

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Thursday, 2nd August, 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. M. S. Porcher (Ag.)

The Hon. the Attorney General,
Mr. C. Wylie, Q.C., E.D.

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 Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall, (Member for Communications and Works)

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

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj

The Hon. R. C. Tello

Nominated Unofficials

Mr. W. A. Phang

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.

Mr. C. A. Carter

Mr. E. F. Correia

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb

Mr. H. Rahaman

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Dr. H. A. Fraser

Mr. R. B. Jailal

Mr. Sugrim Singh

Clerk of the Legislature

— Mr. I. Crum Ewing

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature

— Mr. E. V. Viapree.

Absent :

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Member for Labour, Health and Housing)
—on leave,

The Hon. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.,—
on leave.

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.—on leave.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal—on leave.

Mr. T. Lee—on leave.

The Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, the 27th of July, 1956, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death of the Deputy Speaker

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, since last we met, as you all know, this Council has lost a Member who served us both here and in previous Legislatures, and one who gave much service both to this Council and to the Colony in general. By way of tribute to him, therefore, I do not propose to proceed with any other business on the Order Paper or otherwise today. I know that a Resolution will be passed for transmission to the sorrowing wife and children of the late Member, and I propose to adjourn the Council after that has been done. I will now ask the hon. Member in whose care the motion has been entrusted, to move it.

Sir Frank McDavid: I formally ask that the relevant Standing Orders be suspended so as to enable me to move a motion for the purpose Your Honour has indicated.

The Financial Secretary: I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Sir Frank McDavid: Mr. Speaker, just over ten years ago—to be precise on 6th June, 1946—the late Mr. W. J. Raatgever first took his seat in this Chamber as a Nominated Member of the Third Legislative Council. He continued to serve in the Fourth Legislative Council and, on its dissolution, was appointed a Member of the State Council under the 1953 Constitution and, finally, to this the First Legislative Council under the interim Constitution. During these ten eventful years Mr. Raatgever undertook more of public duty and gave and ac-

complished more in public service than many a man might well do in a lifetime. It can be said that Mr. Raatgever first became a prominent public figure in the year 1945 when he was elected President of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce—an office which he held continuously thereafter for five years. The bare facts of his biographical record since 1945 are sufficiently significant.

Mr. Raatgever gave valuable service on the Executive Council during 1948 to 1953 and he has occupied some of the most important and onerous non-official posts within the realm of public affairs in this country. I need mention only the more important bodies on which he has served either as Chairman or Member:— The Rice Marketing Board, the Transport and Harbours Department Advisory Council, the Georgetown Sewerage and Water Commissioners, the Georgetown Planning Commissioners and the Central Housing and Planning Authority. But there are also a large number of non-statutory bodies, committees and conferences on which he gave service, the most important being perhaps the Regional Economic Committee of the British Caribbean Territories on which he was British Guiana's first representative during 1951 and 1952. He further took part and gave valuable service on several important delegations to England and the West Indies.

I should not omit to mention some of the important non-political and cultural organizations with which he was associated, such as the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society, the Museum Committee, the Trustees of the Georgetown Cultural Centre, the Mariners' Club, the Red Cross, the Tourist Committee and the Music

Festival Committee as well as a number of sports organizations. Not many people know that Mr. Raatgever was also a pillar of strength to the Church of Scotland in British Guiana, having served for many years as Chairman of its Finance Committee.

As I have said, these are merely the bare facts of Mr. Raatgever's biographical record. It is within this framework that he undertook an enormous amount of work and responsibility in the public interest (in addition to his private business commitments). Recently, as is well known, his Chairmanship of the Rice Marketing Board imposed on him, personally, quite a considerable burden. All of this, I am sure, deprived him of that necessary measure of relaxation and rest which, had he been able to enjoy it, might perhaps have prolonged his life.

In writing for the Press yesterday, I used some words which I would like to repeat here. I said that looking back over the years I could find no more striking example than his of devotion to public duty and public service; and that his life and work during the past ten years provide and illustrate the true definition and interpretation of those often misunderstood and misapplied terms. I also referred to what we all know to be Mr. Raatgever's outstanding characteristics — his integrity, sincerity, courage and determination in the doing of whatsoever he felt to be right and proper.

As Deputy Speaker of this Council, when called upon to preside over our deliberations, Mr. Raatgever performed his duties with dignity, impartiality and efficiency—even though it was evident that it was sometimes irksome to him to be deprived of the opportunity to engage fully in the thrust and

counter-thrust of debate on the floor of the House. And here, may I say quite frankly what is also well known; that often I did not share his views on many aspects of public policy and he was just as frequently opposed to some of mine. I was of course not alone in this; and many of us in this House have from time to time strongly joined issue with Mr. Raatgever on important measures under consideration. But that is only one illustration of the democratic legislative process at work—a process which we would do well to cherish and maintain at all cost. And who can fail to appreciate the immense value of a democratic opposition — a field in which Mr. Raatgever, perhaps more than any other Member of this Council, excelled and was an outstanding leader?

In these last few weeks, it was obvious that Mr. Raatgever was suffering from over-work and fatigue both mental and physical, and that the strain of his many functions had begun to impair his health. But he could not stop. And he has died, so to speak in harness. To us his sudden death has come as a great shock, but it is good that he has been spared the pain of a long illness and what would have been to him an even greater suffering, a long period of enforced inactivity.

For all these reasons, it is fitting that we place on the records of this Council due tribute to the distinguished service rendered to this country and this Council by our departed colleague and friend. He has won an eminent place in British Guiana's Roll of Honour. He will not be forgotten. The memory of him will remain ever green in the minds of us his colleagues, of his wide circle of business associates and friends and of a very large number of the people of this country who knew him only by reputation. And

[Sir Frank McDavid]

more, when the history of our time comes to be written he will have an assured and honourable place in that record.

Mr. Raatgever was fortunate in his family life. He was blessed with a gracious wife, a son to succeed him in his business and his three daughters one of whom has presented him with a grandson. To all of these, I am sure Honourable Members will wish to tender an expression of their profound sympathy in their bereavement and grief.

I therefore invite Honourable Members to join in adopting the Motion which I now formally move:—

"BE IT RESOLVED:

"That, this Council place on record its deep regret at the sudden passing of Mr. W. J. Raatgever, C.B.E., Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Council, and pay tribute to the able and devoted service which he rendered to the Colony and to this Council; and directs that an expression of its profound sorrow and sympathy be conveyed to his widow and children."

Rev. Mr. Bobb: Mr. Speaker, it is not easy for any Member of this Council to support a motion of this kind which pays, or attempts to pay a very deserving tribute to a very worthy colleague and an outstanding Member of the Legislature of this country. Personally, while I would not say that I welcome this opportunity, yet I would like to express my own feeling of sympathy and regret at his departure.

Roughly six hours before the passing of Mr. Raatgever I was speaking with him about matters in connection with this Legislature and also personal affairs relating to other people whom I was quite certain he would have been willing to help the next day. It was therefore a tremen-

dous shock to me to read the news of his death very early on Wednesday morning, and then it was forced on my notice how few men there are in this country to do so much that there is to be done. So the passing of our colleague, Mr. Raatgever, leaves room for others to enter, and it is, indeed, a tremendous challenge to the youth to move up to the high level of integrity, courage, sense of responsibility and service, the discharge of which has gained him popular admiration and goodwill.

We judge men usually by their convictions, and although many of us parted company with our late colleague on many important points in State affairs, we all appreciate the strength of his conviction and the sustained interest in which he pursued in no uncertain way his endeavours to make whatever he believed to be true become actual and effective. From that point of view alone this country could hardly afford to lose a man of such grit and determination. I have always felt that it was good to argue with this gentleman when he was on the other side, for the simple reason that once you convinced him he was with the same ardour prepared to accept the opposite point of view and to show no ill-will whatsoever.

There is much one can say and will be said from every section of this community in praise of this worthy gentleman. From the Church, from the community, from the State there will continue to flow for some time tributes of praise and admiration of the sterling service which he had been permitted to give in all these fields. We bow today in sad reflection that we shall see him no more. If these walls could speak they would tell this Council, and Councils yet to

be, something of the emotion and sincerity which animated Mr. Raatgever in all he did. He has left a worthy example to others to follow in his footsteps.

As I said at the beginning, it is not an easy thing for anyone at this time to support a motion of this kind, but I second the motion, which I am sure will be carried, with one closing word—that if the time does come (and it may come sooner or later) when this Council chamber will be graced by the presence of Members elected by the people, may there be preserved in a most telling manner the same spirit of democratic outlook, the same spirit of give-and-take, the same unbiased and unmitigated zeal for the good of this country as has been so wonderfully exhibited by our departed brother. Mr. Speaker, with deep regret indeed I second this motion.

Mr. Gajraj: Mr. Speaker, the shock of the sudden passing of our colleague still remains with me. Only last week in this Council he was with us, giving support here, sharing criticism there and, as usual, without seeming to exert any effort, making his presence felt. It has been my good fortune to have known Mr. Raatgever for many years, but I became more closely associated with him in his public duties over the last six years. He had always impressed me as a man of great courage and strong convictions—a man who threw himself body and soul into any task to which he was called. His record of service to this Council and to this country will remain a monument to him, and the expressions of sympathy at this time, not only by his colleagues in this Council but by the humble folk with whom he mixed, will in some small measure, I hope, be a source of comfort and consolation to his bereaved widow and family.

I am told that on the afternoon of Tuesday, 31st July, he was in good spirits. He had worked hard and long to fulfil his desire to modernize his business—his keenness to keep in the race, to move boldly into the spirit of the new merchandising method of self-service. He felt, after months of planning and hard toil, that the future of his business, which he had built up for his family, was fully assured; that once he got it off to a splendid start his son, whom he had trained, would carry it on successfully. Our departed colleague, I think, felt satisfied on that afternoon. Surely, if happiness can ever come from the honours of triumphs of this world, on that peaceful Tuesday afternoon William John Raatgever might well have been a happy man.

No foreboding of illness haunted him; not the slightest premonition clouded his sky. He was happy in the company of his wife and family. He retired to bed full of hope of the morrow when his new venture would be launched. Within a few hours he was awake, coughing uncontrollably. He went to bed a satisfied man—strong and confident in the years which then seemed to stretch ahead—but awoke as though wounded, doomed to suffer but little, but destined to leave his beloved ones and his countrymen within a matter of minutes.

Respected in life, Willie Raatgever lies honoured in death. Fearless, honest and sincere, he was a relentless foe of all he thought was wrong or not good for his country. He had an indomitable desire to serve his people and his country. He has done well; he has lived creditably; he has died honourably. He will be missed, Mr. Speaker, not only in this honourable Council but in every avenue of

[Mr. Gajraj]

endeavour in this country to which he gave of his service so willingly and so ungrudgingly.

I desire to join the hon. Member for Agriculture (Sir Frank McDavid) and the hon. Member, Mr. Bobb, who sponsored this motion, in asking that the deep and sincere condolences of the Members of this Legislature be conveyed to his bereaved widow and family.

The Chief Secretary: (Mr. M. S. Porcher acting): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Government, and particularly of the Official Members, I wish to support the motion and to put on record the Government's very sincere appreciation of the service which our late Deputy Speaker, Mr. Raatgever, rendered to his country, and of the profound regret with which the news of his untimely death has been received. I also wish to convey Government's deepest sympathy to Mrs. Raatgever and her family in their grievous loss.

The hon. Mover has told us of the enormous amount of work which Mr. Raatgever did in that last crowded decade of his life. It is, I think, remarkable that in that comparatively short time he was able to do so much and to make such a tremendous impact upon his country and on his people. He did many things, but of all the things he did I think his greatest contribution is not what he did but how he did it, and the example he set. As we all know, he was a man of powerful convictions, and it was inevitable, therefore, that at times he found himself in conflict with the Government of the day, and when that happened he made no bones about it. He did not hesitate to say so with all the strength at his command, and to give his reasons for it. What a tonic he was for any Government, because without honest and

constructive criticism like his no one could achieve a healthy and progressive Government.

But Mr. Raatgever was not one of those people who criticized because it was the easier or the more popular line to take. He only criticized when he thought something was wrong. If he believed a thing was right he would support it with just the same honest forcefulness, utterly regardless of personal consequences. I think the record of his achievements may grow dim with time and may become just one more page in Guiana's history, but I do believe that his reputation as a man of his word will always live in our memories, and I pray that it will be an example that generations to come will follow.

If I may I would like to pay my personal tribute with all honour. Compared with most hon. Members I did not have the opportunity to know Mr. Raatgever for very long—just a little less than four years—but within that time I developed a profound regard for his judgment, for his honesty, and for his kindness. I've always been very good to me; he was always willing to give me helpful advice, and he did so constantly and, above all, despite our disparity in age he gave me genuine friendship. In his passing this country has lost a great Guianese, and I hope that the people of this country will continue in the years to come to profit by his example, because he was a great man.

Mr. Macnie: Your Honour, after the high tributes which have been paid to the late Mr. Raatgever there is very little left to be said, but as one who has had the privilege of his friendship over the past 35 years—first in New Amsterdam, and later in much closer association and work in this Council and outside of it in more recent years,

I feel that I must join in the tributes which have been paid to our late departed friend. When I say "our" I do not refer only to those of us in this Council but also to those outside, because the people of this country have lost not only a great man but a great friend, a man who had the courage of his convictions; courage to be able to differ with anyone, be he high or low. He kept before him all the time his great aim—service to his countrymen, service to the public.

We have lost not only a great Guianese and friend but a man who had undying and firm faith in his country; a man who set an example which, as the hon. the Chief Secretary has said, let us pray that the younger men who will come after him will have the courage to follow — not only to follow his example but to do so with the firm belief and faith he had in his country and our country — British Guiana.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Feeling somewhat insecure on such an occasion I rise, as one of the junior Members of this Council, to join in this very appropriate tribute to a great Guianese who has passed on the road all men have to follow sooner or later. There are in this Council Members who have been very closely associated with the late Mr. Raatgever, but we who have got to know him more closely since we joined this Legislature have always found in him a courageous and fearless fighter at all times.

The unexpected demise of Mr. Raatgever has caused a shock throughout the length and breadth of this country, and I agree with the hon. Mover that thousands of people who had not even seen him will mourn the passing of this great man. He came

from very humble parentage to share the aspirations and sufferings of the small man. He climbed the ladder, and of him it can truly be said: "I came, I saw, I conquered." The passing of Mr. Raatgever at this momentous time in our country's history is indeed the more regrettable because he was a public man who could speak to anyone in this country and make them listen. He achieved those qualifications because of his years of fearless, methodical and continuous fight in the interest of his country. We have no choice, but all of us who know political trends in this country were hoping that Mr. Raatgever might have been the man to be able to bring all forces together in this country and achieve normalcy once again. It was not to be.

The late Mr. Raatgever has indelibly inscribed his name not only on the pages of the history of this country, but in the "hall of fame" as a Caribbean politician. For years to come, within the walls of this Chamber will reverberate the high ideals for which he stood. He was equally courageous, cogent and fearless in whatever stand he took, and although, as hon. Members have so clearly mentioned, we did not agree with him we had to admire the way in which he stuck to his convictions.

There is just as good a fish in the sea as that which came out of it, but the loss of Mr. Raatgever is an irreparable blow to this country. We in this Council who have led a democratic opposition have lost a great leader. To us he was an encyclopaedia, and we all know that whenever he stood up to present a case it was not just a matter of oratory or elocution: he was armed with records and authorities at each stage. He was indeed a man of records.

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

His life is a shining example to all ambitious Guianese genuinely interested in the welfare of the land that has borne them. If he erred in his industry to put through his points and ostensibly appeared to be rash, it was because of that unswerving devotion and love for his country. He led a real democratic opposition, as we know, and a democratic opposition is an essential element in any democratic constitution, as it tends to keep the constitutional ship on an even keel. Those to come will find in Mr. Raatgever's career an ideal public man who devoted his life for the benefit of his country. Although advanced in age, although occupied in his own business, at some sacrifice he answered the call of those in authority to assist in the affairs of this country.

Only a week ago his rich, sonorous voice and his vibrant personality pervaded this Chamber; today he is no more.

Mrs. Dey: It is with feelings of emotion that I rise to pay tribute to Mr. W. J. Raatgever and to add to all that has gone before—and all that has been said. His sudden death is not only a blow to me, but an irreparable loss to this our country. We were schoolmates at St. Thomas's School under the late Daniel Edward Sharples. He was my junior but we mixed a great deal, and I would say that the rich promise of his boyhood was more than amply justified by the varied and meritorious service he rendered his country and his fellow men. His true, tried, simple and unswerving devotion to the national good was a conscious reflection of the cardinal principle of his life — “the greatest good for the greatest number.” He gave always of his best, and mere man could do no better. His love of justice

was an abiding passion with him. He loved truth for its own sake. British Guiana was his first and last love.

I can recall only eight days ago his fight in this Council, as he put it, “in the interest of the small man” and I shall never forget his own words, —“I shall never cease to do so.” Luke that tragic English Queen he may well have said, “When I am dead, open my heart and you will find a name written thereon—‘British Guiana’.”

In a dishonest world his probity stood unquestioned and unquestionable. As a politician he may have estranged many public men by what they considered his error, but he made few enemies. And even these few, while magnifying his failures, will be compelled to admit his virtues.

Strange as it may seem, Fate took upon herself to choose the 1st of August to call William J. Raatgever to rest; a day which to most of us Guianese is significant of freedom, and he was always fighting in this Chamber for the well-being and freedom of his countrymen. A link in this Council has been snapped, and I think the legacy he would like to leave for us is, that we bind ourselves together and achieve what he tried to establish. He is dead and gone, but if we do that, William J. Raatgever would be satisfied.

I feel sure that I do not exaggerate when I liken his death to when some giant cedar goes down before the woodmen's axe with a loud crash, and leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

Mr. Jailal: I speak on my own behalf and probably also on behalf of a wide circle of over 60,000 people whom I elected to serve some time ago — the rice producers. Mr.

Raatgever took pains to serve well and with courage those people and the industry in which they are engaged. He need not have done so, but no doubt he felt he should serve in a field in which he was capable of doing best for the country.

I am many years Mr. Raatgever's junior. I remember him when, as a little boy, I could recall seeing him walking down Main Street in New Amsterdam in the very garb in which we were accustomed to seeing him here — white hat, white suit, white shoes. In those days I thought to myself, 'this is a gentleman', and I would like to carry that thought on. In later years I met him and came to respect and like him. We did not share exactly the same political views, but our ideals were similar. I feel that in anything he did politically his only motive was the best for this country. His plans and his hopes were imbued with the same spirit.

I do not think that for many years to come the rice industry in particular will be able to replace two losses. Rice has now claimed its second martyr, the first being the Hon. John de Aguiar who was also a Member of the Legislative Council. I remember Mr. de Aguiar dying shortly after a 'battle' on behalf of the rice industry—one which put it on a better footing. We in that industry—and I do not only mean officers of the Rice Marketing Board but people throughout the industry—will recognize that this man gave up his life for that industry. He hastened his death: all those who worked with him every day can understand the strain under which he carried on, and for that our memories will hold him much longer.

I want particularly to join with this resolution of condolence to the relatives of the late Mr. Raatgever the voice of 60,000-odd rice producers, and personally to say that he has left us a legacy of selfless work, and has shown in no uncertain fashion how man can die gloriously outside the field of battle. If I had been a relative of Mr. Raatgever my admiration could not have been greater for the accomplishments of this great man. I share the sympathy of the entire community and I feel the loss myself as though it were of my own family.

Mr. Raatgever has been a great son of the soil; he has left a legacy for the young and indeed his footprint on the sands of time.

Dr. Fraser: I would like to join with other Members of this Council in paying tribute, and expressing my sympathy to the relatives of the late Mr. Raatgever. I have known Mr. Raatgever for many a long year but more intimately since I became a Member of this Council. I have had the greatest admiration for his undoubted sincerity and courage in matters pertaining to the welfare of this country. He did not spare himself in the public service of this country, and we have indeed lost a very great man. I for one shall miss him very much from around this Council table.

Mr. Kendall (Member for Communications and Works): I would like to join in paying tribute to the late W. J. Raatgever. I have been associated with him for nearly ten years in this Council, and I have found him at all times to be a straightforward man with a high sense of civic responsibility.

[Mr. Kendall]

As Chairman of the Transport and Harbours Advisory Committee he will be missed very much for the valuable service he rendered to the Department and my Ministry. As a public man he said just what he felt and not what the public wanted him to say, and that is a quality which is much lacking in public life today.

His passing is a great shock to me and a reminder of the uncertainty of life. May his soul rest in peace.

Mr. Farnum: By the death of Mr. Raatgever this country has suffered a severe and cruel blow, since we can ill afford to lose men like him, especially now that the Colony is engaged in an extensive development programme which we hope will result in the prosperity of the country as a whole. Mr. Raatgever who was known to us as "Ratty", started life in a very humble way — a way in which many of our middle-class families have started — at the bottom rung of the commercial ladder in this Colony — and by his ability, integrity and industry he rose from that position to what is known as the merchant class. In that class the merchantile community conferred upon him the highest honour it was in a position to bestow. I may add that Government also conferred upon him the highest honour which could have been conferred upon an unofficial Member of this Council. He was also appointed to represent this Colony abroad at nearly every important Economic Conference in which it was concerned, and I am sure that his attendance at those Conferences was of very great benefit to this Colony.

We know that Mr. Raatgever was a man of very strong convictions and that he expressed himself fearlessly at all times. We know the stand he

took with regard to the question of Federation and that he not only expressed himself very freely in his own country but elsewhere. I happen to have been with him at a Conference held in Barbados some time ago in connection with Primary Producers, and there among the "Big Shots" — if I might so term them — of the West Indies, he expressed himself about Federation, although it was a bit unpalatable to the persons who heard him. I do not think, however, that Mr. Raatgever had any real enemies. Though people disagreed with him his sincerity was so well known and that winning smile of his when he found that his views were not right, that there was no room whatever for anybody to be an enemy of his.

It is not only in that regard that Mr. Raatgever will be remembered. He was never too busy to listen to persons with some form of distress and he was always trying to bring relief to such people. As recently as Saturday last he discussed with me certain proposals relating to a particular community outside of Georgetown, because he considered that they would have brought happiness and contentment to those people. Many well-deserved tributes have already been paid to Mr. Raatgever, and I can only conclude by hoping that his life will serve as an inspiration to the young men of this country in particular, and that they will emulate the good example he has left for us all. To his sorrowing widow and children, I join in extending our condolence and sincere sympathy.

Mr. Phang: I desire to be associated with the previous speakers in the motion of condolence relating to the death of Mr. Raatgever, late Deputy Speaker of this Council. I, personally, regarded him as my friend

and mentor, and we collaborated on many matters in this Council Chamber. I am certainly going to miss him terribly, and I join in extending my sympathy to his bereaved wife and family. I can only conclude by saying "May his soul rest in Peace".

Mr. Tello: I also would like to associate myself with the tributes paid to a very great son of the soil — our Deputy Speaker who has passed to the Great Beyond — and with the motion of condolence that has been moved to his sorrowing wife and other relatives. Many kind things have been said about Mr. Raatgever, but the one thing that has held my great admiration of him was his ability to speak with pride of his achievements. I think that is something lacking among those who like to see the progress of this Colony, for only those who have doubt or pessimism about the future ever speak about the Colony, and far too many people are willing to hide their light under a bushel.

I shall always remember something else that impressed me about this great man and that is, when he was Manager of Davson's in Berbice, he held a party at his home and he invited every member of the staff — from the highest to the humblest—and entertained them personally. I am very sorry that my own nature does not permit me to emulate this worthy son of Guiana who has so many things standing on record to his memory.

Mr. Speaker: I have only a few minutes left (owing to my impending departure from the Colony) to say something on the very sudden passing of Mr. Raatgever. As a matter of fact, I have resumed my duties as Speaker, because my leave really commenced on the first of the month (August) and by some form of tragic

irony I am deputising in this Chair. No one can imagine my feelings since I heard of Mr. Raatgever's untimely death, and I am grateful for the opportunity afforded me of being able to join in paying tribute to his memory. I should think that notwithstanding the disparity in our ages, I shall never forget his early life and my long association with that life; and I shall never forget also the valuable assistance which he has given me in presiding for me in this Council Chamber. I knew him when he was at the bottom rung of the commercial ladder—as a junior clerk at a stationery store in Water Street. When I went to New Amsterdam some years later, it was his desire to become a Member of the old Legislature, but it was very difficult for me to be able to persuade the people of New Amsterdam that he really had the making of a politician. He could never get over the fact that he did not belong to Berbice. He looked upon Demerara as his birth-place, and so he left New Amsterdam never to return.

MR. LUCKHOO'S TRIBUTE

I should like to read to hon. Members a written tribute from the hon. Mr. Luckhoo (absent through illness) to Mr. Raatgever who is no longer with us. It says:

"When the pages of Guiana's history are written the name of William John Raatgever will stand prominently forward as one of her most distinguished sons—a Nationalist, a Patriot and a Statesman. In him was blended ability, courage, character and a resolute spirit to work for the progress of a country that was his and of which he was so proud.

"His record of service was outstanding. In every field of activity in which his name was associated, he was dominant, he was the natural leader. In the Legislative Council he was regarded as the leader of the floor members and his assaults on Bills and resolutions were guided not by politics but by plain, cold

[Mr. Luckhoo]

reason of what was best for Guiana. He was a crusader, a champion of just causes and without reservation he gave unselfishly of his time, his boundless energy and his keen intellectual acumen, seeking no reward — to the contrary, refusing to receive payment for what he regarded as the honour of public service. His integrity and honesty were unquestioned. He feared no one, and he earned the admiration of friend and foe by the forthright expression of his convictions and his positive unequivocal stand.

“As we mourn the loss of this tremendous figure, we must be aware that he gave his life on the battlefield of service to his country. His work for the cultural advancement of the Colony, his interest in the promotion of sport, his achievements for the prosperity of the rice industry, his lead for a stable Government, seeking the independence of Guiana, are all indelibly written on the pages of our history. In any country, by any standards, this man—this William John Raatgever—was great.

“Our tender regards go out to his widow and family with whom we join in mourning this sad loss.”

Motion put, and carried, Members standing.

Mr. Speaker: The resolution will be transmitted to Mr. Raatgever's widow and children.

There is just one other matter: I happen to know who is going to fill Mr. Raatgever's place as Deputy Speaker of this Council and as I will be leaving the Colony this evening for the United Kingdom, I am sure the new Deputy Speaker will receive every consideration from honourable Members in the discharge of his not too difficult duties. I now formally adjourn the Council until 2 p.m. tomorrow (Friday, 3rd August 1956).