

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**FRIDAY, 24th OCTOBER, 1947**

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

PRESENT :

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

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson (Acting).

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

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

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

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

The Hon. C. V. Wight, O.B.E. (Western Essequibo)

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North Western District).

The Hon. T. Lee. (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 23rd October, 1947, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID**MAIN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.**

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : (Mr. D. J. Parkinson, acting) : Sir, I beg to lay on the table the Report of the Main Development Committee. With your permission, Sir, I am laying the document formally this afternoon, as this is the last opportunity I shall have to do so before the Council is dissolved. Copies of the Report in its final form will not be available to hon. Members until next week.

GOVERNMENT NOTICE.**INTERPRETATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1947.**

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. E. M. Duke, acting) gave notice of the following Bill, and of his intention to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rules and Orders to enable it to be taken through all its stages at the meeting:

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Interpretation Ordinance with respect to the continuance in office of a Member of the Legislative Council, after dissolution thereof, as a member of certain Boards."

ORDER OF THE DAY**INTERPRETATION (AMENDMENT) BILL,**

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I move that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended in order that the Bill, of which I have just given notice, may be read a first time and taken through all its stages to-day.

Sir EUSTACE WOOLFORD seconded. Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

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

Sir EUSTACE WOOLFORD seconded. Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : The object of the Bill is to permit those Mem-

bers of this Council who, by virtue of their position as Members of the Legislative Council, have been members of various Boards and Committees, to continue in office until the first day of the sitting of the new Legislative Council. I must apologize to hon. Members for the fact that this Bill has been brought forward without any notice whatever. I was aware that Members of this Council were, as such, members of many Boards and Committees which did useful work, but until last night I did not appreciate the valuable work and the constant work which is done by Members of this Council on those Boards and Committees, and it was only last night that I appreciated that a Bill of this sort was really necessary and that it should not be an *ad hoc* Bill in relation to the existing circumstances but a permanent enactment on the statute Books of this Colony. It appears to me that the machinery of Government would in many respects come to a standstill if those Members could not function between this day and the meeting of the new Legislative Council.

I should mention that in relation to the Executive Council, an Unofficial Member of the Executive Council does in fact at the present time continue in office as a Member of that Council until the first meeting of the new Legislative Council after dissolution. That is by virtue of the Royal Instructions as amended in 1943. So that all we are doing is to elevate those Members of this Council who are not Members of the Executive Council. With those remarks I move that the Bill be read a second time.

Sir EUSTACE WOOLFORD: I am seconding the motion but not altogether because of the reasons furnished by the hon. the Attorney-General. I am rather surprised to learn from his lips that the ignorance shared by many members of the public as to the quality of the service rendered by Members of this Council has also permeated his own brain. I have always understood that one of the qualifications for the office of Attorney-General is that he should be a good politician. We all know that whatever his faults may be as regards his interest in public affairs, there is no member of the local Civil Service who is more apt and has a more ready brain

than my hon. and learned friend, and I have no doubt that it is due to his individual conception that he has advised Government that the appropriate Ordinance to amend is the Interpretation Ordinance. I myself thought that a general Ordinance dealing with all the Advisory Boards would have been a simpler procedure, but I realize now how valuable it is to have a Member of Mr. Duke's ability when matters of this kind are under consideration. I hope that the proposed amendment will cover the functions of all the Boards. At the moment I have some doubt about it, but in the event of any difficulty arising an enabling Ordinance can be passed to legalize any work done by members of a Board who are not Members of this Council.

Mr. ROTH: I fully appreciate the embarrassment expressed by the hon. the Attorney-General in bringing forward this Bill at the eleventh hour and 56th minute, but as Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Council for the Interior I must confess to even greater embarrassment, for this reason: That of the 21 members of the Committee only five are Members of this Council, the other 16 being gentlemen who are not Members of this Council. Therefore I shall be very grateful to have the hon. the Attorney-General's decision as to the position of that Advisory Committee after 5 o'clock this afternoon.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think the Committee referred to by the hon. Member is a Committee appointed under any law; it is a Committee appointed by the Governor. There is a distinction, of course, between a statutory Committee and one appointed by the Governor. What we are particularly concerned with, I think, are statutory Committees appointed under the law. There is no reason, as far as I know, why any Committee appointed by the Governor should not continue to function. I think that answers the hon. Member's point.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without discussion.

The Council resumed.

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

Sir EUSTACE WOOLFORD seconded,
Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

GAMBLING PREVENTION (AMENDMENT)
BILL, 1947.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the following Bill intituled

“An Ordinance further to amend the Gambling Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 95, with respect to distributions thereunder to charitable organisations and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.”

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: This Bill was referred to a Select Committee of this Council, and the report of the Committee has been laid on the table. Copies of the report are in the hands of hon. Members. I propose to move that the amendments suggested by the Committee be read into the Bill. In relation to clause 1 the amendment suggested is the substitution for the figures “1946” of the figures “1947,” and that “Cap. 95” be inserted in the marginal note. As regards clause 2, the amendment is the substitution for the word “forty-six” of the word “forty-seven” at the end of subsections (1) and (2) in section 23, and also the deletion of the hyphen in the word “subsection” in the first line of subsection (2) of section 23.

The next amendment is the substitution for subsection (3) of section 23 of the following subsection:—

“(3) Where the amounts received in any one year under subsection (4) of section twenty-one exceed the sum distributable under subsection (2) of this section, the Sweepstakes (Charity) Committee shall—

- (a) set aside from the excess such sum as the Governor in Council may approve, being not less than ten *per centum* of such excess, to be disbursed for such charitable purpose or purposes (excluding any charitable organisa-

tion which derives benefit under this Ordinance) as the Governor in Council may direct; and

- (b) distribute the balance of the excess among such of the approved charitable organisations and such other charitable organisations as the Governor in Council may, in each instance, approve, and shall pay to each such organisation the percentage approved by the Governor in Council.”

It is also proposed that clause 2 be amended by the deletion of section 24 therein, and the substitution of the following new section 24:

“24. Every charitable organisation which derives benefit under this Ordinance shall keep accounts to the satisfaction of the Sweepstakes (Charity) Committee and shall before the first day of June in every year transmit to the Sweepstakes Charity Committee an audited statement of its total receipts and expenditure, including the receipt and expenditure of amounts paid to it by the Sweepstakes (Charity) Committee, for the twelve months ending on the thirty-first day of the previous December, inclusive.”

In clause 3 it is proposed that for the word “forty-seven” the word “forty-eight” be substituted.

I am asking that the Bill at present before the Council be read as if those amendments suggested by the Committee were actually inserted.

Question put, and agreed to.

The Council resumed.

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

Mr. ROTH: I would like to draw Government's attention to certain recommendations in the third paragraph of the Committee's Report. I do not think they should be dealt with in this Bill, but I trust Government will take serious notice of the recommendation that a tax of 4 cents on each sweepstake ticket should be imposed for the purpose of general revenue. The second recommendation is that in the constitution of the Sweepstakes (Charity) Committee there should be a representative

chosen by the charitable organisations. The third recommendation, which I observe the Bill takes no notice of, is in regard to unpaid prizes. The fourth recommendation is that there should be a greater check on the business of the Demerara Turf Club. The Club is a very strong and powerful monopoly.

Mr. de AGUIAR : Did I hear the hon. Member say that there should be a greater check on the Demerara Turf Club? I think his language is a bit loose.

Mr. ROTH : It may not have been stated in so many words, but the intention is there in suggesting that the Club should be required to submit to Government audited balance sheets of all their assets and liabilities. I am putting no further interpretation than that a greater check on the Club is recommended. I do not cast any aspersions on the Club in any way, but it has been given a very valuable monopoly at the expense of the rest of the population, and it is only fair that Government should be in a position to demand from the Club a statement of its affairs annually. I think it is only justice, irrespective of what any hon. Member may think.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ADDITIONAL PROVISION FOR 1946

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I beg to move :

"That, this Council, approves of the Schedule of Additional Provision for the year 1946, which has been laid on the table."

I apologize for the delay in bringing this motion before the Council. It is largely due, of course, to printing difficulties. It is usual in connection with the final estimate of the preceding year and the excesses that accompany it to lay on the table the complete financial reports of that year, but, unfortunately, we have not been able to get the completed accounts of the year in print, and I was only able to lay on the table yesterday an abbreviated form of statement showing the financial results of the year 1946.

This statement includes a number of minor items of excesses which occurred on a number of votes, which have been disclosed after the completion of the accounts. I said "minor items," but there is a very large item under "Subsidization" of \$340,000 for that year. The position in regard to that is known to the Council and, I think, it was presumed that Government would go on with subsidization in 1946 on the basis then in force. That is the only item of major importance. I move that the Schedule be approved by the Council.

Mr. RAATGEVER : I would appreciate it if the hon. the Colonial Treasurer would let the Council know what difference the inclusion of this supplementary estimate for 1946 will make in the Colony's finances, and what difference it will make in the reserve fund of the Colony?

The COLONIAL TREASURER : If the hon. Member looks at the statement he will see the total. It adds that amount to the expenditure of the year. We are seeking covering approval for expenditure already incurred. It does not mean that the figures given will be added to now. These are excesses which did not appear in the supplementary estimates passed during the year, and the cover sought now will not add to the printed figures.

Mr. RAATGEVER : I have no copy of those figures. I would like to know in actual figures what is the difference.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : The difference is the amount on the Schedule which has been added to the expenditure.

Mr. RAATGEVER : I have not the expenditure; I do not know what it is. I would like to know what is the balance of the reserve fund at the 31st December, 1946. What difference has this \$640,000 made?

The COLONIAL TREASURER : A difference of \$640,000.

Mr. RAATGEVER : Yes, but what are the actual figures today? What amount of reserve fund have we got now?

Mr. JACOB : As I understand the position, the actual surplus balance at the

end of 1946 was \$5,531,886—a deficit of \$449,672 having been taken off the sum of \$5,981,558. I think that is what the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Raatgever, wants to find out. I got up to enquire whether this Council was not given the assurance that the surplus balance at the end of 1946—\$5,981,000—would have remained as a surplus balance and that the expenditure for 1946 would not have shown this excess of \$449,000.

I understood, when the Bill for the abolition of Excess Profits Tax was being passed recently, that the financial position of the Colony was in such a state that the surplus would have remained intact. Now that the Excess Profits Tax Bill has been put through as from the end of 1945, we find that the surplus is but half a million dollars. I do not know if I am correct. I stressed the point in this Council that Excess Profits Tax should not have ceased until the end of 1946, but the hon. the Colonial Treasurer, when he returned from Canada, submitted his own figures and said the Colony's finances were in such a state that it made no difference if it ceased as from the end of 1945.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I do not understand the hon. Member's point at all. These figures have nothing at all to do with Excess Profits Tax which ceased at the end of 1945. These figures are for 1946. In these accounts there are the results of the Excess Profits Tax collected at the end of 1946. I did not expect a debate of this nature otherwise I would have prepared a statement, but the returns for 1946 were very much better than were anticipated.

Mr. JACOB : If I have not made myself clear, let me repeat that this Colony has not collected Excess Profits Tax after the end of the year 1945, but figures have been submitted now showing that at the end of 1946 there was a deficit of half a million dollars. My point is that if Excess Profits Tax had ceased at the end of 1946 this Colony would have benefited to the extent of 1¼ million dollars, because I understand that the Excess Profits Tax for 1946 was something in the vicinity of 1¼ million dollars.

Mr. LEE : I must rise in support of my hon. friend, the hon. Member for

North Western District. When the Excess Profits Tax was removed we were given the impression that the Colony's finances were in a very healthy position, but we are now being shown a deficit of half a million dollars. If that was told to us before, we would not have removed the Excess Profits Tax. It has already been done, but we want Your Excellency to find out from the Colonial Treasurer whether that statement was not given to this Council.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : The hon. Member is quite wrong. If he looks at the revised Estimates for 1947 he would see exactly repeated there the figures in this document which has just been laid. He would see that revenue was estimated at \$15,896,000 and the expenditure at \$15,844,000 the surplus being \$52,000. That is printed on the first page of the Estimates for 1947, and it was explained when I returned to the Colony. For a very long time hon. Members were using these very figures—for the whole of this year. They were using them in the Main Development Committee and so they are nothing new. In reply to the hon. Member for North Western District I would like him to explain what he means by saying that Excess Profits tax has not been collected in 1946. In this revenue for 1946 there is a full year's collection of Excess Profits Tax and I do not see why he should, in 1947, raise the point. The tax was collected in 1946 in the usual way.

Mr. RAATGEVER : The hon. the Colonial Treasurer is right; the removal of the Excess Profits Tax this year made absolutely no difference in the amount collected last year. The amount collected this year will be shown in this year's figures; last year's figures are complete.

Mr. LEE : I am not conversant with all these amounts, but at the time the Excess Profits Tax was removed we were told that the Colony's finances were in a very healthy position, otherwise no Elected Member would have agreed to the abolition of the tax.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : What we said was that although the tax was being removed the Budget for 1947 would be balanced, and so it is. It is balanced

with an estimated surplus of \$52,000, so that the undertaking the hon. Member is asking about is the undertaking that the Budget for this year will be balanced. The deficit which the hon. Member is speaking about, however, is a deficit for the year 1946. In the Estimates—the revised Estimates—the deficit for 1946 is put down at \$450,000 and the figure now submitted is \$449,726 so that we were absolutely correct when these Estimates were printed.

Mr. JACOB: Are we in Committee, Sir? I do not know whether we are in order.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not in Committee, but we can go into Committee if the hon. Member wants.

Mr. JACOB: This Council, in 1947, passed a Bill not to collect Excess Profits Tax as from the end of 1945. Is the hon. the Colonial Treasurer saying now that Excess Profits Tax has been collected this year for the year 1946? If that is so, it has been done without any legal authority. A Bill was passed in February, 1947, to the effect that Excess Profits Tax will cease to be collected as from the end of 1945. When the hon. the Colonial Treasurer returned from Canada early in 1947 he stated here that the finances of the Colony were in such a healthy state that it made no difference whether Excess Profits Tax was not collected up to the end of 1946.

In other words, had he collected the $1\frac{3}{4}$ million dollars for 1946 the Colony's finances would have been in a very healthy state. He went on to say that there would be a surplus for the year 1946. I was always under that impression and, I think, Your Excellency would agree with me that when we met recently on the Main Development Committee I made the point that we would have a surplus for 1946 and that we should budget for surpluses year after year so that we would have a certain sum of money to go on with development planning for the next 10 years. I now find, however, that we are short half a million dollars for 1946 and have to pass these supplementary estimates. I do not think this Council was properly informed as to the exact financial position at the beginning of this year.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. Member's memory is usually short. The Budget for the year 1946, as laid over, was passed by this Council with an estimated deficit of \$2,892,000. That was passed for 1946, but a revised estimate was put before the Council while I was away from the Colony showing a better position than that, and that position is the one of which I am speaking. It is incorrect to say that this has not been put before the Council when the Budget for 1947 was presented. There was a revised statement laid by me, I think, in January, 1947, and at that time we had available the figures for 1946 and the position as far as we could see it. That is why we see here—in the revised Estimates for 1947—a deficit of \$450,000 which is more or less correct.

To go back to the point about Excess Profits Tax, the Bill which was passed by this Council in February, 1947, caused the collection of Excess Profits Tax to cease, except for arrears which were not collected as from the previous year. 1946 had its full collection of Excess Profits Tax. The tax is collected for the accounting period, and when the hon. Member (Mr. Jacob) says it has not been collected to 1946 he is not using a correct phrase. In 1946 it was collected on profits for 1945 and so far as the public is concerned it was collected in 1946, but it is not being collected in 1947. These figures for 1946 are before the Council and the Council also had the assurance that this year's Budget would be balanced when the Excess Profits Tax was being removed. In so far as the development programme is concerned, there will be no change in the figure of $5\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars. We knew that figure for some months, as we have been working on these schemes for a very long time.

Motion put, and agreed to.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I now beg to move:—

“That, this Council approves of the Schedule of Additional Provision for October, 1947, which has been laid on the table.”

This Schedule was passed in Finance Committee a few days ago. Normally this would not have been included in the supplementary estimates for the quarter, but in view of the proposed dissolution of the Council at this meeting I thought it desirable that the Council should have the opportunity of passing this particular schedule of supplementary estimates before it dissolves. The schedule is a very large one. The grand total is \$1,820,144.94. It includes certain approved items in the form of re-votes, and it also includes provision for the Temporary Cost of Living Allowance passed by this Council some time ago.

Hon. Members would remember that the Estimates were originally prepared with provision for the Temporary War Bonus and that the Council recently approved of a Temporary Cost of Living Allowance, the cost of which will be \$494,644. There are also some new items of unforeseen expenditure. Lastly, there is a very large item of \$850,000 for Subsidisation. When this matter was considered in Finance Committee certain Members made certain reservations about particular items. The hon. Member for Essequibo River and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, reserved the right to speak and possibly oppose the item for \$5,000 under Head XXI.—Militia—the vote being required “to provide for initial expenses in connection with the setting up of the Volunteer Corps.” These two Members were not present during the debate when the resolution relating to this matter was taken and, therefore, said they would take this opportunity to speak on it.

The hon. Member for Essequibo River also wishes to mention a point under Head XXII—Miscellaneous. I think he wants to refer to promotions made outside the Colony. And lastly, many Members reserved the right to speak under the Head of Subsidisation. I do not know whether hon. Members want the Council to move into Committee or whether they prefer to speak generally under any particular Head.

Mr. JACOB : I beg to move that the Council go into Committee to consider this Schedule.

Mr. LEE seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Mr. JACOB : Under the head Legislature, Item 8—“Election Expenses, 1947—\$25,000,” I understand that adequate provision has not been made for polling stations, particularly in those districts where there is a large number of voters. At this time when there is difficulty in travelling—voters in this country have been accustomed to being transported by motor cars but motor cars cannot be used in these days—I think Government should afford every facility and not allow voters to walk more than a mile in order to get to a polling station. I have not got all the facts before me at the moment—I was promised them. I am not speaking about my own constituency, but I think that in other electoral districts like Demerara and Berbice facilities should be afforded so that every voter would be able to register his vote. If more funds are required in order to do so I would be willing to vote them.

Mr. LEE : I desire to support that application on behalf of the voters. Now that the rice crop is on, many of the voters in the country districts are busy reaping their crops and, if the polling stations are not placed within their reach, they would prefer not to vote rather than lose a day's work or a few hours' work. I suggest that the matter be discussed with the Elections Officer. As regards the sugar estates, proper facilities should also be given to the workers, I would also ask whether Your Excellency could not see your way to declare the polling day to be a public holiday, since if certain places are working voters employed there would not be willing to travel a mile or a half mile to vote, unless they are very much enamoured of their candidate.

The CHAIRMAN : I think the hon. the Attorney-General should say something in this matter. I am not closely acquainted with the subject.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : It is not easy to accede to the request made by the hon. Member for the North Western District and the hon. Member for Essequibo River because they have given no details. Practically speaking, everybody agrees that the greatest possible facility should be

given to people who wish to exercise their votes, but what is desired is a concrete instance to show that that principle is not being carried out in its fullest sense by the Elections Officer. The two hon. Members have given no particulars whatever. The hon. Member for North Western District says he is not referring to his own constituency, but alludes to the Demerara and the Berbice constituencies. In Demerara there is a constituency — Eastern Demerara (Electoral District No. 5) and these are the polling stations which will be published in tomorrow's *Gazette* as having been provided there:—

“Vigilance Court Room; Paradise Anglican School; Nonpareil Anglican School; Cove and John Court Room; Anglican School, Cove and John.”

At Cove and John we have fixed two places, it will be noticed—the Court Room and the Anglican School. Then there will be other polling stations at—

“The Government School, Pln. Enmore; Golden Grove Methodist School; Ann's Grove Village Office; Clonbrook Wesleyan School; Unity and Lancaster Village Office; Scots School, Mahaica; Mahaica Court Room; Mahaica Village Office; Cane Grove C. of England School.”

Mr. JACOB: May I rise to a point of explanation? These lists have been promised to me but I have not got them. I think it is unnecessary for the hon. the Attorney-General to read them out in that manner. I was hoping that other hon. Members would have said something about this matter, but no one has done so. Perhaps, after I take my seat other Members will say something and the hon. the Attorney-General will reply.

Mr. LEE: As regards my constituency, I asked for a polling station at Bel-field which is a few miles from Maryville, Leguan, but it has not been given. Although the West Coast, Demerara, is not in my constituency I would like to know how a voter could be expected to walk from Leonora to Uitvlugt in order to exercise his vote. No labourer who is a voter should be expected to do that and, I think, better facilities should be provided there.

Sir EUSTACE WOOLFORD: I rise to a point of order! The hon. the

Attorney-General was giving the Council some very important particulars about polling stations, and why he was interrupted I do not know. I suggest to hon. Members to listen to the particulars and make notes about the places that concern them, and they may be able to make suggestions afterwards. They should listen and see what alterations could be made. I have heard that there is much anxiety over the feeling that there are not sufficient polling stations. I can understand the hon. Member for North Western District wanting to know something about the matter, but I think hon. Members should wait and see whether the polling stations now proposed are sufficient. I do not think they should prevent a speaker from concluding his speech by getting up and saying that the speech is not what they expected.

Mr. LEE: The learned the hon. Attorney-General said we were generalising, so I gave specific instances and I would like to hear him on them.

Mr. FERREIRA: I am rather surprised to hear the last speaker. I do not think he is the only Member who is interested in this matter. I thought he would have said so. What I think is that if any hon. Member thinks there should be more polling stations in any particular district, he should take the matter up with the Elections Officer. In my own case I have got satisfaction.

Mr. JACOB: In addition to myself there are others seeking election, and they will never know. That is why I raise the point. I have not prevented the hon. the Attorney-General from giving the particulars. I would like to hear them. It is impossible for me to know all those things, and I intend to speak after the hon. the Attorney-General has spoken. If it is the wish of the hon. Members to hear all the details, I would wait and speak after.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: What an admission to make, that there are those seeking election who will not know, and do not know? Be that as it may, I thoroughly agree with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira). In my case I particularly asked the Electic Officer to type out the list, that was given to me, and send it to those responsible in

the districts. That was done and they wrote back and said it was satisfactory. Why hon. Members did not do the same thing in their districts? It resolves itself into the trite remark made by the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) that there are those seeking election who will never know.

Mr. ROTH : Borrowing the logic of some hon. Members, I think the solution of the problem is to appoint a polling booth at every second house, as no one is going to walk a mile to a polling station. Appoint the rumshops as polling stations and, even if they are four miles away, I am certain citizens will go there.

Mr. FERREIRA : To a point of correction ! The rumshops close on polling day !

Mr. ROTH : There is one point that has been overlooked. A citizen's highest privilege is to exercise the vote. If he does not think it worthy to walk two or five miles to exercise that highest privilege of his, then I do not think he is worthy of being a citizen.

The CHAIRMAN : I do not think we want this debate to continue all the afternoon. I have told hon. Members I have taken a personal interest in this question of having sufficient polling booths. I have asked the Attorney-General to ask the Elections Officer in turn to do everything he possibly can to provide sufficient polling booths for the people. It is quite evident from what hon. Members have said here that the Elections Officer has been very obliging when consulted and representations were made. The complete list of polling booths will be published immediately in the *Gazette* and, presumably, in the newspapers. Should hon. Members or prospective Members or candidates have any reasonable representation to make, let them make them. They will be considered. We have taken the greatest care to provide as many polling booths as possible and to make it as convenient as possible for every voter to exercise his vote. I do not think I can say anything more.

Mr. EDUN : I think I should make a point in this matter because I have taken particular pains to interview the hon. the

Attorney-General. What I pointed out to him was this : Government should take care to inform the electorate of the seriousness of illegal practices, such as bribery and corruption and such things. The average voter does not read all these documents and, therefore, it is the responsibility of the Government to put up posters in order to let voters read for themselves what are offences. At the moment I know as a matter of fact that illegal practices are prevailing, and I expect this Government to do a thorough job about it so that when anyone is caught in the attempt there can be no excuse.

The CHAIRMAN : If that is so, I hope the hon. Member would see that the matter gets to the Court. I think it is his duty to do so.

Mr. EDUN : I am asking that Government put up posters. If the money is not sufficient, then we would vote more in order to see that the exercise of the franchise is done conscientiously. I think that in the interest of the community Government should do everything possible to see that the voting is carried out correctly.

Mr. FERREIRA : I think I should rise and say that I have seen those safeguards printed, and the hon. Member knows that.

Mr. JACOB : We would like to hear from the hon. the Attorney-General all the polling stations in the whole Colony. I do not know if he is prepared to do that. Let me give a concrete case. There are several stations at Kitty and there is none between Kitty and Graham's Hall, a distance of two or three miles. I am not familiar with the mileage, but that particular case was drawn to my attention. While it will be very interesting to listen to the names of the various places, unless we can within a few minutes figure out the distance between one station and another we will not be able to say anything at the moment. It would be well for the public to know, because all do not see the *Gazette*

The CHAIRMAN : I think the public will know in the morning. Let us have the list published and, if there are any repre-

sentations to be made, let them be made to the proper quarters.

Mr. PEEER BACCHUS : I think the hon. the Attorney-General should be allowed to speak.

The CHAIRMAN : I do not think we will get any further by reading out all the polling booths.

Mr. LEE : I think we need not worry to have them read, as Your Excellency has given the undertaking that if any of the prospective candidates desires additional polling booths he can apply to the Attorney-General.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS : I was waiting to get the polling booths for the different districts before making any observation. I have a similar complaint in so far as my district is concerned. In a particular centre we have polling booths five and a half miles apart. That, I think, is a little too far apart. I was not as fortunate as the hon. Member for Western Essequibo or the hon. Member for Berbice River. I took the matter up with the Elections Officer and he refused to grant another station within that 5½ miles. That is between Bush Lot and Lichfield, a distance of 5½ miles. I think in fairness to and for the convenience of the public another polling booth should be placed there.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I will go into the matter of a polling station midway between Bush Lot and Lichfield. At some times the difficulty is, there is not a suitable place at a particular spot. I shall go into the matter of Britannia with the Elections Officer. With respect to the complaint made by the hon. Member for North-Western District that there is no polling station between Kitty and Graham's Hall, I would like to remind him that very few people live between Kitty and Graham's Hall.

Mr. JACOB : Over 100 are living there !

The CHAIRMAN : Does any other Member wish to raise a question on any other item on the Supplementary Estimates?

MILITIA

Mr. LEE : Under Head XXI—Militia—I desire to record my protest to those items. British Guiana is a very peace-loving country, and I think no military force is necessary for the protection of what we may term the development of the interior. I feel that the Police Force is quite enough, and before we have this Militia we should increase the Police Force as many of the Police Stations—it is within my knowledge—are short-staffed. I cannot agree to expenditure for any Militia in this Colony. Instead of spending that \$26,000 as the Message says, I think it can be better applied for vocational training in this Colony, even on a small scale.

Mr. EDUN : What is passing through my mind about this vote is, whether there is some sinister feeling of the eventuality of war and Government is making preparation for such a war. What I could not understand was why did not Government take the boys who went abroad and had some training and use them to the best advantage. The men are sore about it. If you call them now to serve again in a war in any capacity, you would hardly find them willing to serve because they were not treated well indeed. I have this suspicion lurking in my mind, that something is happening. I did not speak about it when the Message was being discussed, but what I have found out is, this Militia or Volunteer Corps will be used internally, but for what purpose I do not know—whether they will do Police work or will be utilized if there are industrial disputes. We, Labour leaders, have to be very careful when we are arming people because those arms may be used against us. For that reason I think there is no necessity for forming a Volunteer Corps and spending money on it. We ought to be preaching the gospel of love and peace rather than thinking of war. I do not think this will serve the interest of British Guiana. It is against the interest of the people, because we need money for other things and it should not be spent in this direction.

Mr. FERREIRA : Frankly I am amazed to think that after 1939, having regard to what we learnt then, two Mem-

bers of this Council within such a short space of time can get up here and make the remarks they did. In 1939 we were told that fools led a life of false security which we had been doing, and today we, hon. Members of this Council, are saying that we should go back to those days. I am thoroughly amazed, especially when one recollects that this Volunteer Corps is nothing new. It goes back 200 years, to the days of the Dutch Occupation. It was incumbent then on the landowners in this Colony to serve their country. I do think if any person derives a benefit from his country he should be sufficiently patriotic, without a law compelling him, to serve his country. One hon. Member has suggested that if the time came again for war service those who had given before would be unwilling to serve again. That is utter rubbish. I know what took place in 1939, and I was one who gave service. I know how they flocked to the Colours because they had a sense of responsibility, a greater sense than some Members have.

We are not asking you to do something which will react against you. We are asking you to provide funds for the young men of the Colony to be able to do their duty to the Colony, and I am surprised to think that any right-thinking Member of this Council will oppose such a measure. I feel very strongly about it, because I have been an unpaid member who served and, I think, served faithfully. I saw the good that the Militia Volunteer Corps was to the community. I know the sense of discipline, the sense of responsibility, the *esprit de corps*, that Corps inspired in those young men. Therefore let no Member stand up here and tell this Council that this is something that will react against this country. Far be it. If we are Guianese, this is our country and let us be proud to serve it.

Mr. EDUN: I think I should reply to the hon. Member who has just taken his seat. I want to know from him who is our enemy. We can be crushed here in five minutes from the American Air Base. Is it possible for any puny force to stand up against the Americans? We have the protection of the Munroe Doctrine and of the British Fleet. When the

hon. Member talks about serving our country, I think, he is dreaming. He is talking nonsense.

Mr. FERREIRA: To a point of order! The Member cannot be allowed to suggest that I am talking nonsense.

The CHAIRMAN: It is hardly parliamentary to say that a Member is talking nonsense.

Mr. EDUN: When the Member spoke he said I was talking rubbish, I think I ought to tell him that he is talking nonsense. It is just as wide as broad.

Mr. LEE: I desire to draw the attention of the hon. Member for Berbice River to the fact that we are talking about economic cuts, as Your Excellency has expressed from that day's. Are we going to follow the Imperial Government's policy? The Imperial Government has said that in 1948 it is going to withdraw its overseas forces; it is cutting down its navy. Why then should we incur an expenditure of \$26,000 for this purpose, when we can apply it to educational purposes which the Colony needs very much? If that is done and it turns out three persons every year as fit and proper citizens of British Guiana, we would be satisfied.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: To a point of information! While the Imperial Government is cutting down the Regular Forces, it is doing its best to expand the Volunteer Force.

Mr. LEE: That is what I do not want. We are under the protection of the Imperial Government. We are British Citizens and not Subjects.

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. Member wants to move the deletion of the item he can do so. This whole matter was discussed as the subject of a Message by me, and a resolution was passed unanimously adopting it. That was only a fortnight ago. The best way in which the hon. Member can show his displeasure is to move the deletion.

Mr. LEE: In my opening remarks I said I want to record my protest.

Mr. EDUN: Supposing this Council passes a measure and it is found after-

wards that this very Council thinks it should not vote the money in order to carry out that measure, has it not the right to do so?

The CHAIRMAN : It certainly has the right to do so, and I suggest to the hon. Member to move the deletion in the exercise of that right.

Mr. EDUN : Very well, Sir. I move the deletion of the whole item.

Motion put, and the Committee divided and voted as follows:—

For:—Messrs. Lee and Edun—2.

Against: Messrs. Farnum, Raatgever, Thompson, Ferreira, Roth, Peer Bacchus, Gonsalves, Dias, Critchlow, deAguiar, C. V. Wight, and Seaford, Sir Eustace Woolford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General, the Colonial Secretary—16.

Not Voting:—Mr. Jacob—1.

Items passed.

Mr. GONSALVES : I would like to announce that the hon. Member for North-Western District did not vote, though he always boasts of voting either "for" or "against" any measure.

Mr. JACOB : I did not quite follow what was going on.

MISCELLANEOUS—(b) SUBVENTIONS, etc.

Item 57—Subsidy to British Guiana United Broadcasting Coy., Ltd., \$2,500.

Mr. LEE : Your Excellency, from the accounts shown me by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer in the Finance Committee I was compelled to be satisfied that they were in order, but what I want to bring to your notice is that in the Advisory Committee to the B.P.I. the question arose as to hon. Members of this Council and prospective candidates for the Council using the time allowed Government on the broadcasting programmes. It was agreed that it should be used and I was the only dissident. I noticed last Saturday when the *Daily Argosy* was broadcasting the West Indian news, the announcer introduced political views. For instance, he said that Mr. Crawford, a Member of the Executive

Council of Barbados, was no more a Member of that Council, and he used certain remarks which I do not want to repeat here. I do not say, if the Broadcasting Station is going to permit politics to be indulged in, then I would ask Government to see that every person broadcasting on that station supplies the script before it is broadcast. I am drawing Government's attention to it, because what is good for one should be good for everyone.

Mr. EDUN : The attitude I took up in Finance Committee was that the report from the Company was a gloomy one and I did not know whether we should waste money on it, but I was told by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer that provision is being made now to give us a better programme, etc., and for better equipment. If that is so, I support it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I did not go so far as that. I gave no assurance—whether it be better equipment or improved type of programme—to which the hon. Member referred. What I said was, that the Company had applied for a franchise and that matter is still under consideration. The delay is interfering with the progress of the Company and, I hope, when that particular matter is settled the Company will be able to put more capital into the business and so improve their equipment and their programmes. I am very sorry I cannot give that assurance.

Mr. EDUN : I want to help the Company. Government should help it in order to put on educational programmes in the interest of the public, but I want to see something better than at present.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : Government is very much concerned about that aspect of the matter, and that is the sole justification for voting public funds in the way we are now doing. I think the equipment as available is giving extremely good public service. As to the point the hon. Member for Essequibo River is making, I am not quite sure I understood him rightly. If the suggestion is that political speeches should be made over the radio or that the Company should allow would-be politicians or candidates for the Council to make

speeches over the radio, then I think in the interest of the Company someone should advise them very strongly to take the greatest possible care in the matter. I am not a lawyer, but I think the law of slander applies to the broadcasting station as to the newspapers. Unless there is someone there to read the script and take the offending parts out before the offensive words go out, then there will be trouble.

Mr. ROTH : I take this opportunity to make a criticism against the Company, as I made in some other places. I trust it will have great effect. Whilst no one can deny that the B.G. Broadcasting Company does a lot of good in giving publicity to some of our commodities and in putting on very fine programmes, there is a certain aspect of their broadcasting which does the country more harm than good. I refer to some of the commercial announcers, some of whom do not speak English as it should be spoken and a few who do not even speak grammatical English. What must the people in the West Indies, England, and my own country, Australia—where ZFY is often heard—think of us if we cannot even speak English? I think that sort of thing does the country more harm than good. Why allow every Tom, Dick and Harry to use the microphone and spread such things to the far corners of the world? It is exceedingly distressing to think that this is British Guiana. I do not oppose the item, but I do hope that Government will take some steps to point these things out to the Broadcasting Company.

Mr. FERREIRA : I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the last speaker. I have listened to the local broadcasts of news in which the main items were crime reports—murder and that sort of thing—which do British Guiana no good. As regards English and pronunciation. I think that the programmes should be thoroughly vetted before they are broadcast. If we are to have a radio service let us have the best. If the Company want more money let us give them, because the local station is the "Voice of Guiana," but please do not allow anyone who cannot speak proper English to broadcast news and views which may make people abroad think we are illiterate people.

COLONIAL EMERGENCY MEASURES

Item 2—*Subsidisation, \$850,000.*

Mr. LEE : As far as lies in my power as a Guianese I do protest most vehemently against the manner in which Government has deemed it fit to withdraw subsidisation of certain items without consulting this Legislature. I also question whether it is in the best interest of the people of the Colony that the subsidisation of those articles should be withdrawn. Sir Gordon Lethem persuaded this Council to agree to subsidisation in order to keep down the cost of living and to enable the poor people to obtain the necessities of life within their means, and it is regrettable that Government did not consult this Council or notify the public before the subsidisation of certain articles was withdrawn. After all, the Members of this Council are responsible to the people in matters of expenditure and revenue, and in this instance I feel that the exercise of the power vested in you, Sir—I do not know if the Members of the Executive Council were consulted—is not a constitutional act. I am not saying that Your Excellency has not the power, but the exercise of it at such a time as this and in such a manner is not constitutional.

While I was ill in bed someone telephoned me and asked if I was aware that Government had decided to withdraw subsidisation with respect to certain items, and my informant was positive that an Order would be published on the Monday morning. Is it possible that such an important decision could have leaked out so that some people could prey on the workers? I am asking Your Excellency to inquire into the matter so as to find out where the leakage occurred, and take measures to prevent it in future. When people went to the shops on Friday the shopkeepers were able to tell them that they would have to pay 22 cents for a tin of condensed milk. It is not right, because the wages of the workers have not been increased. The trade unions have not the means of employing people to keep statistics regarding the cost of living. Why Government cannot inform the public to what extent the withdrawal of subsidisation will increase the cost of living — not the

cost of living as envisaged by the Labour Department, but the cost of living as regards necessities of life? I submit that an increase of 5.5 is not the correct figure. I am appealing to Government to give a lead to other employers by increasing the cost of living allowance to Government employees. It would even be better if Government would introduce minimum wage legislation, but I know that is not possible. I think the only alternative would be to restore the subsidisation which has been withdrawn, and whatever deficit there may be in the Budget the people would be prepared to bear taxation to meet it. If we can import supplies from Australia at a cheaper rate than we do from Canada, we should import from that country and not allow the merchants and Commission agents to influence importation from Canada.

Mr. EDUN: This is a very controversial matter, and I am very much concerned about the policy adopted by Government in withdrawing subsidisation on certain articles, the effect of which is an increase in the cost of living. I do not know where it will all end. I am not going to quarrel with Government for not taking this Council into its confidence in the matter. After all, we are still a Crown Colony and we have to bow to super-imposition from the Colonial Office. When the day arrives for us to have self-government, then and only then will we be able to stand up against this super-imposition from that end. What I cannot understand is that from the inception of subsidisation Government told us that it was designed to keep the cost of living down. What is the reason for this sudden collapse of Government's own ideal? Has something happened? Is it that we have not got the money to continue subsidisation? If subsidisation costs this Colony five million dollars we should pay for it, because it is the only way to prevent inflation.

Is it that Government wants other industries to follow the lead of the Bauxite Company and create upheaval here, there and everywhere? I am sure that the workers throughout the country will ask for more wages. Would Government blame them? The remedy is in the hands of

Government. We must either stand for subsidisation or cut adrift from it. If I had my way I would have preferred to subsidise our own products—rice, ground provisions, etc.,—in order to enhance local production. We should sell those things as cheaply as possible to the consumers while paying the producers better prices for their produce. We are doing so at present but in a very infinitesimal way. We should extend that by spending \$500,000 on subsidisation of local produce, I would prefer to see every person in this country eating cassava flour, which is just as good as wheaten flour, and plantains in the morning instead of bread. Why can't we do like the Venezuelans who eat farine? I am pleading with Government not to be in a hurry about these things, and to maintain subsidisation until something better can be done. I know that Government's intentions are good, but it is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We ought to help the Mother Country in every way possible, and if we know what we can do to help we would make the sacrifice as willingly as we did during the war.

Mr. JACOB: We are asked to vote \$850,000 for subsidisation, which will increase the supplementary provision for October to \$1,819,644. Looking at the Estimates for this year, I see that provision was made for an expenditure of \$15,844,000 and revenue of \$15,896,000, showing a surplus of \$52,000. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer has stated this afternoon that he hopes—in fact he is certain—that the surplus balance will remain intact. I would like to see that materialize, but if the Estimates for this year are to be increased by the sum I have quoted, I can hardly believe that the expenditure will be within the estimate of \$15,844,000. However, we have been told very clearly, perhaps not intentionally, that the surplus we have in hand will remain intact.

I was one who believed that subsidisation of certain foodstuffs was a necessary thing in these times. It was necessary because Government itself did a few things which made it necessary. We are selling two major items of foodstuffs—sugar to the United Kingdom, or to the Ministry of Food in Great Britain, at a fixed price, and rice to the West Indies

at another fixed price, all below a reasonable cost of production, if I can use that phrase. If the workers who are producing sugar and rice have to pay the full value for goods imported from Canada and other places, it is time we get full value for our products. Since it has been found necessary by the Imperial Government to discontinue its contribution of one million dollars towards the cost of our subsidisation measures, the time has come when the price of sugar and rice must be reviewed by the Imperial Government if the people of this Colony, the natives of this Colony, are to be allowed to exist and live normal lives. That is a matter which this Government has to consider immediately with the advice of the Economic Adviser. I do not know who gave this advice. I am presuming that Your Excellency acted on the advice of your advisers, the Members of the Executive Council and the representatives of the people of the Colony, and unless I hear anything to the contrary the responsibility is theirs.

This Legislature has now got to make provision for the people who are producing sugar, rice and other items, to see that they get reasonable wages, and to see that those who control those two articles secure reasonable prices for them. We cannot tell the Canadians to sell their flour to us at the price we want; we are paying them the world's price. We should demand the world's prices for our sugar and rice. Before the contract was made to supply the West Indies with rice I had just returned from Canada where rice was being sold at 10 cents per lb. wholesale, and 12 cents per lb. retail. I wrote Government expressing the hope that it had not agreed to the sale of rice to the West Indies, and I got a reply stating that, with the full approval of Government the sale would be made or had been made. Therefore, when statements are made in this Council that a wonderful thing was done and they were quite happy about it, they are happy because they had the full backing of the Government. The Rice Marketing Board is selling our rice at 50 per cent. of its value. I do not know the period of the contracts for the sale of sugar, but I know that it is being sold at a very low price,

resulting in low wages to the producers.

The whole matter ought to be reviewed immediately, and Your Excellency will probably receive representations from all the trade unions in the Colony that the question of subsidisation should be gone into. I consider that a most reasonable request. After all, this Council and the public were given an assurance that money was actually voted, but what did it matter if another half a million dollars was required? This Council is capable of finding the additional money, but it is only being used. At times it is given full responsibility but at other times it is not. I feel that the people of this country have been very shabbily treated by this Government and by the Imperial Government, and by our experts and advisers, and our representatives who make these decisions. I will say no more about it at this stage.

There is one other aspect of the matter to which I would like to refer. It has been rumoured, and I think it is true, that before the subsidisation of certain articles was removed a few persons knew about the decision and were able to purchase large stocks of certain items—milk, etc. Condensed milk was being sold at 16 cents per tin, but overnight the price was raised to 24 cents, and some people made thousands of dollars. During the debate on the Budget it was clear to certain Members of this Council, and particularly to the Unofficial Committee which went into the matter, that there was some serious leakage, but definite evidence was not available and the matter was left there. The question of a leakage has been raised again. Certain groups of people have benefited tremendously at the expense of the working people. If the goods had remained under the control of the wholesalers they would have had to pay the Controller of Supplies the difference in price at the date subsidisation was withdrawn, but the retailers had possession of the goods and they are making money at the expense of the consumers.

It is the duty of Government to investigate the matter. I do not think Government will be able to discover anything, because I am certain that neces-

ary precautions are not taken when matters of this kind come up from time to time. It has happened in this Colony over and over again, and it will continue to happen unless necessary precautions are taken, and unless severe penalties—I do not mean monetary penalties—or drastic action is taken to prevent leakage. Certain people are making money at the expense of the poor working people in this illicit manner. As a trader myself I would like to make money by ordinary commercial means, but not in such a way. (laughter). Members may laugh. Perhaps those who are laughing are those who are responsible, perhaps not directly but indirectly and, I know, if they have any conscience, they would realize that some of them have benefited. Perhaps I have benefited too. ("Hear! Hear!!"). Let an investigation be made. I was associated with two other Members in the investigation of a certain matter, and we knew who benefited, but there was not sufficient evidence on which we could make a definite report. I am sure that this sort of thing can be stopped, and Government ought to take the necessary steps to stop it. Government's responsibility is there, and it should do something about it. If Government cannot find the money to continue subsidisation, perhaps, it can find money for an all-round increase of wages.

Mr. FERREIRA: At a time like this, when we are facing a very serious crisis, I do not think we should indulge in destructive criticism. Instead, those who are really interested in the welfare of the Colony, and in particular the workers—I am referring particularly to white-collared workers because I think they suffer most—should try to put forward constructive ideas and suggestions which might in some measure help to meet the situation. Frankly, I have never regarded subsidisation as a solution of our problems.

I should like to point out that subsidisation is something artificial—it is a wartime expediency — and the time has come when we must have a solution. We cannot continue to work along artificial lines. In your speech yesterday, Sir, you pointed to the right lines and you spoke

with clear thinking. This is a time when we have to indulge—or try to indulge—in clear thinking, and in order to get rid of our troubles we need less talk and more action. We have to solve our problems by more production; we have to think in terms of funds for Government and private enterprise and Government should take responsible members of the community into its confidence to discuss and put forward plans that would increase the productivity of the Colony in all its aspects,

At present I think we are indulging in too much talk which is getting us nowhere. We have had meetings of the Development Committee and, I think, the time has come when we should get rid of some of that paper work and do something more tangible. It is up to Government to get a move on and to place confidence into the hands of responsible members of this community. There is no sense in Members talking, as has been done this afternoon, about shipping sugar to Australia when Australia produces more sugar than we do. That sort of thing takes us nowhere at all.

I do hope that when the new Council comes into being the recommendations made by the various sub-Committees of the Main Development Committee will be translated into something tangible. I have no doubt that if these ideas materialise an answer to our problems will have been found. Subsidisation can only be a temporary expediency and it can never solve our economic problems. We must get on to something better, and the only thing that will answer our problems is increased production. I agree with the hon. Member for North Western District that we should obtain increased prices for our products if we can get them abroad.

Mr. LEE: To a point of correction! I think I spoke of shipping sugar to England—not Australia.

Mr. CRITCHLOW: I realize that subsidisation is a very serious and expensive matter and that we have to do something to reduce our expenditure, but the workers are feeling the increased cost of

living very much. We—the workers—have to buy in the market, and every day we hear that the cost of things has gone up, when we get there. The people selling fish and other foodstuffs have increased their prices terribly. A woman will show you three small fishes and looking at you straight in the face say they are for 60 cents. Quite recently I was stormed by some people who told me that I sat down in the Executive Council and agreed for Government to take away subsidisation with the result that they have to pay increased prices for butter, condensed milk and other things.

I want to know why the people were being made to pay the increased prices on that Friday when the *Official Gazette* containing the Order was not out as yet. The *Gazette* was not published until the next day, and I told the people on that Friday not to pay the increased prices until they saw the *Official Gazette*. If Government holds that these increased prices must be paid, I think, the workers should be given an increased cost-of-living bonus in order to meet them, and when the prices are reduced the increased bonus can be taken off. If the workers are left to pay the increased prices for foodstuffs without an increase in wages we would be surprised to see the amount of trouble it would cause, especially as the minds of many people in the community are bent on crime already.

I say again that Government should legislate for a special cost-of-living bonus—nothing that will have to do with wages—in order to meet these prices, otherwise there is going to be trouble. When a man buys a 4-cent loaf of bread for his tea in the morning he finds that he can eat two such loaves, but he cannot afford it. How can we expect workers to give increased production when they cannot buy proper food to eat? For instance, they cannot afford to buy beef or even salt fish which they could have begged for and got a piece in the days gone by. How can we expect more production from the people if they are half-starved? Very few workmen can afford to eat eggs, because the price has gone up to 6 cents each. I ask you, Sir, to take my advice and let the workers get

a cost-of-living bonus, otherwise there will be some trouble.

Mr. GONSALVES: My only complaint is the manner in which this thing has been done. I have heard the remarks of the last speaker, but so far as Labour circles are concerned they were aware of what Government contemplated, because the hon. Member who has just taken his seat is a Member of the Executive Council and it must have been known to him that Government contemplated this measure. From what I have seen and heard, however, some secret was disclosed before the Order appeared in the *Official Gazette*, and it appears to me that no greater risk would have been incurred if Government had asked this Council to meet in an emergency session and discuss the matter. If an emergency session of this Council was summoned, however, an accusation might have been made against the Members who attended the meeting. I think the Members could have been pledged to some secrecy until the matter appeared in the *Official Gazette*, but since the Members of the Executive Council and the Clerk were the only persons present at the discussion the matter could only have been disclosed by someone who attended at the time. It has been suggested that Government should do its own printing, but whether Government does its own printing or not the danger or risk of disclosure would still be there. The suggestion I have heard is that the news got out somewhat surreptitiously from a Member on the Government side.

The important point, however, is that this measure has been sprung on the people, and if we are going to think of it only in the light of increased expenditure then the cost of labour would go up. Experience has shown that whenever the cost of living goes up the cost of labour goes up also, and the argument of the other side is that there must be something more for handling the goods. Having heard the speeches made here this afternoon about the Colony's financial position, I am inclined to the view that we should have permitted the substantial vote to continue at least until the end of the year and in the interim Government might have

devised some means of raising additional funds.

One hon. Member has stated that merchants were apparently hoarding goods because the increased prices were expected, but I have also heard and read in the newspapers that since the debate was started here on the motion advocating an increase in the price of rice we cannot get any rice to buy. Whether that is the result of the motion or not I do not know. No question of subsidisation was involved there, but yet there are said to be instances of hoarding. I do join in the appeal made as regards the hardship that has been created by the withdrawal of subsidisation, and I respectfully suggest that it may be found possible to vote the money until the end of the year and then let us see in what way further relief can be obtained.

The CHAIRMAN: Does any other Member wish to speak?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Sir, this is not the time for a full-dress debate on our economic situation. We only have three quarters of an hour left in the life of the Council, so I cannot undertake to make any detailed reply. I had hoped that Your Excellency's address yesterday would have served to bring home to hon. Members the extreme gravity of the situation with which we are now faced as regards both our internal and external finance. You, Sir, indicated in your speech how closely connected this subsidisation is with our economic situation, and you also indicated very forcibly what the carrying of this burden means.

The vote before the Council is one for \$850,000. In the original estimate for 1947 this Council provided \$1,000,000 and it was implied that the Council would provide another \$1,000,000 during the course of the year. In July the Finance Committee approved not of the whole \$1,000,000 but of only one half—\$500,000—which was then being owed, with the understanding that the total expenditure for the year would be limited to \$2,000,000. Now, the addition of this vote of \$850,000 would have brought the total expenditure for the year to \$2,350,000 and, but for the withdrawal of the subsidy from those items

to which Members are referring, another \$250,000 would have had to be spent. Again, Sir, although we have asked now for a vote of \$850,000 the unpleasant news has reached us that the price of flour has since gone up and it is quite likely that I shall have to ask the new Council for a further vote of \$40,000 before very long. It would therefore be seen, Sir, that if we are to carry on until the end of the year it would cost us something like \$3,000,000.

It has been asked why the whole matter was not raised in Council and Members allowed to express their views, and yet at the same time two or three Members have referred to what they call "leakage." This whole matter was dealt with in extreme secrecy. The gravity of the situation came to us when we realized that we were faced with the outrunning of our funds and when we knew what the external situation was. Government then considered it very essential and urgent to make up its mind as to what to do and took action at once. In fact, it was an extremely difficult situation and, as you, Sir, used the words "driven into action" in the course of your address yesterday, I would say that in the end Government felt it was driven to take immediate action. I am not quite sure that if we had come to the Council and had this whole matter debated any other decision would have been possible and, maybe, this question of leakage would have been worse. I believe, it is true that in some way or other foreknowledge of what was proposed got out, as I have heard, from rumours of actual inflation in price of the items affected prior to the publication of the new Order setting out the higher rates. I do hope that if there is any real evidence of that action would be taken by the proper authorities. It was essential, however, that Government should move quickly and take that responsibility without first coming to this Council because it was running out of funds under this vote and there were other implications in carrying out subsidisation.

The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, asked a very pertinent question when he enquired why was there this change of policy and added that he had heard Gov-

ernment officers on many occasions here advocate subsidisation as the proper policy. That is perfectly true. Subsidisation has been debated on many occasions in this Council and at first it was considered uneconomical by many Members around this table. It was Government who had to impress upon Members that policy and the reasons which justified it. The reasons are very simple. Subsidisation, as the hon. Member for Berbice River rightly said, is an expedient — a temporary war-time measure — to meet a war-time situation. During the war the attention of the whole Empire was devoted to winning the fight and it was absolutely necessary as one of the precautions against inflation that we should try by this artificial device to keep prices down. We were also justified in maintaining it for as long as possible after the war, so long as we felt that there was the slightest possibility of these prices coming down within a reasonable proportion and within a reasonable time. The events of this year, however, must have brought it home to everybody that this possibility no longer exists—that we cannot hope to see any early return to low prices and in particular of those articles of which we are speaking. Therefore, the time has come when we have to be realistic and have to readjust ourselves and distribute these commodities at a price which is more in keeping with their actual cost to the Colony, because we cannot go on with this artificial measure any longer. Happily for us the war is now ended.

It is true to say that great hardship has been created as a result of the removal of this measure, but let us not exaggerate it. The five items from which subsidisation has been withdrawn are important in a way, but they are not vital to the domestic economy of our people. We, Sir, do not place strict reliance on the statistics of the Labour Department but, nevertheless, they are a guide that we have and we must accept them as such. They show that the withdrawal of subsidisation has increased the cost of living by 5.5 points or about 3 per cent. Well, this is not a very high figure, and I have it from information prepared by the Labour Department. I have not had the time to check up or

to go into the information in detail, but what has been reported to me is on the basis of the supplementary budgets passed in 1946 when we took the statistics on which our cost of living is based, and the withdrawal of subsidisation puts the amount of money that must be spent weekly by each of these families at 23 cents per week. As I have said, I have not really checked these figures or studied them carefully, but they indicate that we should not exaggerate the hardship which this withdrawal has caused. Naturally, in individual cases the effect may be much more severe, but one has got to take the average; we cannot deal with the whole pack.

The hon. Member for Berbice River was correct when he said that we must look for the solution this way. You have given, Sir, in your address an indication of the policy we have to pursue. We cannot pursue it by way of subsidisation apart from flour; we must look for the solution this way. However, Sir, I have only indicated what Government has done and, again, I say we had to take that action.

Mr. LEE: I must have it on record that condensed milk which was being sold at 16 cents per tin is now 24 cents per tin—an increase of 8 cents. The same thing applies to salt fish, and then there is meat which has also increased in price. On these items alone—apart from other articles of food—the calculation of the Labour Department is incorrect.

The CHAIRMAN: Does any other Member wish to speak?

COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE SCHEMES

Purchase of New Rice Mill—\$144,907.60.

Mr. LEE: Under Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes, on page 22, there is an item which reads—Purchase of new Rice Mill, etc., \$144,907.60. Some time ago I raised the question whether Government would consider the advisability of erecting central rice mills in certain districts and I understood that that is being done. I would therefore ask Government to place the orders for these mills as early as possible.

The CHAIRMAN: I think I made it clear yesterday that machinery is on order.

Mr. LEE : Thank you, Sir.

Council resumed.

Motion put, and agreed to.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (1946)
BILL, 1947.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I beg to move the first reading of a bill intitled :—

“An Ordinance to allow and confirm certain additional expenditure incurred in the year ended the thirty-first day of December, 1946.”

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

On a motion moved by the Colonial Treasurer and seconded by the Colonial Secretary, the Standing Rules and Orders were suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I now beg to move the second reading of the Bill. This Bill is the final act—a formal one it is true — to authorize legally the excess expenditure incurred during the year 1946. All of the items have, of course, been approved by the Council by resolutions on various supplementary estimates and these have been set out in the Schedule to the Bill. As I have already stated, Sir, this is a formal act to allow and confirm this excess expenditure for the year 1946.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Bill clause by clause without amendment.

The Council resumed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : With the permission of the Council I move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

INCREASED PRICE TO RICE PRODUCERS.

The Council resumed the debate on the following motion by the hon. Member, Mr. A. M. Edun :—

WHEREAS the cost of living index has arisen from point 161 to 182 from December 1946 and at which point it has taken a steady stand to this date;

AND WHEREAS the cost of labour has arisen considerably in the Rice Industry,

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council strongly recommends that the Rice Marketing Board increase the price of rice on all grades to be paid to padi growers and rice producers, by one and a half cent per pound, to take effect from 1st January, 1947;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Honourable Council strongly recommends that the aforesaid Rice Marketing Board open negotiations immediately with West Indian purchasers of rice requesting an increase of two cents per pound on all grades of rice to meet with the high cost of labour and the cost of living of the padi growers and rice producers of British Guiana.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I beg to move that the question be now put.

Mr. EDUN : I shall be very brief. The hon. Member has asked that the question be put, but I think it is the privilege of this Council to reply to certain observations made by Members. Strange enough, Sir, this motion happens to be the last act of this Council in voting on it.

The PRESIDENT : I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. If an hon. Member does put a motion “That the question be now put”, it has to be put forthwith. That is to say, I must put it to the Council and if hon. Members think the hon. Member should continue to speak they would vote against it. I am not putting the motion but the question.

Mr. GONSALVES : What the hon. Member has in mind is that the debate may be shortened,

Mr. LEE : Is it that the question by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo be now put ?

The PRESIDENT : The question does not affect the motion. If you feel the debate should continue then the hon. Member would continue his speech. If you do not wish that then you would vote for the motion at once.

Mr. CRITCHLOW : I beg to second the motion "That the question be now put."

Mr. GONSALVES : I think the hon. Member should be allowed to reply to the debate.

The PRESIDENT : I think the question must be put.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I think the hon. Nominated Member promised to be brief and we should allow him to go on for another five minutes. Let us hear what he has to say about it. I think he can conclude his remarks in that time.

The PRESIDENT : If that is the opinion of the Council he may continue to speak, but everyone has the right to put the motion "That the question be now put." It seems, however, to be the feeling that the hon. Member should be allowed to continue his remarks which would not be long.

Mr. EDUN : As I said before, this is the last act that will be performed by hon. Members of this Council, and I am pleading with them and shall ask them to vote for this motion and that they vote conscientiously. Moreover I expect them to vote in the interest of rice production, in the interest of the rice producers and in the interest of the availability of a staple food not only for the people of this Colony but the people of the West Indies. This is not a constitutional issue. What would happen if Members vote for the motion is this : Government would send the debate perhaps to the Rice Marketing Board and ask them to review the situation. That is the best it can do. I do not say that Government can tell the Rice Marketing Board to increase the price of padi. Government cannot do that. This Council cannot do that. All this Council can do is to tell the Rice Marketing Board that

in view of the prevailing circumstances you are provided with the instrument of negotiation in order to see whether the purchasers in the West Indies can be generous to give more for the price of rice. You have heard that the people in the West Indies want Federation, and they want our rice. Is this not the test to make them think, since we are producing rice at a loss, that they should not continue the contract ? It is well and good to think the contract is inviolable. I agree that we cannot treat contracts as if they were scraps of paper, but the point remains that there is something much more in a contract than is written on a piece of paper. There is the question of equity. If we take the matter up with the people over there on that basis, now that we are talking of reciprocal agreement, of Federation and the intention to do business together, this is the test of their sincerity. If they do not accept it, then I consider there is no use our talking about Federation and of Reciprocal Agreement.

This is a serious time. If we are talking of production of food to contribute to the economics of this Colony and the West Indies, then I say without hesitation it must pay the producers to produce rice. Nothing is involved except that you will give the rice producers a degree of confidence in the sincerity of this Government, in the sincerity of the Rice Marketing Board, and that negotiations may be opened for an increased price. Otherwise it will mean that the rice producers will have to approach the Rice Marketing Board to encroach on their Reserve, because the cost of production is very high. I do not want to resurrect the old story, but this much I must say, the time has come when further consideration should be given to the producers and I ask Members to vote in this matter conscientiously. The motion itself is very simple. It provides for the rice producer and for the opening of negotiation with purchasers in the West Indies. Being so simple, I think, it should be accepted by Members here, and I ask them to vote conscientiously.

Mr. GONSALVES : To a point of explanation ! I understood the hon. Member to say in his reply just now that

Rice Producers

he is not asking this Council to say that the price should be increased. His only desire is that the Board should consider the matter. That is not the motion before us. If that is his real feeling in the whole matter, having heard the debate on the motion he may withdraw it now and the members of the Board who are here and have heard the views expressed may take the matter up when the Board meets. What the hon. Member has said in his reply is not the motion as we have been discussing it.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I again ask that the question be put. It seems that the hon. Member will have to move an amendment and I will have to vote on it. I again ask that the question be now put.

The PRESIDENT : The hon. Member wishes to accept the suggestion ?

Mr. EDUN : I expect Members to vote on it, either for or against.

The PRESIDENT : There is an amendment. I therefore put the question "That the words of the question stand on the original motion."

Question put, and the Council divided and voted as follows :—

For : Messrs. Edun, Lee, Jacob—3.

Against : Messrs. Farnum, Raatgever, Thompson, Ferreira Roth, Peer Bacchus, Gonsalves, Critchlow, de Aguiar, C. V. Wight, Seaford, Sir Eustace Woolford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General, the Colonial Secretary—15.

Motion lost.

Amendment by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo, Mr. C. V. Wight :

WHEREAS the cost of living index has arisen from point 151 to 182 from December 1946 at which point it has taken a steady stand to this date—

AND WHEREAS the cost of production has risen considerably in the Rice Industry—

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council strongly recommends that the Rice Marketing Board increase the price of padi of all grades to be paid to padi growers by fifty cents per bag to take effect from the 1st October.

The PRESIDENT : I think it is my duty to make clear to the Council the effect an increase must have on the price of rice in the Colony. I cannot see any other alternative. I only say that for the information of the Council so that you will realize what the position is.

Amendment put, and the Council divided and voted as follows :—

For : Messrs. Farnum, Thompson, Ferreira, Roth, Edun, Lee, Jacob, Peer Bacchus, C. V. Wight—9.

Against : Messrs. Raatgever, Gonsalves, Critchlow, de Aguiar, Seaford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General, the Colonial Secretary—9.

The PRESIDENT : The casting vote falls to me and I must vote "Against."

Amendment lost.

DISSOLUTION OF COUNCIL.

The PRESIDENT : Hon. Members !

The work of this Council must now be regarded as finally concluded. It only remains for me to ask the Clerk to read the Proclamation which I am issuing today dissolving the Council, but before I do so, it would be fitting if I made some reference, if only a brief one, to some of the work which has been accomplished by the Council during its long life.

I am still, comparatively speaking, a newcomer to the Council and, perhaps, therefore not in the best position to speak of its past work; but looking through the Statute Book for the past twelve years has at least given me a good indication of, and indeed itself provides a permanent record of the work done and the progress made. The first session of this Council, as you will recollect, was summoned by Sir Geoffrey Northcote in October, 1935, exactly twelve years ago. It has been, so to speak, the longest Parliament in the history of the Colony, a circumstance largely attributable to the recent war which necessitated extension of its life from 1940 until today. During those twelve years there have been many changes in the membership of the Council, and there are few survivors among

the original Members. The Treasurer, Mr. McDavid, is the sole survivor of the original eight *ex officio* Members, as is, I believe, my honourable friend, Mr. Dias, the sole survivor of the original group of five nominated Unofficial Members. Of the original Elected Members we still have a very good sprinkling around the House worthy all of them of a medal for long and meritorious, if at times somewhat contentious, public service. I myself am the fourth and last presiding Member of this Council and you have had no less than three changes in the offices both of Colonial Secretary and Attorney-General and, at the moment, two very worthy acting ones. But it is not only the personnel that has changed but also the character of the Council itself. In 1935 there were eight Official Members, while today there are none and only three *ex officio* Members. A further important constitutional change took place in 1943 under which both this Council and the Executive Council have since enjoyed unofficial majorities and in that respect greater opportunity for the expression of public opinion in the counsels of Government. Other changes have been the creation of the office of Deputy President and the establishment of a system of standing Advisory Committees to the Legislative Council as well as an important Finance Committee, all of which have, I hope, come to stay. It would be appropriate to record also that it was this Council that passed measures for reducing considerably the franchise qualifications for both Legislative and Municipal Council elections.

The period through which this Council has served British Guiana has been a historic one for the world in general and the Colonies in particular. It has witnessed and assisted in social changes of a fundamentally important character, and it has to its credit the enactment of legislation both of a social and economic nature which has been, and will continue to be of the greatest value in promoting the progress, the welfare and the prosperity of British Guiana. It has been responsible for placing on the Statute Book up to date Trade Unions legislation, Workmen's Compensation legislation, legislation for the

regulation of relationships between employers and employees and for the settlement of differences between them and regulation of wages, legislation regulating the hours and conditions of work for shop assistants, bakers and for employment of women, young persons and children. Laws have also been enacted for the setting up of Employment Exchanges and for the payment of Old Age Pensions. In the economic field vitally important legislation has been enacted for the protection and better conduct of our two major industries—sugar and rice—also a law providing security of tenure for rice farmers. More recently this Council has placed on the Statute Book comprehensive housing and town and country planning ordinances together with laws regulating relations between landlord and tenant and for the regulation of employment in factories. You have also witnessed the setting up of special departments for local government, social welfare and labour, and assisted in significant developments of drainage, irrigation and land settlement schemes. As a fitting conclusion to your work there has been placed on the table today as a gift, so to speak, to the new Council, the Ten-Year Plan of the Development Committee whose membership included practically every Member of this Council.

This brief record is by no means complete and, while some of you and some of the public may feel that progress has been slow and others of you more concerned with what still remains to be done, all will, I think, agree that something solid has been achieved for the benefit of the people of this country. It remains for me to thank you both as a Council and individually for the co-operation which you have extended to me and to my predecessors, and for the public services which sometimes at great sacrifice you have rendered to the community. I will now ask the Clerk to read the Proclamation dissolving this Honourable Council.

The Clerk of Council read the Proclamation.

The PRESIDENT: The Council is now dissolved.

