

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 12th April, 1945.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon 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. H. N. Critchlow, (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice)

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

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, 6th April, 1945, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS.

### MR. CRITCHLOW WELCOMED BACK

The PRESIDENT: In opening this session I should just like to welcome back from England the hon. the Fifth Nominated Member. The hon. Member, I have every reason to believe had an opportunity in London not only of attending conferences but also of advancing some of the principal claims of this Colony and I am sure we should be grateful to him. We are very glad to see him back in good health in spite of his braving the coldest winter for some years in Britain. I should at the same time express the appreciation of Government and Council for the services of Mr. A. A. Thorne during this period of absence of the Fifth Nominated Member.

### PROHIBITION TO LAND IN TRINIDAD.

I should perhaps refer to an incident which has probably come to the notice of all of you when the hon. Member found himself most inconveniently faced with a prohibition to land in Trinidad. I am sure Members will be at one with me in saying that a Member of this Council, not to say a Member of the Executive Council of the Colony, should be subjected to such a proceeding is utterly inexcusable and deserving of the most spirited protest—not only from consideration of the individual but of this Council and of this Colony. I immediately pursued the matter as soon as I heard of it *vis-a-vis* the Governor of Trinidad personally, and I have received a very handsome expression of regret and apology, which we may take as not only addressed to the hon. Member but also to this Council and this Colony.

## AN OFFICIAL APOLOGY,

Sir Bede Clifford writes as follows:—

"I have learnt with great regret that "when he passed through recently on a "steamer coming from the United Kingdom on his way home to British Guiana "the Honourable Mr. Hubert Critchlow "was first refused permission to land "here."

After stating that he has called for a full report as to the incident, His Excellency continues:

"I would ask you to convey to Mr. Critchlow personally my very sincere "regret that he should have suffered this "vexatious treatment and the inconvenience of delay in landing from the ship. "I should like him to understand that this "is not only an official apology but the "expression of my own personal feeling."

The Governor adds that he would have been glad to see him himself. I am sure Members will feel that this is a very handsome *amende*, and that both the hon. Member and ourselves will take it in the spirit in which it is clearly meant.

## RECONSTRUCTION OF BISHOPS' HIGH SCHOOL.

With regard to the business before us today, I understand that at the last meeting of the Council the Deputy President undertook to give opportunity for the motion standing in the name of the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member, and I should be glad to carry that out. Government has, however, been pressed to try and put through the motion granting funds, largely Development and Welfare funds, for the reconstruction of Bishops' High School, and I have proposed to the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member that we should take that early, in the expectation that it should not take us very long. Further, the Chairman of the Public Works Advisory Committee is unable to attend today, and it is quite essential that he personally should have an opportunity

of speaking on the subject raised by the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member. The hon. Member wishes that we should await the return of the Chairman before we take his motion, so we will follow the Order of the Day as in the paper.

## RE-PLANNING OF BURNT AREA.

With regard to other forthcoming Bills, the Bill for the re-planning of the devastated area of Georgetown is, I think, practically ready with the plans attached and in spite of these difficulties of printing I hope we can get it early into Members' hands. I should like to inform Members that I took an opportunity last Tuesday morning of having a discussion with the President and Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce, with the Zoning Committee present and representatives of firms who are principally affected. I did so in order to dispose of any question that persons and interests concerned were not being and would not be fully consulted. On reading the minute of the Town Planning and the minutes of the Zoning Committee, it was quite clear that that was being done. The Town Planner had recorded his discussions with the principals of firms, and in fact had drawn up no less than three alternative plans, one after the other, in order to meet points raised.

The next step, of course, was the Zoning Committee to pursue the discussions in detail as soon as the actual plans were ready. These were ready on Sunday last. I assured the officers of the Chambers of Commerce that though the Bill would be brought before the Legislative Council in a specific and concrete form in order to create the machinery necessary and would refer to the plans, the details of the latter were of course subject to the fullest review and discussions, and Government would most certainly not push the matter through to statutory finality until everybody had the fullest opportunity in this

Council, and outside it, to consider any matter of detail. The immediate present action is for the Zoning Committee to pursue these detailed discussions.

**LONG-TERM LOAN OF \$5,000,000**

The COLONIAL TREASURER communicated the following Messages:—

MESSAGE No. 33.

Honourable Members of Legislative Council.

I have the honour to inform the Council that, on the recommendation of this Government, the Secretary of State has approved of a long-term public loan being raised locally in order to defray expenditure on public works and other public services which can appropriately be met from loan funds as well as to allow local investors an opportunity of investing their capital and savings in a desirable local Government security.

2. The loans raised locally during the last 25 years comprise the Church Endowment Loan of \$639,410 raised on 1st January, 1921, the \$2,000,000 loan raised in 1922/23 and three small loans totalling \$583,250 raised between 1926 and 1929, and there can be little doubt that local investors would welcome at the present time a Government loan offering a reasonable rate of interest. Such a loan should attract both the small investor as well as the large local investing companies who, for lack of opportunity to invest locally, have been forced to make investments abroad.

3. It is proposed to apply the proceeds of the new loan to the following purposes:—

- (a) To provide for such portion of the expenditure incurred on services (civil and military) in connection with the War as may be approved by the Secretary of State and the Legislative Council, being charged against loan funds.
- (b) To defray expenditure on such other public services as may be approved from time to time by the Secretary of State and the Legislative Council; and
- (c) To provide for the redemption prior to maturity of the outstanding 4% Bonds of the 16th and 18th issues raised under Ordinance 6 of 1916, which originally formed a part of the \$2,000,000 loan raised in 1922/23 mentioned in paragraph 2 above.

4. With regard to (a) the total War Expenditure to 31st December, 1944 (including all items provided for under the Colonial Emergency Measures, Subsidization and Temporary War Bonus votes) totalled approximately \$6,000,000 while expenditure on these services in the current year is estimated to amount to not less than \$2,500,000. It is reasonable and appropriate that a portion of this expenditure which has so far fallen wholly on general revenue should be met by borrowing with the object of spreading part of the burden over a long period.

5. With regard to (b) it is now clear that the Colony will have to embark on a considerable programme of capital expenditure in addition to that which can be met either wholly or partly by financial assistance from His Majesty's Exchequer under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. This applies particularly to the construction of new public buildings, reconstruction of roads, etc.

6. In connection with (c) reference is invited to my Message No. 34 dated 9th April, 1945.

7. Reference is also invited to my Message No. 35 dated 9th April, 1945, on the subject of the redemption of the Church Endowment Bonds and to the proposal accepted by the Churches concerned to take Government Bonds in lieu of cash on redemption of the Church Endowment Bonds.

8. The Council is accordingly invited to approve of a 3½% loan, not exceeding \$5,000,000, being raised locally under the provisions of the General Local Loan Ordinance No. 25 of 1941, for a period of 40 years, with the right of redemption after the expiration of 30 years from the date of issue, and of the introduction of the necessary enabling legislation.

GORDON LETHEM,  
Governor.

Government House,  
British Guiana,  
9th April, 1945.

REDEMPTION OF BONDS.

MESSAGE No. 34.

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council:

I have the honour to inform the Council that it has been decided to

exercise the option of redeeming the outstanding bonds of the 16th and 18th loan issues raised under Ordinance 6 of 1916. These issues which total \$2,000,000 were originally 6% bonds, the 16th issue of \$1,161,850 having been raised on 1st January, 1922, and the 18th issue of \$838,150 on 1st January, 1923. \$644,500 of the 16th issue and \$461,650 of the 18th issue were redeemed on 1st January, 1934, and the remaining balance of \$893,850 converted into 4% bonds redeemable in 1972/73 with the right of earlier redemption at the option of Government after 10 years from the date of conversion.

2. By Government Notice No. 1569 published in the *Official Gazette* of the 16th of December, 1944, the Bondholders have been notified that the Bonds will be redeemed on 1st January, 1946.

3. The Sinking Fund provided for the redemption of the two issues is expected to have a cash realisable value of approximately \$200,000 on 1st January, 1946, and it is proposed to meet the balance required to complete the redemption from the proceeds of the new  $3\frac{1}{2}$ % loan to be raised under the proposals set out in my Message No. 33 of 9th April, 1945. It is further proposed to make an offer to the Bondholders to convert their holdings of 4% bonds into  $3\frac{1}{2}$ % bonds of the new loan. On the assumption, therefore, that all of the outstanding 4% Bonds are so converted, the operation would result in the estimated amount of \$200,000 being available in the Sinking Fund as a net accretion to the new 3% loan.

4. I accordingly invite the Council to approve of the proposals set out herein.

GORDON LETHEM,  
Governor.

Government House,  
British Guiana,  
9th April, 1945.

ISSUE OF NEW GOVERNMENT  
BONDS TO CHURCHES.

MESSAGE No. 35.

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council:

I desire at this session to bring to the notice of the Council that the Church Endowment Bonds issued under the provisions of the Churches (Financial Assistance) Ordinance, Chapter 228, are due to mature on the 1st January, 1946.

2. The Endowment Bonds in question bear interest at the rate of 5% per annum, the total issue of \$639,410 having been distributed between the Churches and Religious Denominations concerned in the following proportions:—

To the Church of England .....	\$350,350
„ „ Church of Scotland.....	\$ 87,660
„ „ Church of Rome .....	\$113,210
„ „ Wesleyan Missionary Society .....	\$ 75,000
„ „ Moravian Church .....	\$ 6,380
„ „ Lutheran Church .....	\$ 3,620
„ „ Salvation Army .....	\$ 3,190

3. The bonds are redeemable from a Sinking Fund which is being accumulated by means of an Annual Contribution of \$15,397. The estimated market value of the investments of this fund at 31st December, 1944, was \$716,000, and it is expected that the fund will reach approximately \$760,000 by 1st January, 1946, an excess of approximately \$120,000 on the sum required for redemption of the bonds. It is with particular reference to the disposal to be made of this surplus on the Sinking Fund that this Message is being addressed to the Council.

4. As Members of the Council may be aware, the basis of the Churches (Financial Assistance) Ordinance is the Report of the Committee of the Combined Court (No. 25 of 1919) dated 11th April, 1919, and the Court's Resolution of 9th July, 1920, adopting that Report with certain modifications.

5. It emerges from a perusal of this Report that it was a recommendation of the Committee that "the annual contribution necessary to create such a fund"—\$15,397—shall be deducted from the "Clergy List grants now paid"—a recommendation which was given full effect. It follows, therefore, that the Endowment Fund was created out of monies which, but for the settlement, would have been payable to the Churches and that the cost of establishing the sinking fund was not an independent charge on general revenue.

6. It has been represented to Government that the approaching maturity of these 5% bonds is a matter of the gravest concern to the Churches, all of whom will stand to suffer a loss in annual income on maturity of the bonds.

7. It is accordingly recommended for approval of the Council with the prior concurrence of the Secretary of State for the Colonies that, as an additional measure of assistance, legislation be enacted to provide that the surplus

accruing on the sinking fund shall be paid to the Bondholders in proportion to the bonds held by each, a benefit which will allow of each of the Churches and Denominations receiving an estimated addition of about 20% on the individual amounts set out in paragraph 2 above.

8. The Church authorities have also represented to Government that they are most anxious that the funds accruing to them on redemption of the bonds should remain invested in a local Government security, and Government considers it is very desirable to meet their wishes in this respect, having regard to the original object of the scheme which was to disestablish the Churches and, at the same time, to create a permanent endowment fund as the foundation of their financial structure.

9. With this object in view it is proposed to issue to the Churches (and all of the Church Authorities concerned have agreed to accept) new Government Bonds equivalent to the total amount realized by the Sinking Fund provided for the redemption of the Church Endowment Bonds. As explained in paragraph 3 above, this is expected to total \$760,000. The bonds to be issued to form part of the loan to be raised at 3½% on 1st January, 1946, under the proposals conveyed in Message No 33 of the 9th of April, 1945.

10. I trust that the recommendations set out in this Message will commend themselves to Honourable Members, and I invite the Council to approve of the proposals and of the introduction of the necessary enabling legislation to give effect thereto.

GORDON LETHEM,  
Governor.

Government House British Guiana  
9th April 1945.

#### GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

##### LONG-TERM LOAN OF \$5,000,000.

The COLONIAL TREASURER gave notice of the following motions:—

That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 33 dated 9th April, 1945, this Council approves of a loan of \$5,000,000 being raised in the Colony under the provisions of the General Loan Ordinance No. 25 of 1941 such loan to bear interest at the rate of 3½% per annum and to have a currency of 40 years, but with the right of redemption after the expiration of 30 years from

date of issue, being reserved, and of the introduction of the necessary enabling legislation.

#### CONVERSION OF BONDS.

That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 34 dated 9th April, 1945, this Council approves of an offer being made to the holders of 4% bonds of the 16th and 18th issues under Loan Ordinance No. 6 of 1916 to convert their holdings into 3½% bonds of the proposed new local loan.

#### ISSUE OF NEW GOVERNMENT BONDS TO CHURCHES.

That, with reference to His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 35 dated 9th April, 1945, this Council approves of the proposals as set out therein providing for the surrender to the Churches concerned of the surplus on the sinking fund established for the repayment of the Church Endowment Bonds issued under the Churches (Financial Assistance) Ordinance, Chapter 228, new Government Bonds to be issued to the holders thereof on redemption in lieu of cash, and of the introduction of the necessary enabling legislation.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The COLONIAL TREASURER gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bills:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make provision for raising in the Colony a loan not exceeding five million dollars."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to vary the manner of redeeming the bonds issued under the Churches (Financial Assistance) Ordinance; to authorise the issue of debentures to certain religious Bodies; and for matters connected therewith."

#### ORDER OF THE DAY.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL, 1945.

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to appropriate the supplies granted in the current session of the Legislative Council."

The COLONIAL TREASURER: This Bill, as Members are aware, is the formal act of the Legislature in

recording its sanction of the appropriation from the annual revenue and other resources of the Colony, of supplies which have been passed in the Estimates for the year and not provided for by statutory law. The total amount involved is \$11,264,096, and the items are listed in the Schedule. I formally move that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

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

The Council resumed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I ask leave of the Council to move the third reading of the Bill which is not contentious.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the third time and passed.

#### FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1945.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the following Bill be read the first time:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Firearms Ordinance, 1940, by providing for the disposal of firearms and ammunition voluntarily surrendered to the Police Force."

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

#### IMPROVEMENTS IN CHRISTIANBURG-- WISMAR DISTRICT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move:—

That, with reference to Governor's Message No. 31 of the 27th of March, 1945, this Council approves of the cost of the works being met from public funds and undertakes to provide the sum required on supplementary estimate for the current year.

The motion refers to the proposal that a sum of \$26,000 should be provided on supplementary estimate in order to meet the cost of improvements in the drainage and living conditions of the Christianburg--Wismar Country District. The Message deals with the matter in some detail, and all that is necessary for me to do is to remind hon. Members that it is rather an important place. It stands opposite the bauxite territory and therefore the contrast which now appears of the very unsatisfactory conditions on the west side of the river compared with those on the other side is most noticeable. The Central Board of Health has been for a long time pressing Government to have something done about it, and Members will remember that an Ordinance was passed in 1942 which provided for the partitioning of this particular area. In order to take full advantage of the work of partitioning it is necessary that a considerable amount of drainage works and realignment of roads and re-allotment of lots should take place. The cost is far and away above the capacity of the Local Authority to meet, and we think that a motion that public funds should provide the cost will commend itself to Members of this Council.

Details of the cost are shown in paragraph 4 of the Message. They include the construction of reinforced concrete sluices, bridges and culverts to control the creek water, \$18,300; making small earth roads in accordance with the Partition Officer's report, \$2,524; the payment of compensation to owners of houses on the Government reserves, \$2,600; and contingencies, \$2,342, making a total of \$25,766. That

is the capital cost intended to be provided as a grant from public funds, but the Local Authority will meet the annual cost of maintenance, which is estimated at \$555. If Council approves of the motion I shall put the amount on supplementary estimate at an early date. I hope the motion will commend itself to the Council.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.  
Motion carried.

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF BISHOPS' HIGH SCHOOL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I beg to move:—

That, with reference to Governor's Message No. 32 dated the 29th of March, 1945, this Council approves of the revised proposals regarding the acquisition, rebuilding, and equipping of the Bishops' High School for Girls at a total cost \$127,436 as set out in that Message, and undertakes to vote the necessary funds as required from time to time.

I think Members will agree that the financial commitments have been clearly set out in Your Excellency's Message, but I think further explanation to Members is desirable on the structure of the new building and the reason for the additional cost. It will be seen that there will be an additional cost to this Government of some \$32,615. The cost of obtaining the land remains constant, but in the three years which have elapsed since the proposal was first considered, the cost of building material has increased, and the final plans which have now been approved by the Comptroller for Development and Welfare, the Board of Governors, and the Director of Public Works, provide for certain improvements on the original design which will cost a little more, particularly in connection with the labora-

tory and other facilities for specialist training.

The new building will be "L" shaped and of three storeys, which will provide the best possible ventilation under a new system which has received approval where it has been installed elsewhere. Fresh air will be taken in at the bottom of the rooms and the exhausted air will go out at the top. That, in simple language, is the new system. There will be continuous lighting by glass all along the top of the class rooms. There will be three staircases provided, so that there will be ample egress from the building if a fire should take place at any point. The entrance hall will provide a porch so that motor cars and visitors who will go into the main entrance from Murray Street will be able to drive under the porch in case of rain, which will be a great convenience as compared with the present very unattractive and difficult entrance to the school. The existing Parry Hall will be part of the new building and will be moved. This work will be undertaken tomorrow as soon as the school breaks up, and it is hoped that the removal of the Parry Hall will be completed during the holiday.

The present building houses 208 girls; the new building will accommodate 400, with 14 standard class-rooms and eight specialist rooms. The class-rooms will be 24 x 24 ft. each, and will accommodate 30 pupils, giving 20 square feet to each pupil. I have the plans here and also a mass of documents. If Members would like to know more about the new building I would be glad to show them. I can also give them an accurate account of the reason for the delay which is, briefly, that the plans were always being sent backwards and forwards between this country and Barbados before final agreement could be reached. That agreement has now been reached by

every possible authority concerned with the school. They are all very pleased with the new plans. I am confident that the new school will be a credit to the Colony. The Governing Body, the staff, and the parents have been suffering this delay in the building of a new school with a very great degree of patience. The existing building is really tumbling down. I do ask hon. Members to pass this motion today and approve of the amount involved. I formally move the motion.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Mr. JACOB: I would like to take this opportunity to say that I think the public looks forward with great interest to the construction of the new building, because it will accommodate double the number of pupils in the existing building. As a matter of fact I know that a large number of pupils are desirous of finding accommodation at the Bishops' High School, and I think Government should expedite as much as possible the construction of the new building. I anticipate that Government will have to provide accommodation for another 200 pupils within a very short time, and it is to be hoped that when the new building is constructed additions could be made to it at very little expense and inconvenience, and maybe without much structural alteration.

A good many people, particularly the parents of pupils at B.H.S., are most anxious to see that provision is made, but I think the difficulty is that Regulations have not yet been prepared for the granting of a separate Guiana Scholarship for girls. I think the time is overdue when boys and girls should be treated alike. In my opinion girls should have preferential treatment, and I am hoping that, as has been promised during the last annual session, provision will be made on supplementary estimate this year for a scholarship for girls, so that if any of the girls who are taking the Higher School Certificate examination this

year come up to scholarship standard provision would be made for them to be awarded scholarships next year. I think the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Education will support me in that plea because the Education Committee recommended early in 1944 that money should be voted on the 1945 Estimates for an additional scholarship for girls, but since it was not found possible to do it then I can see no difficulty in doing it now, even at the annual session this year, so that next year the money would be available.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The PRESIDENT: I understood from the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, that he would prefer not to take his motion until the Chairman of the Public Works Advisory Committee is here. I understand that that is still his wish. We can therefore, with the agreement of Members, ask the Attorney-General to proceed with the other stages of the Firearms Bill. I presume that will need a suspension of the Standing Orders.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No, sir.

#### FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1945.

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Firearms Ordinance, 1940, by providing for the disposal of firearms and ammunition voluntarily surrendered to the Police Force."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The reason for the Bill is that the Police Force of the Colony have in their possession a considerable number of firearms which have come into their possession in various ways. The Firearms Ordinance provides what is to happen to firearms which come into the hands of the Police by Order of a competent Court or by seizure, but the firearms I am talking about have all come into the possession of the Police by means other than those two, and there



is no provision in the law for their disposal. Unless this Council makes some provision they will keep piling up from year to year, and we shall not know what to do with them. This Bill asks that the Governor in Council be permitted to make Regulations to deal with them. The reason why it is suggested that it should be done that way is that firearms differ so greatly among themselves. A great number of them are curious, ancient, antique, old weapons for which the original owners do not want to pay any more licence fees. The most dangerous ones in firing it is proposed to destroy. On the other hand some of them are quite useful and, therefore, we should make no fixed provision in this Bill as to how we should get rid of them. All we are asking is that the Governor in Council be empowered to deal with them as they deem fit—the holding of private or public auction sales, or by some other means at their disposal. I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. WOOLFORD seconded.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: I would just like to ask the hon. the Attorney-General who said about a sale at public auction, if it can be sold by a licensed auctioneer. The Ordinance prohibits a sale of that description through a licensed auctioneer. As a matter of fact, I had considerable trouble over a similar matter. I think it is the best method of getting a price, but I had to withdraw from a sale a very valuable firearm. I do not see how you can call for tenders. I would like the hon. the Attorney-General to explain that when he says "sale at public auction."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. Member is quite correct. It was a slip of the tongue. I meant by tender so as to get the highest price possible. I thank the hon. Member for reminding me.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I think one of the difficulties in the Firearms Ordinance is that no provision has been

made for anyone, who may not wish to use his gun immediately, to leave his gun in police custody for a year or two and then on obtaining a licence secure its release. I anticipate I may be told that some arrangement can be made with a registered licensed dealer in firearms. Most of the people who use firearms may not be able to get in touch with a licensed dealer in firearms. Some provision should be made in the principal Ordinance whereby the Police can exact a fee for keeping one's gun during such period that one does not desire to have a licence. At any future time that he desires to have a gun licence he can go and take delivery from the Police. Most of the guns surrendered to the Police, the owners had no immediate use for them but probably they might have use for them a year or two later. I think it is very hard on such persons that the Ordinance should lack such a provision.

Mr. JACOB: I think there is something more in this matter. According to the present law you are not allowed to keep a gun at all except you have it licensed and registered. Some people have found it so difficult to obtain ammunition that they cannot do otherwise than leave their guns at the Police Station. I do not call that "voluntary surrender;" they are compelled by law to do so. In some cases some people are not given a licence—they are prevented from taking out a licence by some regulation—and I think Government ought to take care; maybe it is for security reasons at the present time and it is well to have these guns locked up at some particular place and that most of these firearms are not destroyed. I do not think it is necessary. I think the time is not far distant when it will be unnecessary to have all these guns locked up. I was told that firearms have been destroyed recently at a particular Police Station; a hole was dug and they were buried therein. I do not know if it is true but I was told so. This Bill, it would appear, is in respect of action already taken. Government is now trying to

get authority for what had been done. I was told that serviceable guns which people had surrendered at a Police Station on the West Coast, Demerara, were cut up and buried on the grounds of the Station. Whether that is true or not I do not know. I think it is well for Government to know that.

I think these guns are valuable. They may not be to some people, but to those who have cause to go into the interior they are valuable. A gun is a means of protection in addition to being valuable to them. I suggest that care should be taken not to destroy serviceable firearms. Certain regulations should be made to return them to their owners when it is possible for them to get ammunition. If the original owner is unable to use a gun, not being a fit person, then it should be given to some other person who can have the use of a firearm.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. Member for Western Berbice suggests that the Police should be compelled by means of Regulations or a change in the Ordinance to take charge of firearms handed in to them by members of the public on payment of a small fee. That is an obligation put on the Police in all tropical countries including this one,—to keep a firearm himself. Proper attention, oiling and cleaning are required and that takes time and labour, and the Police at the present moment are complaining of being short-handed. We want no more duty thrown on the Police which will take time and labour in its performance. Another objection is, that the holder of such weapon is responsible for its safe custody, and it is not intended that the Police should be saddled with such responsibility. If you agree to that suggestion in the case of a rifle, where is it going to end? Why not take my motor car into Police custody if I go on leave? Why not take my typewriter if I do not want the immediate use of it? It is the thin edge of the wedge.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: One can

leave his typewriter or his motor car on his premises but he cannot do so with firearms.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I cannot follow why you cannot leave your rifle in the house.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: You must have a licence for it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Naturally. I am afraid I cannot accept responsibility for the Police taking care of these rifles for people. As regards the remarks of the hon. Member for North-Western District, he said he knew of an instance where firearms had been already destroyed and buried. As far as I am concerned, that may or may not be so. I have no knowledge of that, and certainly it is not that incident which has brought this matter forward to be dealt with. Actually the Commissioner of Police asked for a Board to be appointed to examine these guns. That is how the whole matter came up.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

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

The Council resumed.

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

Mr. WOOLFORD seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the third time and passed.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INQUIRY

The PRESIDENT: We have no other business on the Order of the Day, unless the hon. the Sixth Nominated

Member cares to have his motion considered. Does the hon. Member agree to our taking his motion?

Mr. EDUN: I just want to point out that this motion was tabled a considerable length of time. I am very much concerned about the second resolution of the motion—the appointment of a Vigilance Committee—and I want the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Department to be here. Therefore, I say I cannot take it now.

The PRESIDENT: I have suggested to the hon. Treasurer that we might take the motions mentioned in the First Schedule, but he has explained to me that the two motions and the Bills go together and they are of such financial importance that Members should have at least one week's notice before we take those motions. Is there any other business Members care to speak about?

MR. CRITCHLOW THANKS GOVERNMENT

Mr. CRITCHLOW: I must thank the Government sincerely for the assistance it gave me through its letter of introduction. Everywhere I went priority passage was afforded me and I was well attended to. Among the matters discussed at the Conference were matters affecting labour, and the improvement of conditions in the Colonies was discussed with Members of Parliament of the Conservative and other Parties who took a keen interest in the discussion. I was invited to speak at several places on the conditions in our Colony. Even Sugar was touched on in the discussions. The only unfortunate incident was at Trinidad where the Immigration Officer told me I was not allowed to land. I showed him the letter this Government had given me, and I was surprised when he said to me after reading it "This letter cannot help you." He then asked me if I would protest against the treatment meted out to me, and I said "Certainly; I would like someone to take the letter to the Colonial Secretary and see if I can be allowed to land." That

was done and I was told that the Government would send a reply in the afternoon, but before mid-day I got a reply. I considered it an insult to this Government. I had tried to live up to the expectations of the letter given me by this Government and was very glad when the reply came that I could land. I sincerely thank Your Excellency for the assistance given me on my mission abroad.

The PRESIDENT: We are very grateful to the hon. Member for the information he has given us.

#### THE "ARGOSY" AND THE TOWN PLANNING SCHEME

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: In Your Excellency's opening remarks you referred to the Town Planning Scheme. I understood you to say definitely that those who had suffered in the fire were asked to attend a meeting. I want to make it perfectly clear that as Chairman of the Argosy Company I knew nothing about it. I do not belong to the Chamber of Commerce and I have no use for it. This is the first intimation I have of the meeting. I want you to understand, sir, that as an individual you have done everything you can to assist the Argosy Company personally, but as regards the Town Planning Scheme I know nothing about it. I heard nothing about it. I was treated with the courtesy of meeting the Town Planner on one occasion privately, and he showed me several plans he had to complete. I happened to have been out of town for four or five days after that and so I knew nothing more. I would like to know as regards this meeting whether the *Argosy* was represented because the *Argosy* were the biggest losers in that fire.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I think the Government is the biggest loser.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: The Government is wealthy. I am not such a wealthy man to afford the loss of the good deal of my capital that has

gone. Can you tell me whether a representative of the *Argosy* was at that meeting?

The PRESIDENT: No representative of the *Argosy* was there. I may explain that my own action in this matter was purely on the spur of the moment. I had spoken with the Mayor on the previous night. I telephoned the President of the Chamber of Commerce suggesting to him to come to my office with his Vice-President. He then asked me later in the morning if he could bring along certain representatives of burnt-out firms and I said "Yes." I am afraid I did not go into the details as to who they were. I left that entirely to him. I am sorry no representative of the *Argosy* should have been at the meeting. He certainly would have been there if it had been brought to my notice.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: I hope it is understood that I am not attributing anything to your method of dealing with the matter. I only want to know about it. I know what Your Excellency has done for which I publicly thank

you. Perhaps you may be able to tell me whether I can see you and find out what is planned.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I suggest that the hon. Member ask the Hon. C. V. Wight.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: My relatives do not come into my business. I allow them to carry on in their own way, and I carry on in my own way.

The PRESIDENT: I have put the immediate responsibility on the hon. Member for Western Essequibo as Chairman of the Zoning Committee to consult everyone concerned, and I hope he will realise that the hon. Member is also concerned. •

I do not think it is any use our meeting tomorrow. I do not anticipate the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to be out in time. I therefore adjourn Council to next Thursday provisionally at 2 p.m.

The Council adjourned until 2 p.m. on Thursday, 13th April, 1945.