

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 21st December, 1944.

The Council met at 2 p.m. His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G., President in the Chair

PRESENT.

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon James Lethem, K.C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C., K.C.

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

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

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

The Hon. J. A. Luckhoo, K.C. (Nominated).

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).

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

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

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

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin, O.B.E. (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. J. B. Singh, O.B.E. (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. H. C. Humphrys, K.C. (Eastern Demerara).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 20th December, 1944, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL.

The PRESIDENT: With regard to our business I would like to express my gratitude to Members, who had been attending Council this last week, that within the last two days we have got on fairly well. As I said last night, there are only four heads remaining—

Post Office, Transport and Harbours, Colonial Emergency Measures and Education—to complete our consideration of the Estimates, and what I propose to do is to take the head "Post Office" at 2 o'clock and then go on to Transport and Harbours, but as I have been asked by the hon. the Colonial Treasurer to hold a meeting of Members and discuss privately the Colonial Emergency Measures I propose, if we get through the head "Transport and Harbours", to proceed tomorrow to such a meeting. If not, we will adjourn at 3.30 o'clock for a few minutes and I can hold that desired meeting when I am prepared to give an hour. Maybe there is a chance of finishing actually the Committee stage tonight. If we make good progress I feel we may not meet tomorrow. That will enable us to take next week the debate of the resolutions which, I understand, hon. Members would like to speak upon, and I will give as many days as may be necessary next week. Tuesday being a public holiday, I propose to have that meeting on Wednesday and go on as long as Members care to continue that debate.

The only other business is a comparatively short Bill that I see on the agenda. As I said before, I find it extremely difficult to give any time to Legislative Council business in January and, if there is anything to be done, I would ask to be excused as I will have Sir Frank Stockdale coming during the first week and, as I said some time ago, his Engineering Adviser will be coming on the 1st January. As I have mentioned before, the Governor of the Federal Territory of Brazil wishes to meet me on the frontier; and now I am to receive a visit from the Governor of Surinam towards the latter part of January

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION SCHEMES.

As regards Sir Frank Stockdale's visit his principal objective is, he

hopes, to finalize our Drainage and Irrigation project and he will pay a special visit to the Corentyne. He will come to a definite decision, as I have said before, on our programme for the immediate next few years. In that connection I am issuing to Members copies of the comprehensive despatch of the 31st January, 1943, which had been printed but marked "Confidential. Not for publication." There are several reasons for that. I quoted certain matters the issuing of which had not been sanctioned for publication by the Secretary of State. Now I have got his approval with certain verbal amendments. That is to say turning the direct quotation into an oblique one. I think that will be considerably convenient as it sets out, as envisaged two years ago, the full comprehensive plan of irrigation and drainage.

In this connection I am quite happy to announce that with the sanction of the Secretary of State I shall proceed to acquire for our use the dredge "Demerara" now operating in the Demerara River. That will be available almost immediately. It is intended to send it round to the Bonasika Scheme at the beginning of January and it will of course speed up the prosecution of that work very greatly indeed. I now propose, therefore, to ask the Council to move into Committee and proceed with the Post Office estimates.

ORDER OF THE DAY

ESTIMATES, 1945.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. McDavid): I move that the Council resolve itself into Committee for the purpose of resuming consideration of the following motion:—

"That this Council approves the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from Revenue during the year ending 31st December, 1945, which have been laid on the table."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Heape) seconded.

Motion put, and passed.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

Mr. ROTH: May I crave your indulgence before proceeding with the head "Post Office" to ask you kindly to recommit head XXXVI — Public Works (Annually Recurrent)—for a few minutes?

The CHAIRMAN: We will proceed as promised with the head "Post Office." The hon. Member will have an opportunity later on to say what he desires.

POST OFFICE.

Item 1 (8) — Postal Agents \$5,546.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am asking the Council to approve of an increase by \$120 and the item carried out at \$5,666. I think it is necessary to have a postal agent on the Demerara River in connection with the Mackenzie Airport Scheme and the operations at Seba.

Question put, and agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: Temporary War Bonus, the purchase of a typewriter and part of item 17, which is for the purchase of a new bicycle, will have to go under extraordinary expenditure. I propose to take out item 7—Furniture—and permit that to be done by allocation from a block vote shown under Public Works.

Item 5—Conveyance of Mails.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: Under the head "Other Charges", I would like to enquire whether the amount of the contract in respect of the conveyance of internal mails has been increased, whether the rates are as before and, if they are increased, to what extent?

Mr. SHARP (Postmaster-General): An increase has been made to cover the Essequibo Mail Contract which is costing more than it hitherto has.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: By how much, may I ask?

Mr. SHARP: The increase is, I think, in the vicinity of \$100 per month.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I would like some information about that. How has the contract been increased by \$100 per month on what it was previously, say in pre-war days? One can understand an increase to meet increased expenditure. Whatever the figure was before, it has now gone up considerably. I think some explanation ought to be given as to why such a large increase is made.

Mr. SHARP: The old mail contract expires on the 31st December. New tenders were advertised for; the matter was put up to Government and a new contractor has been appointed at a new rate.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: That still does not answer the question. Why is it necessary to increase it to that rate—\$100 per month more? What was the rate before? It seems a large increase.

Mr. SHARP: The present contract requires the conveyance of emergency mails. The old Contractor had only two cars, but the person who has been given the new contract is the possessor of three cars and can meet all emergency mails requirements.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I would like a little further explanation. We have got it from the Postmaster-General that tenders were called for and considered. I would like to know whether the person to whom the contract has been given at this increased rate was the cheapest tenderer.

Mr. SHARP: I am not quite sure the old contractor was not the cheapest. Speaking from memory his tender was in the neighbourhood of about \$135 per month.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I have not up to now referred to any one person.

Mr. SHARP: Do I understand the hon. Member to ask whether the tender accepted was the lowest?

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Yes.

Mr. SHARP: It was not.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I am not concerned as to whether the tender accepted was the lowest or whose tender was accepted. I desire to know what was the cost of the previous contract, how much per month and how much is this one now? Why this enormous increase? One would understand a reasonable increase on the last contractor's price. What is the difference in the prices now?

Mr. SHARP: The full facts were reported to Government. The old Contractor's tender was not recommended by me after examination by me and officers who had experience in the matter. The old Contractor, in my opinion based on six years' experience of him, was not satisfactory. The main thing was, he did not own the vehicle with which he had to perform the service. He used a 'bus.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I do ask that I be given an answer to a very simple question. What price the old Contractor did the job for?

The CHAIRMAN: Can you give the figure?

Mr. SHARP: I think it was \$135 per month. The present figure is \$240.

The CHAIRMAN: I will ask the hon. the Colonial Secretary to explain. He knows all about it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I only know the principle and not the details. I will get the files and have it looked up for the hon. Member. It came to my notice on appeal that the old Contractor should be allowed to continue his contract. My answer was that it was a matter for the Head of the Department concerned, and I referred the matter to the Head of the Department and also to the Controller of Supplies and Commodities, because it had been suggested to me that the old Contractor was not given a fair deal, as he could not run the contract because he could not get the necessary supplies. I went into the matter very carefully. I saw the Postmaster-General at the time and I sent for the Controller. The Controller satisfied me that the old Contractor had been given a fair deal in respect of spares and tyres in so far as the Commodity Control was concerned, and that the allegation that the Postmaster-General was trying to get out of the contract by refusing to allow the Contractor to get supplies was not true. It therefore seemed obvious to me that in a departmental matter if the Postmaster-General was not satisfied with the performance of the old Contractor he was perfectly at liberty to give it to a higher contractor. There was nothing to bind Government to retain the old Contractor, and I left the matter in the hands of the Postmaster-General. I think the answer is, the Postmaster-General preferred the new Contractor as he was not satisfied with the old Contractor. That is the reason for the change of the contractor.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. the Colonial Secretary will look up the file and give the answer.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I ask that the item be allowed to stand over for the reason that I am not quarrelling over the Postmaster-General having another Contractor if he is not satisfied with the old one. Whether he is treated fairly or not is not a matter for this Council but for the Executive Government, but this Council is entitled to enquire whether this increase in the carriage of mails is justifiable having regard to the number of years the old Contractor carried the mails for a certain price. Why should we suddenly find an increase of 100 per cent. being given to the new Contractor? If the old Contractor did not give good service, by all means get a new Contractor, but if the unsatisfactory service is due to the fact that he was paid too little then it would be unfair on the part of Government to do so. I think this Council should know why there is this increase on the old contract.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member had the hon. the Colonial Secretary's explanation. He was acting for me at the time and he appears to know all about it. He is satisfied that the change was desirable. What can we do? Ask him to go into it over again? The decision was made by him as Deputy Governor acting in my absence, and it would be rather supererogation to go over it again.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I am not asking that, but this Council may enquire as to whether, having regard to the work having been done reasonably in view of what was previously charged, it is justifiable to have another Contractor on the recommendation of the Postmaster-General. This Council looks after the finance, and it does seem that an increase of 100 per cent. is not justified. If it is justified, then what was paid

the last Contractor was not sufficient. We must be satisfied that the amount is not too large.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you wish a reduction of the item?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I have been consulting the Postmaster-General. He went further and took the advice of the present Controller of Motor Vehicles, Mr. Wakeham, who hon. Members know is an expert on motor traffic. He advised that the contract price was reasonably worked out based on the mileage done, which is just over eleven cents (11c.) per mile for the whole service. If that is so, the figures must be reasonable, and I am entirely satisfied to know that Mr. Wakeham had examined the figures and had advised that the contract be accepted.

Mr. SEAFORD: Is this Contractor allowed to take passengers in the very conveyance with the mails? If so, then I take it, he makes beyond that 11 cents per mile.

Mr. SHARP: He will not in the ordinary way carry passengers, but with the consent of the Postmaster at Suddie he will take a Government Officer. He does not normally ply for hire by passengers.

Mr. JACOB: I do not think that the increase of \$105 per month is reasonable, considering the distance to be travelled on the Essequibo Coast. It would be well to ascertain how many years the previous Contractor did this work, what are the reasons for dissatisfaction by the Postal Department during this year or probably last year, and whether up to the end of this year he has had tyres, etc., to run the mail service. My information is that he has not even tyres to run the present mail service, and he has had to hire a vehicle from the Contractor who is to run the service from next month.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If I am given the courtesy of waiting for the file I would give the answer.

Mr. JACOB: Very well. There is something wrong, as it appears that every answer has had to be extracted from the Postmaster-General. It is a simple matter. We have an item in respect of which the increase is not quite clear as to whether the \$6,100 is for Internal, External or Air Mails. If for the conveyance of mails on the Essequibo Coast the cost is \$105 more per month as against \$135 per month in the past, there is something wrong. I know some of the facts. There is something radically wrong here. The present Contractor is unable to do the work.

The CHAIRMAN: We will get the file and the hon. Member will get the answer when it is at hand.

Mr. LEE: As far as I understand, Government has a Tender Board and all tenders for contracts go before that Board. But I now hear the hon. the Colonial Secretary refer to the Postmaster-General as the person who made the recommendation and it was accepted. Am I to understand that the Tender Board does not consider such contracts? I would like an expression of opinion in respect of it.

The CHAIRMAN: Let the Colonial Secretary look through the file first.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This contract was not considered by the Tender Board. I think some of the contracts go to the Tender Board while others are done by the Head of the Department.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is so. Specifically departmental contracts, such as this one, do not go to the Tender Board which deals with general contracts for general commodities. The Department is authorized to make contracts such as this one.

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: I would be glad if this matter is looked into. The old Contractor made several attempts to get tyres from the Controller of Supplies in order to carry out the contract but was not given any. He could not very well carry on the work and, therefore, had to make other arrangements for the conveyance of the mails. He had been carrying the mails for the last 41 years, since in the old days of horse and cab and recently by motor car, I understand, on the Essequibo Coast, and it seems very hard luck on his part to be deprived of it. I do hope some enquiries will be made into the matter, as up to this year he has had the contract and he must have been carrying out the contract efficiently for the Department to have retained his services for the last 41 years.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Speaking from memory, the old Contractor did not own the vehicle for which he applied for tyres. I wrote at some length in reply to the representation made. I give an undertaking to show the correspondence. The whole point that worried me was the suggestion that the old Contractor was prevented from carrying out the contract because he could not get tyres. The answer to that is that I was satisfied from what Mr. Macnie told me that the allegation was not substantiated by facts.

Mr. LEE: I take it that Government is satisfied with the increase of 100 per cent. on the old contract price.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. the Colonial Secretary says it is. I have heard a lot of complaint about that service.

Mr. EDUN: I think Members have the remedy in their hands—to throw the vote out altogether and let us have another shy at the contract.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I hope Members will not press that because, in fact, the increase is \$6,000 under (c) and only \$100 under (a). I am glad to think that the Postmaster-General has savings up his sleeve.

The CHAIRMAN: That is quite correct. I have looked up last year's estimate. It was then \$7,900 and this year it is \$7,800.

Mr. JACOB: There seems to be something wrong about these figures. If the Essequibo contract is \$135 per month, and we are only providing \$100, what then?

Mr. SHARP: I think the answer is that we take every separate mail service into review year after year and make the necessary provision. In the case of the Mazaruni mail, for instance, it has been running weekly, but it is only fortnightly this year, and a saving is effected.

Mr. FERREIRA: The conveyance of mails on the Corentyne is done by Government, and I am of the opinion that passengers are carried on the Government vehicle. I would like to know whether there is a regular Government schedule charge for the conveyance of passengers and, if so, what is that charge?

Mr. SHARP: I am a little uncertain whether any charge is made. The Controller of Vehicles controls the service and he allows the senior Postmaster in New Amsterdam a certain amount of discretion in carrying certain people along. I cannot say off-hand what charge, if any, is made. The privilege is not abused, I understand.

Mr. FERREIRA: If a charge is made is it paid into the revenue of the Colony?

Mr. SHARP: Yes, certainly.

Mr. FERREIRA: I would ask the Postmaster-General to verify that statement.

Mr. LEE: When passengers travel by mail car the fares collected from them are not paid into general revenue. The money is paid to the owner of the car. It is a very reasonable charge—60 cents to Skeldon.

Mr. FERREIRA: I beg your pardon; it is \$2.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I am sorry I am not satisfied that this large increase is necessary. Whether justice or injustice has been done to the old contractor is no concern of this Council, but I think the amount concerns the Council, and I cannot see any justification for this large increase.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to see the old contractor called upon to do the work for the same amount?

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I think he could do it. I do not see why this new man should have \$100 more if the old contractor has been doing it all these years for less.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I move a reduction of the item by \$1,200.

Mr. SEAFORD: I would like to have it made clear that this contractor is allowed 11 cents per mile and is allowed to carry no passengers. Is that correct?

The CHAIRMAN: Will he be allowed to take passengers?

Mr. SHARP: Yes, sir. He will be allowed exceptional passengers with the permission of the Postmaster at Suddie.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Hasn't the contract been signed already?

The CHAIRMAN: The Council still has the power to reduce the vote.

Mr. LEE: If the contract has already been signed it would not be playing the game with the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council nevertheless has power to reduce it.

Mr. LEE: We should not allow Government to break faith with any contractor.

Mr. SEAFORD: I understand that the late contractor was allowed to carry passengers. If he carries them in a 'bus he should be able to do the work very much cheaper than a man who is running a car for the carriage of mails alone. I do not think the two things are quite on all fours.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think the item should stand?

Mr. SEAFORD: Yes, sir.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I do not think a contractor should be allowed to take passengers in a mail 'bus. We know what happens.

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: I think the matter has been left in a very obscure position. I do not think we have had the full facts brought to our notice here. I speak on this matter because I happen to know the former contractor, and that quite recently he had to pay the contractor for 1945 over \$100 to convey the mails for him because he could not get tyres for his 'bus. As a result he is out of pocket to the extent of \$300 in carrying out the terms of his contract.

The CHAIRMAN: I will put the question that the item stand as printed.

The Committee divided and voted—

For—Messrs. Roth, Lee, Jackson, Austin, C. V. Wight, Seaford, the Colonial Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—9.

Against—Messrs. Ferreira, Edun, Jacob, Humphrys, Peer Bacchus, Gon-

salves, Percy C. Wight, Dias, Critchlow, de Aguiar, J. A. Luckhoo and Woolford—12.

Did not vote—Dr. Singh—1.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment is carried by 12 votes to 9, and the figure becomes \$128,000.

POST OFFICE—TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRICAL INSPECTORS' BRANCH.

Mr. FERREIRA: I move a reduction of this head by \$100 for the sake of discussion. I desire to say a few words with regard to the trunk line service to New Amsterdam, and the telephone service on the Corentyne. I think it is known and accepted that both services are in a miserable condition. We will very likely be told that nothing can be done at the present time because materials are not available but, unfortunately, for those of us in Berbice who suffer today and have suffered for years, this has been an old question which we have raised with Government 10 years ago—definitely long before the outbreak of the war. On the Corentyne Coast the Government telephone line extends only as far as Port Mourant. The line beyond that is the property of a private company which paid for it and pays a maintenance charge per month. That company has been very gracious to permit the use of that line by the public. New lines have been added to that service and it is impossible at times to get through from No. 63 on the Corentyne to New Amsterdam. It takes anything from one to three hours to put a call through.

I think the time has come when Government should make serious efforts to have that line put in order. I would be satisfied if I could be given some undertaking that Government has definite plans for the improvement of that service. We have need for additional call offices. On the other hand the present renters realize that additional

call offices would mean additional strain on an already overburdened service. The line from New Amsterdam to Georgetown is maintained by two men. It is something absolutely impossible. It is so old that it breaks by its own weight. There are two men stationed on the West Coast of Berbice to look after that service, and the system is this: If there is a fault in the line the Maintenance Engineer gets on the train and as he travels he looks through a window to see where the break has occurred. When he discovers the trouble he gets off and walks back to the spot to repair the line. With the line in its present condition there should be at least seven maintenance men, and there should be some modern means of transport. They should be able to get from point to point by motor vehicle. How are we going to get men capable to run the new service and maintain it if we do not already have them in the employ of the Department undergoing training? I would like to hear some reply from the Postmaster-General on that score.

In making these criticisms I would like to make it perfectly clear that the personnel of the Department, whether engineers or operators, are not included, because I think they work under very trying circumstances and give of their best, but I ask that some consideration be given to this Department, and that the Council be told that something will be done by Government in the near future.

Mr. LEE: I am always advocating that responsibility for the running of certain Government Departments should be placed on Elected Members nominated by the Governor, and I am asking Government to consider the appointment of an Advisory Committee to this Department. We are supposed to be leaning towards a better form of Government and more responsibility, and I feel that this is one of the

Departments that should be controlled by an Advisory Committee.

Mr. SHARP: I admit that what the hon. Member has said is true. The service on the Corentyne is unsatisfactory. The cables are old and the lines are old. On the 1942 estimates we managed to get money to improve the service but, unfortunately, the materials were not available. Since that time we have put the facts again to Government. Mr. Maille, the new Engineer-in-Chief, who is very keen, worked out a new proposition and has put up proposals for next year. Government has given authority for new lines, and if materials are available we can come forward and ask for more money. But the Engineer-in-Chief wants additional staff because you cannot do the enormous amount of reconditioning that has to be done in this Colony and undertake new construction, unless you have some extra staff in advance of the arrival of the material so that they may be trained to do the work when the materials arrive. I do not know what the position is, but I have asked Government to appoint a Committee of the Executive Council to tackle this problem which I think ought to be tackled at a very early date.

Mr. FERREIRA: If the Postmaster-General admits that there is need for additional staff why hasn't a sum been put on the estimates?

Item (14)—53 Telephone Operators—36 Grade II (\$480 by \$48 to \$600), 17 Apprentice Operators at \$120 \$20,886.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Members will notice just below this item in italics the item "Relief Telephone Operators." The recommendation of the Anomalies Committee was that these relief operators should be paid what will be called a retaining fee of \$10 each, and in addition they would

get 50 cents an hour for the work actually performed. I am asking the Council to permit the sum of \$1,760, shown in the 1944 estimate, to be included in the total of \$20,886 under item (14) so as to provide remuneration for relief operators. I move that that item be increased by \$1,760. At present these relief operators work on a fee basis only, but the Anomalies Committee thought that they should be put on some permanent basis, and recommended that they be paid \$10 per month in addition to the fee.

Item as amended agreed to.

Item (25)—*Temporary Clerical Assistance, \$820.*

Mr. de AGUIAR: I see no explanatory note in regard to this increase of temporary clerical assistance such as we have seen elsewhere. I am wondering whether it is an increase of the actual amount.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am glad the hon. Member has mentioned that point because I will take the opportunity to make an explanation which covers the whole item "Temporary Clerical Assistance" which appears throughout the departmental estimates. If the hon. Member would turn to the General Clerical Service, Appendix K, he would see that on the first page provision is made for a total of 402 officers with an expenditure of \$380,688. On page 55 the Appendix gives the allocation of charges in respect of the General Clerical Establishment to the various Departments, and the hon. Member will see that the total amount is only \$349,485. The difference of \$31,203 represents the salaries of officers seconded for military and other war service which are not actually voted on the departmental estimates at all.

The cost of providing substitutes for those officers who have been seconded is to be met from the provision for temporary clerical assistance, and I have with me a list of the items under this special head appearing in all the departmental estimates, and that list totals \$24,321. So that in fact, by omitting the salaries of the established officers and inserting instead provision for the salaries of substitutes, it is obvious that the estimate does not really provide for the full salaries of officers actually on the Establishment. Members may wonder why that particular procedure has been adopted. It is entirely due to the fact that I, as Treasurer, am concerned with putting into the estimate provision for the salaries of officers on secondment who are not at the moment attached to any particular Department, which would permit those Departments to have funds under their control and staff which they could use, perhaps without authority, or if they do not obtain authority, to advance a claim for additional assistance on the ground that they have funds.

What happens as regards substitutes is this: The Departments are allowed to employ temporary substitutes, and from time to time, as those temporary clerks become entitled to permanent employment, they get on the permanent staff. Departments may have temporary staff from time to time becoming permanent, and I am afraid that if we allowed them in addition to get back their staff on secondment they may eventually have too much funds. That is why this particular procedure has been adopted. The amount provided for substitutes is \$24,321 for all Departments.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I have listened with a good deal of interest but I have not gathered the gist of what the Treasurer has stated. Of course he dealt principally with the employees on the Clerical Establishment and not

with specialized posts. In that case I think I would be right in saying that in the case of an officer holding a specialized post and seconded for military service, his post remains the same on the estimate. If I understood the Treasurer correctly the position of the clerical staff is varied somewhat.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: For departmental purposes in order to keep the post alive and have the officer again, the post is shown, but with regard to the Clerical Establishment that is not absolutely necessary, because the first page of the Appendix shows the number of the cadre, and his post is in the General Establishment. But in the case of departmental posts proper they must continue to be shown even if the officer has been seconded.

Mr. de AGUIAR: Therefore I take it that the answer to the question I raised is that the increase on the estimate for temporary clerical assistance is in order to provide funds to meet the salary of any person taken on in this particular Department, but not provided for in the Clerical Establishment.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is so.

The CHAIRMAN: There should have been a note on the opposite page.

Item 4—Maintenance—Telecommunications, \$25,000.

Mr. de AGUIAR: This is not a large sum of money, and we know that prices have gone up. I was wondering whether under this head there are arrears of maintenance, or any provision being made for future maintenance.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There should be correspondence between the Chief Engineer and the Postmaster-General, and between the Postmaster-General and the Treasury and the Secretariat. This amount represents a

considerable reduction on what the Chief Engineer would like to have. It is really due to pressure on the part of the Treasury. It was not right to burden the head with a large sum of money when it was almost impossible to obtain materials. This sum of \$25,000 is merely a token vote which they can use for what they can obtain. The Engineer claims that maintenance is in arrears, and they only do as much as their materials allow.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I am very grateful for that explanation, but I think the Treasurer has brought up a very important point. I gather that \$25,000 was a figure arrived at arbitrarily, without any estimate of what materials could be obtained for that amount. The point I wish to make now is whether in the opinion of the Head of the Department he is satisfied that sufficient of that type of materials is available that this amount will cover in order to maintain a reasonable service. It is very important to find out whether this amount is sufficient to obtain the materials that will carry out a reasonable telephone service, because the hon. Member for Berbice River made a complaint so far as Berbice is concerned. While it is true we have a very good service, we do know the lines are wearing out, and it is very important to know whether this amount will be sufficient to maintain a reasonable service.

Mr. SHARP: The answer is that this sum will merely maintain what is there today. We hope so. Reconditioning or improvement of the service will necessitate coming back to the Council for more money on a supplementary vote under extraordinary expenditure.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: If the Essequibo service is to be maintained at all, I do not think the whole amount put down would be of any assistance.

Head passed as amended.

POST OFFICE—EXTRAORDINARY.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The item—"New lines, material and labour for extending existing services. \$10,000—is purely arbitrary.

Head passed.

TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS

Item 1—Net Deficiency, Transport Services, \$760,584.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Item 1 — "Net Deficiency Transport Services, \$760,584. It is not very much in excess of this year's. I think in my Budget Statement I mentioned that it may have to be increased as the result of a Committee now reporting on the wages of the Department.

Mr. FERREIRA: I would like to say that I do not blame the Department for this large deficiency. I blame Government for the reason that it is within my knowledge that the Board of Commissioners had put up to Government proposals that certain increases should be made about fifteen months ago at least and no steps were taken as regards freight, and only quite recently steps were taken to increase the passenger fares of the Railway but nothing has been done as regards the Steamer Service. In the Budget Statement we are told that it is under consideration but we should await the arrival of an expert to decide as to whether or not freight rates should be increased. I do not think it is necessary to wait for the arrival of an expert in the Colony to tell us whether or not we should increase our freight rates. I think it is for Government to say and to make a pronouncement whether or not it is Government's policy to run the Transport Department purely as a utility service and to have cheap rates as a form of subsidy. If Government could only make up its

mind on that point. If this Department is to be run without showing a deficiency, then it should adopt the steps approved for the buses of the Transport Service on the Corentyne which has been under Government's guidance. On the Corentyne Coast the Transport Officer has got together a service and the freight rates have been increased as much as 100 per cent. If we have got to pay—and quite rightly—War Bonus and increased rates of salary, why then should those who travel by or benefit from the Transport Department Services be given such special services and the remainder of the Colony must pay for it? I think this Government should be run along economical lines and that immediate steps should be taken to put that Department on a proper footing economically. Then we might be in a position to have the Department if not making a profit at any rate not disclosing such a disgraceful loss as shown here. Of course, I rather gather that if the receipts from Harbour Dues were placed in the estimates the deficiency would not be like that and possibly there would be none, but they are paid directly into Revenue and, therefore, this deficiency remains at a high figure.

On the other hand I think that with proper care, vigilance and supervision this Department would not bear the bad name that it bears today. I do not think there is one Member present who can say he is satisfied with the manner in which that Department is being conducted, and I am fully aware of the fact that there is a war on. I am fully aware of the fact that we cannot have an efficient service efficiently run as had there not been a war on. Whenever the point arises as to why the service is in this disgraceful condition that excuse comes bobbing up. I think the supervision of this Department has been so lax that this Government has lost thousands of dollars when had a little more interest been taken in the running of this Department we would have saved thous-

ands of dollars. I can make reference to one or two things. Some time ago the s.s. *Baiara* on the Berbice River service while travelling down the river was sunk and was left there. That boat did not just sink in a couple of minutes: it took hours. I say without any hesitation that it took about at least six hours to sink. I say this because it might interest hon. Members and it might interest you, sir, to know that after that boat went down no enquiry was held. There was a report from the Captain and it ended just there. That boat in sinking went down with several heads of cattle, not less than fifty, tied by their necks to the rails. Although it must have been evident to the Captain and the crew that the boat was sinking those animals remained tied and were drowned. The Transport and Harbours Department paid the owners for the loss. Was not that enough that some enquiry should have been held? A public statement made at the time by the General Manager was that the river was safe for traffic. I challenged that. That boat could have been saved. No thorough survey was made, and no attempt was made to salvage it. After some considerable time you arrived in this Colony, sir, and I mentioned that there was that boat lying in the river. That boat sank with its stern tied to a tree. After it had been lying in the river for over a year, at last a tender was put up and accepted and that boat was successfully salvaged by a firm of non-engineers. Men went up there and using their commonsense, grit and courage raised it, but our Transport Department could not do the same thing.

Some time around that period a punt travelling down the river smashed into the deflector built by the Public Works Department. That deflector had been built some 20 years ago, and it was known that though it was there it was of no use to anyone. It was never lighted at nights. A claim was made on the Depart-

ment and not only was the owner compensated for the loss of his punt but he was told he could have the timbers if he removed them. Those timbers were removed and sold at 40 cents a cubic foot in New Amsterdam and, I am not sure, some was not resold to Government through the Public Works Department at 80 cents per cubic foot. If that is satisfactory I do not know what is.

Before that we had a boat condemned as being of no further use, the s.s. *Haimara*. It was sold for \$500 and lent back to Government after having been repaired and the owner is making handsome profits today from it. Our competent men could not undertake that job, but that firm of non-engineers could have had the courage to do so.

In 1943 the Transport Department decided to erect a bond at the New Amsterdam Stelling. The primary object was to have a lorry-park, but when that failed it was decided to store rice in it. I saw it under construction and I then said it would sink. A couple of weeks after it did sink. One would have thought that in such construction something proper would have been done. That bond is there maybe as a monument of inefficiency.

In March or April of this year a schooner ran into the Beacon in Berbice. It was not the fault of the schooner as there was a black-out. Despite repeated requests that work was never started until this week. I do not know if that is the manner in which we should go along.

For years it was known that the New Amsterdam Stelling was too small to accommodate the traffic. An amount of \$10,000 was put on the Estimates for enlarging it, but up to now nothing has been done. No work has been started. Those are just a few of the policy of *laissez-faire*. I was told there is no timber. I question that and have good reasons for doing so. Those of us who travel on the Berbice River steamers have to put up with the most repulsive

conditions. Those conditions have been reported from time to time by the Berbice Chamber of Commerce, and a reply was given that the passengers should complain or draw the Captain's attention to those conditions. Is that the sort of thing one must be subjected to? When I tell you the conditions are most repulsive I am not exaggerating. Once they had 50 to 60 head of cattle on board and the second class passengers had to be accommodated in the first class. These second class passengers have to travel under the most revolting conditions from 7 o'clock in the morning to 12 o'clock the next morning, and on board the River Steamer there is a sad display of lack of discipline. I am amazed to think that such a state of affairs should exist, but it does not surprise me in the slightest degree because no one responsible travels on the Department's steamer and no one knows what happens.

I know I will be told that it is intended to appoint an Inspector of Traffic. It has been the intention for some time now and one would have thought the General Manager or his Deputy or someone responsible would occasionally travel along the railways and the steamers and see how conditions are, but apparently they have too much work at Head Office. They apparently know nothing about these conditions and they are allowed to exist. You have a well balanced Board of Commissioners, but how can those men decide on any matter when they do not know what is being discussed, as they do not travel on the services and do not know everything about the services? If a petition or suggestion or complaint comes up for consideration they have to take the word or advice of one man as they do not know what is happening. I do say that each Commissioner should at least travel on each of the services and be conversant with conditions so as to be in a position to act independently and properly.

I have spoken strongly, but I think the time has come when some action

should be taken. I am satisfied in my mind that this Department is not being efficiently run, and I do say that the Government should take steps to have the administration of the Department efficiently carried on. I have been told that an amendment will be moved adding in an amount to cover the erection of a shed at the Berbice River Steamer Service terminus. I thought the hon. the Colonial Treasurer would have told us something about it. I was assured by the Chairman of the Board last week that something would be done. I am speaking of the matter so that it should not escape the attention of those concerned. In 1943 when I acted for four months on the Board I drew attention to the fact that Paradise had no shed, no stelling, and it was a serious and grave inconvenience not only to the residents of Paradise but also to those who had to travel 20 and 30 miles to go there to await the arrival of the steamer. If I may explain briefly, you have passengers from Kwakwani. It is customary for them to travel in daylight by launch in the river. They arrive at Paradise at about six o'clock in the afternoon and have nowhere at all to stay unless they are prepared to go into a private home or the shop which is sometimes too convivial an atmosphere. Especially the poor women, they have to remain out in the open until the steamer arrives. The steamer may arrive at 9 o'clock in the evening or 2 o'clock the next morning. Surely there should be some shed erected to accommodate these people. When I raised the point I gathered it was felt there was some personal interest involved. I would like to say publicly that I have no personal interest or financial interest in the Berbice River. I speak in the interest of the community there, a community of long suffering, and I ask that the promise that was made to me be put into effect.

There is another point, I think, we may have been told something about—the increased salaries for the Department. I would like to draw this Gov-

ernment's attention to the post of River Captain. I raised it on the Transport Board, but I think it is worthy of consideration here. A Captain in charge of a steamer with its cargo worth \$2,000 leaves New Amsterdam at 6 o'clock in the morning and travels the whole day and the whole night. He is responsible for the ship, the cargo and the lives of the passengers. He arrives at his destination at 9 o'clock in the night or 2 o'clock the following morning and has to load and leave the following morning arriving back in New Amsterdam possibly in the night. He discharges the passengers and then goes to Rosignol and unload his cargo, returning to New Amsterdam about 5 o'clock in the morning. For all that he is paid \$50 to \$60 per month. He gets no subsistence allowance. I consider it a definite hardship to expect a man to have a house in New Amsterdam or Georgetown and to travel up and down the Berbice River on the pay he gets, which I consider small. I do think he should get some subsistence allowance to take care of his expenses for meals. I hope that the points I have raised—I think they can all be verified—will be taken seriously and I trust to hear some remarks about them. Every Member, I am sure, would like to add his quota and, therefore, I would not detain the Committee any longer.

Mr. EDUN: I have just listened to a detailed survey of the disabilities of the Transport Service in British Guiana. I consider transportation is an essential administrative function of the State. I have read just recently that in the United Kingdom Government acquisition of the transport system of that country has resulted in a complete success as against the private interests there. The success was rather astonishing especially in war time. Here in British Guiana this service is owned by the State, and year after year it has given one a headache and a nightmare. But it must not be forgotten that when we took over this service it was pretty nearly a derelict service, and the Department must be complimented for keeping it running up to today, knowing as I

do the conditions prevailing—war conditions. But I think we ought to be grateful for having a service which is still carrying on somehow, but some Members when they criticize the service do not consider that. I look at the service and say "Here is experimentation in self-government. Here is where Members of this Council, those in the minority comprising the Board of Commissioners, are given an opportunity to run a service." After all if it is considered necessary to subsidize it with \$1,000,000 it should be done. I consider this deficit to be the penalty of experimentation in self-government and, I think, we can help by exercising the right to do certain things in our own way. That is, we ought to capitalize the service and put in more of the rolling stock by borrowing somewhere at low interest and by planning now for after the war when we will be able to take some pride in this very service about which certain men so glibly complain against at present. I would be sorry for the day when this service is held up before the eyes of the world as incompetence on the part of those in whom somehow we have some confidence. That is why when I spoke on this matter last year I said that we had reached saturation point. We ought to get the advice of an expert, even an American expert, and we are advised by Government that such an expert is coming in the person of Mr. Rooke.

I agree with the last speaker that the time has come when we should ask the people of this country to support the service in a better form. To give it an effectual start let us consider how freight rates might be increased so as to get more revenue. Let us consider whether we should ask passengers to pay a little more. After all it is our service—the property of the inhabitants of this country. Why should we keep on condemning it and telling the world that we have a toy railway? I have seen railways in England and I have travelled in railways in Trinidad. I do not see that they are better railways than this (laughter). In any case if I am in my home and I own a rickety

"Berbice" chair which is giving me comfort I should be proud of that possession. I think the time has come when certain Members who are experts in their own line should meet the expert who is coming, and put all the defects of the railway before him, and I am sure that something definite could be hammered out whereby this service could be put on a proper basis. It must not be forgotten that when it was taken over by Government the service was not a first-class one. I have noticed improvement—excellent improvement. Never in the history of the Colony did we have such an imposing building as we have now at the Georgetown ferry.

I think we are proceeding on rational lines. I agree that there may have been some administrative mistakes, but anybody is liable to make mistakes. Reference has been made to the steamer which went down in the Berbice river. Battleships crash against icebergs and go down. The mighty *Titanic* went down in that way. I do not think the loss of that vessel should be taken to mean that the whole administration is defective. Members speak very glibly about increases of wages right round. As a Labour man I would like to see increases all round, from the top to the bottom, but as soon as we make such increases we will have to look at the bottom for the deficit too. In this matter of a vital utility service we ought to put our heads together instead of coming here from day to day and making criticisms against it. I am looking forward to the Government owning every utility service in the country—the sugar industry, the bauxite industry and one or two others. I am looking forward to nationalization of those industries—community ownership instead of their being carried on in the interest of one particular section.

There might be some change in the personnel of the Board. Maybe there are some members who may be exchanged for more progressive people. Perhaps they are too rigid in their ideas. I think we should not look for-

ward to progress from a certain direction at all, especially from men who, I must say, are very conservative in their ideas and not prepared to take a leap in the dark. We want men to put new ideas into the administration of that service, men who will make mistakes but will show some progress. That is the way we have to work in order to make the service a success. I plead for that opportunity. The service is our property, the property of the inhabitants of the Colony. Let us make it a national concern rather than break the hearts of those who are trying to do their best to give us the best service they can.

The CHAIRMAN: We have reached the time for adjournment in order to have the meeting of Finance Committee.

The Council resumed and adjourned until 8.30 p.m.

NIGHT SESSION

8.30 p.m.—

The Council resumed, and resolved itself into Committee, to resume consideration of the draft Estimates of Expenditure for 1945.

Mr. JACOB: During the last three or four years I have criticized this Department and I did not intend to say very much today, but owing to the remarks of the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member I think it is necessary for me to say one or two things. I notice that in the Budget Statement the hon. the Colonial Treasurer stated that—I will read exactly what he stated:—

"Consideration of proposals by the Board of Commissioners for increasing the tariff rates has been deferred by Government but will no doubt be reopened during the course of the enquiry into the working of the service by Mr. Rooke, the railway expert, who is expected to visit the Colony shortly."

I am exceedingly disappointed that the Board did not increase the freight rates, and I gathered from the debate last year you were particularly impressed by the suggestions that were made that it was grossly unfair to increase the passengers rates.—I do not remember the percentage, but it was very considerably more than 50 per cent—and the freight rates were not increased at all. I am particularly disappointed that the Governor in Council did not even press the Board of Commissioners to increase the freight rates. Here you have a service being run at a huge loss and you increase the passenger fares and do not increase the freight rates which stood at the same figures, unrevised for several years. What is the reason? I can only come to one conclusion and that is, the poor unfortunate travelling public must be made to pay. I do not travel on the trains and will not as long as I have a motor car and petrol. I will not even travel on the steamers if I can help it. There is something wrong. Perhaps Government will decline to say why the freight rates are not increased. That has been due for some time, but Government will not say anything. Government has a majority and has a packed Board.

The hon. the Sixth Nominated Member referred to his travels and compared this ramshackle railway that we have as being equal to the railways in London and Trinidad. I have not travelled very much, but I have travelled to London and Scotland and have gone over the ferries in other parts of the world and have travelled on their railways and also on the Trinidad railway and I am a bit surprised to hear a comparison like that made. While the hon. Member was speaking he complimented the Board. That is the kind of thing we would like to hear, but the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member has the peculiar habit of referring to things he knows nothing about. Not only he but several Members make wild statements and quote figures, and they are left in the air. I believe

the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member referred to the whole service as being a derelict concern when it was taken over by Government. He is probably justified in saying that, but I do not feel justified in allowing that statement to remain on the records without contradicting it.

I took the trouble some years ago to compute the Net Deficiency since this service was taken over by this Government. It was taken over in 1929 and the net deficiency for that year was \$160,000. The total deficiency including capital was \$160,971. That year \$971 was spent on Capital Account. In 1930 nothing was spent on capital. The net deficiency from 1929 to 1942 was \$2,517,492. The net deficiency for the next three years to 1945 is \$2,293,710, practically the same amount as the net deficiency for the years 1929 to 1942. For fourteen years the net deficiency has been \$2,500,000, and the net deficiency for the last three years has been practically the same, and yet one hon. Member of this Council gets up and says that when the service was taken over it was in a derelict condition and now we have an excellent service. The Commissioners are very pleased to hear that. As I have stated, I will refuse as long as I can use a car to travel on the railways.

The hon. Member for Berbice River gave some interesting impressions of the services from Georgetown to Rosignol, Berbice, and from New Amsterdam to the Berbice River District. When I have to travel to my constituency I go by the Department's steamer and I see the passengers huddled together like cattle with nowhere to sleep. Nothing can be worse. I was hoping that as things went on and as the deficiency decreased the position would have been improved, but certainly the position has got worse and we have the deficiency increasing at such a rapid rate year after year. That is the picture I paint and it is based on figures. Take the condition of the trains that travel on the East

Coast every day; take the condition of the West Coast trains. I have complained; I have talked about the personnel of the Board of Commissioners over and over, and I must repeat that while the Board has a fair representation I do not know it has a majority representation of Members of this Council. I do not know whether the Board has power to do exactly as it likes in the interest of the country and not in the interest of a few people. I think the Governor in Council has power to do what it likes and so it does but not in the interest of the people. That is my indictment of the Government and the service.

I was told this is the beginning of State control. Let us control the Transport Service, control everything. At this rate we will have a number of people responsible to nobody but themselves running these services. That is what will make the whole country bankrupt in a few years. What is the state of this Department? It is a bankrupt, derelict concern and it has Government control. I want to see Government control or State control but by elected men who have to account to the people and not by a majority accountable to nobody. That is the position I find myself in. That is the position the majority of the people of the Colony find themselves in.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: On a point of correction! Before the hon. Member catches his second breath I think I ought to tell him that the Board of Commissioners pressed Government unceasingly to increase the rates, and may I tell the hon. Member further that the reason is that Government is endeavouring to hold down the cost of living. That is the answer I would like him to think about.

Mr. JACOB: I am afraid, sir, I have been told nothing, absolutely nothing. You are allowing the passengers to travel at increased rates. That is not

increasing the cost of living, certainly not, but if the big concerns, those who transport goods by the service pay an increase it would increase the cost of living.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: What about the freight on rice?

Mr. JACOB: I am sorry to say that is so much bunkum and it is best to leave the reply unsaid. I am not prepared to go into the figures. I have done so already and have made a comparison somewhere. Rice is the thing that is to take all this indictment. 15,000 tons of rice was exported during the last ten years, and yet we talk about rice. Of course it is rice. However, I hold to my opinion, and Government can hold to its opinion, that it is reducing the cost of living by not increasing the freight on rice. I was a little guarded in what I said because I was not certain who was responsible. Now I have it that the Governor in Council is responsible. It must be a dumb Board that would refuse to resign rather than work under such conditions. Why should they?

Mr. LEE: I would like the hon. Member to read the Ordinance and there he would see that the Commissioners are appointed with only certain powers. I would not like him to place on record that the Commissioners are dumb members.

Mr. JACOB: They are more than that. They are "Yes men". I agree that if there is law it must be respected. There must be respect of law and order, but I would refuse to sit on a board where such a law exists. I hope after the next general elections, when there will be a differently constituted Council based not on 10,000 voters but probably on 100,000 voters and when maybe 50 per cent. of the serving hon. Members will not have a chance of being returned—but I do hope we will have ten times 10,000 voters—

and there will be a wonderful show down. Perhaps our bosses in England would give the Governor of the Colony reserve power, but there would be something different, I can see that. But the time has come when the people must say and their voices should be heard and not the Governor-in-Council's. Here you have practical men on a Board recommending increased rates and the Governor-in-Council saying "Oh, no." What is more painful is that this Council is represented on that Council by three Elected Members of this Council. They are guided again by certain regulations and rules and this is the result. It is no use going on because the more I think of the matter, the more I am told certain inner details, the more I feel it is hopeless to expect this Government to carry on anything successfully. Government had a wonderful opportunity to make the Service, I do not say, pay but run for the benefit of the people. It is disgraceful that the people cannot get proper accommodation on the Service and the accommodation they do get is in some cases not fit for human beings but for cattle, and the entire Colony has to pay this huge loss every year. With proper management, with fair rates of passenger fares, fair rates of freight, I cannot, see why there should be a loss of more than \$300,000 per annum.

I do not think the taxpayers would grudge paying a quarter-million dollars as a kind of subsidy. I will be told that when the Service was run by Sproston's firm they were being paid a subsidy. I do not say the Service should be run at a profit, but I certainly do object to the Service being run at a loss of \$873,000 this year. Last year it was \$841,000 and the previous year it was \$580,000. There is something wrong, and the entire set up of these Boards and Committees is something that ought to be abolished. I had some hope when the Official bloc was removed from this Council that

the people's representatives would have had a chance and those who had a chance would have made use of that chance and done something at least to have a shake up. What have we got there? Of course we have had a shake up—bigger losses, losses I am sure the taxpayers cannot bear. There is to be a Budget deficit of over \$1,000,000. Remove this huge loss, remove the over-expenditure or the over-estimate on public works, and the Colony can boast of a surplus. I have no doubt that in the year that is coming to an end, although our financial experts have intimated a deficit for 1944, there will be a surplus. I have absolutely no doubt about it. I may not know anything about figures nor about accounts, but I do certainly know that 1944 will not end up with a deficit and, if there had been \$800,000 loss on this one service, we would have probably a half a million or a million dollars surplus. I can put my finger on certain things and show that if they are run properly the Colony can boast of a surplus. I would not be surprised if the Colony gets under Treasury Control again. That may be the wish of certain Members of this Council and of certain members of the Government. We are all a band of natives here. We have no voice. We are to be controlled; we are to be kept in check. This is a country of 340,000 natives; why should they be given an opportunity for self-government, to manage their own affairs? I think I have said sufficient. I do not want to take my seat with any misunderstanding. I am thoroughly annoyed at the way the Government does its business and I am more annoyed at the way the Governor in Council put the clamp on the Board of Commissioners of this Service and not give them an opportunity, as stated by the hon. the Colonial Secretary, to make the Service show a smaller deficit and to charge equitable freight rates so that they may compare favourably with the

passenger rates. I want to say something about the Mazaruni Service, but I may do that at a later stage when we are discussing the items.

Mr. EDUN: To a point of explanation! I have just looked up the constitution of the Board and seen that there are three Elected Members, two Civil Servants, two Merchants and two Sugar Producers comprising it. I am satisfied that if we had a general election and there was the choice of election to that Board from a panel here, I think the hon. Member for North-Western District would get in there. But this is a transition stage, when we have to see how we are going. There is one thing I want to make very clear in this Council and that is this: I do not think there is anyone here or any hon. Member who will be able to level against me that I humour anybody.—I do not even humour His Excellency the Governor—and if there is one thing I can claim in this Council it is that I have exploded the myth that a Nominated Member is a “Yes” man and is at the bidding of the Government. If there has been constructive criticism either against the Government of British Guiana, Ayube Edun has done so and that manfully and well. Therefore when the question’ again comes up—

The CHAIRMAN: This is all to a point of correction?

Mr. EDUN: Yes, sir, to my hon. friend. When I spoke in the interest of the Service I grasped a greater vision. I have day dreams too, but in my life all my day dreams become realities. If I dream about certain things they would eventually come true.

Mr. LEE: I can fully realize the fear of the hon. Member for North-Western District in that the deficiency is going up but I would like him to realize the several points made and, if he was sitting as a Commissioner of that Board he would also realize, would

not criticize as he has done. I was also a good critic of this Department seeing the deficiency going up, but after assuming certain responsibilities I found that the Department and its Head are doing their best with the least that they have at their command. I would give an instance where if the hon. Member was not told everything that happened he would have been the first to cry out about inefficiency and lack of foresight. Let us say that owing to the war the Department could not get a boat and so had to purchase the boat “Oranje” from the U.S. Government. The hon. Member does not know they had paid for the boat and then the U.S. Government refused to sell that boat. If we did not get that boat the service to Essequibo would certainly have broken down, and what would have been the cry of the hon. Member along with that of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo? They would have said it was the fault of the Commissioners.

Trains travel today with passengers hanging on to the rails, which is a wrong thing. The Department has gone so far as to close the doors of the carriages, yet people crowd on to the trains. Another Nominated Member has protested against the increase of the fares on the West Coast. The point is that necessary supplies for the railway cannot be obtained. Even trucks to convey cattle from Berbice are not sufficient. Members have also forgotten that the cost of fuel has increased 100 per cent. The cost of labour has also gone up tremendously, yet we hear these criticisms. There is also the burden of the annuities, and Government should take steps to redeem them and reduce the interest charges. Of course that would not be in keeping with the dignity of the Government, but I would ask Government to enquire into it. I plead with Members, in the interest of the efficiency of the service, to give the General Manager and the Board a

fair chance to make the best of the means at their disposal. I have been a member of the Board only a few months and we are trying our best to carry on this utility service of the Colony.

Mr. JACKSON: The hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) does not know any reason why freight rates were not increased. I would have supplied the information to him but the Colonial Secretary has already done so. But I can say why the passenger rates were increased. I remember going with a deputation to the Board when the fares were increased, and the reason given for the increase was that the idea was to discourage travelling. It was said that too many people were travelling on the railway, and the fares were increased to restrict travelling, but we were also told that if the increase in fares did not achieve the object intended there might be a reduction to the old rates. It is only those who know the people of the Colony would realize that no matter how much the fares were increased travelling would still continue. Today there are more persons travelling on the railway than when the fares were cheaper.

Everyone knows that the number of steamers was reduced, and it is alarming to see the number of persons travelling at the times those steamers are allowed to run. They are always overcrowded, and there is no doubt about it that it is very dangerous to travel on them. I do not know whether the Board had in mind the collection of more revenue with a view to a reduction of the deficit, when passenger rates were increased, but from what we were told that certainly was not the idea. I am sure, however, that the service is getting more revenue now, which is a fortunate circumstance, because the deficit would otherwise have been greater.

I have no idea of the inner working of the Board, nor am I prepared to criticize the Board adversely, but there is no doubt about it that things are not exactly what they should be. I however, have a feeling of sympathy for the management, because I know that it is difficult to obtain new steamers, and that the present steamers are very old and cannot give the service they might be expected to give under favourable conditions. But I think that the Board should endeavour to see that something is done in order that these difficulties might be averted. Of course the service can never pay its way, and I do not think it is intended to. There is a huge millstone around its neck which will have to be borne continuously, so that my sympathies are with Government in this matter. But for Heaven's sake do not tell us that you increase passenger rates because you want to discourage travelling, because that cannot be effected. I am sure that if it were possible to limit the number of passengers on the steamers the vessels would last a little longer, and we would get better service from them.

The trains are also overcrowded on certain occasions, and perhaps at times an extra carriage or two might be put on to relieve the congestion. I speak with a degree of sympathy for the Board, and I trust that Members in their criticisms might be human and kindly.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT TAKES THE CHAIR

At this stage the President left the Chamber and the Deputy President took the chair.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I have not risen to offer any criticism in regard to the deficit that appears in this estimate, either as a whole or in detail, except, of course, to make passing reference to the fact that it is very alarming to me and I feel sure, to the general taxpayers

of this country, that the deficit in this Department continues to rise year by year. What would be more alarming is if the average taxpayer was aware of the fact that sooner or later, — perhaps very soon indeed—the Colony would be required to face a very heavy bill in the form of renewals of a capital nature which, to my mind, are responsible for a good number of the evils that exist today. I know that the Department is working under very trying conditions of war, and I know too that it is extremely difficult to obtain those renewals, and even if we could obtain them the cost would be something which, I venture to suggest, would be very much higher than I can envisage at the present time.

I should like to say first of all that I speak here as one of the Commissioners. I happen to be a member of the Board, and whether that is a fortunate or unfortunate position to hold I leave it entirely to the judgment of the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob). I think that perhaps I might make my position perfectly clear, because I want it to be known that as a member of the Board, and a very new member at that, I look upon this deficit, as I have done for years, and even before I became a member of the Board, as something of a very serious nature,—serious not only in its growth but, if I may so describe it, serious in moral effect on those people who have to administer the Department, and I would go further and say that it is serious to those people who work in the Department. That, to my mind, is a very serious aspect, and I do not want to be told that the Transport Department in this Colony is any different from similar services elsewhere, where perhaps deficits are shown on the operations. Nor do I want to be reminded of the fact that a portion of our deficit is represented by the annually recurrent

charge in respect of the annuities payable to the holders of the stock in the old Railway Company.

The CHAIRMAN: (Mr. Woolford) Permanent annuities.

Mr. de AGUIAR: Nor do I want to be reminded of the railway at all. As a matter of fact I hope not to make too much reference to it, except to say that possibly it can be found in the Book of Genesis, and for that reason no doubt we find ourselves in this deplorable condition. What can we do to reduce the deficit? I happen to know that even if we increased our tariffs, either in the form of freight, with which I may say right away that I am heartily in agreement, or a further increase of passenger fares, I feel sure that none of those increases would be able to offset this large and alarming deficit the Department has to face now, and which I am almost sure it will have to continue to face for some time in the future. Therefore it seems to me that something more than that has to be done. Whether I am a member of the Board or not I am extremely jealous of the rights and privileges of Members of this Council in the review of these estimates, and I am fully conscious of the fact that the opportunity to do so only arises under the existing Ordinance when this Department shows a deficit. I am not sure whether hon. Members are aware of that. If they are not I should like to inform those who do not, and to remind those who do, that perhaps a deficit—of course not one of this size—is a blessing in disguise, because it affords the opportunity to Members of this Council not only to review the estimates but to criticize and make suggestions wherever possible.

I referred just now to the conditions under which these services are operated, and I think I also indicated what I consider a serious aspect of the matter. I would like to say here and now that apart from any deficit, or apart from

any huge expenditure this Government may have to face in the future, there is one constant danger that exists, which I think a Member of this Council, either in Council or outside of it, cannot mention too often, and that is the risk involved in the carrying of passengers with our present equipment. I use that word in its widest sense so as not to make reference to any particular vessel or device we may have. It is true that the Department made every effort to reduce the number of passengers who use this service, but I think it is well known that the numbers have increased even though the services have been curtailed in certain respects. The total number may not be as large as it was before, but it must be taken into consideration that the services are not as many—certainly not on the railway. I think there is considerable risk involved, and something should be done, and done very early, to let the public know that that risk is there.

I think it was the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Edun) who said that this service is in the nature of an experiment. I made a note of it because I did not like such a statement to go on record, as it is not so. This Department started, I think, somewhere in 1921 or 1922 — over 25 years ago. I want the hon. Member to know that I do not think even the Head of the Department or any Commissioner of the Board would care to admit that they are still experimenting with a service in which they have had experience over 25 years.

The hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob) expressed annoyance at what he described as a clamp put on the Board by the Governor in Council. I was a little bit disappointed; I thought perhaps he would have continued and developed his argument. Whether he had any argument to put forward or not I do not know. Possibly he preferred to make the remark and leave it

there in the hope that some other Member would take it up. I would like to take it up in my own way, perhaps not in the way the hon. Member had in mind, or he might suggest at some other time. The way I would like to take it up is this: We know that there is an expert coming to this Colony very shortly—another expert I should say—to enquire into and make certain suggestions in connection with this service and the Department as a whole. I fully appreciate that it is extremely difficult to set out any terms of reference for an expert, but at the same time I think that as he is coming here at our request we might indicate to him the subjects upon which this Government needs his advice. If that is accepted, and I hope it will be accepted, I think that apart from his own findings and his own suggestions, the Government of this Colony should approach the expert and tell him the kind of advice we want—advice on rolling stock, tariffs, fares, administrative personnel, and so on.

I would like to classify those subjects under three very wide heads. I think we ought to ask the expert to advise this Government first of all on general policy. When I refer to policy I think that will include the framework—the study of conditions in this Colony, the desire that this Department should be run not by Government officials, so to speak, (Government officials yes, but not under the direction of the Head of the Administration), and we ought to ask him to advise us as to the form of legislation that should be adopted to bring that policy into effect. I think there is sufficient data available for us to put before him so that he may be able to advise us on what he considers reasonable tariffs of fares and freight, and so on, and what perhaps is very important is that he might advise us generally on the form of administration of the Department. Let us be

quite sure when we adopt his recommendations, or those we decide to adopt, that we may have the right men in the right places. (applause). When we need a traffic man let us be sure that we have one. If we need a man to look after personnel let us be sure that we have a man who is competent to do that job. Do not let us take a man who has experience only of personnel and put him to look after traffic, and *vice versa*. My point is that we must be very sure when we get all this advice that we will be able to put the right men in the right places.

I have only made passing reference to these matters, and I do not propose to continue much longer, although I could go on for hours on this subject. There is one last point I wish to make, and that is my fear—I refer to it again because I wish to emphasize it—not so much as regards the deficit which this Council has to vote tonight, but as to the amount of money that will have to be found if we are to hope to operate the transport services to the satisfaction of everybody, and a service which I feel sure would produce better results than we have been able to produce in the past.

I have not gone into any figures but I am positive that my guess is as good as anybody else's when I say that in my opinion this Colony will have to face sooner or later, or very soon, a capital expenditure of nearly five million dollars if we want, not necessarily to continue these services or to continue the existing services, but to improve on them. Although that is my estimate I am very doubtful whether that figure I have in mind would be sufficient for the purpose. I ask the question of this Government: Has Government ever given that phase of the matter any consideration at all? I ask that question by way of serious criticism, because criticism it must be. It cannot be anything else. A prudent commercial man would have

been looking ahead, not today but 10 or 20 years back. In fact he would have started from the very beginning to make plans of the things I have just referred to. I recall very distinctly having time and again in this Council invited Government to give some consideration to this question of renewals which must come up sooner or later. I am going to be told that some feeble attempt was made and some very paltry figure was set aside.

I do not even know now whether these paltry sums are in existence, or whether they have been thrown in to tide over some bad years or even some of the good years we had. I am inclined to the belief that, perhaps, those sums do not even represent the smallest fraction of the amount of expenditure that this Government will have to face under that name.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: May I rise to ask permission to make a point of correction? Would the hon. Member develop the point further? He should know that all these small sums are abnormal. It is largely because of our financial position at the time. Is he suggesting that we should put by \$5,000,000 capital in reserve? Is that the criticism that we should put by \$5,000,000 capital in reserve to meet capital replacements?

Mr. de AGUIAR: No; what I am suggesting is this: Instead of waiting—it is all well and fine for reference to be made now to war conditions and the difficulty of getting this and that—I ask Government this question: At the outbreak of war in 1939 what was the position they were in? This is nothing new. The story I am telling you is nothing new. When the war broke out in 1939 what was the position of our steamer and railway services and our general equipment?

The CHAIRMAN The hon. Member expresses some doubt of what

has become of the reserve. He did not say so. He did not know. I think the hon. Member has in mind the Harbours Reserve. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer has said it is absorbed in general revenue.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I was not referring to that at all. As a matter of fact when I was speaking of Reserve I had in mind the question I raised in prefacing my remarks. On this general question of replacements and renewals the point was raised of providing certain sums each year. It started in connection with the Bartica-Potaro Road.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The creation of a reserve fund for steamers was started many years ago. It originated when the first steamers were purchased and was carried on until about 1930 when the Colony was in a very bad financial position and had no option but to gather up all reserves wherever they were found to be and put them in the general revenue in order to try to balance our finances at the time. The scheme which was started then was to try and buy one new ship every two years. That was not entirely kept up and the war came along and we had to stop. I do not want to change the hon. Member's line of argument. I want to develop the point. What is the criticism—that we tried to get steamers and did not get them or that we should put the money by? What is he criticizing? He talks about \$5,000,000—

Mr. de AGUIAR: I think the hon. the Colonial Treasurer is fully aware of the criticism I am making. Whether he wishes as Colonial Treasurer to admit there is merit in the argument or not I do not know but, I think, as an individual, as a businessman and as Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board—

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I was a businessman long before that.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I think he can fully appreciate the point I am making. The point I am making is this: If it is accepted that this Government will have to meet an expenditure of \$5,000,000 for renewing the equipment of these services, am I not justified to ask where the money is to come from? That is my point. Where is it to come from? Then I went on to say, there is no reserve as it was absorbed many years ago when the Colony's finances were in a bad way and it became necessary to utilize the various surplus funds at the disposal of Government. It is unfortunate but nevertheless the argument still stands. I am fully conscious of the fact that Government carries on its business in an entirely different way to that of commercial men, and probably it does not believe in putting aside money for future expenditure.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The point I am going to make is that the hon. Member is entitled to ask the question "Where the money is to come from" but not to use his argument as a criticism. He can ask his question and no one will be able to answer it, but do not say it is a criticism. It is not a criticism. It is a question and a rhetorical one at that.

Mr. de AGUIAR: I can well understand the anxiety of the hon. the Colonial Treasurer in trying to assist me to develop my argument. I still say it is a criticism because, perhaps the hon. the Colonial Treasurer has forgotten, in 1939 these services were in a bad way already. I must make this criticism—if they were in that condition in 1939 before the war broke out, it must have been on account of some restraining hand otherwise I would have to blame the Board of Commissioners at the time for not furnishing the fund required normally to keep the maintenance up to date. I recall very distinctly in these same Annual Estimates items appearing year after year. \$80,000 is one figure I have

in mind.—it may be \$50,000; I am not too sure in connection with the West Coast railway, and even now to this date the only thing they have got is, I believe, two diesel locomotives in order to help them carry it on. Am I not justified in criticizing the policy? Am I not justified in suggesting when the expert comes here that this Government should let him know exactly the points on which we need his advice? Am I not justified in assuming that, perhaps, the knowledge either of the Board of Commissioners or the advisers of Government is incomplete in regard to the necessity or desirability of keeping the railway equipment and the steamers equipment up to date?

I made reference to deficits in the operation of other transport services in other Colonies. They may be small or they may be large, but there is this point in favour of those deficits if and where they do occur: An endeavour is made, a continuous endeavour, to extend their equipment up to a standard that will carry out the services for which those departments are intended. In other words, no Commissioner—and I speak as a Commissioner—can make bricks without straw. That is why I have risen to speak on this question, so that hon. Members may not deceive themselves that the present position can be improved within the near future. It is a matter which this Government has to face, and unless we try to put our house in order, speaking as a Member of this Council and as a general taxpayer and a citizen, I fear the future so far as the expenditure of this Department is concerned.

I do not want to prolong the Council any longer. I have spoken on nearly every occasion in connection with the Transport Department before I was a Commissioner and now I am a Commissioner, and I want to say this: The views I expressed at the time before I became a Commissioner and the

fears that I had before I became a Commissioner are not less today now that I am a Commissioner.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Berbice River expressed some idea as to what the Department was going to do with the New Amsterdam Stelling. I cannot understand why he did so because if he look at the Estimates on page 83 he would find there is a proposal to vote a sum of money to widen that stelling.

Mr. FERREIRA: I did mention that point. \$10,000 was voted to be spent in 1944 but nothing has been done. No work was commenced. We see that for 1945 the sum of \$5,000 is again to be voted. I am only asking that steps be taken to commence the work that should have been done during 1944. I further ask that a stelling and shed be erected at Paradise as a matter of immediate necessity.

The CHAIRMAN : I know what you mean—lack of accommodation.

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: Sir, the last Member who spoke said when he rose to speak that he was going to speak only and not criticize, but I am afraid he departed from what he intended to do and severely criticized the working of this department. I have every sympathy for the present Commissioners of this Department because I think that the blame for what has happened today must be laid at the door of those who in 1922 made a very bad bargain and among those, sir, yourself and myself are to be blamed (laughter) because we were Members of the Legislature at that time.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not admit that.

Mr. LUCKHOO: This perpetual annuity is a millstone around our necks.

The CHAIRMAN: We did not know about that until after we got the report.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Beg your pardon!

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry. Mr. Luckhoo referred to what happened in London. At the meeting we had at the Colonial Institute somebody said we were never told about annuities. I recognize we ought to know about this annuity. Some of us were present in the Combined Court when it went through and approval was given to it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: When I spoke to the Royal Commissioners I had to put on record that the Combined Court approved by resolution of the action taken.

The CHAIRMAN: We were not consulted before the agreement was made.

Mr. LUCKHOO: It is a pity that at that time we had not the help of the expert. But, sir, I do not think we ought to be very hard on this Department though the deficit is a very large one. Year after year the rolling stock goes from bad to worse unless they have the money to make replacements and, as the hon. the Colonial Treasurer said, in one period of the Colony's finances every available reserve had to be mopped up — a term which is used by another Department—and, therefore, nothing was left to put by in order to make these replacements. What I would like to say, however, is this. I think there should be an investigation into the personnel of this Department. I think there have been misplacements. I am not saying that the men who work in the Department did not in their own way know their own jobs, but I think they have been wrongly placed. That has been the trouble for some time now. The rolling stock has got old and no one thought in 1939 when the war broke

out that it would have lasted until 1944 or even more years. We all thought we would have had a chemical warfare and it would have ended in six months, and no one thought of procuring locomotives and other railway stock or steamers for that matter for the Department. Although we are wise after the event those men ought to have foreseen what would have happened. I do not think any blame should be attached to those who are in office now.

After all it is a public utility service, and even if we have to pay the deficit to meet public convenience let us bear it cheerfully. This railway is known as "the old lady of South America", and, while it is true it has passed the age of child-bearing and we cannot expect it to be productive, it is still useful but not as productive as we would like to have it. I think we should examine the conditions under which the Service is to be run in the future and see the best way possible to do so, instead of criticizing and not offering any constructive way of getting out of the difficulty. Let us put our heads together and come to some common decision whereby the Service will receive some improvement.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon Member for Central Demerara based most of his criticisms on the policy of the Department in not having built up a reserve to meet expenditure in the future on maintenance or renewals. I do not think that is a criticism that can be laid at the door of the Board. I remember very well some years ago when the Government here saw a big reserve—I think it was over \$100,000—lying in the coffers of the Harbours Department, it stretched out its hand and took the whole lot to do—what it said at the time—balancing the Budget. I remember that, because I criticized Government very severely at the time not for having taken the money because I knew the state of the Colony's finances but because it had to balance the Budget by raping the funds of the

Harbour Board. I had a big argument. I said at the time that I look on the Budget here as actual expenditure and revenue and Government has a Profit and Loss account, and I cannot see that taking reserves from every quarter you can have the effrontery to say the Budget has been balanced. Our present Treasurer was not Colonial Treasurer at the time. I think the Treasurer at the time also felt a little uneasy about it. It was however effected.

Not having a reserve now is directly due to the policy of Government and not to the policy of the Board. I do realize that the state of the finances of the Colony was such that it was necessary to get every penny to carry on the Government, but at the same time the Government gave an undertaking on taking the reserve that when any steamers or rolling stock were required it was prepared to foot the bill. I think that was part of the instructions given by Government to the Department, and the Department was able to carry on in some way or other since then. I admit it is going to be difficult to find the money to pay for the renewals, but the Department finds itself in exactly the same position like numerous other industries throughout the world who are going to find the utmost difficulty to replace worn out parts of machinery, railway stock and such like things which they had not been able to get in the last few years. I do not think we can blame the Board for not having a reserve. The Board was only carrying out a policy dictated to it by the Government all the time.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am not going to make a speech. As hon. Members know, I was Chief Accountant of the Transport and Harbours Department. When I joined that Department, as a businessman, I was very keen on having this reserve fund properly built up and established.

Mr. JACOB: I do not like to interrupt, but I am surprised to hear

the hon. the Colonial Treasurer saying that he was a businessman. An auditor is not a businessman but a book-keeper.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I was very keen on building up this reserve fund. The first two years we started to make contributions to it just at the time when the Department was making a loss bigger than the subsidy the Government was prepared to pay. The General Manager conceived the idea to stop further contributions to the fund and allow the fund to accumulate by itself. After he had taken money for one ship out of that fund, all that remained was a sum between \$200,000 and \$300,000. That is the money Government seized at the time. I may tell you that the Department itself was extremely glad to get rid of it in exchange for the promise that whenever it wanted renewals or new steamers they would be got on the Colony's Budget. It was promised \$1,000,000 for steamers, one every two or three years. So I do not think so much should be made about the appropriation of this wonderful fund. It could not have bought one good ship.

The point remains, what are we going to do about renewals in the future? I think in the last Budget Statement I made I drew attention to that fact. I did not ask a rhetorical question. It is a fact that the Colony will have to face as soon as the war is over an excessive expenditure on renewals. I do not accept hon. Members' figure of \$5,000,000. Even if it is not given in one lump sum to get a ship every year or two and two or three coaches every year or two years we will not have to find \$5,000,000 all at once. I feel sure that if we wanted to have the whole railway renewed it could not be done within those years.

Mr. SEAFORD: I would like to make reference to the remark of the hon. Member who referred to the railway as

“The Old lady of South America and being beyond child-bearing stage.” May I suggest to Government to ask Mr. Bevin, the Minister of Labour, to come out to this country. I understand that at the time when he called up women up to 60 years of age for service he was very pleased with himself that he was able to put women over the age of 50 in labour. (laughter).

The CHAIRMAN: The General Manager is here and I personally welcome that to be allowed to answer the criticism. Not very often he has the opportunity to do so. I know from long acquaintance with him that he is quite competent to do so. Mr. Goring, if you feel you would like to take this opportunity to address the Council you are entitled to do so now.

Mr. G. I. GORING (General Manager, T. & H. Department): Mr. Deputy President, there has been so much criticism—

PRESIDENT RETURNS.

At this stage the President returned to the Council Chamber and took the Chair.

Mr. GORING: There has been so much criticism and so much compliment levelled at the Transport Department that I really feel that the one cancels the other. As a matter of fact there have been left very few points for me to answer. With regard to the increase of freight rates, as has been pointed out the Board has always urged the increase of freight rates to try and balance our budget, but the Board must always take the narrow point of view of a businessman running a business. It, however, has to be passed over to the Government and, if the Government decides on a far wider policy that it is not wise for the good of the Colony as a whole to increase fares and freight rates, that certainly relieves the Board of any responsibility. They have done their best and they have

outlined a policy from their very narrow point of view, which is the the only point of view they can take not being concerned with the wider policy of Government.

With regard to the increase of fares, the statement has been made several times that the increase has not cut down travelling. That is not so. On the East Coast Railway the number of passenger journeys has definitely decreased. On the West Coast Railway curiously enough for the first two or three months it increased slightly and then decreased below the level at which it was when the fares were increased.

There were several points made by the hon. Member for Berbice River. The first was about the S.S. *Baiara*. He seems to doubt that it had sunk owing to an accident to the ship. From the facts as the result of an examination of the hull after it had been raised it was definitely proved that the theory of the accident, the propeller striking a sunken log, had been established. As regards the New Amsterdam stelling bond, it was built as a garage and was of very light construction. Although I am not maintaining that it was very well built it certainly might have served the purpose, but it was used for storing rice, and being rather overloaded it sank.

Mr. FERREIRA: Can I be told what is meant by “overloading?” How many bags of rice were put on the stelling?

Mr. GORING: To be quite technical, if piles are well driven they would bear any weight. They would bear 5 tons, but those piles would not bear 5 tons, and would only bear a lorry which does not work up to 5 tons I may say that that particular garage, as it really is, will be converted into a bond next year when we enlarge the stelling.

With regard to the enlargement of the stelling I may say that the repairs to the other stellings have been so extensive this year that we were not able to tackle that particular stelling. Another reason why that work has been kept back is that the Berbice River provides little greenheart of any quality at all, and the price is excessive. I have had to import to Berbice from Essequibo all the greenheart we proposed to use there, because I have found from bitter experience that we cannot get good quality greenheart in the Berbice River at a reasonable price.

Mr. FERREIRA: I cannot have it stated that the quality of greenheart in the Berbice River is inferior to that from any other part of the colony. If that is so, I would ask the question: why for works carried out in the past by the Transport Department Berbice greenheart was used?

The CHAIRMAN: It is a question of price.

Mr. FERREIRA: No price was ever asked for in Berbice.

Mr. GORING: With regard to the bond at Paradise I may say that the money was put on the estimate, but at the time I was very doubtful about the whole proposition. It was to have been erected at Paradise and subsequently the stelling there, which was owned privately, fell into disrepair and the steamer was unable to dock there. I did not see the use of having to rebuild the stelling to put a bond there.

Mr. FERREIRA: The General Manager speaks of rebuilding. The Transport Department never had a stelling there.

Mr. GORING: I then received a petition from the residents of the district asking that I do not go back to

Paradise as they were quite content with the stelling on the other side of the river where they had been well treated by the man in charge, and there seemed to me to be no necessity for a bond. But as the hon. Member has said that there is some necessity for a bond there, I can assure him that the matter will be fully investigated early next year, because the Chairman and I intend to visit the Berbice river and see for ourselves whether there is any necessity for a bond.

Mr. FERREIRA: I was assured by the Chairman a week ago that it was agreed upon that there was need for a shed for the residents of that district. Now I am told that the matter is being investigated. I would like to know exactly where I stand.

Mr. GORING: One of the difficulties, of course, is the lack of material. I do not know whether at the time there was a sawmill in the vicinity which could have supplied the material, but I have had such unhappy experiences both as regards quality and price that I was not anxious to start until I could see prospects of getting material at reasonable prices and of good quality.

I would like to emphasize the Colonial Treasurer's statement about replacements. There will be great nervousness when, quite suddenly, the Transport Department will ask for five million dollars to replace all the existing rolling stock and ships. I would like to warn this Council that as a matter of fact the quality of the service provided by the Transport Department can be expected to deteriorate in the coming year rather than improve, and I do not think there will be any possibility of getting new units for the Department, at least within the next five years. There are many people who think the war is over; it is not, and still the greater portion of people think that when the European war is over war conditions will cease immedi-

ately. From what we hear from America and the United Kingdom we have been told quite bluntly that they have great arrears in maintenance for which they expect first priority, and they do not expect us to call for any materials for many years to come. I received from the British Government a paper asking for our programme for 1946, and it was made quite clear that although they would be interested to know what we wanted in 1946 there was no guarantee whatever that we would get it. In the line of ships I do not think you will see a new ship out here until somewhere about 1950.

Mr. FERREIRA: One thing I would like to stress is the question of the Transport Department not being able to obtain greenheart of suitable quality and price in the County of Berbice. I would like to refute the statement made by the General Manager and I would ask Government to bear in mind that large works have been undertaken in Berbice by the Public Works Department, on which greenheart has been used, and also that there is such a thing as prices control, so that there can be no exorbitant charges by the millers in Berbice. The sugar estates also carry out extensive works, and I think they do so quite satisfactorily. I think they have competent engineers who would condemn faulty material.

Mr. SEAFORD: As regards the Sea Defence Board, and also in respect of the drainage works, there has been very great difficulty in getting the necessary supplies of greenheart in Berbice.

Mr. EDUN: I have heard something about sugar estates. I know the cry of the sugar estates is that there is no material at all to repair the houses of the workers. Therefore I do not think the hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) is quite correct when he says that the sugar estates get all the materials they need.

Mr. FERREIRA: I never said that.

Mr. JACOB: With regard to the enlargement of the New Amsterdam stelling I do not speak of details; I speak on principles. I want to say something about the Morawhanna stelling. In August, 1935, when I went to Morawhanna for the first time there was no stelling at all. Since then a stelling has been built, but I have had information recently that it has almost collapsed. When the General Manager visited the North-Western District about a year ago he promised the people there that a shed would be attached to the stelling, and that necessary repairs would be done. Nearly a year has passed. I wrote a letter to the General Manager about a month ago asking that something be done to repair the stelling. If there had been a shed the stelling could not have been destroyed in the way it has been within nine years. The General Manager wrote back to say that his Department could not get greenheart planks or some other material on the spot, and it was not possible to transport material from Georgetown. That is not a good enough answer. I do not think it needs more than a couple of hundred feet of materials to repair the stelling. When these things are not attended to in time they give a lot of trouble later on. That is the position at Morawhanna.

There is a stelling at Coomacka which was there in 1935, and I do not think anything has been done to it to any large extent, owing to the fact that it has a shed. It is penny wise and pound foolish, to build a stelling of greenheart without any cover at all. I would like the General Manager to do something about it.

I see that \$10,000 was voted for the enlargement of the New Amsterdam stelling in 1944. The hon. Member for Berbice River (Mr. Ferreira) says that nothing has been done yet. We are coming to the end of the year and I

presume that nothing of that \$10,000 has been spent. We are now asked to vote \$5,000 for 1945. Your Excellency has seen that stelling. It looked like a wonderful feat of engineering. I have been there on several occasions and it seemed to me to be dangerous to traffic. One cannot even drive a car on the stelling properly, and with people coming and going it becomes dangerous. To talk about enlargement of that stelling is definitely wrong. The word should be re-enlargement because it was enlarged under five years ago.

Mr. GORING: I may assure the hon. Member that I feel very guilty about the Morawhanna stelling, and I must apologize to him because I had promised to do it this year, but owing to pressure of work we have not got around to that stelling. We intend to enlarge it and, if possible, put a shed.

With regard to the Berbice stelling I find that it was built with Berbice greenheart by a Berbice contractor, and it ought to be good. (laughter).

Mr. JACOB: It is not; it is far too small. We are burdened with these annuities, and I think the Department has been burdened further with faulty purchases from the time Government has taken over these services. I say nothing more.

PUBLIC WORKS—ANNUALLY
RECURRENT

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. the Seventh Nominated Member (Mr. Roth) asked me to recommit Head XLV—Public Works—Annually Recurrent. I think we are justified in doing so. It is on page 76, item 7—Historic Sites, Ancient Buildings and Landmarks, \$800. The hon. Member is, I think, the Chairman of the Historic Landmarks Committee who have a large list of places which they consider worth restoring. I find on the file that particular reference is made to Fort Zeelandia

in the Essequibo. A certain amount of money has been spent there, and I can assure Members that the work has been very well done. The Public Works Department has put up what it considers a complete estimate for restoring the site and maintaining it. An estimate of \$3,200 was sent to Government and the Director of Public Works was authorized to put that figure on the estimates. For some reason which I do not understand he has not done so at all.

Item 7 is recurrent expenditure and we do not want to spend that amount every year, but as a piece of capital expenditure and an extraordinary item perhaps the Council will be prepared to consider whether it is worth while.

Mr. ROTH: Actually it is an extraordinary expenditure. The position is that there is a certain amount of erosion, and the engineers have come to the conclusion that if a stone apron was put down the Fort would last many years more, but the longer it is delayed the more it will cost. As you know, sir, and as Members who have travelled up the Essequibo river know, Fort Zeelandia is one of the finest relics we have of the Dutch occupation, and it would be a pity to allow it to disappear altogether. A sum of \$3,200 is required to put it in a safe condition.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am under the impression that it was to be verified in the Draft Estimates, but I am afraid that the Public Works Department is so overburdened at the moment that we thought it advisable to put it in. It is under consideration, but I do not think it will be possible even to attempt it.

The CHAIRMAN: I did see something on the file about the difficulty in procuring stone. The question is whether it is worth putting the item in this year. We can put it in so as to keep it alive.

Mr. WIGHT: It is a question of stone supply for which there is an inordinate demand on the West Coast sea defences.

Mr. LEE: I would suggest that the money be voted, and if stone can be obtained the work could be done.

The CHAIRMAN: May I put it under "Extraordinary" without any money attached? That would keep it alive.

Mr. WIGHT: I suggest that the matter might be forwarded to the Director of Public Works. We may be able to work it under block vote if we can get stone.

The CHAIRMAN: We can put it on the estimate under its name without any particular sum attached. In that way it would not die a natural death,—or would Members like to press for the actual sum to be put in?

Mr. ROTH: I accept that.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that under Public Works—Extraordinary item 3-General Works, \$57,100 be increased to \$57,200, and that in Appendix F the following item be

inserted: "Production Works at Fort Zeelandia, Fort Island—\$100."

Agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: We have come to the end of the Estimates except for two small items under "Education" which we will consider in Executive Council on Saturday, and which will only take a few minutes at our next meeting in Council. What I propose to do is to adjourn the Council until 2 o'clock on Wednesday when we can have a debate on the resolution for the approval of the Estimates. Members can then debate the whole question of the Estimates and the Budget as much as they like, for which they can have the rest of the week.

Mr. WOOLFORD: Before the Council adjourns, sir, will you allow me, on behalf of Members, to wish you a very happy Christmas?

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you very much. It will be a very busy one, I am afraid. Again I wish to thank Members for having attended this evening. I think we have gone ahead rather expeditiously.

The Council resumed and adjourned until Wednesday, 27th December, at 2 p.m.