

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 12th December, 1935.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR GEOFFREY A. S. NORTHCOTE, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, (Mr. E. J. Waddington, C.M.G., O.B.E.)

The Hon. the Attorney-General, (Mr. Hector Josephs, K.C.)

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

Major the Hon. W. Bain Gray, C.B.E., Director of Education.

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

The Hon. E. F. McDavid, M.B.E., Colonial Treasurer.

The Hon. J. Mullin, O.B.E. Commissioner of Lands and Mines.

The Hon. F. J. Seaford (Georgetown North).

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

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

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

The Hon. J. A. Henderson, Surgeon-General.

The Hon. M. B. Laing, District Commissioner, East Coast Demerara District.

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

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

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

The Hon. A. R. Crum Ewing (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. A. G. King (Demerara River).

The Hon. S. H. Seymour (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. J. W. Jackson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 11th December, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

CULTIVATION OF BANANAS.

The Council resumed consideration of the following motion:—

WHEREAS there exists in this Colony, in view of its economic condition, an urgent need for the development of new industries;

And whereas there exists a remunerative and steadily increasing demand in the world's markets for bananas;

And whereas it has now been established that bananas can be produced commercially in the various river districts in particular of this Colony;

And whereas the recently organized Association known as the British Guiana Banana Producers' Association has successfully aroused interest among local farmers in the production of bananas for export;

And whereas this Council is of the opinion that it is in the interest of the Colony that a serious effort should now be made for the proper establishment of a Banana Industry;

Be it Resolved.—That His Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to provide in the estimate of expenditure for 1936 a sum of money to meet expenditure

(a) for the experimental cultivation of selected plots in each of the counties of the Colony;

(b) for assistance for a period of 3 years to the Association recently formed to deal in the export trade of bananas on a co-operative basis with such safeguards to Government as may be deemed necessary; and

Be it further Resolved.—That early steps be taken by Government to obtain the necessary sanction from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies to give effect to this proposal.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Sir, when the Council adjourned yesterday I was dealing with

the Report of the Imperial Economic Committee on the marketing and preparing for market of foodstuffs produced in the overseas parts of the Empire. I propose this morning to deal principally with the motion before the Council, but before I do so I wish to make reference to the Report of the Small Farmers' Committee which sat in 1931, and to invite Your Excellency's attention to paragraph 26 which deals with bananas. I do not think it is necessary to quote the paragraph because Members are familiar with it. Within the last four or five years I think it can truly be said that interest in the banana industry has revived in this Colony. The Press took the matter up and articles appeared in "The Daily Argosy" from time to time advocating the development of the industry, and I think it can also be said that it was as the result of those articles that the British Guiana Producers' Association saw the light of day. Early this year I endeavoured to obtain information from Government as to what was being done for the development of this industry. I tabled several questions on the subject, but the replies were disappointing as I expected a little more information than was given to me. I can well appreciate the wisdom of Government in not saying too much on the question, especially as the industry has not yet shown any signs of progress, but I considered too little effort was shown by Government in the matter when there was a hue and cry in the country for the introduction of new industries.

Since then a little more progress has been made, and in August a trial shipment was made to England. In certain quarters the opinion was expressed that the shipment should not have been made. Although the shipment was unsatisfactory from a financial point of view, I am satisfied that the experience gained will be helpful not only to Government but also to the industry. We know now definitely that the accommodation offered on the steamer for the shipment was not satisfactory, therefore it would be foolhardy to make any further attempt at shipments by that Line unless the accommodation is improved, and it behoves us to look around and see whether we can make other shipping arrangements. It seems to me that Government's policy is that we must establish shipping facilities before we get the bananas. Bananas cannot be grown overnight; it takes eight

or nine months for the fruit to be ripe for shipment. Efforts should be made to produce bananas as the first step, and as soon as that step is taken the question of shipping facilities will be easily overcome.

On the question of shipping facilities it is interesting to mention that not long ago a cable was received from a shipping broker. I know that Government will not encourage shipment of our produce in foreign bottoms, but that cable shows that we have been able to do something in that direction. The cable asked what quantities can be obtained for shipment fortnightly, starting next winter. The reply was "Will not have sufficient quantity," but the person who sent the reply was so optimistic that by that time Government would do something in the matter, that he altered the reply to "Will not have sufficient quantity until October." There is therefore evidence of the fact that suitable shipping can be obtained, and if that is so the delay in making a start is one that should not be permitted. When we have planted the bananas and know how much we can ship we can then make suitable arrangements. That was the reason why the proposal in 1889 fell to the ground. The person wanted a guarantee from Government that 3,000 acres of bananas would be cultivated before he did anything. That guarantee was not forthcoming and nothing was done. That bears out the point that if we want to establish the industry we have to start to grow bananas, and as soon as we know the quantity of bananas available for export suitable arrangements will be made for shipment.

It is possible to arrange freight at £6 or £7 per ton, and at that figure I think the cultivation and marketing of bananas would be remunerative. I am in a position to state that it would be possible to make arrangements with the Producers' Association in Jamaica for the marketing of our fruit. I have documents in my possession to that effect, and Government is aware of it. Apart from any arrangements that can be made with Jamaica, I am in communication with people in England for the marketing of the fruit, also in the United States, and I think it will be possible to find markets the world over if we only had the fruit. At the present moment no progress can be made

because, when the crucial moment comes and the question is asked how many bunches of bananas can we ship, no one would take the responsibility of answering the question and the whole matter is dropped. We have all the lands for bananas in the river districts. We can get all the land we require in the Demerara River district. Can it be said that those lands are not suitable? I challenge any expert on that point. I know of my own knowledge that bananas can be grown easily in the Demerara River district and that they have been grown there for 25 years. All along the coastlands, too, bananas have been cultivated. We must endeavour to develop our river districts, and we can easily make a start in the Demerara River, which offers facilities for transportation, suitability of soil and good drainage.

I sincerely hope that the trial shipment that was made on the "Ingoma" has not been taken by Government as an indication of the possibilities of this industry. I should be very sorry indeed if I am told that that shipment has been taken as an indication of the possibilities. It must be borne in mind that the collection and handling of that shipment was not all that could be desired. Bunches were collected here and there in the Demerara River district, and some came from the West Coast, the West Bank and the East Coast. When I say that the fruit was not carefully selected it should not be taken as a charge against the Department of Agriculture; it was a trial shipment and the Department did the best it could under the circumstances. Some of the bunches were small and some were slightly bruised, and storage accommodation on the steamer could have been better; but even the sellers of the shipment on the other side and the Adviser of the Colonial Office had something good to say about it. Mr. Stockdale says that there was very little external bruising and in that respect the bananas were in a better condition than a consignment of Cavendish bananas from Jamaica. Messrs. Poupart & Co. reported that the bananas all arrived in chilled condition and added:

"owing to the whole of this consignment arriving in a chilled condition it would be unfair for us to give you a report on the quality of the fruit. As a result of this chill the colour of the fruit became ripe, was of a dull russet shade

and when the fruit was exposed to the outside atmosphere for sale, it turned a reddish brown. The whole consignment was very badly damaged by bruising which, it was assumed, was caused during transit. Although this experimental consignment is not encouraging they felt that if the fruit could be carried in a correct condition and handled carefully, there was a good opportunity of its meeting a favourable market in this country."

That brings me to the question of marketing, having disposed of what seems to some people to be difficulties in the way of the economical side of the fruit. It is well known that the consumption of bananas in the United Kingdom is increasing annually. There is also increasing consumption in Canada. The market is there, we can get the ships, and we must now grow the bananas. If the market was not there would the other Colonies be rivalling each other to cultivate the fruit? We know that quite recently several contracts have been made in Trinidad, also in Dominica where they have a Banana Association, and I have heard that quite recently a long term contract has been made in Grenada. I make the latter statement for what it is worth, but I have reason to believe it is true. I venture to say that if this Colony attempts tomorrow to cultivate bananas and the quantity available is made known, we would also be in a position to make contracts for the fruit, and it seems to me that we would be wanting in our duty if we refuse to do something for our peasant farmers. Even in foreign countries efforts are being made to establish a banana industry. In the Dutch East Indies a contract has been made with a firm in Holland for all the bananas available for a certain period, and they are finding no difficulty in marketing. Mauritius has gone even a step further by having several factories manufacturing banana wine. I think I have said sufficient to convince the Council that, so far as the marketing problem is concerned, we can find markets for all the bananas we can grow. It also supports my point that there are remunerative markets for bananas, and that it would be possible for us to make satisfactory arrangements for distribution of the fruit. I should add that it would only be possible to make those arrangements on a guarantee of regular supplies, which should not be too small for the reason that if they are small it would not be possible to make suitable shipping arrangements.

Government is probably aware that in accordance with the terms of the Canada-West Indies Trade Agreement the Canadian National Steamships have provided suitable storage accommodation for the carriage of fruit. Perhaps instead of making a trial shipment to the United Kingdom we should have made it to Canada. At present that accommodation is available and I have gone to the trouble to enquire from the agents here what is the true position. The reply was that the Company provides 10,000 cubic feet of space for the use of shippers, but in order to know exactly how much of the space may be released it is necessary to make bookings well in advance. The rate of freight is 80 cents per 100 lbs. exclusive of loading and discharging cost. I have asked for further information on that point because I intend to pursue this matter until I am satisfied that nothing can be done. I intend to use as much energy as I can spare to bring about a successful banana industry in this country, and that is the reason why I became associated with the Association that has been recently formed.

As regards the request in the motion that a sum of money should be provided for the experimental cultivation of selected plots, I propose with Your Excellency's permission to quote from the Report of the Imperial Economic Committee, which I have found very helpful in procuring information. On page 264, para. 78 in part states:—

"Proposals for experimental cultivation have been made in British Guiana, and at a recent meeting of representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the British Guiana Sugar Planters' Association, and the British Guiana Farmers' Conference it was decided to urge upon the Government the necessity of establishing the cultivation of a number of plots of about 10 acres each, distributed in the various districts over the Colony, for the purpose of carrying out local investigation in the production of different types of bananas. On the plots the growing of the different varieties under varying conditions might be attempted. This would supply a basis for estimating the cost and potentialities of cultivation on a larger scale. It was suggested that these plots should be placed under the control of efficient district agricultural inspectors, directly supervised by the Director of Agriculture. To such experiment we think that financial assistance might be given, such grants to be made by the Executive Commission, up to a maximum of £2,000 a year for two or three years in respect of each Colony, *i.e.*, Trinidad, British Guiana, and, if necessary, British Honduras."

The Committee were so satisfied after

investigation as to consider it necessary to recommend that a sum of money should be provided for experimental cultivation for two or three years. I would not be so foolish to ask Government to provide a sum of £2,000, because the answer would be that Government has no money, but I do urge that with the advice of the Department of Agriculture some money be provided, and I am quite willing to leave the matter at that if Government gives me an assurance that something will be done at once. The request in the motion is to provide a sum of money in the estimate of expenditure for 1936, hence I emphasise that something should be done at once. I have quoted the amount recommended in the report as a guide when the matter is being considered.

The next request is for assistance to the Association that has been recently formed. Before I make that request I propose with permission to quote a few of the objects of the Association, because I believe that if Government is aware of them it would do all it could to encourage the Association. The main objects are to promote, foster and encourage the growing and marketing of bananas by co-operative methods. I wish to emphasise co-operation. We have been hearing a lot in this Council about co-operation and I ask Government to direct the proper officer to lend every possible assistance to this Association in relation to co-operative measures. The project is something new, therefore it is best to obtain advice, especially from Government. Other objects of the Association are to act as agents on a co-operative basis and to enter into contracts. I make reference to these objects in order to show that a step is being made in the right direction to establish the industry, and it is up to Government now to prove its good intentions by lending it all possible assistance. It can truly be said that the Association, without any money, has successfully aroused sufficient interest among the peasant farmers. I attended several meetings in the country districts and on one occasion I was called upon by my constituents to deal with the question. I am not advocating cultivation on the coastlands. If the lands are available there let there be cultivation by all means, but in the initial stages we should start in the river districts. What is the form of

assistance required? Here again I refer to the Report of the Imperial Economic Committee. In para 79 they say:—

“In our main report we dealt with the general question of the organisation of producers for the object of marketing their produce. We also recommend that financial assistance shall be given to encourage the formation and organisation of growers and exporters associations with the Colonies and Protectorates. This applies with special importance in the case of bananas where little organisation has so far been attempted. In the course of our inquiry we have been particularly struck with the difficulties existing at the present time owing to the lack of responsible authorities representing the banana growers. There is no organised method of expressing the views of banana growers in any particular Colony, and in the establishment of a shipping service it would be most important for the shipping line to be able to negotiate with some representative body which was able to guarantee regularity and adequacy of supplies”.

In para 81 they go on to say:—

“We strongly recommend that the Executive Commission, in making grants to such associations, should give special consideration to the possibility of assisting the formation of associations of banana growers and exporters in the various banana exporting Colonies of the Empire. Such grants, we think, might be for a limited number of years to cover part of the expenses of establishment and overhead charges during the initial period. We estimate that the total overhead charges of such organisation would amount to about £2,500 a year to cover secretarial and other clerical expenses. . . . We do not contemplate that more than half of this cost should be borne by the Executive Commission, and we, therefore, recommend that grants not exceeding £1,200 a year might be made to approved organisations of banana growers and exporters in the various Colonies with which we deal.”

I am not going to ask for £1,200 or any particular sum. In the motion I ask for assistance for a period of three years with such safeguards to Government as may be deemed necessary, and I am prepared to abide by that. What I want is not only Government's sympathy but its help. I want tangible help from Government to establish the industry. I think I have established a case that a start should be made to that end. I do not think any comparison can be made between Government's assistance and the possible increase of revenue. If the industry is successfully established, could Government say that a bad bargain has been made? My own view is that revenue earnings would be greater than the mite that is being asked for the establishment of the industry. This is a hard-headed business proposition

and I ask Government to look at it from that point of view. A business Government must spend money to make money. At the same time to give a fair return the money must be judiciously spent. I submit with every confidence that any assistance given for the establishment of the industry will be money well spent and will give a handsome return. If there are going to be any critics of the motion I extend an invitation to them to offer something better and show that they take an interest in the people from whom all of us around this table earn our living. With those arguments I have very much pleasure in moving the motion.

Mr. KING: I feel it a privilege to second the motion because in years to come, when a banana industry has been established, we would be glad to think and the people proud to know that we helped to inaugurate it. There comes a time in the affairs of a Colony, as in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to success and financial independence. At the moment I cannot see anything better for the prosperity and progress of British Guiana than the establishment of a banana industry. It will relieve to a very great extent the terrible unemployment and semi-starvation that exists among a certain type of people who have no future to look forward to. I feel sure that it would help them to become financially independent in years to come. As far as I have been able to understand the establishment of the industry is not so difficult as one is made to believe. I have heard it said that the Panama disease is a terrible barrier to the establishment of the industry here. I believe the disease has existed in every country where the banana industry has been established. Today we are not afraid of diseases. Experts have fought disease in every phase of plant life and I see nothing to be afraid of in Panama disease. Why should we be afraid of it when other countries have fought and combatted it?

I have also heard it said that the lands in the Demerara River can only yield bananas for three or four years. There, again, science can put into the earth what it takes out of it. Science has done so for cane on the technical advice the sugar planter has received from the Agricultural Department. Similarly, it would be possible for the soil to be enriched to

continue the growth of bananas. Even if that could not be done there are 89,000 square miles of country, and if the land in the Demerara River became exhausted for the production of bananas there are other lands on which they could be grown. I view with no fear the terrible things the experts try to make us believe. Experts are liable to err. Some years ago when the Georgetown Football Club decided to erect a swimming bath the question of a suitable water supply arose. I interviewed the Director of Agriculture, Professor Harrison of revered memory, and suggested the use of clarified lamaha water or well water. He was strongly of the opinion that the only water that could be used was well water because, he said, it would be impossible to dispose of the slush from the clarified lamaha water. I accepted his advice and tried to sink a well, but the well was a failure. One-and-a-half years after Mr. Aitken came to the Colony and took charge of the water supply. He worked on the clarification of lamaha water, and when asked about the disposal of the slush he said there would be none left. That was proved to be the case.

If there is any opposition to this scheme—I do not expect that there will be any from the Department of Agriculture—I hope the future will prove the opponents to it to be wrong. I, personally, look forward with every confidence to a banana industry becoming a valuable asset and of great help financially to Government, and a tremendous help to thousands of farmers who find it at present impossible, or nearly so, to earn a living. Let us take advantage of world conditions and try to get a foothold on the markets of the world. Let us at least make an honest effort to establish the industry, and if it proves to be a failure we would have the satisfaction of knowing that we have tried. We owe it as a duty to the inhabitants of the Colony to make a trial, and the small sum of money will be an investment if it is a success or a failure. The Colony is at present in dire need of new industries. The first shipment of bananas was certainly not the success some people thought it was going to be. Unless proper conditions are provided on the ship there would not be a fair test of any shipment.

It is no test to take the first shipment

and say we are satisfied that there is no hope whatever for the peasant farmer so far as the banana industry is concerned. A fairer test would have been to ship the bananas in the way they are shipped from other banana-producing countries, and then we would have had something available to go on. That shipment has not proved one thing or the other. The shipment was bound to be a failure because it did not have proper accommodation. If we can supply bananas I am sure we shall find accommodation. There are people perfectly willing to provide accommodation and until we grow the bananas it is impossible to ship them. It is for this Colony to make an effort and I appeal to Government to give the matter a sympathetic hearing. I feel sure that owing to the present financial depression it would be impossible for the people concerned to do anything on their own. The industry affects the farming classes, who have not the money necessary for the purpose of growing bananas and are appealing to Government, through their representatives, to consider their case and give them a chance to make a living in an industry which they are prepared to carry on. I feel confident that Government will consider this motion very seriously and very earnestly. If that is done I am sure Government will have no cause for regret, but if it proves a failure the people would not be against Government for making a sincere effort to see the industry started.

Mr. JACKSON: I think, sir, the House is in agreement upon the need for establishing new industries where possible, and I do not think Members will oppose any reasonable scheme that has for its object the promotion or the establishment of any industry that will work for the benefit of the Colony. I have listened with a good deal of interest to the remarks of the mover and the seconder of the motion. I am strongly of the opinion that if it is possible for an industry such as the banana industry to be established in this Colony it will make for the benefit of all concerned, but I think the request made to Government is pretty extensive and definite. I do not know whether the mover of the motion would seriously expect Government to adopt his motion as moved and place a sum of money on the Estimate for the coming year to carry out the project. My own idea is that an

amendment in terms like the one I shall read might be acceptable to the House as well as to the mover, and I move "that His Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to consider what assistance Government may afford the Association in support of the project." This amendment would give Government the opportunity of going into the whole question and of determining to what extent assistance might be given and also what Government might undertake in the matter. It will be impossible for Government to come to a conclusion at short notice on the amount that will be required to carry out this project. In view of what the hon. Member has stated with reference to lands in the Demerara River district, I do not think there is any need for the experimental cultivation of selected plots in each of the counties. There are already plots within his knowledge that can produce sufficient bananas if cultivated. I understood him to say that of his own knowledge he knows of such lands. Might he not place his knowledge at the disposal of Government and save the expense of cultivating experimental plots? If my amendment is accepted, it might be the means of producing something definite.

Dr. SINGH: I am supporting the motion, having due regard to the fact that the people on the continent of Europe are growing conscious more and more of the food value of bananas, hence the demand continues to grow. I feel sure that every Member of this House would like to see the finances of this Colony improve, and if we are to encourage the banana industry, which might be a success, in time to come it would automatically benefit our finances. Government should give every assistance in order to carry out the experimental cultivation of bananas on selected plots as proposed by the mover of the motion. Money spent on such an experiment will serve a useful purpose, and I do not think anybody would raise any objection to the amount so spent. If the experiment happens to be a success the Colony as a whole would benefit. The poor farmers would benefit and it would also assist in relieving unemployment. It has often been said in this House that we should not place all our eggs in one basket. We have sugar, rice and copra. Government should now support the cultivation of bananas, and I am sure bananas would be planted on a

large scale for export, which will be of immense benefit to the Colony. There is no doubt that there is already a market for bananas.

Mr. AUSTIN: I should like to second the amendment. The mover and the seconder of the motion have spoken with extreme confidence over this banana proposition in spite of the fact that we have received expert advice that the production and export of bananas cannot be economically worked out unless it is done on a very large scale. I would like to know from the mover and the seconder of the motion if they are prepared to put up any capital in a proposition of this sort. If the people who want Government to contribute to banana experiments are prepared to put their hands in their pockets and put up 50 per cent. of what it is likely to cost perhaps Government will see their way to put up the other half. I have in mind the pine apple industry. The hon. Member for Demerara River perhaps knows a lot about that industry. What has become of it? Is the place functioning at all? That was put up against the advice of the Department of Agriculture. We are now asked to continue the error which we know has been proved expensive in so far as capitalists are concerned in the Amsterdam experiment in the Demerara River. I cannot conceive that the taxpayers of this Colony should bear all the expenses of the banana or any other industry. The hon. Member for Central Demerara speaks historically. Where has he got his knowledge from? The information he has given us is not up to date, and we have to work out our future on present-day knowledge. I am convinced that if any small or large capitalist were asked to put capital into the banana or the pine industry they would not do so, yet they ask this Council to vote money which will have to be written off in the near future. I am in sympathy with the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Jackson. It would get us nearer the thing we wish to get at rather than spend a large sum of money on what most of us know must be a failure financially.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I crave permission at this stage to make a few remarks from a desire to shorten the debate. I would like to move an amendment to the motion which might meet the views of the Coun-

cil. I regret that I cannot accept the amendment of my hon. friend as it would put off for an indefinite period action by Government in the matter. He probably overlooked that the provision I asked for was in respect of 1936, because I wanted early steps to be taken. My amendment is that for the word "provide" the words "consider making provision" be substituted.

Mr. JACOB: I desire most heartily to support the motion and I hope Government will see its way to make an early start with respect to what is asked in it. I am very keenly interested in the agricultural resources of the Colony and I feel that some practical help should be given by Government to an industry of this kind, which is of world-wide repute and considered remunerative in other British Colonies. I cannot agree with the Nominated Member who suggested that it is not necessary to have experimental plots. You must have experimental plots to determine what varieties of bananas are suitable for certain districts and certain areas, and I think the Director of Agriculture will agree with me on that point. At the beginning of cultivation especially you must have experimental plots. I do hope that something will be done to get the people interested in bananas to show their interest in a practical manner.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture): I rise to try to be of some assistance in this matter because, like every Member in this House, I am in agreement with any effort calculated to bring new industries here. I might say at the outset that I am heartily in agreement with the amended motion, and I think Government will accept that. I desire, however, to make a few remarks in connection with the whole idea of a banana industry because I think the mover of the motion did not really make all the facts very clear in regard to the pros and cons. In fact, I was somewhat perplexed in listening to him, because he made so many assertions and gave so many guarantees that I was surprised that up to now a flourishing banana industry had not been built up all these years. But reports, petitions, newspaper articles and personal opinions do not create industries. Economic conditions and all the factors

associated with economics must continue to be the fundamental basis on which industries must stand. This question of a banana industry has been raised in this Council over and over again and in the Colony as a whole. As far back as 1929 Mr. Crane opened a debate on the question which proved to be very lengthy, and in my reply I pointed out one or two facts which I think are still true today. It will be found on page 623 of Hansard of December 5, 1929, and here are one or two remarks I made at the time:—

"The hon. Member brings bananas into the picture. He quoted a statement made twenty years ago in support of the argument that bananas can and should be grown here. I am not saying, sir, that bananas cannot be grown, but what I do say is that it is a totally different matter growing a crop for local consumption to producing it for exportation. The people of this Colony do not seem to grasp that distinction. Our knowledge of the agriculture of the banana has considerably changed in recent years. For example, the inroads of the Panama disease were not known at that time, at any rate to any extent, nor had the industry been started in Surinam only to fail soon after under conditions similar to our own."

That failure in Surinam cost the Colony and those concerned a very substantial sum of money, and in five years it petered out. I went on to say:—

"The Empire Marketing Board have had for two years now in this part of the world an expert who is visiting all the banana growing countries. He has visited Jamaica, British Honduras and Costa Rica, where he studied the whole aspect of modern banana production. He has also recently spent some time in this Colony and gone thoroughly into the banana question."

I quoted extensively from the report at that time. The question of a banana industry in British Guiana was in the opinion of Professor C. W. Wardlaw highly improbable. His statement will repay reading:—

"Under existing external and local conditions there can be little doubt that the establishment of a banana industry in British Guiana would be a very uncertain and difficult undertaking."

The Department of Agriculture has not stood still in the matter. We were very anxious to do something and we started experimental plots in various parts of the Colony. We have planted on both clays and pegassey soils to test whether it

is possible to get continuous production of Gros Michel which is so essential. At that time and until quite recently there were no opportunities for shipment of bananas at all. When I attended the Jamaica Freight Conference in 1933 the matter was discussed there and I learnt for the first time that the Canadian National Steamships contemplated putting in a certain amount of banana space on their steamers. On returning to the Colony, at the first meeting of the Council, I gave a report of what happened and suggested that here was an opportunity of trying out small shipments, especially from the river areas. One gentleman here, Mr. Deveaux, was particularly interested, and we supplied him with suckers to start a demonstration plot up the river with a view to stimulating cultivation at that end. I congratulate him on the activity and enterprise he has adopted there, but the experiment is not yet complete.

As a result of my efforts the United Fruit Company sent a representative here to go into the banana question and he reported very fully against the possibilities of large-scale cultivation of Gros Michel. More recently he returned to the Colony and visited the plots up the Demerara River and said that while those plots showed better progress than bananas he had seen in any other part of the Colony it was still necessary to examine the cultivation regularly before any considerable expansion should take place in that area. He found that the percentage of suitable bunches was not very large. That was due to unevenness of soil conditions, and he suggested that, in order to test the matter still further, careful examination should be made before anybody was invited to embark on commercial cultivation even on the river areas. That does not alter the point I made at the end of 1933 that any surplus quantity of bananas not required for local consumption should be marketed, especially in Canada. The United Fruit Company's representative looked into that and said he was satisfied that there was insufficient fruit to justify any organised marketing being done, but he promised to keep in touch with me and endeavour to get one of the men stationed in the Windward Islands to follow the matter up. I am hoping that he will carry out that

promise and be able to secure the services of the officer in question. The whole position hinges on the question of commercial production and the continuity of such production. We cannot make contracts until we can guarantee a definite quantity, and we must go slowly and feel our way. It is too highly speculative to do otherwise. So far as the Department of Agriculture is concerned we are prepared to do everything in our power to ensure the sale of surplus bananas whenever they are available.

The hon. Member for Demerara River referred to the question of Panama disease. I am sure that if he saw a field decimated with Panama disease he would appreciate that it is not easy to control, and those countries which have a substantial banana industry are spending large sums in keeping it down. If you are going to start the industry you have got to make sure at the beginning that you are not going to start something that is in a short time going to be so decimated. Under conditions of soils here there is every indication that immediately you start extensive cultivation of Gros Michel it will soon be attacked. Cavendish banana is in a different category. With the Panama disease affecting the Gros Michel in most of the bigger countries the Cavendish came into the picture recently. Brazil is exporting quite a large number and some of our own Colonies, too, and the idea in Jamaica is that unless they turn to the Cavendish or some other disease resisting kind there will be very serious trouble about the year 1938. That is why certain countries have turned to the Cavendish; on the other hand, the result of our trial shipment is now better understood—there are no ships fitted out for carrying Cavendish bananas to England, and the price is not remunerative to justify any considerable planting. All these questions are very carefully watched, and I can assure the Council that nothing will be left undone, as far as myself and staff are concerned, in order to bring about some improvement in the outlook for a banana industry. If it can be done it will be done, and I can assure the Council that I shall do everything in my power. In so far as the motion is concerned I think Government is willing to accept the amendment proposed by the mover.

Mr. SEAFORD: I do not think there

is anybody in this House or in this Colony who would not welcome any industry which they hope would be for the good of the Colony as a whole. This question of bananas, as has been pointed out, is not a new one. It has been very carefully considered by the Board of Agriculture. Members of the Banana Association attended a meeting of that Board at which shipping representatives were also present. All the members of the Board promised to do their utmost to forward the efforts to establish a banana industry. I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Central Demerara that if we have bananas we would get the shipping. We have made representations and we have got prices for the shipment of bananas, and in no case has the cost of shipment been below £10 per ton. It is no good recommending the growing of bananas unless you can guarantee transport of those bananas to the market. The Banana Association may have got figures since the Board of Agriculture obtained quotations, but if they have them those figures have not been submitted to the Board. When the offer of £10 per ton was received the Board pointed out that it was no good unless we could get a rate of £7, but to that representation we have had no offer to cut down freight charges in any way.

I do not see how we can advise people to grow large quantities of bananas and then find we could not market them. No business man is going to cultivate large areas with bananas without knowing whether he can put them on the market at a remunerative price or not. The planter members of the Board have promised, and will be prepared, to put in experimental plots, if requested to do so, to see what can be done as they already have drainage and irrigation. Anything that would bring in revenue they would turn to to-morrow. They did it with rubber to their cost, and with coconuts to a certain extent. Any remunerative crop they would be prepared to take up, and help the farmers as well. I am not against Government giving a certain amount of help because if it is going to improve the position of the small farmer we are willing to do our little bit to help him. The idea underlying the motion is to assist the small man who has no capital behind him, and I think any money spent on experiments would be money well spent.

Mr. SEYMOUR: I am going to adopt a very broad and modern view. I endorse what the hon. Member for Georgetown North has said. We have not come to the transport stage yet. The idea is to try out experimental plots in areas where in process of time we shall know whether Panama disease will become an important factor. The experiment must be tried. We cannot sit here and say it cannot be done. The expenditure will not be a large sum. I do not agree with the proposal that assistance should be given to the Association. It is no use our running to Berbice, or Essequibo or the East Coast. Concentration of effort is essential, and we should concentrate on the Demerara River. To try experiments which are unnecessary would be a waste of money. Demonstrate that we can grow bananas here not only free of disease but of the required standard and quantities, and the Demerara River offers better facilities than any other part of the Colony for the purpose.

The trial shipment of bananas cannot be regarded as a fair experiment. The length of time the shipment took in reaching England was too long; a far better means of sending the fruit would have been by one of the steamers of the Dutch Line, which takes only 16 days. That and other avenues should be exploited, and if we can get any steamship line to come here and take away our produce it should be encouraged. I do not think the pine apple industry failed altogether through conditions not being favourable. From my observation the organisation lacked much to be desired. The capital was spent without any chance of its being recouped. Trials with bananas have been made by neighbouring Colonies with more satisfactory result than our own. Let us pursue that course and see whether we cannot make it satisfactory, but let us proceed slowly and not rush the experiments. Try on sound economic lines and see whether we cannot establish the industry. A trial was made at Anna Regina to grow bananas, but I cannot congratulate the Department of Agriculture on that trial because the bananas were simply thrown in and left to themselves. If we are going to proceed on such lines I would prefer to get a practical man from Jamaica. Possibly the Director of Agriculture will not agree to that and will tell us he knows how to grow

bananas, but a man who is a specialist in a certain department has a far better chance of making good than a qualified theorist. If I had my way with this experiment I would second a man from Jamaica with a knowledge of banana and of the method of shipping to arrive at its destination in good condition.

Mr. WIGHT: I am no pessimist. I am prepared to assist anything to relieve unemployment, but after what I have heard from the Director of Agriculture I am not very keen on this motion. Your Excellency has told us that you are prepared to assist any scheme that is likely to prove remunerative or a success and I think you should adhere to your policy very strictly. I rose primarily to say that I thought the Director of Agriculture would have made some reply to the reference to the pine apple industry. I do not think that industry has been a failure entirely. I have heard it said that the Department of Agriculture had condemned the pine apple cultivation, but I understand that the Director of Agriculture not only gave it every assistance but assigned one of his Instructors to assist in the breeding of pine apples, which has been an entire success. The failure of the operations of the Company was due to the fact that they could not compete with the cheap pine apples available in the market. I feel that banana cultivation will be killed by the competition of other Colonies which can produce the fruit much more cheaply than can be done in this Colony, while the cost of transportation is another factor responsible for sales at unremunerative prices. I offer no objection to the motion, but I suggest to Government to make haste slowly.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I desire to express my appreciation and thanks to Government for accepting the motion in its amended form. One or two Members expressed adverse criticisms, but I do not think it could be said that those criticisms were constructive. However, another opportunity will be afforded me to deal with the matter.

THE PRESIDENT: I am prepared to suspend the Standing Rules and Orders for a quarter of an hour to finish the business of the Council.

Mr. DE AGUIAR formally moved the

suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders to enable the Council to continue.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: To pursue my remarks at the point where I left off, the first criticism adverse to the motion came from the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Austin. He endeavoured to make capital of the reports received from time to time from experts who have visited the Colony. I am sure that in the light of recent experience those reports cannot bear examination, and I do not propose to deal with them today. What I desire to deal with is the question of capital. I am afraid that my remarks were misunderstood. I referred to the shipment of bananas on a co-operative basis. The people of the Colony are willing to come into the scheme on those conditions, and if they are willing to do so it is my duty to lend them whatever assistance I can. The hon. Member said that whatever assistance Government gives will have to be written off. I do not agree with him, nor do I think any other Member agrees with him. It must be borne in mind that Government gives assistance to other industries, and I do not think the remark that assistance should not be given to the banana industry is justified.

The reference to the pine apple industry has been replied to by the hon. Member for Georgetown Central. The position of that industry is that those who are associated with it can no longer continue to finance it, and, further, competition is too severe in the market and consumption is limited. In the case of bananas we have evidence that, unlike the pine apple, the consumption is increasing all over the world. I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Western Essequibo that the experiment should be confined to a particular area. In countries where banana disease is in existence as soon as the cultivation is attacked they abandon it and go elsewhere. We have all the lands we want, and to suggest that experiment should be confined to one particular area is very bad advice. I again express appreciation and thanks to Government for accepting the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think the hon. mover has done justice to Gov-

ernment with regard to its attitude to this industry and will quote what I said at the opening of this session:

“ I read much into this report which should encourage the hopes of banana growers though not so much as would justify an immediate large extension of planting. A fuller report is expected by mail and I have requested the honourable the Director of Agriculture on its receipt to confer with the Banana Growers' Association as to future steps. I take the opportunity of extending a warm welcome to the Association”.

I think the hon. Member will not deny that Government has the fullest sympathy with the banana industry. I ask him not to be discouraged by the trial shipment and to agree with those who say that the outcome of that shipment ought to have been expected from the conditions under which it was made. The hon. Member asked me for tangible help. I amended his motion so that I could accept it. I will be very glad to give such tangible help as I consider, and my advisers consider, justified by the prospects of the industry. It is essential—and the hon. Member for Georgetown Central has touched on the point—that I must have before me a concrete scheme before I am prepared to put money down to assist it. That is a condition which from the beginning of my term in this Colony I have always laid down with regard to the expenditure of public money. There must be a concrete scheme. I trust that before long the Banana Association will put such a scheme before Government that it will be able to give assistance.

Motion put, and agreed to.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I crave the indulgence of Your Excellency and the Council to move a motion, the terms of which I am sure all Members will agree with, in order that we should convey our appreciation of the gift of £22,000 for further geological surveys, to which Your Excellency has referred during the course of the session. The motion reads as follows:—

THAT, with reference to Sessional Paper No 21/35, this Council expresses the gratitude of the Colony for the free grant of £22,000 which has been made from the Colonial Development

Fund for further geological surveys and respectfully requests that the Colony's thanks be conveyed to the Secretary of State and to the Colonial Development Fund Committee.

During the last three years there have been geological surveys which have proved of very great benefit to the mining industry. There are further considerable areas to be covered. The grant will enable the work to be carried on for another four years. I am sure we are all agreed that the grant will be of great value to the mining industry and the Colony as a whole, and it is meet that we should express our appreciation in the terms of the motion.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Mr. JACOB: On behalf of the Unofficials I desire to express our thanks to the Secretary of State for this grant. I also desire to say that there has been some misconception with regard to my statement yesterday that the Imperial Government was not giving us the necessary assistance we desire. What I have in mind particularly is that we require some amount of practical financial assistance for works of immediately productive nature. This grant is very well appreciated, but I do not think it can be said that it is for work of immediate productive nature. I think some definite financial help should be given whereby languishing agricultural industries may be helped.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member must speak to the motion. Is the hon. Member supporting the motion? I understand that he is.

Mr. JACOB: I was only going to refer to Mauritius where a similar grant has been made.

Motion put, and agreed to.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Before the Council adjourns, as this is the last meeting of the session, permit me, sir, on behalf of the Unofficial Members and myself, to wish you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

THE PRESIDENT: I am very grateful to you.

The Council adjourned *sine die*.