

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 1st December, 1932.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR EDWARD DENHAM, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. C. Douglas-Jones, C.M.G.

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

The Hon. T. T. Smellie (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

The Hon. T. Millard, C.M.G., Colonial Treasurer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. Q. B. de Freitas, M.R.C.S. (Eng.), L.R.C.P. (Lond.), Surgeon-General (Acting).

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

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

The Hon. N. Cannon (Georgetown North).

The Hon. A. V. Crane, LL.B. (Lond.) (Demerara River).

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

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves (Georgetown South).

The Hon. A. E. Seeram (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. V. A. Pires (North Western District).

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

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

The Hon. G. E. Anderson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 30th November, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

PAPER LAID.

The following document was laid on the table:—

Report of the Meteorology for the year 1931 (Professor Dash).

ORDER OF THE DAY.

PUBLIC NOTARIES BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Hector Josephs): I move that "A Bill to provide for the appointment of Notaries and to regulate the duties of the office of Public Notary" be read the first time.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

Notice was given that at the next meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read the second time (*Attorney-General*).

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

MAGISTRATES.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the draft Estimates of expenditure to be defrayed from revenue for the year 1933 under the head "Magistrates."

THE CHAIRMAN: A request has been made to me by various Unofficial Members that the Council desires to hear an official reply in regard to the question of Magistrates. I propose to let that question of the number of Magistrates stand over for the present.

Mr. CRANE: It appears that no provision has been made for bailiffs in Georgetown.

THE CHAIRMAN: That question will be considered by the Attorney-General.

POLICE.

Mr. CRANE: I ask leave to refer to the Fire Brigade to make a comparison with the Police estimates. Half of the expenditure of the Fire Brigade is provided by the Town Council and provision is made for what appears to be increments to officers of the Police Force. I am aware that the Police execute the duties of fire protection and do them remarkably well. I also recognise the fact that they do overtime work as fire fighters and should be paid for it. It seems to me a wrong method to put down four Inspectors specifically for \$360 each per annum along with the men exclusively connected with the Police Force. These officers are not exclusively reserved for the Fire Brigade and we ought to revise the method of compiling these estimates. Every policeman is a fire-fighter and it is not correct to say that there are 32 third-class privates who are paid at the rate of \$384. What you want is a lump sum vote from which the Inspector-General could allocate to each man what he deserves. These 32 men also appear on the Police estimates. The Town Council has decided to raise this question and go into the compilation of the Fire Brigade estimates, and Government should likewise enquire into the method of preparing these estimates. Government pays 50 per cent. and gets 75 per cent. of the services of the men in doing Police work,

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. C. Douglas-Jones): I appreciate what the hon. Member's point is. The Deputy Inspector-General is also Superintendent of the Georgetown Fire Brigade. The whole of his salary is shown under the Police vote and an equal amount is deducted from the vote for Fire Protection. The four Inspectors of Police are paid Police salaries but get an allowance for being used as officers of the Fire Brigade, and the extra remuneration they get is shown as \$1,440. The men enumerated under item 1e are primarily engaged and kept as fire-fighters and none of their salary appears under the Police vote, but it is true that their time is not wholly kept in fire-fighting and they are kept as supernumerary to the Police as policemen. If it is necessary to prepare these estimates in another way it can be done, but this method has been the practice for a number of years. All Fire Brigades are Municipal services and we can take the Fire Brigade out of our Estimates and leave it to the Municipality to show it in their Estimates. All Government need then do is to contribute their half share, \$25,000, which can appear as a subvention to the Municipality. It would then be for the Town Council to decide whether the establishment for fire protection is desirable. I think the hon. Member, as a Town Councillor, would be the first person to raise his voice against any reduction in the personnel of the Brigade for fire protection, and in taking up that attitude he would get the support of every Member of this Council and of the Government. The fact that there is not more loss is entirely due to the efficiency of the Brigade.

Mr. CRANE: I did not raise any point about the propriety or otherwise of reducing the Brigade or that it should be taken out of the Colonial Estimates. The point I made was that while these men are paid by Government and the Town Council primarily for fire-fighting, 75 per cent. of their time and energy are devoted to performing duties of protectors of the peace and other Police work. Government is thereby enabled to reduce the number of policemen who necessarily would have been employed on Police duties. Fairplay demands that the proportion of the allocation should be re-arranged.

THE CHAIRMAN: I suggest to the hon. Member not to press the point

because the further he does the further Government might drive home the fact that the Municipality does not pay for the Police in the City. It is very much better that the men should be employed on Police duty as well as on fire-fighting. They are trained as policemen and because of their training they are so efficient as policemen and as firemen.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move in as item 38 "Class and examination fees for First Aid, \$300." Although the training in First Aid is given voluntarily by Government Medical Officers, it is usual to pay small fees for examinations either orally or otherwise, and this sum is to meet the cost of paying these Medical Officers for passing the men who sit for these examinations.

Question put, and agreed to.

PRISONS.

Dr. DE FREITAS (Surgeon-General): I move the deletion of item 1*f*—Personal to Mr. T. L. Fields, Clerk, New Amsterdam Prison, \$180—the officer having died recently.

Question put, and agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Item *i*—Service allowance, \$144—should also be deleted. It is paid to the officer under a misapprehension and should not appear on the Estimates.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. BRASSINGTON joined the Council at this stage.

MEDICAL.

Mr. CRANE: During your absence from the Colony, sir, I asked certain questions regarding the position of the appointment of Medical Officers. In a sense it is undesirable to discuss questions of this kind in Council. It is desirable to have a parley with Government before a matter is finally dealt with here, but there have been so many things engaging attention that I have been unable to take that course in ascertaining what I want. The answers to my questions indicated that there were two vacancies and in respect of one the Governor had made representations to the Secretary of

State. Nothing had been done in respect of those representations at the time my questions were asked. There was also outstanding at that time one such appointment. When the Estimates were being considered I made certain representations and as a result the employment at £200 a year was sanctioned of two young men who were then employed as supernumerary officers and were engaged in the arduous task of taking out-door patients. After this arrangement had been in force for three or four months one of these officers was turned off most unceremoniously and the other was given notice that he would go at a later date. Further representations were made and the one who was then temporarily employed was kept on until the end of this year. I asked whether any of those officers were qualified for appointment and the reply was "One." The one who was regarded as not being qualified reached a very high position in his examination at the London Hospital, which he entered as an Exhibitioner, but did not take the certificate of the London School of Tropical Medicine because he had a leaning to surgical work. The qualification of London University is exceedingly exacting and one of the highest in the world, but this young man was not thought qualified because he did not go to the London School of Tropical Medicine, which is thought to be a pre-requisite but is an inferior qualification.

Dr. DE FREITAS: I rise to a point of correction. Before the law all medical men stand on the same footing and it is invidious for the hon. Member to make comparisons. I have the joint qualification and take umbrage at his describing it as an inferior qualification.

Mr. CRANE: The hon. Member is mistaken on what is the position of a Member here. The hon. Member is entitled to his opinion as to the relative value of the qualification. If I prefer a University qualification to a College qualification it is a matter of my own opinion and it is not very large-minded of the hon. Member to take umbrage merely because he has a College qualification. As a matter of fact I did not know that the hon. Member was in that position.

Dr. SINGH: I also rise to a point of correction. The qualification of the

Royal College of Surgeons takes one up to the F.R.C.S. degree. It is a matter of choice.

THE CHAIRMAN: The lawyers had their day yesterday and I think the doctors might now have a chance of saying something.

Mr. CRANE: They might indulge in it but it does not concern me at all. I am not making any comparison between the two men and indicating that one should be appointed rather than the other. One is a product of our education system—a Guiana Scholar; the other is a creole whose parents have expended quite a deal of money in qualifying him, and they have gone further and complied with every requisite laid down by Government in getting him fit for service in the tropics. There is a vacant post and a local man on the spot who has complied with every requisite for appointment. It is in the interest of the population of the country, and it is only living up to the expectations of the people, that one of their sons should be appointed to that post. When one's environment and other considerations unfit him for a certain post that post should be filled by some one from outside, but where those considerations do not arise and a local man has reached the same high qualifications I claim that he should have the first choice. Government in their replies said there was a vacant post and a person qualified to fill it. I hope then that you will treat this matter, sir, in the usual fair manner of dealing with these questions and decide that it is a proper and fit thing to do to appoint a qualified Guianese to that vacancy. I notice that it is the tendency of Government to keep offices open. There is a certain amount of mystery in keeping these offices open, and in the meantime Government will play with the salaries of officers. I should like to know what has been done during 1932 about these 27 Medical Officers and what is the real position of them to-day. I said I regretted being unable to consult Government before raising this question here, and I ask you, sir, not to allow the Medical Department to keep these vacancies open any longer. I ask you to go into this question and the propriety of appointing this particular officer. I think it is but justice that the office should be filled and the man on the spot appointed. It would

be the most economic course to be adopted as it will require no passages for himself and his family, and it has the additional advantage that the man is acclimatised and that he has been tried and has given satisfaction to the Department.

Mr. SEERAM: I have always advocated the appointment of local men when all things are equal. There is a feeling, I regret to say, that Guianese who become qualified are least likely to get a chance of appointment. I appeal to Your Excellency to give this matter special attention so as to erase that feeling. One of these young men is a Guiana Scholar and Government should get some benefit from the expenditure on his education. The parents of the other have spent large sums of money on qualifying him professionally. I ask Government to consider the just claims of these young men.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think this point should be answered at once. It is the desire of Government to give every facility to persons born in this country and especially when a case is made out in respect of those who have won a Scholarship and gone Home and qualified themselves for certain posts. Government would be obviously acting wrongly if it did not give the greatest consideration to such a case. All things being equal men from the Colony should be given the prior chance. In a matter of this kind there is a very much bigger question, the health of the community. I understand there is a vacancy but I cannot say at present how that vacancy should be filled. It is not possible for me to say without reference to the Medical Department. There may be some reason that the appointment should be filled in a particular way to meet the needs of the community. The hon. Member has asked me to consider the claims of the local man in view of what he has done. That I will undertake to do, but I cannot bind myself that he will be appointed because I have to consider the whole question of the Medical Service.

Mr. CRANE: I accept that position. This is not one of the special appointments for which the Council has voted money from time to time but the appointment of a general practitioner.

Dr. DE FREITAS: There are one or two points in the speech of the hon.

Member for Demerara River that I should like to refer to. There were two vacancies. One of them has been filled recently by the appointment of a creole of this Colony. Perhaps the hon. Member was not aware of that. One vacancy is at present under consideration. The hon. Member said that the two acting officers were getting salaries of \$80 per month. That only obtained for a short time. One officer was drawing \$140 for most of the time and it is not correct to say he was always paid \$80 per month.

Item 1*m* Medical Officer, Mahaicony District, \$1,200.

Mr. SEERAM asked the following questions of which he had given notice:—

1. What are the terms of the employment of the medical officer of the Mahaicony district? If in writing will the Government lay on the table a copy of such terms?

Give a copy of the scale of fees charged—

(a) By the past medical officer of the district.

(b) The present officer, and

(c) That charged by medical officers of other districts in the Colony.

3. What travelling allowance, if any, is paid to the present medical officer of the Mahaicony district? How much was paid to his predecessor? What amount is paid to other medical officers of other districts?

4. How many times in a week is the present medical officer of the Mahaicony district required to visit his district? How many times his predecessor visited same? How many times other medical officers of other districts visit their district?

Salary of subsidised medical officer...	\$1,200	Minimum salary of a Government medical officer ...	\$2,400	Maximum salary of a Government medical officer	\$3,360
Travelling allowance		Travelling allowance	360	Travelling allowance	360
	\$1,200		\$2,760		\$3,720
			1,200		1,200
			\$1,560		\$2,520
Less rent paid by Government medical officer for Government house at Mahaicony			360		360
			\$1,200		\$2,160

The scale of pay of a Government medical officer is \$2,400-\$3,360 per annum.

The salary of the subsidised medical officer's predecessor was \$3,360 per annum.

7. The scheme has not been in existence long enough to determine whether it is a success or not.

TERMS AND PARTICULARS OF APPOINTMENT OF MEDICAL OFFICER FOR THE MAHAICONY MEDICAL DISTRICT.

Salary—\$1,200 per annum.

Private Practice—In accordance with the authorised scale of fees.

5.—(a) Is the present medical officer of the Mahaicony district required to visit the Mahaicony creek?

(b) Was his predecessor at any time required to visit the creek?

(c) If so how much travelling allowance was given to him?

6. How much saving has been effected in this district by subsidising the present medical officer of the district?

7. Is Government satisfied that the scheme is a success?

Dr. DE FREITAS replied as follows:—

1. The terms and particulars of the appointment of medical officer for the Mahaicony medical district are set out in the Paper attached hereto. This officer is allowed to occupy a Government house free of rent.

2.—(a), (b) and (c). In accordance with the authorised scale of fees provided for in the Regulations relating to professional services of Government Medical Officers in country districts, 1908.

3. The officer is not paid any travelling allowance.

\$360 per annum was paid to his predecessor. \$360 per annum is paid to the medical officers of other districts.

4. The present medical officer visits twice a week.

His predecessor visited twice a week.

Other medical officers visit their districts generally thrice a week on fixed days and at fixed hours.

5.—(a) The present medical officer is not required to visit the Mahaicony creek as a routine measure.

(b) His predecessor did so up to 1923 when the routine visits were discontinued.

(c) \$600 per annum. No allowance has been paid since 1923.

6. Minimum saving—\$1,200 per annum.

Maximum saving—\$2,160 per annum.

The saving is made up as follows:—

Leave—The medical officer appointed shall have no right to leave but, subject to satisfactory arrangements being made and approved by the Surgeon-General, leave may be granted up to a period not exceeding six months.

Pension—The appointment is non-pensionable and the medical officer appointed shall not have or be subject to any right, claim, or liability under any Ordinance relating to pensions or retiring allowances of public officers.

Termination of Appointment—The appointment confers no right to promotion or appointment in the permanent Medical Service and the services of the medical officer appointed

may at any time be dispensed with if the Governor is satisfied that he neglects or is unable to discharge his duties; and otherwise the appointment may be terminated on three months' previous notice being given on either side.

Duties—(a) Gratuitous attendance on Police officers and their families when residing in the station compound.

(b) Gratuitous attendance on paupers—

The only charges made in these two instances being for medicine supplied at a fixed rate.

(c) Gratuitous attendance at any time of the day or night on persons brought by the Police in cases of wounding and accidents.

(d) Certification of alleged lunatics and lepers.

(e) Visits to prisoners in the lock-up whenever called upon by the Police.

(f) Quarterly inspection of police constables and the vats and tanks in Police and other Government compounds in the district.

(g) Quarterly reports on the sanitary condition of the district.

(h) Examination of candidates for the Police Force and the Rural Constabulary.

(i) The conduct of Infant Welfare and Maternity Clinics in the district and the supervision of League Midwives.

(j) The routine performance of anti-typhoid inoculations of contacts of enteric fever cases when called upon to do so by the Sanitary Inspector, and vaccinations against small-pox.

(k) The performance of the duties of Superintendent Registrars of Births and Deaths.

(l) The performance of such other duties in the district as may from time to time be specified.

Mr. CRANE: I was in a measure responsible for the trial of this form of medical assistance to outlying districts. The late Surgeon-General was never in favour of subsidised officers in spite of the advantage that Government was under no liability for pension, leave and other perquisites which Civil Servants are entitled to. After Government was pressed on several occasions to try out the experiment it agreed to subsidise the officer in the Mahaicony district and claimed to be giving the system a trial. It seems to me that the conditions under which the officer was to operate in the district were designed that the system should fail in order to reason therefrom that it did not suit this Colony. It is a shameful piece of business to expect a medical man to instal himself in a district on an advertisement which requires him to be a whole-time officer at a salary of \$100 per month and to pay for his house out of that sum. It was only when I made representations here that the condition as to rent was rectified. The officer who had resigned and whom this

practitioner succeeded had reached his maximum of £700 per annum. The system is one which I still believe will serve the Colony if it is faithfully given a trial. The officer is required to visit the creeks.

Dr. DE FREITAS: The officer is not required to visit the creeks at present.

Mr. CRANE: People who live up the creeks have as much right to medical assistance as those who live in the vicinity of the officer's house. I am not concerned with whether he is required to go. It shows the weakness of the system; he could not be expected to go there on account of the ridiculous salary. Those are the districts in which we need medical assistance and in which it is withheld in order that the system should fail. What I expected was a frank and sincere attempt to try out the system, and that could only have been done by offering the officer a decent salary, a house to live in, and possibly a telephone to get in touch with any emergency call. If a salary of \$200 were offered on the same conditions as Government Medical Officers are bound to conform to, it would be sufficient inducement for any ambitious young man with the exercise of industry to work up a decent practice and clientele in that district. A salary of \$100 a month in a big district like Mahaicony was unfair to the man.

THE CHAIRMAN: Government fully approved of the scheme and of giving it a trial, and I referred to it in one of my speeches. There were possibly mistakes about the conditions, but there was no intention that the system should be a failure. The conditions were advertised and accepted by the officer. There is no reason why we should not vary those conditions now if they are found not to work.

Mr. CRANE: I accept the statement that there was no intention to do that, but I know, sir, that some of your advisers were unalterably opposed to it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any suggestion that there were certain advisers of Government who were not anxious that the scheme should be a success and knew that it would be a failure is very unfair. The late Surgeon-General acted entirely with the approval of Government and Government takes full responsibility for any failure of this scheme and for the terms

which were offered. Any reflection on Dr. Kelly is quite unjustified.

Mr. CRANE: I shall leave the particular subject and pass on to another. I always desire to comply with any request from the Chair. I quite remember your speech, sir, referring to your intention to carry out this experiment. I am hoping that Government is not going to regard the conditions under which this appointment has prevailed during the last two years as conditions under which that system could have been given a fair trial. That is the point that I desire to make. I am of opinion that any system which would save the Colony eventually pension charges should be given a fair trial. The permanent officer was paid a salary of \$280 per month plus travelling expenses, he occupied a house built by Government, and he had leave and pension rights. Nothing short of £500 a year plus a house and a telephone would suffice to make this appointment attractive. It has been persistently stated that in order to make up his emoluments the officer has been charging very high fees. I understand that the officer has been given three months' notice, and, if that is correct, I should like to know how it is proposed to reform the conditions in order to give a decent trial to the system.

Mr. SEERAM: The questions which I have asked in connection with this service are due to representations made to me by residents of the district. It is a matter of surprise to me that in spite of repeated representations there has been no revised scale of fees for 25 years. I make bold to say that medical officers do not adhere to this scale of fees in all districts. I know of cases where \$15 and even more has been charged. It is a most difficult thing for a poor man in the country to get a pauper's certificate. How is a medical officer to judge that a man is a pauper? Only a few days ago a medical officer refused to visit a patient no matter what sum was paid.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member makes the statement that a medical officer refused to attend a patient. That statement ought to be followed up and I will ask the Surgeon-General to make enquiries at once.

Mr. SEERAM: I shall be able to give all the particulars of that case. The com

plaint is that the medical officer of this district charges exorbitant fees. I am suggesting that the officer should be made to visit his district thrice weekly as in other districts. That would make special visits less necessary. There was a time when the medical officer visited the Mahaicony creek and I ask that some provision be made for the people there to receive medical attendance. It will require only a small sum as a travelling allowance for the officer to make these visits. I have been a strong advocate of this subsidised system and I am not satisfied that Government has done everything to give it a fair trial. I urge on Government to consider the points which have been raised.

The Committee adjourned for the luncheon recess.

Mr. GONSALVES: If it is correct that this officer has been given notice to terminate his appointment, either Government is not satisfied with the service being run on a subsidised basis or the conditions of the appointment were not clear and distinct and consequently brought about difficulties. There seems to be some question as to whether or not he is entitled to a travelling allowance. That is a matter that could have been rectified by mutual arrangement. If conditions are made difficult for the officer it is not possible to have the system fully tested, and if it is intended to give it a fair trial it is unreasonable to expect the officer to run the district without any allowance.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: About two years ago I expressed the opinion that the time was ripe for an enquiry into the working of the Medical Department with a view to complete re-organisation. The cessation of immigration has completely altered the medical outlook and the time has arrived when the question of subsidising medical officers in the various country districts should be considered. It is unfortunate perhaps that the Mahaicony district, with a very sparse population, was selected for giving the system a trial. If a subsidised officer had been put in one of the thickly populated districts, say, Buxton, or Plaisance, we would have had a better opportunity of judging of its efficiency. I think it is unfair to expect a medical officer to live in the way he should and give the best service on a salary

of \$100 per month. It has been suggested that the minimum should be £500 a year and I think that is a fair sum. If all the districts were subsidised with a salary of £500 there would be a considerable saving. I am not in favour of the hospitals being run on such a system; there should be the best men for these institutions and they should not be shifted from a hospital to a district. The subsidising of medical officers is a system worthy of an extended trial, and one way to solve the question of the Medical Service is to appoint a Commission, which I think would find that great economies can be effected by making no more pensionable appointments except for the hospitals. The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara took exception to a fee of \$15 for attending a case. I wonder if there is very much difference in what a medical officer would charge as compared with what a lawyer would charge. My experience of medical officers in country districts is that they are very reasonable in their charges, especially to the poor.

Dr. SINGH: I hope Government will continue its policy of appointing subsidised officers to districts when they become vacant. With a well organised plan a subsidised service would be very useful to the community and an asset to Government. I do not think the Mahaicony district is getting the best from the present service. That district extends over a distance of 45 miles and when the medical officer is travelling from one end of it to the other the district is left unprotected. In a case of emergency people would be put to the expense of coming to Georgetown or going elsewhere for assistance. The subsidised service could be made an efficient means of serving the community and at the same time effecting a saving in expenditure which is so necessary.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I have always considered the Medical Service to be a sort of nursery for millionaires. You pay men £900 with travelling expenses, the right to private practice and I think a free house, just to live in a district. Government saw the force of the contention that it was a nursery for millionaires and decided properly to inaugurate a subsidised service. But it did the reverse of what should have been done. Government tried out the experiment in a place where it was bound to fail, and naturally the small

salary paid to the officer resulted in extortion of the people. That was not what Government intended but it was bound to result that way. It was never intended that a man should be given such a niggardly salary which would drive him, if he is to live up to the dignity of his profession, to extort money from his patients. The Surgeon-General told me he was surprised at anybody applying for the job at that salary. I am glad to hear that Government has given this officer his ticket; he has been there twelve months too long.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have to assume the logical conclusion from the hon. Member's remarks. The hon. Member says a salary was given the officer which would make him charge exorbitant fees. I suggest that what he intended to suggest was that the salary was so low that the officer would have to recoup himself but not necessarily charge exorbitant fees because he got a low salary. I think in justice to the officer that should be put right.

Mr. ELEAZAR: What I want to convey is that if he got so little money to live up to his profession he was bound to charge high fees. A subsidised service is the best Government can do and when Government acceded to our request in establishing the service one thought Government would have given it a fair trial. The system has failed because it has not been fairly tried. Whatever subsidy is offered it should be commensurate with the position of the officer that he may be able to live decently. It is not fair to place the officer in that position or to place any member of the community in the position not to obtain his services within reasonable limits of charges.

Mr. FREDERICKS: I rise to give my support to the principle of a subsidised medical service. A subsidised service must have two effects on the body politic. One is that any retrenchment is financial economy and the other should be efficiency of the service. There can be no doubt that the doctor in a district did not in many instances give of his best to the district, and that was because he was a Government servant with a salary and all that was connected with it, therefore it was not necessary for him to urge himself as somebody who had not that support behind him. I therefore think that the subsidised service will suit the country at this stage,

but the service must be such that every part of the country should have a medical officer to assist in its physical necessities. Immigration made it necessary for every part of the Colony to have its own doctor. The time has come when parts of the Colony have no doctor at all and it is practically a luxury to get the services of one. I have particularly in mind the islands of Leguan and Wakenaam. It is almost true to say that medical aid for these two islands is remote. I therefore think that a subsidised service should be a serious matter with Government. I am perfectly satisfied that a subsidised service with a reasonable subsidy to each district would be the best thing for all concerned, and at the present time it is the best means that can be adopted to assist Government in its retrenchment policy.

Mr. LUCKHOO : This appointment was more or less in the nature of an experiment and in the light of the experience gained Government might revise the terms and conditions of the appointment. This officer undertook the work with a distinct understanding of those terms and conditions. I think that the system of subsidised medical officers in districts is a very good one. If this officer had been sent to an important centre where there is a large private practice the probability is that this trouble would not have arisen. However, the officer accepted the appointment with a full knowledge of the terms of his employment, therefore he has no grievance against Government. On the other hand I hope that in any further appointment of this nature Government would bring to bear upon it the experience it has gained.

Mr. CANNON : I think there should be a distinct difference between men employed for hospital service and those for the districts. I am not opposed to men in the districts being paid a reasonable salary and I think it might be graded according to the district. Government ought to be able to find out what the earnings are of the men in the districts and apportion to those districts different rates of pay. What I will never agree to is to the hospitals being manned by men not well up in their profession, and I hope Government will not allow those institutions to get into a condition that would be a discredit to the Colony rather than a credit. We

have some excellent men, creoles of the Colony, in the districts who, if given proper inducements, may be induced to take up hospital life. Hospital men might be provided with pension rights to make up for what they lose in outdoor work. If that were done the medical skill one expects to find in a hospital would be maintained. There are at present abroad very unpleasant rumours which I hope will not be allowed to continue. There is room for improvement in the hospital and I hope Government will endeavour to get the best skill for the institution and let the younger members of the profession work their way up from the outdoor.

Dr. DE FREITAS : The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara made the statement that medical officers in districts were not adhering to the scale of fees. I can assure him that the regulations in regard to the scale of fees are observed to my knowledge. In each district there is a local Board of Guardians and provision is made for the poor to obtain medical treatment and medicine, and I can vouch for the fact that practically the medical officers see paupers and prescribe for them. All that is required of paupers is for them to produce a ticket from the Board of Guardians showing that they are in receipt of poor relief so as to prevent any abuse. With regard to the Mahaicony district being visited by a medical officer, the position is that it was visited twice a week up to 1926 when the population began to decrease. Representations were then made to the Surgeon-General and he gave permission to discontinue the visits. I understand that the population is now increasing in that district and that is a good reason why the medical officer should resume his visits. There are qualified dispensers stationed at Leguan and Wakenaam and the medical officer at Suddie visits Wakenaam fortnightly. In the Pomeroy district there is also one dispenser. I was very pleased indeed to hear the hon. Member for Western Essequibo give the Council the benefit of his experience of the reasonableness of the charges of medical officers in the districts. As the result of recommendations of the Financial Commissioners districts were amalgamated and the distances to be covered might create cases of individual hardship. There is not now a single medical officer drawing more than £700 a

year. The classification of medical districts, as suggested by the hon. Member for Georgetown North, would be a very difficult matter. It is a question where the personal factor comes in and you could not lay down any hard and fast rule.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am very glad to find that the system of subsidised medical officers has received the approval of those who have spoken. It is a system which is adopted elsewhere and one which might be more widely adopted in this Colony. The hon. Member who introduced this debate tried to persuade the Council to save pensions of medical officers. The idea of introducing a subsidised service was to offer a subsidy to a medical practitioner who had already established himself in a district. For that subsidy he would be expected to perform certain of the duties medical officers are required to perform. We want to avoid having too many doctors in a district. If there is a medical practitioner already established there we want to avoid the necessity of another being stationed there. That is the underlying principle. But what has happened? A vacancy occurred in this particular district and it was suggested that we should endeavour to fill it by giving effect to the suggestion of having subsidised officers. We decided what we wanted and what the terms of the appointment should be and we advertised those terms. We got three replies to that advertisement, one of which was from the officer stationed there. The officer was offered the post on the conditions advertised and he accepted it. If a medical practitioner going to a district in which he is not known is to be paid a subsidy equivalent to the salary of a medical officer until he works up a practice to maintain himself there is going to be no saving at all. Government has to be very careful in considering this matter to see exactly where it is going to lead because, assuming that we make the subsidy £500 a year, which is the minimum of medical officers' salary, I can conceive after ten years in a district a medical officer approaching Government and saying "My private practice is not worth anything at all" and ask that his service be made pensionable from the start. We have had instances where it has happened, and if we make the subsidy equal to the

minimum salary of a permanent medical officer, that is what we are laying ourselves open to, therefore there would be no economy.

Government is quite prepared to admit that the trial made has perhaps not been a success. Whether it is due to the system, or whether it is due to the officer, it is difficult to say. At all events it is perfectly true to say that the trial has not been successful, and it is the duty of Government to ascertain whether it is due to the officer himself or to the conditions of the appointment. It may be due to the conditions of the appointment and those conditions might very well be improved. It has been pointed out that it was necessary for the medical officer to visit the Mahaicony creek. People are now settling in the creek and I think that \$600 may well be added to the subsidy for that purpose. The officer is now being given a free house. With a free house and travelling allowance we should then re-advertise the post and if the present holder applies for it he will be considered with other applicants. It is not fair to say either that the subsidy is too low or that the system has failed because it has not suited this particular district, but I agree that we should reconsider the position. I think a case has been made out for adding a travelling allowance. I also think that we should re-advertise the post, and if the present holder desires to apply for it he can do so. The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara suggested that medical officers generally charged very high fees. Medical officers are authorised to charge fees. Those fees are limited in certain cases and they are not bound to charge them to everybody. Anybody who is poor and cannot afford to pay should have no difficulty in obtaining a pauper certificate which a very large number of people are authorised to give, and I cannot conceive of a poor person in any district requiring the services of a medical practitioner being unable to get a certificate. Medical officers do quite a lot of gratuitous service and I think the people of the Colony thoroughly appreciate it.

Item 4—Commuted Travelling Allowances, \$4,800.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that the sum of \$600 be added to this item for the medical officer of the Mahaicony district.

Question put, and agreed to.

Item 28—Dental treatment of school children, \$960.

Dr. DE FREITAS : This is a new item. It is not intended to extend the treatment outside of Georgetown. The work is so considerable that it would be some time before it can be extended to the districts. This is a tentative scheme to enable us after twelve months' trial to decide definitely. I made enquiries relative to the cost of a clinic but the difficulties in the way were such that I was forced to the alternative of recommending that we should utilise the services of dentists in private practice who will undertake to treat a certain number of children on a given number of days every week. In that way we hope to overtake the worse cases of dental caries in Georgetown. If we start a clinic in a proper way for equipment alone we shall require £200 apart from the provision of a suitable building. We found that there were not many houses suitable for a clinic so we are providing for dental treatment by a few practitioners and hope to obtain valuable data to advise Government next year as to what should be done.

MAGISTRATES.

The Committee reverted to the estimates of Magistrates.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL : In dealing with the question of Magistrates the first matter I ought to call attention to is the fact that there are now five substantive Magistrates in the Colony. Although there are five substantive Magistrates there have been others acting. That has arisen in consequence of one of the Magistrates acting as Assistant to the Attorney-General, another going on leave and a third in Georgetown acting as a Judge and subsequently as Attorney-General. Under normal conditions appointments of acting Magistrates will not so frequently occur. One hon. Member yesterday referred to the fact that an acting appointment creates enemies. It is difficult to follow the reasoning. What I presume is meant is that if an acting Magistrate in the performance of his duties decides a criminal or civil case against somebody that person is likely to become his enemy. If that is so he will become the enemy of the permanent Magistrate. Is that a fact, and is it suggested that that is a characteristic of the people of this Colony? I for one do

not believe it. (Hear, hear). I think it was said without full appreciation of what was meant. I rather think it is more a characteristic of the people to have an admiration for fellow colonists who have been chosen to sit temporarily on the Bench and to administer justice, and one ought to be very careful in the language one uses in respect of matters of this kind. One should not use language which is likely to make the position difficult—language which when it is reported and read away from the surroundings of this Chamber might give rise to misconception in the minds of some members of the public who may not thoroughly understand the situation. No Member of this House wishes that there should be any lack of appreciation or disrespect of acting Magistrates, therefore one has to be very careful in the choice of one's language in referring to legal practitioners who have been found good enough during an emergency to sit temporarily on the Bench and assist Government, the country and the public in the administration of justice.

Another point was made which I think was also due to some little misapprehension of the position. It has been said that acting Magistrates may be influenced in their decisions in cases for which the Attorney-General is responsible. I do not know what the ordinary public may think about that. Lawyers know that in certain respects the office of Attorney-General is a corporation sole. The holder of the office is not personally concerned in those matters, and in most instances proceedings are only by law instituted in his name. Another point is the arrangement by which Magistrates do their work. I am not going to suggest that I consider it an ideal arrangement. Everyone of us know and realise that it is an arrangement we have had to resort to by reason of the stringent necessity for economy. Naturally, some degree of inconvenience is caused to the public and to members of the legal profession, but things like those have to be borne because we cannot do better and we have to do the best we can temporarily until some sort of silver lining begins to appear. There is a variety of circumstances which tend to turn the balance one way or another, and there must therefore be a great deal of loyal assistance to the Magistrates by members of the legal profession who practice before them and feel it under present

circumstances a public duty to help them in that direction. It may be interesting to know that from about 1928 there has been a steady decrease in the volume of work coming before the Magistrates Courts. Each year there has been a decrease and it is lower now than it has been at any time during the last seven years. That has not been due to the present arrangements. In addition to monthly returns there are annual returns showing the total of the work done in each district during the year. Sometimes the number of undisposed of cases is higher than at other times, but at the present time the number is by no means alarmingly high and very little higher than when the number of Magistrates was higher. Those returns have been carefully analysed and I shall consider it my duty the moment I find there is undue pressure in getting through their work, having regard to the present circumstances, to tender advice to the Governor asking him for the temporary appointment of a Magistrate to help. I come in frequent contact with the Magistrates and discuss with them the work they are doing and so forth.

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam yesterday called attention to a certain section in the Summary Jurisdiction (Magistrates) Ordinance which fixes certain hours during which a Magistrate must sit in Georgetown. That section struck me nearly twelve years ago when I first came to the Colony and I wondered why it was enacted. On consideration of the matter I found that all that it did was to ensure the Magistrate's presence during those hours. It is in law directory, and I have no hesitation in advising Government that that section does not affect the validity of any work done before 10 or after 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The Magistrate has the power to sit when he likes reasonably. If he fixes unreasonable hours it may be ground for a new trial, but that section—and I take full responsibility for the statement I make—has no effect on the validity of work done outside the mentioned hours. I am quite sure that no legal practitioner will have the temerity to ask that a judgment delivered at 5 o'clock in the afternoon be set aside.

Mr. WOOLFORD: This section has been the subject of a judicial decision and, personally, I shall take the opportunity of moving a motion to pursue the discussion. I was not anxious to develop the legal

side. I was rather calling attention to the fact that for very many years—for 25 in my experience—no summons was issued for attendance before 10 o'clock, observing that section in its literal sense, but within the last few years people have been summoned to appear at 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning. I am not giving any legal opinion.

Mr. SEERAM: There was a practitioner who had the temerity to take an appeal to the Supreme Court and the Judge thought the section was not ministerial.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I had no knowledge of that. In deference to the hon. Member for New Amsterdam I withdraw my remarks. I did not understand him. As I said before, loyal legal practitioners, like any other body of men in the unusual circumstances which the Colony is passing through, have readily come to the assistance not merely of Government but to the Colony as a whole to the extent they do in the administration of justice.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I should like to make some supplementary remarks. In the cases that were the subject of enquiry from 8 or 9 o'clock the subpoena did not record that as the hour. It is now the practice, and it is a practice that cannot be avoided, by reason of the volume of work. If the hon. and learned Member would in consulting the records not merely look at the volume from the point of view of numbers but examine that volume from the point of view of cases that are heard and decided, as distinct from cases where a man sues and the defendant consents to sentence and there is no trial or an *ex parte* judgment, he would find that since the time of these acting appointments there has been an increase in the volume of decided cases or cases that had to be tried with witnesses on both sides. On that point the hon. Member has been discreetly silent. I contend that there has been an increase in the number of cases that require to be heard. Only recently there has been passed in this Council an Ordinance which extends the jurisdiction of Magistrates. The object of that extension was to increase the number of cases tried in the Magistrates Courts and to reduce the number of cases that went to the sessions.

The Council resumed and adjourned until the following day at 11 o'clock,