

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Constituted under the British Guiana
(Constitution) (Temporary Provisions)
Order in Council, 1953).

THURSDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 1956

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

His Honour the Speaker,
Sir Eustace Gordon Woolford,
O.B.E., Q.C.

Ex-Officio Members

The Hon. the Chief Secretary,
Mr. F. D. Jakeway, C.M.G., O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney General,
Mr. G. M. Farnum (Ag.)

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,
Mr. F. W. Essex.

Nominated Members of Executive Council

The Hon. Sir Frank McDavid,
C.M.G., C.B.E. (Member for Agri-
culture, Forests, Lands and Mines).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall, (Mem-
ber for Communications and Works)

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.,
(Member for Local Government,
Social Welfare and Co-operative De-
velopment).

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj

Nominated Unofficials

Mr. E. F. Correla

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Dr. H. A. Fraser

Mr. R. B. Jailal

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.

Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. I. Crum Ewing

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. B. M. Viapree (Ag.).

Absent:

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Mem-
ber for Labour, Health and Housing)

The Hon. R. C. Tello—on leave.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

Mr. T. Lee—on leave.

Mr. W. A. Phang—on leave.

Mr. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.—on leave.

Mr. C. A. Carter

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb—on leave,

Mr. J. I. Ramphal—on leave.

Mr. Sugrim Singh

The Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the
Council held on Wednesday, the 19th
of December, 1956, as printed and
circulated, were taken as read and con-
firmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Speaker : I have to announce that Mr. Luckhoo is still very ill. Mr. Phang is also ill. The Rev. Mr. Bobb, Mr. Lee, Mr. Rahaman and Mr. Sugrim Singh have asked to be excused from today's meeting.

PAPERS LAID

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development): On behalf of the Member for Communications and Works (Mr. Kendall) I beg to lay on the table:

Air Mail Postage Rates (Amendment) Order, 1956 (No. 86 of 1956).

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS

NURSES' SALARIES REVISION

Mrs. Dey : I beg to give notice of the following question:

What is the present position with regard to the Report of the Salary Revision Committee or nursing allied and subordinate staff of Medical institutions and the Palms, which was submitted to Government on the 30th of June, 1956?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL.

The Chief Secretary: I beg to give notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled:

"Representation of the People Bill, 1956."

It is Bill No. 60 published today.

AUDIT DEPARTMENT (AMENDMENT
No. 2) BILL

The Financial Secretary: I beg to give notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled:

"Audit Department (Amendment No. 2) Bill, 1956."

ORDER OF THE DAY

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL,
1956

The following Bills were read the first time:

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to make provision for the election of Members of the Legislative Council and for purposes connected therewith."

AUDIT DEPARTMENT (AMENDMENT
No. 2) BILL

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Audit Department Ordinance."

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1956

Budget Debate

Council resumed the debate on the motion for the second reading of the Bill intituled:

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

Mr. Speaker : Mr. Correia, I know you would like to speak. Do you desire to speak early?

Mr. Correia : No, Your Honour.

Mr. Speaker : No one has given notice of priority. Would any Member like to speak now?

Mr. Jailal : This may be the last occasion in my political career that I shall have the opportunity of addressing this Council on a subject as wide in implication as the Budget. Before proceeding fully into this subject I am forced to pay tribute to Your Honour's long experience in this particular field of legislative work. You had been a champion on this floor for several years, and you know that at this time Members of the Council take full opportunity of reviewing the work done in the year past and trying to amplify and debate very seriously the work for the year to come. On the subject of our activities, while one does not wish to tire the Council with long speeches, as it were, yet it seems necessary to allow reasonable room for the comments and criticisms of Members. I therefore make a plea to the Council that if, perhaps, I and other Members go beyond the normal limitation of time, the Council

would bear with us, because I feel that what Members say here is influenced by a sense of patriotism. To my mind, no Member ever wishes to bring Government on the carpet but more or less criticizes very objectively the work that has been done and is being planned for. I do not propose to speak at the length to which the Council is now accustomed, because I am going to deal with the Budget in a new and different light. I am going to try to look back, first of all to the accomplishments of this Government, and then to look into the future somewhat.

During the time that this Government has been in power we in this Council were always cognisant of the various plans of Government because they had been brought to us, but it has not been fully so in the case of the people of the country. Many have heard nothing of what had been or will be done. This is because of poor communication, because of lack of adequate news facilities, because of the lack of radio communication over the entire country, news travel slowly and, therefore, I feel it is necessary to review to some extent the accomplishments of the present Government. There has been marked improvement in our provision for housing. In 1953 and early in 1954, this Government undertook to provide more housing especially for the poorer class of people who did not have adequate housing. To a great degree this Government has implemented that promise. We see a great move in our house-building programme. There are quite a number of new houses particularly in the environs of Georgetown. Self-Help Schemes have been established. Housing, generally speaking, is on the march. Private enterprise is not lacking. The sugar industry has done all it could within its scope and within a very limited period to establish reasonable and satisfactory accommodation for its workers by way of making reasonable loans available to them for house-building. As a result today we see in front of most sugar

estates a very welcome sight. No longer we see the old familiar long ranges. There are still a few of them which in course of time, I daresay, will be demolished. But there has been a great development in the sugar industry in terms of housing, thanks to those who administer the Sugar Welfare Fund.

Our bigger schemes are gigantic projects. The Torani and the Boerasirie Schemes are well on the way. If the assurances given by the Central Government are to be taken, then very shortly we will see the Berbice River flowing into the Canje River at our will. This would mean that Blocks I, II and III, the sugar estates and all that area along the Corentyne Coast and the banks of the Canje would be provided with adequate water for crops and cattle. The Boerasirie Scheme would mean that a few thousand acres more would be added to the area available for farming. When this comes into being there is going to be much improvement, and farmers in that area and probably in far off places like the Islands of Leguan and Wakenaam, which we know are overcrowded, will be able to find lands where they can establish their farms and prosecute a reasonable livelihood. Soil surveys are being carried out as rapidly as possible, and this will allow more opportunity for Government to know where to allow people to invest their money. Indeed it will prove to the farmer long before he has planted his crop his chance of a perfect economy.

The future of the fishing industry has already been mapped out, and protective legislation has already been passed. What happens to that industry now is entirely a matter in the hands of the fishing folk themselves. Government has already established marketing schemes by which loans are given to fishermen for procuring fishing gear, and we are told—and we have no reason to doubt—that things are working somewhat smoother now.

[Mr. Jailal]

An attempt further to secure rice farmers, rice landlords and rice millers has been made. How well that attempt will succeed, I will not venture to say, I daresay history alone will be able to tell. Tremendous effort has been put into Self Help, apart from Housing, in the rural areas. Large sums of money have been spent on the organizing of Self Help schemes, and I am pleased to note that the spirit infused by Sir Alfred Savage has caught on and set the movement afire.

We have the rehabilitation works on railways and wharves now in progress, and we have already seen at New Amsterdam a new cargo terminal which, in my opinion, is sound development, because no longer will it be necessary for traffic to be held up while passengers embark or disembark when crossing the Berbice River, as cargo movements will now be facilitated. On the railways we have seen new engines both on the East and West Coasts, and I venture to say that while we have not been able to accomplish the highest ideal in rail transport, yet we have achieved some more facilities for travellers. We do not now find too many breakdowns on trains and too much off-schedule arrivals. In the transport fleet we find an addition of two new vessels. This has come with reasonable grace to the inhabitants of this Colony, not only from the fact that we are able to offer new accommodation, not only because we can put in weekly services to remote areas, but because of the fact that at least one of these vessels was built almost entirely by local labour and by a local firm. As we were told, the work on this vessel was comparable to the work on the other vessel that had been built in a United Kingdom dockyard. Rolling stock has been improved and railway tracks have been renewed and rail beds are being repaired constantly. I think this service has im-

proved considerably over what we knew it to be in the past 50 years.

A new and large agricultural station has been established, and work on that is being continued. It is hoped to carry on large scale experimentation in our crops and the cattle industry, and I daresay when this programme has been fully implemented British Guianese will have the benefit of the money expended on this particular scheme. I had the peculiar advantage of being able to visit the Rice Experiment Station there, and I am completely satisfied with the work in terms of experimentation. How early those experiments will find their way to the farmers, I cannot tell. I believe that the Department of Agriculture is tackling the job with all the "know-how" it has at hand.

I can call for no further acceleration in terms of this particular phase of experimentation because I know that the breeding of rice strain is a matter that takes a number of years, and officers of the Department should indeed be congratulated on their efforts in this direction. Lands in this country have their own peculiarities and rice that may do well in other parts of the world may fail here. It is significant that we can raise a strain that can bear well in our local conditions.

Private enterprise has stepped out of the corner and with the help of special tax concessions granted by this Government we see a beer brewery shortly to be completed, we see a biscuit factory shortly to be completed and a margarine and soap works already well established. A few weeks ago we passed legislation for the establishment of hydro-electricity in the country, and following in its wake we passed here yesterday legislation sanctioning the \$60 million bauxite project.

Those are truly signs of the times. They exemplify, to my mind, the courage of a people who, though time and

tide have not played very fairly with them, seem to have lasting perseverance on this plot of earth on which we were born. We have fought consistently for the upliftment of our people, but not alone—there are others who have spent a lifetime, some in this Council Chamber, bargaining for this country—and the results we are seeing now are the fruits of all our efforts. I am of the opinion, like one other Member who expressed this view yesterday, that investment will follow investment, and I believe, deep down in my heart, that British Guiana has turned the corner.

There is a further aspect of development that has proved successful—the sea defence programme. We have learned our lessons by our mistakes and the fact is that, regardless of the price, we are going to have a means of reclaiming from the sea a large block of land extending from the Mahaica to the Mahaicony, and in due time we will see it a centre of cattle-rearing and rice-growing instead of a sheer watery waste. I feel proud of these achievements, I take pride in everything that is being done. We who have seen it will know that the milk pasteurization plant has been started and in a short time it should be fully established. In the light of all these developments and in the light of all that is going on around us, it would not be correct to say that this Government has sat and done nothing: if we make such a criticism it would be completely unfair.

However, the speed with which these programmes were carried out and are being carried out is a matter for some concern, and there have been left behind some large projects like the rehabilitation of the hospitals, the schools programme, Block III cattle pasture (which has been 'on the books' for a long time); there has been delay with regard to Blocks I and II, and slow progress in terms of the re-habilitation of private estates. The reason, quite apart from lack of funds, is the lack

of technical assistance, and it is difficult then to charge Government with being the cause of a plan delayed. I know after practically three years' close contact with almost every section of Government that there is no deliberate delay. Government is itself anxious to see that things are done, but I believe that no longer should we procrastinate in seeking technical assistance from outside. If we cannot pay for this assistance within our salary structure and have to face widespread competition in securing it, then the only thing to do is to pay for it at the price we can get it for.

Let us employ the necessary people on three or four-year contracts, and if the salary they get is greater than their Deputies, it does not matter because after they have left, the posts can be filled by their Deputies. I do not see that we should tarry any longer if we are to carry out our Development Programme. Not only in this little tract of country but the whole world around us is in the throes of an industrial renaissance. We are just recovering from a world war and the whole world is forced to rebuild all that has been destroyed. How quickly this world of ours can do it is a question I would not presume to answer, but I dare say that because of the competition and the gap being widened between what we want and what we can get, I would urge Government to secure as early as possible all the help we require for whatever sum of money it costs, providing we can afford it. If we cannot afford it, then the scheme involved should be supplanted by something else. It is useless to have plans and nothing to carry them out with.

We have not been able to gather any momentum in our land settlement schemes. We have accomplished to some extent what is necessary, but the country looks forward with urgency and with hope to seeing the lands put at the disposal of people and people in houses

[Mr. Jallal]

there. Port Mourant factory has been closed down and I remember Mr. Luckhoo telling of the distress of the people involved—they are, as he put it, on the point of starvation. I do feel there is necessity for us to put the lands in order quickly. How quickly we can get this done is, in ordinary parlance, the 64-dollar question. We have bought Garden of Eden and we have bought Mara. The country as a whole looks forward to speed of action. I can only say that while some works could actually have been done, the major hold-up was because Government had not been fully able to fix a policy in terms of settling people on the land.

Because of our adventures in these fields and because of the great side tracks with respect to financial aid, I am beginning to wonder if the carrying out of big projects on the coastlands will be an answer to the economic problems of the country. Millions of dollars will have to be spent in order to improve and prepare the lands in the coastal areas for agricultural purposes. Is it not reasonable to ask why doesn't Government set up one of these settlements in the interior — deep in the heart of British Guiana — where some of the people could be fed? I know that the answer will be: "Where is the communication?" but my answer, in turn will be: "Did the people of the United States of America wait on roads?" We need not wait to have all the roads built before we make a start. Within recent years we have seen the laudable efforts made in this respect in the interior by people who come from neighbouring colonies. I referred to that fact last year and I reiterate it this year, since we have had conclusive proof that people can grow crops successfully in that area — between Bartica and Potaro. What do we have to do in order to let people take advantage of the land there? One of

the burning questions—people have been complaining bitterly against it — is that it takes a long time — a year and sometimes two years — to get a lease on Government lands.

I wish to encourage Government to try and allow people to get access as early as possible to Crown tracts for farming purposes. We know that in the past people took lands willy nilly, but with the new restrictions — two-year leases and 10-acre blocks—I do not think there will be an excuse any longer. We have just voted in Finance Committee what I would call a fair sum of money, for roads in the Rupununi. At one time the fear of Government was that if we are going to spend money on these roads, we should make them so that they could stand up to heavy traffic? We have several Departments operating in the interior and each one has its own transport "fleet". I use the word "fleet" advisedly, since each Department has its own type of vehicle, and the question is that while these jeeps are travelling these lands are still coming along. My point is that it would pay for us to erect proper bridges at all these portage points so that in a few years Government could undertake a schedule service on the roads in the interior. I think we are spending much too much money on officers' travelling. The days are past when officers walk short distances or travel on horseback over longer ones and I would not encourage that when the amount of mileage they are putting in is going to send up the maintenance cost of the vehicles which operate on these roads.

I don't see why we cannot attempt to establish an interior transport service similar to the one which existing between Bartica and Potaro. It would save our having to buy every two years, three or four vehicles for officers travelling, since there is usually a vehicle for each Department. I cannot

agree with that. I remember that Government did not regard it as a very laudable thing to undertake the extension of the road from the Potaro to the Rupununi, but I wish to encourage Government seriously to undertake that proposal because we cannot see much more hope for the people as regards settlement on lands in the Blocks 1 and 2 Scheme in the Corentyne district. We know that the people on the Corentyne would have no more lands and also that the population on the other side of the scheme would have no new lands, therefore I want to encourage Government to create opportunities for more land in the direction I have mentioned.

Further encouragement should also be given, in my opinion, to the people on the coastlands so that they would be able to maintain a balanced economy through industries other than rice and sugar. I do not believe in cotton, and I have said so before. Every place that I have gone to which produces cotton is a poor country — exceedingly poor — and, personally, I believe that if this country cultivates cotton it would become poorer and poorer.

Furthermore, so long as rice will grow on our coastlands we will never get our Indian population to convert their ricelands into cotton fields. I hope to live for many years yet and to see what I have said come true. If we are going to diversify our crops by planting cotton, it is useless to think of doing so on the coastlands. If jute will grow successfully on these coastlands then the people might take it up, but so long as rice will grow they will never cultivate jute. Experts and other people have come here and told us that we cannot grow this and that, yet on each occasion I visit the interior of the Colony I see a new form of agricultural development taking place — citrus fruit and things of that kind. I wonder

whether we are not suffering from a surfeit of these experts who come down here and try to tell us what we can grow and what we can't.

So far as cocoa is concerned I feel that there is a big future for British Guiana so long as the market holds. Within the 40 years of my experience I have seen cocoa prices at a premium and with the knowledge available at the present time for the production of these large-scale crops, I feel that cocoa has some future. But what I wonder is, why hasn't British Guiana been able to hitch itself, as other countries have been able to do, to the great magnets and others who push cocoa? Why have we failed to encourage people like "Fry's" to set up an establishment here? Perhaps I do not have sufficient knowledge of how these things are arranged, but I agree that we should encourage the production of cocoa on a large scale and I welcome Government's plans in this direction. I feel that our boys at Centanno (in Trinidad) will come back with valuable knowledge and will be able to help us in this direction.

Coconuts is one of the products we have to look at with some degree of fear because — and I heard a criticism to this effect a few days ago — we haven't improved our situation in this industry for so many years. Our coconut farms have not been developed, but left as they were. If we are going to have faith in British Guiana then we should also do everything possible to bring about improvement in this industry as early as possible. Steps should be taken to clear the sand reefs on the Corentyne — sand dunes I call them — at places like Auchlyne — since they can be made to produce a large quantity of coconuts within a few years. There are long stretches of land at Lancaster and Maida — large areas of grass on salted wastes — and these also could

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be utilised for the production of coconuts since we have already protected these lands from the sea. I am asking Government to encourage the villages by giving them financial assistance to enable those lands to be put under cultivation. Thousands of coconuts could be reaped in a short time from those lands. Huge estates could be built up there. Those are the things in which we are lacking; some of the small things we could build up very quickly to the credit of any Government, and they would not require large sums of money, any major planning, or the bringing of an expert. I would like to see a well formulated scheme for the establishment of this particular phase of what I would call peasant development of our countryside.

Some of the more painful things we have to talk about today are our main projects — our roads. The Corentyne road has been a dismal failure. I do not accept Government's attitude in this matter; indeed I do not believe that any portion of the population accepts it at all. Regardless of the fact that specifications for the reconstruction of the road are not yet ready, exceedingly poor maintenance work has been done on the Corentyne road. Government is not even trying to save the road, and it seems as if it is quite willing to allow it to fall to waste and ruin.

This is a serious criticism to make against any Government. Travellers on that road are completely dissatisfied. The road runs through what is now known as the granary of British Guiana. There is heavy traffic on the road, and within the last year and a half we have seen complete laxity as regards maintenance. I cannot understand; I do not know what is Government's attitude in this matter. We know that

a large sum of money has been voted for the purpose of putting that road in order, but if the work is going to proceed at the same pace which was maintained last year, and the same sort of half-way job is going to be done, I think it would be better if Government took one half of the licence duty from owners of motor vehicles and let them run on the rough tracks. The Mahaicony-Abary scheme has better roads. It is a shame to levy high licence on motor vehicles and expect them to be run on a road like that. It is one of the saddest things that have happened to this Government which has not seen fit to do something about it. Government's attitude has been criticised over and over in this Council in no uncertain terms, but those criticisms seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

I know that a Road Department has been established, and having seen survey paals being put down and new bridges erected, I know that work is being done on the East Coast road, but the country as a whole is dissatisfied with the slowness in this matter. I would urge Government to do everything within its power to see that the reconstruction of this road is accelerated. If we are to achieve the results we have set out to achieve, that is to make the people have full confidence in Government and its plans, we must show them our good work.

I shall now deal with the East Bank road. I am not doing this with the intention of putting the Member for Communications "on the carpet." Far from it. I think I know some of the reasons for the delay, but I do want to emphasize the urgency of the situation. We have allowed the dry weather to pass and the wet weather to come along without having the East Bank road done. We have al-

lowed ourselves to be lulled into a security which was completely false. The Chamber of Commerce and all the people of British Guiana have been complaining about the East Bank road. I know how little of it is left, because I travel on it very frequently. I wrote Government and pleaded with it to throw all its forces into the reconstruction of that road. It could have been completed within one month from the time I wrote. Certain sections of the road are so bad that people will always complain until they are done. There are four or five miles of the road to be completed. I would suggest that the diversions could be done later. The urgent necessity is to put the existing road in good condition. There is no need for any great expenditure, because the sections of the road which are causing great political trouble are very small and can be put in order in a comparatively short time.

I shall not comment on the West Coast road because that part of the country is well served by the railway, and I know that Government will do what it can about that road as soon as it can, but I wish to direct attention to the roads in Wakenaam and Leguan. There has been large-scale development in those islands which have turned from sugar and are completely under rice and coconut cultivation. The roads in those islands should not be allowed to get into such a condition as to make it impossible for the farmers to bring their produce out. I am told that the roads are to be made up with quarry cleanings, but sufficient money is not being provided. There is need for some speeding up, because the product has to come out.

There is one last major criticism I want to make which I have already made in Finance Committee. I refer

to the question of our engineering staffs. It seems to me that we have small detachments of engineers all around. There are engineers attached to the Drainage and Irrigation Department, the Public Works Department, the Central Housing and Planning Department, the Education Department, the Medical Department, and engineers for roads. In a little while we will probably have engineers for the Land Settlement Department. I think it is an uneconomical arrangement. As I have said before, and I reiterate now, engineering works proper should be in the hands of one Engineer. For instance, I cannot see how we can expect efficiency when immediately after the erection of a set of houses by one Department they are unloaded on the Public Works Department to be maintained. One Department builds and another maintains. Schools will be built by the Education Department and handed over to the Public Works Department, and yet we are to have an engineering staff with clerks and typists attached to this subdivision of the Department. I cannot understand that. I advocate that our engineering division become one big and full division embracing all phases of the field, because it will make for better economy and more efficiency and, I am sure, it will make for speedy operation.

There is something more unpleasant for me to say. The hon. the Financial Secretary has told us that there can be no relief from taxation next year. I want to bring before Government the startling fact that there is oppression in terms of Income Tax. There is severe oppression of a small group who have to carry the burden of that Tax. I do not know that you will ever be able to satisfy people completely with regard to taxation, but when there

[Mr. Jailal]

is reasonable argument for some relief Government should lend a listening ear. We are working under Income tax laws established long before our revision of salaries was undertaken, and Government has failed to examine the cost of living in relation to the Tax. A man and his family are given the meagre allowances of \$1,000 a year for himself, \$500 a year for his wife and \$250 a year for each child. Let us look at it realistically. Can a man live reasonably well with that kind of allowance having regard to what is being paid in this country as salaries generally? If the normal wage-earner is given that kind of allowance and he is in the middle bracket, it is easily seen how hard his time is. There are no allowances given for the education of his children. It is no wonder that our youths are not able to qualify as quickly as we would like them to for vacant posts. It is because the people have not the money to educate their children. I do plead with Government to have a second look at this matter.

We have to study other means by which to collect our Income Tax and not oppress one group of people. I think one of the things we can do is this. We are spending huge sums of money in Social Assistance, and I am wondering if the policy of of "while you work you ought to be made to save" should not be one that this country should adopt, because I feel that in the very near future we should establish some form of social security by law, so that people would be forced to save some part of their earnings for old age. Social Assistance is becoming increasingly burdensome. It does not savour well for this country that at times like Christmas there are published in the newspapers "sad stories" of needy cases such as

a man with a crippled arm having 15 children to provide for. Those are not things that should be headlined in the Press. It makes out to the world that this is an abysmally poor country. I feel that we can establish means whereby this Social Assistance that we give out—I do not grudge it—can be curtailed. I feel that if the Government Officers can be forced to save, why cannot the rest of the people of the country be made to do the same thing. It is only a matter that has to be gone into and studied carefully. I think it will help, and the story of Government not being able to relieve the oppressed in terms of taxation will be stopped.

I wish to recommend that Government prosecute a thorough and rigid policy with respect to the collection of taxes. I know that there has been some definite speeding up in this matter, but I feel—and from what I have learnt—that the District Officers are somewhat hesitant to undertake the job in the full. If we cannot collect our taxes by the officers that we have, then we must get those who will collect them. There is very little more that I would like to tell this Council, but I would like to say that whatever we undertake within the next few months, let us do so with the optimum of speed. Time is running out on us, and that is why I have dealt with the Budget in the fashion I did. I want before I take my seat, to say to the Members of the Central Government that I feel that with the little tools they had, they have done as fair a job as one could expect under the severe strain and pressure of time.

Mr. Speaker: I am very glad the hon. Member has spoken as he did.

Dr. Fraser: Since I have become a Member of this Council it is the first time that the Annual Estimates have

been presented at such an early date. I feel that, as the hon. the Financial Secretary is a comparative newcomer to this Colony, he should be congratulated, for it increases the efficiency of the various Government Departments when they are able to get on with their programme very early in the new year. I do hope that hon. Members would co-operate and get these Estimates passed before the end of the year.

I listened with a great deal of interest to the Budget Speech of the hon. the Financial Secretary. He gave us a very clear and concise picture of the financial position and trade of this Colony. It shows that at last the tempo of development and achievement has been slowly but surely increasing over a number of years. In this constant stream there must be increased production if we are to increase our national wealth and our revenue. On the second page of the Budget Statement the hon. the Financial Secretary says:

"Unless we produce more, particularly for export, or get added investments from overseas, our national income can show no lasting rise, and unless the national income increases then we can obviously expect little more as public revenue."

However, the Statement continues:

"What we need first are major developments of our natural resources, mining ventures or the processing of minerals which give employment to hundreds of people, a much larger area under rice cultivation, and a stepping up of the production of other export crops."

The Financial Secretary kept on production. We cannot get increased production in our crops if we do not provide more drainage and irrigation of agricultural lands, and that is why when the drainage estimates come before Finance Committee Members are so insistent that Government should proceed to get engineers and others as

quickly as possible to give effect to the plans. We feel we are not getting on with our drainage schemes—which are the chief means through which we can increase our production and therefore our revenue to pay for all the expenditure that is being incurred.

I think it was in last week's newspapers I noticed a statement by the Director of Land Settlement that lands at Mara would be available for production early next year. That is very heartening, especially in view of the fact that there are internal drainage works in that area. In Blocks I and II we have approximately 28,000 acres suitable for rice production, and only two weeks ago I learnt that consulting engineers were in the Colony to carry on with those schemes. My point, again, is that Government should push these drainage schemes as hard and as fast as possible because the lands are needed for settling people and increasing production.

When the rice crop fell short of expectations this year additional supplies had to be obtained from the U. S. to meet our contract. I feel that in the coming year we will also experience a short supply in spite of the fact that more land is being put under cultivation. Yields are falling, not through lack of fertility of the soil but through poor husbandry. Machinery has replaced manual effort in the planting and broadcasting of padi, and this means that we will not get the same returns per acre.

The recent Land Tenure Bill has its good features, but it also has its bad features; so much so that more land which perhaps might have been brought under cultivation with proper methods had to be let out to tenants and slipshod cultivation has been the result. This year will have seen ex-

[Dr. Fraser]

tremely late planting, and the returns, in my opinion, are going to be extremely reduced. This is a rice country, we have the land to be used, and we can supply the whole of the British West Indies. But the people have to be taught the proper use of machinery and we have to go in for proper cultivation, otherwise in years to come our production will go down instead of coming up. I am urging this Government so that steps will be taken by the appropriate Department to stop the decrease in yields.

There is another factor operating against increased production which year after year I have been referring to in this Council, and that is, the importation of milk into this country. For this year the value of this importation is \$2 million; it is increasing every year. The Department of Agriculture has done some investigation into the matter, but to my mind it is a complete waste of money to be giving away to farmers free of charge well-bred heifers on the condition that the first-born heifer calf would be given to Government. In a milk situation of low production such as this we are faced with, it is rare that such an attempt at its relief would be successful.

We cannot expect people who have not been accustomed to handling well-bred animals, but only scrub animals which only give a few pints of milk, to make a success of such a scheme—it is entirely a waste of time and money. There should be an extensive campaign to improve the rearing of cows in the more productive areas, at little expense to Government, in which people would be taught how to feed the cows, care them and so on. Frankly, I feel there is much more

work to be done for improving cattle-rearing in this country, so as to bring it to a level where it would provide occupation for people 365 days in a year.

This country imports far too much of its food. We now have a Fishery Department, and I hope that this Department would in the years to come stop in a large measure the importation of this type of food. That is the type of department this country should be striving for to increase local food production.

Mr. Jaisal spoke about the noteworthy cocca-growing in the North West District. It is a fact that this is so, because I have lately visited the North West District and have seen as never before such healthy-looking young cultivations. So much so that I feel Government could improve the fortunes of this neglected part of the Colony by bringing displaced people from European countries with agricultural and industrial experience to settle in that area, for how can improvement come to the Colony with a small population of only $5\frac{1}{2}$ persons per square mile?

We must attract people to this country, especially to our interior and let them develop the lands there, if this Colony is to go much further. We have heard Mr. Jaisal's remarks about roads and I do not intend to dilate on them, except to say that in the case of the Corentyne road one is astounded to see that this road which was put down only five years ago has been neglected and left to go to utter ruin. The asphalt on some spots has worn away to about an inch, and it is inconceivable that Government should have permitted its road programme to deteriorate to such an alarming extent.

Mr. Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

Mr. Gajraj: I wish to contribute to the debate, but I had hoped that hon. Members would spend the whole of today on the Budget.

Mr. Speaker : I should point out that we have not got a quorum (at the moment) and I think it is a good sign in a way. I wish to be able to proceed with the next item as early as possible.

The Financial Secretary: Perhaps I should mention, sir, that certain Members intimated to Your Honour that they wished to speak.

Mr. Speaker : Certain Members did so, but they have not yet spoken. Does the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, wish to speak now?

Mr. Gajraj: I would like to speak, Sir, but I did not expect to speak this afternoon. If we are going to adjourn I will do so tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker : I would not like to adjourn now because we might get a quorum easily tomorrow. I am not saying that it is due to lack of interest. I know it is not easy for all members to be present because I have already explained the reason for the absence of some of them. Mr. Sugrām Singh, for instance, is engaged in the Supreme Court, while Mr. Correia intimated quite early that he would not be here, but would like to speak later.

Mr. Gajraj: Then, sir, I shall take this opportunity to speak.

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. Member like to do so now?

Mr. Gajraj: If the adjournment is moved now I can speak tomorrow. I should prefer to do that.

The Financial Secretary : I would suggest, sir, that we adjourn and give Members a chance to come tomorrow. If they do not attend tomorrow, then you should put the question.

Mr. Speaker : I do not expect Mr. Luckhoo tomorrow at all; he said he would not be able to attend. The only Member who intimated his desire to speak is Mr. Correia; he told me so before we started. I think that Mr. Gajraj should speak now or we would have to adjourn. Unless he has something particular to say, however, he is not compelled to speak today.

Mr. Gajraj : I think I will speak, sir. Firstly, I would wish myself to congratulate the hon. the Financial Secretary for having been in a position to present this Council with his Budget address as early as he has done, and in getting Finance Committee to consider the Estimates as quickly as it did. It would seem that this is the first year for a very long time when we would be able to complete our discussion of the Appropriation Bill before the end of the year. It is an achievement of which he must feel very proud, and I am sure the members of his staff would like to share in the credit which goes to him, as Financial Secretary. I think also that we should congratulate the Financial Secretary on presenting a Budget which does not call for increased taxation. At a time like this when we have been spending a considerable sum of money—over and above what we have been spending before—I think many people in this country were afraid that it would have been necessary to have increased taxation. Here again, I must pay a tribute to the Financial Secretary for going into the estimates of the various Departments and for pruning them where it was considered necessary, thus making it possible to present the figures without calling for additional revenue to meet expenditure. That is something which, as I have said, we are all very pleased about and that sentiment has

[Mr. Gajraj]

been echoed throughout this country. We have seen it in the Press and it has been very much appreciated on all sides.

The Budget which we have before us is one which provides for a very large expenditure of money in the year 1957. The Finance Committee has probed the amounts which appear under the various heads and the items of expenditure have been approved. I am, as we all know, a member of the Government, and as such I am whole-heartedly in favour of the motion for the passing of the Appropriation Bill. I also feel that it is incumbent upon me to explain in this Council some of the views and expressions of people outside of this Chamber who have seen me and with whom I am daily in contact. I feel that I have answered most of their questions and allayed most of their fears, but it is very desirable to mention at this opportune time that measures passed by Members of this Legislature are not lost sight of but are brought before those responsible for looking after the respective affairs. It is, of course, well known that at the present time and for a little while now I have had the privilege to be Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board and, as such, quite a number of persons engaged in the rice industry have come to see me from time to time about various problems affecting them — problems affecting the rice farmers, the millers and also the consumers.

One of the most important things in connection with rice that I must stress — and I have already stressed it in another place — is the very great need for increased production. Government as well as the R.M.B. was placed in a very embarrassing position towards the end of the last crop when we found that, contrary to expectations, there was going to be a shortage of rice which necessitated one of our principal buyers — the Government of Trinidad — having to look elsewhere and being permitted

to bring in 2,500 tons of rice in order to safeguard stocks and supplies. That was a serious blow to us, one which made it necessary for us to review the supply position more carefully, particularly with regard to the Autumn crop which was then being reaped. I am in a position to say that from the estimates which the Department of Agriculture has made and from figures which the R.M.B. itself has been able to obtain from its district supervisors, we are not at all happy over the results of the Autumn crop, and in point of fact we feel that unless there is a bumper Spring crop in 1957 we might, unfortunately, find ourselves in exactly the same position that we found ourselves at the end of the 1955 crop year.

I think it is necessary to stress this because we have got to call upon our rice farmers to try and produce more, and because this Government has been able to get an assured market for B.G. rice in the B.W.I. Now that we have been able to get an assured market for B.G. rice in the B.W.I. — having to supply all their requirements for the next five years — I think we should be careful and endeavour to meet all the supplies that would be necessary. The rice producers of this country are assured of an export market for many years to come; that is an assurance from this Government of which we all feel very proud indeed, and in this respect a tribute must be paid particularly to Sir Frank McDavid who, as one of B.G.'s delegates at the Regional Economic Committee this year, did a considerable amount of work and consented to this agreement which is very beneficial to the rice producers of this country.

Having assured the industry here of a market for its surplus production

— a market which I may say is an expanding one, for with the increase in population in the Caribbean islands, and indeed with the increase in *per caput* consumption of rice which must follow, there is an increasing demand in the export field for our rice. Right here at home we are having a very large increase in population each year. The figures show that we have a 3 per cent. rise in population each year, and it has been calculated that in the year 1980 our population will be doubled. So that with increasing consumption within British Guiana itself we are faced with the fact that unless we produce more rice we will not be able to feed the extra mouths which will have to be fed at the end of each year. We have to double our production by 1980, and this calls for considerable expansion of the area of land we might place under rice cultivation.

I know that the question which would be asked outside is why did Government not provide the land? We are utilizing all the land available for rice cultivation, therefore we need more land. This Government certainly has been doing its best, but there is no Alladin's wonderful lamp by which large forests might be cleared and drainage and irrigation schemes brought into operation overnight. As Dr. Fraser has said, work has been progressing steadily on the Blocks I and II Schemes on the Corentyne, and on schemes in other parts of the Colony, particularly on land settlement schemes which have been planned to include rice cultivation. We are hoping to have more land made available in that way, but there is also land attached to existing rice estates which could be beneficially occupied by the planting of rice. For the purpose of developmental work of that nature the Credit Corporation

would be prepared to consider the advancing of money to enable larger areas to be put under rice cultivation.

There are people who have been to me and people who have been to other Members of this Legislature and to Government—people engaged in the rice industry and who own rice estates—and complained that they had made application to the Credit Corporation for loans, but although recommended by the Regional Development Committees their applications had been turned down. I have investigated a couple of cases myself and found that the object of asking for such loans was to pay off indebtedness which the applicants had incurred in the course of expanding their cultivation, or doing other work on their estates. I have had to point out to those people that the object of the Credit Corporation is to lend money for new development—not to make loans to people to pay off debt. If that were done the funds of the Corporation would be used up in that way and the country would not benefit from greater production, because it was developmental schemes which were being under-written by the Credit Corporation. So I feel that private enterprise has yet a great part to play in promoting increased production of rice.

Apart from getting larger areas of land to place under rice cultivation, there is the question of increased yield. We have heard Dr. Fraser speak of some people complaining that the yields from their lands are not good enough. I feel that in this respect the rice farmers and the Department of Agriculture —

No Quorum

Miss Collins: Your Honour, may I interrupt to draw your attention to the fact that the hon. Member is addressing Members of the Govern-

[Miss Collins]

ment, as there are only two "floor" Members present. In fact there is no quorum, as there are only eight Members now present.

Mr. Speaker: I very much regret that you have drawn attention to it, for unless my attention is drawn to it the proceedings go on. I am very sorry about this, and I am wondering whether anything can be done about it.

The Chief Secretary: Under the Standing Orders I think Your Honour has to wait for 15 minutes while other Members are summoned.

Mr. Speaker: I have waited longer than that. Of course I could adjourn, but the question is whether I should adjourn the debate. We could deal with other business. Before you conclude your speech, Mr. Garraj, I think you might deal with an important point which was raised by Dr. Fraser. I am sorry he has left the Chamber. He complained that rice farmers were still "shying" padi instead of planting it. You and I know that that is the method they adopt only where there is an absence of sufficient water. For instance, in the Mahaicony creek area the only way they can cultivate rice is by "shying" the padi in the hope that they will get rain, and if there is no rain there is no crop. In these days when good prices are being obtained for rice the only people who "shy" padi are those who cannot afford to employ labour.

Mr. Gajraj: Except where there are small areas to plant.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member, Miss Collins, did not intervene I would not have taken any notice of the lack of a quorum. I am sorry she did.

Mr. Gajraj: In the circumstances Your Honour will have to adjourn the Council.

(At this point the acting Attorney General (Mr. G. M. Farnum) entered the Chamber, and took his seat. The debate continued.)

Mr. Gajraj: I think the points I have been trying to make are necessary to be mentioned at this time. I was saying on the question of the reduction in the yield of padi per acre, which I think was in some quarters considered to be the basic cause of the reduction of the total quantity of rice available during last year, that farmers and the Department of Agriculture should work hand-in-hand, particularly on the question of the use of artificial fertilizers. In this country we have been planting padi in the same field year after year without replacing in the soil the chemicals needed to produce prolific growth and a bigger crop. It is true that the custom in the past has been that after a crop had been reaped, cattle were permitted to go into the field, and spend a month or two there feeding on the stalks and leaving droppings behind.

By that method the farmers were able, in some measure, to replace into the soil some of the chemicals which were taken out in the process of the cultivation of the crop. But it will be found that particularly in those areas where two crops a year are grown, it is not possible for that to be done, and if we are to keep the soil properly alive to produce more padi, then fertilizing of the soil is the right thing. And it is perhaps wise for me to say here that in many of the countries of the East where very large quantities of rice are produced, the soil is fertilized after each crop, otherwise the yield per acre would not be

sufficient to make rice cultivation an economic proposition.

So that if we are to look upon rice cultivation as a very necessary part of our economy, farmers will have to use fertilizers to increase their yields, because increased production is so very necessary if we are to maintain our markets and provide sufficient rice for our growing local population.

One matter which has been affecting the minds of persons who are engaged in the planting of rice, especially those who are engaged in these days in the mechanical cultivation of rice is the ability of the plant to stand up to the rain after the padi has burst out and the grain is awaiting to be ripened. Most of the strains which are at present being used by our rice producers do fall over, and when we have a lot of rain and there is therefore much water in the fields the padi gets into the water, and the whole of the crop is lost. This is a loss not only to the individual producer but a loss to the country, because it does affect the national income of the country. After a man has put all his labour in planting and has taken care of his field, to find that he is not able to reap what Nature in her bounty has produced for him is certainly a calamity. Here I want to tell the farmers that Government has not been slow in realizing the need for a better strain of rice, a strain that will be able to stand up against the ravages of the weather, and particularly the type of plant which by mechanical reaping will enable a great deal of the crop to be taken in quickly.

The hon. Member, Mr. Jailal, mentioned that he was very pleased indeed with his visit to the Agricultural Station at Mon Repos, where a number of members of the Rice Marketing

Board also had the privilege of seeing some of the strains being crossed and developed so as to produce in due course the type of padi plant which will stand erect and look beautiful in the field and not have the heads falling into the water. The two Plant Breeders at the Station are Guianese themselves and, I feel, tribute should be paid to them for the work they are doing in this scientific field. I want to see more of our people developing skill and obtaining technical training so as to produce something better for our country. This country belongs to the people of Guiana. They were born here, they live here and therefore must take more and more interest in its technical advantages so as to benefit themselves and posterity. As I have said, the two officers who are responsible for this work are Guianese. I will not call their names, but instead I desire to pay tribute to them for the very excellent work they have done in bringing out new strains of padi plants which, I feel sure, in about a year or two will be fully developed and can be passed out to the farmers. A lot of the fears and losses, which presently occur at reaping time, will then disappear. That is something the farmers must know. The end of the road is in sight. As far as the yield is concerned it is comparable with the best yield of the existing strains over the last ten years.

We have had complaints that, although the Government does spend a fair amount of money each year on the development of pure line seed some of the seeds when planted produce red grains. I have had such complaints brought to me from the Essequibo Coast, the East Coast and the Corntyne Coast. So it appears that this complaint is general. But talking to an experienced rice farmer the other day, he assured me that it was

[Mr. Gajraj]

perhaps bad methods of planting that resulted in red rice being found at reaping time in a field of what is supposed to be pure line seed padi. In his own experience he knew that, if one took pure line seed which is sold to the farmers and which probably had been kept in storage for months and as a result had suffered from pest infestation, a certain degree of the germinating qualities of that seed suffer. A certain percentage of that seed will not fertilize or germinate when planted, and what he does is to throw all the seed he gets into a water tank and as a result all the bad seed floats to the surface and is taken out. The solid or good seeds which remain at the bottom of the tank are then planted, and he has been able to get 100 per cent. germination. When, however, you take the seed just as it is handed to you and throw it in the field, you find in certain parts of the field the rice plants come up thickly together and in other parts of the field there are small patches without any plants at all. Those patches are probably where the bad seeds had dropped. It is in those patches that the dropped seeds of the previous crop which give the red grains get the opportunity to spring up amongst the new plants. Unless they are pulled out at an early stage and not left with the other seeds, you are bound to get a certain percentage of red grains when you reap the padi from that field.

So it is a good thing that one should make mention of it here, so that it will in due course reach the country. I have to tell the farmers myself when I make trips next year to the various rice producing areas. I am planning to do so, as I want the rice farmers to know that Government is aware of these things and will take every oppor-

tunity to assist them to eradicate the problems which beset them.

Another problem of the industry, which the Rice Marketing Board has been endeavouring to assist in stamping out in consultation and co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, is this most undesirable feature which rice has when milled in bad weather, and that is bad odour. It has always been a problem with the industry. For years and years I have dealt with rice and I know that one has to be careful in bad weather and be sure that the rice produced has no odour. The Department of Agriculture through a young local scientist has been able after a number of years to produce the answer to this problem. By the use of Glacial Acetic Acid fermentation is arrested and the bad odour eliminated. The Rice Marketing Board has done its best by bringing down a large supply of the acid and having it supplied to all the mills. It was decided not to charge for the initial supply and to treat the cost as a subsidy to the industry in order to show all the millers and those farmers who do all they can to get a better price for rice that if they use the acid they eliminate the risk of the rice of having a pungent odour after milling in bad weather.

Just to indicate to the Council how difficult it is at times to get people to adopt a new method — a method which definitely in our opinion is in their own interest — we had representations made to us by farmers that in spite of the Glacial Acetic Acid being given to the rice farmers free of charge they will not use it. In some cases the millers have told the farmers: "If you are going to mill your padi and use the acid, you must pay us for the acid." Those are things that are certainly affecting the success of the in-

dustry. The farmers, millers and the Department of Agriculture must get together in order to educate the people and make them understand that they must work co-operatively and progressively in the interest of the industry. Rice with an odour cannot be sold for human consumption. As one could not ask the local consumer to eat such rice, nor could it be sold at all, we had as a result to take all of that rice with a bad odour, break it up and sell it as cattle feed. One wonders whether cattle or poultry would be willing to make use of a feed which does not carry a pleasant odour. That is one thing we must get rid of, and I want all to co-operate in making sure that it will be removed.

Notwithstanding that fact, we promised them that we will continue to assist them to the end of the year. That is, as the result of representations made we decided that for rice with a bad odour the farmers will not be paid at the lowest rate, because of the claims made by farmers that they were suffering from the methods adopted by the millers. So we decided to give them that concession to the end of December of this year in order to impress upon the millers that unless they do as we say they will lose substantially on the rice they send to the Board.

Another thing affecting the industry is the question of storage and pests. During previous years, we suffered the loss of a large amount of stock from weevil infestation. We have been working in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture on the matter. There is an officer of the Department spending much of his time in studying these pests and the way in which we can eliminate them. The other day I was very much surprised to learn that in a test it was proved that a pair of weevils which had been left in a jar reproduced themselves so many times in

one month that on the count there were 238 weevils in the jar. That gives an indication of how much loss can result from rice being stored in places where weevils can breed. That is a phase of the industry we are all very anxious to safeguard against, because weevils attack the padi before milling and also attack the rice afterwards. We hope that by proceeding as we are doing to be able to offer to the industry suggestions whereby a fair amount of this loss may be prevented in future years.

Now I come to the question of the mechanization of the industry. Everyone knows that we are producing now very much more rice than we produced let us say, 10, 15 or 20 years ago, and the average farmer is 'sold' on the idea of using farm equipment for ploughing his land and reaping his crop. Only the other day up at Mahaicony it was pointed out that farmers cultivating rice in different areas—sometimes one man to 400 acres—while having a considerable number of tractors and so on, did not have adequate reaping machinery. In such circumstances, coupled with our peculiar weather conditions during reaping time, when we have to gather in our crop in three or four weeks, a single "combine" in many cases is not enough to do the job of reaping, and we find that farmers not only in Mahaicony but in other parts of the country, having to buy ploughs and tractors are not in a position to buy enough combines also, with prices ranging from 18,000 to 35,000 dollars for a "combine harvester".

That gives an indication of the tremendous amount of capital that the individual farmer must invest if he wants to mechanize his farming throughout. It has been pointed out to me that to a fair extent the rate of customs duties is responsible for the high price of this type of machinery, and I hope to take this up with the Financial Secretary at an early date. I

[Mr. Gajraj]

think we should consider the vicissitudes of the farmers and make the rate of duty on agricultural machinery somewhat lower.

Apart from that, we find there is very great need for the use of moisture testers by rice millers. The days are past when the rice miller from his own experience was able to say at a glance, "this is dry padi" or "that is wet padi" and so on. That was all right in the days when the quantities of padi delivered for milling were small and millers with small bonds could mill off in a short period of time, but in these days of the expansion of the rice industry when thousands of bags of padi are being produced all over the coastlands and some small mills stock between 15,000 and 20,000 bags of padi, it is absolutely necessary for the miller or the buyer of the padi to know, when the wet weather comes, which lots of padi can be safely stored for a week or two and which lots can be stored for six months.

Now there has been developed in the United Kingdom an excellent moisture metre which, when plunged into the stocks and a water generator is turned, it indicates the moisture content on a dial attached to this instrument. This piece of equipment would cost £50, and when I was checking on the customs duty payable I was amazed to find that it is classified as a scientific measuring instrument, at 20% Preferential and 36% General. That is also something which I can discuss with my colleague, the hon. the Financial Secretary because the business of moisture testing is very essential to the industry.

Another aspect of the mechanization of the industry is that we find so many of the farmers buy their machin-

ery but they do not know enough about it to take care of it properly. I myself have seen all over the coastlands of this Colony tractors, ploughs and other equipment stored when not in use, in the open air and at the mercy of the elements. This is another thing that needs correcting because if the greatest amount of use is to be gained from mechanical equipment that costs a lot of money it needs to be well looked after. We find, for example, that when tractors are used in the field they come out full of mud and they are in many cases only superficially washed; their bearings get clogged and the result is that they do not give good service, and one of the things facing the farmer is the very high cost of replacement parts.

During the last season I was shown instances where similar parts for motor cars cost four or five times less than those for rice farming equipment. So I think perhaps it would be wise for the Agriculture Department in consultation with other agencies engaged in rice production to arrange classes in various parts of the Colony in which young farmers using this equipment can be taught how to give better service. This would be all to the betterment of the industry: and remember, we want greater production, greater quality of product, greater revenue—all related to the economic aspirations of the country as a whole.

Time is fast moving on. I know Members would like me to finish this afternoon and I would like to assist them. But there is another point which is exercising the minds of the people in the rice industry and that is, the policy of the Government with relation to mills. I have had the opportunity of speaking to Members of the Council of the B.G. Rice Producers Association and I informed them in no uncertain terms that it is not Government's policy to legislate the small mills out of pro-

duction. I have said so although I know that His Excellency the Governor has also taken the opportunity to stress when asked by people in the rice industry that it is not the Government's intention nor the Government's policy to legislate small millers out of the way. Nevertheless there is a great fear on the part of the small man that in other ways they will be pushed out of making a living and a contribution to the industry—which they have been doing for many decades now. As a Member of the Government I wish to say that tribute must be paid to those persons who have built up the industry from nothingness right to what it is today, and in paying that tribute the millers must come in for their share, because in various parts of the country they are the people who are providing milling facilities—though some of these facilities are of the plantation type—out of their meagre resources; if they had not been doing so, the industry would never have attained its present stage of development. So that whatever is done, I feel that it is to be borne in mind that it is in the interest of the country, of Government and the industry that private enterprise should play its part in the milling industry along with Government.

We have two Government mills at the present time, and there are about 200 small mills privately owned, and the minimum number of bags of padi these large mills need in order to run economically is 300,000 bags *per annum*. Well, if we are looking forward to expansion in the production of rice it is easy to see that there must come a time when large mills will have all the padi they need and some left over which will not be enough to warrant expenditure of a million dollars to put up another large mill. It is possible for modern milling techniques to be introduced into the operation of mills of a smaller

capacity—methods leading to the multi-stage —

Sir Frank McDavid: I do not know if the hon. Member is speaking on a personal basis or if policy is represented in what he is saying.

Mr. Gajraj: I did say "I" and not "we", and I want to assure the industry that I feel there is no room, and I say it categorically, no room for 200 rehabilitated mills working alongside each other. Something will have to be done about it, but there is no room and some will have withdrawn from competition. What I am trying to say is for the benefit of the industry. Those concerned should not carry fear and dread in their minds that Government's policy means a complete close-down of all these mills. That cannot be done even though it might have been felt at some time that that should be so. I feel that a general realization of the situation will bring about a different approach.

One of the things that worries people in the rice industry and which I must mention here is, that the Rice Development Company is running mostly on Government guaranteed finance and, it is felt, in the normal course of competition if the Rice Development Company is minded to pay for padi a higher price than is economically prudent, this will push out of business the small millers because they would not then be able to get the raw material for their mills, and if there is a loss suffered by the company, the general taxpayer will have to pay.

I make mention of it but I make no comment, because I am not in a position to do so. It is also clear, of course, that these large and modern mills have not yet reached the peak of production in the best quality rice and I know myself that these things have got to be improved upon by way of trial and error.

[Mr. Gajraj]

I have seen samples myself which came from two large mills and it does seem that they are gaining control of the milling technique and that the recovery from the padi is now of a higher percentage than what was being secured from the small mills provided, of course, that the milling cost is comparable with the amount of padi sent to the mills.

That is all I wish to say about rice. I feel that it is only right as one charged with the Chairmanship of the selling part of the rice machinery in this Colony, that I should bring these points to the notice of this Council. I am sorry that the Council is so depleted today, but before I continue on things agricultural, I think I should spend a few brief moments in making an appeal also to the coconut producers in this country—to do everything within their power to increase production. Only a few days ago I took the opportunity while speaking on the subject, to point out that the Oils and Fats Agreement gives a great deal of security to the industry in British Guiana and the entire Caribbean, but no security or even the best markets will make the industry develop further unless the supply of the raw materials required to produce the manufactured article like margarine can be maintained in accordance with the demand. We, in British Guiana, have not for the last few years been able to achieve increased production. This is most necessary, particularly now that we will be producing our own margarine from our own local raw material. Heretofore, our production and consumption remained somewhat in balance, but it must be recalled that all of our table margarine was then being imported. We must call upon our farmers to plant more coconuts: replace old trees and clear new lands. The Agriculture Department must provide the impetus: start a coconut campaign and, generally, do

everything possible to educate and assist the coconut grower. In particular, attention must be paid to those diseases which are decimating our trees in the Pomeroon and on the East Coast. No half-hearted measures must be tried; the Agriculture Department and the farmers must tackle the problems jointly and vigorously.

On the question of pests, there was a general discussion at the last meeting of the Oils and Fats Conference and I am very glad to state that it has been decided that it should be tackled on a firm basis so that we in British Guiana will benefit from the research scheme which will be started in the coming year. In the meantime, because of its economic value to our agricultural economy it is necessary that we should work through our own Agriculture Department and our own scientists to try and minimize loss from caterpillar and other pest infestation. I do not think it is necessary for me to say more at this stage. I feel that the problems of the two agricultural industries which I have undertaken more or less to represent in the Government and in this Council have been fully explained. I do not think my hon. colleague (Sir Frank McDavid) will take exception to any of the views to which I have given expression here, but would undertake to let the Agriculture Department pay full attention to them because he himself I know, is very interested in winning this battle for production.

Sir Frank McDavid: If any other Member has any particular point to make he can always do so during the discussion of the Budget, under the appropriate head.

The Financial Secretary: I think other Members do wish to speak.

Mrs. Dey: I am one who would like to speak, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I allowed Mr. Gajraj to speak on an appropriate subject. He was not speaking on the Budget particularly, he was taking opportunity to explain the necessity for certain action.

Mrs. Dey: With your permission, Sir, I shall begin on the resumption tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said so. If you wish to speak now, however, you may do so.

Mrs. Dey: And continue tomorrow. I cannot finish within five minutes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member (Mrs. Dey) must realise that Miss Collins also has a right to speak if she wishes to do so. Obviously she does not wish to speak, but she has the right, I do not wish to embarrass the hon. Member (Mrs. Dey), but she cannot say very much within the few minutes left and therefore she will begin tomorrow.

Mrs. Dey: Thank you, Sir. I begin tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: I take it, you will end tomorrow also. Council will now adjourn until 2 p.m., tomorrow.