

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT :

The President, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson (acting).

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).

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

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

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

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

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

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 Hon. T. T. Thompson (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 2nd August, 1946, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICE

INTRODUCTION OF BILL

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice of introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled—

“An Ordinance to amend the Trades Union Ordinance, Chapter 57, with respect to the fees payable thereunder to auditors”.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL

The Council resolved itself into Committee to consider clause by clause a Bill intituled—

“An Ordinance to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, 1946, to provide for the grant of licences to use hire cars and goods vehicles on a road and otherwise to regulate the operation of such vehicles in any prescribed area”.

Clause 1—*Short Title.*

Mr. PEER BACCHUS : I am moving the deletion of this clause, for the reason that I believe we have adequate provision in the existing laws for controlling motor buses throughout the Colony. Under the existing laws the Governor in Council has to prescribe declared areas for a road service licence and the conditions under which such a licence is granted are that the service has to conform to a schedule as to times of departure and arrival, the number of places at which the vehicle must stop throughout the journey, and also the rates which will be charged to passengers. Under the existing laws, the Prescribed Authority has declared two areas and enforced conditions on routes along which the railway operates, and it is obvious that in granting the road service licences the Prescribed Authority found that the buses in these two areas had not interfered or competed unduly with the railway service. It is well known that although the buses ply for hire along these routes together with the railway, there are

still insufficient travelling facilities for the general public. For instance, the route between Georgetown and Rosignol has only two buses operating a daily service on it and there is only one train service in so far as Berbice is concerned for six days a week and on the seventh day the people either have to stay at home or travel by foot or donkey cart. With such inadequate facilities, however, Government is endeavouring to tighten existing conditions. As I have already stated, the existing laws give adequate protection and control to the Prescribed Authority, and we need not burden the statute books of the Colony with any further unnecessary legislation.

Mr. ROTH: I rise to support the remarks made by the hon. Member who has just taken his seat. During the debate on the second reading of this Bill, Your Excellency made a very clever and well-thought-out defence of the principles on which the Bill is founded, but if we go into the matter very carefully I do not think anyone can deny that if we pass this Bill we would be sowing the seeds of nothing but fascism. I am yet to learn that open competition is a bad thing: this Bill will strangle it entirely.

Mr. EDUN: I rise to support the motion for the deletion of this clause, and in doing so I think I shall be discharging a duty devolving on me as a Member of this Council. The other day, the hon. the Attorney-General indicated that the finances of this railway were improving and, I think, the first thing Government should have done was to take us into its confidence and show us those figures. Not having done that, Government has left us in the position of having to take its word for it, but I am not prepared to do so at this moment at all. I think the first duty of Government is to prove that the finances of the railway are improving, which means that the deficit this year will be less than usual. When I take all the facts connected with the Transport and Harbours Department as it has been functioning during the last few months, I can only come to one conclusion and that is that the Department is endeavouring to skin the fleas so as to

fatten itself. I make that statement with all the force I can command in this Council.

The Acting Colonial Secretary would tell this Council that I took opportunity to bring to the attention of Government the serious difficulties being experienced by the producers of greens, poultry, eggs and other commodities on the West Bank and the West Coast, Demerara, and I made out an excellent case showing that these people were enjoying certain rights for a period of not less than 25 years, but at the moment those rights are being curtailed with the sole object of fattening the Department. I shall read from the letter I forwarded to the hon. the Colonial Secretary in the matter and I shall also read from the reply sent by the General Manager of the Department, so that hon. Members of this Council may see what is the motive in Government's mind. Paragraph 4 of the letter which is dated 11th June, 1946, states:

"4. That Government have recently changed this policy and in consequence of which the Authorities of the Transport and Harbours Department have not only increased the fares of the producers from 8 cents to 12 cents return passage for the first and second trip across the Ferry, but have also been charging for the containers (baskets and milk cans) at the rate of 5 cents each and empty ones at 2 cents each".

To that letter, I received a reply of which par. 6 reads:—

"6. In view, therefore, of the assistance provided by Government in other directions, it is not considered that the increased charges made by the Transport and Harbours Department should seriously affect the prices obtained by farmers for their produce, if the farmers themselves will only take advantage of the facilities available to them for more economic marketing".

This shows definitely that although for years the producers on the West Coast and the West Bank, Demerara, were given facilities to bring their produce to the City for sale and return with their containers free of charge by the first and second boats, those facilities have been removed for some reason or other; I understand that the

reason given originally was that Government wanted to obtain certain statistics in order to find out how the Department could be made to pay, but I see that the change has become rigid and every producer who brings his produce to the City from the districts in question has to pay the exorbitant charges. One cannot help noticing, however, that although the charges to these producers have been increased, nothing has been done up to the present with regard to freight rates on sugar, and it does not appear to be the intention of this Government to do anything. That goes to prove beyond reasonable doubt that while Government intends to squeeze these small producers, it will not touch the big "pooh-bahs" at all. I cannot understand what is the reason for this partiality—it is difficult to comprehend. I asked the General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department what he intended to do about the matter, and this is the reply—a very haughty reply—that he has given me in par. 2 of his letter which bears today's date :—

"2. I am able to tell you that there is at the present time no intention to increase charges for conveyance by rail...."

I will not read any more of this letter, but here is Government's intention in a nutshell—not to increase the freight rates on sugar.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to know why the hon. Member has not read more of the letter. I would like to hear some more.

Mr. EDUN: I am prepared to hand it in.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to know why. The hon. Member should read it.

Mr. EDUN: I am glad Your Excellency wants to hear some more. It says :—

"I am able to tell you that there is at the present time no intention to increase charges for conveyance by rail to a level which would render that service vulnerable to road competition by cheaply acquired second-hand vehicles uncontrolled either in respect of their operation or charges."
(Laughter).

That gives the whole of the Department's case away; they are not prepared to increase the freight rates on sugar although they want to control motor lorries and buses. That is the whole gist of the letter.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member must be fair; he cannot read part of a sentence and leave out the rest. I have not seen that letter, but it seems to me that when the contents are fairly read it will be found that the Department cannot increase freight rates on sugar until it is able to review the whole question of freight charges and possibly put up the rates on rice or sugar, or on both. It is a matter for the Transport Board, however, and not for the General Manager alone. What I want to know is why the hon. Member would not read the whole letter to us.

Mr. EDUN: Because I wanted Your Excellency to anticipate what was coming behind. It is exactly what the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member was saying—that this is an attempt to sow the seeds of fascism—control and more control all the time. That is why I am asking every hon. Member of this Council to fight against this encroachment on their rights. This matter involves a very great principle indeed, and the gist of the whole question is why these small producers of milk, greens, etc. should be made to pay increased rates and increased fares. I think it is because these people are helpless, but I am determined to fight their cause.

The CHAIRMAN: I hate to interrupt, but the hon. Member must keep within reasonable bounds. It was not the decision of the Transport Board to increase freight rates on helpless people. I think the decision was taken by the Governor in Council on the advice of the General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department and following the recommendation of Mr. Rooke who thought the increase should be made immediately because the individual effect per head of the travelling public would be negligible. The increase was not made because these people could not oppose; it was done on the advice of Mr. Rooke and the General Manager of the Transport Department which was approved by the Governor in Council.

Mr. EDUN: But the question was raised again and again in this Council, and I asked that the freight rates on sugar be increased.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a very complex question.

Mr. EDUN: I cannot help feeling that Government came to the conclusion that it would be very easy to raise the fares and to collect them also. Government also felt that it would be easy to increase the freight rates on milk cans, etc., but it would not be easy to increase the freight on sugar, since that would result in negotiations involving this Government and perhaps the Colonial Office. While I have no desire to challenge Government's motive, I will say with all due respect that I can see nothing but discrimination in this case. As I have already stated I would be the last man to scrap the railway, but only last week I read where tiny, little Bermuda—an island of only 19 square miles—had opened her doors to motor cars for the first time in her history. On the other hand we find that British Guiana with an area of 90,000 square miles—a big slice of the South American continent—is closing her doors against motor transportation. I understood from Your Excellency that this was intended to be a temporary measure in order to stabilize the railway service and I regarded this as the saving grace in the whole Bill, but I do not see anything at all in it to indicate that it will be a temporary measure. That is why every intelligent citizen of this country is disturbed over this encroachment—an encroachment on their livelihood—since they would like to know what would happen to all the buses that would be affected and all the people who have invested their money, some of them in one bus only which would have to be scrapped.

There will be no hope for the development of motor transportation in this Colony within the next 10 years at least, with a Bill of this kind. I always visualize the day when every family in this Colony will be able to own a private car, and when that day comes will the railway authorities come along and say that nobody will travel by rail and so we must encroach on the rights of the people by compelling them to do so? Hon. Members will therefore

see how very narrow is this question of restricting motor transport in this Colony, and that is why we should all support the motion. If your Excellency was in this Colony 25 years ago, you would have been able to recall how inadequate the railway service was thought to be in those days for the rural areas especially. If the facilities were inadequate 25 years ago, then they should certainly not be good enough today when the population is very much greater. According to the proposals contained in this Bill the civic communities will have all the transportation facilities they desire, while those in the rural districts will be restricted and that is the reason why I refer to the Bill as an attempt to introduce dangerous discrimination.

Apart from the freight on small goods and leaving out sugar, it will be found that the policy is discriminatory. We have indeed come to a sorry pass in this Colony. If the Council resumes to-morrow I shall table a motion asking this honourable Council to appoint a committee of enquiry into the several controlled systems in this Colony—control of flour, control of milk, control of motor lorries, control of edible oil, etc. I have deferred tabling it today for obvious reasons, but we have indeed come to a stage where we are controlled all over; we are even controlled in our speeches in this Council. A happy thing in itself and strange enough, this control of speeches was initiated by the first Labour Member in the Executive Council. That is the most sorry part of it but, be that as it may, the time has come when I must warn Government to pay attention to this matter. By increasing the freight rates on produce the workers should call for more wages. There is no doubt about it. Let Government understand this as clear as the noonday sun. The farmers will want an increase on every farm product and the workers will necessarily have to pay more for those products. Where will you be able to stop the spiral? Inflation will be the order of the day. The Executive of the Man-Power Citizens' Association is calling a meeting of the workers to put these facts before them and to tell them to ask for more wages. If they do not get it, it would mean a struggle for it. Perhaps, Your Excellency would like to increase the war

bonus. In Martinique it is 65 per cent. and in Jamaica it is 33 per cent., while in this Colony it is 25 per cent. We have been fooled long enough to take everything for granted that Government is doing everything in our interest. We do not want to retaliate.

Mr. ROTH : I rise to a point of order! We are supposed to be discussing clause 1, but the hon. Member is speaking about wages. He has spoken for twenty-five minutes and I move that the question be now put.

Mr. EDUN : My observation on that is, the question of wages is allied to this matter as it affects the labourers in the rural districts.

The CHAIRMAN : I think the hon. Member is straying a bit, but he may carry on.

Mr. EDUN : I just want to warn Government to take this matter seriously, as the increased freight rates will give rise to a spiral and Government will be blamed in the long run. On Monday mornings it will surprise you to see the rush of people coming to town from the rural districts simply to buy food. The blackmarket system is rampant in the rural areas. I took it as my duty to go and say to them "What are you doing in town today?" They have told me "I had to come to buy oil for my children, biscuits for my children". Can you stop them from coming to town? Perhaps Government does not know it. In Canada the railway stood in deficiency to the extent of more than \$10,000,000, and so is the railway in India. So the question of deficit in the running of utility services like this should not give so much headache if we want it to work in the interest of the community. In this case while Government on the one hand is seeking to press the small people on the other hand it is allowing the larger issue to escape. The freight rate on sugar should have risen years and years ago, and at the beginning of this year when the freight rates were increased I saw nothing but discrimination. I agree with the hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Peer Bacchus) that there is sufficient in the existing Ordinance of 1940 to give Government all the control of the buses needed.

Only this morning I spoke to the hon. the Attorney-General about it, and he said the clause dealing with hire cars will be deleted. I welcome that. I think the whole thing should go by the board in order to save the face of Government. Six or seven months after now all this will be scrapped, when we have had the General Elections and the people have chosen their representatives who will come here and declare the policy of the people. With those observations I support the deletion of the clause.

Mr. GONSALVES : I thought that the discussion on this Bill today would have been on the clauses, but I gather from the speech of the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member who has just spoken that he is opposed to the Bill on the whole. What surprises me as peculiar about this matter is this : Whereas he had strong objections to the Bill and its becoming law, when the second reading was taken he did not exercise the right of opposition and vote against it but adopted a neutral course in saying "I will not vote". His duty was to vote against the second reading. Because there are certain parts of the Bill with which I agree and certain other parts with which I do not agree and I took the neutral course of saying "I will not vote". One can understand that. I suggest to the hon. Member that by his conduct in adopting a neutral attitude and not voting for the second reading of the Bill he gave the impression that he was in favour of it to some extent. This is not a Bill which by any means has been or will be acceptable to everybody. We had in the first instance very strong opposition in regard to hire cars, and in regard to that it was explained, and that definitely, that the Bill will be so amended that no hire car will be prevented from travelling along a route also taken by the railway. I want that to be clear. Therefore that statement coming from Government coupled with the statement of the hon. the Attorney-General that the traders and owners of hire cars are in agreement with the Bill provides the desired safeguard.

With regard to the owners of buses, or trucks, or lorries, so far as I am concerned, there is no competition between the Bus Service in Georgetown and the Railway

Service, and the question of bus competition is entirely one for those who represent the rural districts through which the buses operate. It is left to them to say whether they are in agreement that the Transport and Harbours Department be allowed to restrict hire cars and buses plying for hire along the Coast. Though the hon. Member, Mr. Edun, is not an Elected Member of this Council but is a Nominated Member, he has always maintained, and rightly so, that his interest in the community is as great or greater than, perhaps, that of the Elected Members. Therefore if that is so, he would not care to be second in representation to any Member who represents any division through which the railway runs. If I am correct in that conclusion, then he did not properly represent those constituencies by not voting definitely against the second reading of the Bill.

Taking the matter as a whole, it seems to me, in view of the discussion we had on the second reading and in view of what has been said by the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member, that this matter is one which, perhaps, should not be pursued this afternoon, but Government might take Members of this Council into its confidence and let us see what is the position in regard to the Railway Service. It seems to me that much can be done with the view of arriving at some definite conclusion satisfactory to all the parties concerned. I throw that out as a suggestion, because I can well see that the hon. Member for Western Berbice in moving the deletion of clause 1 did so solely for the purpose of raising a question more or less on the principle of the Bill. The hon. Member, who last spoke, did not speak on the particular clause because on it there can be no discussion. If Government persists in carrying on in Committee we are going to have opposition to every clause.

MR. LEE: I would like to support the suggestion of the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Gonsalves). Your Excellency will remember it was I who called attention to this matter in respect of a resolution passed by the Hire Cars Association and their opposition to this Bill. Let us face the facts and see whether we can pass this Bill as it stands. If you look at the railway in the afternoons you will

notice, as I do from my house, that the passengers are still hanging on to the carriages as the train proceeds up the East Coast. If that is so, can this Government say the railway affords sufficient, suitable and comfortable travelling facilities to the public residing on the East Coast, Demerara? Government cannot and, therefore, we cannot permit this Prescribed Authority to say "We will not grant a road licence." I can only give an instance of what occurred to my knowledge. Let us take the West Coast and West Bank Demerara. The Bus Service there is being regulated and run on a time schedule by the Police as the Prescribed Authority, and there are cases of persons crossing the ferry after the train has left and having to walk from Vreed-en-Hoop to Uitvlugt and also to as far as Vergenoegen, on the West Coast, Demerara, because they can get no conveyance. Is it fair to the people that they should be so penalised? Here is another case. A member of a man's family died in the Canals Polder and he had to get there from the West Coast, but there was only one bus allowed by the Prescribed Authority to go there. As a result he could not reach the funeral house in time as he had to walk. I am not saying that the Transport Service should not have some priority as it has a great deficiency to meet, but that deficiency does not come about as the result of the loss of revenue. It is the result of the heavy cost of coal and certain other things. I admit Mr. Rooke has made a thorough study of it. I agree that a check up under Colonel Teare is being done now. But do not, however, give authority to stop competition. How can you say to the world, "Here is a free Colony, British Guiana; here is freedom of action; here every man has the right to do what he likes in order to earn a standard living", when because a utility service is costing too much and there is a deficit as the result of expenditure exceeding revenue you are seeking to introduce such a hindrance as the present Bill? It is the general public who are footing the bill in respect of the Transport Service, and the time has come for reform in the administration of the Transport and Harbours Department but not as is being sought. Give authority to Colonel Teare to pull up certain things but not in this way. I ask in all earnestness that you accept the proposal of the

hon. Member for Georgetown South and myself for a conference in this matter and that Government takes us into its confidence. Up to now Government has not taken us into its confidence in this matter, and I feel that the Bill is a hindrance to the people of British Guiana.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I have listened quite attentively to those Members who have spoken so far, and frankly I am quite amazed at the turn this debate has taken on the Bill. The effect of the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Western Berbice is really to throw the Bill out of the Council, and I think that is his intention. That was the first part of my amazement. Then the speech by the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member—I could not quite understand what was behind it. Some hon. Members definitely have not taken the trouble to study the Bill at all. Reference has been made by so many speakers about buses. There is nothing in the Bill, as far as I have read, that relates to buses. No more do I understand how this debate is going on. The hon. the Fourth Nominated Member referred to freight rates the Transport and Harbours Department is trying to foist upon the people. The least said about that is the better, because quite frankly he produced no facts in support of that statement, and I doubt very much he is aware of the facts. He spoke about the increases that took place recently in regard to the freight rates on agricultural products, but he has forgotten, perhaps he is not aware of it, to state that the freight rates on agricultural products were reduced 2, 5 or 6 years ago in order to meet certain requirements. He has not stated whether the increase that has taken place takes the rates back to the former figure or whether the increase takes them higher than what the figure was before. As the hon. Member seems to be so interested in the subject in view of what he has stated, he should make further enquiry and give the benefit of it to this Council before talking about the freight rate on sugar has not been increased. He did not even quote figures. I am not going to say that the rates have or have not been increased as that is for somebody else to criticize, but I certainly must say I cannot understand the line of his argument.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS : To a point of correction ! The hon. Member said this Bill does not refer to buses. May I just refer him to clause 3—Amendment of heading to Part VIII of Principal Ordinance. Part III of the Principal Ordinance, section 61 (1) reads :

“On and after the first day of January, nineteen hundred and forty-one, no person shall operate a motor vehicle as a motor bus in any area or route in the county of Demerara, including the city of Georgetown, or in any area or route which may hereafter be defined in any order made by the Governor in Council unless he is the holder of a road service licence”.

The CHAIRMAN : I think it is quite clear. The point by the hon. Member for Western Berbice is in effect wrong. This Bill gives the same power as regards a common carrier as that section gives in respect of the buses. There is no control of buses in this Bill at all. The hon. Member is entirely wrong.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS : I particularly made the point that the existing Ordinance has given sufficient control so far as passenger buses are concerned and this will be unnecessarily burdening further the control.

The CHAIRMAN : It does not deal with buses.

Mr. de AGUIAR : I am grateful to you, sir, for pointing out to the hon. Member where he is wrong. I am sorry you did not leave it to me. I could have, perhaps, done it a bit stronger. I repeat, if the hon. Member did not hear what Your Excellency said, the Bill before the Council has nothing to do with buses.

Mr. ROTH : To a point of correction ! 71.G. of clause 5 of the Bill refers to motor bus twice, distinctly and definitely.

Mr. de AGUIAR : Hon. Members are straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. 71.G. does not bear out the statement made by the hon. Member for Western Berbice. 71.G. deals with the conduct of conductors and has nothing to do with buses on the road. However, sir, I maintain that what the hon. Member has in mind does not appear in this Bill, and I challenge him or any other Member to say I am wrong.

What I have really risen to say is this: We hear so much glib tripe about buses. Hon. Members are not facing up to the situation. Am I to understand those Members feel now that the policy which this Government was trying to initiate some time ago so as to control motor vehicles on the public roads should no longer be carried out? It seems to me that is what certain hon. Members wish to happen. Am I to understand Members did not agree in some council or other to accept the policy and adopt the principle of imposing a very heavy licence duty in order to keep motor trucks and buses off the roads? Am I to understand that Members feel that heavy licences were so successful that no further control measures should be adopted? I maintain that control of these motor vehicles on the public roads should be carried out to the fullest possible extent for the proper control of competition against our railways, having regard to the safety of the people who use these vehicles and those who move on the roads. I think hon. Members would be doing an injustice to the general public if they do not attempt to offer this Government some assistance to bring about effective control. When I spoke during the debate on the second reading, I pointed out certain hardships which I knew would be created and I endeavoured to confine myself to those points rather than throw out this Bill and leave the position as it is at present. Hon. Members must know that that position is unsatisfactory; if they do not know it is, I would say they are not in a position to contribute to this debate.

I am going to refer to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Georgetown South, because there is some suspicion on the part of people outside—suspicion and a good deal of talk—and who is responsible for it I do not know. Some people think that the poor, unfortunate General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department wants to do away with every bus, hire car, lorry and everything else. I think the time has come when Government should make a public announcement so as to allay the suspicion which I happen to know is appearing in the minds of a large number of people. I have no doubt whatever that if such an announcement is made a good deal of discussion on this Bill would

disappear. I repeat that subject to the points I raised when the debate took place in this Council last week, I see no injustice being done to the people who operate these services. All I can see in the Bill is an effort by Government to effect proper control over the operation of these vehicles on our public roads and for the improvement of our transport services. As far as I am concerned, so long as I see that justice will be done, I am prepared to support Government in its intention to bring into being this effective measure, which is before us and which is regarded by a large number of people as being very necessary and very desirable.

Mr. THOMPSON: I am very glad the worthy General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department has been god-fathered by the last speaker, but I can assure him that the General Manager will be quite agreeable to having this Bill taken by two or three Members—and for that matter by as many Members as possible—and thoroughly hammered out so as to arrive at something better to put before this Council. For that reason I am supporting the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Georgetown South—that we should go thoroughly into this Bill and save any unnecessary quarrelling over it. I would be the last person to say that the railway should be scrapped. I am prepared to give every possible support to the Bill, but we are all conscious of the fact that at this stage things are not what they should be. The General Manager is supposed to be an expert and we should give him an opportunity to show his ability in that direction. We understand that some very good saving is being effected at present, so we should give him a little more time and see what would come out of it. I can assure hon. Members that the residents in Western Berbice are placed in a very unenviable position in so far as travelling is concerned. There is a single service and when anything goes wrong there is no other means of getting to and from the City. Now that we are coming to the padi season the Berbice train is always taxed to capacity. Some padi producers have lost a good deal of their padi through having to take it to the railway line and leave it there. Nobody takes control and it is left at the mercy of

animals, etc. Most of the people feel that a lorry is needed to assist them in the transportation of their padi, and if one could be obtained for them at reasonable cost they would be willing to pay for it out of their produce money. We are told that no tractors are available to assist the farmers in their cultivation and that they may be available later, but if we can get lorries to come in and make transportation of the padi easier it would be a very good thing for us. I think we should take the advice given us and hold that it is not good and proper to carry this Bill as it is, but that we should hammer it out and come back with a decision when we shall have had all these points cleared up.

Mr. CRITCHLOW: I am glad the hon. Member for Central Demerara has explained to us that this Bill does not interfere with buses. I was really under the impression that it would do so. What is operating in my mind, however, is whether the General Manager of the T.H.D. who is trying to improve our transport system and protect it against competition should be given more power to prove to us that he could wipe off some of this deficit and make the system more up-to-date. It seems to me that some hon. Members are quite willing to represent certain individual interests who own lorries and buses so that these vehicles can compete against the railway, but if the General Manager is carrying out these measures in the interest of the Colony as a whole he should certainly be given all the power possible, so long as he proves to us that the Colony will benefit. Something must be done, for after all the competition is by individuals and if they get all the benefits we would always have to meet these deficits. It is true that every State-owned railway always has deficits, but if we can take off some of ours it would be better. One hon. Member has stated that Government should take us into its confidence in this matter, but if the General Manager is brought here and asked some unnecessary questions he might get annoyed. In England there are several railway systems and I was glad to hear an Elected Member say that he would support this Bill, for although I have the right to vote according to my conscience the first thing that might be said is that I am not

an Elected Member and am therefore compelled to support it. Something must be done so that the railway can be improved for the benefit of the Colony as a whole. I am going to support this Bill and I would like the General Manager to get an opportunity to show whether or not he can improve the situation.

I desire at this stage to refer to the remarks made by the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member. Some Members are always speaking without a time limit. If any of them had the opportunity of attending the International Labour Conference which was held some little time ago, they would have seen that at every important conference there is a time limit. They should also be reminded that in Parliament the Members do exactly the same thing one hon. Member did here just now—asking that the question be put when it was felt that the debate was being made unnecessarily long. I think we should certainly have a time limit in this Council, otherwise some Members would come here and make others waste a lot of time. Even the Pressmen get disgusted and sleepy sometimes when Members speak unnecessarily long. I will conclude by asking hon. Members to support this Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: I am indebted for the speeches made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Critchlow; the hon. Member for Central Demerara, the hon. Member for Georgetown South, and the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Thompson, all of whom seem to have approached this matter with a tolerant and unbiassed view. It is quite obvious to me that it is no good my trying to "bull-doze" the Bill through the Committee stage this afternoon, and I accept the advice that it would be better for it to be left to be hammered out, but in doing so I would like to answer one or two points myself. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. de Aguiar) has stated that Government should make a public announcement, but I feel that I have already made several announcements on this Bill and those announcements have been very properly and correctly reported in the Press. I stated that this Bill is intended not to turn off trucks, etc. from the roads in the Colony, but to ensure that there is machinery to deal with the future.

I have stated—and this will be in answer to the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Critchlow,—that this Bill does not deal with buses and that it is intended to give power over trucks to the same extent as now exists with regard to buses, and that is quite a different thing from what some hon. Members have been saying. I have said that this Bill puts the control into the hands of an Authority which has no vested interest—and that is the Executive Council—and that so far as I am responsible the control will not be harsh. Indeed, I have made three straight and forthright announcements on this Bill already, but it seems to me—and I think I can be quite candid to hon. Members—that something has happened since the second reading of this Bill. Well, I suggest that we refer this Bill to a select committee and I want it to be clearly understood that this is not intended to be a postponement. I will nominate the members of the committee now, and I want the committee to work on the Bill at once and to co-opt and hear the views of Colonel Teare and the Commissioner of Police. Can I appoint the committee now, Mr. Attorney-General?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I see no objection to its being done, if Your Excellency so desires.

Mr. WOOLFORD: There has only been a suggestion by some Members that the Bill be sent to a committee; there has been no motion. If Your Excellency is interpreting that as a motion, then you have to put the motion to the vote.

The CHAIRMAN: If hon. Members agree I would put the question to the vote as to whether the Bill should go to a select committee. If you agree, I would state who the members of the Committee would be.

Mr. GONSALVES: If it is desired that the point should be put in the form of a motion I will do so, but it does not matter who does so.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg to move that this Bill be referred to a select committee.

Mr. de AGUIAR seconded.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that this Bill be referred to a select committee. I repeat that in doing so it does not mean a postponement of the matter.

Motion put and agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: I propose to appoint a committee comprising the Attorney-General—as Chairman, Mr. de Aguiar, Mr. Gonsalves, Mr. Peer Bacchus, Mr. Jacob, Mr. Edun and Mr. Thompson. I did not expect that this would happen, therefore we will have to meet again to deal with the Bill in Committee. If hon. Members would like to meet at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon we can do so and I will then take the matter relating to the Development Committee.

Mr. EDUN: There is one point I desire to make on that question and that is, I think Your Excellency should be the Chairman of that Committee and Colonel Spencer the Secretary.

Mr. WOOLFORD: May I point out that a select committee such as the one just appointed should have very distinct terms of reference? I would suggest that these be stated.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It has been decided that this Bill, as it now stands, be referred to a select committee and the amendment suggested by the hon. Member for Central Demerara with respect to clause 71.A (4) will also be dealt with. We propose to delete that part of the Bill.

Council resumed.

The PRESIDENT: If it is convenient to hon. Members—it is more convenient for me to proceed tomorrow than today—I would like us to meet here informally at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon when I hope more Members will attend. Therefore, we will adjourn until 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon to consider the Development Plan. The Council is adjourned *sine die*.