

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.*Friday, 7th December, 1934.*

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

PRESENT.

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

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. S. E. Gomes, B.A. (Cantab.) (Acting).

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. R. E. Brassington (Western Essequibo).

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. N. Cannon (Georgetown North).

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

The Hon. J. Gonsalves (Georgetown South).

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. J. L. Wills (Demerara River).

MINUTES.

Mr. WIGHT: My name does not appear on the front page of the minutes as being present. It is true that I came in late but I think my name should appear among those present.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member will find that it is recorded at the time at which he entered the Council.

Mr. WIGHT: But shouldn't it appear on the face of the document?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not when you are invisible. (Laughter).

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member was no doubt here in spirit. (Laughter).

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 6th December, 1934, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that the following Bills be read the first time:—

A Bill to amend the Supreme Court of Judicature Ordinance, Chapter 10, with respect to the acceptance or performance by a Judge of any office or place of profit or emolument not authorised by law.

A Bill to amend the Deceased Persons Estates Administration Ordinance, Chapter 149, with respect to certain small intestate estates, and to extend the application of the provisions of section thirty-one to British Protectorates and Protected States and Mandated Territories.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bills read the first time.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice that at the next meeting of the Council he would move that the Bills be read the second time.

SIGN-POSTS ALONG THE COUNTRYSIDE.

Mr. WILLIS: I beg to move :—

WHEREAS there exist at the present time no sufficient or any suitable sign-posts along the countryside indicating the various villages and places of interest located thereon ;

And Whereas it is desirable for the benefit of tourists and visitors to the country districts that an adequate number of such sign-posts should be erected :

Be it therefore Resolved,—That this Council recommends to Government the erection of a number of suitable sign-posts along the countryside indicating the various villages and places of interest thereon.

In presenting this motion to this august House I do so with confidence and a feeling of assurance that it will meet with the approval of the majority of this Council. It may be suggested by some hon. Members that it is a matter of little or no importance whatsoever, but I consider that this motion is helpful, and if it is adopted the sign-posts would not only improve the countryside but perhaps they might be of some educational value to tourists and to those less informed who frequent the countryside. I am sure that most of us here have had occasion to frequent the countryside either on business, recreation or pleasure, and that we must have been struck by the lamentable lack of any authoritative information directing or giving us our whereabouts. The motion is very brief and speaks for itself. I am sure that most hon. Members have had the opportunity of living abroad and have derived some benefit from visiting the countryside. They must have noticed that in the country districts abroad there are suitable sign-posts or indicators erected along the countryside. I am sure that in this Colony we would like to have these things. We know that Government for some time past has been trying to encourage and to cater for tourists and visitors to the Colony. The efforts of Government will be appreciated by tourists and, I venture to say, by persons who actually live in this country and were born here but are City dwellers who go into the country on rare occasions. At the present time when one travels into the country he is at the mercy of, or gets

his information from the chauffeur, or someone who might be seated beside him in the car, or perhaps from a passer-by or a villager. Such information is not authentic. Surely something can be done to indicate to a person travelling along the countryside the locality in which he is travelling. It might be suggested that those sign-posts or land-marks that one sees outside this Colony were not erected by Government. Admitted. Abroad there are flourishing and up-to-date organisations such as the Automobile Associations and similar organisations which have a direct interest in the countryside. This motion is brought in the spirit that Government may take the lead in this matter and ask the help and co-operation of the sugar estates. I am sure that the sugar planters would welcome the idea and would erect at the approaches to their estates suitable sign-posts to indicate to visitors and other persons using the roads the names of the various estates. That is the spirit in which the motion has been brought.

We all know that the Transport and Harbours Department for some time past has been catering for and encouraging City youths to go about the country. It is said that hiking is good, and I know that many youths avail themselves of the special facilities to travel by the 2.30 p.m. train on Saturdays, and can be seen hiking along the East Coast. These youths should know their whereabouts. It may result in serious inconvenience if they do not know where they are ; they may lose the train as the result of walking too far. I think if Government leads the way the village authorities will follow suit. It may be said that Government is trying to lead the way, but it has always been my motto that if a thing is worth doing it is worth doing well or not at all. For some time I have noticed that when erecting a new bridge the Public Works Department has had written on it the name of the particular estate or village. But the writing on the bridge is very bad, and from a car it is hardly legible because the scribbler is not versed in the art of printing. The idea probably originated in the mind of the workman who saw the need of a sign-post. That is not good enough, but I credit Government and the Public Works with having taken the initiative in giving information which they think is

useful to visitors. But I am asking Government to do the thing properly, to erect proper sign-posts in such a position that they will strike you in the eye as you approach. (Laughter). I mean that they should be placed in such a prominent position that one can hardly fail to notice them. I do not think I need say much more on the subject because it is something which is known to most Members. It is for them to say whether or not the erection of sign-posts will serve a useful purpose. I hope the motion will commend itself to Government not only for the sake of visitors to the Colony but also for the benefit of those who live in the country and lack information about it. I commend the motion to hon. Members in the hope that they will support it.

Mr. CANNON: I am going to second it. I think it is a very good idea which will not cost very much, and it will serve a very useful purpose for people in the Colony. I attach no importance to the tourists. I never did, and as far as I can see I never will. I do not think there is anything to be gained in that direction. The few paltry tourists we get here will not bother to look at our coast, but sign-posts will be very useful to people in the Colony. When travelling in a car I often wonder where I am, (laughter), and I have no doubt that there are others who have been in the same position. I hope the Conservator of Forests will supply the material, and that the Director of Public Works will supply a little paint for the sign-posts. I commend the motion to Government.

Mr. GONSALVES: I was going to second the motion but my friend forestalled me. I wondered why the hon. Member who moved the motion laboured so long because it is so simple. I am sure it is a motion which Government will accept. Whether the Public Works Department does it or the village authorities, it does not matter so long as it is done, but I hope there will be uniformity. As a member of the Tourist Committee I welcome the suggestion, and I am not sure that the Committee is not considering the question of putting it up to Government. I acknowledge the appreciation expressed by the hon. mover, of the work done by the Committee. As regards what the hon. Member for Georgetown North has said about tourists, the

Committee thinks otherwise, and I think the general community thinks there is something to be gained by making conditions as attractive as possible. There is only one prominent land-mark on the East Coast, the point where there is a very large tree which is called the "Half-way Tree" because it is half-way between Georgetown and Rosignol. There is no name on the tree. I think there should be some indication as to what kind of tree it is, and if possible we might record on it the date of its birth, and perhaps somebody might be able to predict when it is going to come down. (Laughter). I support the motion and hope Government will accept it and give early effect to it.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I thoroughly agree with the hon. Member who moved the motion as to the august nature of this House, but an august Assembly may make mistakes by infringing on the rights and privileges of other bodies. The difficulty I find, sir, is whether, if this motion were carried, this House might not be accused of trenching on the rights and liberties of the villages. I take it that the villages are proud of their possessions and their rights and liberties. It may well be that the Director of Public Works and the Conservator of Forests might find themselves obstructed if they attempted to put up any sign-posts which might hit anybody in the eye. (Laughter). But apart from that I expect to hear that the Village Chairmen might take up the attitude that it is purely a domestic matter, and that they would like to advertise to the world the names of villages and the matters for which they are celebrated. In that event great difficulty would follow, for instead of the tourist being struck by the rigid uniformity of sign-posts which, naturally, the Director of Public Works will erect, there would be a variety of signs according to the tastes and fancies of the different villages. I am sure that the Registrar-General would exercise his ingenuity in giving a certified copy of the birth certificate of the "Half-way Tree" and seeing that it was duly affixed.

But I think, sir, that it might be a matter for consideration whether Government should trench on the preserves and independence of the villages by undertaking that which they themselves would no doubt be proud to do, and it seems to me

that a subject like this would find great support at Village Chairmen's meetings. The reason I have taken that view is that I believe very strongly myself in individual communities doing matters which come within their scope, and it is a question whether it is wise to supervise them or to take away from their authority matters which could properly be dealt with by them. I take it that they are proud of themselves and their villages, and it should be for them to put up the proper sign-posts, pictorial or otherwise, which may give local youths an opportunity of showing what they can do, and which would also develop some kind of rivalry in the various villages among their Local Authorities to show the advantages of their village and to tell what the particular things are for which they are famed and the attractions which are in their immediate vicinity. I think the matter might be considered from that point of view before Government should force on what might be looked upon as the duty of the villages to put up sign-posts.

Mr. CANNON: May I ask if the villages have any control over Government roads?

Major CRAIG (Director of Public Work): They have not.

Mr. CANNON: The signs will be put on Government roads.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Perhaps the villages have not got control over Government roads so far as the roadway itself goes, but there is no doubt about it that they can put their signs—and they do put signs of a sort about—in such a position as to indicate to people what they desire to know. I do not know that the Director of Public Works would necessarily complain that the villages had trespassed on his preserves if they were to put up signs, and perhaps he might prefer to see them doing so rather than that he should incur a certain amount of unpopularity, which would be by no means a pleasant thing, by interfering with their administration.

Mr. SEAFORD: I do not think it would be wise of this Council to usurp the privileges of the B. G. Automobile Association or the Tourist Committee. I believe the Chairman of the Tourist Com-

mittee is also a Member of this Council, and I feel sure that those bodies would be very hurt if Government took the honour from them. I hear they are very proud of their position and do not want to be interfered with. I would ask if anything is done, to have mercy on the sugar estates; leave them out of it. The managers, or most of them, are of a retiring nature, somewhat shy, and I do not think they would like a lot of tourists to suddenly find their way into their estates. A party of French tourists travelling along the East Coast would surely be attracted by the French names of some of the estates and would begin to speak in French to the managers. I think the sugar estates had better be left out. One hon. Member suggested putting the date of the birth of the "Half-way Tree." I would suggest that we put dates on all its off-shoots. It would be most interesting and I am sure the Director of Agriculture would help in that matter. The trouble I find is that we are all keen on putting these signs up, but within a couple of years they will look dilapidated and we will have no money for their upkeep, like some Government buildings. It is only going to advertise the poverty of the country, and rather than that, we had better not put them up at all. Personally I thought most people in the Colony knew the Colony. I suggest that if sign-posts are to be erected they should be luminous signs, I think it is at night people get into trenches. (Laughter).

Mr. WILLS: I am pleased to hear the expressions of opinion by hon. Members. All have agreed that the signs would serve some useful purpose, but one hon. Member thinks that the village authorities may feel hurt because their powers and privileges were being taken away from them, while another hon. Member is of the opinion that the Tourist Committee might feel offended by this Council attempting to trespass on their special ground. I therefore move, with the consent of my seconder, that the motion be amended by the substitution of the word "that" for the word "to," and the insertion of the word "encourage" after the word "Government" in the first line of the resolve clause.

Mr. CANNON: I have no objection, but I do not see the necessity for it. Government should not turn it down.

THE PRESIDENT: Government welcomes the motion and will send copies of it inviting the co-operation of bodies such as the Tourist Committee, the Sugar Producers' Association, the Automobile Association and the various village authorities.

Mr. GONSALVES: As far as the Tourist Committee is concerned we will probably have to ask for an increased vote.

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure the Conservator of Forests and the Director of Public Works will co-operate, one supplying the wood and the other the paint for the preparation of the sign-posts.

Motion as amended agreed to.

BALANCED DIET FOR LABOURERS IN THE INTERIOR.

Mr. WILLS: I beg to move:—

WHEREAS the diseases of hemeralopia and beri-beri are prevalent among labourers in the interior;

And Whereas the said diseases are due to malnutrition caused by unbalanced diet;

And Whereas the scale of rations contained in the schedule hereto, presently in force, approved by the Commissioner of Lands and Mines under the provisions of the Mining Regulations and required to be furnished to every servant employed on a claim, is inadequate by reason of being unbalanced, and tends to perpetuate the diseases complained of:

Be it therefore Resolved,—That this Council recommends to Government, as a means of eradicating the said diseases, the taking of immediate steps to revise the said scale of rations by providing for a more balanced diet to labourers employed in the interior, and that such revised scale be put into operation as from the 1st day of January, 1935.

SCHEDULE.

“Weekly list of Rations required to be furnished to a servant on a Claim in accordance with Regulation 119 of the Mining Regulations, 1924:—

Salt Beef	1 lb.
Sugar	2 lbs
Flour	7 pints.
Salt Fish	1 lb.
Peas	1½ pints.
Rice	3½ pints.
Salt Pork	1 lb.
Biscuits	... 14 large or 1 lb
Chocolate	... 7 sticks.

Provided that the employer may, in his discretion, substitute similar quantities of fresh fish, beef, pork and vegetables in place of salt meat and peas.” *Gazette* (dated 23rd May, 1925, p 1,126, Notice No. 428)

For some time past there has existed the

need for a revision of the scale of rations provided for labourers in the interior, but this motion has been precipitated by the recent outbreak of beri-beri in the upper reaches of the Corentyne River. In introducing this motion I am doing so in the interest of the labourer as well as the employer, because it must be remembered that if labourers are poorly fed they cannot give of their best, and the employer in turn cannot receive the amount of work that he pays for. In short he cannot receive the best service. Hemeralopia is a medical term for what is known in ordinary language as night blindness. Beri-beri is a disease which is known to be due to the want of a certain vitamin known as Vitamin B. On account of medical and scientific research it has been discovered that it is not the quantity of food we eat but the quality that matters. But while medical science has been progressing and advocating a change of diet it is unfortunate that the labouring class has been suffering under a scale of diet which, at some time or another, was thought fit and to contain all the nourishing qualities that a man labouring in the interior would require. But in the light of medical science and research it is sadly lacking in the qualities essential to keep a man fit and strong. If the food of the labouring community is undermined,—and I say that the labouring class is the foundation of any community, the others live among them—if you have a weak and ill-nourished labouring community you cannot and will not get a flourishing superstructure.

Government thought fit as far back as 1896, when the Mining Regulations were codified and brought into effect, to make it obligatory on an employer to supply a scale of rations for the labourers he took into the interior. Those Regulations have been repealed from time to time until 1931. I will draw attention to what appears to be an oversight on the part of those who were responsible for the scale of rations. I am not saying that an unbalanced diet produces these diseases, I am saying that an unbalanced diet tends to encourage them because they thrive on a person who is suffering from malnutrition. Those diseases are aggravated and induced by malnutrition, and that condition in a patient could be remedied, the treatment being proper food

and nourishment. In considering an unbalanced diet we must first know what is a balanced diet in order to determine whether the schedule published by the Commissioner of Lands and Mines is a balanced diet. It has been found by medical research that for daily existence certain vitamins are necessary. Vitamin A is found in milk, butter, and cheese, Vitamin B in peas, nuts and green vegetables, Vitamin C in potatoes, onions, tomatoes and cabbages, and Vitamin D in oils. We must see whether the scale of rations published by the Commissioner of Lands and Mines contains these foods. The scale of rations lacks Vitamins A, C, and D. It contains Vitamin B, but it must be remembered that one vitamin cannot compensate for the lack of any one of the other three, and cannot help a person to withstand a deficiency disease.

It has been brought to the notice of the public by the Government Eye Specialist that the disease of night blindness is prevalent in the Colony, and is found attacking most men who work in the interior. As far back as 1932 the Eye Specialist contributed to the *British Guiana Medical Annual* an article in which he dealt with the subject of night blindness. As long ago as 1932 the Eye Specialist said he had been drawing Government's attention to this nutritional disease caused by an unbalanced diet, and it is peculiar that it was only the year before, in 1931, that Government thought fit to repeal the Mining Regulations of 1924. Government was then thinking of making conditions better for men who happen to live in the interior, but there was no change in the scale of rations. I have grave doubts whether an employer is in duty bound to supply labourers with rations to day. My reasons for those doubts are that the present Regulations existed in 1925 and were published in the *Official Gazette* of the 23rd of May, 1925. It seems to me that an employer can say to-day that he will not give his labourers any rations at all because the scale of rations has been repealed by the 1924 Regulations. Section 164 (1) of the Regulations of 1931 says "Every person who employs any servant on a claim shall be bound. . . . , and shall also be bound in addition to the payment of wages agreed upon, to feed every such servant or to furnish every such servant so employed with sufficient

rations, in accordance with a scale for the time being approved by the Commissioner." It seems to me that since the passing of the 1931 Regulations no scale has been approved by the Commissioner. The scale of rations under which labourers are working to-day is provided under the Regulations of 1921, and I have grave doubts whether employers are bound to supply labourers with rations to-day.

But the point at issue is whether the rations supplied to these men are only commensurate in quantity or are commensurate in quality. I will refer to a report which appeared in the Press of October 20th, of an outbreak of beri-beri in the Corentyne section of the B.G.-Brazil Boundary Commission. Beri-beri, malaria and other tropical diseases, it was stated, were attacking the members of the Commission. I think it is within the knowledge of Government because two Government officers were also afflicted with the disease of beri beri and had to be brought down in a very precarious condition. It seems to me rather ironical that a doctor was one of the victims and has now left these shores. The other officer is, I understand, on the road to recovery. It only shows that with proper dieting the patient rapidly regains strength to combat the disease. It was also reported that the labourers of the Boundary Commission worked under difficult conditions, and that in order to save money the men lived on food which could not nourish them.

As the result of the article in the *British Guiana Medical Annual* in 1932, and as the result of the useful information given by Medical Officers in the mining districts the men realised that in order to keep healthy they must have proper food. The Government scale of rations is deficient and in order to ward off the diseases of hemeralopia and beri-beri the men are driven to purchase the necessary foodstuffs to supplement the deficient rations given to them. Their small earnings are therefore spent in the shops. It might be said that such things must occur in the interior. How can we get the articles of food that contain these vitamins into the interior? I have classified the articles and I say it is an easy matter. I will suggest a few articles which may be added to the present scale

of rations. We can add butter, potatoes, milk and cheese. I understand that milk contains all the vitamins. I need hardly say anything more on the motion because I am sure hon. Members realise the importance of it. They also realise that with a healthy foundation, the strength to do work, the labouring community will be more energetic. It is in that spirit I bring this motion, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. CANNON : I beg to second it.

Dr. SINGH : In view of the recent illness among the members of the Boundary Commission I think the time has arrived when Government should turn its attention to revision of the scale of rations for labourers in the interior. Looking through the scale one observes that the articles of food contain fats, carbo-hydrates, proteins and mineral salts, but they are lacking in the essentials of a modern diet. Owing to the lack of these essentials our labourers will continue to be susceptible to diseases like diarrhœa, conjunctivitis or sore eyes, night blindness, beri-beri, skin diseases, multiple neuritis, etc. If Vitamins A, B and C are added to the present scale of rations I think the result would be a balanced diet, and the men in the interior would be less susceptible to the diseases I have enumerated. It is not easy to supply fresh meat and fresh fish to people in the interior, but in my opinion by adding milk, butter and cheese to the scale of rations a balanced diet would be secured. In the place of oranges, tomatoes and lemons we could substitute preserved lime juice. Unpolished rice will help to prevent beri-beri, and in the place of fresh vegetables we could supply yams which can keep for some time. With these additions to the dietary scale Vitamins A, B and C would be provided.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : I desire to support the motion. It seems to me extraordinary that Government has not seen fit to seek the advice of the Medical Department in this matter. We have a very expensive Medical Department, and certainly it seems to be a grave indictment that the medical advisers to the Government have not seen what an ordinary layman has seen. The picture painted by the hon. Member for Demerara River is an exceedingly serious one, a distressful one. I do

not know whether the facts are as bad as he has pictured, but there can be no doubt about it that recently there has been quite an epidemic of beri-beri. I quite realise the difficulty of getting fresh meat and other necessary articles of food into the interior, but at the same time—I do not wish to indict any official—it seems to me extraordinary that in spite of the progressive age in which we are living the scale of diet for men in the interior, which has been approved by Government for ten years, should to-day be said to be totally inadequate. The sooner the scale is revised the better. I consider that this is essentially a medical matter. I do not see how the Department of Lands and Mines can be blamed for this because they must have had recourse to the Medical Department when this scale was drawn up. It is certainly a very important matter which needs very urgent attention.

Mr. DE AGUIAR : I think every Member of this Council, certainly the Elective Section, will support a motion of this kind, especially in view of the fact that medical assistance to the men in the interior is so lacking. It is therefore essential that their bodies should be kept thoroughly nourished in order that they may be able to undergo the hardships of their calling. I am not prepared to make any recommendation as to the addition which should be made to the present scale of rations. I prefer to leave that to the technical officers of the Government to advise the Department of Lands and Mines. It would be useless to suggest the inclusion of items on that list which would be unobtainable in the interior, and for that reason I think it would be better to leave the matter to the Medical Department to make recommendations to the Department of Lands and Mines. It must also be borne in mind that this scale of rations is controlled by the rates of pay. The two things work together. If Government makes the scale of rations extremely difficult for employers to supply they would not comply with it regardless of the Regulations. There are some employers who treat their men very liberally, but there are others who confine them to the four walls of the Regulations, and for that reason I think it is essential that some alterations should be made in the scale of rations.

I also desire to join the hon. Member

in his reference to the epidemic of beri-beri among the members of the Boundary Commission. It is common knowledge, sir, that the outbreak of beri-beri among the officers and labourers of the Commission was primarily due to the lack of nutriment in their diet. I make that statement without fear of contradiction. I make it as a charge not against the Government, because I can well understand that the Colonial Secretary has no time to look after rations that were to be given out to those men, but it is common knowledge that the head of the Boundary Commission is responsible. I doubt whether he even follows the scale of rations. It is well known that things are not right up there, and it is not surprising that such an epidemic broke out in the camp. I think it is a motion that should be readily accepted, and I would suggest that the whole matter be referred to the Medical Department for its advice as to the new scale of rations which should be provided for labourers in the interior.

Mr. WOOD (Conservator of Forests): I have only risen to give the Council a piece of information which possibly may not be known to any other Member. When Sir Wilfred Beveridge came out here to examine the question of sanitation and public health in the Colony he was regarded as about the greatest authority on the question of dieting men. He was responsible for the dieting of the whole British Army in France throughout the War, and when he came out here Dr. Kelly, the Commissioner of Lands and Mines and myself were associated with him in his investigations. We took a list of the Government scale of rations for labourers in the interior to him and asked his advice as to whether he thought it could be improved, and whether he thought it was suitable or not. He went through the scale very carefully and said he did not think it was necessary to suggest anything because he considered it a properly balanced scale and contained more nourishment than that issued to the troops in France. I have never studied the question of vitamins, but it seems to me rather extraordinary that this scale of rations which is said to be unbalanced has been in force for a great many years in a country in which the disease of beri-beri was unknown and unheard of. Although men have been

dieting on this scale for a great many years beri-beri has never made its appearance until quite recently, so far as I know, in one expedition. I think that before we finally pass judgment on the scale of rations it would be worth while to investigate whether there is something generally wrong with the scale, or whether perhaps on certain occasions the rations had either gone bad or suffered some deficiency. So far as my experience goes of carrying men into the bush, the Government scale of rations does not cause deficiency if one is sufficiently watchful. It would be advantageous if one could have fresh things at times. One can suggest cheese and potatoes, but after cheese has found its way up river for a good distance and then droghed along the line to the camp I think many people, including myself, when they see it on the table prefer to risk getting scurvy or beri-beri. (Laughter). I have seen that happen on many occasions.

I really only rose to point out to Members that as regards the working out of this scale, the three Heads of Departments mainly concerned sought the advice of Sir Wilfred Beveridge who is a great authority on the subject, and his advice was that we had as good a scale as we could get in the circumstances. It is very difficult to make certain that the occurrence of hemeralopia and beri-beri was due to the fault of the Government scale of rations. It must be remembered that all the people who are working in the bush are not living on the Government scale of rations. That scale is laid down for men who are registered to work on claims, and the employers of such labourers are bound to follow it. The prospector who is working on his own goes to a shop and buys and eats what it pleases him to eat. He does not feed himself according to the Government scale and it would be interesting if it were possible to separate the incidence of those diseases among those who have been living on the Government scale of rations in the interior, from those who are living on the kind of food they like to buy in the shops.

Mr. SEAFORD: There is a rumour going around that the outbreak of beri-beri was caused by the use of polished rice which had been imported into the Colony for the use of the men working on the Boundary Commission. I would like to

hear from Government whether that is true.

Mr. CANNON: Was it rice imported through the Crown Agents? (Laughter).

Mr. MULLIN (Commissioner of Lands and Mines): I would like to make it clear at the outset that so far as the Department of Lands and Mines is concerned, which is the Department responsible for the working of this scale, we are perfectly open to any suggestion for improvement. We would welcome it as long as it is within the means of the employer, but I would like to make it clear that the scale of rations is not a dietary laid down that must be observed. It is the minimum scale of rations which an employer of registered labour is bound to supply. If he does not supply it he can be prosecuted, but he is allowed to substitute, and he does substitute, and supplement. If they are growing ground provisions on a claim they always add that to the diet and drop something out.

On the facts I would like to make one or two corrections. I think the mover of the motion would be glad to know that the scale of rations was drawn up by the late Sir John Harrison who was a well-known authority on dietary, and it only applies to registered labourers and not to a tributor or claim-holder who, as the Conservator of Forests has pointed out, is a free agent and is not entitled to rations. He is entitled to a share of what he finds, whether gold or diamonds, which he sells to the shops and buys what foodstuffs he wants. It is obvious, of course, that what Government can lay down as a minimum scale of rations and force a claim-holder or employer of registered labourers to supply must be something that he can reasonably carry into the interior, and something that can keep for a reasonable period of time. You cannot lay down a scale of diet as you would in a hospital in Georgetown, if the employer is not in a position to supply those things. They must be portable and must be able to keep for a reasonable time. The scale has been considered a balanced one and is being used all over the Colony. We have had no complaints as regards the occurrence of those diseases being due to this scale of rations. In other words, on the claims on which registered labourers

are employed the men are healthy and well nourished, but it is amongst the tributors or pork-knockers who experience hard times and have to tighten their belts and shorten their diet that you find men suffering from malnutritional diseases. I have visited most of the claims in the interior, and on my recent visit to the Mazaruni I found that the healthiest and best fed men were undoubtedly the registered labourers employed on contract by such men as Mr. Houston and Mr. Eytte. But amongst the ordinary pork-knockers I found cases in which they were suffering from lack of nutrition. We cannot lay down a dietary scale which every man must follow whether he can afford it or not.

As regards the publication of the scale of rations, the mover made quite a point about the last publication being in 1925. It so happens that that is the one that was available, but it has been published several times since, and only quite recently in a pamphlet issued on the Mineral Resources of the Colony. With regard to the revision of the scale I may mention that when the 1931 Regulations were brought in, which was a revision and re-enactment of the 1924 Regulations, both the scale of rations and the Sanitary Regulations were submitted to the Medical Department, and no revision was suggested with regard to the scale of rations. As late as April this year, when we again considered the question of a possible revision of the scale of rations, it was submitted to the Medical Department and the Acting Government Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Cochrane, who is well known for his knowledge of dietetics, states in his report:—

“The present scale of rations is adequate in Caloric value; such rations can be easily carried and will keep for a long time. It is disadvantageous, however, owing to its lack of vitamins and variety. A study of the food values and market prices of local products convinces me, however, that as far as supplies bought in Georgetown are concerned no useful substitutes can be obtained. The lack of fresh vegetables is the defect of this scale, and such vegetables would have to be supplied on the spot.”

We have not lost sight of the question of the revision of this scale, but naturally we desire to get some information which will enable us to do so with some possible chance of the articles being supplied. I would like to emphasise that this scale refers only to registered labourers in the

mining areas, who form a very small proportion of the total number of men in the districts. It does not apply to the wood-cutting and balata camps, the ordinary tributor or claim-holder, or anybody else. Therefore I think that undue weight has been given to the effect of this scale which is only applicable to a very limited degree.

As regards the Boundary Commission there are two things to be remembered, and one is that it is now operating in the remotest part of the Colony, the southern end of the Colony on the border of Brazil. Transportation is extraordinarily difficult. For instance it takes a month to reach the base camp, and from the base camp to where the men are working it takes from 7 to 10 days by small corials. You can imagine that in those circumstances it is very difficult to feed men especially with the exact vitamin content that one would like to do. But I may also mention that so far as the Boundary Commission employees are concerned they are not subject to the dietary scale laid down for registered labourers. They are not supplied with salt beef, salt pork and salt fish, but with corned beef, roast beef, salmon, sardines, bacon and lard. Instead of peas they are supplied with beans. So that the incidence of beri-beri or deficiency diseases on the Boundary Commission was not in any way connected with the scale of rations laid down under the Mining Regulations. I do not profess to be able to deal with the question of the different vitamins, except to say that the mover of motion seems to have left out Vitamin E which is a reproductive vitamin. (Laughter). No doubt the Surgeon-General will deal with that point.

Dr. HENDERSON (Surgeon-General): The motion before the Council has been so well dealt with by the various hon. Members that little is left for me to add. There are however one or two points to which I would like to make brief reference. The hon. Member who moved the motion definitely inferred that he agreed that it is not only diet that contributes to the diseases he referred to, more especially beri-beri. I think I should advise the Council that whenever the question of beri-beri came to the notice of Government the matter was very carefully gone into and, unfortunately in a way, from the point of view that Dr. Dunn was a patient himself

and had to come to the City, I had a favourable opportunity of examining the various points in connection with the outbreak among the staff of the Boundary Commission. Dr. Dunn has formed the opinion that there must be factors other than food connected with the causation of beri-beri. The hon. Member has referred to the manner in which food was distributed and the difficulties which exist in that connection, so I think I need not dwell further on that point, it being recognised that there were difficulties, in that direction. A very curious feature was that the incidence of the disease and also the severity of it was more marked in the case of the officers of the Boundary Commission than in the case of the men. That is very curious because in the draft report which I have before me, and which Dr. Dunn and I have prepared for Government, Dr. Dunn states distinctly that the diet of the officers was on the whole very satisfactory, and particularly as regards Vitamin B. There was that amount of Vitamin B. in the diet practically equal to what they would have obtained in Georgetown. That is a very significant point. I think there is no doubt, that as the text books indicate an important factor is also the question of locality—certain areas seem to cause the disease endemically. That, of course, is not unknown in this Colony. I think hon. Members know that about 1911 there was an outbreak of disease amongst balata bleeders which caused a large number of cases of what appeared to be beri-beri and, unfortunately, a large number of deaths. The disease is also known in certain parts of the Corentyne, perhaps not definitely as beri-beri, but the symptoms and features are very similar to this disease, more particularly the sudden deaths which occurred and which we know recently constituted a very serious and sad aspect of the disease.

The remarks which were made by the mover of the motion in connection with night blindness I do not think I need amplify. He referred to the *British Guiana Medical Annual*, and if any hon. Member would like to read Dr. Browne's description of his investigations I shall be very glad to give a copy of the *Annual* to the Clerk of the Council for their information.

In connection with the incidence of

beri-beri I think there is little doubt that another most important factor in connection with its causation is the length of time the personnel spend in the bush. I think it has been established that prolonged life in the bush leads to an anæmic condition which reduces the vitality, and in going over the whole matter Dr. Dunn and I have made particular recommendations in regard to the length of time which the personnel should spend in the bush. I think a very sound practice would be, if it is possible, to remain in the interior for say six months and return to the coastland for the next six months in order to recuperate. That may be difficult, but an endeavour along that line should very earnestly be made. In regard to the six months the personnel should spend in the interior, it is very desirable that not more than about ten weeks should be spent away from the base camp, after which they should return to the base camp for careful examination by the Medical Officer, and if all is well they can return to spend another ten weeks or so.

I would also like to emphasise another important point. Perhaps it is unnecessary to do so in these days, but I take the liberty of stressing it at this time, that very careful attention should be given by executive officers to all measures which are brought to their notice by the Medical Officer. Another point that is emphasized in the report before me is that the rations should arrive in the field before the personnel actually get there. That is a matter that will require to be looked after very carefully when the Commission resumes its operations. There should be no question of the non-arrival of foodstuffs. I realise that there are difficulties, but surely measures can be taken which will ensure that the men in the interior will have their food supplies available for them.

With regard to the scale of rations itself, as the mover of the motion has and other speakers have mentioned, there is no doubt that it does lack vitamins, but as hon. Members have inferred, the reason for their non inclusion no doubt was the difficulty in procuring them. Hon. Members have also indicated that certain measures can also be taken in this direction, and I think probably when the scale was printed it was intended that there

should be amplification in the direction of securing fresh meat by the use of hunters, by growing ground provisions, and also probably by obtaining cattle for the purpose of getting fresh milk.

The hon. Member raised the question of rice. That foodstuff was particularly commented upon by Dr. Dunn in his report. I cannot say where the rice came from, but it was unfortunate that in the process of transport the husk became detached. The husk as is known contains a certain amount of vitamin, but as it happened what was left of it was eaten by insects. Dr. Dunn had hoped that when fresh supplies of rice arrived they would have no further cases of beri beri but unfortunately it was otherwise.

The various points which have been referred to I shall take up in detail with the Commissioner of Lands and Mines. With these remarks I will proceed to recommend that the motion be accepted with a few modifications. The motion says: "And whereas the said diseases are due to malnutrition caused by unbalanced diet;" I would suggest that this should read "And whereas the said diseases are due partly to malnutrition caused by deficient diet." In the third preamble the word "deficient" should be substituted for the word "unbalanced," and the resolve clause should be amended to read as follows:—

Be it therefore Resolved,—That this Council recommends to Government, as a means of preventing the said diseases, the taking of immediate steps to amplify the said scale of rations by providing as far as possible for the necessary accessory substances to labourers employed in the interior.

I will go into the whole question of beri-beri and associated diseases with the Commissioner of Lands and Mines, and assist Government in every way possible in this direction.

Mr. WILLS: I do not think there is any need for me to reply because the arguments adduced in the course of the debate prove that there is need for a revision of the scale of rations. What struck me were the remarks of the Conservator of Forests and the Commissioner of Lands and Mines. As regards the scale existing in the time of the late Sir John Harrison in 1896, I would point out that the question of vitamins was not known in those

days. As regards Sir Wilfred Beveridge's report there is much difference of opinion whether the present scale contains the essentials for men who work in the interior. With Your Excellency's permission I accept the amendments suggested by the hon. Surgeon-General.

THE PRESIDENT: Is the hon. Member prepared to accept them with the consent of his seconder.

Mr. WILLS: I am prepared to accept them with the consent of my seconder.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Is beri-beri a tropical disease? I ask the question be-

cause a comparison was drawn by the Conservator of Forests between this scale of rations and that used in the Great War.

Dr. HENDERSON (Surgeon-General): It is largely a tropical disease.

THE PRESIDENT: But it is known in temperate climates.

Dr. HENDERSON: Yes, sir.

The motion as amended was agreed to.

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

