

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 21st May, 1936.

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. A. Luckhoo (Eastern Berbice).

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

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

The Hon. J. Gonsalves (Georgetown South).

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. S. E. Gomes, Assistant Attorney-General.

The Hon. A. MacDougall, General Manager, Transport and Harbours Department.

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. E. M. Walcott (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

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

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

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

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

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 20th May, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

PAPER LAID.

The following document was laid on the table:—

Report to Government on the activities of the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board since the introduction of the new Rice (Export Trade) Ordinance, 1935 (*The Colonial Secretary*.)

ORDER OF THE DAY.

DEEDS REGISTRY (SALES IN EXECUTION) BILL.

The Council resumed consideration of "A Bill to amend the Deeds Registry Ordinance, Chapter 174, by making better provision with regard to the effect of sales of immovables in execution."

THE PRESIDENT: The situation of this bill is as follows. The debate on the second reading was proposed by the hon. and learned Attorney-General, and then the hon. member for Central Demerara raised a point of some considerable moment. I therefore deferred putting the question yesterday. I understand that the hon. member has now met the hon. and learned gentleman and is satisfied that although his point has great weight it is

not a matter which goes to the principle of the bill. I shall therefore now put the question that the bill be read the second time, and the bill will go into Committee when the points raised yesterday can be further discussed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

The Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Clause 2—Provisions relating to sales in execution of immovables after commencement of this Ordinance.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Hector Josephs): As I mentioned yesterday, I desire to move an amendment in para. (a), by inserting in the fourth line after the words "registered interests" the words "other than real servitudes." The object of the amendment is to protect real servitudes, rights of way and cases of that kind, which, of course, are never interfered with in documents of this nature, but it will be made perfectly clear.

Question put, and agreed to.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There is an amendment to paragraph (b), of which I have given notice, to add the following proviso at the end of it:—

Provided that where the holder of a registered incumbrance has consented in writing to the grant of a lease or of a registered interest being a real servitude a sale at execution for the purpose of enforcing his rights under the incumbrance shall be subject to the lease or servitude.

It protects the interests of a lessee to whose lease the mortgagee is a consenting party. That is in the case of a lease made after the mortgage. It would be inequitable that when a mortgagee is enforcing his security the lease should be wiped off, and it is entirely a question for the mortgagee whether he would consent to do so or not, but the proviso says what the position will be if he consents to it.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: Does the Attorney-General not think that it might be as well that the amendment should be a bit wider? Where the holder of a registered incumbrance has consented to the granting of a lease I think it ought to be well to put in

the words "or the creation of an interest in the land." The proposed amendment is in respect of a lease having been granted, but it might be made wider by the creation of an interest in the land.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I appreciate the point of the hon. and learned Member. The mortgagee might in special circumstances deem it wise to consent to the creation of such an interest, but without the consent of the mortgagee it would be impossible to create a servitude on mortgaged property which will have the effect of lessening the value of his security. I appreciate that questions might arise, but I think it should be a registered interest, because one of the principles of the Deeds Registry Ordinance is the validity that is given to registered documents. Unregistered documents are of little value, and they make it difficult to enforce equitable principles, which it was presumed and hoped were introduced into the Civil Law of British Guiana Ordinance. I would have no objection, if the House think it necessary or useful, to an amendment adding after the word "lease" the words "or of a registered interest being a real servitude."

Mr. HUMPHRYS: That would meet my point.

Question put, and agreed to.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that in para (c) the words "if there is no such address" be inserted after the words "instruments or" in the fifth line. That makes it quite clear that the notice will only be served on the property in the event of there being no registered address.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 5—Summons to decide mode of distribution.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move a verbal amendment substituting the word "for" for the words "as to" in the penultimate line.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 7—Ordinance applies to sales by the Registrar, etc.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: Has the Attorney-General considered section 13 of the

Agricultural Relief Ordinance, Chapter 152? It looks to me that if any money is advanced under that Ordinance there would be no lien at all.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The statute to which the hon. Member refers gives a preferent lien and there is nothing in any subsequent statute which removes from that lien its priority. In the circumstances mentioned in the particular section it takes precedence over everything else. That is borne out too by a recent decision of the High Court of Justice that where a particular Act gave a general exemption from taxation in very general terms the income accruing to the defendants was free from income tax notwithstanding the provisions of the Income Tax Act. The statute here is stronger by giving a preferent lien in the circumstances. I am glad that the hon. Member has referred to the statute, and I hope use will be made of it.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I understand then that in the event of a sale the distribution of the proceeds in clause 4 of this Bill would have to give way to the preferent lien under the Agricultural Relief Ordinance.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes, in the circumstances mentioned in the Ordinance.

The Council resumed.

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

INSTITUTE OF MINES AND FORESTS
(REPEAL) BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Waddington): I beg to move that "A Bill to repeal the Institute of Mines and Forests Ordinance, Chapter 215" be read the third time and passed.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question "That this Bill be now read a third time and passed" put, and agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

AUDIT DEPARTMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I beg to move that "A Bill to amend the Audit Department Ordinance, Chapter 200, to make provision for the appointment of an Assistant Auditor on the abolition of the post of Chief Clerk, and for purposes connected therewith" be read the third time and passed.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question "That this Bill be now read a third time and passed" put, and agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

Mr. Mc DAVID (Colonial Treasurer): I beg to move that "A Bill to appropriate the supplies granted in the last session of the Legislative Council" be read the second time. This Bill, sir, when passed will provide the statutory authority required for the payments to be made for the service of the year 1936 in accordance with the Estimates which have already been approved by this Council. The Bill covers services which are not provided for by statutory law. The total estimate approved is \$5,435,592. Of that sum \$1,699,529 is already provided for and this Bill covers the remainder of \$3,736,063. The items in the schedule are precisely the same as those already passed in the estimates which have been approved.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

Mr. SEYMOUR: I wish to make some observations on the sea defences of the Colony; whether I can do so now I do not know.

THE PRESIDENT: It will be within the hon. Member's competence to speak on the point.

Mr. SEYMOUR: The question of sea defence has come before the public to a very great extent within the past few years. There is undoubtedly a large amount of public interest in the problem of our sea defence policy, involving very heavy annual expenditure on replacing collapsed works and maintenance, more

especially since 1934 when the illusion as to our sea defence works being permanent was shattered by the disaster on the East Coast with the subsequent grave disaster last year of new works again collapsing at the same spot. In 1917 it was decided to bring about what we term permanent sea defence works. From then until now is a very long time. We find to-day criticism in the Press and other channels by different people of Government's seeming failure to surmount the difficulties of sea defence control which has now been operative for 19 years. Sea defence is a burden on this Colony; money is being thrown into the sea and the public have a right to criticism. Failure to overcome these difficulties calls for a revision of the whole position.

In 1917 we called in Mr. Case and decided on what we call the sea defence policy. At the outset of the so-called permanent sea defence works Mr. Case laid great stress on two essential conditions: firstly, the building of a light sea wall in conjunction with groynes which would eventually build up and maintain the foreshore several feet above the toe of the sea wall, as also reduce the velocity of wave action by frictional resistance on a sloping foreshore impinging on the wall at high tides. The wall was of a very light structure and to safeguard it he said groynes were the remedy. Groynes were introduced and in some cases they assisted in building up the foreshore; in some cases the foreshore did not build up rapidly and in other cases the foreshore as well as the groynes. To the ordinary citizen the position must be complex, and I do not consider that Government have through their advisers plainly placed before the public the actual condition. Rather have the issues been confused by introducing hypothetical reasons, which in my candid opinion confuse the actual problem.

As further proof of the sea defence problem I will give a little experience of my own. In the early part of 1919 we were faced in Essequibo with what has been happening at Nog Eens. It was found necessary to spend thousands of dollars on groynes and sea walls, the sea having breached the earthen dams in several places, as at Nog Eens to-day. We started permanent works and before they were completed we found that there was a considerable amount of accretion. It

would appear that the peak of the erosion ceased on completion of the works, *i.e.*, the ocean bed undoubtedly shallowed with the result that layers of silt mud were deposited on the foreshore, which consolidated the foreshore built up to 54 Essequibo Data with forest of courida in places. From 1919 to 1933 accretion had taken place steadily. It is of interest to note that at Reliance, where there was no groyne whatever, the foreshore had extended 2,000 feet seawards. At Taymouth Manor groynes were erected and you could not see them because cattle were grazing on the foreshore. Within the last two years the whole of that foreshore has disappeared, millions of tons of mud have been removed by the sea, and groynes which could not be seen were undermined and toppled over.

That is a concrete illustration of the failure of groynes to protect the foreshore. Much stress has been laid in letters appearing in the Press on the assumption that if groynes had been properly erected at certain angles the disaster at Nog Eens could have been averted. Why then at Taymouth Manor, where the groynes were covered with earth, this did not prevent the erosion of the foreshore? Similar conditions have arisen on the West Coast, Demerara, where rapid erosion has taken place. Captain Gibson found a very deep channel there, which no doubt was the cause of erosion taking place at Leonora. Likewise in Essequibo a deepening of the channel inward has caused erosion there. Mr. Case in his Report 1936, No. 16,593, paragraph 18, states:—

“Previous to the 1934 breach at Nog Eens I had never seen any erosion which could not be attributed to ordinary wave and current action, but Baron Siccama in a paper read before the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1910 advanced the view that the intermittent erosion of the Guiana Coast could be due only to changes in the bed of the sea front. Where this shallowed the Coast to leeward was protected, but where it deepened the sea waves travelled on coastwards in great volume and velocity with more disastrous results to that part of the Coast on which they impinged.”

I entirely agree with Baron Siccama. The erosion that has taken place at Nog Eens *cum annexis* cannot be attributed to any other cause than the change of the ocean bed, deepening considerably near the foreshore, causing the sea waves to roll along the coastland in greater volume

and velocity with disastrous result to that part of the coast on which they impinge. Baron Siccama said that in 1910 and what he said then exists to-day. We have to face the fact that erosion on the foreshore is due to Nature. I think we are not playing the game with the public. The collapse in 1935 is further confused by Dr. Grantham being called in, and we are presented with a report which speaks of land slides and warping. There is no such thing as land-slides here, nor is there any warping, and I am glad that Dr. Grantham agreed with me that the erosion at Nog Eens, West Demerara and Essequebo is to be regarded as normal. We come down to a simple factor. The deepening of the sea-bed must and does take place, and the moment that deepening takes place on the foreshore we get erosion. It occurs in cycles and then we have accretion. We have therefore reached the point where we have carefully to consider expenditure on sea defence.

Turning now to the hydrographic survey, I intended to ask Mr. Case if he had all the data it would have saved the wall at Nog Eens. I did not then ask the question having already spoken and in view of the restricted time at our disposal, but I say now that even with all the data that wall would have gone all the same. It is not a question of faulty design or construction, or that something was wrong with the concrete or cement, as some people have suggested. It was a case of the earthen foundation being cut away by wave action, with the result that the wall simply toppled over. There is value in hydrographic work, but I also know that a hydrographic survey will not do all that is now claimed for it. I cannot understand of what advantage monthly reports of such surveys would be. It is not possible to come down to any degree of accuracy in the course of one month which will be of any service whatever. It will require at least twelve months and during those twelve months conditions might vary so much as to render them valueless. It is no good talking about groynes with the drift we have on the coastlands. The building up of the foreshore is due not to groynes but to sling mud coming in. Where you have groynes you find sling mud and if the sling mud is consolidated it is a protection against erosion. While I agree that useful data may be obtained from a hydrographic

survey, I venture to add that with our constant changing ocean bed and foreshore conditions I fail to see what reliability can be definitely placed on such data, especially bearing in mind the erosion and building up of the foreshore which take place constantly.

Further large expenditure on the type of walls and groynes in this country is purely experimental and it calls for serious investigation. Are we to continue spending thousands of dollars experimenting? I have been studying the methods employed in Holland as sea-defence measures. It was found there that concrete walls were not successful as breaches occurred below sea-level without warning, due to the concrete facings not allowing observations regarding what was taking place below, and the sudden collapse of the wall occurred.

The protection of the land is secured by dykes or dams, there being three dykes: the outer, the second and inner. Large mats of branches and twigs are made at a convenient place and towed by launches to the sea side side of the outer dyke; such mats being placed three or more feet thick. These mats are fastened to the dyke and then loaded with stone which gradually sinks them into the required position. Such mats last for years lying below sea level. We can build a seawall which can stand up against the attacks of the sea, but we are confronted again with the economical aspect of the value of the land. It is a matter of dollars and cents, and that must be carefully studied. Mr. Case cannot design a wall, whatever data he may have, of a more permanent nature than the sea defence we have now. We must put up a wall to stand up against sea action with groynes or follow what is taking place in Holland.

I come now to a very important point which Mr. Walcott raised at Government House. The question he asked was: On whose authority was the Mahaica deflector removed? That deflector was erected on the advice of Mr. Case, our adviser, and was left there until it was removed, I understand, by Sir Edward Denham. The point about that removal was that Mr. Case was not consulted. Mr. Case tried to cover up the question by stating that he did not think the removal was the cause of the present erosion. If the deflector was put in and we found that

no erosion was taking place, what about that well-known old policy of life "Let well alone"? It should never have been removed whether it was doing no good or doing no harm. The deflection of the Mahaica River at the mouth could and may have had a very important bearing on the situation, and Mr. Walcott will bear me out that a few months after that deflector was removed erosion took place. If we are going to continue to be advised by experts let us by all means follow their advice and not as laymen change their plans.

There is another point. Mr. Case removed every break-water we had in the Colony. In Essequibo there were break-waters and it is idle to say that those granite boulders caused erosion. They might have caused erosion to a certain extent, but had they not been removed they would have been a first line of defence. Break-waters arrest the sea's velocity and their removal was a retrograde step. It is no use crying over spilt milk, but it must be borne in mind that in future nothing of that kind should be removed.

I come now to another very important point. I made in this House last year the suggestion that the cost of sea defences should be made an Imperial one. Your Excellency then said that you were taking up the matter with the Home Government. Whether or not it becomes an Imperial Question it must become a Colonial Question. This question must be rightly and squarely faced by the people of this country. It is not fair to the people who are struggling on the front lands and are after all the backbone of the country; and it is the bounden duty of everybody to help to protect the very essence of our success and progress. It is Government's policy to spend large sums of money in building roads and bridges to open up the interior. I have never been against progress, but if you are going to spend money for the benefit of those in the interior, they should pay their share in keeping the sea out on the coastlands. It is a fatal blunder to burden those who have to face the sea. I don't demur to assisting in the development of the interior, but I do demur to our bearing the whole burden of sea defence. I trust that what I have said this morning has clarified the sea defence situation, and I ask Government to give very careful consideration to all the points

I have raised, bearing in mind that protection of our coastlands is a part of the protection of the whole Colony.

Mr. JACOB: I would like to make a few remarks on the very interesting review by Your Excellency of the finances and trade of the Colony during the first three months of the year, and I propose to comment chiefly on the prospects of the coffee and rice industries. The coffee industry is in a very parlous condition. My constituency, the North West District, produces about 50 per cent. of the total production of coffee in the Colony, and during Your Excellency's recent visit there I have no doubt that you must have been satisfied that the industry does need assistance. The kind of assistance necessary is what is puzzling all of us, but I feel confident that some assistance can be given by way of a fixed local price. If it is impossible to fix the price of coffee, then, as you have suggested in your address, there are other means of reducing the cost of production. That might be alright, but coffee is produced in small quantities, and, as the copra industry is protected, in the same way coffee could be protected. The problem would be very simple and not half as difficult as the copra product. I appeal to Your Excellency to give the matter further consideration because, sooner or later, we shall find coffee cultivation being abandoned not in the North West District alone but in other districts. We have to build up the finances of the Colony by means of agricultural products, and it is not good policy for Government to allow this industry, which has been built up but has fallen on evil days, to go out of existence without giving it some help. I am not suggesting that such help must be permanent, but probably for a period of five years or a little longer, and if after that it cannot stand on its own legs it might be allowed to go. I do not think it is fair that an industry that has fallen on evil days through world conditions should be allowed to go out of existence, especially when it forms the principal means of livelihood of the people of the North West District.

I also feel that the very intricate problem of rice should be ventilated, and I desire to refer to some of the points made in the address. The rice industry

was the pride of this Colony and up to three years ago it was the second largest industry. At that time sugar was first in the list of exports, rice was second and every other industry followed after. In Your Excellency's address I find that in value sugar is first, gold second, bauxite third, diamonds fourth and rice fifth. Even rum is nearly as high as rice. It is deplorable that an agricultural industry which held the second place should find itself now as the fifth commodity in the list of exports. I say that the present position of the rice industry is due mainly to Government control and the uncertainty in which rice-farmers and others find themselves. That may be a harsh statement to make, but the control which was asked for was never given. Other powers were given, and the Rice Marketing Board has exceeded its powers, which has accentuated the position. I have asked certain questions in respect of the industry and must plead with Government for co-operation in that respect. Government had those questions for two weeks, and, although I specially asked that the information should be placed on the table, I have not yet received a reply. But I have the information, and I want to convince Government that I know what has been going on. There seems to me to be some evil genius at the back of the whole affair. There seems to be an idea of trying to keep back everything in order to mislead you, and I respectfully say you are being misled and will agree with me. In your address you stated:—

“The Rice Marketing Board assisted by certain millers made strenuous efforts to dispose of this surplus and was successful in placing approximately 13,000 tons; other sales have since been made by exporters and, while it seems probable that a certain quantity of padi will have to be carried forward, it is felt that by the end of the year the position in this respect should not cause any undue anxiety.”

Fancy at this time of the year we are being told by the President of this House, on the advice of his experts, that we are going to carry over padi from this year to next year. What is the object? Is it to prevent sales so as to allow padi to be held up to bolster up a position that is untenable? That is what has been happening. When the crop was reaped the Rice Marketing Board announced that there was a surplus of 30,000 tons to be exported during 1936. In the report that has been

issued that figure has been reduced to 28,000 tons, and I would not be surprised if in another three months it is reduced by another 3,000 tons and at the end of the year we are told that we are carrying forward 10,000 tons. The exports for this year will not be more than 18,000 tons as compared with 10,000 tons last year, 14,000 tons in 1934 and 29,000 tons in 1933. But we were told at the beginning of 1936 or late in 1935 that we would have 30,000 tons to export in 1936, and therefore the Rice Marketing Board must be there to buy and sell rice. That is utterly dishonest, sir; I use that word advisedly. The Rice Marketing Board has done various irregular things, if not illegal things, and it is dishonest to attempt to fool us. They cannot fool me. I do not pose to be an expert but I have as much knowledge of it as any Member sitting around this table, or at least nine-tenths of the Members here. The rice industry needs every encouragement and help, and I feel sure that it will have some encouragement from now on.

Your Excellency has been advised also that inefficient milling is responsible for our not being able to market our rice. I am sure that our buyers abroad do not complain about the quality of our rice not being consistent with the price they are paying. If they buy Super rice and get No. 1 rice of course they will complain, but if they buy No. 3 rice and get the lowest grade of rice they have no cause for complaint whatever. I am responsible for at least 15 per cent. of the exports and I am in communication with practically all the islands that buy our rice, and I have had very little complaint about the quality provided they do not get No. 2 when they wanted No. 1 rice. Sometimes a buyer feels that he had not got the grade of rice he wanted, but he has never complained that he got what was not consistent with what he bought. I am practically advised that some scheme is being hatched whereby there will be greater stringency, resulting in the reduction of the number of rice millers with a view to reducing the production of rice. I say it is on account of this scheme that inefficient milling is brought into your address.

I am prepared to back up my experience with correspondence and convince Government that we can market all the rice that is produced here. That does not do away

with the necessity of improving our milling, but we should not be asked to do it under present world's conditions. I am in favour of the continuance of grading; but every other control of the rice industry must be abolished. In support of that statement I wish to make a few other remarks. The Rice Marketing Board is vested with certain powers by statute. We find the Board trading in rice—buying and selling—which it has no power under the law to do. But the Board arrogates to itself that power and continues to do it. We have protested over and over again, but there is some evil hand at work. Elected Members of this Council are on that Board and I regret that I have to make these comments. These Members allow themselves to be led, but this House and Government will not allow one or two people to ruin the rice industry by doing what they like. I hope this House will be satisfied that the Board has exceeded its powers, and that the Ordinance should be repealed forthwith.

I see in the accounts of the Board an item due by "sundry debtors." How can the Board have sundry debtors when it is only allowed to do certain things and propaganda work? If the Board had not been trading how could it allow people to owe it? The Board has taken up the functions of licensed exporters to the detriment of the industry. We have asked the Board to say how many bags of rice have been sold and how they have been distributed but have not got the information. What is the conclusion to come to? I have my own views on the point. My business this year has increased tremendously. I am responsible for 15 per cent. of the exports, while last year and the year before my average was not less than 10 per cent. On sales that were made I did not even get 8 per cent. Some were profitable and others were unprofitable. But the position is that I must sit in my office and allow the Board to effect my sales. I say that the Board has not acted within its powers, therefore illegally, and that it has not distributed sales in the right manner. I am forced to say so from the fact that it has persistently refused to give me information I have asked for.

At the same time I want to be generous to the Board. The Board has done one or two good things, but if it had not been there we might have done better. It

made a very good sale of 25,000 bags of rice to Trinidad, but it also made a sale of 10,000 bags which was not a good sale. We were told that certain exporters had protested against the bank exchange being paid by the shippers. The Board said "Very well, we pay the bank exchange from the funds." The Board has no authority of that kind. There are other things that the Board has done of which no mention is made in the report, but I propose to investigate and expose them. The sale to Trinidad was somewhat satisfactory, but sales to Martinique and Guadeloupe were to our disadvantage. The Board having contracted, and the Colony's name being at stake, we were forced to agree to the contracts, but the Board antagonised buyers on the other side. The result has been great dissatisfaction. The Board stated over and over again that its object is to please buyers, but conditions were made very much worse both in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and the Board was asked to cancel sales with Martinique because they were not to our advantage. Since then we have had enquiries for sales there but we are prevented from selling.

Exporters know their own business and the majority prefer to make sales themselves. A well-known broker in England has stated that the Rice Marketing Board sells blindly and does not know when to sell. When a deputation saw Your Excellency we were given an undertaking that no other market would be put under a quota arrangement to see how it would work out. Two weeks later we were pressed to put the Barbados market under the same arrangement. I was forced to say that these things were going to ruin the industry, and I and others declined to agree to any allocation of sales and would not make delivery, and the matter was left in abeyance. Since then we have been able to sell rice to Barbados at 30 and 40 cents above the quota rates. What worries me is why is this rice business interfered with to such an extent. It is true we asked for certain things for the rice industry. Those things were never given us, but other things were pushed down our throats. I speak not only as an exporter but as a grower and miller of rice. I have been advancing growers money and I have lost consistently during the last five years. The grower and the miller will always lose money under these trying conditions, and it is only the

exporter who looks after his business that will succeed under these conditions.

I think I have said sufficient to demonstrate to the House that although the Board has done one or two things it has exceeded its authority and the Ordinance empowering it to act should be repealed forthwith. But I should like to plead with Your Excellency. In your address, sir, you say that some other scheme is being brought up and will receive consideration. I think that before any scheme receives consideration the Members of this Council who are interested in rice should be appointed to go into it and submit a report to the Council before anything further is done. I anticipate that the Director of Agriculture will have something to say on this question. My hon. friend should be very wary in what he says and should weigh very carefully what he is going to tell us, as I think I shall be able to prove conclusively that the Department of Agriculture is not taking the care it should of the rice industry. I have visited the Counties of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice, and I do not think 75 per cent. of the area will be planted or the production obtained this year. I therefore advise the Director to go warily into this matter and not be misled by any of his friends.

Mr. SEYMOUR: Being interested in the rice industry I think it should come up for very careful revision.

Mr. WALCOTT: I have listened with much interest to the indictment—the very serious indictment—made by the hon. Member for North Western District against the Marketing Board and its methods of operations. I am not a member of the Marketing Board but I am a member of the Advisory Committee, and I am in exactly the same capacity as the hon. Member. We all agree—I do not think there is any question about that—that the Marketing Board, on account of the powers asked for it not being fully given, has not been able to operate and control the situation as well as it might have done had fuller powers been granted. But to say that the Marketing Board has not done any good except in one or two instances is not speaking correctly. The hon. Member used the word “dishonesty” in connection with the Board. I think it

is for Government to protect the Marketing Board against the use of such a word by any Member of this Council. I am not a member of the Board, but it seems unfortunate that any Member of the Council should so misunderstand the liberty that is granted to Members as to make licence of it.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't agree that the hon. Member's use of the word impugned the honesty of any Member of the Board.

Mr. WALCOTT: He said they were dishonestly advised about the actions taken. I can only presume that, as far as rice is concerned, Your Excellency's advice will be taken from the Board, which is your advisory body. The hon. Member called attention to the exports of rice in the years 1933, 1934 and 1935 and made reference to the estimated output for 1936. We all know that 1933 was the peak year. The exports for that year exceeded the exports of any previous year, even the best year of the War or immediately after, when prices were extraordinarily high. In the beginning of 1934 we had a flood, as the result of very heavy rains starting from early in October, 1933, which led to a very large portion of the crop being lost. We knew in January, 1934, that there would be very little rice for export during that year. So much did we know that Government prohibited the export of rice, and that resulted in many of the islands getting their supplies elsewhere. We did not have rice for export in 1934, therefore, as the result of the flood. During the year the market of the East also declined very considerably, and the price went down to a figure that made it uneconomical to cultivate rice in the Colony.

I have on many occasions heard the hon. Member for North Western District, not only here but in other places, talk of the very low prices and call attention to the fact that everyone who produced rice was losing money. That is perfectly correct, and as a result they did not produce as much rice as they would have done under normal conditions. They turned their attention to other things that paid them better. At the same time the sugar industry was being increased and it gave an opportunity for employment. Government was also

giving out a certain amount of relief work at the expense of rice, which would not have given the people a fair return for their labour. In 1935 Government was not giving out much relief work, and rice growers were getting better returns by increased yields from the same acreage as they cultivated the year before. The hon. Member is quite correct when he says that the Director of Agriculture has estimated that there will be a surplus of 30,000 tons of rice available for export this year. Many other people also anticipate a very large surplus for export, and I think you, sir, were approached by more than one body of people interested in rice who were very greatly concerned about how they could get rid of their product. I think that even the hon. Member for North Western District was one of a deputation that saw you in connection with the difficulty we were experiencing.

Mr. JACOB: To a point of correction. I approached you, sir, with the object of buying myself 50,000 bags, because I felt that there was no surplus, and if given an opportunity of buying I would have made a good deal of money. But the Board bought and sold at a considerable loss below the cost of production.

THE PRESIDENT: That is not the point. The point is that you were a member of the deputation.

Mr. WALCOTT: I think it was the direct result of the representations made by those bodies that Your Excellency got the Chairman of the Marketing Board—a man who has no financial interest in rice but has done immeasurable service for the industry and ought to be appreciated and respected—to send, first of all, the Secretary of the Board throughout the islands to try and make sales and find out what the position was. Unfortunately, the Secretary was able to do very little. He found conditions in the islands so black that there appeared to be very little opportunity of selling one-fifth of the crop as estimated by the Department of Agriculture. After that the Chairman of the Board himself—I presume after consultation with Your Excellency—went off on a special mission to Barbados and Trinidad. He took along with him three leading East Indians of the Colony. As the result of that visit they were able to sell a very appreciable quantity of rice in

Trinidad, and I believe they took an infinite amount of trouble in doing so. They are to be congratulated on the results of their action. In talking the matter over with the Chairman of the Marketing Board I undertook, as I was going to the French Islands, to see what I could do free of expense to the Colony. The Marketing Board's price on the day before I sailed was \$2.90 per bag for No. 3 rice, and any and every exporter could have sold at that price.

The records of the Board will show that for several weeks during which that price remained open no sales were made from this Colony. I told the Chairman "As I am sailing tomorrow, if we are going to put through any appreciable business it would be necessary for you to close the market until the business actually comes through, because I am sure that some of our people, even one or two who are members of the Advisory Committee of the Board, the moment they know that you are trying to make sales to these islands will do their utmost to upset the market." The result was that in those two islands we made tentative arrangements for the sale of 35,000 bags of rice, the contracts being subject to the approval of the Marketing Board. On my return to the Colony I handed over the contracts to the Board and the Board called a meeting of the Advisory Committee. Unfortunately, the Advisory Committee are placed in the position that they have to keep secret everything that goes on at these meetings. I have tried—and I believe I have succeeded—to observe my affidavit. Whether others have done so or not is a matter of their own conscience. At any rate, we are in the unfortunate position that I cannot divulge anything that has taken place at those meetings, or it might throw a very different complexion on remarks and statements made in this House.

The Council adjourned for the luncheon recess.

Mr. WALCOTT: I think, sir, when we adjourned I was referring to the Martinique and Guadeloupe contracts. The hon. Member for North Western District said, among other things, that the majority of exporters were against those sales and did not want to pursue them, but that they were forced to do so by the Board

because the Board wished to benefit a certain few to the detriment of the majority. I have just got a list of the voting that took place at an exporters' meeting held in connection with this question. As far as the Guadeloupe contract was concerned 16 members or exporters voted for the acceptance of the contract, 6 voted against it and 3 preferred not to vote. In the case of the Martinique contract 18 voted for it, 4 against it and 3 did not vote. I think that 16 and 18, as against 8 and 6, show a rather big majority and not a minority. Those figures can be vouched for by the Marketing Board. The hon. Member admitted that his business had increased. I may mention that nobody was forced to accept a quota on any of these sales, and anyone could have refused the quota which would have gone to someone else.

Mr. JACOB: To a point of correction, sir. The hon. Member says an exporter is not forced to accept a quota or to sell, but when the Board closes the market entirely the exporter is forced to accept the quota or he is out of business. If the Board close all markets we are out entirely, and my point is that every exporter must work on his own initiative.

Mr. WALCOTT: Anyhow, the majority were in favour of acceptance of the contract, and I repeat that no exporter need have accepted the quota. The hon. Member could have refused to take the quota or to participate in the sales in these particular markets. There were only two markets closed. All the other markets were open, and if I as an exporter thought or knew that I was going to lose money by accepting the quota, I would certainly have refused it. The hon. Member stated that his business has increased. If his business has increased, and I presume profitably, I cannot see what his grivence is. My proportion of business has been less, but I expected to do less export business as the result of the limited market. The hon. Member referred to the benefit they are getting from the Barbados market being open. Well, the present benefit they are getting is undoubtedly the result of the efforts of the deputation that went over to Barbados, headed by the Chairman of the Marketing Board. As a result of the representations made by that deputation, merchants in

Barbados canceled many of the contracts they had between them, and in doing so made it possible for them to buy Demerara rice. Had that deputation not gone there and so strongly pointed out the possibility of the Board opening the Barbados market, it might possibly have been made the dumping ground for our surplus rice without any limit.

Mr. JACOB: The Barbados market is not closed; it is like the other markets of Trinidad, Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Mr. WALCOTT: I did not say that the Barbados market is closed. I said it would be thrown open without any limit. The Barbados market would be thrown open, no price would be put on it, and as a result it would be used practically as a dumping ground for our surplus rice. Faced with that fact, buyers in Barbados considered that it would be better to negotiate with us, and before doing so they cancelled existing contracts with Burma shippers. It happened that the Barbados people would not agree to the price that the Marketing Board demanded, and the Board would not accept the price they offered, consequently the price limit was left on but the market was left open for anyone to sell. In the meantime the price of Burma rice advanced, and as a result of the efforts of the deputation and the sales being cancelled, Barbados buyers are now buying our rice at a better price than we could have got at the time. Had those sales from India not been cancelled we could not have had that market. They had bought enough rice to carry them to the end of the year, and the cancellation of the contracts made it possible for us to sell them now at a higher price than the price fixed by the Marketing Board. I may mention for the benefit of Members and the public in general that the Marketing Board prices are minimum prices, and anyone can sell above those prices but they are not supposed to sell below them. My hon. friend should have been very pleased that, as the result of the efforts of the deputation, he has been able to sell above the Marketing Board's prices. I think most people are, and good luck to them. If a man's business has been increased as the result of the help of the Board, I fail to see why he should be so antagonistic to the Board. Why should he wish to see the Board abolished?

I am in favour of the abolition of the Board if it cannot get the power to control the prices. I have advocated for nearly two years the introduction of a single seller. It was opposed by certain interests; why I do not know. There must undoubtedly be one of two things: either the Board must become a single seller or Government must have a single-selling organisation. The Board must go unless it can get the powers of controlling the export markets. I am in favour of a single seller not only for export but also for local consumption. The hon. Member for North Western District, when he was President of the Rice Association, on more than one occasion stressed the necessity for having a single-selling organisation and for fixing the local price of rice. I understand that a scheme is now on foot for a single seller which will combine the local market and the export market. Such a scheme it is hoped will result in better prices for the grower, and anything that can improve the condition of the grower and make the production of rice lucrative should have the support of everyone. Probably some individuals for reasons of their own would prefer not to see it, but I think all right-thinking people would like to see better prices, and the only way to bring about better prices is by control of both rice for local consumption and for export.

I hope that it will be possible to bring in such a scheme, and I hope that consumers locally will not feel aggrieved at having to pay a few cents more for their gallon of rice. The price of rice to-day is much below pre-war level. For some years now the local consumers, on account of extraordinary world conditions, have been able to buy rice at very much below a fair market price, and if by control they have to pay what is really only a fair price I do not think it can be objected to. We have a similar scheme for the control of local sales of sugar, and the hon. Member was an advocate a short while ago of a similar scheme for the control of coffee. I entirely agree with him. Anything we can do to benefit the local producer should be done in reason. We all know that it is only by protection and help to agriculture we can hope to develop this Colony. When we cease to find minerals they will be gone for ever, but we can go on with agriculture for all time. Unfortunately,

my lips are sealed as regards what transpires at the Marketing Board. If Your Excellency would give me permission to report to this House what transpires at the various meetings of the Board, the public would be better advised as regards who are their friends and who are not. The hon. Member poses as the people's champion.

Mr. JACOB: I never told you so.

Mr. WALCOTT: I have no doubt that he is when it suits him, but I have heard the hon. Member boasted that he buys rice cheaper than anybody else.

Mr. JACOB: Sir, I am afraid the hon. Member's speech is all directed on me.

THE PRESIDENT: I will allow the hon. Member an opportunity to make a personal explanation when the hon. Nominated Member is finished.

Mr. WALCOTT: The hon. Member, as I said, has boasted that he buys rice cheaper than anybody else in the Colony, and I have no doubt that he can. Most people, I think, want to buy at a fair price and make a fair profit. I do not buy cheaper than anyone else in the Colony. If I did I could have all the rice trade in the Colony in my hands, and perhaps that is the aim the hon. Member has in view—to control the rice industry to the detriment of the grower. That may not be the case and I am maligning him. At any rate I hope that if a single-selling scheme is recommended Government will carry it out and not allow any single interest or individual to get such control as to make it possible for them or him to hurt the industry. That is possible. I may tell Your Excellency that when the Marketing Board came into being I had a good deal to do with it because I foresaw the possibility of certain interests using their influence and their money to the detriment of the industry. The hon. Member has expressed considerable concern for the industry, and he went so far as to accuse the members of the Marketing Board of advising Government in their own interest. I may be a fool, but the only inference I can draw from that remark is that the Chairman of the Marketing Board was so interested in the sugar industry that he was using his position to try and kill the rice industry for the benefit of the sugar

industry. Never for a moment would I believe that a man of the character of Mr. Seaford, the Chairman of the Marketing Board, would be a party to such disgraceful acts; but every Member around this table must have got the same impression as myself that the inference was that Mr. Seaford was using his position to kill the rice industry for the benefit of the sugar industry. Such remarks should not be possible, even in this Colony.

With regard to the carrying over of padi, too, the suggestion was made that the Director of Agriculture was bolstering up figures. The position this Colony is placed in as regards forward sales is this. Our crop comes in during October, November, December, and hitherto it has always been our desire—and every effort has been made—to try and get rid of the last year's production of padi before the new crop came to market. That may be looked on to be a very admirable thing to do, but it places the Colony in the position that when the buyers in the islands are desirous of making contracts for the following year, we are not in a position to offer them any quantity of exports. We have then finished our old crop and not started our new, and we do not know until we reap the crop what that crop is going to amount to, because the greatest loss the industry sustains is during the harvest season. If the growers get bad harvesting weather half the crop might be lost, while if they get good weather the whole crop is taken in; and until we know what the crop is going to produce we cannot with any degree of certainty, as sensible businessmen, make offers beforehand. Burma might offer them a fairly good price, which more often than not is below the old-crop price of our rice. Not being able to say what we are going to get we cannot sell ahead, but if we had a single selling organisation that would help the people to carry the unsold padi. If we knew that we had 100,000 bags of old-crop padi available in the factory for prompt milling, we could then sell 50,000 or perhaps 100,000 bags of rice at a price that might give a reasonable return to the producer. Therefore, the carrying over of a certain amount of the old crop would be a boon to the Colony and the rice industry and not a curse, and I think I am not singular in that view.

The hon. Member for North Western

District seemed to anticipate that a good many of the mills would be closed down this year. I do not think and do not believe that it could or would be the intention of Government to close down any mill unless it was found that that mill was milling rice that was not suitable for consumption either here or abroad, or was producing rice that would detract from the good name of the Colony. Many of us know that there are several mills that are operating under very questionable principles, and anything that Government can do to bring these mills up to a better standard would be an excellent thing for the industry, but no steps should be taken that can be considered injurious to individual millers. I would be the first to resent that. Every miller should be given an opportunity to improve his conditions and be allowed a reasonable and fair time in which to do it.

I believe the hon. Member desired to be fair in saying that we can market all the rice we produce here, but he did not point out that it is becoming increasingly difficult to market our poorest quality rice. There is no doubt that the producers in the East are sending a much better quality rice to the West Indies than they did some years ago. They have improved the quality of their rice, and the Indian rice compares almost equally with our No. 1. Certainly everyone of the delegates to the West Indies made a very strong point about the quality, and we must improve the quality of our rice if we are going to hold our own in those markets. We therefore feel that it is essential that we should tighten up on the mills gradually and make it impossible to produce very poor grade rice. It may take two or three years to stop the export of rice of very poor quality, but we must aim at that or we will never achieve the object we have in view. I hope I have done something not only in enlightening this Council but some of the public as regards the actual conditions with the rice industry and especially the Marketing Board.

THE PRESIDENT: If the hon. Member for North Western District wishes to make a personal point he may do so now, but I cannot allow him to enter into debate again.

Mr. JACOBS: I think if I review the hon. Member's speech—

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member must confine himself to a personal explanation.

Mr. JACOB: With respect to the statement that I said I could buy rice cheaper than most persons in the street, I was so surprised myself when I saw that statement in the Press that I immediately wrote Mr. Seaford asking for an explanation, and he replied that he would do so. I spoke to him over the phone again and said I would like to have the matter threshed out, and I have documents to convince you, sir, that I would never have made such a statement. I have never made the statement, and although I challenged the statement and it was stated that it would be proved, it has not been proved up to this day. There are one or two other matters, sir, which I crave your indulgence to speak on.

THE PRESIDENT: I can only allow the hon. Member to speak on a matter of a personal explanation.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture): In the first place I would like to say that I was undismayed at the possible warning levelled at me by the hon. Member for North Western District. I have always done my duty so far as I have been able to see it, and I don't think anybody could ever accuse me of being afraid to speak my mind. I may say, and I am very glad to acknowledge it in this Council, that I have always appreciated the keenness and the ability, business and otherwise, of the hon. Member; in fact, we have often co-operated in many ways. At the same time I confess to some surprise at many of the statements the hon. Member has made in the course of his address to the Council, and I am surprised to think he would believe that Members of this Council would accept a number of them, especially his interpretation of the actions of the Rice Marketing Board. There are, of course, a number of things with which we are in agreement. One is that the exporter is more or less always protected; the producer is not. But before I pass on to deal more particularly with the question which has arisen in connection with rice, I would like to dispose of the coffee matters which have been referred to by the hon. Member. I do not think, sir, that the coffee industry in this Colony has ever had a more depressed outlook

than it has at the present time. I think that is generally agreed. We produce, as is known, Liberian coffee,—a low quality coffee at its best—and in recent years there has been a considerable increase in production of a better quality coffee. Moreover, coffee is being sold today at very cheap prices compared with prices that were realised in the past. That being so the position has reflected adversely on Liberian coffee, and one views the position of our coffee industry with a great deal of anxiety.

The position of the producers is somewhat complicated by reason of the fact that a large number of them have extended their holdings very considerably in boom time and have not been able really to stabilize themselves during the period of low prices. Those who have got beyond the smaller stage of 10 or 20 acres have found themselves in great difficulty because they have to employ a considerable amount of labour to pick and do the other operations, and with the present low prices that means that they are unable to produce at a profit. These charges represent something like two-thirds of the value, which shows the position some of the bigger producers are in. The smaller man is not so badly off because most of his labour is being carried out by his family. The difficulty will be, as I see it, to remain in the export trade at the present prices. More than that, I believe that at the moment Liberian coffee has no demand. That is what I have been told, which makes the position very serious indeed, and no one appreciates it more than I. One of our chief objects will be to see if we cannot tide over this difficult time in the hope that the coffee market will improve. That means that we shall have to see what can be done to advise the growers to retain the best fields under cultivation so that if prices rise they will be able to respond advantageously. The whole matter is now under very careful consideration by Government. I do not wish to take up the time of the Council in going into the details, but I will say that Government is really and sincerely anxious about this matter and will do its very best to bring some daylight to the position. More than that I am unable to say at the moment.

I think we may now return to the rice

question. The hon. Member, I think, somewhat misrepresented the position in respect of the last two or three years crop, particularly from the point of view of production. We all know that the year 1933, as the hon. Nominated Member pointed out, was a bumper year. We had the big crop in 1932 exported in 1933. At the end of 1933 and the beginning of 1934 the crop was seriously affected by the unprecedented rainfall and flood, which meant a considerable loss of the crop and affected very considerably the 1934 exports. For the 1934 mid-year planting there was a very long drought, which fairly spoilt the crop that year. Those are the important and material facts, coupled with what the hon. Member also said in connection with prices. In 1935 we staged a come-back as far as production is concerned. The hon. Member for North Western District questioned our figures. That is possible. With a crop like rice it is almost impossible to secure accurate figures. The Department cannot go to every farmer and size up his production. We estimate the crop as far as we could see it, and I think on the whole our estimates are not too far out. The figure 30,000 tons was mentioned. That figure was mentioned before the end of last year when the crop was coming in and I think it represented the position at the time. I think, too, that the 25,000 tons which Your Excellency gave will be found to be correct for this year, because part of the 1935 crop must have been exported at the end of last year. I still contend that the figure 25,000 tons is not far out, and if the hon. Member thinks we shall only export 18,000 tons it only means that we shall have to carry over the difference. I certainly do hope, and hon. Members share that hope, that there will be no carry over.

With regard to the hon. Member's remarks on the Marketing Board, I do not propose to go over the ground so well covered by the Nominated Member, but I must emphasise one point in connection with that attack in which he stated that the Marketing Board was exceeding its powers in respect of sales of rice. The Marketing Board is the medium of sales in executing contracts. The Board cannot be said to be doing anything more than a good turn to the exporters. Further, were it not for the interest of the Board

we should never have been able to bring off the sale at Trinidad with such advantage and the position could not have been so favourable. As is well known, at the end of last year and the beginning of this year the position was very black and we could not sell any rice. There was the war scare and the fact that we could not sell rice in advance. We did not know what the position was going to be. Those were all material factors in the position. The Board always try to do the best for the industry as a whole. There may be one or two exporters or individuals who think they have not been well treated, but the Board has always tried to be impartial in the placing of quotas, bearing in mind the stocks and trade of every individual person in the rice business. It has taken a great deal of time and I do not believe hon. Members realise how much time the work of the Board has taken up. I am positive that from early in the year the Board must have given two days a week to the marketing of rice.

The point I wish to make is that the Marketing Board has worked extremely hard in this matter, and I deprecate the ungenerous and unkind attacks which have been made upon it. The whole fact of the matter is that human beings as a whole do not like restrictions. A restrictive market is a thing that none of us like, but, nevertheless, it is a fact to-day that there are very few commodities in the world which are not marketed under some restrictive rule, and it is necessary in this rice industry to have some measure of control. Unfortunately, that control is not as full as one would like, but I believe it will come in the long run. The hon. Member has made a plea for these restrictions to be taken off entirely. That, perhaps, may secure a temporary advantage to some exporters, but I believe it will be a bad thing for the industry in the long run, because there is a large amount of low grade rice produced at the moment which will be released on the market at practically any price and the industry must suffer. We do not wish to return to the position we were in when the Marketing Board came into existence and Government was approached and asked to take some action.

I wish to say a word or two about the question of milling. There is no doubt

that at the present time there is a great deal of really first-class padi that is being sacrificed in the production of rice which is being classified as No. 2 and No. 3 but could certainly be pushed up further in the grading if it were more efficiently dealt with. Inefficiency of one kind or another is certainly at the bottom of it. At any rate there are a number of factors involved, and I say as the result of most careful and exhaustive study of the position—and I know that opinion is shared by members of the Marketing Board who have gone into the question and persons who know something about it—that unless we can turn out a higher percentage of better grades we are going to find ourselves in a very difficult position in regard to competition with India. In the early stages, 1931-1932, we caught India unprepared and without knowledge of what was happening. Now she is conforming to our grade, and by reason of her acreage and large surplus her industry has been able to keep off certain lines and to be able to undersell us. India is able to do a large export sale not because their padi is better than ours—as a matter of fact it is not—but because they have large mills for milling export rice and because they have surplus rice. We have the remedy in our own hands and it is up to our millers and all who are interested in the rice industry to realise what the position is. If we take off the restrictions of the Marketing Board rice would have to be sold at sacrificing prices and the industry will languish, and I ask the Council not to listen to the ideas about efficiency of the mills and that we can get a market for all the rice we grow. Unless we can produce rice of the quality demanded we cannot stabilise the industry.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: We have listened to a very lengthy speech of the hon. Member for North Western District. Even now I am at a loss to understand whether the hon. Member was speaking for himself or on behalf of the rice industry. I am almost in agreement with all he has said, but I am not here for that purpose. I am here to do what little I can to encourage increased cultivation of rice and to help the growers; at the same time as an exporter I am going to look after my interest in the best way I can. But had the hon. Member expressed his views

personally or generally I might not have taken the trouble to rise from my seat, for the reason that I have on several occasions spoken on this important industry and I believe that my views in that respect are very well known. But when the hon. Member, as I understood him, tried to attack members of the Rice Marketing Board, of which I am one, I cannot allow his statements to go unchallenged. I am prepared to differ from the opinion expressed by Mr. Walcott when he tried to draw a distinction between a member of the Rice Marketing Board and a member of the Advisory Committee. Members of the Board are at liberty either to accept or reject any advice given to them by the members of the Advisory Committee, and it is well known that in matters appertaining to the export trade in 99 cases out of 100 the Board has been guided by the advice of the Advisory Committee.

I take a very active interest in the working of the Board and Mr. Walcott and the Director of Agriculture are in the same position, and Members of this Council should not come here and make it appear as though they know all about this industry. While it is true that I am not a rice miller or a grower, I am an exporter of rice and in one way or another interested in the industry. If the industry prospers the firm I am connected with will share in that prosperity as every member of the community. One of the chief difficulties at the time was that this country was unable—and I think I am right in saying it is still unable—to book any large contract for the supply of rice to the islands. Another difficulty that the industry had to face was the question of security of prices. We had it distinctly from Trinidad, one of our most important markets, that they would not do business with us because there was no security in the matter of prices. Those were the two principal difficulties with which the industry was faced. People who were deeply interested in the industry were invited to meet and as the result of discussions the formation of the Rice Marketing Board was brought about. I think I am right in saying that in the early days of the Board everybody was happy. Unfortunately, as time went on, certain exporters began to make rings around the Ordinance that was then in existence, and

rebates sprung up and the whole thing fell to the ground. There is a greater number of exporters of rice to-day than before the creation of the Marketing Board, which is evidence of the fact that the Board has been of great benefit.

The Board has tried to encourage people to export rice and there are now more people in the market, but the exporter has suffered by people making rings around the Ordinance. I know as a fact that one exporter is trading under two or three licences. There must be some reason for it. I know the reason, but this is not the place and I have not the time to go into it. I would like to support the views expressed by the Nominated Member and the Director of Agriculture. There can be no doubt that our competitors in India have awakened to the fact that this country is a serious competitor in the island markets, and whereas in the past one of our low grades rice compared with theirs at the present moment it takes practically our No. 1 grade to compare with the Indian article. If that is so it is clearly in the interest of this Colony to improve the quality of our rice, because there can be no doubt that if the quality of Indian rice is maintained we shall lose those markets. It is just as cheap to make good rice as to make bad, therefore it is definitely in our interest to make good rice. I would have preferred some of these Members coming and asking Government to try and help them by getting a preference in the West Indian markets. We know that there were some difficulties, but those difficulties may no longer exist. That is something we may clamour for and is something that will do good for the rice industry.

The hon. Nominated Member also spoke about a single-selling organisation. That is nothing new. I have spoken about it in this Council until some of the people outside thought I was going to be the single-seller. I supported the creation of the single-seller organisation because I felt, as I do now, that it was the only means of tightening up control and preventing secret rebates and enabling us to bargain with people on the other side. A single-seller organisation would naturally know exactly what supplies are available and be able to bargain to the best advantage. The Rice Marketing Board at one

time was not quite sure whether this country would be able to execute contracts for 20,000 to 30,000 bags of rice. We want to pool not only our ideas but our resources too; we want one big organisation to control our supplies and our markets; in that way we would be making a step in the right direction.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I have listened with some interest to this debate, and I perceive that most of the remarks were in respect to the export trade. I agree with the Director of Agriculture that the exporters have been protected in this scheme and not the producers. I do not propose to go into the details of the scheme of a single-selling organisation, but I hope that in the near future such a scheme will be introduced in this House. A single-selling organisation that would have my support must be an organisation solely for the benefit of the producer. It is an established fact that the rice industry, owing to competitive markets, cannot afford to pay profits to an exporter, and a single-selling organisation should be so arranged as to be run for the benefit of the producer. It would be regrettable if anyone has to go out of business but that would be only because the industry does not afford him profits, and if a single-selling organisation is created for the purpose of benefiting the producer Government will get not only the support of this Council but the gratitude of the entire rice planting community.

A point was made by the hon. Member for North Western District that an order was refused because it would not have been to the benefit of the exporters but to the producers. If there was a single-selling organisation for the benefit of the producer that order would not have been refused and the Colony would have exported 5,000 or 10,000 more bags of rice. For a good many years the growers have been producing rice at a loss and it was recommended that there should be some sort of control in order that they may be benefited. By the creation of the Rice Marketing Board there has been no benefit at all to the producer. In the execution of the order from Trinidad a quota was given to each of the exporters, but although the Marketing Board was able to secure a fairly good price the pro-

ducer did not get more than \$2.30 per bag for his rice. It has always been my contention that for the Board to be of any benefit to the producer there must be locally some fixed price. I sympathise with the Rice Marketing Board. It is supposed to represent the interest both of the exporter and the producer, and no Board placed in that position will give satisfaction. Any Board placed in a similar position would always have complaints one way or the other, and the only way to obviate such complaints is by means of a single-selling organisation, which I intend to give my whole-hearted support if it is favourable to the producer.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: We have had a fairly long discussion on the rice industry generally and on the activities of the Rice Marketing Board. I do not propose to add very much on the subject of rice, though I would refer to one remark of the hon. Member for Western Berbice about the single-seller organisation. The hon. Member said he could only support such an organisation if it could be shown that it would benefit one section of the community only—the producer. Whether it be a single-seller or not, surely what we want is a scheme which would benefit all those who are necessarily connected with the particular industry, and to confine it to producers only seems to predict a spirit of co-operation amongst the producers of this country which has not so far shown itself and which is probably impossible in a complete sense. There is one other point only in regard to rice, and that is as to a reply to questions from the hon. Member for North Western District. He said he had put in certain questions about a fortnight ago and had not got a reply. It is true that he put in some questions about a fortnight ago. The replies were formulated and in draft when a long list of supplementary questions were submitted by him, and the questions were held up for a comprehensive reply. If it is not possible to supply him with the replies before the end of the session written replies will be sent to him.

I listened with a great amount of interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo. He dealt very fully with the sea defence problem, and I am sure he does not wish me, or anyone in fact, to reply to any technical questions

he might have raised. I regarded his speech—and I know rightly regarded it—as a sincere effort on his part to make a contribution to this difficult problem which besets us all. He referred to the many difficulties and he suggested that it was desirable that Government should take no very definite step at this time until further information was available: in other words, that we should mark time and attempt to accumulate the requisite knowledge. That, I may say, is Government's policy in the matter. While taking all measures necessary for the protection of the land liable to be affected it is the policy of Government, as Members have heard from Mr. Case's report and Government's acceptance of that particular recommendation, that we should mark time as far as possible and attempt to accumulate the requisite knowledge.

There was just one remark of his in regard to acquiring knowledge that I did not quite understand. He was talking about hydrographic surveys and said monthly recordings were quite useless. It is true that no definite information can be obtained from any one monthly reading, nor would any very great weight be placed on the reading on a particular day, but it is clear that the more readings one has the greater knowledge one would acquire of the average condition of the sea-bed, and it is from that point of view that Mr. Case has recommended and Government desires to obtain as frequent readings by the hydrographic survey as possible. In advising that Government should act only on the technical advice of its expert he referred to the question of the deflector at Mahaica. I do not wish to say anything about that, other than to say that it has been the avowed policy of Your Excellency to act on technical questions on the advice of your technical advisers. That has been the policy and it will continue to be so.

There is one further point in regard to sea defence, and that is the question: who is to pay for it? The hon. Member suggested that it should fall on the Colony as a whole and not on the particular estates facing the sea in those particular areas. The hon. Member being a member of the Sea Defence Board knew, although he could not, of course, tell the Council what I can say, that this matter has been recom-

mended to Government by the Sea Defence Board and is receiving consideration at the present time. What particular form it will take I cannot say. Hon. Members will know better than I do that some years ago, before the present sea defence rates were instituted, it was met by a tax on all exports. If that same method were considered to be a reasonable one for raising the revenue again, I would just like to mention that, when the general export tax was abolished, that on mineral products remained. I mention that because the hon. Member made particular reference to mining interests in that regard. As I said, it is not possible at the moment to say what particular line will be taken, but the matter is receiving Government's consideration from the point of view expressed by the hon. Member that the cost should be more widely spread.

THE PRESIDENT: There is no need for me to say anything on the question of sea defence as the Colonial Secretary has entirely covered the point. With respect to the coffee industry, from the point of view of Government I feel sure that one part of the remedy which it may be possible to apply effectively would be to try to improve the quality of the coffee produced. What is true of our rice is true of our coffee, and that is that too much low grade coffee and too much low grade rice is produced. As for rice, I stand entirely by what I said in my address a few days ago: that we must try to improve milling efficiency in this Colony. I also quite agree with what Mr. Walcott said, that any action to be taken towards the mills must be taken with due regard to the circumstances of the day, and that they must be given ample time in which to come up to the proper level of efficiency. Nevertheless it is true that this very important industry of British Guiana must not be permanently injured by inefficiency in the processing of the padi, which can be avoided if proper steps are taken.

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

The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read the third time and passed. (*Mr. Mc David*).

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL.

Mr. Mc DAVID: I beg to move that "A Bill to allow and confirm certain additional expenditure incurred in the year ended thirty-first day of December, 1935," be read the second time. This Bill when passed will confirm the additional expenditure passed by this Council in excess of the amounts which were provided by the original appropriation law for the year. The amounts set out in the schedule have been already approved by this Council on various Supplementary Estimates and total \$101,250, but there is a saving on the original Estimate of something in the vicinity of \$75,000.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

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

The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read the third time and passed. (*Mr. McDavid*).

CUSTOMS (COMPTROLLER OF CUSTOMS POWERS) BILL.

Mr. D'ANDRADE (Comptroller of Customs): I beg to move that "A Bill to transfer to the Comptroller of Customs the powers and duties of the Chief Commissary under the Bitters and Cordials Ordinance, Chapter 109, the Spirits Ordinance, Chapter 110, and the Stills Ordinance, Chapter 111" be read the second time. The object of this Bill, sir, is indicated in its title. The Bitters and Cordials Ordinance regulates the conditions under which bitters and cordials and other spirituous compounds, such as bay rum, lime rum, and similar toilet and medicinal preparations, also locally made fruit wines which come within the definition of sweets, may be manufactured. The officer at present responsible for the carrying out of the provisions of this Ordinance is the Chief Commissary, who is also charged with the administration of the excise system as established by the

Spirits Ordinance and the Stills Ordinance. On the inauguration of the District Administration Scheme the Chief Commissary was appointed District Commissioner for Georgetown and the East Bank Demerara District and recently the West Demerara District has been incorporated in it. This has added very considerably to his work and in the circumstances it is considered desirable that he should be relieved of the duties which he performs as Chief Commissary under these three Ordinances and those duties transferred to the Comptroller of Customs. In most other Colonies the excise control of spirits is under the charge of the Comptroller or Collector or other senior Officer of Customs, and it was also the position in this Colony up to 1911 when the duties were transferred to the Chief Commissary. It is proposed to transfer an officer from the Commissariat to assist the Comptroller of Customs. He is a third-class officer who has had considerable experience of distillery work, and he will be required to make frequent visits to the distilleries, do clerical work and train new officers in distillery work. It is difficult to estimate what amount will be required for travelling, but it is thought that \$200 would be sufficient for the remainder of this year. No date has been fixed for the transfer of the duties, but if the Bill is passed the date will be the 1st July.

Dr. HENDERSON seconded.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I think most Members will agree that the control of distilleries and stills should be under the Comptroller of Customs. Not many years ago we know what occurred in one of the distilleries. I do not know whether Government suffered in consequence, but Government must have lost revenue and I congratulate Government on the introduction of this Bill. I was hoping that Government would have gone further, and possibly it is its intention to do so later on. If that is so all that is left for me to say is to express the hope that it will be done very soon. I refer to the consolidation of the Customs and Excise laws of Colony. I am glad that Government has already selected the officer to do this work, which is very important. Although the officer's name has not been mentioned I have a suspicion who the officer is. This officer must travel and \$200 may not be

sufficient. In distillery work, as in the case of bush rum, the man must be constantly on the job, and it is important that nobody should know when he is going to make his visits. I heard the Comptroller of Customs say that the officer is a third-class officer and I suppose that in time he would be promoted.

THE PRESIDENT: He is a second-class officer.

Mr. KING: I desire to congratulate Government on relieving the District Commissioner of the Demerara River District of some of his onerous duties. I am not so sure that I can congratulate Government on assigning the officer new duties. Time will prove it, but I am glad to know that he has been relieved of some of his responsibilities. I feel it is a move in the right direction to revert to the old order of things, and while it is thought that the District Administration Scheme, like an omnibus, would cover everything I hope the Commissioners are masters of some. Measures should be taken to ensure that the revenues are collected and there is no leakage in their collection through the officer having other onerous duties to perform. He has very responsible duties and I have no doubt that Government is not going to be niggardly over his status.

Mr. D'ANDRADE: It is not correct that Government has under consideration the consolidation of the Customs and Excise Ordinances. As regards the travelling allowance the \$200 will be in addition to about \$100 which may be available from the Customs votes.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the second time.

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

The Council resumed.

Notice was given that at the next meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bill be read the third time and passed. (*Mr. D'Andrade*).

THE PRESIDENT: There now remain as the business of the session one Bill for second reading and four for third reading. I suggest to the Council that the Standing

Rules and Orders might be suspended so as to enable the Council to rise today if possible. I do not think it will be found that the Bill for second reading is contentious.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders to enable the Bills to be taken through all stages to-day.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION (PAYMENT OF ARREARS) BILL.

Mr. Mc DAVID: I beg to move that "A Bill to make special provision for the payment of arrears prior to Nineteen hundred and thirty-six of annual rates under the Drainage and Irrigation Ordinance, Chapter 165, and of advances or instalments thereof under the Drainage and Irrigation (Advances Repayment) Ordinance, 1932" be read the second time. This Bill is the outcome of a motion which was moved by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo in December last. In the preamble to the motion the hon. Member made reference to a recommendation of the Committee which reported on economic conditions in Essequibo. That recommendation was to the effect that the arrears of annual rates which were due and outstanding by proprietors in Essequibo should be collected by annual instalments over a period of 10 years. The hon. Member, however, in the preamble to his motion, was somewhat more optimistic and urged that the period should be 25 years and not 10 years. The motion was debated but was afterwards withdrawn, I think I am correct in saying, on the promise of Government that the matter would receive consideration. That promise was accompanied by a warning, however, that it was unlikely that a period as long as 25 years would be granted. The purpose of this Bill is shown by the operative clause 4, which gives the Governor in Council power to direct that the arrears of a proprietor or of a local authority may be paid in such instalments, at such times for such period and subject to such conditions as he may think fit. The Bill is entirely general in its scope. It does not refer to any particular village area or to any period of years over which the instalments should run, and that being the case it may be applied to Essequibo

or any other area which might need such relief. The Bill is quite simple in character. In an appendix to the report of the Colonial Treasurer will be found a statement of the arrears outstanding. These arrears amount to an alarming sum and I hope this Bill will tend to reduce that amount considerably.

Major CRAIG seconded.

Mr. SEYMOUR: The Colonial Treasurer said this is a very simple Bill, but it is so simple that it is very indefinite. The work has been carried out as long ago as 1924, and there was no statute to collect the money as it was being spent. Government got busy in 1928 and brought in a Bill to start collection. In Essequibo and other parts of the Colony you will find that you are not going to get back some of the money spent, and I believe that is the reason for bringing this Bill in. On some properties the rate is more than \$5 an acre—more than the value of the land, and you are not going to get it. This Bill also puts too much power in the hands of the Governor in Council. There are Governors in Council and Governors in Council, some of them very sympathetic and others not. One individual was owing \$12,000 and the Governor in Council took it upon himself to allow that individual to pay without interest. This Bill is penalising those who want to pay. I defy any Governor in Council to say "You must pay, or you must not pay." If we are going to pay let us all pay, and if we are not all going to pay let nobody pay. Some of us in Essequibo agreed to pay in four years, but some got 10 years and we went on strike. When I asked that consideration be given to the payment of the arrears I did it with the object that everybody would pay. I hope you, sir, will withdraw the Bill and remodel it and let us have something definite. I assure you it is going to create suspicion and distrust which no Government should have around their shoulders. Certain people who owe this money will never pay.

THE PRESIDENT: It is quite clear that this discussion will carry us over the statutory time, and in that case I will adjourn the Council now until tomorrow at 11 o'clock.

The Council adjourned accordingly until the following day at 11 o'clock.