

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 6th July, 1944.

The Council met at 12 noon, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT:

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, K.C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.B.E.

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, O. B. E., K.C. (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E. (Georgetown North).

The Hon. J. A. Luckhoo, K.C. (Nominated).

The Hon. C. V. Wight, (Western Essequibo).

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

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow, (Nominated).

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.E. (Eastern Berbice).

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

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E. (Georgetown South).

The Hon. J. B. Singh, O.B.E. (Demerara-Essequibo),

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. J. W. Jackson, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 14th June, 1944, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

FRANCHISE COMMISSION'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT: Hon. Members of Council,—this meeting is called today for the specific purpose of debating publicly the report of the Franchise Commission. It has been thought desirable to have this early and tentative expression of view from the most authoritative body in the Colony before I submit any considered recommendations of Government to the Secretary of State. I have arranged in fact to proceed to London by the quickest route, three to four day passage, at the end of this month and wish to take with me the expression of view of Members of this Council. It is very desirable that this more expeditious mode of progress should be followed rather than that we should attempt to carry the whole matter through by correspondence.

It will be, of course, further useful in that I would hope to be able to fix the vexed question of the Civil List there rather than pursue the scarcely satisfactory compromise which we had proposed to be followed at our last discussion both in Finance Committee

and in Executive Council. Needless to say there are a considerable number of things which it will be highly convenient to discuss in person at the Colonial Office at this particular time. For this purpose it is useful that my visit to London will fit in with that of Sir Frank Stockdale.

To revert to the question of our debate today, it will be obvious that I must make it very clear and definite that Government will not express any opinion on the matter at this moment. That would be quite improper and it is highly undesirable that Government should be committed in any way to the future action by premature definition at this moment. I think it will be much better if Members of Council themselves do not commit themselves to final opinions by voting, and I would suggest that we do not proceed to a vote. The debate will serve the purpose of sounding out and recording opinion which will help me in the next step. There is also the question of whether an election should be held.

I think I need not say any more on this debate save that in order to give free time to it we are putting no legislation before Council today. Members are aware of the important Bills now forward, I think copies of the draft Rice Tenants Security Ordinance should be published on Saturday, as well as those touching the Soap Industry and Spirit Shop Hours. It is my intention to ask Council to sit **again** at an early date in order that we can proceed with these important ordinances before I leave the Colony.

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION.

I would just like to take the opportunity of referring to the question of the proposals put forward by the Secretary of State on major schemes of drainage and irrigation. I have now received a telegram from the Secretary of State expressing his appreciation of the full setting out of this matter. The Secretary of State's telegram reads as follows:—

22nd June, 1944,

Addressed Governor British Guiana 302 repeated to Comptroller for Development and Welfare 328. Your despatch 74 and your despatch 80 of April 17th and April 19th.

“Drainage and irrigation applications Corentyne Coast and East Demerara. I am grateful for your clear statement of position. Before coming to final decision however, I should wish to consider economic review now being undertaken and I should also be glad to have the Comptroller's views.”

I have received a letter from Sir Frank Stockdale in which he expresses his full support of both projects, that of the Corentyne and that of East Demerara. This reads in its second paragraph:

“I am in full sympathy with both schemes and on general grounds they have my support.”

He goes on to comment on the Corentyne scheme as a major developmental project which will require a good deal of other work such as land settlement, agricultural instruction and marketing, and so forth.

He suggests that he therefore would await the results of the agricultural and sociological survey, as he calls it, or, as I have called it a moment ago, the economic survey. He stresses the importance of using mechanical equipment rather than hand excavation, a point which I had also emphasized. Sir Frank Stockdale refers to the East Demerara proposal as a “practical scheme, soundly conceived to encourage agriculture in an area already closely settled.” He emphasizes for both schemes the necessity of early steps in regard to the necessary legislation.

I should intimate firstly that active steps are being pursued to secure mechanical equipment, and the prospects are rather better than they have been for some time.

In regard to the agricultural and sociological survey, that has now

reached me in draft for the section dealing with the Corentyne scheme and I expect to receive very soon the section on the East Coast Demerara scheme.

The conclusions touching the Corentyne Scheme have been stated to the Secretary of State in a telegram which reads as follows:—

“Addressed Secretary of State 495 repeated to Comptroller for Development and Welfare 73. Your telegram 302 repeated to Comptroller for Development and Welfare 328.

Drainage and Irrigation Economic Review just submitted in draft. Includes first section touching Corentyne scheme 32 tables giving detailed economic social data for region Chief points as follows, area fed by proposed water supply now supports one-fifth population, one-third sugar cane acreage, one-third rice, one-third cattle for coast lands of Colony. It is one of the most productive regions in the Colony but water supply only adequate for sugar estates and rice grown thereon. Population anticipated will grow from 70,000 in areas immediately affected to 100,000 by 1958 mostly on areas off sugar estates which are without assured water supply. For adequate water distribution, if to avoid interference with sugar production, it is necessary that total supply be increased which is the main chief feature of engineering proposals. Figures submitted indicate potential increase in rice and cattle production and revenue would be very considerable.

Some indication economic potentiality scheme may be gauged from conservative estimate that increase in rice output would nearly meet requirements in Trinidad. As regards maintenance figures submitted which are based on relatively kept Government Estates, indicate cost maintenance riceland would be no higher than rice can and does pay. Past failure rice meet maintenance charges is attributed to periodical lost harvests and landlord-tenant relationship. Later to be corrected by legislation to enforce landlord responsibility and now coming before Legislative Council. Depressed prices have also been factor but it is submitted that even allowing for some fall in prices rice should still meet maintenance especially if yields rise, of which there are indications. Contemplated expenditure in area at outset, scheme may have significant pump-priming effect in

regards to agricultural expansion programme. As regards social aspect, striking commentary is clear indication that children of most successful and presumably most enterprising farmers under present circumstances tend to leave agricultural occupation. Population transfer will be necessary to central part of development area but over population Albion-Port Mourant area should provide solution. There are initial problems at first, such as population and occupation of land, but these not insuperable especially if equipment trend continues. General conclusion stated, is that scheme is sound productive undertaking from economic and social view point.

2. The above conclusion is more optimistic than I had expected but the figures are notable as to prospects of good development in this area.

3. I hope East Demerara section draft will be submitted soon but it may be some weeks before I can send completed copies. I telegraph now in view of Comptroller's visit to London.”

I am pleased to be able to report such progress in this matter.

I should add that I have forwarded to Secretary of State and Comptroller of Development and Welfare all the various criticisms of the scheme which have been submitted. I have carefully avoided any expression of opinion as to priority or preference as between the two schemes and that will depend on further discussion of the economic and sociological aspects as well as practical considerations which may affect them. I have been considering in these days questions of maintenance rates. As it is working out, Corentyne rates, as estimated, will work out low. But in East Demerara some village areas have rates already high, and the addition of further rating for the new water supply might make them higher still, one reason being perhaps the differences in acreage: I hope, however, that a form of distribution could be found which would get over this difficulty. I may say that my visit to London is timed so as to catch Sir Frank Stockdale in London when the whole matter can be more thoroughly gone into.

A further question has been under consideration, and that is the

proper steps that should be taken to ensure that the irrigation and drainage works will be carried through so as to ensure the best possible health conditions. I have received a special report from the Malariologist of which I quote:—

“In the carrying out of any land and improvement aimed at the agricultural and economic betterment of the coastal population, it is of the utmost importance that a net distinction be made between agricultural lands and village or residential areas. Adequate reservation for the latter should be made on the healthy front lands, and the characteristics which make these front lands healthy (salt soils and surface waters—active ventilation) should be conserved, improved and regulated. Legislation to this end will be necessary.

Sea water influence should be controlled but not excluded. Cultivation and the planting of trees in and around the villages and settlements should be subject to strict control.

For a depth of at least one and one-half miles south of the limit of the settlement zone, the land should be laid out into drained, open pastures. The amount of fresh water in this zone to be strictly regulated.

Beyond this buffer of drained, open, fully ventilated and well stocked land, all kinds of irrigated cultivation can be practised without compromising the health and vitality of the population.”

These conclusions seem to me eminently sound and I see no reason why they should not be followed.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERIOR.

With regard to another matter which was raised to me in particular in addressing Council on the 30th May, that of development of the interior, I have appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of the Honourable the Seventh Nominated Member, on which I will myself sit, as well as the principal Government officers concerned, with the following terms of reference.

“(a) The planning for the economic survey of the interior,

(b) Interior communications generally,
(c) Minor projects of development in specific areas.”

Some progress has already been made.

In notifying to Council my forthcoming visit to London I should also record that my return by the same quick route by air is being arranged: though not its date until I reach London. I should hope myself that could be some time in September.

PAPERS LAID.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Heape) laid on the table the following documents:—

Parcel Postage Rates (Venezuela) Regulations, 1944.

Defence (Transport and Harbours Ordinance Amendment) Regulations, 1944.

FRANCHISE COMMISSION'S REPORT

Mr. WOOLFORD: I beg to give notice of the following motion:—

“Whereas the Report of the members of the Franchise Commission appointed on the 26th day of May, 1941, has now been laid on the table, and has also been printed and made public for the information of the community in general;

Be it Resolved, that the necessary steps be taken by Government to give effect if so advised to the recommendations of the said Commission but more particularly those relating to the qualification of Electors or to make decisions with respect to all or any of the said decisions.”

I take the opportunity of asking leave to amend the resolution by the insertion of the word “to” after the word “particularly” in the second line, and the substitution of the word “recommendations” for the word “decisions” appearing at the end of the resolution.

The PRESIDENT: I think it will be necessary to accept the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to take

this resolution. I have no doubt that Members will be agreeable to that course. The Standing Orders are suspended and I call on the hon. Member to move his resolution, in the form now proposed.

Mr. WOOLFORD: Sir, I need hardly say that to a very large extent I am somewhat unprepared to move this motion, a highly important one, in the manner which I should have liked; and I should imagine, from what I know of the tempers and dispositions of hon. Members, that they are also in much the same position, having had too little notice of it, not being fully aware of the necessity for making this motion, and not having previously heard the President's explanation for its having been brought forward.

The motion is one which I may describe in part as non-committal and framed in a hurry. The idea is to endeavour to ascertain whether the recommendations *en masse* should be accepted, or whether only some of them should be accepted, or whether all should be rejected or some rejected, or whether it is possible to arrive at any decision at all. But it is essential that some measure of agreement should be come to on the less contentious recommendations made and embodied in the Report, about which I think there should be no insuperable difficulties. But even assuming that that can be done I should endeavour to ask hon. Members to consider whether any decision can be arrived at, and whether that decision can be made by this Council itself. It was not intended by any member of the Commission that the recommendations should be regarded as the *locus classicus* as to the relationship that should exist between the Government and the electorate, or that they should be imposed either on this Council or on the community. The Commission was intended to be an investigation of a very important problem affecting the constitutional rights and practice then existing in this Colony. Only

on one occasion previously has there been an examination of the franchise privileges of the community by a Commission, and that was in 1934. The qualification of electors prior to 1891 was determined by an Ordinance which the Order-in-Council of 1923 superseded. In other words, prior to 1891 voting was openly done. Electors approached the polls, wrote the names of their favourite candidates on a piece of paper, handed it to the Returning Officer, and also subscribed their names thereto. Voting by ballot supervened, and we had the qualifications which appear in the Ordinance of 1891.

I am not going into details about the provisions of that Ordinance, nor am I going to refer to the qualifications of electors and Members as they existed after the Order-in-Council of 1923. In part, they are reproduced in the report of the Commission and appear on the Statute Books of the Colony. I am presuming at any rate, as I feel I am entitled to do, that Members of this Council are fully aware of them. But, sir, I may be allowed to speak quite frankly on this matter. During the deliberations of the Commission there frequently appeared in the newspapers various letters, or some private intimation would be given to members of the Commission that the public was anxious to know when the report of the Commission might be expected. Since the report has been published I personally have not seen what I might call a lead from the community as to what action should be taken as a result. I may have seen one or two letters, but if any expression of opinion has appeared in this community either by open letter in the Public Press it has escaped my notice, and so we have this very unsatisfactory state of public affairs in this Colony. The right to elect representatives to this Council is one which, apparently, the community takes no interest in whatever. None of the groups, societies or organizations that submitted their views

to the Commission have either indicated whether they are in agreement with or dissatisfied with either of the reports—the majority report or the minority report, or the recommendations or observations made and contained therein by certain members. Important bodies like the Chambers of Commerce, inhibited by their charter or provisions from taking any part in political discussions but having as members men with political leanings who are urging on Government the necessity for political representation for their bodies, have also failed to make any contribution to this very important report, and it is left to Members like myself and my colleagues in this Council to determine, without any help whatever from members of our common electorates or from the people of this Colony, to make some decision in this matter. I think it is a deplorable state and, but for the fact that I feel that someone should take action in this matter, I should not have tabled this motion at all. So far as the political good sense of this Colony is concerned, I consider it is the best in the West Indian hemisphere.

After the visit of the Royal Commission and its recommendation that there should be an investigation of the franchise and also of the qualifications that would entitle citizens to be elected to this Assembly, two Franchise Commissions only have been appointed—one in Trinidad and one in this Colony. No such Commission has functioned in the Island of Jamaica; no such Commission appears to be necessary in the Island of Barbados where the franchise of electors is governed by the provisions of a Ballot Act. I refer to these two Islands by way of comparison because I am one of those who believe that the Legislative Assembly in Barbados may or may not have been the proper body to determine what the franchise of the electors should be. That Island has its own peculiar constitution and it may be that without being a member of that

community there is good and sound reason for taking the view that an examination of the Ballot Act without submission of its provisions again to the scrutiny of the general community, without inviting the views of the electors on that score, was sufficient for the requirements of the Island. I doubt very much whether in these days it would generally be considered to be sufficient for a truly democratic community.

With regard to the position taken up in the Island of Jamaica where there is an enormous population as compared with ours and a politically conscious population as opposed to ours, no Commission, such as we have appointed, has functioned at all. Yet in such circumstances His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies has offered to that community a new Constitution and has advised or sanctioned—I do not know which is the appropriate expression—the adoption of universal adult suffrage. That is a matter which concerns the fortunes of the people of the Island of Jamaica.

I am not in agreement with those members of the Commission, or others outside the personnel of that Commission, or who may be in this Council today, who feel that this Colony is ripe for so vital and democratic a change in our Constitution. I doubt if the community in Jamaica had been consulted they would have arrived at such a decision. I doubt very much whether this new Constitution, which has been offered to Jamaica and which apparently the Jamaicans, themselves, as a whole, have no knowledge of, is desirable. I doubt whether there can be any serious dispute about the statement that this Colony by its example in examining the franchise and the acceptance of changes in the Constitution which have recently taken place, important as they have been, has not furnished a better pattern to adopt than the sudden transition which the Island of Jamaica is destined to undergo. I have

it on the most responsible authority that changes in the Constitution about which members of the Community should have been consulted are being reached without any opportunity being given to an elector to express an opinion on them but have been determined by some system of conference between the various political groups in that Island which meets in private, never publishes its decisions in the public press and about which, as far as I know, the Government is not aware.

So when people outside of this Council refer to this Colony as one which is decadent, when public life in this Colony is criticized, I wish to say on behalf of those who have been in this Council for years that at least we have arrived at the stage when, I think, in comparison with other places we may be proud of our institution, this Legislative Council, how it has been formed, assembled as it has been from component parts of the people of the Colony with their assent and their approval and arriving at decisions, at any rate, after consultation with them. I hope, sir, there will not arise in this Colony at any time a constitutional change which will be given effect to by this Government, at the behest of the Imperial Government and as to which the people of the Colony have not been consulted. It is for that reason, sir, I think the Franchise Commission's report should be welcomed by the people of this Colony, and that we, as their present representatives, should examine it, consider it and do so faithfully and conscientiously for the benefit of those who, apparently, are not interested and have absolutely no ideas of what representations they should make. I would rather not undertake the task of examining in detail everyone of the recommendations or of the impulses that led to their adoption. They are there for everyone to read. Every Member of this Council has no doubt read the Reports and has very good reasons for supporting them or otherwise.

I invite hon. Members also to consider carefully the minority report of the hon. Member who has signed it, the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Edun, and the joint recommendations and observations of some of the hon. Members of this Council appended to the Report. Whether they are able to express an opinion now or not, I would like hon. Members to consider how far those opinions can be reconciled with the opinions contained in the majority report, how far they are supported by evidence or by the reasoning of the members of the majority of the Commission. There are, however, certain questions I feel it my duty to ask hon. Members to consider. I made short notes of them this morning and they appear to me to be of sufficient importance to read them:—

“What are the necessary steps to be taken ?

“Who are empowered by constitutional practice to take those steps or to determine what action should be taken?

“Is this Council authorized to advise on the subject?

“If not, should this Council be dissolved and a general election follow immediately?

“Would not those not now on the register but who may be said to be tolerably certain to be affected be entitled to have a voice in making or shaping those decisions?

“Does not this entail a new electoral register ?

“Is this register to be compiled on the basis of the extended or widened franchise as recommended by the majority report?”

Those are some of the questions that have occurred to me and, I have no doubt, will occur to other Members also. But in this important change in our constitutional life, are Members prepared to say that because we form a part of this body we are the only people qualified to make a decision that is going to bind the Legislature probably for the next five or seven years ? Even those who are now on the register apart from ourselves—the electors—are

they or are they not the proper body to make this decision? Even if you extend the franchise as contained in this Report, which would affect very largely and numerically the present list, how are we to determine what numbers are going to be added? They may preponderate in actual numbers; those that at present appear on the register are very small. What is our duty to our electors? We certainly had no mandate from them on this question at the time we were elected. I feel very strongly as an Elected Member that a serious position has thus arisen. Is it not our duty to consult our electors? Those are the questions, I think, you should ponder over and on which I would like to hear some contribution made by you, and what, I think, the community has a right to expect.

If then these new factors are to be considered and if a new electoral list is to be prepared giving effect to the majority report, its preparation will take a considerable time. There is no question about that. Those who know what happened prior or subsequent to the change of the Constitution in 1928, know that the electorate or rather, persons were stampeded into becoming voters who had not the necessary qualification. If some had it then, they may not enjoy it today. In other words, the electoral registers should be purged. There are on this register in the various electoral districts some persons who were not qualified to be there at the time on the faith of their own admission made to me and other candidates. If this is to be done, is this very important question to be sidetracked, perhaps, forgotten in its importance for a period of years? But curious things do happen, and I wish to draw Members' attention to the paragraph in the Report inserted by me referring to the Reform Act of 1914. It is a very important matter affecting, as it does, the question of the adoption of universal adult suffrage. It is an expression of opinion of my own, and is not original.

It is vouched for by what I have read, and what has come within my personal knowledge. It is paragraph 52 of the Report on page 8. It is worth looking at:—

“It must be borne in mind that it was only after the Reform Act of 1914 had been passed in Great Britain that universal franchise was for all practical purposes there introduced...”

It is therefore a change of recent growth even in a great country like England, yet that is what is being proposed by some to be introduced in this Colony today. The paragraph continues as follows:—

“Parliament had been in existence for a period of 8 years and was said, by those who were opposed to the legislation, to have outlived its life and mandate. The reform was vigorously opposed by many persons of all shades of political opinion, as well as by members of different political parties, the change being regarded by them as being constitutionally questionable. It is a matter for very grave consideration whether such a constitution problem, which is still so largely on trial, should be agreed to as being in the best interests of this Colony.”

This Council is being asked to decide whether so great a constitutional change which has been in existence in Great Britain for a period of 30 years only should be initiated in this Colony and without any opportunity being taken of going to our constituencies over the proposal. Had not Great Britain been at war in those days the question of universal adult suffrage might or might not have been adopted. It might have been opposed by the general body of electors. It was a decision of Parliament, a parliament that had no legal or constitutional right to exist but for the exigencies of the moment and but for the fact that the country was at war. We are not in that position. A general election would not mean so great a disturbance in our economic life as it would in Great Britain. No large number of electors here are on active

service and I do not consider we are as qualified as the British Parliament was to make the decision it did.

To give an idea how that Parliament acted at that time, I believe it changed its life three times within a space of eight years, if my memory is right. It so happened that there was a Coalition Government formed by the vote of the Parties and an arrangement was come to whereby this Coalition Parliament of 1911 prolonged its life, in the way I have stated. There again that was done without going to the constituencies. Then a strange thing happened. On November 25, 1918—fourteen days after the Armistice—Parliament was dissolved, this parliament which would otherwise have expired on January 31, 1919. There followed a general election which was called a Snap Election on December 14, 1918, hardly one month after the dissolution of Parliament. It was considered appropriate that the electors should vote in that case for the men who won the war, and the Government had won the war. We have no such urge in this Colony in the consideration of the questions before us.

I am said by a certain Member of this Council to be in my political dotage, but I feel my fine sense of pride and reverence for the Constitution, whether old or new, that forbids me to make the decision that this Council is the proper body to determine what the constitutional changes in this Colony should be. I would like also to say this: when the Constitution of this Colony has to be examined and when references are being made to what obtains in other parts of the world — I have quoted what happened in England—I suppose if that sort of thing happens here we would have certain Members going about the country districts and resolutions being put to meetings and brought here to protest against such constitutional practices. But the English people did not do that.

When hon. Members tell me— heated as some of the discussions were at the meetings of the Commission I do not think anyone lost his temper though one did retire from the meeting—that universal adult suffrage was actually part of the Constitution of the United States of America, let me tell them that in eight of the Southern States in that country the poor man has the right to vote but he has to pay a poll tax before being allowed to do so; if he cannot afford to do that what is the result? There are ten million such people who cannot afford to do it, and of that ten million 60 per cent. are white people. I refer to that race because I wish it to be clearly understood that in this Colony, I at least politically will never allow distinctions of race or minorities to influence my judgment or my advice on any constitutional change.

Every citizen in this Colony, whether he be of Indian, Chinese, or African descent, who was born here is a native of this Colony and has no right to claim for himself that he is an Indian or Chinese or African except by descent. He is by birth a British citizen. This is a British Colony. This is a free constitution and we are legislating for the welfare of British subjects in which Indians, Chinese and Africans are included and, I hope, enjoy equal rights. We should desist from these comparisons without close examination of their proper application to the life of this Colony and, I hope, that as time goes on these references, which do no good but which merely instil ideas into people who really do not understand them but might be influenced by them, would occupy no place in their minds at all.

I feel that this question is far too important to be left to determination by this Council. I cannot suggest what other means may be suggested. Perhaps, some other Member may find it possible to do so. I am contenting myself in outlining some of the difficulties that are in the way of our

arriving at any decision at all. I wish to see a system whereby people returned here as Members on the suffrage of the electors should be allowed to vote freely, unfettered and uninfluenced by anything but wise guidance. You should not be able to say to any constituency "I am an African, vote for me"; or "I am an Indian, vote for me"; or "I am a Chinese, vote for me." No one candidate should be allowed to make such remarks on a public platform. There may be reference in this Report to East Indians, but that has been done with the idea of emphasizing how unfortunate it is that circumstances of the moment have caused so large a quota of our very interesting and very valuable portion of the population not to be contented because they are being denied the vote which should have been theirs if there was not going to be a literacy test.

Quite apart from other questions we are considering, there is this very vital question of literacy. When the memoranda come to be examined there will be found a very well reasoned article submitted by an African member of this community, a very fine production. There was also at Bartica a contribution which impressed every member of the Commission from an African subject, as one hon. Member would prefer me to say, but I would prefer to say "citizen," who appeared in the hall and addressed the Commission with very great effect, claiming that although he was uneducated he did understand what the people wanted and could, if left uninterfered with, come to a decision. You would have these elements in the community whose opinions are entitled to consideration. I would not minimize the importance of that consideration, but my judgment would not allow me to vote for the adoption of universal adult suffrage either at this stage of the community's transition from what looks to me like a period of non-progress to one of possible development.

This is the body that is to determine the future also of this country and I would like to see appointed to it men who are elected for their standard of intelligence, people who have gained knowledge not merely from personal contacts but from reading authoritative and well written books and other literature. No amount of radio distribution can give that class of person or those persons the education they stand so much in need of, and I think a literacy test, even when universal adult suffrage is adopted, should be the test, and there should be no compromise about it whatever.

I do not think there is any necessity for me to go into details at all with regard to the findings in the majority report which have been carefully considered. The Commission was widely representative of people who, I think, were qualified to study conditions in this Colony. We did not arrive at our decisions intemperately or with anything like rapidity of decision. Every paragraph of that Report was submitted to members of the Commission for their consideration, and I do not think that anyone would accuse me of having in any way burked discussion on the subject.

It only remains for me to thank you, sir, for the appreciation conveyed to me personally as Chairman of the Commission, and to the members who took part in it, and I do hope that the recommendations in this Report and the reactions they may have on our political life will be carefully studied, and that some decision, wise and important decision or decisions, may be the outcome of this motion.

Mr. DE AGUIAR : I beg to second the motion for the purpose of discussion.

Mr. AUSTIN : I would like to make a few remarks on the excellent and well considered speech which has just been made by the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford)

I do not intend to go into details at all. The hon. Member has covered them fully and it is not necessary for me to do so. I think it would do a wonderful lot of good in this small community if that speech was printed *in extenso* and distributed from Post Offices and other public places for the benefit of those persons who may not be able to purchase newspapers. It might also be printed in the Urdu and Hindi dialects.

I have been a Member of this Council for some 15 years and I cannot help thinking that the hon. Member who has spoken so extraordinarily well has told us today of matters which we all had in our minds, but which have not been elucidated as he has done this morning. If you feel that way inclined, sir, I suggest that his speech should be published as much as possible.

Dr. J. B. SINGH: I am one of those members of the Commission who signed the minority report. In my opinion the interim report of the Royal Commission which visited the West Indies in 1938 had some influence in paving the way for the appointment of our local Franchise Commission. We all know that when the Royal Commission visited this Colony there were labour troubles, but in spite of that they carried on their enquiries and have made observations regarding the economic, social and political aspirations of the people of this Colony. The personnel of the Commission was a distinguished one—men and women versed in important subjects, like social welfare, agriculture, public health, and so on. Their interim report contains many useful suggestions aimed at guiding the destinies of the 330,000 inhabitants of this Colony comprising Chinese, East Indians, Africans, English and Scotch people.

The East Indians, Madeirans and Africans arrived in this Colony under almost identical conditions of labour. Most of them were illiterate, but through private enterprise and Government effort in

introducing a Compulsory Education Ordinance in 1876 mass education began in this country in that year. But there was some relaxation of the compulsory education clause as far as East Indians were concerned, and that relaxation was carried further by the issue of the Swettenham Circular. I need not go into details of the Circular; we all know what it was about. The relaxation continued until 1903 when every child was compelled to attend school. Here we have two pictures. Through compulsory education we had a large section of the community becoming literate, and on the other hand, through a process of relaxation we had the East Indian community becoming almost entirely illiterate. Can we place the responsibility on Government or on whom? This is not the time for recrimination, but we find without any sympathetic consideration of what existed in regard to education, the majority of the members of the Franchise Commission recommending that in order to become qualified as a voter one must be able to read and write in the English language.

Even Government has been sympathetic all these years. Long before the Order-in-Council of 1928, East Indians were allowed to exercise the franchise on the qualification of being able to read and write Hindi and Urdu. Do Members realise that up to the present time Government has spent nearly \$100,000 on education in Hindi? Was that money spent for any purpose? Government would not have spent that large sum of money within the last 40 years without having some object in view. When the Franchise Commission was making preliminary plans notices were published in Hindi and Urdu, and when certain members of the East Indian community were invited to give evidence before the Commission interpreters were paid to attend for the purpose of their examination. Instead of progressing we are going backwards. I repeat that long

before the Order-in-Council of 1928 East Indians who could read and write Hindi and Urdu were allowed to register as voters. Even the present Order-in-Council permits that.

I advocate the adoption of universal adult suffrage. I do not believe that by its adoption a certain section of the community would predominate in voting. If this Colony is to advance I think that is the medium, and we should put it to the test. I would not sit here as a Member of this Council and allow one section of the community to predominate in elections to this Council.

Mr. JACOB: I welcome this opportunity to speak on this very important motion. I feel that I must congratulate my hon. friend, the seconder, on seconding this motion for the sake of discussion. I think too, that I have to congratulate the hon. Nominated Member, Mr Austin, for suggesting that the speech of the hon. mover should be printed and circulated very extensively in the vernaculars as well as in English. I think we are making very important progress in this Colony, but I would really like to see progress along progressive lines. As the last speaker stated, the West India Royal Commission recommended, briefly, that they believe (some of the members at least) that the West Indies were ripe for universal adult suffrage, whereas other members thought that it should be introduced in stages. We have seen effect given to that by His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, in the case of Jamaica. The hon. mover cannot understand why Jamaica was given universal adult suffrage, or whether Jamaica has actually received sanction of universal adult suffrage. That is at least how I understood him.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I think an offer has been made to the community of Jamaica by the Secretary of State and I presume it has been accepted,

because there are elections in November this year, and I presume that the necessary electoral rolls are being prepared.

Mr. JACOB: That is exactly what I am stating. The hon. mover presumes that it has been accepted or granted, but he tries to confuse it by talking about electoral districts. Whether we have additional districts or not the question of franchise is distinctly separate, and that is my main purpose as a member of this community, as a citizen of this Colony and as a member of this Legislature. What I am concerned with is the fact that each member of the community, each working man and woman should have the constitutional right to select a representative in this Council. Whether that citizen earns \$25 per month, as the qualification is today, or \$10 per month, as I think is recommended in the majority report of the Franchise Commission, the fact remains that he or she should have the right to vote. At the present moment if you earn \$24.99 you are not entitled to vote, but if you earn \$25.00 you are allowed to vote, and according to the recommendation in the majority report, if you earn \$9.99 per month you will not be allowed to vote. These matters have been debated by the members of the Commission for several years, and it is a little embarrassing to me to speak on them so often.

What does Government pay the working men, or at least some of them? Government, acting on the advice of its expert advisers, pays strong, healthy and able-bodied men working at least 8 hours per day about 3/- per day, and most of them do not get six days' work per week. If they earn 3/- per day and get six days' work per week they would be qualified to vote. Of course in the case of unemployment relief work, when people are employed two or three days per week, it can be easily seen that they would not have the qualifi-

cation to vote. In the case of women, in view of the recommendations in the majority report no single woman working with Government will be able to vote at all. That is what this Council is asked to approve, and what His Majesty's Government is to be asked to approve.

The majority of the Commissioners recommend further that women should be allowed to sit in this Council. Those women will have to depend on men to elect them in view of what is recommended by the majority of the Commissioners, because they will not be able to depend on their fellow-women to vote for them. They will not be on the register at all—the working people at least. If in the new order the working people must continue to have no voice or to be given a voice through a few hand-picked Members of this Council, then that is what I expect to find in the new order.

I welcome this opportunity to say something on this motion. I am glad Your Excellency is going to England to have a free and frank discussion on this matter. I want to make my position perfectly clear, although it may be a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Together with three of my colleagues in this Council and a member of the public I signed a memorandum which forms part of the Franchise Commission's report. On page 25 of the report appear the following recommendations which we have made in our memorandum:—

- “(a) That Universal Adult Suffrage without the literacy test be introduced forthwith;
- (b) That the qualifications of Members of the Legislative Council be as under:—
 - (i) That income qualification be reduced to one thousand two hundred dollars;
 - (ii) That property qualification be reduced to one thousand dollars over and above the amount of any mortgage;

(iii) That qualifications under a lease be reduced to three hundred dollars;

- (c) That the boundaries of the existing fourteen electoral districts be altered to twenty-four in order to provide for a wholly elected Legislature consisting of 24 members.”

So far as I am concerned I wholly disagree with and dissociate myself from the remarks of the hon. mover of the motion with regard to the disinterestedness or lack of interest by the community in matters of this kind. My hon. friend has been persistent in those remarks, and that is one of the reasons why I have welcomed the suggestion made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Austin, that the public should know what certain hon. Members, elected by the people, think of the people of this Colony. I have had instructions from my constituents. It is my duty to receive their instructions. I have had instructions from my constituency to support the view that there should be universal adult suffrage in this Colony. Some of my hon. colleagues laugh at the idea. I have their instruction too that it should be introduced forthwith. Those instructions were given to me privately, at public meetings and otherwise. I cannot say that I have been asked by a single person to oppose universal adult suffrage, and if what I am saying is published as extensively as the hon. mover's speech I would welcome it. We would then have it clearly stated what my constituency feels about this matter.

More than that—it is true that my colleague, who is not present here, and I have gone around the country and spoken to people about this very important matter. I should like to know how many hon. Members of this Council have been to their constituencies and enquired of them, or have held public meetings and arrived at a decision? Except two or three other Members of this Council I do not believe that the majority have

consulted their constituencies at all. Yet we have the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) telling us all the things he has told us about the interest of the public. I should like to remind him that the West India Royal Commission did not arrive at their decision that universal adult suffrage should be introduced here (some of the members of the Commission said immediately while others said it should be done gradually) merely by coming here and not listening to the people, and going back and reporting on what they had not heard. It is a serious indictment of the Royal Commission to state that the people here did not make those representations. Of course my friend likes members to be talking to him all the time, and he pays little or no attention to what is being said. That is my impression of the hon. Member and I have had close association with him on the Franchise Commission and as a Member of this Council. I have said enough to let my friend understand that he has made a somewhat astounding statement here today, and the sooner he desists the better for this Colony—not for himself.

This Colony has languished too long; it has languished for over a century by the kind of representation the representatives of the people give in this Government. That brings me to this point, that it is the duty of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to instruct this Legislature, as he instructs it on many other matters, to grant the people of this Colony universal adult suffrage, and if the people by unwise selection of their representatives make a mess of things it would be his duty to withdraw that grant. That is the only wise thing to do and that is what I am pleading with Your Excellency to tell His Majesty's Secretary of State—that that is the wish of the majority of the people of this Colony. The hon. Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee) and I have been to every constituency

in this Colony except Georgetown, and that is what we gathered from the people. I know that the trade union leaders of Georgetown, with the exception of one, live in Georgetown. They all agree that there should be universal adult suffrage, but some have made the proviso that it should be subject to a literacy test. I am not so mindful whether there is a literacy test or not. I am wholly in favour of universal adult suffrage. I am also wholly in favour of no qualification for Members of the Legislature.

I have signed the majority report of the Commission in order to have some kind of uniformity or co-operation with my fellow citizens and my colleagues in this Council, but so far as I am concerned—and it is the wish of my constituents too—there should be universal adult suffrage and no qualification whatever for membership of the Legislature. I am not speaking here on my own behalf. I represent a constituency whether it has 73 voters or 700. The responsibility for the number of voters rests wholly with this Government—not with the Member, and if the Government—I do not know who the Government is really—would think the matter over, it would see and not put Members in any false position by representing a handful of people or a thousand people. What do I find? According to the latest records of 1939, there are 341,237 persons in the Colony and the voters for 1941-42 total 10,423. Just 3 per cent. of the people of the Colony have the right to select Members to come to this Council. The whole thing has been so unsatisfactory, resulting in great dissatisfaction. As a result, recently Government has thought it fit to increase the number of Nominated Representatives on this Council. That is putting in another way what the hon. mover of the motion wants. He wants a system of perpetual nomination, and then you hear so much about Democracy—Government of the people, by the people

for the people. The thing is so noxious, but Government wants it because it has recently increased the number of Nominated Members in order to give those people who have no representation some amount of representation in this Council. In fact, the majority report of this Commission corroborates or approves of that also, and I have heard it to-day from the hon. mover that this thing must continue. In fact, it is stated in the majority report "indefinitely." I cannot imagine certain Members of this Council by their very methods are hoping that when the new elections come along, if they are rejected at the poll, they will certainly have a claim on this Government for nomination to come to this Council and continue their methods of misrepresentation of the people of this Colony. That is the kind of thing we are to have, and then we are told about Democracy, freedom of speech, freedom to live our own lives, and freedom of expression. I do not see freedom of voting. I do not know if "expression" means "voting."

My hon. friend, the mover, went on to say—I think I quote him correctly—"How are we to have these changes? Whether there should be changes at all." As I have stated long ago and I have repeated it whenever the opportunity presented itself, there should have been a general election in this Colony. I claim I do not properly represent any constituency at the present time, but by virtue of the fact that this Government has not dissolved this Council I am forced to come here and to represent my constituency. When I go back to my constituency, if the Council is dissolved next month, I will see 73 voters there again. We have all been accustomed to stratagem. What will happen? Let the Council be dissolved and we will have practically the same Members of the Council coming back here. Is that desirable? I say "Certainly not, that is not the intention of the Imperial Government." My hon. friend

is not concerned as to whether there is to be a general election or not, or as to who should elect the new Members of this Council. So far as I am concerned I certainly do not like a general election based on the present register. It has been stated here that a large number of persons on the present List are not qualified. If you have those off the List you would still have a great deal less than three per cent. of the people as voters in the Colony. What is to happen? Are we to continue to have 9 or 10 thousand people electing fourteen Members of this Council? I am not in favour of that.

One of the reasons why this Report was delayed so long is the fear in certain quarters to face the new issue. I would not be surprised if no new register is brought forward for two or three years and the general election put off to 1950. We are heading towards that. I certainly would not like to have a general election based on the present register, nor do I like to have a general election based on the recommendations of the majority report of this Commission. I think the Secretary of State for the Colonies should decide very promptly what should be done, and that should be put into effect almost immediately. If it is the intention of the Imperial Government to have uniformity of legislation and federation in these West Indian Colonies, I cannot see how the Secretary of State for the Colonies can refuse to grant us universal adult suffrage when Jamaica has got it, Trinidad is asking for it and some of the members of the Franchise Commission in British Guiana are asking for it. I think this motion should be amended, to read:—

"Be it resolved that the necessary steps be taken by Government to give effect, if so advised, to the majority recommendations...."

It is clear they are not the recommendations of the whole Commission, and I suggest that the word "majority" be put in. Looking at the Report it

is understood it would be the majority recommendations by fifteen members of the Commission. It may not be out of place to mention that one or two members of this Commission took very little interest in its work. I do not know whether they have read the report at all. I have attended almost every meeting. I have read the minutes, not that I agree with all that has been written. I took an interest in the entire proceedings. Some of the signatures on this document are not worth anything at all. Of course, it has been the practice in this Colony up to the present I am sorry to say, to have signatures on documents as a matter of course. There must be, however, seat-warmers. Your Excellency may not have had the opportunity of hearing this before or coming to that conclusion. But that is what I know, because wherever I have been appointed to serve I always took a keen interest, I always see what goes on. I see the interest shown by certain hon. Members of this Council in matters connected with the affairs of this Government. And so I say this motion is, I take it, to give effect, if so advised, to the majority recommendations of the Commission but more particularly to those relating to the qualification of electors, or to make a decision in respect of the said recommendations.

I cannot support this motion. I hope it will not have the approval of His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies. I hope he will take the initiative and put the people of this Colony—I place myself with the people—in a position to do the one thing and that is to select by way of a vote—the secret ballot, persons who should come to this Council to represent them and ensure the development of this wonderful country so far away from the Mother Country languishing in such a way as to be in my opinion a disgrace to the British Empire. It may not be out of place to mention that Your Excellency has been to nearly every part of the

Colony during the last three years or so. Your Excellency has just been to Essequibo. I see the hon. Member who represents that division is not here. Your Excellency has seen Dartmouth Village. I had the privilege of going there. I have known that place for over twenty-five years. It corresponds in some ways with No. 28 Village on the West Coast Berbice? The hon. Member on my right (Mr. Bacchus) is smiling. We have such places in this Colony. What can the people do to raise the standard living under such conditions—no proper houses, they cannot afford to build them; no drinking water. When it comes to other social necessities none is provided for. I maintain it is the duty of His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies to give those people an opportunity to have a voice in the selection of representatives to come to this Council and speak for them in the future.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Sir, the motion before us asks us particularly to consider the recommendations of the Commission in relation to the qualification of electors. I think that is the first point I am going to deal with. If I remember correctly, I was the only Elected Member to present a memorandum before the Royal Commission asking for universal adult suffrage. Before the Royal Commission I was asked many questions and among them was whether I think universal adult suffrage should be given without a literacy test. My reply then was, and I still maintain that opinion, that if I could be given an assurance that the secrecy of the ballot would be maintained I would consider giving my support to universal adult suffrage without a literacy test. Up to now I maintain it is in the best interest of the community as a whole that a literacy test should be attached to universal adult suffrage. I think the recommendation of this Commission refusing to give universal adult suffrage but sug-

gesting instead an earning qualification of \$10.00 a month—roughly 36 cents per day—is splitting hairs because if an applicant does not suffer a disqualification by receiving doles from any local authority, I cannot imagine a Registering Officer refusing to accept his claim and to register that man or woman who is responsible for maintaining himself or herself. I cannot see that anyone can support himself on less than \$2.40 per week and therefore I say it is splitting hairs to refuse to consider universal adult suffrage.

Paragraph 17 (b) of the Report states as a disqualification; “Has within twelve months previous to registration received any relief from public funds or funds of any local authority;” and if an applicant does not suffer that disability, then I feel certain it would be wrong for any Registering Officer to refuse the registration of that person. Even if, according to the hon. Member for North-West District Mr. (Jacob), work is only available for three days a week at two shillings a day besides the cash earning capacity of any applicant his produce has to be included in the calculation of his income during the past six months previous to his application. Therefore I cannot see on what line of thought the majority of this Commission has refused to consider favourably universal adult suffrage. Can anyone be expected to live on less than \$2.40 per week?

So far as literacy test is concerned, I quite agree with the recommendation of the Franchise Commission in paragraph 18 of the report which says:

“We are of the opinion that (a) should be amended to read as follows:—Cannot read and write a simple sentence and sign his or her name in the English language to the satisfaction of the officer charged with the duty of registering voters, provided always that any person who knows how to read and write English, but is incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause from reading or writing, shall not be disqualified from being a voter.”

If that is the only recognised test the applicant is supposed to have, then I agree with that. But I think it is an insult to India and Indians with Indian education and culture to say that those who can read and write in the Indian or any other language are illiterate. I think it is the greatest insult this Franchise Commission can offer to those persons to say they are illiterate because they cannot read and write in the English language, because as far as this recommendation goes the English language is the only test for literacy. But there is what I consider an inconsistency. If we look at paragraph 77 we find that the majority of the Commission also recommend that those who are on the register of voters with a literacy test of any other language should remain.

The hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford) says the recommendations have been arrived at by good reasoning. I must admit I have not gone through this Report thoroughly, as it was only last night I had an opportunity to go through it and, therefore my contribution so far as the other portions of the Report are concerned is limited. I cannot point to the particular paragraph at the moment, but I think the fear that has been expressed in one of the paragraphs is that if universal adult suffrage is introduced one section of the community would have a majority over the other. That might be so and I would not dispute that because I have not gone into the figures, but may I ask the majority of members of the Commission who signed this report to consider if that condition which is being given to the other section of the community does not give that section a majority. Not that it bears any weight on the conclusion at all, but I think a better view should have been given in arriving at that. The fact that one section of the community will be put far above the others in numbers as voters is the reason given, but it works the other way round if they are denied the concession of universal adult suffrage. I may explain that so far as I

am concerned it does not interfere with me nor matters much to me which section of the community finds itself with more in numbers on the Register, because I claim that I have no race prejudice at all. I can say here and now that my election to this Council was supported more by other races than my own, and I am still hoping that I will retain their confidence.

So far as the qualifications for membership of the Legislature are concerned I notice that it is recommended by the Commission that the immovable property qualification should be reduced from \$5,000 to \$1,000. Personally, I feel that the qualification suggested is a little bit too low. I would prefer to see a reduction by one-half. So far as the income qualification is concerned I would prefer to see it remain at \$2,400.

I hope that a decision on this motion will not be rushed today, and that further consideration be given to the question of the Constitution. We know that we cannot approach the Secretary of State for an amendment of the Constitution every now and then, therefore I hope every care will be taken to see that the views of the majority are given effect to in the Constitution we expect to get.

Mr. EDUN: This morning my clerk prayed to God and I also prayed that God would change the hearts of men towards a new idea, and that is my prayer night and day. I have risen to speak on the motion not only as a Member of this Council but as a member of the Franchise Commission and the signatory to the minority report. In reading the reports any average intelligent reader would see a clash or, if I may so term it, a battle of ideals—a battle between the property ideal and the ideal of life. Standing on one side is the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford), a veteran Member of this Council, propounding his own thoughts and ideas, as he has always done, while on the other side

of the picture stands your humble servant depicting the ideal of life as the criterion of man's purpose in this universe. That is the battle which is going on in Europe and here also—the battle of ideals. Throughout the centuries there has been a battle of ideals—life subordinated to property. In this country you, sir, have outlined the whole episode of this Colony's meanderings in which life has been subordinated to the property of certain vested interests. It is a battle between the old and the new schools of thought.

Those of us who read the newspapers and listen to the radio fully comprehend what is meant by Sir Wm. Beveridge's plan for social security—from womb to tomb. On this question I could also refer to President Roosevelt's plan for security from the cradle to the grave. Here I find the hon. mover of the motion trying to subordinate life to property, standing as he does at the head of the majority report. This is a new age and we have to reorientate our lives towards a new ideal. How shall we begin to further the practical realization of those ideals except by accepting certain definite forms of Government—Government of the people, by the people and for the people? That is what this wonderful war is being fought for—the preservation of certain ideals. Within the report of the Franchise Commission we find the same battle ensuing. I have in my hand a recent issue of the Labour Press Service and International Supplement in which appears an article headed: "The New Social Mandate—I.L.O. Restates Its Aims and Objects."—By Herbert Tracey. In the course of the article the writer states:—

"It has become necessary, in the view of the I.L.O. authorities, to restate the aims and purposes of the *Organisation in the period into which the world is now moving*. Everything that has happened in the inter-war period has added force to the basic philosophy of the I.L.O.; but the world has moved forward and the time has come, it is suggested, for the adoption of a new statement of general principles em-

bodying a new Social Mandate. The Conference, therefore, is to be invited to reaffirm the fundamental principles on which the I.L.O. is based, and in particular these:—

That labour is not a commodity,
That freedom of expression and of
association are essential to sus-
tain progress,

That poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere and that accordingly the war against want, which must be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, requires continuous and concerted international effort, in which the representatives of workers and employers enjoying equal status with those of governments can participate in free and democratic decision for the promotion of the commonwealth.

Events have also made it necessary to broaden the conception of social and economic organisation underlying the work of the I.L.O. directed against inhumane conditions of labour and economic insecurity. The declaration relates this purpose to the conception of humane freedom and dignity, and to the objectives of economic security and equal opportunity.

I invite particular attention to the passage "in which the representatives of workers and employers enjoying equal status with those of governments can participate in free and democratic decision for the promotion of the commonwealth." That is exactly what the minority report calls for, an equitable representative element so far as the producing element of this country is concerned, without which public representation would be one-sided and inequitable. If we accept the majority report as it stands it would defeat the object towards which every civilized nation of the world is progressing. If I were to examine fully the motive underlying the majority report I would condemn the authors as men who are not imbued with any new ideas, men who are reactionaries in the extreme, who have not captured the idea of a new world order. I do not want to say harsh things but they ought to be relegated into the limbo of forgotten things. I remember the year 1928 with Lord Snell's Commission and its

report. My friend the hon. Member for New Amsterdam was a member of that Commission.

Mr. WOOLFORD: I feel it irksome to rise to a point of correction. The hon. Member has referred to me as having had the honour of being a member of Lord Snell's Commission, and now that he has done so I recall reading a similar effort of his in a newspaper contribution which I believe was his. Now I know. When Lord Snell's Commission came here Lord Snell was a Member of the House of Commons, and Mr. Roy Wilson was the other member of the Commission. It was a Parliamentary Commission, and I have not yet had the honour of being a Member of the House of Commons. If the hon. Member is interested he will find a reply to the report of that Commission in a memorandum submitted by the Electives of which I was the sole author. That memorandum contains criticisms of the report, and if the hon. Member has not seen it I shall be very pleased to show it to him. It shows how much the hon. Member knows of the events of the past which make him think that some people who lived in that past are unfit for the future. (laughter).

Mr. EDUN Be that as it may. (laughter). I want to point this out: that I remember the hon. Member for New Amsterdam even in those days. I remember fully well when the question of the change of the Constitution was mooted. The people of this country met and organized the United Constitutional Reform League, of which I happen to have been the Assistant Secretary. In those days I was the Honorary Secretary of the B.G. East Indian Association, and that organization in conjunction with the United Constitutional Reform League toured this country from Skeldon to Charity, requesting the people to express their views regarding the change. I remember also that even the Governor, Sir Cecil Rodwell, was so concerned about the change that

he went out of the City on active propaganda in favour of it. He went to the Canje district. Government wanted the change and three Elected Members did not support the will of the people. I also remember that a deputation went from this country to England in order to frustrate the rape of the Constitution. Several Members of the present Council accompanied that deputation. Nothing was achieved and the Constitution was changed in 1928.

From that day the Government of this country has governed. The gist of the change was that Government should govern. Government wanted to govern because there was a preponderating element of people's representatives in the Legislature, constituted as it was then as the Court of Policy and Combined Court. Government thought it was in its interest to govern as it liked. Government did govern from 1928 to 1943 within that period of 15 years the finances of this country and the morale of the people sank to a low ebb until your arrival, sir, as Head of the Administration. It was only last year that the people of this Colony gained some little confidence in the Government. I want to show that although the Constitution was changed so as to give Government the power to govern no progress was achieved at all. It disproves the theory that because the people are given the right to govern themselves a country cannot progress. On the contrary, it proves that you can give Government all the power, but the right to govern themselves must be the right of the people alone.

I maintain that the majority report of the Franchise Commission endeavours to defeat the principle of government of the people by the people for the people, and it defeats the new ideal for which we are fighting against a terrible foe. The minority report supports the democratic vision, the democratic way of life. Give every

man and woman the right to vote. Here we have the hon. Member for New Amsterdam denying the people the right to vote because of lack of property. That is not playing the game. If this Council assists in preserving the *status quo* of property then one day generations will arise and curse this Council. We ought to take a leaf out of the book of progressive people. When the hon. Member spoke of the United States of America I thought he would have referred to the U.S.S.R. and what they have achieved there—how they have liquidated illiteracy and made every man and woman voters. Some people grin. Let them grin. The people of the U.S.S.R. have achieved wonders. Within 17 years illiteracy was liquidated in that country.

That is the ideal I want the hon. Member to point me towards. I as a youngster will not accept his version when he points me to a reactionary way of life. In paragraph 75 of his majority report he states :—

“We are aware that, in the past, it has been a noticeable feature of our public life that interest in securing the registration of voters was awakened only on the eve at the General Elections—after which there existed very little or no activity in this direction—except on those occasions where prospective candidates for the Legislature took an active part in endeavouring to persuade persons to put their names on the List. We are prompted, however, to believe that more than a spasmodic interest in elections for membership of the Legislative Council will be evinced in the future, and it is in anticipation of this that we have made the suggestions hereinbefore mentioned.”

I have read the newspapers in my early days. The same of the Hon. E. G. Woolford figured in the debates in public life in this Colony for “umpteen” years, and if this is what he has written then it is an utter condemnation of the man. What has he done to arouse public opinion in this country? He condemns himself and others. It is not true that because

a man wants to seek election he goes about registering voters. That is a libel against the people of this country. I ask the hon. Member to examine paragraph 96 of the report which states:—

“As an instance of the limited knowledge that prevails of the Constitution of the Colony, no less a body than the Chamber of Commerce of Georgetown in its memorandum has suggested that women should be allowed to register their votes. This right has been possessed by them since the change of the Constitution in the year 1928; and yet the enjoyment of this privilege by women does not appear to have become known to so important a section as the principal commercial body of the Colony, and even, generally speaking, to members of the sex themselves.”

After all, the hon. Member is not a producer; he has not produced anything, not even a book or a pamphlet, although he is a literary man, and there are others in this Council who can be indicted in the same way. The Chamber of Commerce does not know about these things. Those are the people who are today making a hulla-baloo. They want to have representation in this Council, yet they do not know that women could vote in 1928. I had the privilege to take a lady to a polling station to vote. I know several women who are voting today in the villages. That is the type of public representation we have got. God help us to change the hearts of our representatives. In paragraph 97 of the report the same story is told over again of a prominent citizen who was not aware of certain privileges. Is that any reason why a person should not be given the right to vote? I am beginning to be suspicious. Something more is underlying this denial of the right to vote on the part of certain people. Is it the preservation of some people's properties? Is it the continuation of the rotten system which has been prevailing from 1928? Are we to go backwards or progress? The only way to pro-

gress in any country is to give the people the right to vote. In paragraph 39 just at the conclusion it is stated:

“We are satisfied that these workers as individuals do not appreciate exactly what adult suffrage means, and have been persuaded to support the proposal because they are under the impression that it will confer on them manifold personal advantages, e.g., increased wages not obtainable by any other means.”

If there has been a libel published against the working class people from whom the middle class and the capitalist class get their sustenance and living, this is one by a professional man and a middle class representative of the people—because they think they will get increased wages they want to vote. Is not that an absurd, ridiculous and severe statement to make? But it suits the purpose of certain people to say certain things at certain times. I am not going to allow that any longer. Even if we do not get adult suffrage in this country, I am sure we shall yet win at the next election. Whoever may suffer does not matter.

I want to examine the significance of this report. In the first instance we had a Chairman in the person of Mr. W. J. Gilchrist who began the proceedings in a manner that was not conducive to proper constitutional procedure. It was good that he was withdrawn, and then eventually the hon. Member for New Amsterdam was appointed Chairman. I happen to have attended practically every meeting of the Commission except one, and I have listened carefully and examined the witnesses. I have found the people alive to their interest. They are paying taxes on their food, on their clothing and other amenities of life. In every sphere they have been taxed to the utmost to support the Government, and yet you are asking that they should not exercise the right to vote. Here it is; in this important document there is a violation of the British principle of “no taxation without repre-

sensation" being mooted by these wonderful gentlemen. Perhaps I may refer you to what happened in the U.S.A. when the Americans told the British Government that they were not going to be taxed unless they obtained representation. The consequences are too well known to be repeated here. That principle must be accepted by this Legislature. Once you tax an individual you must give him the right to know how his money is spent. Is not that a commonsense theory which ought to be put in a practical way of functioning? But no, sir.

I have marked off the men who did not attend the meetings of the Commission at all but just spasmodically showing their faces and leaving. They are Messrs. H. C. Humphrys, K.C., E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.E., A. G. King, R. V. Evan Wong, B.Sc., — all middle class men, the bourgeoisie. Those men did not attend the meetings and, if I am to accept the British principle, of trial by jury—as I understand the British principle of jurisdiction, trial by jury is the nearest human approach to perfection in examining man's conduct against man—you listen to what both sides have to say, examine the demeanour of the witnesses, see how they deliver themselves, whether you feel they are telling lies or speaking the truth in your presence, and then you will be able to make your own conclusion. But those men did not think it fit to attend the meetings at all or most of the meetings, why? Because their minds were already made up; they are living in an age of conservatism. They will not bother to find out from the people whether they are progressing towards greater things in life. They were not concerned to enquire what the people want and why. And the curious fact remains that they have signed this report which gives forth to the outside world that a big majority had signed it. The report has been signed by fourteen men. That is the impression created outside, whereas in truth and in fact they

simply read the report, saw it was suitable to them and signed it. That was a betrayal of the confidence reposed in them by the Government of this Colony. Do you not find this playing of bo-peep or absenteeism in the Council? Although they are representatives of the people they do not attend the meetings of the Council, and yet you find those men wanting to foist their will on the people of the Colony because they have been appointed somehow.

Let me examine the majority members of this Franchise Commission who signed this report and see what are their spheres of influence, how much do they know of this country and with whom they come into contact.—

Mr. J. A. LUCKHOO: To a point of order! Is it relevant to the debate to examine the character of the men who signed the report? I ask for a ruling from the Chair.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member is entitled to refer to the membership of the Commission.

Mr. EDUN. Thanks very much! Public men ought not to be sensitive to public criticism. Their backs should be broad. When you get into public life you must be careful not to have a cupboard in your home (laughter). That is the test, and I wish His Majesty's Secretary of State would be apprised of what I am saying here today. Let me examine those men in their attempts to represent the people who have placed them here. From their offices to their homes or perhaps to their clubs and in the night, perhaps, to their Lodges and on the recreation field, that is about the most that can be said about them. Although they were representing on this Commission the people to whom they are responsible, yet they did not find it convenient as far as they were concerned to ask their constituents "What is your opinion?" Yet the hon. Mem-

ber for New Amsterdam has the temerity to come here and say that no one said anything about the Franchise Commission's Report after its publication. Is it not his duty to get about it instead of the people's. It was an understood thing that so long as the Commission's report was published, Government had the obligation to do something about it. That was the understood policy on the part of—

Mr. WOOLFORD: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. My recollection is that I invited this Council to say whether any representation whatever had been made by the public in general on the report of the Commission and what the reaction was, as I had seen none. That is what I said. With reference to what happened before the Commission, the Commission's investigations were widely published. Again the hon. Member was not quoting me correctly.

The PRESIDENT: That is so.

Mr. EDUN: At the most one of those men meets more than 100 persons within their sphere of influence—that is coming into contact with men and women while about their business—and is in a position to air their views in this Council. Therefore it will be found, if I am to take the trial by jury system the obvious fact remains that the whole majority report is a biassed one, biassed in the sense that it endeavours to preserve the property against the right of the people. If a plebiscite could have been taken on this question of adult suffrage from the adults of this country, you would have seen a phenomenal vote for the right of every citizen who pays taxes to have a vote. If this report is read through it will be found that extensive observations were made about education, examining why certain people were not educated, and so forth. I made a minority report in which it is stated definitely that the Commission was not an Education Com-

mission but simply a Commission constituted to examine the simple question of the right to vote, the qualification of the electors and the qualification of the Members of the Council, and if there is to be any change in the constituencies. But it was in the interest of the majority members to draw this red herring of education across the trail to confuse the issue. Any outsider reading this report will come to the conclusion that illiterate people will be asked to vote, and naturally you will find His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies being influenced by a report of this kind. "Oh, no we cannot allow illiterate people to vote", will be said in a patronising way and so keep the working man down in the gutter, because he is not educated, although he works and sweats to produce the food which everyone else eats. But, sir, he is educated enough to produce rice, sugar, cattle and every kind of thing that this world can produce. You do not want to give him education at all because he is illiterate but he is not an idiot for idiots are sent to the Lunatic Asylum in Berbice and if they are there they cannot be allowed to vote. If this is not an attempt to frustrate the right of the working class people, to kill their incentive, what else is? I feel strongly about it, because after all it is the making or marring of this country. Government has bungled for fifteen years; let us govern and see what we can do. With men of Your Excellency's type at the head we can do wonderful things.

Property-owners must be in the Council to preserve property. The time has come when this thing must be blotted out of the minds of people. A life has at the most 100 years; properties are preserved for centuries. Shall I recall your minds to the Sphinx, the Pyramids and those old antique properties of England, those castles? They are there for thousands of years. They are preserved and can stand the test

of time, but life is short. This Council has therefore to give life a very good chance of living from the date of birth. From womb to tomb and from the cradle to the grave life must be a degree of happiness, but so long as the property ideal is there to preserve it so long life is suborn. There is the test, whether this Council is prepared to support the one against the other.

I do not want to be repeating what I have been saying in this Council all these months, but perhaps I should. The man who takes a ton of padi, plants it in the soil and gains ten tons has added nine tons to the supply and therefore is an asset to the community, and so is the case with the man who plants a cane-top and gains ten canes. They have added to the wealth of the country. They are essential units of production. Apart from the production of goods, the working classes, the sugar worker, the rice producer, the milk producer, the cattle producer and the small businessman, who are the men and women who will be relegated into the scrap heap by this report, are of no account because accidentally they happen not to know to read and write and they happen somehow not to be earning \$10.00 a month. They must be denied recognition and the right to vote. Apart from producing goods look at the Customs figures. See how much is got in Customs dues, nearly \$2,000,000 or more from the consumption of imported articles by the majority of people, this very majority which produce. Although they suffer in the payment of Customs Duties and support the economics of this country by their productivity they are to be denied the right to vote. I ask this Council in common justice, in equity and from every humanitarian point of view not to deny them that right. If they are given the right to vote they would vote for a Member of the Council, they would have something to talk about and by contact and experience

would be able to utilize the vote. They may make mistakes as it is human to err. Give them the vote. Give the people of this country universal adult suffrage. That will not create any mal-administration because it is just that everybody should vote.

In this country we ought to preserve intellectual representation like that of the hon. Member of New Amsterdam. What a wonderful intellect he has. He is a man full of literary possibilities and capabilities, but they are still kept under a bushel. I have listened to those gems coming from his lips in his address to-day. More often than not we do not get those gems, but here I am asking in the name of social justice to give these people the political right to determine who should govern them. We are going step by step towards self-government within this great British Commonwealth of Nations, and if we do not start among ourselves, if we do not give the people of this country a lead they would say to us "All you want from us is to produce the goods; all you want from us is to pay taxes. We too should have the right to do certain things at certain times." I do not want to bring in the question of race but these are practical things which cannot escape one's attention. Because these illiterate persons are Indians and cannot read and write the English language, they are to be disregarded in the reports of both minority and majority of the Commission. Do you know what that would mean? Perhaps hon. Members have not studied the problem. These Indians would have the right to ask for representation in proportion to their economic strength, and who can blame them if they do. Let us get out of this rut. Let this country be free from the stigma of what happened in Kenya, South Africa and other countries. This is part of the great American continent. Let us be American in

conjunction with being British, and give the people the right of representation when taxed.

I happen to be an Indian. I am proud of the fact and take infinite pride in the fact that I am a full blooded Indian and a member of the great British Commonwealth of Nations. I have repeated that over and over again. I have stated that in common prose in my book "London's Heart Probe", and whoever wants to read it can do so (laughter). Let them grin if they like. They have seen the book. It is a test whereby I can stand in this Council and talk as I do. If I happen to go to London tomorrow, what I can do there many Members here cannot do because of that fact. I am proud to be an Indian and a British subject, but if as an Indian there is this stigma against me and my people because they happen to be illiterate though intelligent enough to work and to carry on I must oppose it. Many wealthy people are illiterate and cannot spell their names, and many people cannot understand what they read. I am a British Guianese first, but when it comes to a matter of race, well, the British Empire would be without an Emperor if it were not for India. After all the King is the King-Emperor of India. He happens to be King of the Kings of India; he is not King of the Kings of the Dominions or Colonies. Therefore you see how important is this race of people to the British Commonwealth of Nations. If you stigmatize them in British Guiana it will have a repercussion which would go far and wide, and Indians would be justified in stating that the Legislative Council of British Guiana did not think it right to give the proletariat the right to vote.

It should be the responsibility of this Council to make a decision. The Chairman of the Franchise Commission ought to know something about that. Who is to determine the issue?

I do not want you to give a lever to any section of this community to call for sectional representation, and I beg of this Council not to raise that issue at all. Let us worship at the shrine of life and sweep away the ideal of property from our minds altogether.

I happen to travel every week. On Sundays I meet hundreds and thousands of workers and I know that they have a public opinion. Their voice is heard and they get a hearing from Government. Perhaps the people of Georgetown have no public opinion. The hon. Member for New Amsterdam, who lives in Georgetown, ought to tell us something about that. He says there is no public opinion. At the inception of the Franchise Commission every member was told by the first Chairman to advertise the Commission as much as possible, to arouse public opinion and encourage people to appear before the Commission and say what they wished to say. I want to tell this Council the reason for that. It was because the two previous Commissions held their meetings *in camera*. Nobody knew anything about what was happening behind the scenes. In this case of the Franchise Commission it was definitely stated that people should attend and express their views. The Chairman also expressed the desire that employers of labour should give facilities to labourers to come to Georgetown, and that there must be no victimization. Taking the cue from the Man-Power Association which distributed circulars all over the Colony telling the people "If you want to have universal adult suffrage sign this circular." The Chairman wants to belittle those 1,500 persons who sent in those circulars. Supposing we had thousands of those people, everyone would have clamoured for universal adult suffrage. If we were to take the law of evidence, the preponderating evidence, the collective evidence, the majority ought to sway the issue.

We are told that the will of the people is the will of God. Democracy is the will of the people; it comprehends the voice of all. If we are to take cognizance of those expressions then we ought not to make the mistake now and let Democracy be considered simply as a mandate from the crowd; it should be an assembly where everybody can air their views. Democracy always faces the opposition. It is from the opposition that Democracy gets its strength, but the majority report of the Commission wants to override all the opposition in British Guiana against the property ideal. Why Jamaica should not have a Franchise Commission? Why Barbados was not asked to appoint a Franchise Commission? Because it is an understood thing that the preponderating element in the population in Jamaica is one. In Barbados it is the same thing, but in Trinidad and British Guiana there is a cosmopolitan population. That is why the Secretary of State says that we must determine what is good for us. I went to that Commission fully prepared to help and give my best in order that this country should be pushed on. Give the people a chance to use their franchise. They would never go wrong if they are directed well and truly. I do not know who should determine the issue. I do not know whether a vote will be taken here. That would be a violation of the principle of Democracy, because I feel at the moment that the Elected Members of this Council do not represent their constituencies properly. They have been here nine years but the law limits the life of the Council to five years. I am not a lawyer but constitutionally, as I see it, the Elected Members are sitting here *ultra vires*. That is another matter beside the point. That will not give the working class people representation. Although the Elected Members are in the majority in this Council they are really in the minority. Therefore I am of the opinion that there should be a General Election as soon as possible to determine the issue. That

would be the correct thing to do, and when the new Council is constituted the matter could be decided there.

There again it would be found that under the electoral rolls representation would not be given to sugar workers. It is not the ideal thing to nominate a Member of this Council to represent sugar workers. It is not the ideal thing at all for Labour to get representation by nomination. I detest it to the bottom of my heart, and if there is a General Election I will be returned to this Council as a representative of the sugar workers. The position appears gloomy to me, except the Secretary of State with your assistance, sir, reviewed the whole matter and came to a definite conclusion of equality among all sections. For that reason I would leave the matter entirely in the hands of His Majesty's Secretary of State to decide, believing, as I do, in British justice. Standing here as I am, a strong adherent to the British way of life, I pin my faith on that great Britisher, Colonel Oliver Stanley. Up to now I feel secure that sugar workers are getting representation to a certain extent, but it is not good enough. I would stake my all in this matter on the Secretary of State.

I wish to congratulate the hon. Member for New Amsterdam on the able manner in which he has done this job. He has done it well indeed. With his tact and experience—well I do not think there is another man who would have succeeded in that Franchise Commission, composed as it was. Because I do not agree with his findings is no reason why I should not regard him as one of our great minds in this country. I do. He is one of those men whom the youth of this country will have to take as an example (“Hear, hear”) and I feel that even now I should appeal to him to help us. The unfortunate sugar workers who cannot read and write today may be in the same position for the next ten years. Give them

a chance to vote and they would be satisfied, and there would be no maladjustment at all. I appeal to the Council to view the matter dispassionately, because I may not have a chance to speak again on this subject. If the war ends tomorrow I would be off to London and India within six months. I love this land; I am a citizen of this country. British Guiana happens to be my birthplace. I have a little of the British make-up, a little Indian and a little British Guianese. Paramount in my mind is the idea of British citizenship, and if I, as a thinker, may aspire to be a British citizen, what about those people who work? Haven't they got the same right? Aren't they human beings? The time has come when we should not expect that these lives will preserve property; property must preserve the lives. If there is a large house with only two persons living in it then it should accommodate ten persons. It will come some day, even in British Guiana.

I regret that my friend, the hon. Member for Demerara River (Mr. A. G. King) is not here. Would anybody in this 20th century of civilization think of denying women—our mothers, sisters and wives—the right to vote? This is not Germany. We have not a patch of German ideas in our minds. As an Indian I know that a woman's place is in a home, but that is only a phase of her life. When she is mature and has come out into the world among citizens and she feels that she should give public service, who would deny her the right if she is qualified to do so? Yet we find a man who is supposed to be progressive (the last speech I heard from him in this Council was infused with progressive ideas) would deny his daughter the right to sit in this Council. Perhaps a few people are beginning to have a confused idea in their minds. His Majesty's Secretary of State, seeing a report like this, will dub it a reactionary view. The women of Great Britain are a progressive type. They have been going to

jail all these years for women's rights. We should take that as a pattern. It is changing even there. It is also changing in the United States, and we ought to imbue ourselves with that changing pattern—the preservation of life, of millions of lives, against the preservation of property, for property can be preserved for ages, but life has only a decade to live, 100 years at the most. I plead with hon. Members to think of life first and property afterwards. I thank you.

The PRESIDENT: I would like to make one comment at this stage. The hon. mover of the motion put certain points, particularly as to our method of procedure, and asked the question whether this Council as constituted is in a position to pass this resolution. I think that of the five members who have spoken only two have referred to that particular point—the Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob), who said he would leave the matter to the Secretary of State, and the hon. Nominated Member who has just spoken, who first of all said there should be a General Election as soon as possible, and then, if I heard him correctly, he said he would leave it to the Secretary of State. The other Members who spoke did not particularly mention that point. It would be useful to Government if we had some expression of opinion generally, and if the other speakers would pursue that I would be grateful.

Mr DeAGUIAR: Sir, I regret most profoundly that I did not arrive in time to listen to the words of wisdom which I am sure fell from the lips of the hon. Member for New Amsterdam (Mr. Woolford). I am sure that what he told the Council today could not have been anything but words of wisdom, because I have had the good fortune to listen to him on several occasions on constitutional questions, and I have also had the privilege of reading something written about what he said in this Council, not

many years ago. However, I hope to have the opportunity, before this debate is concluded, to read some of the things he told this Council today, because I feel sure it will be of considerable value to me. I have no doubt that those Members who have spoken so far felt a keen sense of disappointment in view of the attendance in the public gallery this afternoon, because there is no doubt about it that there is no speech—

Mr. JACOB: May I correct my friend? I do not think the public knew that this debate was going on today. No mention was made of it in the Press at all.

Mr. LEE: I beg to endorse that.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am afraid the hon. Members have missed the 'bus. I did not say nor did I imply that the people are not politically minded, and for that reason they were not here. What I was about to say was that hon. Members must have felt a keen sense of disappointment because the gallery is so sparsely attended, and they are not here to listen to the views of Members on this important question of the franchise. They should, however, have some satisfaction in the knowledge that the Press allows them an opportunity to have their views published, and what is more, they will be able to obtain a full report in Hansard with which they will be able to traverse the country districts with the views they have propounded here today.

In a debate of this kind Members must approach the subject with what I would describe as a very broad view, and they should endeavour to criticize the report that has been presented to this Council and make suggestions with respect to a Constitution which they consider would be more suitable to the needs of this community. We have not far to go to see exactly just where this debate is leading this Government. We have not far to go to

discover errors of utterance or even errors in the written word. Even in the minority report of the hon. Nominated Member himself there appears an error which, I believe, if allowed to go abroad unchallenged, might be interpreted in the wrong light. Here in the 6th paragraph of his minority report he says:

"I do not wish to bring in recriminations against anybody as regards illiteracy among the East Indian population, which is unfortunate indeed,"—

And these are the words I say are wrong—

"but having found that these same East Indians form the bulk—98% of the producing element of the inhabitants of British Guiana, I consider that their claim to political rights cannot be refuted."

I challenge to hon. Member's statement when he claims that the East Indian community represent 98 per cent. of the producing element of the inhabitants of this country. It is statements of that kind not only by the hon. Member, not only by hon. Members of this Council but even the public at large that lead those who have to express an opinion to arrive at a wrong conclusion. It is well that Members from their seats here should not allow such statements to go by unchallenged. What do we find in the discussion that has taken place so far? As far as I have listened—and I have listened very carefully to those hon. Members who spoke since I entered the room—the discussion has led mainly to one particular aspect of the report, and that is the part that deals with Universal Adult Suffrage. I wish to say right here now as a member of that Commission that I approve and heartily endorse and unhesitatingly confirm the views that have been expressed by the majority of members in that report. I go further and say that in my own mind and from discussion I have had with responsible members of the community, the recommendations of that report

will be a means or a stepping-stone in the formation of the framework of a constitution of this Colony which we all hope will give us what we need.

As an Elected Member I want to say that in my own view the necessity did not arise for me to call public meetings in my constituency in order to sound the feelings of the community. I was disappointed in the hon. Member for North-Western District (Mr. Jacob). I excuse the hon. Nominated Member who has just taken his seat, but the hon. Member for North-Western District knows that in the various districts of this Colony there are men of vision who are described as political leaders. They know and discuss with the people of their particular districts these political questions and are able to express the views and sentiments of the people in their neighbourhood. Therefore I say, if a Member having approached those leaders and discussed with them and listened to their views, that Member must be satisfied in repeating what was told him by those leaders that he is in effect representing the views of the community which he is charged to represent.

I do not believe and do not think any Member of this Council is honest in his own mind when he talks about self-proclaimed meetings, self-drafted resolutions. I know what happened in my own district with those resolutions. The hon. Member knows to what I am referring. These self-drafted resolutions put forward in order to carry out self-ideas, self-desires, do not take our community any further than we are to-day. What I would like to say, sir, is that it would be a cruel disillusion to the people of this community when they discover the strategy of those persons who style themselves as leaders of a people and who tell them to accept their idea and request something which they are not by themselves ready for. I refer to universal adult suffrage which has been referred to so glibly by the Members who have spoken. I believe

and most of the people with whom I have discussed this matter have convinced me that if we want our Constitution to proceed along the right lines we can only progress step by step. We cannot hope at this time at any rate, to plunge upon the people of this community—I do not call them workers or anything, they are the people as far as I am concerned—something that they are not ready for. I look upon a prosperous community of wage-earners as the people of the community, not as workers. They must be wage-earners. On the other hand I must admit I am not one of those who hold that this problem is not insoluble, but I think that in trying to solve the problem we must be very careful. We cannot afford to make any errors. We have had our lessons in the past and we know what those lessons are. We all know what led to the change of the Constitution in 1927-28, and I think we are now travelling along a good road, though a little bit thorny, it is true. At the same time, we must take care not to make any errors so that we put the clock back. If after seventeen years we agree to a Constitution, which would put this country in a state of chaos resulting in a turning back of the hands of the clock, we can never hope to reach that form of government which all of us have in mind to reach in the very near future, I hope.

Talking about self-government for British Guiana, it is too early to my mind to discuss that matter. The whole problem is one which especially at this time is linked up with federation. Only this morning in the Press there appeared an article, which I believe was reproduced from the "London Times," in which I think it was Capt. Gammon who referred to the possibility of Federation of the West Indies. All of us here would certainly like to see something like that brought about, but sir, I submit that we cannot hope to have that federation which is in the form of Dominion

status, if at this time we were to thrust upon the Government of this country the question of adult suffrage, or if that should form part of our Constitution. Any attempt to introduce extraneous matter into this debate would merely confuse the issue and to my mind do more harm than good.

What I say, sir, is that at the present time the problem is one that cannot be solved even to the satisfaction of those hon. Members who are in favour of adult suffrage and, therefore, we should at least make some effort to ameliorate the position. That is where I say and firmly believe an effort was made in that direction by the majority report issued from the Commission. In that report there is a number of complaints which justly have been remedied or some effort made to remedy them. It was thought that the income qualification of voters was too high and the proposal has been made to reduce it to a figure which, I feel sure, no Member of the Council or of the public can reasonably come back and say "It is yet too high." The figure is \$10 per month and, I am sure, it must be admitted that however feeble a man may be he can easily earn \$10 a month and thus qualify himself to become a voter. Only the other day we passed an Old Age Pension Bill that provides nearly one-half that amount. I know that those persons will not be entitled to vote in such circumstances and I do not think they will want to vote. They will be classified in the same category as the hon. Nominated Member's reference to idiots and people of that sort.

This is not a battle of property *versus* life. I regret as one who was born in this country to make that statement from my seat here. It is not a battle of property *versus* life but it is fast becoming a battle of majority *versus* minority, and in that I warn the Government of this Country. I warn the people of this country that it will be a sorrowful day if ever the

Constitution permits the development of minorities and what naturally follows from minorities in any community. The hon. Members who have spoken have referred to what happened in other countries. I also refer them to what happened in other countries where minorities were allowed to develop and the trouble that had arisen therefrom. Why there should be all this objection to the proposal that was put up—I think there was a time fixed—that the question of universal adult suffrage should be reconsidered on the basis of a literacy test? I think the suggestion was put forward that the time for reconsideration would be after a census was taken. Well, sir, I personally think that was a very wise recommendation indeed. The last census was taken in 1931—13 years ago—and I do not know and I do not think anybody else knows the changes that have taken place in our population, and it may well be—I do not say it with authority—that when the next census is taken all these percentages of each race in our community may undergo a change which may probably show those who are on the one side a better percentage and possibly strengthen their argument and opinion. On the other hand, it may show the position in a somewhat different light. But what I do know, there has been quite a number of changes in our population since 1931 and I think, it will be of considerable interest for this Government to know just exactly what has happened, the effect of these changes. Therefore, it naturally follows that it was a wise recommendation that before the question be reconsidered a census of the people should be taken.

I am quite aware of the fact that there are different races in this Colony, but I am also aware of this fact that whether they be Indians, Africans, Europeans—I notice my race was excluded this morning—Portuguese or Aborigines, there is one fact that stands out: Unless we are prepared to pull together, all for one and one for all, we

can never hope to have any progress in this country, no matter what kind of Constitution we have. That, to my mind, is the first lesson that leaders of the people should try to inculcate into the minds of the people rather than to stir them up to what is described as political privileges, political aspirations, and what not. Even the Royal Commission experienced a difficulty when they were approaching the subject. It was they who developed the idea of sectional representation. Speaking for myself, I hate the idea. I join issue with the hon. Nominated Member that there should be such a thing as sectional representation in the Legislature of this Colony because that will only be the thin edge of the wedge and it will be a waggon to which you can hitch a lot of minority difficulties.

On the question as to whether the Legislature, as at present constituted, should decide the issue, I must confess that it presents a very serious problem indeed. I have given the matter considerable thought in order to find a solution. As one hon. Member said, if a General Election was proclaimed the candidates will have to approach these people who are at present on the register, for the simple reason that there is no other register available. There is no other register that can be prepared, because the register in existence is prepared along the lines of the present Constitution. It therefore naturally follows that if an election follows candidates who will be seeking election will have to go to the present electorate. We have it from the lips of one hon. Member who seems to know all about it, who seems to know all the electoral districts and, and what is more, what the voters themselves are actually going to do. He further says we will find all or a majority of the Members present around this table returned. The hon. Nominated Member said he will be returned too. That is his secret weapon. I do not know if he is going to be returned for the

Rupununi or whether he knows his own district, but he is quite sure of being returned. I am not going to boast. If we are going to have so much ego here, I also feel I am going to be returned and so both of us will be on the same common platform.

The point I am developing is this. If we accept that statement and, frankly I must admit it has a certain amount of merit, even if all were elected would it be proper for that Council to pass legislation on this question? The point I am desirous of making is this: The new Council will be in no different position than the Council as it is at present constituted, and so it seems to me that no useful purpose would be served if we should approach these people to ask the type of Constitution they require. The idea behind the whole thing is to enlarge the franchise and bring in persons who are not at present on the register.

It seems to me, therefore, whichever way the decision goes we are likely to err, and if we are going to err on the side as to whether or not a fresh election is the proper course to take it will be far better to be guided by the advice of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the matter. This discussion today to my mind, will be most helpful. It will inform His Majesty's Government of the varying views on the question and, the Secretary of State having an opportunity of studying it and with his knowledge of what has gone on in the past here and in other Colonies and what is contemplated in others, it seems to me that he is the best person at the present to go to for advice in this matter. When that advice is received I have no doubt that full opportunity will be given the Members of this Council to consider it before a final decision is taken. It has been referred to as the passage of legislation. To my mind that is only a phrase. I would rather refer to it as a decision of this Council as to the

form of Constitution which we, the people of this Colony, are prepared to give a trial. I hope that in the advice that will be received from the Secretary of State and also in the decision that will be made by the Council at the time, due regard will be given to all sections of the community and not merely to one particular section which, I regret to say, held such a prominent position in the motion, as I feel sure it does not hold out much good not only for the rest of the inhabitants but the entire Colony.

I am very grateful for the opportunity that has been afforded me as the result of this debate to express the views I have just expressed, and I have no hesitation in saying them here, and I will have no hesitation in saying them elsewhere, because as one who was born here and expect to die here

I look with a considerable amount of regret at the tendency which is being developed in certain quarters and which to my mind can do nothing else as time goes on than disturb the good feeling that exists between all sections of the community of this Colony and will be the means of starting not only minority questions but minority issues and possibly more serious matters than those. When a Member of this Council in speaking about British Guiana refers to the possibility of Indian repercussion if this is not done and the other is not done, one must reflect and ask himself "What is behind all this? Whither are we leading to?"

At this stage the Council adjourned until the following day at 12 noon.