

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF BRITISH GUIANA.

(Constituted under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions)  
Order in Council, 1953)

## OFFICIAL REPORT

(HANSARD)

OF PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION

IN THE

THIRD ~~SECOND~~ YEAR OF THE REIGN

OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II.

FIRST SITTING

TUESDAY, 5th JANUARY, 1954.

The inaugural meeting of the First Legislative Council of Br Guiana, constituted under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953, was held in the Chamber of the Legislature, Public Buildings, Georgetown, on Tuesday, 5th January, 1954, at 9 a.m.

His Honour the Speaker and Members of the Council having taken and subscribed to the Oath of Allegiance, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, K.C.M.G., addressed the Council.

### PRESENT

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

#### *Ex-Officio Members :—*

The Hon. the Chief Secretary, Mr. John Gutch, C.M.G., O.B.E.

✓ The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder, Q.C.

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

#### *Nominated Members of Executive Council :—*

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

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

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall.

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.

The Hon. G. H. Smellie.

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj.

✓ The Hon. R. C. Tello.

#### *Deputy Speaker :—*

Mr. W. J. Raatgever, C.B.E.

*Nominated Officials :—*

- ✓ Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.
- ✓ Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

*Nominated Unofficials :—*

- Mr. T. Lee.
  - Mr. W. A. Phang.
  - Mr. L. A. Luckhoo.
  - ✓ Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.
  - Mr. C. A. Carter.
  - Mr. E. F. Correia.
  - ✓ Rev. D. C. J. Bobb.
  - ✓ Mr. H. Rahaman.
  - ✓ Miss Gertie H. Collins.
  - ✓ Mrs. Esther E. Dey.
  - ✓ D . A. Fraser.
  - Lt. Col. E. J. Haywood, M.B.E., T.D.
  - ✓ Mr. R. B. Jailal.
  - ✓ Mr. Sugrim Singh.
- Clerk of the Legislature—Mr. I. Crum Ewing.  
 Assistant Clerk of the Legislaturé—Mr. I. R. King.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Speaker : Hon. Members of Council, our first duty is to take our respective Oaths of Allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen and thereafter subscribe our names in the book of records kept for that purpose. The Oaths will be administered by His Lordship the Chief Justice. I shall take my Oath first and thereafter Members of Council will follow in rotation of their precedence.

The Honourable the Chief Justice, Sir Peter Bell, then administered the Oath of Allegiance to His Honour the Speaker and to each Member of the Council in order of precedence.

His Grace the Archbishop of the West Indies, the Most Reverend Dr. Alan John Knight, read prayers.

COUNCIL CONSTITUTED

Mr. Speaker : Hon. Members, I now declare this Council to be duly constituted and in session. Before resuming my seat I should like to thank His Lordship and His Grace for the services they have given us this morning, and I am sure you will join with me in tendering to our respected Chief Justice our sincere congratulations on the dignity that has recently been conferred on him by Her Majesty. (Applause). I may be allowed to add that we have heard with very deep regret and disappointment that His Grace has not found it possible to accept nomination to this Council, and I take this opportunity to thank him for the valuable services he rendered in the State Council during the short period of its existence, and to express the hope that in course of time he will again lend to our deliberations his guidance and blessing.

With the permission of hon. Members I will now vacate the Chair for a short while. Council will reassemble after the arrival of His Excellency the Governor which will take place before 10 o'clock. Members may leave their seats during the interval but are requested to be present in their seats when His Excellency arrives in this Chamber.

Council adjourned at 9.25 and resumed at 10 a.m. when His Excellency the Governor, accompanied by Mr. Speaker, entered the Chamber.

#### GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS.

His Excellency addressed the Council as follows :—

Mr. Speaker, Your Grace, Your Lordships, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen—

About eight months ago it was my privilege to open the Legislature which was established under the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1953. It was hoped then that with the large measure of responsibility given to the Colony such development would have taken place as would justify further constitutional advances. Unfortunately, such hopes were not realised and, as you are aware, circumstances arose which made it necessary for Her Majesty's Government to suspend the Constitution and to provide a new form of Government. The British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953, was accordingly made in London on 22nd December, 1953, providing for the suspension of the Constitution and for the establishment of a new Government. This Government has now been appointed.

It would be improper for me to comment further on the constitutional changes as a Commission has been appointed and will arrive in Georgetown

tomorrow, and will, I am sure, wish to commence its work immediately. I understand it is the intention of the Commission to make an early tour of the country districts in order to obtain a picture of general conditions. I trust that all sections of the community will either submit memoranda to the Commission or will volunteer to give oral evidence.

I considered it essential that the new Legislative Council should be appointed and begin its work with the least possible delay, and I accordingly fixed the 1st of January, 1954, as the day on which Parts IV and V of the Order should come into operation. It is now my privilege today to open the new Legislative Council and in spite of the difficulties and hindrances which faced this country in 1953, I do so with undiminished faith in the future. For ten days Part III of the Order in Council, which gave me full powers of legislation, has been operative and I feel that I should explain publicly but briefly, the laws which I have passed in that period and the reasons for each of them.

- (a) An Ordinance amending the law relating to certain statutory authorities. Two orders were made under Section 4 of the suspended Constitution Order in Council which transferred the power of appointment from the Governor or Governor in Council to certain Ministers. The Ordinance just passed by me restores the original power and at the same time enlarges the field of selection by removing any restrictive provisions limiting appointments to members of the Legislature.
- (b) A decision was taken to postpone the holding of the New Amsterdam Town Council Elections during December and I have passed a law to give authority to the postponement for one year and to provide that the Mayor and Town Council of New Amsterdam as at present constituted shall continue in office for a further period of one year.

- (c) The British Guiana Rice Producers Association was due to hold an election in November and December, 1953. In the prevailing circumstances this was not possible and I have passed a law extending the life of the District Committees and Council of the Association for a period of approximately one year pending the holding of fresh elections towards the end of 1954.
- (d) I have passed a law to provide machinery for the payment of compensation in respect of action taken by the Governor or by a Competent Authority under the provisions of the Emergency Order and in particular to provide for the payment of compensation in respect of property requisitioned under the provisions of the Order.
- (e) I have passed a law providing for the payment of remuneration at the rates I announced recently, and for the payment of travelling expenses and subsistence allowances to nominated unofficial members of the new Executive and Legislative Councils.
- (f) Normally a supplementary Appropriation Bill would have been presented to the Legislature in 1954 in respect of supplementary provision approved during 1953. I considered it inappropriate that the new Legislative Council should be required to deal with such expenditure and I have therefore passed a law confirming expenditure which was approved during 1953 by previous Executive Councils.

I should also announce that under my powers in the Order in Council, I made yesterday the first Standing Orders of the new Legislative Council. They take the form of the existing Standing Orders modified so as to bring them into accord with the provisions of the new Order in Council. But I have taken the opportunity to provide for the appointment of a Deputy Speaker and I am glad to announce that Mr W. J. Raatgever has accepted the appointment. (Applause).

The first meeting of the new Executive Council was held on Wednesday, the 30th December last, when Members took the Oaths of Office and I delivered the portfolios already announced to the members concerned.

I have formally appointed the Economic Council to which I referred in my last broadcast and I held the first meeting yesterday.

It is hoped that legislation providing for the establishment of the British Guiana Credit Corporation, recommended by the World Bank Mission, will be presented to the Legislature at an early date. Meantime, preliminary steps for the recruitment of a Chairman and a General Manager have been taken. We hope to obtain on a consultant basis the services of a top flight independent overseas businessman as Chairman.

It is my wish that all parts of the Colony should participate as far as possible in the planning for development and to take an interest not only in the making of plans for the country generally, but also in the execution of those plans in so far as they affect their own particular areas and districts. I propose that the Regional Development Committees should have executive as well as advisory powers and I shall consult Members of the Legislature as soon as possible with regard to the appointment of the personnel of these Regional Committees.

It would be appropriate for me to mention here in passing that it is my intention to resume next month the travelling in rural districts which I undertook last year. My wife and I want to meet as many people as possible, as before, and I intend to discuss on the ground the development and other problems of the districts. In short, without offence to Georgetown, I hope to spend much more time in the country than previously.

The budget for 1954 has been drawn up by my official advisers. I should emphasize that the non-official members of the Executive Council carry no responsibility for its preparation. I do not intend to anticipate the Budget Address of the Financial Secretary which will shortly be presented; but I will only observe that the Budget is not in any way a caretaker budget—nor might I add is this Government a caretaker Government. Our task is not to mark time but to march forward.

The Budget will be presented on the lines proposed by the World Bank Mission in two parts—a recurrent budget and a capital budget. The recurrent budget provides for a substantial increase in services and therefore of expenditure. The capital budget has been prepared on the basis of the recommendations of the World Bank, some of which it is proposed to expand and/or accelerate. We shall need assistance in one way or another from overseas and the proposals have been sent to the Secretary of State. I would add that it is my intention to visit the United Kingdom at the end of next week and have consultations with the Colonial Office regarding certain matters including the financing of our development programme.

I am sure that the estimates will receive the careful consideration of the Members of this Honourable Council. They provide for substantial improvements in various services as well as new schemes both economic and social — extending over a very wide field. Given confidence and co-operation I have no doubt that this New Year will bring new production and increased employment in most parts of the country. The population is increasing rapidly and if we are to maintain and improve our standards of living there must be, given certain conditions, increased production — more

sugar—more rice—more copra—more cattle—more milk—more meat—more mineral and general development. Minor industries must be fostered. There must be more work—more building—more houses in the country and in towns—more self-help—more drive—more unselfish enthusiasm for the advancement of British Guiana. There must be a greater spirit of understanding and co-operation between capital and labour. But above all, there must be a greater regard for moral and spiritual values. Let us put first things first. There must be a greater recognition of the brotherhood of man—practical recognition not theoretical. The increasing attacks on religion and the development of colour prejudice as political weapons are another reflection of Communist technique but you and I, everyone of us, have given by our shortcomings in the past the opportunity for seeds of doubt to be sown. We have a lot of ground to recover in 1954 but unless we put first things first we shall not succeed.

Honourable Members of this Council have a special responsibility for the future, but also a great opportunity. I pray that God's blessing will be with you in your thoughts, deliberations and actions and I offer you as a challenge those well-known lines:—

“That which we are, we are,  
One equal temper of heroic hearts  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong  
in will  
To strive, to seek, to find and **not to  
yield.**”

**Mr. Lee:** Your Excellency, may I take the opportunity now on behalf of my fellow Councillors and myself to thank you for the excellent and well considered address you have given us today, and to assure you, Sir, that you can expect the fullest co-operation from this Council in its fulfilment. I beg to

move that permission be granted by you that the said address be printed and circulated among the Members of this Council."

His Excellency withdrew from the Chamber.

**Mr. Speaker:** This Council will now adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock, when the Hon. the Financial Secretary will deliver his Budget Address.

Council adjourned to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 6th January, 1954.