

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, 6th MAY, 1948

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Campbell Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. M. Duke (acting).

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

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E., (Nominated).

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

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Hon. T. T. Thompson (Nominated).

The Hon. W. J. Raatgever (Nominated).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum (Nominated).

The Hon. D. P. Debidin (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. Dr. G. M. Gonsalves (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. Dr. C. Jagan (Central Demerara).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. C. A. McDoom (Nominated).

The Hon. A. T. Peters (Western Berbice).

The Hon. W. A. Phang (North Western District).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 30th of April, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the following documents:—

Reports of the Commissioner of Income Tax for the year 1945 and for the year 1946.

The Report of the Colony's representative at the meeting of the Provisional Council of the University College of the West Indies held in January, 1948.

ANNOUNCEMENT**UNOFFICIAL MOTIONS**

The PRESIDENT: I think I mentioned to hon. Members that opportunity would be given them at this week's meetings to discuss one or two Unofficial motions, and I would propose that apart from one item on the Order Paper we should proceed with the motion standing in the name of Mr. Lee and Mr. Debidin, but the Government motion which I would wish to be taken first is the Rent Restriction (Amendment) Bill. That I regard as a very urgent matter, and it is important that the Council should make some progress with it. If the Council agrees I would ask the Attorney-General to proceed with that Bill, and thereafter we would take the two Unofficial motions on the Order Paper. I take it that the Council agrees to that.

RENT RESTRICTION (AMENDMENT)
BILL, 1948

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: (Mr. E. M. Duke, acting): I beg to move the second reading of

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Rent Restriction Ordinance, 1941, with respect to the standard rent of premises erected after or in course of erection on the eighth day of March, Nineteen Hundred and Forty-one."

Under the Rent Restriction Ordinance of 1941, where premises have been erected after, or were in course of erection on the 8th of March, 1941, the standard rent of those premises is the amount at which the premises were first let. Investigation has proved that in many cases exorbitant rents have been charged in respect of those new premises, and it is considered desirable that the Rent Assessor should have power to fix as the standard rent for such new premises a rent which in all the circumstances of the case he considers to be fair and reasonable, and it is for such purpose that this Bill has been introduced. It merely contains a single subsection which reads as follows:—

"(1A) Where an application under subsection (1) of this section is made in relation to premises (whether let furnished or unfurnished) erected after, or in course of erection on, the eighth day of March nineteen hundred and forty-one, the Rent Assessor may, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, ascertain and certify the standard rent at a lesser amount, but not at a greater amount, than the rent at which the premises were first let:

Provided that where the standard rent is so reduced, no proceedings shall be instituted for the recovery of any rent overpaid by a tenant in relation to the period before the date of the commencement of this subsection."

What the proviso to this proposed new subsection means is that if the Rent Assessor reduces the standard rent of new premises the landlord would not have to repay to the tenant any amount in respect of the period before the enactment of this Ordinance. I think it makes it perfectly clear that it is not proposed that the operation of this new subsection be made retrospective. I now formally

move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Mr. LEE: This Bill should have been introduced several years ago. There is one phase of the question to which I would like to draw attention. Owing to the scarcity of houses and the high rentals certain tenants have sub-divided their houses and rented rooms at exorbitant rents, making a profit at the expense of their landlords. I suggest that the Rent Assessor should be given the power to assess the rent for sub-tenants. In a recent case in which I appeared the Rent Assessor deplored the lack of such power.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I agree with the remarks made by the previous speaker. On two successive Saturdays I had to appear before the Rent Assessor on behalf of some tenants who occupied five rooms in the lower flat of a two-flat dwelling house which was rented at \$25 per month at one time, but by the sub-division the landlord was able to obtain a monthly rental of \$64. Those of us who have to appear before the Rent Assessor have always come up against the question of apportionment of rent, and the time has come when Government should make some provision for it in the law. For instance, if a room which was formerly rented at \$10 per month was sub-divided the Rent Assessor has no power to apportion the rent between the two tenants. He has to fall back upon the provision which says that the rent shall be the amount at which the room was first let. I suggest that the law in England relating to apportionment of rent be introduced in this Colony.

I am sceptical about the practical application of clause 3 of this Bill, and I know that the Rent Assessor has exclaimed very loudly about it. It would mean that he would have to visit every house, and at present he has more work than he is able to cope with. To make arbitrary assessments would put him in a very invidious position. As a matter of fact he is now being placed in the same position as the former Municipal

Appraisers. I suggest that the provision in clause 3 should be suspended until some practical method of enforcing it can be evolved. It is a necessary step, but as things stand at present I do not think it is a wise one.

Mr. PETERS : I too have had experience in the Assessor's Court of this question of the lack of provision for apportionment of rent. Only a day or two ago the Rent Assessor had a problem put to him in which he could do nothing. It was a case in which a landlord entered into a contract to rent a house, and after the tenant had moved into the house the landlord decided to reserve a portion of the rented house unto himself. The tenant went to the Rent Assessor to have the rent assessed for the portion of the house he occupied but the Rent Assessor said he had no power to do so—he could only deal with the subject of the tenancy which was the entire house. The only remedy for the tenant was an action for damages. I would be glad to see some provision made in the law for the Rent Assessor to deal with this new problem.

As regards the proposal in clause 3 of the Bill to give the Rent Assessor power to fix the standard rent of premises erected or in course of erection on the 8th of March, 1941. I personally feel that if the Rent Assessor is to be given that power he should in fairness to the landlord be also given the power to increase the rent if he finds that too low a figure has been charged. We should not restrict the operation of his conscience, and if we are making sauce for the tenant we should also make sauce for the landlord. I suggest that we delete the words "but not at a greater amount" in clause 3 of the Bill. We should not restrict the operation of the Assessor's conscience. Perhaps it would be well if we deferred consideration of this Bill and have a discussion with the Attorney-General.

Dr. JAGAN : Government is to be congratulated on introducing this amendment of the Rent Restriction Ordinance which I feel would help the distressed tenants to a very great extent. I am aware of several cases in which landlords

have taken undue advantage of their tenants. I have known of cases in which excessive rents were charged for new dwellings, but the first tenants were allowed to pay \$5 or \$10 less than the amount for which the receipt was given. For instance the tenant may be told he would have to pay \$40 per month, but he is given a receipt for \$50 or \$55, so that when a new tenant comes along he is given a receipt for a sum in excess of the actual rent paid by the original tenant. I therefore consider this a very desirable move on the part of Government to protect tenants, especially those in the low income group.

Mr. ROTH : I too am very glad to see this Bill introduced. I have had my own experience. I know a cottage not a third of the size of this Chamber, which has been rented during the last 12 months at \$60 per month, and the landlord is planning to put another flat below. That is one example of how necessary it is that this amendment of the Ordinance should be made.

Mr. SEAFORD : I do not think any Member of this Council will have anything but praise for a Bill of this kind. The only thing is that certain Members have pointed out that difficulties may be encountered in enforcing the Bill as it is presented. I am therefore inclined to agree with the hon. Member for Western Berhice (Mr. Peters) that further consideration might be given to the Bill by the hon. the Attorney-General assisted by some of our legal friends in this Council, so that we might have a Bill which we would not have to amend in a short time.

Mr. FERNANDES : Like everybody else, I congratulate Government on bringing forward this Bill. It is overdue, but there is just one thing I would like to ask the hon. the Attorney-General with Your Excellency's permission, arising out of the remarks made by previous speakers. I would like to know if a room or building has been subdivided subsequent to 1941, whether that would be considered as having been constructed after 1941. If that is so it would solve many of the problems that have

been put before us. If a room subdivided in 1942 or any other time after 1941 is in order, then, as the hon. Member for Western Berbice has said, the Rent Assessor would be powerless. In that case I would support the suggestion that further consideration of this matter be postponed in order that these loopholes be stopped. I am not quite sure what the term "construction" means and whether dividing a room or building would bring forward the date of construction. If division would be taken to mean construction, then there might be some dissatisfaction.

Mr. SEAFORD : Does the hon. Member when he uses the word "division" mean a permanent division or a temporary screen ?

Mr. FERNANDES : I mean division for the purpose of renting the premises to several persons.

Mr. LEE : This Bill speaks of "erection"; if it had "construction" then, perhaps, the Rent Assessor might have had to extend the legal definition. The term "erection" carries the implication that it is a new thing. If the Bill spoke of "construction" then the question of division might have made some difference.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Since all the speakers have approved in principle of the Bill and some have suggested early consideration of certain points relating to the details, may I suggest that this Council passes the second reading and that when we reach the Committee stage Your Excellency be asked to appoint a Select Committee to consider the Bill. I think that would save a lot of time. If the Bill passes its second reading this afternoon it would show that this Council has approved of it in principle, and the details could be gone into by a Select Committee.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I am very pleased to see such a strong measure of unanimity on the part of Members of this Council with respect to the principle of this Bill. Most of the points raised have been raised by Members who are legal practitioners—most of whom are

known to me—and I thank them for bringing these points up before this Council. There is a slight amendment which might be made and I would just indicate it now because I entirely agree with the suggestion made by the hon. the Colonial Secretary for the appointment of a Select Committee. Well, I would indicate what is in my mind at the moment. I suggest that one of the points to be considered by the Select Committee is whether sub-clause 3 (1A) should not be amplified in order to include all premises furnished or unfurnished which were first let after March 1, 1941. At times there is some uncertainty as to whether a building is a new building or not; it may very well be not a new building within the meaning of the Georgetown Building By-laws because the framework might be old but it is sometimes considered by the Rent Assessor as being a new building although what happened was that the building was in a very bad state of disrepair. It might not have been repaired for 30 years and extensive repairs are done and it is called a new building. I think hon. Members of this Council probably know of cases within their own experience where that has happened.

The hon Member for Central Demerara made a very good point when he spoke of the issue by landlords of bogus receipts. The object of this amendment is to eliminate hardship caused to **bona fide** tenants by reason of bogus receipts issued in the first place to the persons who first occupied the premises. With reference to the point made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara as to the responsibility of the Rent Assessor and the advisability of entrusting these powers to a Board, I would mention that this Ordinance is not confined entirely to Georgetown. There is a Rent Assessor and the Ordinance can be extended—and it has been extended to other parts of the Colony. Further, any amendment to the effect that a Rent Assessor should sit along with a Magistrate would have to be carefully considered in view of the fact that this Ordinance is not confined entirely to Georgetown. I entirely agree with the suggestion made by the hon. the Colonial Secretary.

The PRESIDENT: As I stated before we proceeded with the Order of the Day, I would like this Bill to be considered today because I regard it as one of particular urgency. It has taken a long time to come forward and one of the reasons for that is a very difficult question — this Rent Restriction. My experience as regards evasion is that no matter what we put on the Statute Book the amount of evasion that will take place may be considerable, but we want to make the law as perfect as we can. But if we are going to wait for months and months before we do anything the tenants are going to continue to suffer. My desire is to get something done which would prevent the unquestionable exploitation of tenants which is taking place at the present time and I am prepared to agree to the appointment of a Select Committee. The suggestion is to take the second reading of the Bill and then refer it to a Select Committee for consideration, and I would ask that the Select Committee proceed to do its work with all possible expedition. We all know that in Georgetown — and I know also in Bartica which I recently visited — that ruthless exploitation is taking place and the sooner we can put a stop to it the better. If the Attorney General would move the second reading of the Bill we can proceed to appoint a Select Committee to consider it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move that this Bill be referred to a Select Committee of this Council as nominated by His Excellency the Governor.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: On the assumption that the hon. Members concerned will agree to be members of the Select Committee, I appoint the Attorney-General, Chairman; and the hon. C. V. Wight, O.B.E., Deputy President; T. Lee, D. P. Debidin and John Fernandes to be the members of that Committee. If that is acceptable to hon. Members then I propose to appoint the Committee accordingly. I hope that the Attorney-General who is the Chairman will endeavour to arrange an early meeting and let us have the report of the Committee as soon as possible.

REMUNERATION OF UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS

Mr. LEE: Before I say anything on the motion standing in my name in the Order Paper, I desire to move an amendment to the resolve clause so that the motion would read as follows:—

“WHEREAS it is desirable that Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council and Executive Council of this Colony should be adequately remunerated for their services;

AND WHEREAS the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Councils of the Island of Trinidad and other West Indian Colonies are remunerated by their respective Colonies;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council recommends to the Governor that Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council of the Colony be remunerated for their services at the rate of \$1,800 per annum with effect from the 1st January, 1948.”

I have passed up the amendment to the Clerk of the Council, Sir, and I ask that it be adopted. If hon. Members look at the motion as printed on the Order Paper they would see that the effect of this amendment is that all Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council should be remunerated for their services at the rate of \$1,800 per annum with effect from the 1st January, 1948, instead of the rates mentioned in (a) and (b) in the resolve clause in the Order Paper.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mr. LEE: This motion was originally tabled by my friend, Mr. Critchlow, who

was a Member of this Council and also a Member of the Executive Council. He brought up in the Labour Party this question of payment to Members of this Council and decided to table a motion to give effect to it. He and I travelled within recent times to Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica along with the hon. Mr. Marryshow of Grenada, and we found that in these islands and even in some of the smaller ones Members of the Legislative Council were receiving remuneration for their services. I feel we would be making a step forward in this Council if we decide to give Members a remuneration for their services so that they may devote the whole of their time to the work of this Council and the several Committees relating thereto. We must always remember that as a result of the 10-year Development Plan for the Colony there will be a lot of work to be done in this Council within the next few years. Certain hon. Members will have to attend not only meetings of this Council, but meetings of several Committees and give the benefit of their knowledge and practical experience for the advancement of the Colony. I feel that is a responsibility which those who have undertaken the task should endeavour to discharge. I am not saying that they do not give of their best, but I think they should be induced to give more of their time to the work of this Council and to see, among other things, that all expenditure is undertaken with the sanction of its Members.

Those of us who are Elected Members should realise the responsibility we have to face in the years ahead and when we give an account of our stewardship to our respective constituencies we should keep the people informed with respect to the various policies of Government. I feel that would take much time as well as a lot of travelling and attention, but that is more or less by the way. I feel that Your Excellency will permit a vote to be taken on this motion which is in the interest of the Unofficial Members. My constituency, on the map, is the largest in British Guiana and several different industries — timber, minerals and at the present moment cattle — are being carried on therein. Within the next five or ten years we are going to have hydro-electric power and other things to assist

in industrial development and each Member of this Council should be able to keep himself informed on all the current affairs in the Colony and especially within his constituency. For myself, I must say that if I am to go into parts of the interior which are within my constituency it would take up very much of my time and I would be able to do very little of my legal practice. We have also a large area and a large population—some 57,000 people—in the Corentyne district and if we look at the forecast of economic conditions and progress prepared by Mr. Huggins some time ago, I feel sure the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice would like to have that constituency divided into two parts so that he could devote his attention entirely to the development of a particular area. Hon. Members will also have to devote their attention to various problems relating to drainage and irrigation that would come up for the advancement of the Colony. All these things will make a heavy demand on their time and I think it is but right that they be given some remuneration for their services. I have the greatest pleasure, Sir, in moving the motion standing in my name.

Mr. KENDALL seconded.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think the hon. mover of this motion will bear me out when I say that at a meeting held by a certain Party I was one of those who very strongly opposed any measure of payment to Members of this Council, but there was a substantial majority in favour of it. Unfortunately also, I was absent when the suggestion was discussed in Finance Committee and I was therefore unable to give my views. However, I understand that there was a compromise and that the Council agreed by a substantial majority that this measure should be put through.

The PRESIDENT: Not the Council; the Finance Committee.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am sorry, Sir. At this moment I feel I should bow to the majority view as although I did not attend the meeting of the Finance Committee, as I have already stated, I understand it

was the wish of the majority that the motion should be carried as amended. Nevertheless, I would like to state my own views before such a measure is passed. In the first place, I would like it to be publicly known that such a measure should not be regarded at any time as one which is intended to reduce the status of Members of this Council — their conscientiousness and their willingness to serve and to do what they planned before the measure was brought forward. Secondly, I do hope that when general elections are held in future candidates would not be constrained to seek the suffrage of the people merely because there is in the offing this question of payment to Members of this Council. but that persons who are public-minded and well qualified would come forward and be guided by a willingness to serve and conscientiousness in the interest of the people as a whole. That alone should be the guiding principle. My third observation is that so far as the Members of this Council are concerned it is necessary that a suitable amendment of the Constitution be made so that this measure should not operate to the disability of persons seeking election to this Council in future.

Mr. PETERS: I desire to repeat what I said some time ago and that is, those of us who would vote for this motion are not actuated by any desire to be paid for the services we have rendered here and to the community at large. For my own part it seems to be a question of applying one's self to the task in hand and the question of the time that one has to consume here away from one's regular vocation. The two elements, therefore, are time and service. Far be it from me — and I say it for the other Members also — to be paid for service to one's homeland. If we have grown up sufficiently to feel that time is of monetary value to most people, then we should address our minds to the fact that this should be regarded as an honorarium for the task in hand rather than as a recompense for service, for after all we should never be mercenary in our desire to serve the interest of our Colony. On the other hand, when it comes to the question of time, I for one admit that it has monetary value and it is for that reason I am prepared to vote for this motion.

Mr. SEAFORD: I am going to say straightaway that I am opposed to this motion. My first reason is that I cannot see what this Colony is going to get for the expenditure of this sum of money. I think it works out to \$37,800 per annum. The hon. mover of the motion said he has suggested it because he hoped that all Members would be able to give two or three days a week to the work of the Council, but I do not think what he actually conveyed was what he meant to convey. I do feel that people who have taken the Oath of Allegiance to do their duty here should give of their best whether they are paid or not. I cannot agree with the construction placed on the motion by the hon. Member for Western Berbice — that in any case they would give of their best. but it is a recompense for time lost. During election time every candidate promises that he would do this and the other and I feel that this sum of \$40,000 roughly, per annum could be much better employed, whether it is by increasing old age pension which is very meagre for the poor people in the Colony, than by lining the pockets of Members of this Council. This is not a rich country and I think there is a lot that can be done with this sum of money rather than spending it in this way. We have had some hon. Members saying during consideration of the Estimates that we are spending too much money and yet this motion has been brought forward today. I have also heard a lot of comment outside this Council in which this Colony was compared with Jamaica and Trinidad, but I do feel that the political condition of this Colony is above that of both of those islands and I hope we will never see in this Colony what we have seen taking place in those islands within recent times. Again, this Council has been compared with the Mother of Parliaments where Members are paid, but conditions are totally different in the United Kingdom from those which obtain in this Colony.

The Parliament of England sits continuously with a break of a couple of weeks now and then. A Member of Parliament represents not 2,000 or 3,000 people but 30,000 or 40,000 or 50,000 people. Their correspondence is so large

and they have so much to do that it is essential for them to keep a private secretary and a stenographer, all of whom have to be paid. A very large number of them live a great distance away from the House of Parliament, and it means they have to maintain themselves away from home and that entails a large sum of money. The emoluments they draw cannot cover the actual expenditure involved. I feel that conditions there are totally different from those in a Colony such as this. Another thing is, I am very much afraid that by payment of Members of this Council we are going to set up in this Colony a breed of what I may call "professional and parasitical politicians" which, God forbid, should be. Many of them have the gift of the gab and payment will be a terrific inducement to them to come forward as candidates for election to this Council. I hope it will not be the case here, and I can rely on the good sense of the people. That is the fear I have, and I would like Members to consider this matter from that angle. I cannot help thinking that this amount of roughly \$40,000 can be better employed. I feel we can use that money for the benefit of the poor people of this Colony who are in such dire need today. I am sure, if hon. Members agree to hand it back for the benefit of the poor people, they would be very much happier in their consciences and they would sleep very much better in their beds.

Mr. RAATGEVER: I am opposed to the payment of Members of the Legislative Council, and I would like to associate myself most heartily with the remarks made by the hon. the First Nominated Member, Mr. Seaford. I feel Members should consider it an honour to be in a position to have the ability to serve their fellow citizens, and I feel that Members should give of their best without payment. I have always given of my best in anything I undertook, and I will continue to do so. I think it is a waste of money, which we cannot afford at the present time, for us to sit around this table and vote ourselves \$40,000 as payment for services to the Colony.

Dr. GONSALVES: I rise in support of the motion, and while I do so I am only

carrying out that which I undertook in Finance Committee and I am prepared to stick by that now. In looking up material for support of this motion I came across a little pamphlet called "Current Events", a little magazine published in the U.S.A. for the benefit of children to keep them in touch with what is going on. In it I read that a boy in eighth grade at school asked what Congressmen are paid and this was the reply: "A Congressman's pay is \$12,500 and \$2,500 for his travelling expenses." I would like to ask, having heard such statements as Members would be lining their pockets rather than provide for the poor of the Colony, are the Members of this Legislative Council in their loyalty so superior to the Members of Parliament who are receiving payment? I am very glad to hear the hon. the First Nominated Member and the hon. the Third Nominated Member make the same statement that they are opposed to payment. Those Members said we should leave the money to augment Old Age Pension. Should I not be entitled to leave a pension for those who come after me. I serve my people, and every workman is worthy of his hire. I think the principle is correct, it is just. Some time ago in Parliament the Hon. Mr. Creech Jones, when asked in which Colonies the Members of the Legislature are not paid, said that "the Members of the Legislative Council are not remunerated in British Guiana, Barbados and British Honduras, but in British Guiana the principle of payment of Members of the Legislative Council is approved but in the absence of evidence of strong local support the Colonial Government deferred action until after the General Elections in 1947."

The PRESIDENT: What is the hon. Member quoting from?

Dr. GONSALVES: A Press report of the proceedings of Parliament. We notice, too, that in Jamaica the Members of the Legislature, with the exception of the Speaker of the House whose pay is \$220 and \$75 as travelling allowance, are paid. I take great exception to certain statements which have been made. Am I to understand that our loyalty is supreme to that of the Legislators of those other

said openly that I would support it. I will repeat now the reasons I gave then for supporting it. The reasons were that there are quite a number of people in British Guiana who are capable of contributing very well and ably to the government of this Colony, but who are not in a financial position to enable them to give the full time necessary to serve as Members of the Legislative Council without causing them very serious financial embarrassment, and I did not see any reason whatever why any person finding himself in such a position as to be capable of serving the people should be denied the chance of serving them. As regards myself I am making it perfectly clear that while I support the motion I will not use a single cent of any money paid to me as a Member of the Legislature for my own benefit. If the motion goes through and I am paid, I have already decided the use I will put that money to. It will not line my pocket, but it will go to very many people and, I am sure, it will be very well spent. So in order to fulfil still another promise to the electorate I am going to support the motion.

Mr. LEE: I desire to reply to the comments of the several Members. In dealing with my friend, the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara, who is a member of the Labour Party and as such he accepted the Labour Party's policy which gives every Member who holds that ticket the privilege of advocating Universal Adult Suffrage, I may say, the principle on which Universal Adult Suffrage is based is that every democratic country shall have the right to have men elected by the majority vote to be the representatives in the legislative body, and for such services they must be recompensed not in a measure to line their pockets but so that they should give of their best to the public. At this stage I shall deal with the comment of the hon. the First Nominated Member. When I say "give of their best" I mean this: Take the hon. Member as he stands, for example. Were it not for the position he holds in his company he could not devote as much of his time, even if elected by the public to the Legislative Council, and all the Committees on which he serves as he does. I know he has the greatest interest of the country at heart in serving on those

committees. Therefore it is absolutely necessary, and in his conscience he knows that what I am saying is right, that a Member, who has to earn his living and who is elected by the people of this Colony to serve them in the Legislative Council, should be compensated for the time he devotes to the interests of his constituency and compensated in such a manner as to enable him to maintain the dignity of his position. I will give an instance from my own personal experience. You have aquatic sports being held at Bartica, a portion of my constituency. I am not a rich man, but I know that it is in the interest of the public and of the Colony that such things be encouraged, and yet I cannot give towards it more than I can afford. If, however, I am being compensated, as the hon. Member for Central Demerara says, I would not only be able to devote more of my time to my constituents but to encourage their projects with subscriptions so that they can carry on such things. Many of the charities that ask assistance of me that I know are deserving of help I cannot fittingly respond because I cannot afford it. But I am a public man and as such the payment of \$150 to Members of the Legislative Council will not line my pocket.

I would like further to say that those who were the Members of the Legislature in the early days, either as Members of the Court of Policy or as Financial Representatives of the Combined Court, went to the electorate only at the time of election when they sought the honour to be elected. But today it is a different picture. Any member of your constituency may send you a telegram summoning you to be on the spot, and it is not enough for you to remain in Georgetown and look after the interests of your constituency. Is it not right, therefore, for the time you devote to such work that some compensation should be given so as to permit of your running your house in such a manner as to command the respect and due regard of the public? I may give another instance. Within quite recent times the area known as Met-en-Meer Zorg in Wakenaam was flooded and a telegram was sent to me stating that my services were needed. I could not stay in Georgetown and see what help I could give. My presence was required to give

encouragement or otherwise to the residents. Were it not that I have my own house and relatives in Wakenaam it would have meant financial loss to me in visiting there and doing what I could to assist in the situation. For another Member it would have meant his staying at the Government Rest House and paying all the expenses of his stay there and getting nothing at all for so doing.

Can those Members who preached universal adult suffrage say that they can afford to give their services free to their constituents? In the records of the previous Council are questions which were asked by Mr. Jacob, a former Member, as to the attendance of Members at meetings of the various Committees. Now it would be different, because a Member would have to account for every minute of the day that he devotes to public service. Members should take an active interest in the affairs of various Government Departments with a view to avoiding waste of public funds. There have been occasions when I have drawn the attention of Heads of Departments to certain things, as a result of which large sums of money have been saved. This sum of \$37,800 will be money well spent by the Colony, and those Members who feel that they should not be paid could return it to the Government.

I feel sure that Members would not be lining their pockets, as one hon. Member suggested. The Labour Party saw that it was necessary that Members of the Council should be paid so that they should devote their time to public service. After all \$5 per day cannot pay a Member of this Council. On my visit to the Potaro I got a free passage, but I had to pay for the lorry which took me to various places. I paid \$17 out of my own pocket in addition to hotel and other incidental expenses. Members should not be out of pocket in giving public service. If I have to visit the Potaro again I would have to travel by plane, paying \$20 each way, to consult my constituents, which it is my duty to do. Many Members of this Council did line their pockets long ago, but what has become of them? Many of them have lost their seats. I regret that the hon. Nominated Member used those words.

In attending this Council I frequently have to give up my professional work, and I have had to return fees paid to me in fairness to my clients. I do not say that I need compensation, but I know that there are certain persons who might be elected to this Council but cannot spare the time because they are fully occupied in professional and other duties.

If we preach democracy we must practise it in a way that we should get sincerity from every man. The hon. Member referred to Jamaica and Trinidad, and what has happened in those Colonies where legislators are paid. I would like him to understand that those Colonies in which legislators are clamouring for more payment are advancing by leaps and bounds. They are getting more assistance from the Mother Country, and more money is being invested from outside than poor British Guiana is getting. As far as I know there are capitalists in Jamaica extending their hotel accommodation and doing everything to encourage the tourist traffic, and Members of the Legislature there are doing everything for the improvement of the Colony. In Trinidad the Members of the Legislature are also paid.

Mr. SEAFORD: Will the hon. Member tell us the financial position of Trinidad and Jamaica as compared with that of this Colony?

Mr. LEE: I agree that Jamaica and Trinidad are in a better financial position than this Colony, but the public men of those Colonies are doing their utmost to foster local industries such as milk, cattle and sugar.

The PRESIDENT: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but isn't he going on too long on this particular point?

Mr. LEE: I am only trying to point out certain things in reply to the statement made by the hon. the First Nominated Member (Mr. Seaford), but I will leave it at that. There is only one thing I would like to say and that is that I wish he would withdraw his reference to "professional and parasitical" Members.

Mr. SEAFORD : I said it would lead to the introduction of professional and parasitical politicians. I did not say that they exist today. I do not think they do. I said I hoped it would not lead to that.

Mr. LEE : I will accept that. I sincerely hope that those who are elected to this Council will give such sincere service as would justify their reward. There is nothing more I can say except that I respectfully submit that it would be in the interest of the Colony that Members be paid for their services, not only in this Council but behind the scenes in studying the various reports and laws, and attending meetings of the various Committees. After all the Colony is making progress, and our duties and responsibilities are increasing more and more.

The PRESIDENT : Was it the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara who wanted to know whether there were any legal difficulties in the matter ?

Mr. DEBIDIN : Yes, sir.

The PRESIDENT : The point will have to be looked into. I will now put the amended motion.

The Council divided and voted :—

For—Messrs. Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Debidin, Farnum, Thompson, Lee, Dr. Jagán, Dr. Gonsalves and Dr. Singh—11

Against—Messrs. Raatgever, Roth and Seaford—3

Did not vote — Mr. Mc Doon, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—4.

Motion carried.

The PRESIDENT : I may tell hon. Members that the remuneration of Unofficial Members of the Council having been accepted by the majority of the Unofficial Members, I am accepting it in principle, and in due course the Colonial Treasurer will put the necessary vote to the Finance Committee. I could wish myself that there had been more dis-

cussion on the question of the amount to be paid, as the original figure has been changed. I assume that all the Members who spoke in favour of the motion were also in favour of the amount and considered that amount was justified.

DRAINAGE OF EAST DEMERARA WATER CONSERVANCY AREA

Mr. DEBIDIN : Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name which reads as follows :—

“WHEREAS the East Demerara Water Conservancy of an area of 221 square miles releases its waters in wet seasons through four sluices exclusively into the Mahaica river, and this volume of thousands of millions of cubic feet of water released per day is far in excess of what the river can discharge per day, and would inevitably cause abnormal floodings of the lands not only on either bank of the Mahaica river but also of lands in the Mahaicony river districts and also aback of villages and other districts between Mahaicony and Golden Grove.

AND WHEREAS the aforesaid areas are most fertile and suitable for production in very large quantities of essential foodstuffs and has been in the past a source of very large supplies of rice, cattle, milk, poultry and eggs, coconuts and edible oil, ground provisions, etc.

AND WHEREAS with the present rainfall there has been most serious and heavy loss of such foodstuffs in the above referred to areas which would have a very adverse effect on the Colony's food supply and general economy and all this is likely to recur with every wet season ;

AND WHEREAS the clearing by dredging of the Mahaica and Mahaicony river mouths would considerably improve the drainage of the above areas.

AND WHEREAS from the point of view of colonial development and the encouragement of peasant farming in the Colony and the preservation and protection of the above areas which are largely settled upon and are already noted for large production as aforesaid, it is most desirable to improve the drainage conditions of the said areas ;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Legislative Council, recognising the great need for better drainage conditions in the Colony, approves and recommends that Government take immediate steps to have discharged all

the water of the East Demerara Water Conservancy during the wet seasons exclusively into the Demerara river and no longer into the Mahaica river, and in this respect and for better drainage of the above areas this Council approves and recommends the immediate undertaking and commencement by Government of the following works :—

- (a) The building of the necessary outlet or outlets for water from the East Demerara Water Conservancy area to the Demerara river.
- (b) The dredging of the mouths of the Mahaica and Mahaicony rivers and the clearing of all overhanging trees and bushes at the various bends in these rivers, and
- (c) The erection of another pumping unit within the area between Golden Grove Village and Belfield on the East Coast Demerara."

The text of the motion fully explains its object. Most hon. Members will remember that in my maiden speech in this Council I referred to Goldsmith's "Deserted Village". After nearly 10 years of very close association with the people in the Mahaica district, and being fully acquainted with the conditions prevailing in that area, I cannot help recalling that very famous poem by Goldsmith, and I am particularly impressed by the lines which read :

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey :
 Where wealth accumulates, and man decays :
 Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade,
 A breath can make them, as a breath has made ;
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

I feel it is my duty to describe the area as briefly as I possibly can within the short time allotted to me, and I propose to do so with the help of some charts which I have brought here. After I have described the locality I propose to give the Council a factual picture of the problems in that area. It was not possible for me to provide a copy of these charts for each Member, therefore I will hold them up in such a way that Members may be able to see.

The Mahaica district is known to most, if not all hon. Members. On both banks of the Mahaica river people occupy by absolute ownership 41,473 acres of land, while 11,638 acres are held under lease and permissions, making a total of 53,111 acres. Most of this land has been occupied for a number of years, and there was considerable prosperity in the district at one time. There came a time when the East Demerara Water Conservancy extended its area to 221 square miles. I understand that it has since been extended, but I am not sure. We must therefore think of 221 square miles of land located south of the coastlands, between the Mahaica river and the Demerara river, and embracing a considerable portion of land in between. Here (indicating on the chart) is the coastland between Georgetown and Mahaica—

The PRESIDENT : I think hon. Members know the district very well.

Mr. DEBIDIN : I just want to show the size of the area on the chart. In this area there were at one time no less than eight rice mills, a fact which is an indication of the extent to which rice was cultivated in the Mahaica area. I may recall the names of Alexander Paul of Melville. I understand that one of the largest rice mills ever erected in this Colony was mortgaged to Messrs. Thom & Cameron for something in the region of \$63,000. That alone is an indication of the considerable quantity of padi produced in that area at that time. There is only one mill left in the area today, and it is still owned by Abdool Kadir.

Apart from rice production it is a very large cattle-rearing district. I will be able to convince the Council later that the flooding affects not only the Mahaica area but the areas of the Mahaicony and Abary rivers as well where there are large numbers of cattle and poultry. The figures supplied me show that there are 32,683 head of cattle, 384 horses, 2 mules, 645 donkeys, 2,469 pigs, 2,970 sheep, 526 goats, 35,633 fowls, 789 turkeys and 5,494 ducks. The figures show too that the Mahaica river district, to which I am directing particular attention, contributes a fair proportion of the total of each head I have enumerated,

and for that reason hon. Members will have to consider its importance in the economy of the Colony.

As regards rice production the estimates for the Autumn crop show that 15,831 acres are under cultivation in the area between Mahaica and Abary, which is a very large proportion of the area under rice cultivation in the Colony. Roughly 3,000 acres are under rice cultivation in the Mahaica river area alone. The report of the B.G. Rice Marketing Board which has just been handed to us shows that the quantity of padi delivered to the mills during the crop ended on the 30th September, 1946, amounted to 1,169,025 bags equivalent to 513,929 bags of rice. If 3,000 acres of land are available for rice cultivation and the average yield in that area is 30 bags per acre, one would expect a yield from that area alone of 90,000 bags of padi equivalent to 45,000 bags of rice. That, I respectfully submit, shows that the area is capable of producing a considerably large quantity of food, and this is in the Mahaica district only.

In the Mahaicony and other areas the total quantity of land available is 15,831 acres and if we take the same average yield — 30 bags of padi per acre—it means that they can produce a total of some 450,000 bags of padi, including, of course, production from the Rice Expansion Scheme. Then there is another important item of food which is produced in this area, and that is milk. The milk from this area supplies Georgetown, principally. We all know that two years ago Government passed the Georgetown Milk Control (Defence) Regulations as a result of which practically all the milk produced in this area comes to Georgetown for distribution among the inhabitants of the City. Here then is a very important commodity from this area which serves a very important part of the Colony — the City of Georgetown. From the Mahaica creek alone a total of 2,097 gallons of milk per week is sent to Georgetown in normal times. The figures relating to milk actually received by the Milk Control Board in Georgetown show that 2,097 gallons are received from the Mahaica creek, 4,230 gallons from the Mahaicony creek and 2,100 from the

Abary creek, per week—an average of 1,200 gallons per day—for distribution in the City. During the present wet season there has been abnormal floods and the figures from the Control Board show that last week only 124 gallons were received from the Mahaica creek, 132 gallons from the Mahaicony creek, and none from the Abary district. It is clear from all the facts that the area between the Mahaica and the Abary creeks is a very large producing area of important and essential commodities, these including rice, milk and cattle apart from other subsidiary commodities like eggs, poultry, ground provisions, firewood, timber and so forth which come from the creek lands.

I would like to make the point that while I said the people in these areas were very prosperous and were producing much at one time, today they are in a state of frustration and discouragement and the majority of them are migrating to other districts. There is still a large number of families, however, in the Mahaica River district especially, totalling about 2,000 persons who are willing to carry on, but if the present conditions continue I venture to say that they would have to migrate also. The family life of all these people would therefore be ruined and they would have to go to the four corners of the Colony to seek an existence. That is why I think the quotation from Goldsmith which I made just now is very apt indeed. There is very much more that I can say in painting a picture of this area in order to stress its ability to produce and the value of the products which come from it. I must point out, briefly, that it is very important that the Colony at this time—and this has been emphasized over and over again by you, Sir, and by other Members in this Council, and even by the Colonial Office in one way or another—should produce more than it has been producing in the past. Not only must it produce sufficient for local consumption, but it must produce sufficient to permit some of its products to be exported to the West Indies and elsewhere. The emphasis, therefore, is on more production. We have been talking from year to year about land settlement in order to establish a prosperous and progressive peasantry in this Colony; we have been

hoping that prevailing conditions would have encouraged the people to 'produce much more than they have done in the past, but very little has been achieved in this respect. That is why this motion becomes very very important, and that is why we have to give very sympathetic consideration to the demands of these people. If we are to be sincere as regards the needs and the interest of the people, I think this motion is a challenge to that sincerity and to the community to which I have referred.

I think, Sir, this is the stage at which I should refer to the particular problem which this East Demerara Water Conservancy poses. It seems to me that we must attach a great deal of importance to the report which was made by Mr. G. O. Case and which was laid over in this Council at its fifth session in 1939-40. It is a report dealing with the East Demerara Water Conservancy and the flooding of the Mahaica River area, and it is Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1940. With your permission, Sir, I wish to refer to this report from time to time. It is clear from this report that the Conservancy serves a useful purpose and therefore, this debate is not one of the Mahaica River *versus* the East Demerara Water Conservancy. It is not a question that we must have the one or the other; my contention is that we need both. It appears to me that the initial error lies in the fact that when that Conservancy was built it was intended particularly to supply the East Coast sugar estates with water. That brings me to the measures being introduced by the Torani and the Bonasika schemes. These are in effect conservancies which will discharge water through large sources—the Berbice and the Essequibo Rivers, respectively—and in the case of the East Demerara Water Conservancy the water should have been discharged through the Demerara River or the Mahaica River, but instead of that there has been an interruption of the normal course of nature.

As far as I have been able to trace, this conservancy was established some time after 1897 in order that the sugar estates and the privately owned estates on the coastlands, as well as the City of Georgetown, should be supplied with

water. Dams were built all along the conservancy and two sluices were erected in the area where the Lama canal flows into the conservancy. It seems that the need arose to enlarge the conservancy in order that more water should be conserved as it was probably felt—and that can be gleaned from this report—that in dry weather there would not be sufficient water to supply the sugar estates and the privately owned lands. The result was that two other sluices were erected to discharge the water into the Mahaica River during the wet season. Mr. Case's report, to put it in a nutshell, seems to advocate very strongly the need for erecting two extra sluices at a cost of \$24,000 not only to solve the question of irrigation but also to discharge the water from the conservancy, otherwise the dams might break down and possibly endanger the coastlands. That, in a nutshell, was what Mr. Case recommended and I am asking Your Excellency and this honourable Council to consider the advisability of discharging the surplus water from the conservancy into the Demerara River in future, instead of discharging it into the Mahaica River.

I base my contention on certain facts and they are these: In the first place, this conservancy extends nearer to the Demerara River than to the Mahaica River and, secondly, there is no difficulty in carrying out the suggestion except the question of finance which, I respectfully suggest, can be easily overcome and should not be allowed to be a stumbling block if the suggestion is found to be a good one. The Maduni creek and the Lama Canal which connect the conservancy with the Mahaica River are narrow and not capable of discharging the water properly and I think the Commissioners of the Conservancy and others responsible for its maintenance should have sought an outlet into the Demerara River long ago. If that had been done we would not have been faced today with the loss and suffering which the conservancy is causing to residents in the Mahaica River district. Thirdly, even if this surplus water is not discharged into the Demerara River there are other places where it could be discharged without disadvantage to anyone. I am not

unaware of the fact that Mr. Case has stated in his report that if the water passes through Friendship on the Demerara River it would have to pass through pegasse land and it would be necessary to dig deeper and in some cases to convey clay in order to make up the dam properly.

I challenge anyone to say, however, that Mr. Case has suggested that lower down the Demerara River—that is by Plns. Relief, Support, Supply, Brickery and Land of Canaan—there would be much difficulty in digging a canal. As a matter of fact, according to this chart which I have here, the distance between the western boundary of the Mahaica River and the eastern boundary of Pln. Friendship is fairly close indeed. It seems to me, therefore, that it is quite possible to dig a canal—I am not dealing with the question of expenditure now—which would be able to discharge the same quantity of water from the conservancy into the Demerara River as is being discharged into the Mahaica River. In this respect Mr. Case has given some figures in his report and I am going to draw my own conclusions from them. According to Mr. Case, the maximum quantity of water which can be discharged daily from the Mahaica River under present conditions without commencing to flood the lands on the western side is about 114,000,370 cubic feet; and, without flooding the lands on the eastern side, about 92,000,000 cubic feet. He also states that in a period of 31 days the maximum discharge without flooding the land on the eastern side of the river is approximately 2,852,000,000 cubic feet. These figures are based on one of the heaviest periods of rainfall on record—when there were 27.74 inches in one month of 31 days. They also show that the present maximum discharges in 31 days from the Mahaica River to the sea without flooding the land on either side are, from the right bank, 2,852,000,000 cubic feet, and from the left bank 3,534,011,470 cubic feet.

The PRESIDENT: Aren't the figures printed in the report? Is it necessary for the hon. Member to repeat them again?

Mr. DEBIDIN: They are on page 6 of the report.

Mr. SEAFORD: May I ask the hon. Member to read the next paragraph?

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like the hon. Nominated Member to know that I am going to draw my own conclusions from this report, and if he thinks I am wrong in those conclusions he can reply to them. On both banks of the Demerara River there is what is known as a catchment area and the first thing I disagree with in this report is that Mr. Case refers here to both banks right away down to the Maduni. I venture to think that the Demerara River itself discharges part of the water from the catchment area. I suggest, that to give the area of the Mahaica catchment area as 360 sq. miles is an exaggeration, but I am going to argue on the assumption that he is right when he says that the run-off from the 360 sq. miles Mahaica Catchment Area is 13,920,242,688 cubic feet. Then he states that the maximum relieved by cuts in dams is 1,928,448,000 cubic feet; and the maximum discharge of the Lama and Maduni sluices, 3,476,563,200 cubic feet. What I make of all these figures is that taking the amount of rainfall in one month as 27.74 inches and the run-off as 60 per cent. of the rainfall, then the amount of water to be relieved in 31 days will be 8,545,482,317 cubic feet. If then the river can discharge a net daily average of 30,926,520 cubic feet, then it would not be able to discharge all the water properly, exclusive of the amount from the catchment area. We have to consider, therefore, that this conservancy discharges into the Mahaica River a matter of nearly 1½ times more water than it can take off, and so there must be flooding of lands in the area. That is my point. Rain does not fall every day and some 50 per cent. has to be allowed for evaporation, but when we take the total rainfall in the area and compare it with the amount of water the river is capable of discharging per day, we will find that the river is incapable of taking off all the surplus water from the conservancy with the result that the neighbouring lands get flooded.

Mr. SEAFORD: What about radiation and evaporation?

The PRESIDENT: I doubt whether any Member of the Council follows those figures and draws the correct conclusion. The hon. Member is talking about thousands of millions. I suggest that he may reduce those figures to writing. We have before us a report by Mr. Case, an expert on this subject. He has gone into the whole thing and drawn a definite conclusion. The hon. Member is quite entitled to challenge that conclusion, but I suggest that the figures he is quoting merely make the matter involved and very difficult for one to follow.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Your Excellency, as I have said before, we are dealing with an expert's report. I took a very long time to explain it so that every Member should understand.

Mr. ROTH: As a fact every time the sluices open in the wet weather the lands at Mahaicony are flooded.

Mr. DEBIDIN: As the hon. Nominated Member has said that, if he assures me that he and other Members of the Council will support the motion I would sit down. I anticipate Government is going to entrench itself behind the report which deals with this matter and is going to say that its expert has said that the whole river is flooded even without the water from the Conservancy area. That in a nutshell is what this report says. If hon. Members would spare the time to follow me I would make it simple for them to follow. That river has its own water from an exact area to discharge, and on top of it there is the water from the Conservancy which is discharged through little creeks into the Mahaica River. I have established by figures I have given that the Conservancy discharges nearly one and a half times as much water as the river. If the river has its own water normally to discharge, which we will call "one," and the Conservancy discharges its water into the river, the river would then have to do two and a half times its normal work. That is what the figures disclose—2,852,000,000 cubic feet maximum discharge by the river from its catchment area as against 8,545,000,000 cubic feet with the Conservancy discharging into the river.

Mr. SEAFORD: May I ask where the hon. Member gets those figures from?

Mr. DEBIDIN: At the bottom of page 5 of the report.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member should put his figures and deductions down in writing for all to see. It is extremely difficult for hon. Members of this Council to follow him.

Mr. DEBIDIN: If the opportunity is given me to do so. I daresay Your Excellency might adjourn at this stage as I would like to do so. The figures are all here and all the Members have not had the opportunity of having this report before them. In answer to the hon. Nominated Member I would say it is a report with which he is very familiar, and I would ask him to read page 6. It says there:

"When the New Conservancy Dam is completed the area of the Conservancy will be 221 square miles. If therefore there is 27.74 inches of rainfall in one month and the run-off 60 per cent. of the rainfall, then the amount of water to be relieved in 31 days will be 8,545,482,317 cubic feet".

Mr. SEAFORD: That is not water going into the Mahaica Creek. There is a release sluice at Land of Canaan which the hon. Member does not know about.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. Member knows as much as I do that the sluice at Land of Canaan is too small and does not function.

Mr. SEAFORD: It is a 16 ft. sluice as big as the Lama and Maduni sluices. To say it does not function is not correct. You have to deduct the amount of water flowing through it into the Demerara River. The hon. Member is suggesting that all the water flows into the Mahaica Creek.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This seems to be a very highly technical question, and this Council has been sitting and listening to a sort of argument that might be fought out in a Court. Really it does seem to me that if the hon. Member is disputing a very highly

technical report, it would be very much better that he disputes it on the Public Works Advisory Committee and then, if not satisfied, debate it in this Council. To go through all the details of a highly technical report on areas of water in an argument between the hon. the First Nominated Member and the Mover of the motion seems to be an unusual position for this Council to be in.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Sir, I do not like the hon. the Colonial Secretary to say that I am disputing the report. While I disagree with some of the findings I do not dispute the report itself, because much of what this report has we have to accept and, I think, Members are becoming alarmed. It is usually so when one has not had an opportunity to prepare figures, but these figures are not what I produce but what is stated in the report. I think Members are forgetting the small point made when I am quoting this report and, therefore, I shall leave the figures out and make my point, but I had thought I should just state how I came to think as I do. The small point is this: The Mahaica River has a duty to perform without attaching the Conservancy area. Given the Conservancy area it has two and a half times the amount of water that it can discharge. Mr. Case says:

"Apart from the Conservancy water more than 3½ times more water than the river can discharge goes to the river from its Catchment area."

That is not how I see it. The point I wish to make is this: Before the Conservancy water was discharged into the Mahaica River the people had not been experiencing the difficulty they are experiencing today. I am asking Your Excellency and this honourable Council to consider the feasibility of discharging that water entirely into the Demerara River. What I am trying to show is that the water from the Conservancy is in itself capable of flooding that river as it is more than the river can discharge with its own water. Therefore it must flood the river. The point will be seen in what I have to say now. Suppose a crop of rice is planted and there has been a flooding of the Catchment area, that water, as I have pointed out, will be reduced by evaporation and by tidal flow. Mr. Case in his report has himself admitted that the river is tidal

right up to its source, in which case every time the water is being discharged it is at the rate of nearly 200 million cubic feet per day. In other words, what it has to do without the Conservancy area, I venture to say, will be within its means of discharging. With evaporation and a break in the weather — the rains not falling every day, a short break of a day or two — it will have sufficient time to catch up with the extra water and the water level will drop. If on the other hand it has to do 2½ or 3½ times its work, according to Mr. Case, is it right to make it do 5½ times its work by adding the Conservancy water to it? That is my point. Let that water from the Conservancy be discharged into the Demerara River.

If this motion and the suggestion I have made are accepted, there is a practical and possible alternative of discharging all that water into the Demerara River. Mr. Case himself said the Land of Canaan sluice discharges 717,894,900 cubic feet of water in 31 days. That shows that if one sluice can discharge all that water more sluices should be built to discharge the entire Conservancy water and so relieve that site and those estates very near to the western boundary which are much nearer to the Demerara River than the eastern boundary of the Mahaica area. That is the main point of this debate. Why let the Mahaica River be flooded unnecessarily? I must refer hon. Members to what Mr. Case says in his report:

"I therefore regret to have to come to the conclusion that the embanking of these lands is at the present time neither economic nor feasible, and that the best thing to do would be to offer the settlers drained land elsewhere."

Then on page 9 of his report he goes on to say:

"I would like to place on record my opinion that it is inadvisable in the future for Government to sell or lease any lands for agricultural purposes in isolated areas which have no facilities for drainage and irrigation. Catch crops may be reaped and cattle reared in favourable seasons, but in the periodical severe wet seasons crops will inevitably be ruined; cattle lost; and the settlers will then come to the Government to ask for assistance."

Here is Mr. Case saying in those two paragraphs, let the people get out from that river area because the Conservancy must be served, because the estates on the East Coast Demerara must be served. I want to make it clear, and I want hon. Members to appreciate this fact, that the lands served on the East Coast Demerara are only 80,000 acres as against 650,000 acres in the Mahaica Creek. Further, when the river overflows its banks the water goes to a certain height, but when the water from the Conservancy comes in—and particularly this was noticed in the last flood—the water rises to a considerable height and goes beyond the Mahaicony bank on the other side. The height of the Mahaicony area is very little more than that of the Mahaica area. The effect of that extra volume of water in the Mahaica River was felt as far away as the Abary River area. I know as a fact, and this has been given me by the people when I held a series of meetings in my constituency, that a back of Victoria, Belfield and Golden Grove, black water was seen and the locks were opened by whom I do not know in order to relieve the Conservancy Dam, and the peasant people in those villages were flooded out because of the necessity of saving the Conservancy Dam.

Mr. SEAFORD: I rise to a point of order! Control of the intake sluices is in the hands of the Village Authorities themselves.

Mr. DEBIDIN: But the locks can easily be opened, and they were opened by whom I do not know. I am merely saying what was given to me as evidence by the villagers. If you desire it I would bring them here to say so. I am merely making this observation on their part, and this fact is borne out by the very report in which Mr. Case states:

“In my opinion sufficient reliefs should be constructed to avoid the necessity of making cuts in the dams. The past practice of making cuts in the dams is objectionable”.

Mr. SEAFORD: May I suggest that this report was written eight years ago? If the hon. Member is reading from the report that Mr. Case recommended this relief to be in the Demerara River to save

the cutting of the dam, for his information I may state that no dam has been cut there since these relief works. I defy anybody to contradict that statement.

Mr. DEBIDIN: An hon. Member is smiling there because he knows that he, Dr. Singa and I visited the Conservancy and a libel action resulted from it. The point I am making is being misunderstood. I am saying that there was damage done to the dams, either by breaking away, or relief by cuts, or otherwise, which permitted the water to be discharged.

Mr. SEAFORD: I have already pointed out to the hon. Member that was before this relief work was carried out. I think the hon. Member knows it perfectly well. Since the relief work was carried out following that report, he cannot show where any dam was cut.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I leave that. I see the Members are all smiling.

The PRESIDENT: You have had three-quarters of an hour. Are you going to be any longer?

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am going to ask to recommit it.

The PRESIDENT: The substance of the motion is in the motion itself.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Your Excellency and gentlemen, I know that this honourable Legislative Council may not be the convenient forum, and I am somewhat inclined to agree with the hon. the Colonial Secretary when he said this debate is not like a law suit in a Court of Law where the experts can be examined and cross-examined. I think this matter should engage the attention of every Member and that Members of this Council must have a sympathetic view of the plight of human beings in which, perhaps, the plight of the very Colony itself is in this important debate which is before the Council. It is of far-reaching importance and tremendously so because it affects an area of land not only in the Mahaica Creek but an area stretching from Golden Grove to the Abary. That is why I am going to ask your indulgence to develop

this argument, because the other part of this debate relates to a pumping station being established between Golden Grove and Belfield. I think that has been stressed by many people who have written on the subject. Mr. Pudsey, Mr. Case himself and others who have examined conditions there. I would like to refer to a very important point, and that is that the water be allowed to be discharged in the Demerara River, as Mr. Case himself in his report seems to suggest on page 6 where he says:

"The completion of the Conservancy Wing Dam will make available for agriculture a large area of land, between Good Success and Den Heuvel, which has constantly been flooded since the Conservancy was formed. Before the formation of the Conservancy there were flourishing plantations in this area, on lands adjacent to the Demerara River. I have therefore prepared a scheme for the drainage and irrigation of these lands which have the advantage of being close to Georgetown and that produce can be cheaply transported by river."

There is an advantage if this motion is passed which should not be overlooked, and that is if canals are built from the Conservancy to the Demerara River, I venture to think, it would bring a lot of good and a blessing to the people in the East Bank Demerara, as Mr. Case himself admits. If the area near to Georgetown is made available for agriculture, much of the transportation difficulties would be eliminated and we would derive from another source a tremendous lot of produce which we need most. If this Conservancy water is to be relieved through the Demerara River all that we need to do, as I see it — I am not an engineer but I am taking what we have before us as the opinion of an expert is to have the one sluice of 12 or 16 ft. at Land of Canaan, which, according to Mr. Case's report is capable of discharging 717,894,900 cubic feet of water, and a few more smaller sluices or a wider outlet — a 40 ft. canal. And what is more some of the sluices which are at Maduni and Lama can be transferred to this part, leaving one or two for intake purposes and other uses on the Demerara River side. Those are things which can be accomplished.

So far as finance is concerned in this Colony, it must be borne in mind that a considerable amount of money is spent on similar projects in the Torani and Bonasika schemes. We know what the experts are doing there. There is so much disagreement on levels and so much more money has been required that one hardly knows what is going to be the final end of these schemes. Whatever it is, this point must emerge that a considerable amount of money has been spent already for the achievement of the same thing that we are asking that money be spent here for. That is, to reclaim land to provide greater irrigation and greater drainage in order that we should have greater production. What is the difference then between this scheme and the other projects on which you have Colony expenditure? This point I would like to emphasize. The results will be there. We will get value for it, in that these lands — Mr. Case has put it at 650 acres, but that multiplied three times will give the acreage — will be made to produce beneficially where people can settle. And this must not escape us that these areas for which I am seeking assistance are already settled upon.

The PRESIDENT: May I ask the hon. Member if he has read the Main Development Committee's report on Drainage and Irrigation and the various proposals made for that area — Mahaica, Mahaicony and Berbice — and the proposal to spend \$2,000,000 or more — \$3,000,000 if my memory serves me correctly? I do not want the hon. Member to get on the general question as a proposal for that is already in the report. He is now talking of this Conservancy and much water. I suggest that as he has made the point we may refer it to a special committee to investigate and let us hear what is the reply. I am quite prepared to do that. The hon. Member has stated the facts, but the solution is not sound and practical.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I will adopt that suggestion, only that we hope we will not be swamped out by technical advisers on that committee.

The PRESIDENT: I hope the hon. Member takes the view that they give

a considered opinion. I am not going to overthrow lightly the advice of my experts. When it is established that the expert's advice is not wrong, the hon. Member cannot expect us to take action on his personal opinion of that advice. I am sure he will agree with that.

Mr. DEBIDIN I agree with the course of having a Select Committee or the Advisory Committee to go into this matter, but it should be drawn, as intimated, from this Council. It is a matter which Members of rural areas will appreciate. This is a matter which affects the livelihood of thousands of people, and the present situation shows only too clearly what their suffering can be. The motion is very timely.

I do not know whether we want discussed by that Committee the question of having another pumping station similar to the one at Nabaclis at some point between Nabaclis and Victoria. I think the principle and the necessity for that have been accepted by Government, and the people of those districts have all passed a resolution unanimously only a week ago asking Government very strongly to grant them that facility in order to improve their drainage condition, because they suffer continually from floods which certainly discourage them in their agricultural pursuits. I would like to know if Your Excellency would intimate whether the first part of this motion would be referred to a Select Committee.

The PRESIDENT: Not a Select Committee! What I suggest is that the hon. Member having moved his motion it should be referred to the Public Works Advisory Committee for consideration.

That is the proper step rather than attempting to deal with it and having disputes about figures and conclusions. We should allow the Advisory Committee who are the persons interested in that matter to come in and examine it. The hon. Member can put up what evidence he likes before the Advisory Committee. I suggest that is the procedure this Council should adopt.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I have no objection to that course at all.

Mr. SEAFORD: As the hon. Member has spoken for about three-quarters of an hour on this report of Mr. Case and has painted a lurid picture of the suffering of the people by floods and how all these things can be easily averted, although those floods took place before any Conservancy relief works were carried out, I think I should be given an opportunity to reply to his statements. He made the statement that the Mahaica Creek flooded out the Abary and the Mahaicony areas. If you check up on the levels you would see that is a physical impossibility, unless the hon. Member has discovered how water can run uphill. Further a road is being built between the Rice Expansion area and the public road, and the people on the western side — the Mahaicony side — are complaining that the road prevents them getting water from the Abary, which shows that the water is from the Abary.

At this stage the Council adjourned to resume the debate on the following day.

The Council adjourned to 2 p.m. on Friday, 7th May, 1948.