Buildings, hospitals, schools—primary and secondary—account for another very large figure, eight million dollars in the first decade and about two in the second. Land settlement, though expensive in itself per caput, does not make an alarming total, about one million. Housing at ten million has been noted. Departmental Services such as agricultural, forestry, interior administration, social welfare—do not in themselves run up the figures in the same way as capital works. But of these departmental services educational and medical run to large figures, a total of about thirteen million in the first ten years and about six and a half in the second.

I have the summary here in front of me and Members will be interested to see it. I will issue copies to Members as soon as possible, preparatory to very early discussion.

I must make it clear that this large figure of financial requirement includes only such projects as can be properly brought within the ambit of the Development and Welfare Act. It does not cover those extensive needs for services in the colony which cannot be so described, *e.g.*, prisons, police, post office and telecommunications, transport and harbours and the large bill we have to meet over railway and steamer replacements, possibly also military establishment. We have also to consider the very large liabilities we may have to face in the difficult transition from war time conditions back to the normal conditions of peace. All these liabilities may be very heavy indeed and it is to put ourselves here in a position to meet them that we have decided to raise the present loan.

It is therefore very tentatively indeed that I have put up in my covering despatch to Sir Frank Stockdale a figure of five million dollars, which will be getting on for half of the total of our surplus funds plus loan, as the possible limit of what the colony can itself contribute to the Development and Welfare programme. Let me say again that this is entirely a tentative figure. It may however be well possible to raise further loans in the future.

How soon the total need can be met must remain a matter of complete speculation at this moment. The practical side of it is that we have a new Development and Welfare Act coming into effect next year with an apparently generous financial provision of £120,000,000—but that is to cover the needs of some fifty Colonies and a population in the total of which Guiana is a very small item. We will have to anticipate something by way of allocation within which we must work. That has not yet been indicated to me. It will be very clear that we cannot have everything, we must choose between priorities, we certainly cannot have it up to the champagne standard in every part

of this country or in every service. It will be preferable to choose and do well those things which we do attempt.

I shall discuss all this very early with Members.

QUESTION OF PRIORITIES.

It will be the task of this Council initially in its forthcoming session and finally in the new Council to make the difficult discrimination between those projects which should be pursued in the next five years and those which must be deferred or postponed for later consideration, as being too extravagant or quite uneconomic or impracticable for immediate prosecution. This question was under discussion generally in London at my meetings in the Colonial Office and particularly with the Comptroller, Sir Frank Stockdale. The conclusion was reached quite definitely, and it is definitely my own view, that priority must go to the needs of the coast lands, the paramount need of improving agricultural and living conditions in the coastlands. Other objectives are not of course excluded by any means. But it is probable that the preference would be felt by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for projects which effect some immediate improvement in inhabited coast conditions rather than, for example, expensive commitments in the empty interior, with the exception of air communications. In fact I found authority in London unprepared to favour the issue of large funds for expensive interior projects, for example, roads which I had put forward, though my propositions for a modest beginning with interior development and a skeleton framework administration were sympathetically received.

REVISION OF RURAL ECONOMY.

But there is another side to it apart from expenditure of money and cash economics, and that is one which I feel particularly the new Council which may come into being next year will have to

consider. As I see it, the conditions that exist in far too many parts of our coastlands demand not only heavy capital expenditure, but also a new set-up in all sorts of ways in the inter-relations of the population living on the land, and between the various classes that compose it. This part of Guiana is, and will be for good or ill, a tropical agricultural country, in which the whole instinctive inclination of the mass of the population is towards individual security and holding of some kind on the land. That seems to me wholly natural and inevitable and more and more inevitable as our people make advance. Had there been natural evolution of indigenous peoples in this country as in most other parts of the tropical world, no doubt a condition of things reasonably meeting this human sentiment would be in existence. Instead of that we have a strange history and background which handicap this country exceedingly. But until the objective, which will become stronger and stronger in the minds of our rural population, can be adequately met, I do not think this country can be a happy country. It would appear to me that over a considerable period of years we shall require a revision of our whole set-up of rural economy. I think it will require amendment of laws, particularly touching the securing and holding of land, in a variety of ways that would have appeared a very few years ago very drastic and revolutionary. There will be required if the economics of the country are to be maintained, an immense degree of education in co-operative methods in agriculture, touching agricultural activity at every point; the usage of the land itself, the use of mechanical and advanced methods of cultivation, marketing, the whole organization of our rural economy. All this will tax the ability and good sense of our new Council to the utmost.

SUGAR THE SHEET ANCHOR.

All this will have to go forward just at a time too when it may be

difficult to maintain our export markets on which we must depend for economic and financial stability. These things cannot be rushed if we are not to end in a worse state than we began, but that is no argument for marking time. Sugar is regarded as the sheet anchor of our economics and that is true, but to be fully so it must be a national industry with a real share in it for every section of our people engaged in it. Its set-up must be such as to secure the willing and directly interested co-operation of the Guianese as a whole. There are other important coastland industries, of which the rice industry and its future demands at present so much of our thought. If a market can be held for that product there are very great possibilities as to our carrying through, in certain places at least with a fairly free field, the kind of co-operative and even collectivist development which may bring about the kind of thing I for one would wish to see. But whether it is sugar or rice or coconuts or coffee or food production or anything in which are involved the tenure of land and the relation of the manual producer and cultivator with management and superior organisation, it seems to me that the same general principles must hold.

The more I look at this coastland question the more it seems to me to come back to one fundamental thing, that is, to get land in order, drained, if possible irrigated as well, and gradually to transfer the surplus population of sugar estates and congested villages to such land where adequate conditions of land tenure and co-operative local government organisation can be established. This will be to the common advantage of every interest. I have advised frequently the heads of the sugar industry that it will be in the interests of their own industry to hand over land for such purposes as housing rather than for the sugar estate to remain landlords of housing areas. The same process should be applied to certain vil-

lage areas where conditions are so bad that it is quite uneconomic to attempt to tackle these in individual places. Much of all this should have been done years and years ago, but it is better late than never, though the burden on the State is going to be increased. It is one of the tragedies of these Caribbean countries to the outside observer to see how the standard in towns and of middlemen can rise at the expense of the rural standards. I read quite recently in a balanced document on West Indian conditions the following harsh criticism, that the towns and the middlemen have—

“fattened in the past in spite of a mass of poverty-stricken citizens . . . existing on imported foods, from which the merchant-importers have gleaned an easy harvest through percentage commissions and profits.”

Whatever may be thought of that view, so stated, it must be admitted that the betterment of our rural economy is essential and is going to take us all the political intelligence and good will of our future politicians.

The whole principle of the matter seems to me quite clear. Rural reconstruction with the land itself put in order, proper security of tenure to the small man given and facilities for housing him provided. We are fortunate in this country in having already established the system of local government, which I fully believe can in due time carry all this, and in an admirable co-operative and democratic manner of organisation.

In my view, therefore, it is beyond all question that this matter of rural reconstruction throughout the coastlands is the first and absolute priority requirement of this colony. It must affect the choice, if we have to make it, if we are limited in the choice, between the many desirable projects for the whole country, and affect our discrimination as to use of funds and personnel and everything else.

INTERIOR DEVELOPMENT.

I should mention the other side of our future, the interior and our endeavour to secure a constructive advance in that matter. As I have said in this Council before, I have a great belief that ultimately the varied possibilities of the hinterland in Guiana will come into their own, though one must be realist at present, and I have endeavoured to get the first essential steps taken. Since the opening of last session we formed an Interior Development Committee of the many and varied activities of which the Members are aware from the useful report by the Chairman, the seventh Nominated Member. I spoke last year of the political and administrative responsibility which lies on Government, and I said that until that can be faced and the necessary action taken, I must regard the present administration of Guiana as utterly inadequate to make any effective beginning. I must consequently refuse to commit the Colonial Government to anything beyond tentative and experimental advances such as I recently indicated to Council touching the Pakaraima area. The recommendation of the Interior Development Committee and myself went home to the Secretary of State a year ago for the creation of a Department of the Interior in charge of a Commissioner. We put forward proposals for a skeleton administrative machine which should effectively carry the varied particular projects on which a beginning could be made. Since then to give a fuller picture of the next few years of the necessity of continuity we put forward, but without detail, the proposal that it would be desirable to maintain modest development of ordinary services, with minor works, apart of course from major works, at an expenditure of approximately \$500,000 a year, with continuity for ten years.

My original proposal had been that such costs be met by an Imperial grant-in-aid as I had regarded the matter

primarily as an Imperial responsibility and I was anxious to avoid overtaxing our share of Development and Welfare money. The decision has been, however, that we must treat it all as part of our Development and Welfare picture. As I have already explained, I am given to understand that pending the consideration of the over-all plan and our allocation under the new Development and Welfare Act it may not be feasible to make firm decisions on the necessary finance, though I should be prepared to proposed advance of funds for the beginning if there is an assurance of ultimate acceptance.

I would just like to say one more word as to the interior, and that is the necessity to be realist! The easy use of the words "vast," "fabulous," about the unknown wealth of the interior is in some ways disservice and invites scepticism. I have for example recently had before me certain papers from abroad on which I have to comment—(His Excellency quoted from a document).

That is of course just share-pushing rascality, but we in Guiana sometimes rather invite it. A less amusing thing is the record that I have seen, that a gentleman having been convicted of fraud has his sentence suspended on the condition that he goes off to British Guiana! Ten years or so to Botany Bay—or "Eldorado—the rogue's hide-out?" Is that really our repute?

Members are aware that I of myself have been very greatly attracted by the possibilities. I have just said that I am optimistic in this matter and I have seen quite a lot in numerous visits as well as in the papers I have read. But I should be a fool if I blinded my eyes to the disappointments that close and expert examination do sometimes reveal, and there have been some of these in these last three years. There is a bright side as well but we have a long way to go.

In one thing we have made a good start, air transportation, and we have done pretty well, there are a surprising number of possible landing grounds even now, thanks to Major Williams, and the grant of funds for four regular fields has now been approved.

My most earnest opinion and belief would be that, given the ways and means, we should go on with the continuous policy of establishment of services and developmental schemes wherever hopeful, and with intensive exploration, as preparation for the wider development perhaps possible in the next decade.

STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION.

I have already referred to finance and in particular reference to the responsibilities of the new Council as they will be in the immediate post-war years in regard to recurrent expenditure, liabilities which will have to be faced possibly with a falling revenue. I would like to turn to the other side of our financial picture which is far more satisfactory. That is the unexpectedly strong financial position which has maintained itself and even developed since 1941. If Members will look back to that year, we had in hand an extremely small surplus, anticipated deficits on our annual working, and we had to look solely to Development and Welfare for capital expenditure. That position has substantially changed. We have built up a substantial surplus, there is a surprising increase in the amount of money throughout the country and in all sorts of hands, and the practical position at the moment is that we are far better equipped to stand the constructive capital expenditure than we could have ever hoped to be four or five years ago.

I have already referred in the remarks I made regarding the new Development and Welfare Act, the allocation under it and a sketch plan for some years to come, to the proportion

of capital expenditure which this colony might perhaps bear. What I would wish to invite for the attention of Members now is that rather than go on marking time, possibly until 1946 when the new Act comes into effect and our allocation and plan and so forth have been considered, we take practical steps now on all those things which we can safely regard as of first priority and therefore which will certainly come within the allocation we may expect. What I should propose therefore is that we should advance sufficient funds from our surplus to go on with actual works desired as I authorised recently for the Bonasika work. We can do so in the expectation that we shall be able to refund when the new Development and Welfare Act comes into effect.

FIRST OBJECTIVES.

The objectives which I would wish to put forward first are the building of primary schools, housing under the Housing Scheme for Essequibo put forward at the end of last year, the Corentyne Drainage and Irrigation schemes, and Vergenoegen Land Settlement. I have reason to think that in rural districts of the country at least we could begin with some building of primary schools. Similarly, I think we might in that part of our Housing Scheme which affect Essequibo and the Essequibo Islands also attempt to make a beginning and make funds available under the scheme of one-third free grant and most of the rest loan, of which Members are aware. As regards Drainage and Irrigation though the consulting engineers are working on several projects, the one that is ripe for action is of course the Corentyne Scheme. Moreover, as a result of the very quick progress which has been made with the Bonasika Scheme, the large dredge is available now and if we do not turn it on to digging the Torani Canal for which it is well suited we shall of course have to face the unusual extravagance of overhead expenditure on equipment not used. I am

personally quite confident that we will be justified in proceeding with advancing funds for these particular purposes, and I shall take a very early opportunity of consulting Members on the subject in order to regularise procedure and get the assent of the House registered to the action proposed. I shall ask for about \$60,000 for a beginning this year for building of primary schools in the next few months (the total application is \$1,200,000 and I am sure we will get it); or perhaps the same for housing in Essequibo and on the Corentyne Scheme enough to finance the internal drainage of the Bloomfield-Whim and of the 53-74 sections, and the start on the Torama Canal.

I propose to have a discussion with Members perhaps tomorrow, if they would meet me at 2 p.m. I have important information on this matter to discuss.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

I should record in concluding these words to Council, the more immediate and important business of the new session. For legislation we have the Franchise Bill, now printed and ready, though I still await the Secretary of State's comments by telegraph; we have the Town Planning Bill, as to which and the plan that goes with it after a great deal of discussion, I trust such substantial agreement has been reached as to facilitate its early passage; a troublesome legacy of the fire is the need of statutory provision affecting the Savings Bank: a very long and complicated Local Government Bill, which with its amendments now made will take a month to print, so handicapped are we in that regard since the fire; and lastly we shall have the final statutory enactment gathering up all the threads concerning the long lease of the sites in the Colony as military and naval bases for the armed forces of the United States of America. These bills require close and earnest attention from this Coun-

cil in the next period of weeks. It would be my intention to make an earlier start than in previous years with the Budget, in order to give Members a still more ample opportunity of examination of our finances and to avoid the pressure under which we have had to complete it in the last two years, last year I am afraid largely owing to my own absence from the Colony.

I have said little to-day as to our present financial position, but I will take a later opportunity, I hope in good time before the meeting to take the Budget.

These are among the heavy tasks that await us in the next few months. This session should be the finale of Guiana's "Long Parliament", and may it be a good overture to the first session of Council under the new Franchise. I think this country is faced with a period of years extraordinarily difficult but on the other hand most challenging, which may—possibly—see the country put right on to its feet. Looking back fifteen or sixteen years to the economic depression of 1929/30, one seems to see a decade in this country of forced economy, which has hindered constructive development on any scale and has cramped and blunted the administrative machine. Just when a new era seemed to promise in 1939, the war intervened. Even the possibilities of action that appeared possible to me when I first came here at the end of 1941, gradually waned and faded throughout 1942 and in 1943. For the immediate future there is one good side. I have the fullest confidence that we shall be able to carry through a certain number of large scale projects which cannot fail but to be of the most immense constructive benefit to the country as a whole. We may not get just all we might like to see, but I am quite confident that we shall get enough to make real and substantial progress.

HIGH COST PRODUCERS.

In other aspects things will not be so easy. I have spoken to-day of the difficulties of recurrent finance in the post-war years and I shall speak again at a later meeting or at any rate at the Budget. I have indicated also to-day the great needs for retification of many things in our rural economy. These alone will demand the utmost ability and intelligent attention from any new Council. At the same time in our economics we seem to be drifting towards a condition of being high cost producers in everything, which may jeopardise our foreign markets and even bring us into difficulties within our own door, and tend to a lapse back to the conditions of living—or trying to live—on imported goods. If we are going to pull out it is going to demand a very big effort all along the line. It cannot be done easily by passing resolutions, or passing bills in Legislative Councils, or voting money if we have it. I said before that I am a most confident believer in the establishment more and more of democratic institutions, for it means sharing the responsibility and the participation in the ordering of our own affairs throughout the community and on the common man. Yet in itself that contains no divine principle, and it can only successfully live for the common good if sustained by reasoning men working to serve with all their capacity. It is for people who are adult and who have learned to judge for themselves and not betray their minds and their reasons to emotional appeal of sectional or private interests. As I have said to-day, the retification of our social economy required in so many ways, is going to be a great task upon our new Councils of the future, and it will demand the utmost good sense and good will and the patience and tolerance and the respect for all interests and all points of view. May these be given in full measure to the people of Guiana.

Mr. WOOLFORD: It is my very pleasant duty to thank you, sir, as I have done before, for your very inter-

esting and very able address. I do so with some hesitation because I am again confronted with an instrument that I am not accustomed to look at but which, I believe, has been placed there in order that my remarks—whether they are irritatingly inaudible, as has been said, or not—may reach a wider audience than I see here to-day. I suggest, if this is to be a permanent feature of this Assembly, that I may be allowed to exercise my privilege in calling attention to a “stranger in our midst” and, with your permission, ask that it be removed to some other place or places in this room where that human vice to which you have referred in your address is possessed by some Members whose frequent interventions in these debates are certainly more numerous than mine, when I have no doubt that their hitherto uncensored contributions in this Assembly will receive something of the criticism from the general public to which they are accustomed to listen from fellow Members like myself.

A Governor's Speech in this Colony, or rather in this room, with the possible exception of the Budget Speech is, I think I am correct in saying, the only speech that the public ever reads. It is read, I think, with the scrutiny which it deserves. It is read with interest and concern, as I readily believe. I am not going to indicate that section of the community which reads it with interest, nor do I propose to differentiate between that section and the other which reads it with concern. I leave it to the imagination of my hearers to determine that, but in this room you may rest assured—and if it were not so I would not say so—that your reviews in this Council are received by every Member—whatever his political complexion may be whether it be healthy or jaundiced—with respect and admiration. I say so because apart altogether from the range of your experience in the conduct of public assemblies there was always in this Council under your Presidency, some anecdote and refer-

ence which give us pleasure to listen to and which help us in some way or other to smooth angry passions. You are in that respect an able politician, and this is a political assembly; and, therefore, I am glad to think that to-day the general community has had the opportunity of witnessing some of the relief that public men whose privilege it is to be here enjoy when you preside in this Council Chamber.

I know this too, that in the minds of Members of this Council there is the feeling that whatever duties you may have to perform while recognizing that in their fulfilment you are the Governor, and it is expected of you that you should discharge those duties in your official capacity with possibly due regard to official form, we seem to find in them something of the reflection of your own mind, now that you have been in this Colony a considerable number of years, and there can be gained from your utterances something of that advice, inspiration, and guidance which you would that men like ourselves, situated in responsible positions, may either agree with or at least consider and with that assistance devote ourselves, better equipped, to the performance of our duties in this Council. It is because of that we value from time to time these reviews that some of us have listened to for very many years. But no Administrator I can ever recall has, during his term of office—and I cast no reflection on your predecessors—been placed in the position you have been of being able not only to take this Council into your confidence but the community also, in a greater and larger degree than ever to what they were accustomed. It is the policy of the moment. It is the democratic way, and I share with you the belief that democracy in this Colony will eventually become possible, because we have a fair measure of Local Government under which there are men whose talents and whose ability will eventually assist the cause of democracy.

I was very amused to hear your references to the possibilities of our

interior; and this recalls an incident which occurred very many years ago and at a very early period of the Colony's discovery of gold. A certain miner, in his exuberance and joy and with his faith in the interior, on his arrival at Bartica, the Lake District as we are told it is, cabled to his wife, a simple country woman: "Arrived Bartica; gold in quantum. If money nuh deh, borrow." (laughter). Such was his belief in the future success of his enterprise, but history does not disclose how much gold, having remained a few days in Bartica, he reached Georgetown with, or whether the loan, if it was obtained, was ever repaid. But we do know that miners in those days seldom reached their country districts at all. I merely mention that as an historical anecdote.

Now, sir, my sole remaining duty is to ask, in accordance with practice and custom, that the review which we have listened to to-day—not the last I hope we shall listen to—may be printed and circulated; and you may be assured that in any examination of it you will receive the support, as I hope, you have always had, and the ready support of Members of this Council.

PAPERS LAID.

THE PRESIDENT: There is one formal piece of business—Presentation of Reports and Documents by the hon. Colonial Secretary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Laing, actg.) laid on the table the following document:—

His Excellency the Governor's Review of the Year, 1944 (Legislative Council Paper No. 16 of 1945).

THE ADJOURNMENT.

THE PRESIDENT: Before we adjourn, I just want to thank the Deputy President for his remarks in which, I have noticed that I am now described by him as an able politician. I shall remember it. I do not know whether

to take it as a compliment or the reverse. I would like to express one regret at this meeting, and that is that I had not the opportunity, as I had hoped, of decorating the hon. the acting Colonial Secretary, Mr. Laing, with his very greatly deserved honour of C.M.G. (applause). Unfortunately the Insignia has not arrived, so this part of the

proceedings that I looked forward to, I am unable to carry out.

I propose to adjourn until next Wednesday, but that will be dependent to some extent on our discussions when we meet here in Finance Committee tomorrow afternoon, which I am provisionally fixing for three o'clock. I therefore declare the Council adjourned.