

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

FRIDAY, 10TH AUGUST, 1956.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Deputy Speaker,
Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G. O.B.E. —
In the Chair.

Ex-Officio Members:

The Hon. the Chief Secretary,
Mr. M. S. Porcher (Ag.)

The Hon. the Attorney General,
Mr. C. Wylie, Q.C., E.D.

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,
Mr. F. W. Essex.

Nominated Members of Executive Council:

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

The Hon. **W. O. R. Kendall** (Mem-
ber for Communications and Works).

The Hon. **G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.**
(Member for Local Government, Social
Welfare and Co-operative Develop-
ment.)

The Hon. **R. B. Gajraj**

The Hon. **R. C. Tello**

The Hon. **L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.**

Nominated Unofficials:

Mr. T. Lee

Mr. W. A. Phang

Mr. C. A. Carter

Mr. E. F. Correia

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb

Mr. H. Rahaman

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Dr. H. A. Fraser

Mr. R. B. Jailal

Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. I Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature

—**Mr. E. V. Viapree.**

Absent:

His Honour the Speaker, **Sir
Eustace Gordon Woolford, O.B.E.,
Q.C.**—on leave.

The Hon. **P. A. Cummings** (Mem-
ber for Labour, Health and Housing)—
on leave.

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.—on leave.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal—on leave.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.

The Deputy Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the
Council held on Thursday, the 9th of
August, 1956, as printed and cir-
culated, were taken as read and con-
firmed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Development Programme, 1956-60

The Financial Secretary (Mr. Essex): I beg to give notice of the following motion

"Be it resolved:

That this Council directs that Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1956—Development Programme, 1956-60 — be referred to Finance Committee for consideration and report."

I would also like to say that with your permission, sir, I shall move at a later stage that the relevant Standing Order be suspended to enable me to proceed with this motion this afternoon. For this course I have His Excellency's permission.

ORDER OF THE DAY

Constitution — Motion For Appointment of Royal Commission

Council resumed the debate on the following motion by Mr. Lee:

"Whereas His Excellency the Governor's announcement of the details of Her Majesty's Government's proposals for introducing an elected element into the Legislature and Executive of the Colony has been received with general dissatisfaction among the people of the Colony:

And Whereas the people of the Colony are particularly concerned that they were not afforded an opportunity of expressing their views in the matter:

"Be it resolved:

(i) That this Council recommends that His Excellency the Governor be requested to inform the Secretary of State of the general dissatisfaction among the people of the Colony following the announcement of the proposed changes in the Constitution, and to ask for the appointment of a Royal Commission to visit the Colony to ascertain the views of the people and to make recommendations with regard to amendments to the Constitution.

(ii) That the Secretary of State be requested to suspend further action on the

proposals announced, pending the submission of the report of the Royal Commission."

Mr. Phang rose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. Mr. Tello had risen to his feet just before the adjournment yesterday afternoon, and unless he would like to give way—

Mr. Tello: I have no objection, sir.

Mr. Phang: I rise to support the motion so ably moved by my friend, Mr. Lee. We know that there is considerable dissatisfaction among the people of the Colony with the proposed amended Constitution. I have heard the proposal described as illiberal, monstrous, etc., but Mr. Lee has labelled it a farce, and I quite agree with him. He also said it was an expedient to save face, and I also agree with that view. It is my opinion that consideration should have been given to the aspirations and wishes of the people of the Colony. This is a democratic country where the will of the people should prevail. I therefore do not think it is right to say "Here is the new Constitution, the Renison Constitution," and push it down the throats of the people. It is not fair to them to say "Take it or leave it. Have it or else —". Such an attitude is highly undemocratic, dictatorial, un-British and very unwise.

If the communists in our midst were responsible for the 1953 political crisis then they should be punished. Exile, disfranchise them, or do what you will with them, but it seems wrong to punish, and keep on punishing, the entire population because of the misdeeds of a few communists.

I agree with the hon. Member, Mr. Lee, that a Royal Commission should be appointed to investigate the

political situation in this country and obtain the views of the people as regards the Constitution. I think such an enquiry would ease the rising tension in this country, and would make for better relations between Government and the people. For these reasons I am supporting the motion requesting the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Dr. Fraser: I regret that I cannot support the motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission, but I would like to commend the hon. Member, Mr. Lee, for his obvious sincerity of purpose in bringing it before the Council so as to get the widest possible publicity of the views expressed here.

However, I cannot subscribe to that portion of the motion which says that there is general dissatisfaction among the people of the Colony following the announcement of the proposed amendment to the Constitution. I feel, like the hon. Mr. Luckhoo, that the people of this country are not concerned about politics. They are concerned with making a decent living, with obtaining a plot of land to plant their crops, and a ready market for the sale of their produce. Given those requisites I feel that the people would co-operate with any progressive Government. Following the announcement of the proposed amendment of the Constitution I think there was a feeling of disappointment throughout the Colony, and it was only natural that people who have the well-being of the Colony at heart would like to see the restoration of representative government at an early date.

I consider the proposed amendment of the Constitution as an opportunity

being given us by H.M. Government to put this country back on the road to representative government as early as possible, and to give the people a chance of regaining respect among the people of the Caribbean and in other more distant countries. To my mind it is a realistic approach to a very difficult problem — an approach that may not be very palatable. At the same time we should put our whole heart and soul into the task of making the amended Constitution work, so that we could move onward to further representative government.

I think that the suggestion of boycotting the General Election is childish, and shows a lack of responsibility among certain politicians and so-called leaders of the people, as such an attitude would only cause delay in the return to political progress. I think no one wants a repetition of the 1953 fiasco which led to the suspension of the Waddington Constitution. I would suggest that we forget the past but, profiting by the lessons of the past, we should move ahead with confidence in the future of this Colony by making the amended Constitution work. During the debate I was somewhat surprised to hear the hon. mover of the motion say: "Give us back the 1953 Constitution."

Mr. Lee: I beg your pardon. I never said that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think it was the hon. Member, Mr. Correia, who said that.

Dr. Fraser: I have it down here in my notes, but if Mr. Lee objects to it I will withdraw it. However, he did say that the Renison Constitution is a farce and cannot work. Mr. Correia said:

[Dr. Fraser]

"Restore to us the suspended Constitution and give the Governor all the powers necessary to safeguard the interests of the Colony."

I take it that the Governor has all the powers necessary. I think the problem is that the Governor, or H.M.'s Government, cannot take the slightest risk of a recurrence of the 1953 episode which led to the suspension of the Constitution. A second crisis would lead to economic disaster for this Colony, and utter ruin. Our Five-year Development Programme calls for an expenditure of \$91 million to be raised on loan. Which country would loan us any money for development in such circumstances? Even in this country we could not raise 91 cents for development. Moreover, we have been trying to attract capital and industries to this Colony during the past few years, with very limited success. Can we in such an event hope to get any people to invest money in this country? Moreover, to my mind, industries in this country would not seek to expand and where possible they would pack up and depart. What would be left of this country then but economic ruin? I join with other Members in asking the hon. mover to consider the withdrawal of this motion.

Mr. Tello: I desire to associate myself with those speakers who have thanked the hon. mover of this motion for the opportunity of expressing opinion on such a vital matter. I am also very grateful for the opportunity to express my opposition to the motion for some of the reasons already stated during this debate, chief among them being the unnecessary exposure of the electorate to a longer suspense and the undesirability of extending the life of this Interim Government.

I am yet to understand what is behind this request for a Royal Commission. I am certain the mover is sufficiently experienced to know that already the Colonial Office is aware that we desire as representative a government as it is possible and convenient for Her Majesty's Government to offer us. Long before the advent of the Waddington or the Robertson Commission British Guiana as a whole and Guianese individually and through organizations were agitating for as representative a government as possible. Then, where is the great need for this Commission? Surely, it is not to inform the Colonial Office of our desire for representative Government. Surely not to expect more than has been offered us in this proposed amended Constitution. I desire to quote His Excellency in his broadcast on Sunday, 29th July, 1956. He said:

"... does anyone honestly believe that, particularly after such an exhibition of boycotting which might appear to be at communist instigation, after all the further delay we could get more out of a commission than is now offered."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: "Would get" rather than "could get".

Mr. Tello: "Would" thank you. His Excellency having had so much to do with the spade work leading up to the amended constitution is in a better position to advise as to the necessity for a Commission. So many Members have agreed with him that it was a mistake for the hon. mover to suggest that the Secretary of State should give consideration to sending out a Royal Commission. Other than the delay it would cause and other than the possible misinterpretation of the true intentions of the hon. mover (whom I feel had no intention of delaying the life of this Council) by the masses, I seem to think that Commissions today are a bit outdated and the modern practice is for Elected Governments to appoint delegations to discuss di-

rectly with the Colonial Office any change in Constitutions. I think the hon. Member in his anxiety to render service to this country has forgotten that the age and practice have changed. I think I should remind him that his motion is very much outdated, and knowing the gentleman as I do I am certain that this error being pointed out to him, he would give consideration to the point in his reply to the Council.

I desire to refer to Hansard of Wednesday 25th April, 1956 and to a point which I understand to be an invitation from his Excellency to this Council and the Colony as a whole to recognize the flexibility of the amended Constitution offered and the possibilities within that flexibility. His Excellency, in addressing this Council said, and I am quoting from column 17:

"If I may say so, having had so much hand in it, I think that one of the wise things about the constitutional advance which is announced will be its flexibility. As in the British constitution, it is not intended to specify too much in legal instruments. Ministerial and executive responsibility and the balance between the official, nominated and elected elements will be changeable by administrative act or convention as experience is gained."

He went on to say:

"It is in the nature of controlled experiment to end this period of marking time, in the hope that it will get us back on the right road; shall I call it the Queen's Highway?"

When His Excellency made this statement I am certain he assessed the political intelligence of the hon. Members who adorn this Council, and when he explained to us the value of this flexibility I feel certain that having expressed himself in such a clear manner he succeeded in so impressing the hon. mover of this motion that he was able to put before this Council his extensive knowledge which has been very helpful to me to see the true value of this amended Constitution and to recognize

its great possibilities for the advance which he is seeking by way of this motion.

I was unfortunately not present at the meeting of the 25th April but having read the Hansard and knowing my friend's great love for sincerity and great respect for saying what he means that I feel His Excellency must have succeeded in helping him to recognize the flexibility spoken of when the hon. mover spoke these words which can be found in column 20 of the Hansard:

"Your Excellency, may I be permitted, on behalf of the Members of this Council, to thank you for your excellent Address, and to ask that it may be printed and circulated among the Members of this Council. On my own behalf I may say that Your Excellency's return from England was anxiously awaited by the people of this country for some announcement concerning our political Constitution, and with Your Excellency's help we shall endeavour to work it."

The words that struck me most were those in which he told of the people's anxiety for an announcement and that they would "endeavour to work it." Subsequent developments have brought a little doubt in my mind as to the true cause for the change, because as I have said my friend is known for his sincerity and for weighing his words well, knowing that the records will be there for posterity. We find him today stating in his motion that there is general dissatisfaction and that Her Majesty's Government should consider taking certain steps. It is somewhat disappointing to have this quick change of heart with so much experience behind him and so much knowledge to support that experience.

I often wonder whether in the walks of life from day to day we do not meet prophets — such as those of whom we read in the Holy Book. I am pleased to observe that His

[Mr. Tello]

Excellency acted like a veritable prophet when he said, also in his address to the Council on 25th April last, and again I refer to the Hansard at column 15:

"I suppose the immediate reaction of the local communist leaders will be to try to intensify their present 'struggle against imperialism', their present clever policy of trying to appear a normal national people's party like every other party. They will continue to try to raise a united clamour for greater political advance without the restrictions which they caused to be imposed, and which will continue to be imposed so long as persons are considered a threat to freedom."

Almost exactly three months later, on that bright Saturday morning of 28th July last he met a delegation in conference to discuss what might be described as a united clamour for a greater measure of self-government, and I can imagine how His Excellency must have smiled to himself at the fulfilment of his prophecy. Communists have possibly succeeded in inveigling certain leaders to embark on their waggon in this united clamour for a more advanced Constitution and unfortunately in that delegation was the hon. mover of this motion.

I will again refer to the broadcast by His Excellency the Governor on Sunday, 29th July last, the day after the conference. He said these words:

"People are not as interested as some politicians think in the form of a constitution, what they want is a good honest government."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member mind reading the last part of the quotation again?

Mr. Tello: "... what they want is good honest Government."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Good honest government. Two different things.

Mr. Tello: In the same broadcast His Excellency also reminded them that although they had failed to operate the 1953 Constitution we are now being offered an amendment to the Interim Constitution with the desired "flexibility"—something designed to be made a success under the best Democratic processes. Sir, as we understand it, there was a clamour for an advanced Constitution and His Excellency thought it fit to remind these people that they had two alternatives at their disposal. They had an opportunity to use this amended Constitution in such a way as to justify their right to approach the Colonial Office on the question of Elected representation and advocate an advanced Constitution, or reject it and deny the Colony of a degree of Elected representation. We know that His Excellency has done his best in the matter. It is said that they were not given time to work the Waddington Constitution, but now we are asked to make a try and they are ready to give it a trial.

I would like to say that every Guianese — both in and out of this Council—is a bit disappointed that we have not obtained a greater measure of Elected representation in the amended Constitution, but that does not justify a refusal to work it and to demonstrate our ability to use something that is much better than what we are now enjoying. I think that we should endeavour to convince the Colonial Office and other parts of the Commonwealth that we are making a sincere effort to work this Constitution, especially because we have a very promising opportunity of getting a much more representative Government in the very near future. My hon. friend, Mr. Correia, does not think like me at all. He believes that we are not right and that were it not for a technicality in pro-

cedure he would have been sponsoring an amendment seeking a return of the Waddington Constitution. I am sorry, but it seems that my hon. Friend Mr. Correia, did not make a study of the record of His Excellency's speech, because it is not always that a Governor's speech impresses me as this has done. From the time I heard it in a G.I.S. broadcast I realised that many important points had been touched and that they had been effectively dealt with. In the course of his broadcast His Excellency said:

"I told them that I thought the necessary goodwill was easy if it could be based on confidence that we were all trying to go in the same direction. That is towards self-government based on Parliamentary Democracy."

I want to ask my hon. and very good friend, Mr. Correia, whether there is not an abundance of evidence today to justify the statement that no sincere effort was made to give a trial to the 1953 Constitution. I am convinced — as I always was — that the breakdown of that Constitution could be traced to a lack of sincerity and goodwill, and I propose to read a short extract from page 33 (par. 93) of the report of the Robertson Commission in order to support my view. It reads:

"Mr. Ashton Chase on his appointment as Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, wrote to the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (9th June, 1953) to assure its members that "all matters affecting the mercantile community will receive my sincere consideration". The letter continued "I approach this difficult task in the spirit of co-operation and goodwill and pledge my support to any move which has for its object the benefit of the Colony as a whole. I sincerely trust that I can look forward to the co-operation of your members in making my task as pleasant as possible and look forward to cordial relations during my term of office".

I can say that through the Trade Union Movement I was very much ac-

quainted with Mr. Ashton Chase, and I want it to go on record that I believe every word that was written there came sincerely from his heart. He meant what he said there; I have always found him to be a sincere and true unionist and he would always go down as one of the respected politicians of the 1953 Constitution. But his expression of goodwill and a desire to co-operate was found to be not corresponding with the policy of the majority of those who constituted that Government. I propose to read further — from paragraph 91 of the same report — the very last paragraph — and I would like to ask my hon. Friends to listen to it and judge what were the chances of sincere co-operation among people who could write this in their official organ, "Thunder". It says:

"In the May, 1953, issue of "Thunder" Mr. Sydney King described the newly elected P.P.P. majority in the Assembly and the six P.P.P. Ministers not as the Government but as the "People's Opposition" which he wrote "has moved into positions of strategic advantage in the House of Assembly and in the Executive Council".

What chance was there of having goodwill and co-operation among such men and in the walls of this Council Chamber when Members of the very Government expressed themselves in that way? It was lack of that goodwill and co-operation that was primarily responsible for the collapse of the 1953 Constitution. Again, I ask my hon. Friends whether they have satisfied themselves that there is such a change of heart towards goodwill and co-operation as to justify a second experiment with a liberal Constitution such as the one recommended by the Waddington Commission?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. Member seeks to develop that

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

point, I think it is only right and proper for the accuracy of the records and in fairness to the report—the report of the Robinson Commission—and also the person mentioned by Mr. Tello, that I should point out that the letter written by Mr. Ashton Chase to the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and referred to by Mr. Tello, was written in June 1953, while the portion of the letter which appeared in “Thunder” and which Mr. Tello read from the report of the Robertson Commission, appeared in a May, 1953, issue of “Thunder”. Therefore, the records make it quite clear that what Mr. Sydney King said was said in May (1953) and what Mr. Ashton Chase wrote (to the Chamber of Commerce) was written in June, and I am quite sure, as Mr. Tello has said, that he (Mr. Ashton Chase) was sincere when he wrote that letter in June, subsequent to what appeared in “Thunder” from Mr. Sydney King.

Mr. Tello: I quoted both dates, but what I was trying to say was that we have to consider whether in view of his Party's policy it was easy for Mr. Ashton Chase to express his desire to co-operate and work in goodwill with the Chamber. I wanted to say that in those days it must have been a rather difficult thing for him to do—to make a promise of goodwill and co-operation to a responsible body when the official organ of the Party contained an opposite view. I am not so certain that there is such great a change of heart on the part of these people today as to justify the hon. Member, Mr. Correia, in asking this Council to request a return of the Waddington Constitution. I do not like to indulge in recrimination, but I say again that we should steer clear of a recurrence of history. I think we should attempt to go forward, because we cannot af-

ford to go through the forest and not see firewood. We cannot afford to close our eyes to the signs of the time—we cannot deliberately blind ourselves to the shadows of coming events.

When the amended Constitution was framed (as announced) it became known that certain political groups said that they had every intention and desire to boycott it, and they began a campaign planned to fill the minds of the people with all sorts of nonsense. However, they made no indentation on the minds of the people, since they had become very much concerned with the economic condition of the Colony and the Development Programme just initiated. Further, the working masses have now accepted the machinery of collective bargaining and other Democratic processes for solving their problems. The campaign was a failure.

Again, sir, I crave indulgence to refer to His Excellency's broadcast address in which he issued a warning in these words:

“I told the deputation that if their representations were unsuccessful and they consequently decided to go on to boycott and such like demonstrations, I shall be forced to try and carry on without them. They of course realise that when the elections come there will be plenty who will not maintain a boycott with them.

I can assure you, sir, that during the last few days those who talked about these boycotts and who wanted these boycotts have been very much worried over what His Excellency has said. They are aware that hundreds would be ready to offer themselves as candidates tomorrow if elections under the amended Constitution is offered, and thousands would be ready to go to the polls and elect their representatives. Therefore, this boycott

talk is a bogey and there was a square challenge to it in His Excellency's broadcast. Seeing that it was not a good decision, these people have revised their tactics.

Shortly after this historical broadcast was made by His Excellency, we read in the Press of the registration of a new Sugar Workers' Union. I watch these things and I interview myself because my mind goes back to 1952—53 when there was hardly a night that I could have stayed at home for more than three hours. Even at our homes we used to be sought by workers and members of the Press about matters concerning trade unionism.

Therefore, when I saw mention made in the Press about the formation of a new Trade Union to operate in the sugar industry, I regarded the announcement as a warning. To me it is a warning. Those people are cornered with and prepared to speak the only language they understand—confusion. How can I interpret it otherwise? I make bold to say that the recognised trade unions in the sugar industry, the Sugar Boilers Association, the Headmen's Union and the M.P.C.A., are doing their very best in the interests of the people they represent. I feel certain that the recent registration of a new union is not in the interests of the 30,000 people employed in the sugar industry.

We know that the Members of the Interim Government did not enter these doors with any mandate from the people, but in spite of the fact that we were not elected by the people we serve the interests of the working man, the employing man and all the people. I think I can take some pride in saying that in spite of the fact that

we were not elected the advice of the nominated Members of the Executive Council in the interest of the working classes in the sugar industry has so convinced His Excellency the Governor that he decided to appoint an Advisory Committee to inquire into the dispute existing in the industry. With all those things on record, what reason can there be for the introduction of a new union in the sugar industry other than preparing the way for a recurrence of the debacles of 1952-53?

Mr. Lee: May I ask whether this is not out of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I had begun to wonder as to its relevancy myself.

Mr. Tello: I am sorry if I have strayed, but actually what I was trying to do was to get this matter quite clearly before the minds of hon. Members, as to whether the extent of goodwill as exists today justifies another experiment with the Waddington Constitution. I will not labour the point any more. As long as my friend seems to be satisfied that there must be some doubt I want to put a simple question to the Council, and especially to my hon. friend, Mr. Correia who, I believe, is so busy with his normal duties and business of the day that he has not noticed the signs of the times.

Mr. Correia: I object to the hon. Member's remark. After all I have the interests of this country very much at heart.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think the hon. Mr. Tello has gone so far as to suggest that your business is interfering with your public duty.

Mr. Tello: Not at all, sir. I was really paying the hon. Member a compliment, because I know he is a very

[Mr. Tello]

busy man and a very earnest and honest businessman. What I wanted to point out—and I hope that in my very limited way I have succeeded — was that in spite of all his good intentions, in spite of his anxiety to serve, he might have been hindering rather than helping the Colony's interests, and rather than permit him or any other Member, or any person outside this Council to delude themselves with the glorious things they imagine, I wished to point out to them the true signs of the times which clearly indicate an insufficiency of goodwill and confidence in any experiment with the Waddington Constitution.

Having looked at the picture as I see it today, and as every right-thinking person will see it, I think we should be very realistic about what we are doing. His Excellency was rather keen on that, and with apologies I again wish to refer to the record of his broadcast, on pages 11 and 12, where he says:

"In the last few years, through not being able to face facts realistically and make up its mind, British Guiana had tragically missed almost every political opportunity it had, and, particularly and spectacularly, the Waddington Constitution."

We have seen that. We did not behave in a realistic manner, and we have lost the Waddington Constitution. Are we going to commit the same error today? His Excellency also said on page 12 of the record of his broadcast:

"I told them that the leaders of most of the other countries in this area had got past this sort of disruptive agitation which is so popular here; had recognized that the other people of the Commonwealth were genuinely trying to help them, wanted them to run their own show. Those leaders were trying to build trust and goodwill, not to destroy it. I said I thought that some of our politicians, if

they went on teaching people to trust nothing and believe nothing, were digging their own graves and, worse, might be dragging their country into the darkness after them."

I have quoted this because it indicates that the preaching of foreign ideology or political doctrines to our people may mean suicide to certain politicians. But, be that as it may, the striking words are: "might be dragging their country into darkness after them."

I am sorry that I have been somewhat irrelevant today, but those points must be brought out, as I feel very strongly about them, and I am grateful to my friend, the hon. mover of the motion, for affording me this opportunity.

I want to ask my friend to give serious consideration to the suggestions which have been made to him to withdraw his motion. I know that his intentions are very good, and it would certainly grieve me to vote against the motion, knowing the good intentions behind it. But unless he can suggest an amendment which would make his motion more acceptable than it now stands, I would ask him to give serious consideration to the suggestion that he should withdraw it. But I think I am pushing him on to dangerous ground. I am beginning to see that it is almost impossible for him to amend his motion, so that the only other kindly thing I can do for him is to urge that he withdraw it. Like His Excellency, I would say that we cannot afford another political crisis in this Colony. On page 13 of the record of His Excellency's broadcast he says:

"I ended up by reminding them again that other people were going ahead, running their own shows, forming new nations. Were they going to throw away another opportunity, even if some found the path-

way humiliating? There is a tremendous fund of goodwill waiting to help British Guiana catch up, if only Guianese themselves by their own efforts can clearly eradicate the risk of communism."

Can we afford to throw away another very valuable opportunity? With the tremendous fund of goodwill awaiting to help us, let us give a fair trial to the proposed amended Constitution, and I would advise my friend, Mr. Lee, that he should either accept the suggestion that he withdraw his motion, or observe his own pledge which he made in this Chamber on the occasion of the announcement of the Constitutional proposals on the 25th of April last. I quote from *Hansard* what the hon. Member said:

"On my own behalf I may say that Your Excellency's return from England was anxiously awaited by the people of this country for some announcement concerning our political Constitution, and with Your Excellency's help we shall endeavour to work it."

Mr. Rahaman: I rise to oppose the motion. After hearing the views expressed by those Members who have spoken during these three days of the debate, I anticipated that the hon. Member would have seen where the wind was blowing. If his motion were accepted, does the hon. Member realize how long it would take for a Royal Commission to come here and report its findings? In my opinion the appointment of a Royal Commission would only delay the holding of a General Election. We are hoping for a General Election in 1957, therefore I am urging that we accept the amended Constitution and endeavour to work it successfully in order that we may be granted a more liberal Constitution in a year or two. The amended Constitution which is offered to us is a fairly good one in my opinion. It has been offered to us as a sort of trial run, and if the leaders of the people behave themselves and work

it well I am sure that we would have a more liberal Constitution in the near future.

Leaders of the people are talking about self-Government, and I think the British Government are very anxious to give us self-government so as to throw the weight off their shoulders, because I think we are a burden to the British taxpayers. His Excellency has said quite frankly in his broadcast address, that he could have hidden behind the report of the Robertson Commission and done nothing about the Constitution, but he did not do that. Instead he has given us an amended Constitution which I think is workable and capable of improvement.

The hon. Member, Mr. Lee, has complained about the 12 elected seats offered. In my opinion 12 seats will work, for instead of 24 seats which we had under the suspended Constitution, they are being amalgamated into 12 constituencies. I think an efficient leader could well represent two constituencies, therefore 12 Members could well represent the whole Colony.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It does not follow that the 24 constituencies will be divided by two to get 12. It is not just simple arithmetic.

Mr. Rahaman: I think His Excellency should be complimented for recommending the proposed amended Constitution. I think he is playing a safe bat and cannot be bowled very easily, no matter how tricky the bowler may be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As no other Member wishes to speak I will call on the hon. mover of the motion to reply.

Mr. Lee : As I have been referred to as a very experienced politician I will certainly accept the compliment. I would ask the honourable the Chief Secretary to arrange, if possible, to have the notes of this debate transcribed immediately and printed for despatch to the Secretary of State. I know it is possible, for I have had that done before. If I get that undertaking I would only reply to certain points raised in the course of the debate, in order to show where certain hon. Members have been misled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Before call upon the Chief Secretary I would like to know whether the hon. Member means immediately. I am sure the hon. Member would wish himself to have an opportunity to revise the Hansard report before it is sent to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lee : I have confidence in the ability of our shorthand-writers who have done very good work in many instances. I feel that the report of our speeches can be sent to the Secretary of State as early as possible. If I get that undertaking I would reply very briefly on one or two points, and then ask leave of Your Honour, with the consent of my seconder, to withdraw the motion.

The Chief Secretary : I readily give the assurance to the hon. Member that as soon as the Hansard report is given to me I will take steps to have it forwarded to the Secretary of State without delay.

Mr. Lee : Thank you, sir. First of all, let me deal with certain points—

Mr. Deputy Speaker : The hon. Member has not yet withdrawn his motion. I suppose he will do that later.

Mr. Lee : Yes, sir. Some hon. Members have referred to the time factor in regard to the appointment of a Royal Commission. The Robertson Commission arrived in this Colony on the 6th of January, 1954, and presented their report on the 25th of September. That Commission took evidence from individuals and associations in this Colony and submitted their report in a comparatively short time, and I am certain that a Royal Commission could report within six months. If hon. Members have forgotten, let me remind them that if the Renison Constitution is put into effect we would have to work it for four years.

We have to continue until the end of four years unless in the opinion of the Governor and the Secretary of State the Council should be dissolved. If it even takes a year it would be far better to know through a Commission how we stand with H.M. Government than having the Renison Constitution to work under for a period of four years. I gave notice of my motion in three or four days—within a week—

Mr. Deputy Speaker : If I may be of assistance to the hon. Member: His Excellency's address was on the 25th April—a Wednesday, and the hon. Member give notice of his motion on the 27th April.

Mr. Lee : Within two days of His Excellency's speech with regard to the proposed Constitution I tabled a motion because I felt that every responsible person who has followed the constitutional changes and progress made in British Guiana would certainly be dissatisfied with the proposed Renison Constitution. I am certain from the speeches made here the majority of hon. Members are dissatisfied with that Constitution, too, but they are saying, "If we are to get that Constitution, then of course we have to work

it." But I will give them a warning as I gave the P.P.P. a warning: the constitution of a colony depends entirely on the Governor and the Secretary of State for they have the power to give it the constitution they like. You can do nothing else but work it. It is not the will of the people to have such a constitution. That is the point which most of the Members of this Council are overlooking.

Its effect will not be felt because there will be money to spend on economic development, but no sooner this country has to depend on itself alone for economic development than we will see the effect of the type of constitution under which it is working. I am positive, after hearing them that Members have not studied both the Waddington the proposed amended Constitution is nothing more than what I would term, benevolent, paternalistic despotism. Benevolent because at the moment we are sailing in good waters and we are given loans and grants; paternalistic despotism because the attitude is one which suggests, "We are your makers and we would like to see you get on well," but when it comes to the Constitution one sees that it is a despotic Constitution. I feel that the Governor was not rightly advised, and that is why I brought forward this motion. But I say to the people, if you can do nothing else, then work it. Whoever wants to work it, can work it. If the effect of it does come as I referred to it, then we will be able to say that the majority of members did not agree with it.

I desire to thank the Members who have given me laurels for my sincerity. I can assure them that unless I had the backing of the majority of my constituency I would never have tabled this

motion. I know how they feel and they gave me the courage. I do not want His Excellency to feel that I would not work along with him for the progress of this country, but at the same time I would not like him to make a false step and later on, when history is to be recorded somebody should say, referring to me, "he was an experienced man in the Council and yet he never drew the Governor's attention to it." I would like His Excellency to know that they would work along with him to beat those same communists. I have beaten them and will beat them again. I know all the tricks they know. The same words they utter I can utter to contradict them. They had said that they would nationalize the land, and I said to the voters, "if you wish to give your land over to your tenants, then you can do so," and I left it to them. I would like His Excellency to consider the speeches made by Members of this Interim Government and be guided by them.

This is my last point. I desire to warn the Governor that it is necessary to grant a constitution as elastic in purpose as was the good one which we had consisting of 24 Members (it was said a 25th was being considered for the Rupununi) at some future date, and with those words I will ask consent of the seconder to withdraw this motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Hon. Members, it is unusual for me not to be in position to take part in a debate of this nature—certainly unusual for the past four or five years. I do not propose to take part in it now, but I think I may be permitted to make one or two observations and I hope not to be considered improper in doing so in my present position.

First of all, I would like to take care to correct for the sake of the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker] record and Hansard a mis-statement (I cannot recall by which Member, but it was made) during the debate. It was stated that the Development Programme for 1956 to 1960 had been approved. The position is that it has been presented to but not yet considered by this Council, and I think it would be unfortunate that the Hansard report should go to London to the Secretary of State for the Colonies without that being corrected.

The other observation which I wish to make relates to the motion itself. I would like to join with those Members who have quite rightly seen fit to commend the hon. Member, Mr. Lee, for having brought this motion. I would like to say that I feel that the hon. Member has done a service to the country by bringing this motion, and it should be noted carefully that the hon. Member brought the motion within less than two days of His Excellency's address in which we were told of the proposed Constitution which is now commonly described as the Renison Constitution. I think it is only fair and proper that that should be noted. In fact he had had an opportunity of only 36 hours to study His Excellency's address in print when he tabled the motion, and therefore it would be quite wrong to suggest that the hon. Member's motion is in some way connected with subsequent opposition which has appeared in various sections of the Press both by letter and article to the proposed Constitution. The hon. Member clearly acted quite independently of any such influences.

We have had an interesting and lengthy debate, but I feel sure that it will be of interest and value to His Excellency and to H.M. Secretary of State for the Colonies and others, because although this Council is purely nominated it cannot be denied that the speech-

es which have been made during this debate are representative of wide sections of the people of the Colony, and that everyone who has spoken has applied himself or herself to the task of discussing the motion in the light of their experience, knowledge and contact with the people. Finally, I feel that the hon. Member, Mr. Lee should be commended for his statesmanlike attitude in deciding to withdraw the motion, having been given the assurance that the Official Report of the debate will be sent forward as early as possible to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Question agreed to.

Motion withdrawn.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

1956 - 1960

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We should now proceed further with the second reading of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Bill, 1956, item 2 on the Order of the Day, but as hon. Members are aware, the Financial Secretary has given notice of his intention to move the suspension of Standing Orders in order to enable him to move a short motion in connection with the Development Programme within a few minutes, and I think the Financial Secretary would like to do that now with the permission of the Council.

The Financial Secretary : I beg to move that the relevant Standing Orders be suspended in order to enable me to take the motion standing in my name on the Order paper.

Sir Frank McDavid : I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Orders suspended.

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move :

"That this Council directs that Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1956 — Development Programme, 1956—1960, be referred to Finance Committee for consideration and report".

This Sessional Paper has been before this Council for some time and Finance Committee has expressed the wish that it should be considered in that Committee in the first instance rather than in full Council. I think from the importance of the Paper and the details it covers Finance Committee is the more suitable forum for its consideration in the first place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Before the hon. Member takes his seat: can he give us an idea when it will be discussed ?

The Financial Secretary: I hope to make a start next week. I do not think we can possibly consider it after the normal sittings of this Council, but on special days.

Mr. Lee: If I may say this, I know that many people are looking forward to this Development Programme and I think it would be a good thing if Members of this Council can sit in the evenings in order to get through. There should be no delay. lest this should be put up later on as an excuse for not carrying out the Programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : So the hon. Member is supporting the motion that it can be taken to Finance Committee and suggesting that it be discussed in evening sessions.

The Attorney General: I beg to second the motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Does any Member wish to express his views on the motion that the Sessional Paper on the Development Programme be referred to Finance Committee, or does any

other Member wish to express his views as to when it should be considered ? I must say that I agree with the hon. Member, Mr. Lee.

Mr. Jailal: For my own self I would be glad to sit at night, but not at a meeting sitting from 2 o'clock in the afternoon until 8 o'clock at night. I would propose that we adjourn at the normal hour of 5 o'clock and return at 7 p.m., sitting until about 10 p.m.

Mr. Lee: I also meant that we should sit in Council at the normal hours, and resume at night from 7 to 10.

Sir Frank McDavid : I do not want to compete with the hon. mover, but I must stress the importance of the Rice Farmers Bill. We must get on with the rest of the Legislative Council's work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : The prospect is that this Council will sit on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday next to deal with the Rice Farmers Bill and other business if possible.

Mrs. Dey : The Village Chairmen's Conference will be taking place on Tuesday next.

Mr. Correia : I am suggesting that we work every night from Wednesday, and then we can work on the Legislative Council business now pending.

Mr. Lee : That is not a bad idea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will leave the matter for a decision on Wednesday afternoon with the understanding that we will sit on Wednesday evening if necessary. I have considerable interest in the Development Programme which is to be considered. I am Chairman of three Boards or Area Committees, all of which have business to be discussed, and after sitting in the Chair here for three hours I still think I will be able to come back in the evening. I

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]
am not complaining, but it maybe that I shall not be able to attend on Wednesday evening. I shall now proceed to put the motion.

Motion put, and carried.

Rice Farmers (Security Of Tenure) Bill

Council resumed the debate on the motion for the second reading of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to provide better security of tenure for tenant rice farmers; to limit the rent payable for the letting of rice lands; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid".

Mr. Lee : When this matter was last adjourned I was dealing with the personnel of the Assessment Committee in the Bill before the Council. I have already pointed out that I propose to move certain amendments in the Committee stage, and some of the amendments will hinge upon the question whether it is the intention of Government to prevent private capital from developing lands, or whether there will be compulsory acquisition of lands by Government for purposes of development under Government control. If it is the intention of Government to take these lands and make up the dams and then offer them to peasant farmers at say one dollar per acre, that would be some incentive to them to increase production, but if we are going to tell the proprietors of these undeveloped lands that they cannot cultivate them without the authority of the Assessment Committee, I do not think any proprietor in his senses would agree to lease them to tenants or persons who would break them into rice lands.

I think that we should take two factors into consideration, one being that there is money to be introduced into the industry under the Moneylenders Bill whereby interest charges will not be extortionate and, secondly, there are

benefits to be derived under the Land Acquisition Bill. If that is so I think that this is not only a communistic idea but a totalitarian one, and that we will never get development in this manner. I have got 750 persons to get together and form themselves into a Co-operative Society, and they applied for Government lands at Hog Island for nearly two years, but could not get any although they are willing to develop them. It is only during the last month or so that Government condescended to accept their money for land, and they are now cultivating in a manner that would make for rapid development.

Last week when I was at Wakenaam, I was told that they had started to plant squash and pumpkins, and that if I wanted they could sell them to me. I must say that they are very glad that they have been able to get lands from Government to cultivate. Rice is a large-scale crop in this Colony and I do know that in order to make a success of their efforts these small farmers have to turn out to work at 6 a.m. with their oxen and toil until dusk, with only a short break between 12 noon and 1 p.m. At Wakenaam they have to pay as much as \$12 per acre for the land they rent, yet we have been told that \$72 is sufficient to break that land and put it under rice cultivation.

Sir Frank McDavid : The hon. Member obviously knows much more about Wakenaam than I do, but surely he must know that what operates as a general rule on the Essequibo Coast is that the tenant pays a nominal rental and then there is a charge for working new land. I have seen that myself. The provision in this Bill is an effort to provide for that normal charging and to make it legal for a tenant to pay a rent of \$1 per acre where he himself is going to meet the cost of preparing new land.

Mr. Lee : The hon. Member probably does not know what takes place on the West Coast, Berbice, and in the Corentyne District, but I was once the proprietor of a rice estate and I know all these details. At present, however, I am speaking of my experiences as a lawyer, through having to sue people on behalf of moneylenders and landlords. If the hon. Member agrees, I can tell this Council how much it costs to break an acre of land and make it suitable for rice cultivation. This estimate of \$72 per acre is based on wrong information, since it cannot be done for that in these days. That is why shrewd persons see and take the advantage of applying for Government lands at only 20c. per acre and make the tenants break them in after having rented them. Evidence was given before the Lee Committee on the Corentyne by shrewd people who saw the advantage of renting Crown lands from Government at 20 cents per acre and sub-letting to tenant farmers.

It has been brought to my notice that lands suitable for rice cultivation in the Torani area have been applied for by shrewd people, and the peasant farmers are being left out of the picture. The evidence which the Committee took on the West Coast, Berbice, and on the Corentyne showed that landlords in those areas did nothing to the lands which had to be prepared by the tenants who shared the crop with them, an arrangement which was equitable to tenant and landlord. But some landlords were not in favour of share-cropping, and charged their tenants rent at \$3 per acre, thus making a profit of \$2.80 per acre on land which they leased from Government at 20 cents per acre.

If Government desires to protect the tenants they should see to it that so long as they paid their assessed rent to the landlords they cannot be turned off the land. That is what the

tenants and landlords want. Tenants cannot run away with rents because they can only remove their padi from the back lands by boat, and the landlords can prevent such removal. Rice farmers in this country have not learnt the Jamaica method of transporting padi on the backs of donkeys.

I submit that this proviso is repugnant to the object of security of tenure legislation. It is quite all right when applied to areas like the West Coast, Berbice, where the landlord does nothing to land which he rents from Government at 20 cents per acre. Government has apparently overlooked the fact that it proposes to appoint Assessment Committees. The Lee Committee recommended that the payment of rent should be on the basis of the returns from the land. One landlord told the Committee that he wanted to resume possession of his land for use by his family. Government has not considered that aspect of the question—the resumption of land by a landlord for his own use. I do not say that Government is wrong in protecting the tenant in that way because, after all, this is legislation to provide security of tenure for rice farmers.

Clause 42(1) does not appear to have been given serious thought. It says :

“42. (1) Any tenant who desires to secure additional land for the cultivation of paddy may apply to the assessment committee in writing for leave to give his landlord notice to make available to him as rice land any land or any portion of such land which forms part of the landlord's estate and which is not then used or likely to be used for any purpose . . .”

Isn't this Russian?

Sir Frank McDavid : Socialism.

Mr. Lee : This cannot be socialism. It is repugnant even to the tenant, as I will point out. A landlord who has land at the back which

[Mr. Lee]

he wishes to put into rice cultivation would choose his tenants for that land. A careless tenant who rents one or two acres mainly for the purpose of growing padi to feed himself and his family, would have the right to approach the Assessment Committee with a view to getting more land from the landlord, perhaps to the disadvantage of his good tenants.

Sir Frank McDavid: The hon. Member began to read the clause but stopped half-way. If he had read the whole clause he would have answered his own point.

Mr. Lee: I will read the rest of the clause:

"The Committee after giving the landlord an opportunity of making any representation he desires to make may, if it is satisfied that such additional land would be beneficially occupied by the tenant, and after considering any claims that may be made by any other tenant of the same landlord, grant the tenant leave to give the landlord notice to make such land or such portion of land available to him for the cultivation of paddy within such time as the committee shall specify. Such time shall be stated in a notice given by the tenant to the landlord."

What I am saying is that a good tenant might have 7 or 8 acres of land while another who has one or two acres might ask to be given more land as he has a family of six. He might be a bad tenant but he says he wants more land. What would the Assessment Committee do in regard to that tenant who has only two acres of land? I say they would give him two more acres, whereas the good tenant would not be able to get more land.

I am asking the hon. Member to reconsider this clause. We should not give the right to any tenant to apply to the Assessment Committee for more land for rice cultivation which a landlord does not desire to rent. I

think we are going a little too far towards the communistic stage. I will never agree with the idea of taking away a landlord's rights. Instead, we should pass legislation to provide for heavy taxation on land which is not beneficially occupied. I think this proposed law should give as much attention to the landlord as it does to the tenant.

Perhaps the hon. Member in charge of the Bill does not have the information that I have, but if he makes inquiries from the Land Settlement Department he would find out what I am talking about. In one section of the Vergenoegen front lands, towards where water is got from Boerasirie, the yield is 20 to 25 bags of padi per acre, and on the same land but towards the road the yield is 14 to 15 bags of padi per acre—on the same soil. Yet, according to this Bill before us the tenants in each of those sections of the land will have to pay the same rental. Supposing that I have two acres of land. I plant my land in such a manner that I get a good crop. My next door neighbour, due to circumstances beyond his control does not plant early—he may have had land in some other place to look after—and he does not get the same yield as I have got. Is it fair that he should pay the same land rent? I suppose the landlord will say, yes.

The landlord knows he is safe. The landlord will see to it that the tenant is encouraged. And what is this encouragement? Loans to him: to pay for rations in the shop, to buy clothes and, more especially, for weddings of his children and for doctor's bills. That is how he makes a profit. On the West Coast and in the Essequibo very often only \$5 and \$6 per bag is got by the tenant after reaping his crop. There is nothing to

protect them against that. I hope the money-lending element will be brought into this Bill.

A man has 20 bags of padi. He asks the landlord to lend him \$100, which he refuses to do, but offers to take the 20 bags of padi. The landlord tells the man to issue a full receipt and write a legal contract for a loan and state in the contract the end of the period given for repayment, when you calculate the interest charges in this case you will see that the landlord has committed an offence under the Moneylenders Ordinance. Perhaps the hon. mover does not know how the landlords have been evading the law as it stands. In my opinion, of all the rice tenants in Leguan there are only about 20 per cent. who are free, and in Wakenaam, a little higher percentage, about 30. When you go to the bottom of it you will find that these tenants are suffering. Due to an increase in the price of rice they have been able to pay their interest charges, and they are told by the landlords, "come again next crop". These rice tenants have no co-operative credit society, so that the landlords are reaping a harvest. The Co-operative Credit Bank was taken over and the people were told to form themselves into co-operatives through which they could borrow and lend money. It was never the intention of Government to do it.

There is one thing which I would like the hon. mover to consider. Here is an attempt to protect the tenant who is paying \$6 per acre, but it does not state, \$6 per acre per annum. Supposing in the issuing of receipts the tenant is not protected?

Sir Frank McDavid: I do submit that the hon. Member should read the definition of the words: it says "at an annual rental of not more than six

dollars per acre." Surely, the wording "annual rental" is the same "six dollars per acre per annum". If the hon. Member looks at the definition of "rice land", he will see.

Mr. Lee: I bow to the definition, but in the context of the Bill it does not say that; it only says, "six dollars per acre."

According to the evidence taken by the Lee Committee, if a landlord gets a *subpoena* for committing a breach by disobeying the order of the Assessment Committee he should be imprisoned. The landlord, on the other hand, says, if a tenant commits a breach by disobeying the order of the magistrate the Ordinance does not provide for his being imprisoned. If the landlord is to be put in prison, then the tenant should be put in prison as well.

Mr. Correia: On a point of information; has the hon. Member finished his speech?

Mr. Lee: If the hon. Member would like some information, I am quite willing to give him. I have concluded my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. Member can get his information in the Committee stage, if not before.

Mr. Correia: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Jailal: I would like to examine this matter in the scales, but before doing so I would like to pay tribute in this Council to the Lee Committee for doing a very thorough and valuable job. Indeed the hon. Member for Agriculture pointed out that the recommendations of the Lee Committee were something of a basis upon which the most recent Committee based its find-

[Mr. Jailal]

ings. I was in the field at the time when the Lee Committee was in action. I happen to have attended two meetings when the Committee was actually taking evidence and I want to tell this Council that the Lee Committee must be commended for what it has accomplished. Having done that, sir, I now wish to express a certain amount of regret. This country has well over 60,000 rice producers and every one of us knows of the circumstances in which rice producers emerged in this Colony. Later on, I propose to tell of the circumstances which made them plant rice, and we all know that out of their unfortunate past a great number of the sons of the farmers—and some of the very farmers themselves—after experiencing a certain amount of failure, have been able to operate and manage their estates. Even though I have had the advantage of a better education than many of these people, I myself take off my hat to them for their general commonsense in matters affecting their business and their landed interests.

I want to express my regret openly that Government, in appointing this Inter-departmental Committee, did not see fit to include even one rice farmer or one producer. I feel that that is an insult to the intelligence of that group, and I make bold to say that even though they themselves may not have voiced this sentiment openly it has given them a lot of ill feeling. Deep down inside, they feel hurt. They feel that they are in business—that they solve their own problems from time to time—and that they should have been given an opportunity to say something on their own behalf. It is a group of people with whom we have shared experiences in past years, and I will always remind this Council that these

people will not forget continuously. Whether it was the other side at fault or not, I am not prepared to say; I merely record the feeling of the majority of the people concerned with the work of this Committee which, for the purpose of my argument, I would like to call the Rice Land Committee.

Sir Frank McDavid: May I suggest to the hon. Member to call it what it called itself—the Inter-departmental Committee. We will call it so.

Mr. Jailal: Sir, I would like to call it the “Director of Agriculture Committee.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take it that the hon. Member (Mr. Jailal) is referring to Sessional Paper No. 6, but the hon. Member for Agriculture has stated what is the name of the Committee. It is a rather long name—the Inter-departmental Committee on Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Legislation.

Mr. Jailal: Sir, the intellectual and moral conditions of any people are ultimately determined by the system of land tenure under which they live. In other words, our system is one which many people are not accustomed to. This is not a country with indigenous systems of tenure, and I think that those people who are interested in land desire that there should be a good system. All the lands owned have been secured by way of land grants and purchases of transported property, but there was no real system such as that which obtained in England throughout the ages. The Committee itself has had a most difficult time in trying to segregate the various systems that have come into vogue within the last 30 years, and to resolve the problem in a manner equitable to

all concerned. Probably the members of the Committee have not been able to settle the problem fully, but I still feel that a measure of praise is due to them. They have certainly brought out some very reasonable points and have given us much food for thought. Since it is a matter that we should examine carefully, I would like to put the case in two parts.

I would like first of all to deal with the question of tenantry, and then proceed to deal with the question of landlords. In dealing with the former question—that of tenantry—I would like to ask who is a rice-farmer tenant and who is a rice-land tenant? A rice-land tenant, to our knowledge, is a man who has been literally kicked out of a sugar estate, or a man whose term of indenture is over or the estate to which he was indentured, abandoned. Not having the canefield to go and work in he had to turn around and do something to keep hunger away from his door, and that is how the cultivation of rice came largely into being. The people started to plant a little rice in order to feed their families, and the system adopted is one which has its roots away back in the East. It is a system whereby certain land owners—and there they have the great Zandars—gave out lands to their people, and as tenants took a certain amount of the produce from them.

In British Guiana however, things were done differently. The landlord himself was virtually a sugar estate labourer and one who was able, because of his occupation and a certain amount of saving, to buy land with a heavy mortgage or to persuade other people to help him to buy an abandoned sugar estate. Other people who were also on the abandoned estates became the tenants, and that is how the

system of rice cultivation was built up. It was originally a system of share-cropping, and the landlord had to help the tenant to some extent. In those days, if a middle walk had to be cleaned there was no question of the landlord hiring labour to have it done. If there were 300 tenants on the land, a day would be set aside for doing the job and they would work together and have it done.

As time went on, children of the tenants came on the scene and the system was changed. These children also became tenants and they had to try and scratch a living out of the land. The hon. Member, Mr. Lee, is aware of the fact that at Wakenaam there are several small estates of about 2,000 acres each and owing to the conditions prevailing until recently, if a man lived at Wakenaam it was exceedingly difficult for him to remove and go to a place like Uitvulgt. He would feel that he belonged to Wakenaam and should not live elsewhere. They remained where they were born or indentured, even though they had very little property to deal with.

In those days, the price of padi was around \$1 or \$1.20 per bag, and it was possible to buy it at even 60c. per bag at places like Mahaica. Later, more estates became abandoned and more people started to drift from them. In 1932 Pln. Hampton Court failed, and Pln. Anna Regina was also abandoned around that time. As I have said, the people started to drift and as there were no tractors with which to cultivate the land they had to resort to other methods. This resulted in a lot of ill-feeling among the tenants and they were called in and told that they would be given a certain amount of credit (by way of goods and so on) for the work they did, since there was very much land to be broken in. Some

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were told by the landlords that they would be given three years grace for the payment of rent after they had broken the land—and those who know about rice lands would understand that they had to break the land one fork deep—and that is the reason why there are all these big “meres” all over the place today.

It was not a case where these farmers had to go on the land and just cut down trees; it was a case where cane fields had to be converted into beds and ricefields. At that time also, drainage and irrigation was a very great problem for these abandoned lands, but if the landlords did not buy them somebody else had to do so. By being given an opportunity to work the land, the tenants were able to earn a livelihood through the

landlords—the very people whom they had heard being described as great oppressors, I would not venture to say that all landlords are good people, but I would say that many of them have spent their life-blood on the stage of these rice lands and for the sake of the rice industry. Those landlords had to find the money. I recall men like Baboo Ram Sawh, Sasenarayan and Rashbeharry who have left their blood in the soil in Essequibo, but have not left great fortunes. As a matter of fact I think they have left a lot of penury. I would prefer to stop now, sir, and resume my speech on Wednesday next.

Council resumed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Council is adjourned until 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 15th of August.