

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.***Friday, 14th December, 1934.*

The Council met pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, SIR CRAWFORD DOUGLAS-JONES, Kt., C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

**PRESENT.**

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. P. W. King, (Acting).

The Hon. the Attorney General, Mr. Hector Josephs, K.C., B.A., LL.M. (Cantab.), LL.B. (Lond.).

The Hon. T. T. Smellie, O.B.E. (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

Major the Hon. W. Bain Gray, M.A., Ph.D. (Edin.), B. Litt. (Oxon), Director of Education.

The Hon. J. S. Dash, B.S.A., Director of Agriculture.

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo (Eastern Berbice).

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

Major the Hon. J. C. Craig, D.S.O., M.E.I.C., Director of Public Works.

The Hon. E. F. McDavid, M.B.E., Colonial Treasurer (Acting).

The Hon. W. A. D'Andrade, Comptroller of Customs.

The Hon. J. Mullin, M.I.M.M., F.S.I., Commissioner of Lands and Mines.

The Hon. B. R. Wood, M.A., Dip. For. (Cantab.), Conservator of Forests.

The Hon. J. A. Henderson, M.B., Ch.B. B.Sc. (P.H.), (Edin.), D.T.M. & H. (Edin.) Surgeon-General.

The Hon. R. E. Brassington (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. N. Cannon (Georgetown North).

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

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. J. I. De Aguiar (Central Demerara).

The Hon. Jung Bahadur Singh (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. F. J. Seaford (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. J. L. Wills (Demerara River).

The Hon. E. M. Walcott (Nominated Unofficial Member).

**MINUTES.**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 13th December, 1934, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

**UNOFFICIAL NOTICES.****THE PILOT SERVICE.**

Mr. CANNON, on behalf of Mr. BRASSINGTON, gave notice of the following questions:—

When did compulsory Pilotage come into force?

Under the Harbour and Pilotage Regulations, 1924, what were the qualifications required of—

- (a) First Class Pilots;
- (b) Second Class Pilots?

How many Pilots were employed by the Harbour Board from 1st January, 1925, stating

- (a) Their names in order of seniority;
- (b) The class to which they were then appointed and the salaries attached thereto?

Have any Pilots been promoted since 1925 from the second to the first Class? If so, state—

- (a) Their names;
- (b) Date of qualification;
- (c) Date of promotion.

When did the Chief Pilot retire from the service?

Is it a fact that the post of Chief Pilot was abolished with the retirement of the last holder of that office? If so has any financial consideration been given the senior First Class Pilot in view of his seniority?

Was the Pilot service re-organised as from the 1st July, 1933? If so, state the number of Pilots now employed, their names, classes and what increase of salary, if any, has been given them?

#### HARBOUR SURVEYOR.

Is it a fact that Captain Gibson, R.N., who made the Hydrographic Survey of the Essequibo River and the mouth of the Demerara River, singly recommended to the Harbour Board that a very capable local officer who worked with him in the above surveys be appointed permanent Harbour Surveyor? If so, state—

- (a) Who was the officer recommended;
- (b) His qualifications;
- (c) When was he appointed;
- (d) When was his appointment terminated, and why?

#### HYDROGRAPHER.

Who is the Officer now appointed as Hydrographer to the Harbour Department, and what is the salary attached to this newly created post? What are the qualifications of the Officer appointed, and is it a fact that he has an assistant drafted from the Lands and Mines Department as his draughtsman? If so, state—

- (a) Salary drawn by Hydrographer's draughtsman.
- (b) Why was the Officer recommended by Captain Gibson, R.N., not appointed to the dual post?

#### CAPTAINS.

Give the number of Captains now employed by the Transport and Harbours Department stating—

- (a) Their names;
- (b) Date of appointment to the service;
- (c) Date of promotion to Captain;
- (d) Present salary of each.

#### FLOOD RELIEF.

Mr. BACCHUS gave notice of the following questions:—

What sum of money has Government granted to date to Villages and Estates in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice separately that have suffered by the recent floods under the following heads:—

- (a) Steps taken to meet present situation;
- (b) Preventive measures for the future?

Give the names of villages and the amounts of grants which have been given to them in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice separately, and are under—

- (a) Local Government Board;
- (b) Polder Ordinance;
- (c) Drainage Ordinance.

Give the names of villages and the amounts of grants which have been given in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice separately, and are not under:—

- (a) Local Government Board;
- (b) Polder Ordinance;
- (c) Drainage Ordinance.

If no grants were being given to villages that are not under—

- (a) Local Government Board;
- (b) Polder Ordinance;
- (c) Drainage.

Why?

Is Government aware that all the Villages on the West Coast, Berbice, that are not under the Local Government Board have not received any grant though they have suffered to the same extent as villages under the Local Board?

If the answer to question 6 is in the affirmative, Why?

#### BURNT EARTH ON W.C. BERBICE ROADS.

How many cubic yards of burnt earth were bought by Government for the period 1st January to 30th November, 1934, to be used on the West Coast, Berbice roads, and the total cost?

How many cubic yards of burnt earth were used during the same period on the roads and the cost of laying it down under following heads:—

- (a) Supervision;
- (b) Hire of carts;
- (c) Labour.

#### ORDER OF THE DAY.

##### ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from Revenue during the year ending 31st December, 1935.

##### SUPREME COURT.

Item 1e—1 Class I. Clerk, \$1,716.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I have risen to support the recommendation that this officer should be appointed. In doing so I would recommend that one of the qualifications of the appointee should be that he should have a primary knowledge of book-keeping, if possible more than a primary knowledge of book-keeping, and I do so for these reasons. First of all there is an obligation on executors and administrators to file their accounts in the Deeds Registry. In practice those accounts are lodged there and receive officially no further examination. It may or may not arise that in the course of the investigation of an estate's accounts the matter is taken before a Judge who does not necessarily possess a knowledge of book-keeping. In the same manner the accounts of the Public Trustee are filed with the Registrar, and other accounts may or may not have to be looked at by the Registrar. It is desirable that there should be in that office an officer who has some knowledge of book-keeping or

accountancy, whatever is the difference between the two. In ordinary commercial suits accounts are sometimes submitted for the consideration of the Court, and there are instances where the Judge finds some difficulty in doing so.

The old practice was that those accounts were referred to the Accountant of Court who was then an officer attached to the Registrar's office, and I believe I am correct in saying that one of the reasons which actuated the recommendation for his removal was the fact that some brother officer discovered that that gentleman was earning more money than himself. Probably it was the then Registrar, because from time to time the Accountant of Court would be awarded sums of \$50 or \$100 in connection with commercial suits. It was discovered by somebody that he might possibly at some seasons be earning more money than the Registrar. In any event, for the reasons I have given, it is possible to find an officer in the Service to do the work. If it is possible to secure one with those qualifications let it be understood that any sums awarded to him by the Court in cases like those I have mentioned should not be regarded, in the case of his transfer to another office, as emoluments he should take with him, or that he should be compensated for if he is removed from that office. I think too that he would be a very useful man there in a good many directions. For instance he could superintend not only the collection of money but could be largely helpful to the Audit Office which sometimes sends a clerk there for a period of three or four weeks. If this officer is appointed he could help in the examination of transactions there and so save the time of the Auditor.

There is another direction in which the officer could be helpful. This office looks after the collection of estate duty. That duty is performed by an officer who has other duties to perform also of an important nature, and it frequently happens that oversights are made or the public cannot be attended to, because I happen to know that one of the officers who looks after that is also in charge of the Conveyancing Department. It often happens that his time is occupied in the examination of estates' accounts, and in a good many ways the duties of that officer are interfered with by duties in other direc-

tions. I mention that because there is need for that officer. It will never do to appoint a man on ordinary transfer from one office to another. The officer has to be made to understand that he has to serve the public. There must be no condescension about the matter, and if it is possible to isolate him it would be better. There is always some difficulty in getting an officer who is screened off from the public. I suggest that the Government examine the claims of officers for this appointment with great care.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am obliged to the hon. Member for his remarks and I will have the matter looked into.

Item 1*m*—Duty Allowance to Officer in charge of Sub-Registry in New Amsterdam, Berbice, \$360.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I desire to draw Government's attention to the inadequate staff in that Department. The clerk in charge also does the duty of a marshal, and there is one clerical assistant in that Department. The clerk in charge has to leave the office and go into the country districts to serve writs and execute other legal processes, and sometimes it is inconvenient to get him at the proper time when he is required. That is due to no fault of that particular officer, but to the fact that the Department is under-staffed. In years gone by there have been several officers of great educational ability put into that Department, and the expenditure under that Head was an enormous sum. Government at the time contrived and had the status of the office reduced by reducing the number of highly paid officers. I do urge that there is need for an additional clerk in the office to relieve the officer in charge to concentrate more on important duties. A young man should be trained to do the work.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I wish to endorse what the hon. Member has said. I would like to emphasise the fact that Government took the trouble in the first instance to make inquiry as to the necessity that exists for an additional clerk in the Sub-Registry in New Amsterdam. After two years Government did appoint a young man but he is now employed somewhere else. He has left the position the same as it was before he was there. I cannot con-

ceive that if Government really appreciates the position it would remain as it is. There are men with Senior Cambridge Certificates tumbling over one another for work. They volunteer for service and after 18 months Government says it cannot employ them.

THE CHAIRMAN: I will make a note of what the hon. Member has said and I will go into the matter.

Item 4—Travelling Expenses and Subsistence Allowance, \$500.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I would like to draw attention to the present charge for the service of processes by the marshal or bailiff. Under the Rules of Court the charge is fixed at 40 cents per mile. The question is whether the Department spends the whole of that 40 cents that is collected for travelling from litigants. The charge was fixed at a time when motor car rates were considerably higher than they are at present. Motor cars are now available at 12 cents per mile. It is a hardship on litigants to pay 40 cents per mile because they are able to hire conveyances at less than 20 cents per mile. I take it that Government has no desire to make money at the expense of the public.

Mr. DIAS: I would like very much to support the hon. Member. It is not a new subject. I think Government might address a communication to the Judges requesting them to revise the tariff in order to make the payment by litigants more in keeping with what is expended. To have a writ served at Mahaicony I have to pay \$8. The marshal spends about three shillings and the Government makes about \$7 profit. That does not seem to be right and I do not think the present Judges approve of it. In England a solicitor is authorised to serve his own processes. I believe when the Rules were being amended a year or two ago some such suggestion was made. Government will not require such a large staff if it allows solicitors to serve processes. It is done in Trinidad. If a private individual serves his own writ he has to make an affidavit which gives Government revenue in another form. The matter calls for immediate inquiry, and the attention of the Judges should be called to it. On the travelling item there is a clear profit of  $\frac{2}{3}$ ths of what

is lodged with Government, and there is absolutely no justification for it. No one can say a word in defence of it, except that revenue will be lost, but that is no reason why Government should extract money from the public. The whole idea of the recent amendment of the Rules of Court was to reduce the cost of litigation, but all practitioners know that instead of reducing the cost of litigation by a reduction of the fees of the Deeds Registry those fees were very substantially increased, in some cases by 100 per cent. The reduction was made in the legal practitioners' fees, but Registry's fees were all put up.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I have heard those remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Dias so often that I wonder he has the energy to repeat them. For many years the hon. Member for Berbice River, Mr. Dias and I have been obliged to make those remarks, and the curious position is that the substantive holder of the office was a barrister, but since he became Registrar he has entirely lost his identity as a barrister. All the information he has acquired as a barrister he has placed at the disposal of Government. He has recommended an increase of the item and has succeeded in very largely increasing the revenue of the Department. I told him that since he has become an official he has not recommended the reduction of an item which he knew as a barrister should be reduced, and this is one of them. This is what is known as distance money. It is not fair to collect from the public an amount beyond what is actually spent. If the marshal has to serve a writ a mile from Georgetown 40 cents is exacted although we all know that it costs 6d. to cross the river. He can serve a writ at Vreed-en-Hoop and return within an hour. This charge is to cover the travelling expenses of the marshal, and the curious thing about it is that the explanatory note says: "Increase in work of Marshals." It is not fair to the public. I should like to see another marshal appointed. It should be possible to find someone who can perform the duties there and give satisfaction. I have gone there and found no one in that Department at all.

Mr. ELEAZAR: This charge originated in the days when travelling was slow and expensive. To-day people can travel by bus from Springlands to New Amsterdam for 48 and 36 cents.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I would like to represent the litigants' side for a moment. One who is endeavouring to collect a debt has to be saddled with extra expense which I will be told will be recovered from the defendant, but there are a number of cases in which the costs are not recoverable. If any relief is forthcoming in this direction it will be very welcome. Government would be well advised to go into the matter carefully and see what relief can be afforded.

Mr. WILLS: I would like to add one word to the debate. The charge of 40 cents is rather exorbitant because the bailiff who serves the process is already drawing something for travelling, and if he has to travel outside the orbit of his Court it is very little. I think it is a matter in which an investigation should be made in order to give the public some relief.

Mr. CANNON: I have a long story to tell when the time comes in connection with this very matter, but it is not yet ripe. I had the necessity a few days ago to request the Registrar's Office to summon a man to give evidence for me as a witness. I cannot remember the exact amount, but it was certainly over \$3 I had to pay, and that man lived not very far out of Georgetown—at the Lodge. A soap box in the form of a 'bus will take one there for a penny, but I was asked to pay over \$3. Yesterday my hon. friend Mr. Dias told us that the Judges and members of the legal profession did certain things. I think the whole trouble is brought about because it is entrusted to the Judges and the legal minds. I hate committees but I urge that Government might get a few laymen who have to pay for these bits of pleasure, to inform Government of the true state of affairs. It is scandalous, and the time I hope is not very far distant when I will put the whole matter before Government.

Mr. WOOLFORD: For the information of the hon. Member I would like to inform him that lawyers had no part in the framing of the Schedules at all.

Mr. CANNON: I was only referring to what happened yesterday. I asked the hon. Member to tell us who represented the litigants but I am afraid he was not able to satisfy me or the Council as to who represented the laymen. They had no representation.

THE CHAIRMAN: A note will be made of the points raised in this debate, and I have no doubt that on representation being made to the Judges they will be quite willing to consider the position.

Mr. CANNON: May I ask who is to make those representations?

THE CHAIRMAN: Government will.

Item 9—Fees to Counsel, Murder cases, \$400.

Mr. WILLS: I suggest that this item be increased to \$500. The money is used for the payment of barristers who are assigned by the Chief Justice to defend paupers charged with murder. For some time past the amount voted has proved inadequate, and in those cases in which a practitioner accepts his assignment he does it in the interest of justice. At the same time he might find that a case lasts a number of days and many intricate points might arise. He loses a lot of time and at the end of the trial the Judge awards him an honorarium. He presents his account to the Treasury and if it happens to be about the middle of the year there may be no money at the credit of the vote, and he is held up for some time pending a supplementary estimate or the Governor's warrant. Reference to the Comparative Statement of Expenditure shows that in 1924 the amount spent was \$1,067, in 1925, \$80; 1926, \$426; 1927, \$705; 1928, \$1,145; 1929, \$340; 1930, \$465; 1931, \$1,150; 1932, \$625; 1933, \$140. Taking the average I think \$500 would be adequate.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I am rather surprised to hear this point raised. I hope there will be a disappearance of this item. (Hear, hear). It is not a pleasant thing to contemplate murders being committed and people being tried before the Courts. But in any case I think the fees are fixed by the Judge who hears the case, the duration of which is taken into account. After all practitioners must not look upon this as a money-making avenue. If they are assigned they should do it without regard to the amount of their remuneration. That is my view as an individual. Why should there be an increase of the item? Does my friend contemplate that there will be more murders committed? It does not reflect very creditably on the behaviour

of the people. We consider them law-abiding citizens.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I do not suppose the hon. Member for New Amsterdam wishes to indulge in this debate; he is such a modest man. I do not think the Attorney-General would also like to interfere, but I can say something because not a cent will come to me. It has been my experience that after a time, because of the reduction of the vote, some people were not defended at all, and many a man who might have lived to repent has been sent over the border because of the sort of defence he got. (Laughter). Within recent times I happen to know that after a very intricate and lengthy case the barrister complains that he has lost by the transaction because the Judge, knowing that only a small amount of money is available, awards a very small sum. It should not be so. One regrets that these items have to appear, but we should pay counsel an adequate sum. A barrister is assigned to do his level best in defence of the life of a fellow creature. When he has done his best fair remuneration should be given him. Do not expect him to do his best and give him little because there is no money. Do not make the remuneration so low that an irresponsible individual would shirk the work or refuse the brief when there is an intricate case. I think the hon. Member has not said all he has in his mind. This year there have been five murder cases. If we are going to give these people legal assistance we should give them a fair fighting chance. Sometimes they do not get that; they come out undefended.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I do not know whether the Judges are guided by consideration of what sum is on the Estimate. I take it that they would be guided by the duration and complicated nature of the case. I daresay that if the Chief Justice recommended it and there was no money Your Excellency would approve of a supplementary estimate. I suggest that we leave it to be dealt with on supplementary estimate if the amount is inadequate. It is not a matter that should be discussed here.

Mr. CANNON: It appears to me that if we eliminated the amount altogether and left it to the Government to pay any

amount recommended by the Chief Justice that would get over the difficulty. My opinion is that although we are living under Crown Colony Government we ought to have British justice, and persons charged with murder should have the best legal service available. I am surprised to hear that the best service for the defence of these unfortunate people is not available. It seems to me a scandal that such a statement should be made and go unchallenged.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am not quite clear what is meant by the suggestion that the best service is not always available in these cases. I think I ought to mention that in most countries and places in the British Empire the defence of murder cases is not looked upon as a source of income so much as an opportunity for counsel to do his very best for somebody who is charged with murder, and he is willing to accept a small honorarium for that purpose. That is what is done in England to my knowledge, and to my knowledge in other Colonies also. The amounts given are by no means in proportion to that paid by a person charged who himself employs counsel. I am surprised to hear, and I can hardly believe it to be a fact, that a member of the English Bar ventured to do in this country what he does not do anywhere else, and that is to decline to appear for a man charged with murder because he thinks he is not going to be sufficiently remunerated when he is assigned by the Crown.

The best men in other places when asked by the Court, not the Crown, to appear for the defence are always willing to do so, and it is the duty of counsel who undertakes or agrees to appear for anyone to do his level best whatever the remuneration may be, or even if there is no remuneration whatever. I would be very sorry to believe that such a thing could possibly exist here because it is contrary to the best traditions of the Bar, and any hon. Members who may have thought so are labouring under a very grave mistake. I may mention that in other parts of the Empire, in England and in other Colonies, very often at an Assize Court it may occur to a Judge, having looked at the depositions, that a particular person should be represented by counsel, and when he takes that

view he asks some counsel who happens to be in Court to appear for the person charged. Counsel invariably does that and without remuneration whatever. No counsel would ever dream of refusing to accede to such a request by a Judge, except for some reason which made it physically or morally impossible for him to appear.

Reference to the Decennial Statement, which was referred to by the hon. Member, shows clearly that a standing amount is usually voted, but it is evident that when circumstances require it a larger amount is expended when necessary. I have only intervened to call attention to the fact that when necessary a larger amount than that on the Estimates has been expended, and also to make clear what I have always understood to be, and what is generally regarded to be the guiding principle with reference to defending counsel in these matters in accordance with the traditions of the English Bar.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I am very much pleased to have had reiterated once more, as I have had many times before, the traditions of the English Bar on this particular subject, but I state here as a fact which can be satisfactorily proved, that counsel of standing who cannot afford the time to do an elaborate murder case makes some excuse for not accepting the assignment. He has to do something else to bring him proper remuneration. I think that is highly moral no matter what the traditions of the Bar may be. I believe that the Judges would award an amount worthy of the barrister according to his labour, but I know as a fact also that they are paid very small amounts—in some cases \$75 and \$80—when they were worth very much more, because the vote had been exceeded, and the Judges have not scrupled to say so too. If the hon. the Attorney-General does not know that it is one of the things he does not know. He may take it from me that what I have stated here is correct. Let it be known that the Judges need not confine themselves to the \$400 voted. I only rose because the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice made the youthful Member appear to have done a wrong thing. We all feel the same way.

Mr. WILLS: The remarks of the hon.

Member for Eastern Berbice have not dampened my zeal at all in this matter. I have listened with rapt attention to the remarks of the Attorney-General, but I would like to know whether the same high traditions and principles that defending counsel is supposed to uphold in a British country are not applicable to counsel prosecuting for the Crown in murder cases. Is the Crown Prosecutor supposed to prosecute for love, or is there a fixed sum on the Estimate to be awarded to him by the Attorney-General?

Item passed as printed.

Item 13—Furniture, \$1,075.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Last year we voted \$500, now Government is asking for \$1,075.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: May I ask whether that sum has been spent already?

Mr. DIAS: I think those Members who are opposing this item or making inquiry into it should visit the Law Courts. I have visited many Courts in the West Indies, not to mention those in England, and I can say that our Courts are disgraceful, except that of the Chief Justice which was improved before his arrival. The baize is leaving the tables, and one has to sit on greenheart chairs all day long. I have to borrow a special chair to sit on. Those who visit the Law Courts will know and realise how inconvenient it is for anybody to do any work there. I imagine that this sum is required to complete the work in the other two Courts. I took some visitors to the Courts and they said they looked very dirty. I explained that it was because we are hard up just now.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I asked whether the money was already spent but I have not got a reply. I visit the Law Courts and happen to know that quite a lot of work has been done there recently. If this money is required to complete the good work it is all well.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I may mention that the Magistrates' Courts are also in a disgraceful condition in respect of the supply of furniture in the country Courts. I hope that whatever furniture is available from the Law Courts will be transferred to the country Courts. I feel sure that Your

Excellency will keep the promise you made some time ago.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I only asked why \$1,750 is on the Estimate when only \$500 was spent last year. I was only making an inquiry. If the money is required, spend it by all means, but please remember the Magistrates' Courts.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member for Central Demerara asked if the money has already been spent. It has not been spent. We had \$500 last year with which we completed one Court. There are two more to be done and they will cost \$500 each.

Mr. CANNON: I hope you will be able to find a few more dollars to provide additional accommodation in the Chief Justice's Court. There is one thing I would like to ask. Is it possible for anyone to say how often are the Court-rooms cleaned? It ought to be done periodically. In my opinion it is unhealthy to sit there for any length of time.

Dr. HENDERSON (Surgeon-General): I rise to support the hon. Member, and I heartily recommend what he has suggested.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: The witnesses that attend Court ought to be considered and some convenience afforded them so that we would not have them being rebuked for passing up and down the corridor.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I would like to draw your attention to conditions in regard to furniture in many of the Magistrates' Courts.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member can deal with it under the Head "Magistrates."

Mr. WOOLFORD: I am rather surprised that the hon. Member who represents Berbice has not drawn Government's attention to the deplorable condition of the figure of "Justice." The scales are not being evenly held in the hand. I think the sword is still there, but the scale may or may not be there. There seems to be something seriously wrong.

Mr. ELEAZAR: The sword is not there. (Laughter).

THE CHAIRMAN: I will go into the question of cleaning the Law Courts and make inquiries as to whose duty it is. It may mean another Messenger. We will go into the matter and see whether more money is required.

Item passed.

#### PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

THE CHAIRMAN: If hon. Members will agree I propose that we proceed to consider the estimates of the Public Works Department because I wish to ask the Secretary of State if we could begin to spend the money on Public Works Extraordinary on the first of January or as soon after as possible, as a certain amount of the work is intended for the relief of unemployment. If there is no objection I suggest that we turn to page 87, Public Works Department.

Item (3)—District Engineers, \$6,000.

Mr. SEAFORD: I do not know whether to bring it up under this Head or under District Commissioners. In certain districts the work is neglected or cannot be done because the District Engineer is also District Commissioner. For instance the District Engineer in Essequibo is also District Commissioner. He also looks after the Orderneeming Industrial School and is the Director of Public Works and Director of Sea Defences in Essequibo. No man can combine those jobs and do all thoroughly. It is impossible, and I feel certain that the Director of Public Works will be the first to admit that they cannot be carried on efficiently.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the hon. Member wishes to pursue the matter further it would better come under the District Administration vote. I may say here that we tried it out in Berbice and found it a failure. The policy of Government is to increase the numbers of District Commissioners and avoid dual posts being by held one officer.

Mr. SEAFORD: There is a lot of money to be spent on sea defences, and that work has to be carried out by the District Engineers. The Board feels that it is quite impossible for the work to be done efficiently if the District Engineer has other duties to look after.



THE CHAIRMAN: Government is fully aware of that, and that is why we propose to increase the staff of the District Commissioners. The hon. Member will have further opportunity to raise the point again under the District Administration vote if he wishes to do so.

Mr. SEAFORD: My reason for doing it here is that if it were to continue I would have moved the appointment of another District Engineer.

Mr. ELEAZAR: We have too many Engineers now. The Commissioner has nothing to do in Berbice and the Engineer was given that duty along with his own business. He was often in office when he should be doing his work as an Engineer.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon. Member does not know that where large construction work is being carried on, as will be done in Essequibo next year, it is absolutely essential to have one man on the spot. Nothing is done correctly unless he is there. Members complain about money not being spent properly, which is bound to happen unless there is an Engineer on the spot. It has been made perfectly obvious to us on the Sea Defence Board that there is a lack of supervision, and that there must be increased supervision if this money is to be spent in the way it should be. We find we are losing money by not spending a little more on supervision.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Reference has been made to Essequibo. I entirely agree with the remarks of Mr. Seaford in regard to the necessity of having a Supervisor or Engineer on the spot when important works are being done. It is proposed to spend about \$56,000 in Essequibo, chiefly on new permanent work, and if the taxpayers' money is not to be wasted to an enormous extent it is essential that an Engineer should be permanently on the spot while the work is going on. I would ask that if such an officer is appointed he should be someone who has knowledge of sea defences. Whenever any large sea defence works are undertaken in the Colony there is a tremendous leakage of money, and that work is paid for two or three times over. I do ask that this matter should have Government's early attention. I believe that the work in

Essequibo is to start early in January. I do hope it will.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Hon. Members seem to have missed the point. There are five Engineers besides the Director of Public Works. In the old days we had one Engineer in Berbice, one in Demerara, one in Essequibo and the rest in Georgetown. If there was an emergency, as there is now on the East Coast, an Engineer was despatched to the scene. Is an Engineer to stand on the spot and become a driver? I cannot conceive of an Engineer standing up the whole day looking at men working. He gives directions and puts his foreman in possession of what he wants done, and returns to see that it is done.

Major CRAIG: It is very interesting to hear this talk about additional assistance because I have been asking for the same thing for the last five years. When my staff was reduced by four Engineers, the Deputy Director and three assistants the expenditure of the Department increased. It is absolutely impossible to carry on the work properly and have it well supervised, and get value for the money spent unless there is an adequate staff. It is absolutely impossible for the work we have in hand, and especially the heavy sea defence work that will be undertaken next year, to be carried on as efficiently as I would like with the present staff. The Financial Commissioners when they were here recommended that my staff be reduced by the Deputy Director and two Engineers. They considered that I had no use for a Deputy. I thought differently. I also lost two Assistant Engineers. One has been replaced this year, and I was very pleased when the hon. Nominated Member brought up the question of the need of one in Essequibo. The District Commissioner undoubtedly has too much to do as the result of the duties attached to the several offices he holds, and it is essential that an Engineer should be there. It is a very large area, and besides the public roads and buildings there is the sea defence problem which must be attended to. Work is going to be started there which will undoubtedly require the whole time of that Engineer, and I strongly recommend that the staff should have the additional Engineer. As a matter of fact it will be considered by the Sea Defence Board in view of the

work being done in Essequibo. If it is possible I would ask that another Assistant Engineer be added, to the staff of the Department which will help matters considerably and permit of the work in Essequibo being carried out under the supervision of an Engineer.

Mr. CANNON : I would like to tell the Director the reason why he has found a lot of opposition to increasing his staff is that we were endeavouring to save the unfortunate people of the Colony from extra taxation, but we have been forced to realise that that state of affairs no longer exists ; they are not to be taxed any further, and all the money that is voted now is to come from the Imperial Government. Therefore, if the Director asks for six more Engineers, provided he is going to employ people of the Colony as Engineers, he will have my support.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : I am very much interested in the remarks of the Director. I agree with them, but what struck me as illuminating was his statement that the District Commissioner in Essequibo has far too much work to do. That just bears out what I said at the opening of the Council, that officials cannot, and in many instances dare not give voice to their opinions here. I would like to have heard the Director say that during the regime of the late Governor, but I did not hear those remarks then. It was one of Sir Edward Denham's pet schemes that Essequibo could be run without anybody looking after these things, but now the truth has come out. The Director of Public Works never let us know his opinion as to why things were not going properly in Essequibo, but we have heard it to-day.

Mr. ELEAZAR : I would like to know where these five Engineers are stationed at the present time. I do not know if they are all cooling their heels in the office in Georgetown.

Major CRAIG : There are two Executive Engineers, one is in Berbice and the other on the West Coast. There are two District Engineers, one being stationed on the East Coast while the other is at present in charge of the sea defence work at Nog Eens, while an Asst. Engineer is looking after the work in Georgetown and the East Bank. Those are all the Engineers I have.

Mr. ELEAZAR : Then there are two on the East Coast ?

Major CRAIG : There are two on the East Coast, one in charge of the work at Nog Eens, which is absolutely essential in view of the amount of money being spent there.

Mr. ELEAZAR : Where are you going to send the other one you are asking for ?

Major CRAIG : I am going to send him to Essequibo.

Mr. ELEAZAR : Isn't there an Engineer in Essequibo ?

Major CRAIG : There is not an Engineer but a District Commissioner.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : The District Commissioner in Essequibo is what I would call a jack-of-all-trades. He is Superintendent of Onderneeming, Chief Commissary and everything, with the result that he is undoubtedly unable to do it.

Mr. ELEAZAR : I quite see the reason. It is because there are two Engineers on the East Coast, one standing up to see people work. One of them should be sent to Essequibo, and the other left to do the work on the East Coast. An Engineer is required to be at Nog Eens because there is not a competent foreman to do the work. A competent foreman is wanted.

Item passed.

Item (17)—15 Overseers, \$15,252.

Mr. DE AGUIAR : I rise to enquire whether Government has under consideration the question as to whether these Overseers should be placed on the Fixed Establishment. I see from this list that one Overseer is drawing a salary of \$1,560 per annum, two are receiving \$936 each and one \$1,200. I merely quote the figures in order to show that the first-class Overseers are enjoying salaries equal to those being drawn by Class II. officers, while some of the second-class Overseers are equivalent to Class III. officers. In addition to that, if my information is correct, some of these Overseers have given very lengthy service. One has 25 years, another 24 years and another 19 years.

Having regard to the nature of their work I think they should have some feeling of security. They are in the same position as Class II. and Class III. officers, at least as regards salary, and there is no reason why the question of putting them on the Fixed Establishment should not be favourably considered by Government. I know I will be told that when these men retire they will receive from Government some consideration in the shape of a gratuity, but I think it will be agreed that that position is very unsatisfactory because they will then be subject to the whims of the Head of the Department or a change of Government. I therefore appeal to Your Excellency to give the matter some consideration and mete out justice to them.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I do not know what is Your Excellency's view in this matter, but I hope you will give us an expression of opinion so that when the new Governor comes he will not be able to say that we allowed the time to pass. Some people who came from Africa conceived the idea of a European Civil Service and a native Civil Service, but that failed because we have no Europeans and no natives. Government established a Clerical Branch and intended to make another class for these officers, but that class has not yet been made. The whole thing has been broken down but no attempt has been made to rebuild. There are a lot of men who are not considered to be in this Clerical Branch, for whom nothing has been done. They have been denied the privileges which they hitherto enjoyed, and which they hoped to enjoy when they entered the Service.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I suppose Government will go into the whole question. There seems to be great uneasiness and dissatisfaction in the Service. I would suggest to Government that the whole matter should be inquired into. There are other Departments to be considered and the whole Service should be gone into and certain decisions arrived at which will give ease and satisfaction to all concerned.

Mr. McDAVID (Colonial Treasurer): I would like to remind hon. Members who have just spoken that the new Pensions Ordinance passed in 1933 makes definite provision for holders of non-pensionable

offices of this class. They are eligible for pension under certain conditions. If they serve for a period over 20 years they are eligible for two-thirds of the pension they would have got had they been in a pensionable office. Their position is quite clearly defined and secured by law. That is quite definite under the law that has recently been passed.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I must thank the hon. Member for that, but in view of the responsibilities of these men being so heavy—they are responsible to a large extent for Government funds; they have to make out weekly wages' lists and are on the road all the time—I cannot see why they should only be eligible for two-thirds of the ordinary pension. But that is no answer to my question. My point is that by reason of the responsible work they do they should be placed on the Fixed Establishment. There is such a thing as a dissatisfied employee. I join the hon. Member for Berbice River in asking Your Excellency for an expression of opinion. We would like to know whether Government has considered the matter, and what decision has been arrived at.

Mr. WALCOTT: In this particular instance I am in entire accord with the two previous speakers. In the case of the senior Overseers I certainly think they are a class of Government employee who, after 20 years of satisfactory service, should be entitled to as good pension rights as clerks in the Service. I have seen the work of some of these men and the energy they expend, and I certainly think their position deserves Your Excellency's attention. I hope it will have it. I associate myself with the remarks of the two previous speakers without any fear of being taunted by the Colonial Secretary that it is an electioneering bogey.

Mr. SEAFORD: I am in sympathy with anything for increased security for Government employees, but I cannot see how we can single out one Department. We have to go through the whole list of officers; we cannot make distinctions.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I am not asking for distinctions. Two years ago Government promised that another list would be made out. I would like to know how is the pension calculated.

Mr. McDAVID: The point is that a person who holds a non-pensionable office, such as these Overseers hold, is eligible for a pension. If he has served for over 20 years that pension is two-thirds of the pension he would get had he held a post on the Fixed Establishment. It is calculated on the total years of his service although he is not on the Fixed Establishment.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Let us assume that an Overseer gives 19 years' service; a new Head of the Department gets rid of him. He has not qualified for pension but has given 19 years' service to the Government. I appeal again to Government to go into the matter.

THE CHAIRMAN: In regard to this matter I may say that, as pointed out by the Colonial Treasurer, the question of officers on the Unfixed Establishment has been under consideration by Government for some years and only recently have we been able to arrive at any decision to make them pensionable in any shape or form. There is a great deal to be said in favour of what hon. Members have said, that men who have given faithful service for several years should be given the same pension rights as other officers, but they are very much better off now than they were before. I have no doubt that in time, as the finances of the Colony improve, the position of these officers will also improve. At the moment they have something they had not before, and hon. Members must be prepared to leave it there for the moment. Hon. Members' representations will be noted and I have no doubt it will be possible to divide these officers again into classes so that after certain good service, on the recommendation of the Head of the Department, they may fall into a higher category which may be equal to the Fixed Establishment. They are definitely in a position they were not in before in regard to their pensionable rights after serving a certain number of years.

#### PURE WATER SUPPLY SCHEME.

Item 3—Drilling new Wells and reconditioning old Wells, \$22,400.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I had intended tabling a question in regard to this item. A promise was made by Government some years ago, when the whole question of a

pure water supply was debated in this Council, that all parts of the Colony were going to have these wells, and that stand-pipes would be put up along the roads. That was several years ago. May I ask Government when Essequibo may expect a start to be made with its pure water supply scheme? Every other part of the Colony has had attention. I believe Wakenaam and Leguan are to have it, but I do not know how long we are to wait for it. I would like to hear from Government when Essequibo may expect the well-boring plant to operate there, and a genuine effort made to lay down the pipes in order to give the people a pure water supply.

Mr. LUCKHOO: On your recent visit to the Corentyne Coast Your Excellency saw the condition of some of those wells. The plant is now operating at Rosignol and I hope it will be taken across the river to recondition the wells on the Corentyne Coast. During the drought the people on that Coast had a very trying time as they are dependent in a large measure on water from those wells.

Mr. SEAFORD: I believe the rig is at present on its way to the Corentyne Coast. All the wells on the sugar estates will be reconditioned, and a very large number of people in the district will get the benefit at the expense of the sugar estates.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I ask, sir, that the plant be sent to Sisters village which is a little less than eight miles from New Amsterdam.

The Committee adjourned for the luncheon recess.

Mr. ELEAZAR (resuming): I understand that the well at Sisters village, East Bank, Berbice river, has ceased to flow, or has not very long to go. I would be glad if the Director could see his way to give some attention to reconditioning that well. Water is very scarce in the district, and now that the well is ceasing to flow it is causing great anxiety.

With your permission, sir, I would like to refer to some of the public buildings in Berbice. They have been in a very bad state of repair for the last three years. Two years ago I was told here that they were going to be looked after, and that a

start would be made on the Corentyne. In the meantime unemployment is rife in New Amsterdam. I very often look through the window and see men idling; they can get no work to do. In Georgetown there is a very much larger population. I am told that 52 cents per day is being paid to the labourers at Nog Eens, and that Government is not getting value for it. I ask that when Government is going to start relief work it should remember that New Amsterdam is on the map of British Guiana. The Hospital wants painting and several buildings are out of order.

Mr. LUCKHOO: On the next page there is a large sum put down for maintenance of public buildings. I hope that steps will be taken to arrange that these works in the Counties are carried out at the same time so as to relieve unemployment in those Counties at the same time. Some of the Government buildings are in a shockingly dilapidated condition.

THE CHAIRMAN: I must ask hon. Members to confine their remarks to the item under consideration. It will save the time of the Council.

Item 2—Well Drillers, \$5,880.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I would like to know whether there is any special arrangement regarding the employment of these drillers. I see there is an explanatory note with respect to the additional well driller for 1935. It says: "One driller is employed in drilling wells on private properties the cost of which, including the driller's salary, is met by the proprietors." That may be true in respect of 1934, but I am asking whether there is any special arrangement for 1935. If there is no special arrangement between this Government and the driller we are going to be told next year that he has given satisfactory service and it is proposed to employ him again. By that time we would not have any money coming from private proprietors.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Before the adjournment I asked for certain information.

Major CRAIG: With reference to the hon. Member's inquiry as to the drilling of wells in Essequibo I do not think it will be possible to drill any in 1935 owing

to the necessity for keeping the rigs within as small an area as possible so as to avoid long travelling by the engineer in charge of the work. There are two rigs drilling the Government wells, one is at Rosignol and the other near Mahaica at the moment, and these will be used for drilling the wells which are included in the item of \$22,400. It is anticipated that four or five wells will be drilled for that sum. That is all the money available at the moment. The wells for which private funds will be provided will be looked after under the supervision of the Resident Engineer by the driller who has been engaged on contract for that particular purpose, and when the private wells are completed those drillers' services will be dispensed with unless we find more money and can utilise the rigs we have at our disposal. It would be entirely up to the Council to vote money required for additional wells in Essequibo or in Berbice.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Essequibo comprises Wakenaam, Leguan and the Coast. I have not heard where it is intended to start drilling when the plant reaches Essequibo. It will get there next year. Is a start going to be made in 1936 on the Coast or on one of the islands?

Major CRAIG: In all probability a start will be made on the Essequibo Coast. That will not be definitely decided until late in 1935 when we see the position of the rigs. When the rig has completed operations on this side work will be started in Essequibo.

Item passed.

#### PUBLIC WORKS—ANNUALLY RECURRENT.

Item I—Maintenance and Reconditioning of Public Buildings, \$74,300.

Mr. LUCKHOO: This is the item under which I wish to refer to the relief of unemployment in the County. A good many of the public buildings are in a very bad condition and require repairs and painting. It seems very false economy to allow them to go from bad to worse. If proper attention was paid to them from time to time such a large sum would not be required to put them in order. A stitch-in-time policy should have been adopted. I am glad to see that a sum has been set aside, and I think it will be of great assistance to artisans and workmen

living in those areas. I hope there will be no necessity to bring reinforcements from other parts of the Colony to do work in the County. That is a complaint that has been made to me; it causes great dissatisfaction. I am glad to hear the Director of Public Works say that the men employed will be men resident in the County. I congratulate Government on putting this item on the Estimate. The Mahaicony Police Station is in a disgraceful condition and I compliment Government on taking the matter in hand.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I wish to emphasise that Government should advise the Director of Public Works, who in turn should advise his Clerk of Works in Berbice, to engage the men on the spot. They should not come from any other part of the Colony unless they cannot be got in Berbice, and you can get the best men for anything you want in Berbice. (Laughter). I told Sir Cecil Rodwell that, and there is the New Amsterdam Hospital as a monument. There was only one man from Demerara who worked on it.

Mr. CANNON: I wish to congratulate Government on trying to put those buildings in order. The Police buildings are falling down, the steps, windows and everything are in a dilapidated condition. The Hospital is the same, and the building in which the doctors are housed is a disgrace to any country. I would suggest to the Director of Public Works that unless the men are capable of doing the work it should not be given to them. The Law Courts building has just been painted and look at its condition to-day. I do not know whether it is the material that is responsible. The Public Buildings have not been very long done and they are as shabby as ever. While the money is being spent let us spend it to the best advantage. I do not think a thousand dollars above what was voted last year will meet the case. A much larger sum will have my honest support.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I also join in the appeal that the work should be given to the men in the district. I can assure the Director that we have capable men enough to do any public work. Most of the buildings have been built by men in Berbice.

Dr. HENDERSON: I would like to urge that the New Amsterdam Hospital

should first receive consideration in the expenditure of this money. (Laughter).

Mr. SEAFORD: I would like to sound a note of warning. There is an increase of expenditure well over \$100,000. The work to be done is 75 per cent. more than last year. Is the Director of Public Works sure he has sufficient staff to supervise that work?

Major CRAIG: That is the point I was trying to stress earlier in the day, but it appears I shall have to carry on as I have done for the past five years. With regard to putting Berbicians on work in Berbice that has been my practice ever since I have been here. We have heard reference to the men who built those buildings. I am afraid that old carpenters and painters are not like old soldiers who never die. Most of the good old men are dead, but there are quite a number of good men alive and ready and willing to work, and my instructions to my Engineers are that when any work is being executed it should be given to those men who live in the district who are capable of doing it.

There is one thing I would point out in regard to the condition of Government buildings. They do not please me at all, for the very good reason that \$38,000 is all the money I have had each year for the last five years. That represents 1½ per cent. of the capitalised value of Government properties, and I think anyone who owns property will realise that that is not sufficient to keep any building in anything like good condition. Therefore the charge of the buildings being in bad condition cannot be laid at the door of the Public Works Department. I am very glad to see an additional \$30,000 on those monies referred to by the hon. Nominated Member, which represents more or less the monies provided for relief works in the past years, and those works have been carried on in addition to the other work of the Department without any increase of staff. I do honestly think and submit that additional supervision is required. In addition there are quite a number of other buildings that are down for very considerable repairs which will, I think, provide a considerable amount of employment in the various districts.

Item passed.

## ROADS, RIVERS, CREEKS AND PORTAGES.

Item I—Main Roads and Bridges, \$47,500.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I have been asking for the last three or four years for some attention to the road at Ithaca on the West Bank of the Berbice River. I think it would cost about \$2,000 to put it in order. The four miles of road if looked after would liberate a considerable area of good land that could be used for rice planting and for the cultivation of other produce. With a small sum spent on the road there is the possibility of having many acres of cultivable land beneficially occupied and at the same time relieving unemployment in the district. I ask the Director of Public Works if he did not think of it before to do so now.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I wish to support the remarks made by the hon. Member for Berbice River. Government should be congratulated on having made a substantial increase on this particular vote. On account of the increased traffic in the Corentyne district the roads have got into a shocking condition, and representations have been made through the Berbice Chamber of Commerce to Government on the subject. I am glad that Government has at last undertaken to provide the wherewithal to carry out the necessary improvements. It has been brought to my notice—I do not vouch for it—that heaps of earth have been burnt by certain people but the Public Works Department has not taken them over. If that is so it is a great hardship on those people, and I hope the Department will take the burnt earth from them. The Ithaca road is used by the three estates on the Corentyne Coast as well as by a large number of people, and I hope the amount will be sufficient to put it in order.

Mr. SEAFORD: As regards the matter of burnt earth I do not know what happened in Berbice, but I know that people burn earth without instructions, hoping that it would be taken over. The members of the Berbice Chamber of Commerce were very grave over the condition of the Corentyne road which they say is the worst in the Colony. I asked the President if he had travelled on the East Coast and the East Bank but he would not answer.

Mr. ELEAZAR: When money is available Government always takes over the burnt earth. Within this last year the man in question had to burn earth at several points and to deal with different people. When he got a little money he paid the people at one point, and those at the other spots began to storm him.

Item passed.

*Berbice District —*

Item 3—Clearing Rivers and Creeks, \$2,680.

Mr. ELEAZAR: There is a bit of foreshore near the New Amsterdam Abattoir which is overgrown with bush and rushing mosquitoes into New Amsterdam, but since 1932 Government has neglected to clear it. It requires the miserable pittance of about \$200 to do the work, and if the Public Works Department cannot do it the New Amsterdam Town Council will do it. The Council has cleared its bit of foreshore.

*Essequibo District—*

Item 12—Clearing Rivers and Creeks, \$2,200.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The explanatory note says: "Increase necessary to cover cost of extensive repairs to a lock." I would ask the Director of Public Works to inform this Council how much of this sum of \$2,200 is required for cleaning the creeks, and how much for repairs to the lock. I have not the faintest idea of where the lock is.

Major CRAIG: The actual allocation to the various creeks, including the Akawaini, has not been decided upon, but the lock referred to is the Red Lock on the Anna Regina waterpath, which has been very bad for some time and requires extensive overhaul. I do not think the money is sufficient to clear the creeks from bank to bank, but we have to do the best we can.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Several years ago I drew the attention of the Government to the numerous complaints I had received in regard to the cleaning of the Akawaini creek and other creeks in the Essequibo river. I communicated with the Director of Public Works and I got

the usual reply.—insufficient money. The Akawaini creek could not be cleaned to its full length. As regards the money to be spent on the Red Lock, I happen to know a great deal about both locks, the Chinese Lock and the Red Lock, because I managed Anna Regina for a number of years, and I am surprised to learn that the Red Lock needs repair again. Only a few years ago a large sum of money was spent on it. The Chinese Lock used to be a wooden lock. The Red Lock is made of iron with wooden uprights. I would like to have some information about it.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am amused at Government's form of accounting. A thousand dollars is to be spent at Anna Regina and that is included under this Head. I think we should have been told all about it under the expenditure in connection with the Anna Regina Scheme. It seems to me that is another form of accounting we will have to inquire into. It should be a direct charge against the working of Anna Regina.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I must ask that I be supplied with some information in regard to what is going to be done to this lock, and what portion of the money is going to be spent in repairing it. I would also like to know when the lock was last repaired and the sum of money spent on it.

Major CRAIG: I would be only too pleased to give the fullest information in regard to when the lock was last repaired. As far as my memory serves me I have not seen it for about seven months, but on the last occasion I saw it the doors were in a very bad condition. I think it is a question of replacing the doors and the wooden uprights. I will give the fullest information as regards the lock and the distribution of the money with respect to the cleaning of rivers and creeks. The lock has nothing to do with Anna Regina as the hon. Member suggested. It is a common waterpath.

Item passed.

#### SEA DEFENCES.

Item 1—Essequebo Districts, Nos. 1 and 2, \$5,953.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I do not know whether this is an appropriate time for

me to speak on the sea defences in Essequebo.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is quite the correct item on which to make any references to sea defences.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I am not going to take up much time because I have frequently and consistently urged on the Government that the people in Essequebo are unable to bear the sea defence rates. The position of the people on the Essequebo Coast is greatly aggravated by the fact that they have to pay heavy drainage and irrigation assessments. Your Excellency recently visited the Coast and I am sure you will admit that you took great pains to get all the information and to see everything you possibly could with regard to the economic position of the Coast. I am sure Your Excellency will admit that you could not help being struck with the miserable and deplorable condition of most of the people there in regard to unemployment. I would like to hear to-day, if possible, what is going to be the policy of the Government in regard to the Essequebo Coast.

A point Government would do well to bear in mind is that up to two years ago the sea defences of the Colony, after many years of agitation on behalf of the landed proprietors on the coastlands, was made a colonial question. Now conditions are vastly different on the Essequebo Coast because in addition there is the irrigation and drainage scheme which was put on the people 12 years ago, and it is impossible for them to pay both irrigation and drainage and sea defence rates. I would urge that Government should not attempt to collect sea defence rates on the Essequebo Coast and in Wakenaam and Leguan. It is all very well for those who are not suffering—the larger interests on the East and West Coasts of Demerara—to say: "Why should Essequebo have remitted these sea defence rates and we on the East and West Coasts of Demerara have to pay a heavier assessment?" My answer to that is that those people on the East and West Coasts are in a far better position. I would not say that even they are able to meet their sea defence assessments without considerable anxiety as to what it will mean in the financial bill of their properties, but let us be just, and for the sake of a few thousand



dollars do not create absolute desolation down there.

The whole trouble to my mind is that the Essequibo Coast is so far distant from the seat of Government. If the Essequibo Coast had been a few miles either to the east or west of the City of Georgetown most fitting and palpable evidence of the terrible state of affairs there would have been seen, and steps would have been taken to alleviate the distress, but Essequibo is many miles distant and very few people ever see it. Most people in Demerara hardly know that such a place as Essequibo exists. For me it will not mean starvation, misery and distress if the interests I have in Essequibo have to pay sea defence rates, but I am appealing for the owners of rice estates and the people generally. Do not crush them with the double burden of drainage and irrigation rates and sea defence rates. People have purchased properties and invested money with the idea that the sea defences would be a colonial question for all time, but suddenly on the top of all this misery they are told they will have to pay their sea defence rates by the 15th of this month otherwise their properties will be levied on. As long as I have breath and strength, and as long as I am a Member of the Council I will regularly and persistently—although it might fall on deaf ears—try to do my duty to the people in Essequibo and, if possible, bring to bear on the Government a sense of responsibility.

I am in favour of bringing Assyrians to this Colony, but if the Home Government can find money to spend on people whom I may term strangers surely they can find money to enable this Government to remit a few thousand dollars to the unfortunate people in Essequibo. The Imperial Government will probably be spending millions of pounds to bring those Assyrians here, but they cannot afford to remit a few thousand dollars to 19,000 or 20,000 inhabitants of Essequibo. If Government does not give some measure of help to the people in Essequibo it will show that either the local Government or the Colonial Office is callous of the needs and requirements of the people there. I appeal not only to the Government but to my brother Electives. I speak feelingly on the subject. I have known the Essequibo Coast for 40 years

and it would move the heart of anybody to see the condition of those unfortunate people and the way they are being looked after. I can say no more, sir, I do hope that Your Excellency will give orders that the payment of these sea defence rates that are due now be suspended for such time as the people there may be able to find some portion of it if not all. Do not turn them on the road.

Mr. CANNON: I am not at all surprised to hear the speech of the hon. Member. He has indicated just what I expected would be the position. I have said so in this chamber before. It is not only going to be Essequibo but the whole Colony. It may not come before Your Excellency leaves us but I venture to tell you that you will hear of it after you have gone. I said earlier in the day that I had the necessity to visit the Essequibo Coast quite recently, and I am satisfied that unless this Government does something for those people it will be a terrible blot on the Administration of the Colony. I know that I am going to be told that I have sewerage on the brain and I am beginning to believe it. The people in Essequibo are in exactly the same position as those in Georgetown; they are unable to pay their rates. All I have to ask you, sir, is to bear in mind what the hon. Member has told you. If Your Excellency is not aware of the position I suggest that you get in touch with the people and see their position before you deprive them of their homes. It is a very sad state of affairs. I speak feelingly because I have had this matter under my personal observation in Georgetown. Although I have nothing to do and am not allowed to say anything about another constituency I think it my duty to throw in my lot with the hon. Member and ask Your Excellency to give the matter your earnest attention.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I think I have to throw in my quota. When any portion of the Colony made application to Sir Edward Denham for relief he promptly suspended the payment of rates with Your Excellency's assistance. It was pointed out that they were unable to meet their obligations and they were given the opportunity to make payment in instalments. Some of the instalments are still due. If the people of Essequibo can make out a good case I think Government will not press them to the extent of their losing

their holdings. When the Commission has put the whole position before Government, I am sure that Government will do for them what it has done for the people of Berbice. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo has made a very telling speech. Apparently he has been down to the district recently. There was a syndicate waiting to buy the people's properties, and although Government was aware of that it did not press them.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : I made one great omission in my speech and that is that this representation to the Government about Essequibo has been going on for several years. I wrote letters to Sir Edward Denham and saw him, but all I got was "soft soap." It is action that is required, prompt action. I am sure that if it lay with you, sir, the position in Essequibo would very soon be remedied. I say that with every sincerity. Sympathy will not help the people in Essequibo ; we want action.

Mr. DE AGUIAR : One hon. Member has pointed out that the position in Essequibo in regard to sea defence rates is not peculiar to that district. I remember when the Ordinance was put before this Council representations were made regarding the position of the small proprietors, particularly the rice estate owners, and I think at the time it was agreed that the assessment of those properties would be half of the existing rates of other estates. Experience has taught us that as the result of increased works the amount that is now being levied against those estates is more than they can reasonably carry. I was speaking with one of the proprietors in Essequibo not many days ago and he dismissed the subject with such an air of disgust by saying : " What can you expect me to do when before I can cultivate one bed of rice land on my estate the tax against that estate is \$1,200 a year ?" In fairness to Government I ought to say that that charge was not only for sea defence rates, but he was referring to the various fancy charges, irrigation, drainage and sea defences. I think it will be admitted that that is a heavy charge for one estate to carry. In East Demerara the position is the same. The people there are unable to meet their obligations. It seems to me that if they are levied upon great hardship would be created.

Dr. SINGH : I desire to join in the appeal that the people be given an extension of time to pay their rates.

THE CHAIRMAN : I have listened with mixed feelings to the various pleading speeches made with regard to the people who owe sea defence rates, but I can say there is nothing to be done for it ; those rates must be paid. We cannot allow in respect of the sea defence rates the accumulation of arrears that has taken place with regard to other rates. That is the difficulty the people are in ; they are now finding it difficult to pay. The sea defence rate is a very small one, and if people cannot afford to pay for the protection of their property they should not own property. I am full of sympathy for some districts, but in respect of the sea defence rates they must pay. They are very small, but if they are allowed to accumulate they will become very large. The proprietors must remember that if they had kept up their payments they would not have found themselves in the position they are now. The same thing applies now, I am afraid, to everything in this Colony. Everybody thinks that if they owe Government money they need not pay. The sooner people realise that that is not the case the sooner would they find themselves in a better position than they are now.

Item passed.

Item 5—East Coast Demerara Districts, Nos. 6 and 7, \$25,828.

Mr. WALCOTT : After hearing the remarks and supplications made by the previous speakers in connection with Essequibo I think it necessary for me to say that I do not think it is altogether fair for Government to suggest that the smaller proprietors in every instance, or in most cases, have allowed their rates to accumulate. In the case of East Demerara there were no sea defence rates until last year, and it was only towards the end of last year that those rates were brought in. The result was that the people were practically asked to pay two years' rates in one. Your Excellency must remember that we had floods in this Colony in the early part of last year and that the people suffered severely. I think Government is wanting in a true sense of responsibility and sympathy with those small proprietors if it is going to press them to pay their rates

which they cannot pay at the present moment.

We can afford to borrow \$384,000 from the Imperial Government to do all kinds of elaborate public works. We are taking that quite nicely, I think, at the present time, but if Government is trying to get part of the money that is necessary to embark on those special works by levying on people's properties then I think the sooner we recommitted the estimates of certain Departments and reduced them the better. It is revolting to me to sit here and hear Government say that these people must pay when Government must know that they have suffered and that they cannot afford to pay. If the people do what they should do they would let Government take charge of their properties and run them, and they would see the immense profit that would be made on them. We have an example in the Bush Lot Scheme where the people have had all kinds of facilities from the Government in the way of flood relief and yet they cannot make two ends meet. If it is Government's intention to do what Your Excellency has said, that is to levy on those poor people, it would be the greatest disgrace that has ever been known in this Colony.

Mr. CANNON: I wish to heartily endorse what the hon. Nominated Member has said. If it had come from the Elective side of the House it might have been treated as though we were angling for a return to our seats next year, but the hon. Nominated Member is not in that position. I congratulate him and endorse his remark that it is a disgrace. I regret exceedingly that the statement that the people must pay should have fallen from Your Excellency's lips. I say it and I mean it.

Item passed.

Item 8—Villages, \$10,018.

Mr. WALCOTT: I take it that these amounts to be voted here are for the villages to pay, or does the Government pay the villages' assessments?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. WALCOTT: If the Government thinks it necessary to allow the villages to be let off the payment of sea defence

rates surely Government must realise that the case of the small proprietors is infinitely more worthy of consideration.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Your Excellency very rightly allowed an item to be recommitted yesterday and I had hoped that I would not have found it necessary to have recourse to what I am going to propose now. If you will allow me I will move that the entire items under this Head totalling \$66,828 be recommitted, and that they be deleted from the Estimate. I hope my motion will find a seconder because I would like it to be put to the vote in order to see how many Members of the Council have got a heart.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member has mistaken the position. These are Government's contributions towards sea defences. If he deletes these items there will be no contributions made by Government.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I think it was the hon. Member for Georgetown North who suggested that we should pass all these estimates *en bloc* as the Colonial Office is going to foot the bill. I do not know in what way I can bring to the ears of Government the necessity of doing something in this matter of sea defences. I would go further. I know you have made representations in regard to the sea defence problem and the drainage and irrigation charges, and I believe you have done all in your power. Am I to understand—I hope it will reach the ears of that omnipotent person, the Secretary of State—that the British people do not intend to do anything for the people of this Colony? They can afford to vote £50,000,000 for the beet industry and to spend millions of pounds to improve the housing conditions of the people in England. Are we part of the British Empire? We are always hearing that we are a part of the British Empire and of the great regard and everything else they have for us. The Colonial Secretary in his Budget speech told us of their great concern and sympathy, but what are they doing for this Colony? I do not see. Their showing is indifferent. I feel the injustice of the position of the people in this Colony. We are being treated in the most callous manner.

Mr. CANNON: May I ask what the

hon. Member has moved the deletion of? I take it that a seconder is not necessary.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I admit that in the agitation that I feel over this matter—I feel it deeply—I forgot at the moment that these were Government's contributions. I had in mind the sum which the sugar estates of the Colony generally have to find. It has however given me the opportunity of saying what I long wanted to refer to—the indifference of the British Government to this Colony.

Mr. CANNON: There is nothing that the hon. Member has said that I am not heartily in agreement with. We are looked upon as a down-trodden portion of the Empire. In view of what Your Excellency has said I can assure you that it makes me feel that if we only had Members sitting around this table with a little bit of "guts" we would retire gracefully and leave Your Excellency to carry on.

Item passed.

#### ROADS AND BRIDGES—EXTRAORDINARY.

Redecking Canje Bridge and concrete approach—

Major CRAIG: There will be a balance of \$1,000 on this item at the end of the year. I ask that it be revoted for 1935 to complete the work in hand. The sum voted for this year is \$4,500. I move the insertion of \$1,000.

Item agreed to.

Item 1—Extensive repairs to pile protections around Pier of Swing Span, Canje Creek Bridge, Berbice, \$2,000.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I would like to bring to the notice of the Director the concrete culvert across the road at Rosignol which is in a very bad condition. It was badly put down and affords no drainage at all even to house lots. I think it requires reconstruction.

Major CRAIG: I will make inquiries and I will be able to remedy that under Maintenance.

Item passed.

Item 2—Erection of a new bridge across the Itebibisci Creek, Essequibo, \$10,000.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The explanatory note says: "The beams of the existing bridge are decayed and would be expensive to renew. Rebuilding on concrete piles with wooden decking is recommended. Estimated for 1934, but not carried out as priority had to be given to reconstruction of Mahaica Bridge." If there is one thing I remember at the last Annual Session is the promise that was given by Government that the work on this bridge would be started immediately in the new year. Money was voted to be spent this year. Unemployment is rife in Essequibo and a considerable portion of this money, probably 50 per cent. of it, will go in labour. It would be the means of helping some of the people, but nothing is done. Government said the bridge was in a most dangerous condition. Is this postponement of work in Essequibo to go on indefinitely? When may I and the people in Essequibo expect a start to be made on this bridge?

THE CHAIRMAN: The work will be started as early as possible in the new year.

Major CRAIG: The hon. Member was told that the work on the bridge would be started early in the year, but that was before the floods came which necessitated the work which has been given priority. As a matter of fact the work had been started because I had gathered a considerable amount of stone to proceed with it. The will was there but the money was withdrawn.

Item 3—Reconstruction of Mahaica Creek Bridge, East Demerara, \$10,000.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Will \$20,000 be spent on this bridge? I observe that \$10,000 was voted for this year.

Major CRAIG: That is the estimate for the bridge. Another \$10,000 is required for the purpose of supplying materials and labour in the Colony.

Item passed.

#### PUBLIC WORKS—EXTRAORDINARY.

Item 1—Reconditioning "Chaplain's" Quarters as residence for an Assistant Conservator of Forests, \$4,500.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I move that this

item be struck out. The people in Essequebo cannot be assisted, yet Government can afford to spend \$4,500 in this way.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I support that motion. I suggest that \$4,500 can be more beneficially used. We do not want an Assistant Conservator of Forests. Government might spend that money somewhere else, not at Mazaruni.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Has the officer been appointed? If he has not I will ask Government to withdraw the item.

Mr. WOOD (Conservator of Forests): This officer is the senior Assistant Conservator of Forests. There are no quarters for him and at present he is staying at my house because he has nowhere else to live. My house is not a boarding house for my subordinates. I think the people of South East Essequebo are labouring under a disadvantage at the moment. The Member has just been elected but he has not yet taken his seat, and the result is that perhaps as Chairman of Bartica I might point out that there is, I might say, a noticeable scramble by hon. Members to get unemployment relief works along the Coast and in other parts of the Colony. There is only one item of unemployment relief works in the whole of these Estimates that applies to Bartica and the surrounding country of which will keep artisans and tradesmen in work next year, and that is this item.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The Conservator of Forests, whether intentionally or unintentionally, has made a dig at me by saying that there seems to be a scramble among the Elected Members to get unemployment relief works carried out in their constituencies.

THE CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. Member admits it (Laughter).

Mr. BRASSINGTON: This item will not relieve unemployment. My reason for moving the deletion of the item is because of what I term, whether rightly or wrongly, the apathy and indifference of the British Government to this Colony. For every dollar they give to this Colony they give millions to the British people, and every item I can possibly reduce in order to relieve the taxation of the people I will reduce. I am sure that if the newly

elected Member was here he would throw in his vote with us.

Mr. SEAFORD: It seems a tremendous amount to spend on reconditioning quarters for a bachelor. You can build a fine house for that sum.

THE CHAIRMAN: Reconditioning means reconstruction.

Mr. SEAFORD: I think if anything is to be done it should be left to the Forest Department. They have large stocks of timber. I ask that the item be held over in the meantime because Government might be asked to recommit the Forestry vote.

THE CHAIRMAN: We might pass the item in the meantime.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I moved that it be struck out. I ask for a division.

The Committee divided and voted:—

*Ayes*—Mr. Austin, Dr. Henderson, Messrs. Wood, Mullin, D'Andrade, McDavid, Major Craig, Professor Dash, Major Bain Gray, Messrs. Dias, Smellie, The Colonial Secretary—12.

*Noes*—Messrs. Walcott, Peer Bacchus, Seaford, Dr. Jung Bahadur Singh, Messrs. De Aguiar, Eleazar, Wight, Cannon, Brassington—9.

Item passed.

Item 2—Quarters—District Commissioner, East Coast New 3-room Servants' range and minor alterations, \$1,000.

Item 3—Office—District Commissioner, East Coast—Extension of wing on eastern side to give additional accommodation, \$500.

Mr. WALCOTT: I ask that these two items be deferred until the District Administration vote is taken. We may not find them necessary.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. Member to allow the items to be taken now. We can always revert to them if necessary. These sums will not be spent if there is nothing to spend them on.

Mr. WALCOTT: I do not think this is

the time to spend \$1,000 on servants' quarters and \$500 on the office. The District Commissioner happens to be a particular friend of mine so I cannot be accused of trying to get at him. When we can afford it I shall be the first to vote for it. At a time when the people in the district are suffering and cannot afford to pay sea defence rates, and they find Government spending \$1,000 for servants' quarters and \$500 on the District Commissioner's office they would be well justified in making a lot of trouble about it. I do not think Your Excellency realises the temper of the people at the present time, or you would not persist in this policy.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member has overlooked the fact that quite a number of these small items are included in the sum of \$150,000 specially allocated to the Public Works vote in order to afford employment. If these items are cut out it means that carpenters will get no employment. They have been put in for that specific purpose. We were informed that there would be no grant for unemployment relief and I suggested that we might put \$150,000 on the Public Works vote for that purpose. These are two of those items, and if the hon. Member cuts them out the people he refers to will not get employment.

Mr. WALCOTT: The people I am referring to are not the people who are going to get employment as carpenters. They are the people who pay sea defence rates.

THE CHAIRMAN: We want to spend the money over as wide a field as possible. It is impossible to pick out those who are paying sea defence rates. I do ask the hon. Member to realise that there are quite a number of items which will give employment if the money is spent.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Instead of there being a scramble by Elected Members it seems to me as if there is a scramble by officials to get something done by themselves. They apparently say: "Here is so much money to be spent, let us see how we can spend it."

THE CHAIRMAN: This is a Government house and it happens to be occupied by the District Commissioner. Under another Head we are trying to spend money on Government buildings, and it will give employment to a few people. It all helps.

Mr. SEAFORD: When we were dealing with Public Works Annually Recurrent the Director of Public Works suggested that an extra \$30,000 was very little. I suggest that instead of spending money on this extension we spend it in putting the existing buildings in proper order.

Major CRAIG: I have already stated that the \$70,000 I have only represents a little over 2 per cent. of the capitalised value of the properties, and the buildings have been so starved for the last five or six years that it requires very much more than that. Quite a number of buildings require rebuilding, and it is impossible to make any satisfactory repairs with the amount of money voted, even the increased amount of \$70,000.

Mr. SEAFORD: That is exactly my point.

Mr. ELEAZAR: A thousand dollars seems to be such a lot of money to spend on the little house I know there. It is Government property and it would not be a good thing to allow it to fall to pieces. It seems to me that the work must be done, but \$1,000 is a lot of money. I agree with Government that the item should be allowed to stand.

Mr. CANNON: My objection is that it is not \$2,000. I want to spend as much as we can, and whenever I can advocate an increase of an item I am going to do so.

Item passed.

Item 8—Conversion of Manager's house, Pln. Anna Regina, for use as a Government School, \$1,250.

Mr. ELEAZAR: If anything is a waste and a scandal it is to convert that building into a primary school. Surely Government can let that house remain for a better purpose and use another building for a school. Government might assist the Denomination to keep its building in suitable repair for the school. I suggest that Government might give the money to the Anglicans and Roman Catholics and let them improve their buildings. The house is to be destroyed in that way. It might be used as quarters for Government officials.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. Member to read the explanatory note. The sum includes provision for minor alterations and school furniture. The establishment of a Government School will effect a saving of \$300 annually on the

Education vote. Does the hon. Member know the house?

Mr. ELEAZAR: I have been inside.

THE CHAIRMAN: The house has been unoccupied for many years. Why should we not put it to some useful purpose?

Mr. ELEAZAR: Those are my views.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Spend the money all right but do not destroy the house. I do not believe that there will be an annual saving of \$300 by establishing this Government School. I am waiting to hear the reply to the question asked as to the cost of running these Government Schools. I question very much whether there will be a saving of \$300, having regard to what I know as to how these Government schools are run.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I am not going to let my feelings get the better of my judgment. I know the building; it cost \$20,000. If a house is left empty and unoccupied it rapidly deteriorates no matter how substantial it may be. I think it might serve a wise purpose if it is converted into a school, and the sooner the better. It is a very fine building which was erected only about 14 years ago.

Item passed.

Major CRAIG: I ask leave to move the insertion of a new item 55—"Maintenance and repairs to sluice and sea dams on Government property at Suddie and Onderneeming, \$3,800." It is not within the sea defence district. It is for the protection of Government property which is rendered necessary owing to the abolition of Sea Defence District No. 2.

Mr. SEAFORD: Does it include work on the sea defences?

Major CRAIG: Yes.

Item agreed to.

POST OFFICE—ENGINEERING BRANCH—  
EXTRAORDINARY.

Item 2—Overhaul of a section of the East Coast trunk route and associated branch lines, \$1,500.

Mr. SEAFORD: The Exchange at Mahaica is either too small or something is wrong with the line. It is never possible to get through. It has been the same for the last two years.

Mr. WALCOTT: I think the vote has been long overdue. I think the trouble exists on both the Belfield and Mahaica

lines, and the fact that the Police and Government officers are on the same line. As regards the Belfield Exchange I was asked a couple of years ago to give up my private line and come under the automatic system. I did so on condition that if I found it unsatisfactory I would be given back my private line after six months. The promise was made to me by Mr. Brasher, a former officer of the Telephone Department. I found it very unsatisfactory after a few months and I appealed to his successor, Mr. Mackenzie, who told me it was not possible to give me back my private line because it was being used for the automatic system and they had no other. We are asked to pay very nearly the same subscription. The line has four private subscribers and there were the Police Station, the Inspector's quarters, the District Commissioner's office and his house, the Medical Officer, and not infrequently the line is used by the Telegraph Department when their line breaks down. I got a private line years ago because I found it impossible to get connection through the Police. I went to a lot of expense in getting that private line, and the Department has taken it back under false pretence.

If this money is going to be used for putting in a separate line for the use of Government Departments I think it is an excellent expenditure. I do not think Government can ask private subscribers to continue paying for the maintenance of that line to Belfield when it is loaded all the time with official calls, especially those of the District Commissioner who is always given preference. The result is that it is hours before I can get connection from Georgetown to Belfield. I pay three or four times as much for my connection as any other subscriber does. Government pays nothing. It is absolutely unjust and unfair to expect a condition like that to go on. I sincerely hope Your Excellency will make inquiries into the matter and have it corrected. The Police should certainly have a separate line of their own, or the Police and the District Commissioner combined.

THE CHAIRMAN: The remarks of the hon. Member will be brought to the notice of the Department.

The Committee adjourned until Tuesday, 18th December, 1934, at 11 o'clock.