

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 8th August, 1945

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G., President, in the chair.

PRESENT:

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. M. B. Laing, C.M.G., O.B.E. (Acting).

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

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

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

The Hon. J. A. Luckhoo, K.C. (Nominated).

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

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).

The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).

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

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

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E. (Georgetown Central).

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. A. G. King (Demerara River).

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. A. M. Edun (Nominated).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

PRESENTATION

INSIGNIA OF C.M.G. TO MR. M. B. LAING, C.M.G., O.B.E.

The PRESIDENT: My first business today is the presentation of the insignia of an honour conferred on the Hon. M. B. Laing. I will ask Mr. Laing to come forward.

I now request the Hon. the Attorney-General to read the Royal Warrant conferring upon the Hon. M. B. Laing the dignity of Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George.

The Attorney-General here read the Royal Warrant.

The PRESIDENT: It gives me very particular pleasure to carry out

His Majesty's Command this morning in making the presentation of this award to Mr. Laing, and in welcoming him into the Order of Chivalry to which I have myself also the honour to belong.

I say that for two particular reasons. One is that in the development of certain of the special activities of Government, some of which are novel in these last few years, Mr. Laing has shown himself quite peculiarly able to carry the most onerous responsibility, in the administration and the innovation of things in this country to new needs. This he has done with a profound knowledge of this country and of its people and with a temperament peculiarly suited to its atmosphere and mentality but, further, he has fitted himself for these duties by close attention and study, not only of men and things in the Colony, but by study of institutions in other countries whenever he has had the opportunity, and by devotion to duty which I have not seen excelled in Colonial Service. I would refer particularly to the notable system of local Government that we have in this country, in which we enjoy a pre-eminence sometimes too readily forgotten over many other Colonies of our like, and to the new departures of the initiation of a Labour Department some years ago, which has now grown into a department of its own, and in these quite recent years the institution of Social Welfare Services with their far-reaching possibilities.

My Second reason would be that Mr. Laing, though not a native of British Guiana but in fact born in one of the West Indian islands, has nevertheless identified himself with this country all his active life, and has spent all his tenure of Government service in British Guiana with some short periods of leave in Europe. It should be peculiarly gratifying to Guiana and Guian-

ese that this officer has been singled out by His Majesty for the honour presented to him today.

In the name of Government officers and of this Council, I wish particularly to thank Mr. Laing for his long and able and willing assistance he gives to all of us. I see here today also, quite a number of representatives from country districts who have worked with Mr. Laing, and I am very sure that their attendance here is an expression of their great regard for him and of their particular pleasure at the honour conferred upon him this day. I am sure they speak for the whole of the community of the country districts of Guiana.

Mr. Laing, by Command of the King conveyed to me by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, I present to you the Insignia of Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George (applause).

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday, 26th July, 1945, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

FEDERATION OF CARIBBEAN COLONIES.

The PRESIDENT : I would just like to say in connection with the ordinary business of the Council that you will have seen on the Order Paper that there has been a dispatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies relating to federation of the Caribbean Colonies. I would have brought it forward before had the opportunity offered, but, as it is now we have been asked to express an opinion on this question of federation, and I propose—I hope before the end of the month

—to give a special opportunity for the debate. The hon. the Fifth Nominated Member, has undertaken to move a motion in that regard.

BUDGET, 1946

I would also like to say that I want to bring the Budget for 1946 before the Council a good deal earlier than in the last two years. I propose to try and bring it by the end of October, so that we would have adequate time for discussion of next year's Budget which will be of very considerable importance.

IMPORT CONTROL

I have one paper before me which it might be useful to put on the records of the Council. It touches on the question of imports, and particularly with regard to exchange considerations. It is a matter which is understood, I have every reason to think, by the commercial community of Georgetown, but I would like to put on record the last official directive I have had on it—that of the 16th July. The substance of this paragraph has already been made public in Parliament in London, and elsewhere. The gist of it is that strict import control is required still and the need for it, if anything, increased. This means that from the angle of exchange in particular very heavy demands remain, for certain needs have increased, on supplies of dollars. Certain modifications are possible as regards articles normally obtained before the war in North America—this would be of little importance in the Caribbean area though more important elsewhere—but should demands on foreign exchange resources prove too onerous, further review might be necessary. We might have to keep right within the limits of pre-war supplies and in some cases much less, governed by that prime factor of essentiality in this Colony. Of course, that does not

affect imports from the United Kingdom which come under a different category altogether.

PAPERS LAID.

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

Despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the question of West Indian Federation.

(Leg. Co. No. 21 of 1945).

Air Mail Postage Rates (Amendment) Order, 1945 (No. 25 of 1945. M.P. 94/24 IV).

GOVERNMENT NOTICE

DISTRICT LANDS PARTITION AND RE-ALLOTMENT (SPECIAL PROCEDURE) ORDINANCE, 1945.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bill.—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to provide for the partition of certain areas of land, for the re-allotment of holdings therein, for the issue of titles thereto, and to render the occupation thereof more beneficial."

ORDER OF THE DAY.

PENALTY FOR BICYCLE STEALING.

Mr. ROTH: I beg to move:—

WHEREAS from the first day of January, 1944, to the thirty-first day of May, 1945, more than one thousand six hundred bicycles were stolen from their lawful owners, being an average of more than three per day during the seventeen months in question,

AND WHEREAS, owing to conditions brought about by the War, bicycles constitute the principal means of conveyance available to the general public,

AND WHEREAS on account of control regulations and restrictions it is a long, tedious and often unsuccessful process to attempt to replace a stolen bicycle or part thereof,

AND WHEREAS the suffering public have a right to expect more efficient protection of their property on the part of the law,

AND WHEREAS it is evident that the law as at present enforced acts as no deterrent to the theft of bicycles,

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council urge upon Government the immediate necessity for taking such action in regard to the penalty for bicycle stealing as will act as a deterrent to this type of crime.

Some months ago, I took the trouble to approach Government with a suggestion that the many people who in recent years have been making a habit of stealing bicycles only, should be dealt with similarly to those persons who steal growing provisions or poultry in declared areas—those that are liable to be flogged. It has been intimated to me that Government would not favour any such drastic measure, but in the intervening months the crime has by no means abated; if anything, it has probably increased. Therefore, today, I approach hon. Members of this Council and ask them to urge upon Government the necessity of taking more drastic steps to put a stop to this offence.

When this motion was tabled two or three weeks ago, a columnist in one of the local dailies writing in facetious mood, stated that the local fraternity of bicycle thieves had summoned a special meeting to see what action should be taken and that every member pledged himself to steal a few extra bicycles, while a special honorarium was voted for the member who would steal the bicycle of the hon. Member moving the motion. (Laughter). I am sorry to say that somebody has earned that prize and although the statements

were written jocularly, bicycle stealing has been on the increase since then, the results indicating that the crime is becoming regularised. If we look at the figures as supplied by the Commissioner of Police, we will find that from January 1, 1944, to May 31, 1945, over 1,600 bicycles were stolen from their lawful owners. This works out at an average of more than three per day, for the 16 months in question. Some persons have cars to take them around, but the ordinary man in the street has none and since the control of tyres and gasolene was introduced the use of bicycles has increased very much indeed, for it is not only the poor man who has to depend on them. It is not that if one loses a bicycle this morning he could go and get another within a day or two; he would have to use his legs.

There are some cases in which the owners were careless, but if one goes into Water street he cannot be expected to take his bicycle into a store with him, therefore he has to leave it outside. There are cases where people have gone and made purchases, only to come outside and find their bicycles gone. I know of cases also, where people had bicycles in their houses and yet they were stolen. I know of a case where four were stolen in a single night.

A legal man has drawn my attention to what appears to be an anomaly in the law. It appears that on the second conviction for vagrancy an offender can be flogged, but there is no provision for flogging a man similarly convicted of bicycle stealing. If Magistrates had the power to order a flogging I do not think the stealing of bicycles would have been so prevalent and I ask hon. Members to consider that. I speak very feelingly, because I have suffered through the activities of these "gentlemen" since I have tabled this motion, and I am not exag-

gerating when I say that the majority of the population are anxious that Government should take some step to put an end to this crime which is getting really serious. I ask hon. Members to support this motion.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Mr. LEE: Although I am in sympathy with the motion, I cannot agree that in these enlightened days it would be right to provide flogging as a penalty for bicycle stealing. I agree, however, that Government should take action on the motion and it might be possible to provide that offenders be charged indictably and dealt with by the Supreme Court, in which case longer sentences could be imposed on them, than is at present possible. That might act as a deterrent to others. There is no doubt that many bicycle owners are now suffering from the loss by theft of their entire bicycles in some cases, and in others, their tyres, bulbs and so on. While it is true that flogging goes a long way, I think it is being abolished in every civilised country today and should be adopted only as a last resort. I do not think it should be provided as a penalty for minor offences and if Government thinks of providing it for bicycle stealing as a result of this motion, I will not agree.

Mr. JACKSON: Drastic diseases require drastic remedies, and I am thoroughly in sympathy with the motion. Bicycle stealing has become a little more than a habit—it is an industry—and fellows who have no sense of respectability and no feelings for others, make it a point of duty to steal bicycles, taking off parts and wrecking the machines in most cases. The punishment inflicted on them seems to have done no good, and I am positive that if they are flogged the industry will wane and will ultimately disappear. I am strongly of opinion that nothing short of flogging will keep these fellows

away from other people's goods. As a matter of fact, the tendency is growing not only in the city but also in the country districts, for thieves to walk into people's yards and take up what does not belong to them. I think Government should insist on taking proper steps to put an end to this sort of thing. I would not be surprised if on a few occasions these bicycle thieves are shot, for it is very exasperating to have one's bicycle taken away from him without notice and for other people to derive illegal benefit from it.

Some years ago, I am told, a stranger visited a certain country in South America and noticed that fruits and provisions were left lying on the ground, sometimes for about a fortnight, without anybody troubling them. The stranger questioned someone—a resident of the country—as to why the things were left lying about like that, and the answer was that theft was once very rampant in the country and the Government got so annoyed that it directed that all thieves caught should be shot. It was also pointed out that 16 thieves were shot within a short period and that that was the end of the thieving. I would not go so far as to ask Government to direct that bicycle thieves should be shot, but I do support the motion and ask that they be flogged. I feel sure that the measure would not have to be adopted for a very long time. I think we should throw sentiment to the wind and strike out with iron hands, doing the best we can to put an end to this wicked practice. I support the motion with all my heart and I hope that hon. Members will do likewise, thus endeavouring to bring to a sudden halt this despicable practice of bicycle stealing.

Mr. AUSTIN: I rise to support the motion. As representative of a firm which employs a large number of men—regulars and casuals—I can say

that hardly a day passed without a report from one of our workers about the loss of a bicycle, or of tyres or other parts. As has been already explained, it is very difficult to replace these lost bicycles or parts and very often one has to pay high prices for them in the black market. It seems to me that in these days when certain people offend the law with impunity, Government should take strong measures to protect unfortunate citizens against bicycle stealing which has become an industry, as already stated. I think the only way to do that in a city of this size is to introduce flogging and I feel certain that if that step is taken the practice would soon disappear.

Mr. GONSALVES: There is no doubt that something has to be done with regard to this practice of bicycle stealing. As a matter of fact, the situation is aggravated by the great difficulty one experiences in order to replace stolen bicycles or parts. There is a Control Board, but all of us know how difficult it is to get new tyres or new bicycles, and I am not certain whether the severe restrictions in this respect have not contributed in some way to the present state of affairs—the growing prevalence of bicycle stealing.

Nevertheless those who have succeeded in getting replacements for their bicycles, or those who secure permits to buy new bicycles are entitled to a certain amount of protection. It seems to me extremely hard on such persons that they should suffer the loss of their bicycles or have parts stolen from them. Therefore, it seems to me that some drastic remedy is needed. The motion itself does not suggest what measures should be adopted, but the hon. mover has hinted that a certain action might be taken.

It has been suggested by one hon. Member that bicycle stealing might be made an indictable offence. I think

hon. Members know that the law has been amended to permit certain offences to be tried summarily, in which the value of the article stolen does not exceed \$100. I do not know whether it is suggested that the law should be amended so as to make bicycle stealing an indictable offence, but something drastic should be done which would act as a deterrent.

Mr. DIAS: The first question that presents itself to me is whether Government is satisfied with the situation that exists today. We know of the number of cases that come before the Courts, and that the power of a Magistrate is limited to the imposition of a maximum penalty of six months. We also know that in spite of that one cannot leave his bicycle anywhere. We are speaking of those who steal bicycles and are caught, but there are hundreds of others who are not caught. If Government is not satisfied with that state of affairs then the obvious thing is to make the punishment more severe. The hon. Member has suggested flogging as a form of punishment. We know that in England there was more flogging than at present. Government must do something to put a stop to this villainous practice by certain people.

There is more than perhaps Government knows. There are scores of people who have had their bicycles or tyres stolen and have failed to get relief from the Control Board. The name of the Control Board is pretty stink in this Colony because they do not act fairly towards some people. I understand that a Commission was recently appointed in Trinidad to inquire into the many complaints against the Control Board there. We read in our newspapers recently that two gentlemen employed in the same firm applied for tyres for their motor cars. The Control Board granted the application of one and refused the other's. It is difficult to understand that.

I have in my possession the receipt for an application from a man for a permit to purchase galvanized zinc sheets for a shed to cover his rice. He was told that galvanized sheets were not intended for that purpose, in spite of the fact that Government has spent thousands of dollars for the purpose of developing the rice industry.

I am positive that this Council would vote for more stringent measures against people who steal bicycles by increasing the penalty in some form. An end must be put to this unfortunate state of affairs with which citizens who own bicycles have to put up. Government cannot sit quietly and allow it to continue, but should take such measures as are reasonable and proper to remedy it.

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: I am in sympathy with the terms of the motion but I do not agree that the law should be amended so as to permit a Magistrate, or even a Judge, to order a flogging in cases of bicycle stealing. The modern tendency, except in cases of extreme violence, is not to order a flogging for a person convicted of crime, but some remedy must be found in order to put a stop, or even to minimize the number of cases of bicycle stealing. The hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) has suggested that bicycle stealing should be made an indictable offence. My suggestion would be that for a second or a subsequent offence a person should be charged indictably so as to be liable to a greater penalty than the law allows a Magistrate to impose.

A point I would like to stress is that while the motion suggests more severe penalty for bicycle stealing I think there should be even more severe penalty against a person who receives a stolen bicycle. I think that certain cycle repair shops encourage bicycle stealing, and I think the sooner the police get on their heels the better it

would be for the protection of the public. If they cut off the receivers those who steal bicycles would think a great deal before they embarked upon their nightly prowls. I think the remedy would be to charge a person indictably after his second conviction.

Mr. KING: I cannot conceive that any mercy should be shown to the rascals about town who deprive persons of their bicycles in these difficult days. My bicycle has now been stolen, and my two daughters' bicycles have been stolen within the last two or three months. One has got another bicycle through the Control Board and the other from another source. It was therefore brought home to me very forcibly what members of the public suffer when they are deprived of their bicycles. There is not the slightest doubt that bicycle stealing is on the increase, and I think Government should make the penalty fit the crime. There will be no cessation of bicycle stealing until those who steal bicycles are made to suffer corporal punishment. That type of person is not afraid of gaol, but when he is hurt bodily he will realize that the time has come when he should cease.

There is an epidemic of bicycle stealing in the Colony today, and it is time that flogging was imposed on those who are caught. I am certain that it would have more effect than anything else. It is the employed and lower classes of people who cannot afford to lose their bicycles who are bearing the brunt of this epidemic—people who have no other means of getting to and from their work. The police do all they can but the situation has got beyond control, and very stern measures must be taken to remedy it. I am appealing to Council and to Your Excellency to adopt some measure to put a stop to this dreadful thing that is taking place here. The hon. Nominated Mem-

ber (Mr. Luckhoo) spoke about night prowlers; they are not only night prowlers but day prowlers—worthless good-for-nothing scamps who will not work but will steal a bicycle and sell it for a few dollars, sufficient to keep them for two or three days. I think the people have been very tolerant in the last two or three years, especially now that it is so difficult to get bicycles.

Mr. EDUN: I have listened with a good deal of attention to what hon. Members have said on this motion, and I do not think that simply by administering a flogging will put an end to the epidemic of bicycle stealing. I see something deeper than what we call an epidemic of bicycle stealing. The economic conditions in the City are the cause of the epidemic and nothing else. Now that the war in Europe has ended victoriously, and the war against Japan will soon be over, are we going to blot our Statute Book with such a reactionary law which will permit the flogging of people because they have stolen? Let us consider the economic value of a bicycle. It is something on which we go about. It is said that 1,600 bicycles have been stolen this year, but certainly they have not been lost to the world. It simply means that 1,600 other persons are using those bicycles.

I do not see how we can stop bicycle stealing by flogging one or two persons. Murders have been committed in this Colony month after month although we have been hanging culprits all the time. I have not heard of many bicycles stolen in the country districts, and I would prefer that people in Georgetown do without bicycles. With fine pavements and excellent roads why don't they walk? If somebody cut off one of their legs I would agree that such a person should be flogged, because that would indeed be a crime, but I do not see why this Council and this Christian Government should be asked to permit the flogging of a bicycle thief.

I am asking Members to think seriously before they agree to such a drastic measure. I am thoroughly against the rogues who steal bicycles, and every honest man would feel as I do. A man reaches the point of desperation when he discovers that his bicycle has been stolen. He would do anything then, but I would rather ask the people of Georgetown to do a little bit more walking. In the country districts people trudge, sometimes up to their knees in mud, for two or three miles in order to earn a livelihood.

The whole situation will right itself when the war against Japan is over. All we need at the moment is more vigilance by the police. I also think that the commercial firms ought to provide booths for the convenience of their customers who do their shopping on bicycles. I agree with one hon. Member who suggested that restrictions imposed by the Control Board are largely responsible for this epidemic of bicycle stealing, and I agree with him, too, that to suggest that bicycle thieves should be flogged is not unlike the remark made by a Member some time ago that rumshops are like schools. I do not think this is the time to ask for such drastic measures. I want hon. Members to think seriously about this matter and not be led away by sentiment. All I think Government ought to do is to ask the Police to be more active. I feel that the Police are not sufficiently active. In some cases I know that the Police have been in collusion in robberies in the City. If that kind of thing is going on we will certainly have epidemics of thefts now and again.

We have the atomic bomb with which we will bomb the Japanese out altogether. Perhaps they will surrender sooner or later, and in the course of a year we will get all the tyres we need, which will relieve the situation. I think

Members ought to be content with an assurance from Government that the Police will do their best to track those who receive stolen bicycles or parts. I think the receivers should be charged indictably and given long sentences, but the British nation having abolished flogging for theft many years ago I think it would be un-Christian for us to adopt such a measure in this 20th century of civilization.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I rise also to support the motion, not because of sentiment but because I am serious that something should be done to check those who prey on people's bicycles. I really could not follow the argument of the hon. Member who has just taken his seat—that because one's bicycle gets into another's hands it is not lost. I think the same argument can be applied to the theft of a chicken or a bunch of plantains. It has been consumed by somebody and therefore has been used as food for the benefit of the country. That reminds me of the tale of a sailor who dropped something overboard and told the captain it was not lost because he had marked the spot on the side of the ship!

While it may be true that many bicycles are not used in the country districts, I can assure the hon. Member that many parts of bicycles stolen in Georgetown find their way into the country. If I accept the suggestion that control restrictions have contributed to this situation I would be more in sympathy with the receiver than the thief in this case, because it may be that he has applied several times and could not get supplies from the Control Board, and is forced to purchase wherever he can get them. I say that it is the duty of Government to lay the strap on those fellows in the present circumstances, and to lay it on hard enough.

Mr. WOOLFORD: The hon. mover of the motion seemed to imagine that it would meet with little support because the majority of the hon. Members of this Council do not use bicycles, but use motor cars. I would say for his information, however, that I have looked around and found that the users of bicycles are in the majority, at any rate among the Elected Members. I am in sympathy with the motion, but to give practical effect to it would be a very difficult matter. The object of the motion is to invite Government to find some deterrent against bicycle stealing which, we all admit, is on the increase. I venture the suggestion that the powers given to Magistrates under the law at the moment are insufficient to put an end to the prevalence of what is almost a disease. The advantage of having a summary trial is well known. An offender may be brought to trial—that is if you find him—and if a conviction is not secured against him hope need not be abandoned, because he could be tried again in six months' time. Therefore, it is possible to secure two prosecutions within six months against a man who cannot help stealing, as against the Supreme Court where criminal trials do not take place for months.

There is no harm in making bicycle stealing an indictable offence *per se*, and I leave that view with hon. Members. My own view is that we are up against this difficulty of catching the offender. He either steals a bicycle as a whole or some part of it, which makes it difficult for the Police to bring him to justice. He is always a very dexterous individual; he can remove generators, locks, lamps, etc., with the greatest ease, and he often sells them and abandons the frame. I know of cases where several bicycles have been found in one trench. There is such a

thing in law as the onus of proof, and in the great majority of cases the onus is on the prosecution to establish the guilt of the accused. In these days, flogging is not being encouraged; in fact, it is being discarded because of recent legislation which does not agree with it, and other remedies are being found. I think that in this particular case of bicycle stealing the onus of proving innocence should be placed on the shoulders of the defendant person by altering the law.

We should accept the view that bicycle stealing is not only rampant but is causing distress in the community—not only personal inconvenience, but economic distress. Further, I think we should examine the law of larceny and the law of unlawful possession, and I think it should be made incumbent on all persons who deal in bicycles or their component parts—whether sales houses, repair shops or else, to keep a register at all times and to send in returns to the Police of each transaction carried out by them. I think that would be some sort of safeguard in the matter and would be more practical than altering the law to introduce flogging, or the idea of singling out bicycle repair shops only. Many bicycle repairers do not own shops, but do business in their houses or in back yards at night. If hon. Members were as ubiquitous as I am they would know that these people inhabit various yards in various parts of the city. My own view is that the onus of proving innocence should be shifted to the defendant in a case of bicycle stealing, as is done in Customs cases. An accused person would then have to explain his possession of a bicycle or bicycle part, and we should include everybody—cycle traders, pawnshops, cycle repair shops, Poor Man shops and all others. All these people receive stolen bicycles

or parts from time to time, and I think it is only fair to the people concerned that this Council should protect them.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: My sympathy goes out to the poor man who owns a bicycle, and I think Government should do something to try and stop this prevalence of stealing. I am against flogging, however, because I think it is cruel and should only be inflicted on very bad people. I once saw a man being flogged and I felt inclined, as a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, to prosecute the person doing it. What I think Government should do is to make the penalty for bicycle stealing more severe. I have heard a lot of talking from my legal friends, but I know of a case where a certain lawyer wanted to prosecute his best friend for falsifying an account, or something of the kind, yet he objects to flogging a man for stealing a bicycle. I do not know any right-minded person or any human being who would agree to have a man flogged for stealing a bicycle.

Dr. SINGH: I must say that from the first time I read this motion, I considered it a very difficult matter for me to decide, because I am in sympathy with the motion but I am against the idea of flogging. Therefore, my position is fifty—fifty. I think the whole question is one of economics, and that if the economic condition of the country is improved so that these “young fellows” could find employment, there would be less stealing of bicycles and other things.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This motion urges Government to take some action, and I can certainly say that Government has been taking action for some considerable time. The only dif-

difficulty is to know what further action to take, and it is fitting, I think, to listen to what hon. Members have to say, because something should be said which would give an idea as to what line of action should be taken to curtail or prevent bicycle stealing. Before we can suggest remedies, however, we have to study the whole situation as it exists. The prime factor is that serious crime has increased rapidly throughout the Colony, except in Essequibo and the area around Mackenzie. This wave of bicycle stealing is part of the general wave which has swept the Colony but, curiously enough, bicycle stealing is entirely confined to the city of Georgetown and its environs. Georgetown seems from recent figures to be the storm centre, not less than 1,016 bicycles having been stolen there in 1944, as against 18 in Berbice, 19 in East Demerara, 11 in West Demerara, 1 in Essequibo, and 8 in the other districts of the Colony.

Therefore, it is only Georgetown that is really being affected by this wave. We have two facts to consider; firstly, that the practice of bicycle stealing is prevalent only in the city and, secondly, that it is in fact part of a very much bigger wave of crime. I agree that the figures set out in the motion are the correct figures for the period mentioned. I have the figures as supplied by the Commissioner of Police for the last two years, and it is very extraordinary to find that they show a gradual rise month after month. The question is, what can Government do? They admit that something must be done, but what should it be in the circumstances? The hon. mover of the motion urges Government to take action by increasing the penalty, but that is a weak spot in his argument, because only 5 per cent. of these people are caught. It is the 95 per cent. who get away that we

want to get hold of, and special efforts are being made to cut down that 95 per cent. That is what Government is doing.

On August 1, this year, a special squad of Police were put on the job to do everything they can for the suppression of the crime—and I think that in the near future they will give some figures to show that good results have accrued from the work they are doing. I cannot give you any idea as to how they are doing it, but could say that they are hoping to cut down the percentage of people who are not being caught. It is very easy to criticise the Police but, actually, they would have a better chance of remedying the situation and cutting down the amount of undetected cases if owners of bicycles take reasonable care for their safety. Far too many people leave their bicycles under their houses unlocked and trust in a notice on the gate stating "Beware of the Dog." The dog, however, might be a friendly dog. (Laughter).

There are also cases in which the Police reported to owners that they had recovered bicycles, before the owners actually knew that they had been lost. It is always better for an owner to lock his bicycle rather than leaving it unprotected. I am perfectly willing to concede that there is difficulty in obtaining locks at the present time, but even those persons who have locks on their machines do not use them as often as they might. One hon. Member mentioned a case where three bicycles were stolen from a home in one day, but I venture to say that if those bicycles were locked there would have been a first class chance of catching the thief. If owners would chain their bicycles or lock them if possible, it would be better. Another fact is that huge crowds of people visit theatres and just put

their bicycles down and walk in. The Police cannot memorise every person who does so, and if those persons would only lock their bicycles it would help the Police.

With regard to the 5 per cent. of the people who are caught, there have been several suggestions. One is flogging; another, that the Magistrates be given power to increase the sentence to 12 months; and the third is that accused persons be sent to a higher Court on indictment. There are, however, curious objections to all three of these suggestions. I may also point out that in Georgetown Magistrates are now imposing the maximum penalty of six months on persons found guilty of bicycle stealing. Hon. Members may also remember that at the last Criminal Session of the Supreme Court, a 5-year sentence was handed down by the Court to a man who was convicted of his third bicycle theft. If a bicycle thief knew that on his first conviction he would go to prison for six months, and that on the second or third he would go for 5 years then I think he would take great heed.

As regards flogging, it has been suggested that this might prove an effective deterrent to bicycle thieves, but there are many very good reasons why it is impracticable. In 1897 Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who was then Prime Minister, addressed a circular to several countries in the Empire to the effect that a careful study of the question had proved that flogging as a punishment for crime often did more harm than good. Since then, people in Tanganyika, Uganda and elsewhere had said the same thing, and in 1939 a Committee sat in England and recommended that every effort be made to reduce the number of crimes for which flogging was prescribed. British Guiana is one of the few Colonies in which flogging is

awarded for a few crimes, and now we are being urged to increase the number. I say it is a very controversial question. I for one would say that a little flogging, sometimes, is a good thing, especially in cases of violence, but it is very obvious that we cannot introduce it unless we are sure that we stand on very good ground indeed, and cannot achieve the same results by some other means.

I agree that flogging was introduced for cases of praedial larceny, but bicycle stealings is not the same kind of crime at all. If hon. Members carry their minds back they will remember that that step was taken during the War—I had only arrived in the Colony about six months—when praedial larceny was very rampant, and farmers became so exasperated that they began to patrol their cultivation areas with loaded guns at night. It was decided that the harm which might result from flogging was preferable to the danger of homicide with which we were threatened.

As regards the suggestion to empower Magistrates to increase the penalty of bicycle stealing to 12 months, there are objections which many honest people have to that. They say that for years and years penalties of that nature have not been inflicted by Magistrates and they did not think Magistrates should be allowed to inflict them now. I think myself that sentences of that nature would have far more weight, and I for one would support the suggestion that the powers of Magistrates be increased to enable them to impose a penalty of 12 months' imprisonment, if the new measures adopted by the Commissioner of Police prove insufficient.

As regards the third suggestion—to send accused persons up for trial in a higher Court—that would not have any practical effect, since only 5 per cent.

of the thieves are caught. It would only swell the list of criminal cases dealt with by the Supreme Court. Last year that Court sat for $5\frac{1}{2}$ months on criminal cases, and if more are to be added to the list we would have to get another Judge. Therefore, to each of the three suggestions there are major or minor objections. Two of them, however, could be adopted if other measures do not succeed. I have already mentioned that the motion really refers only to 5 per cent. of the people who steal bicycles. The hon. Member for New Amsterdam has pointed out that the speedy means by which these people got away is the reason why they are not apprehended. That is perfectly true, and that is exactly what the Police are working on now.

Two hon. Members said that if the Control Board issues more tyres there would be less bicycle stealing. That might possibly be the case, but I do know that the Control Board cannot issue tyres if they have not got them. I have no statement from the Board, but I do know that the number of tyres in the Colony is far less now than it was two years ago and that it is going to be far less next year.

The hon. mover of the motion referred to the question of vigilance on the part of the Police. I can assure him that the Commissioner of Police and myself had a long talk on the subject yesterday morning, and he said he was detailing a special staff of men to ensure that there would be increased vigilance in this particular matter. He also expressed his intention to ask the Publicity Office to assist with a certain amount of publicity. I think everybody who has read the motion will more or less agree with it, except on the question of penalty. It urges Government to take action, but I say again that Government is taking action and has been giving the matter every consideration for some considerable time. We

are taking action not only as regards bicycles, but also in regard to the general situation.

The PRESIDENT: Does the hon. mover care to speak on the motion again?

Mr. ROTH: I desire to thank those hon. Members who have supported the motion. Several hon. Members spoke about the necessity for flogging and I may say that I am definitely in agreement with that course. I would ask this Council to notice, however, that the word "flogging" does not appear in the motion at all. The hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Edun) got very hot under his collar about it, but I hope he noticed that the word was not mentioned in the motion at all. It simply asks that Government take steps to increase the penalty for the crime. The hon. the Attorney General has explained several difficulties in that respect, but I cannot say that I have been convinced. I cannot see why Government can adopt flogging for cases of praedial larceny and yet be afraid to use it for bicycle stealing. I think that if the 5 per cent. of the people caught were given six lashes each there would not be another missing bicycle, and the result would be a revelation.

Motion put and agreed to.

NURSERY FRUIT PLANTS

Mr. LEE: I beg to move the following motion:—

WHEREAS there is a growing tendency among the mass of the people to return to the policy of "Eat More Fruits";

AND WHEREAS it is necessary to assist and encourage the small house lot owners in the villages and country districts in this policy, so as to increase the production of fruits;

BE IT RESOLVED that Government cause the Agricultural Department to establish a Nursery and cause to be grown

at regular intervals at least 1,000 plants of each and every well known fruit in this Colony for the next ten years;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the said Department cause to be distributed by its Agricultural Instructors throughout the Colony to the residents of all the villages and country districts the nursery plants free of charge, on the undertaking that the receiver will care and bring to maturity the said fruit trees.

I commend this motion to the attention of this Council. I have very little to say on it except to give a few facts. There is no doubt that the poorer classes and workers in this Colony do not and cannot, owing to economic conditions, enjoy much locally-grown fruit, although it is necessary for their proper nourishment. As a member of the Advisory Committee I find that although the Department of Agriculture is in sympathy with the motion its policy is that the people of the Colony should pay reasonable prices for the plants required for fruit growing. I differ from that view for this reason. It is Government's policy to contribute half the cost of improvement of drainage in the country districts. What is Government's policy after lands are made available for cultivation as a result of improved drainage and irrigation? Government has done nothing but has left it to the people themselves. There was a time when one could buy all sorts of fruit in Essequibo at reasonable prices, but within the last two or three months one has had to pay as much as 12 cents for a sapodilla and 16 cents for a pear. The people of the Colony should eat more fruit but cannot buy it.

I hold in my hand a cutting from a Trinidad newspaper with respect to an exhibition of fruit, vegetables, flowers and preserves held by the Horticultural Club of Trinidad and Tobago on July 28. We have more available land in this Colony than there is in Trinidad, and the people should be encouraged to

plant more fruit and vegetables. The papaw trees we see growing in the country districts, for instance, are not of the variety that produce good fruit. The Department of Agriculture is not paying sufficient attention to the provision of nurseries throughout the Colony. About 10 years ago the Department had a stall at the back of the Stabroek Market at which young plants could be purchased, but it is not there today. What is the reason?

Government should accept this motion and carry out the policy suggested for a period of 10 years. It would not cost more than \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year, and in 10 years there would be a sufficient variety of fruit which could be used for the making of preserves which are now imported. In two years there would be sufficient fruit available at prices within the means of the poor man, and to the benefit of the general health of the people of the Colony. At one time one could buy good bananas at one cent each, but in these days my servant has paid as much as 4 cents each.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: May I inquire of the mover whether he is suggesting that Government should fix the prices of fruit at reduced rates?

Mr. LEE: It will be seen from the motion that I am asking Government to pursue a policy of distribution of nursery plants to persons who occupy lands in the village and country districts in which Government has been and is expending money on drainage and irrigation works. It is also suggested that the distribution should be made by the Agricultural Instructors, and that the recipients should give an undertaking that the plants would be brought to maturity. The planting should be done under the supervision of the Agricultural Instructors who should advise as to the method of cultivation.

With regard to the question asked by the hon. Member for Western Berbice as to the fixing of prices, he knows that that is only done in war time. The greater the supply of fruit the more people would be able to buy at reasonable prices. The Council knows that 100 acres of land at Hague have been taken up by the villagers on long-term leases, but they are not cultivating economic produce. There should be cultivation of crops which could give a reasonable return. With the exception of a few plots in the Pomeroon there is no cultivation of grafted oranges in the Colony. What is the reason? I contend that the people are not sufficiently educated in the method of cultivating such things, and it is the duty of the Department of Agriculture to educate them and to assist them by a free distribution of nursery plants. I am asking hon. Members to give the motion their careful consideration.

Mr. J. A. Luckhoo: I think it would be wrong to let it go forth to the public that the Department of Agriculture is not doing anything in the way of providing nursery plants.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: Is the hon. Member seconding the motion?

Mr. LUCKHOO: I do so for the purpose of discussion. I think that as a member of the Advisory Committee the mover ought to know that the Department supplies nursery plants, but people have to pay for them. I do not think that if those plants were distributed free the people would give them the same attention they would if they had to pay for them. I do not understand the proposal made in the resolution. If these plants are distributed free of charge and those receiving them do not carry out their undertaking to care and bring them to maturity, what would be done about it? Would they be penalized? I think there should be

something in the nature of payment in case they do not carry out the conditions. I do not agree with the motion as it stands. The Department of Agriculture is doing its best to encourage people to plant fruit trees on their lands. They are charged a very small sum for nursery plants, and I think if a thing is worth having it should be paid for.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: The mover has received the answers to every point he has made today at the Advisory Committee. The hon. Member was, perhaps, not present at all the meetings of the Committee; I think he only turned up at the last meeting when he was told of the policy of the Department of Agriculture. He was the only member of the Committee who persisted that there should be a free distribution of nursery plants, and he has now thought fit to put his proposal before this Council. He knows as well as I and other Members do that nursery plants are sold by the Department from 2 cents upwards, and he was told that the demand is much greater than the supply, and that it will be greater for the next three or five years. He was told that the Department had instituted and still has nurseries in the rural areas, but owing to difficulties in the outlying districts grafting is done in Georgetown, and people come from the country districts to purchase grafted plants because they are under the impression that the grafting is done by experienced hands and that more attention is given to it in Georgetown.

The hon. Member speaks glibly about the free distribution of these plants. His motion suggests that something should be given to the people for nothing. Does he seriously contemplate that school children who receive those plants free are not going to sell them to less fortunate people who have not been able to secure them from the

Department? The hon. Member was given full details of the distribution system on the Advisory Committee. Farmers are constantly making application and have to wait for the distribution to be effected. They go to the Agricultural Instructor who makes a requisition, and the plants are supplied and distributed. It is the policy of the Department to encourage the growing of fruits wherever possible. The motion suggests that those who receive these plants free of charge should give an undertaking to care and bring them to maturity. What does that mean? There is no penalty suggested for failure to carry out that undertaking. I think the most highly cultivated plants are sold by the Department at 16 cents each. Surely that is not too much to ask anyone to pay for a valuable plant. Why shouldn't we encourage the cultivation of other produce, plantains for instance? We have asked Government for \$1,000 in order to increase the number of these nursery plants so that they may be sold at a cheap rate.

There is one other point. The hon. Member suggests that fruit should be grown in such quantities that we would be able to buy them at a cheap rate. Has he ever thought of the poor farmer? There would be a glut on the market and the farmer would have to give his labour to the consumer. Is that really what the hon. Member intends? Has the hon. mover never visited the Market and seen large quantities of pine which could have been obtained very cheaply? If he had suggested to the Council that we should try something like canning the fruits, I think it would have been better. That is what the Secondary and Minor Industries Committee is suggesting—getting all the surplus fruit when they are in season and canning them. I do not think this Council should entertain this motion very seriously.

Dr. SINGH: In a tropical country like ours the inhabitants should make more use of variety of vegetables and fruit, and whereas vegetables could be obtained in variety that is not the case with fruits. Fruits form a very important item in the daily dietary, for they provide essential vitamins—a, b, c, d, and so on—to the human system. Citrus fruits, especially, are necessary in certain cases. This motion seeks to encourage the growing of more of these fruits locally and I do not see that there should be any objection to it, since it would enable every home to use more fruits in years to come.

Mr. KING: I have listened, somewhat amused to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo. He spoke about grafted fruit, but I do not know whether he knows what is a grafted fruit. He also spoke about the Department of Agriculture getting fruit trees for people in this Colony. I have the highest respect for the Department of Agriculture and would like to take this opportunity of saying that in my opinion they are doing a very fine job in this Colony. Anyone who takes an interest in this Colony and goes into the Market as I do, will realize that during the last 4 or 5 years the fruits in this Colony have improved very considerably. I know as a fact that the kind of orange grown in British Guiana some years ago was very much inferior in size, taste and colour than the kind being produced today. The same thing applies to other fruits, and that is due entirely to the interest and supervision exercised by the Agriculture Department throughout the Colony. I do not believe for one moment that this is an attempt by the mover of the motion to belittle or decry the work done by the Agriculture Department.

What I think the hon. mover desires to suggest to this Council is an easier

way of getting fruit trees to people who might be desirous of planting them and to take care and see that the fruits be kept for the benefit of the people in the Colony. For that, I would have no quarrel with him and I am quite certain that no other Member of this Council would have either. I bow to no man in my knowledge of and interest in the districts of this Colony—an interest which the hon. mover of the motion hopes would be instrumental in enabling farmers to be supplied with young fruit trees free of cost,—but, if this is done, I am certain they would not take the necessary interest to keep them alive. Therefore, the fruit trees will be lost to those people who could make better use of them.

I cannot agree that a free distribution of fruit trees throughout the Colony, as suggested in the motion, will result in any benefit to the fruit industry. There is no gainsaying the fact—medical practitioners will emphasise it without a doubt—that fruit is a very necessary thing for the human system, but I think it would surprise hon. Members to know the extent to which fruits are being eaten in the Colony today. One hon. Member stated that if we went into the market we would see rotten pine-apples and rotten oranges, but I challenge that statement. I go into the market fairly often—perhaps more often than any other Member of this Council—and have seen thousands of pines for sale there, but it would be entirely untrue for me to say that I have seen a single rotten one. That statement might have been true three or four years ago, but not today. At present there is a great demand for fruit, but I do not believe that even if the demand is doubled there would be any reduction in price. I believe that people here do not eat more fruit, not because they cannot afford to buy, but because they are not available.

I am certain that there is very little more the Agriculture Department can do than it is doing. It might be possible to improve the facilities given to farmers for getting young plants, but I do know that this will take considerable time—perhaps months,—to get a large variety of young plants. If I was convinced that the free distribution of plants would result in a considerable increase of the fruit available for consumption I would have supported the motion whole-heartedly, but I do not think the motion is one which is in the interest of the Colony as a whole. It is certainly not in the interest of the fruit industry. Since the hon. mover is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Agriculture Department, I think it would be better if he could use his influence there and convince his colleagues in terms of the motion, urging them that the price of fruit should be reduced so as to bring it within the reach of everybody. Then, I think he would be doing something for the benefit of the fruit industry in the Colony.

Mr. EDUN: I think this motion is an indication—a very strong and growing indication—on the part of leaders in this country to follow up this question of a balanced economy. The hon. mover is simply following the lead given by myself, and I think this country has reached a state when there must be a balanced economy. We cannot go on doing things haphazardly any longer. Maybe, the hon. mover did not make his points very convincingly, but let me ask hon. Members to go into one of the villages just across the river—say little Vreed-en-Hoop which is a prosperous and thriving community—and you will find excellent fruit for sale on the steamer stelling there. You will find fine, luscious sapodillas, as well as oranges, grape fruit and other things, whereas a few years ago you could not find a single one. I know that the ten-

dency on the part of the peasants is to plant more of these things, but they need education and assistance and when the hon. Member for Western Essequibo speaks derisively against the motion, I conclude that perhaps he has not seen the vision in it.

At Vreed-en-Hoop, as in other places, however, one finds coconut trees creeping into the areas occupied by fruit trees and that shows conclusively that there is no balanced economy in the districts. People do exactly what they like in those areas and coconut trees have become nuisances in many of them. For that reason, I say that the motion carries with it a vision of balanced economy. I agree with the hon. mover that at present there is a dearth of good fruit in the city, although if one takes a train drive from Georgetown to New Amsterdam he will find all sorts of fruit on the way. At Parika, also, one can get excellent bananas—I think some of the best in the world—and with our grand and comprehensive idea of drainage and irrigation—we will soon be releasing 14,000 acres in the Bonasika area which is an excellent fruit growing district equivalent to Canals No. 1, and No. 2—we should not expect the population to grow these things by themselves and succeed.

Further, I think this motion should be regarded as an indication of what is passing through the minds of the people in the Colony. During my school days it was usual to see great quantities of mangoes passing through the district to be sold in the city, but today one cannot see that and the reason is that the sugar estate proprietors started a campaign of "Boycing" the trees, thus greatly reducing the crop. Apart from that, there was a campaign of fruit *versus* vegetables, for nearly everyone knows that there was a campaign going on between myself and the Director of Agriculture as to what should be planted in certain

areas. I urged certain workers to plant fruit trees, but they were not allowed to plant any around the houses on the estates. Therefore, unless there is a balanced economy you will always have experts coming here and diverting the whole system, causing it to go by the board eventually.

This motion might not result in putting everything in better order, but it is an attempt to do so. I have been to London and have seen advertisements stating "Eat More Fruit" or "Drink More Milk". While we do not want the the people in this Colony to pay more for their fruits, I think everybody would agree that they should eat more and that we want a balanced economy. We often hear about producing more sugar in order to have a balanced economy, and we also want to stop importation of certain things. That is balanced economy in a way, but we do not want to be paying for fruits coming from outside the Colony when we can get all the carbo-hydrates and the proteins we need, from things produced in the country itself. I think hon. Members should treat this motion as a fair indication of what is passing through the minds of the working classes through their representatives.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: This motion asks for two things—district nurseries and the free distribution of plants. The hon. mover took these two questions to the Advisory Board of the Agriculture Department, and was given all the information possible—told all the advantages and disadvantages in the matter, and what the Department was now doing to solve the problems. He stated, however, that he would not be satisfied until he got a decision from this Council, and that I hope he will get today. He was also told that in so far as plants are concerned, budding and grafting had to be done by trained people under

technical supervision and I do not think he would doubt for one moment that weather conditions are another factor, and that is why we are advocating drainage and irrigation today. Without favourable drainage and water supply one can never hope to raise successful nurseries, and even at headquarters where these conditions are more favourable than in the country districts, all the technical advice available is used in order to know the most suitable time for doing certain things. Yet, the Department cannot hope to get anything like 100 per cent. results from their plants in the nurseries—they might hope to get 60 or 70 per cent. Nurseries have already been tried in certain districts, but with unsuccessful results.

I think the people in various parts of the Colony who are anxious to get plants will not realise their desire in a very short time, because the nurseries have only a few plants and it will take some time—at least a year—before all the orders can be filled. The farmers in the various districts who desire these plants need not come to Georgetown, because there are agricultural officers in every district in the Colony and if the orders are placed through them the farmers will be notified when the plants are ready and they could be sent through the district offices. The charges for these plants are very, very small and I must say that the Department is making every effort to meet the demands of the farmers in this respect.

The figure I will quote will give some idea of what the Department has already done along these lines. In 1939, the Department supplied 2,617 plants throughout the Colony and this year, up to July 31, they have supplied 5,360. One can see through these figures that the Department is doing everything possible to meet the requirements of the farmers who have placed their orders in time. Recently, a supplementary vote

was given to the Department for this purpose and it is hoped that they would be able to raise no less than 30,000 plants by the middle of next year in order to fill the orders received from farmers in various parts of the Colony. If other large orders are received and the Department finds it necessary to approach this Council for a further supplementary vote, I feel certain that the requirement will be met.

All these things were told to the hon. mover of the motion and therefore I am surprised to hear him say today that no policy has been adopted by the Department. If he feels that the free distribution of plants would have been a good policy, I think it would have failed in a similar manner as the previous cases. The hon. mover has gone into history and has told us that when he was a boy in the Essequibo district, he got bananas and other fruits very cheaply there. He does not state, however, whether the same quantity of fruits is available today, or whether the children are eating more than their forefathers did. So far as the Department is concerned, it is doing its best, as I have already stated, but I will go further and suggest to the hon. mover that if he wishes to assist his constituency—he is a member of the Advisory Board of the Agriculture Department—he should advise the people who are anxious to grow fruits to place their orders early with the Department and I would also ask that priority be given to them, so that the inhabitants of the Essequibo district could get more fruits to eat and become more robust and healthy than those of the other districts in the Colony.

Mr. JACKSON: From the remarks made by the hon. mover I am inclined to think that there are two points on which he desires some consideration. The first is the increased prices of fruit at the present time, but I do not know

whether lawyers' fees have remained stationary. What I do know is that in these strenuous times the price of everything has gone up, and it is no surprise that the prices of fruit have gone up. Everybody tries to get the highest price for the article he is selling, and we find a good deal of black marketing going on. Somebody of some experience mentioned recently that we can never stop black marketing; that it goes on in England and everywhere. Measures are adopted to limit it to a certain extent, but in some cases lawyers have assisted those who practise black marketing to get away with the goods by raising legal technicalities. I do not know whether their fees have been increased; possibly they have been. There is no doubt that the fruit seller demands big prices for his fruit and it is a case of buy it or leave it.

The price of eggs has also gone up, and I am wondering whether the hon. Member desires that there should be a free distribution of eggs or poultry so that more eggs may be produced. People do not really value things they have obtained without any exertion on their part. In my opinion a free distribution of plants would pauperize the people. On the Advisory Committee we have been told of the small prices charged by the Department for nursery plants, and I do not think that a free gift of something for which a person now pays 4 cents would cause him to attach more value to it. I am somewhat amazed at the idea. I found great difficulty in following the arguments of the mover of the motion. I think the Department of Agriculture should be commended for the exceedingly good work it has done during the past 10 years in every phase of its activities. I am satisfied that the members of the Advisory Committee have given us convincing reasons why there should not be a free distribution of fruit trees.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think there are many of us who will disagree with the desire of the mover of the motion to see fruit available in larger quantities, of better quality and at reasonable prices, but I think there are few of us who will agree with him that the way in which this is to be achieved is by a free distribution of young plants. The hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Peer Bacchus) has outlined the policy of the Department of Agriculture in making available to persons in the country districts young plants at reasonable prices. The hon. mover of the motion knows that nurseries have been established by the Department of Agriculture, and that there is on the estimate of the Department a sum of \$5,300 from which those nurseries are to be maintained, and he will recollect that owing to some dissatisfaction which arose among persons who were unable to obtain the supplies of plants they required this Council in its wisdom increased that vote quite recently by \$1,000 in order that the nurseries might be extended. The hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo (Dr. Singh) has told the Council of the large number of plants distributed recently, and of the ambitious programme by the Department of Agriculture to produce a very much larger number of these plants so as to be able to cope with the number of orders on hand. It is estimated that the Department is about a year behind hand in supplying young plants, but it is hoped that if this programme is successful, as we all hope it will be, the Department will in the near future be able to catch up with the demand and have a surplus of plants on hand.

The mover of the motion referred to Government's policy to improve the drainage of the villages, and asked what Government was doing in regard to the supply of plants. The answer, as I have said, has been given by the hon. Member for Western Berbice and other Members. His motion

asks that nurseries should be established and, of course, in that respect he is pushing at an open door because nurseries do exist, and he has been given the reason why nurseries cannot be established in the districts—because they have to be looked after by persons of experience.

I think we all agree that the free distribution of plants is not the correct policy to pursue. The plants cost money to produce, and the Department of Agriculture sells them at almost the cost of production, as has been explained by the hon. Member for Western Berbice. The Department is very energetic in pursuing the matter to see that all those who desire to have fruit trees are provided with plants at very reasonable prices. The number of plants is being increased, and the Department expects that very shortly it will catch up with the demand for nursery plants.

Mr. LEE: In reply to the several speakers I would like to say that I do not in any way belittle the activities of the Department of Agriculture. Hon. Members who do not understand constitutional practice should not say that a member of an Advisory Committee who differs from a majority decision of the Committee cannot approach this Council on the matter. I wish to make it perfectly clear that I differ from the majority of the Advisory Committee in respect of the policy being pursued in regard to the supply of nursery plants, and I think I have every right to come here and get a decision of this Council as to whether I am right or wrong. I feel that no Member of this Council, after hearing that the Department is a year behind hand in the matter of supplying the demand for nursery plants, will agree with the policy of the Department.

Where an industry is dependent upon certain supplies from a Government Department that Department cannot afford to be behind hand. If the

staff is inadequate more people should be employed so as to cope with the demand for these nursery plants. There are boys who have left Queen's College who could be trained in that work, and boys could also be trained in the country districts in the art of grafting and budding. It is not only a question of the free distribution of these plants but the selection of suitable soils by the Agricultural Instructors, and the education of the people in the country districts. I want a decision by the Council as to whether more people should be employed in order that the Department might cope with the demand for nursery plants.

I am asking you, sir, not to put the motion to the vote. I brought it up merely for discussion, so that Government and this Council might see my point of view.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure it has been very well ventilated. I gather that the point involved is the desirability of encouraging the production of fruit in this Colony as part of our balanced economy. The question is whether it is desirable or practical politics to adopt a policy of a free distribution of fruit plants. The Advisory Committee has decided not to do so, and that the practical policy is to continue steadily the expansion of fruit tree production that is going on now under the present system adopted by the Department. The motion is withdrawn but the record of the debate remains with the Council for our attention in the future.

We have a motion standing in the name of the Sixth Nominated Member, but I doubt whether we would be able to complete it in seven minutes. There is, however, a short Bill which is down for first reading, and may be taken in the few minutes remaining.

DISTRICT LANDS PARTITION AND
RE-ALLOTMENT (SPECIAL PROCEDURE)
BILL

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I
beg to move that the following Bill be
read the first time:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to
provide for the partition of certain areas
of land, for the re-allotment of holdings
therein, for the issue of titles thereto,

and to render the occupation thereof
more beneficial."

Mr. WOOLFORD seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

The PRESIDENT adjourned the
Council until the following day at 2
p.m.