

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

Thursday, 9th August, 1956.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Deputy Speaker,

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.
—in the Chair.

Ex-Officio Members

The Hon. the Chief Secretary,
Mr. M. S. Porcher (Ag.)

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

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

Nominated Members of Executive Council:

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

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

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

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj

The Hon. R. C. Tello

The Hon. L. A. Luckhoo, Q. C.

Nominated Unofficials

Mr. T. Lee

Mr. W. A. Phang

Mr. C. A. Carter

Mr. E. F. Correia

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb

Mr. H. Rahaman

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Dr. H. A. Fraser

Mr. R. B. Jailal

Mr. Sugrim Singh

Clerk of the Legislature
—Mr. I. Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature
—Mr. E. V. Viapree.

Absent

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

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

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.—on leave.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal—on leave.

The Deputy Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, the 8th of August, 1956, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

The Chief Secretary : I beg to lay on the table :

The Report of the Trustees of the Mitchell Trust Fund for the year 1955, together with the financial statements and the Director of Audit's certificate thereon.

ORDER OF THE DAY

Georgetown Town Council (Amendment No. 2) Bill, 1956

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development) : I beg to move the first reading of the Bill intituled :

'An Ordinance to amend the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance with respect to the borrowing powers of the Council.'

Mr. Gajraj: I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

CONSTITUTION — MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF ROYAL COMMISSION

Council resumed the debate on the following motion by Mr. Lee:—

"Whereas His Excellency the Governor's announcement of the details of Her Majesty's Government's proposals for introducing an elected element into the Legislature and Executive of the Colony has been received with general dissatisfaction among the people of the Colony;

"And whereas the people of the Colony are particularly concerned that they were not afforded an opportunity of expressing their views in the matter:

BE IT RESOLVED:

(i) That this Council recommends that His Excellency the Governor be requested to inform the Secretary of State of the general dissatisfaction among the people of the Colony following the announcement of the proposed changes in the Constitution, and to ask for the appointment of a Royal Commission to visit the Colony to ascertain the views of the people and to make recommendations with regard to amendments to the Constitution.

(ii) That the Secretary of State be requested to suspend further action on the proposals announced, pending the submission of the report of the Royal Commission.

Mr. Correia: When the Council adjourned yesterday afternoon, I was speaking about the harm that is done to our own people who have to travel abroad, through the use of communist and other mischievous statements that are made by certain persons, and sometimes even in the Press. I would like to repeat that there is only a handful of subversive men and women among us in this Colony, and if we allow a handful of men and women to poison the minds of our people, then the Governor and the Colonial Office would have every right to govern us by officials as provided for in the Constitution referred to by Mr. Lee yesterday. We must endeavour to prevent that, and the only way to do so is to carry out our own type of propaganda as was being done by that handful of people.

As regards the first resolve clause in the motion, it is a well known fact that there is general dissatisfaction with the proposed Renison Constitution. The hon. Mr. Gajraj told the Council yesterday that as he summed

up the position from His Excellency's address to this Council, the Renison Constitution was a means to take us back to the head of the class from which we had come. During the last 50 years or more, we climbed from the bottom of the class and had reached three-fourths of the way to the top when we erred and were put back to the bottom. It is nearly four years since the Constitution in which we failed came into being, and no one can tell me that during that time there has not been a change on the part of the people. They realise that they failed, and there is a definite change on their part. If the Renison Constitution is a gamble to find out what the feelings of the people are and to know whether the subversive element in the country can get back into power, then it is inviting the very object which it wants to defeat, because the proposed Constitution is not the wish of the people and it will be more a failure than a success.

If, on the other hand, we could get back the suspended Constitution of 1953, the people of the Colony would be very happy indeed. There is a far greater chance of success for the Waddington Constitution—the one which was suspended—than there is for the Renison Constitution which it is proposed to introduce. Therefore, if we are to gamble it is far better to do so with the suspended Constitution. I say now, and I mean it, that the Renison Constitution is a time-wasting policy, because if the suspended Constitution is re-introduced, with all the checks and balances recommended in the Robertson Commission's Report, and the subversive elements should win all the seats at a General Election — I make bold to say that that will never happen, because the people have learnt their

lesson—but if, for argument sake, they won all the seats, they have learnt their lesson, and I have no doubt that they would work the Constitution, and the Governor would have the power to carry on the Government without them, if necessary. Therefore, why should we accept a Constitution which has less chance of succeeding?

If a party other than the subversive elements got the majority of seats we would still be a number of years nearer the goal of self-government. The hon. Mr. Gajraj made a very lame point in support of the Renison Constitution. He told us that arrangements are already being made for the revision of the electoral roll, and that we should accept the Renison Constitution because of those preparations—a very poor excuse.

Mr. Gajraj: I do not want to interrupt my friend, but I am sure he will recall that I did not stand here to support the Renison proposals. What I said was that as a Guianese I could not accept them as the be-all-and-end-all of our constitutional development, and I did make the point that it was, in my opinion, the shortest step towards a restoration of the pathway to self-government, which is our aim.

Mr. Correia: That is exactly what I wanted to bring out. No right-thinking Guianese, no Member of the Executive Council or of this Council, deep down in his heart, will accept the Renison Constitution. In fairness to the people of the Colony, after announcing the proposals His Excellency should have allowed a cooling-off period to permit the people to voice their opinions on the proposed Constitution, instead of proceeding immediately to make arrangements to carry it out. Two days after the Governor's announcement, notice of motion was given in this Council.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member referring to the motion under discussion?

Mr. Correia: Yes, sir. Two days after the announcement Mr. Lee gave notice of this motion—on the 27th of April. It was on the 25th of April that His Excellency announced the Renison Constitution. Government should have seen to it that this motion was brought before the Council as early as possible, so as to allow discussion on it and get the feelings of the people. Instead, preparations were made for the revision of the electoral rolls, and after a long time the motion was brought up for discussion.

In the course of his speech the hon. Mr. Gajraj referred to Mr. Lee's motion as a "political manoeuvre", or words to that effect, but I make bold to say that he has covered the same ground as he suggested the mover had done. The remark was therefore not fair to the hon. mover.

I shall not keep the Council longer. In conclusion I repeat that in fairness to the people of British Guiana—and I speak for the majority of the people—I cannot accept the Renison Constitution. I am therefore supporting the motion.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Some measure of thanks and congratulation is due to the hon. mover of the motion and also to the hon. mover of the amendment.

Mr. Lee: To a point of correction! There is no amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no amendment before the Council.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am sorry. I had really forgotten that I had taken the point that the proposed amendment

could not hold water, because it was repugnant to the original motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was you who demanded a ruling from the Chair.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Yes, sir. Without desiring to be harsh or impolite to the hon. mover of the motion I wish to describe this motion as ill-conceived, ill-timed, illogical, and to say that it does not reflect public opinion in this country, nor is it calculated to help our country forward. In my view this motion might very well be regarded as being out of order. I make that statement at this time when an Order in Council has been signed, and preparations are being made—

Mr. Lee: To a point of correction! No such Order in Council has been published in this Colony.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I would ask the hon. the Attorney General to say what the position is. I speak subject to correction. That is my information, but I may be wrong.

The Attorney General: The position is that an Order in Council was made on the 3rd of August. It is an enabling Order in Council to permit this Legislative Council to pass any necessary legislation to enable elections to be held. It does not alter the Constitution in any form at all. The necessity for it arose from the fact that the present Interim Constitution provided for a Legislative Council without any elected Members, and therefore it might have been *ultra vires* for this Council to have passed legislation referring to elections. All this Order in Council does is to confer on this Legislative Council the power to pass Ordinances to provide for elections. No actual amendments of the present interim Constitution have yet been made by any Order in Council. That Order in Council was only made

last Friday (3rd of August), and the necessary particulars have only just been received in British Guiana, so that there has not yet been an opportunity to publish it in the *Gazette*.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am very grateful to the hon. the Attorney General for his explanation of the point. Not even with the assistance of a microscope can I find in the arguments advanced by the hon. mover of the motion, any justification for asking for the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the constitutional or political situation in this country, and also for the suspension of further action on the proposed Renison Constitution. I have been very liberal, and perhaps I am not competent to judge, but I fail to see any cogent argument, or any argument of any merit, in support of what the motion seeks. We have been deluged with permutations and combinations with regard to the seats in the new Legislature. We have also been deluged with high-sounding statements, but we have passed that stage. We would like to hear cold reasoning as one would reason in his own business. I have been anxiously awaiting to hear the honourable the mover present to this Council some good reason in favour of this motion, but all I have heard has not convinced me in the slightest degree to support this motion.

Who in this Chamber would not like to see affairs in British Guiana return again to normalcy? I think I voice the sentiments of every Member of this Council, Officials and others, and responsible public opinion in this country when I say that everyone would like to see British Guiana once again on the road to constitutional stability and progress. There is a phrase we all know of, and that is,

“playing politics.” Very often we play politics. As the hon. mover knows, a lawyer sometimes has a brief, but whether he believes in the evidence that is advanced in support of that brief is another matter. Conscientiously, do my hon. friends seriously wish to urge, knowing this country as they undoubtedly do, that the 1953 Constitution should be returned at this time? Do they seriously hope that a Royal Commission will solve our troubles?

Our troubles are right here and we do not want a Royal Commission to point them out. We have already had commissions and commissions and reports, and reports. We live here; we know the people and we know our troubles. In my view, asking for the return of the 1953 Constitution is even worse than asking for a Royal Commission to visit these shores. I know that in this debate we are going on record as having made certain statements which will be henceforth used as very good fodder for street-corner meetings. I am fully conscious of that, but unfortunately copies of *Hansard* may not be available to as many people as we would like.

I speak with a full sense of responsibility and I want to call a spade a spade. In my view we have deviated from the track which had as its starting point the Waddington Constitution. I was very much perturbed when a senior Member of the Legislative Council expressed himself in such terms as “the Renison Constitution is a farce.” Nice phrase. One hears it at the street-corners and perhaps reads it in newspapers. “The British Government wants to save its face” or words to that effect we also heard. But we all make rash statements at times. I hold no brief for the British Government, and as a

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

Member of the Legislative Council I have often crossed swords with that Government. I am on record as having done that and I have no apologies to make. We have deviated, and whose fault was it? Here was this Constitution after years of battle and we got adult suffrage with it. It was given to us and, to use a colloquialism, we "monkeyed around with it."

I come to the hon. mover of the motion. I may not be giving his exact words, but I heard him say, firstly, that the suspension of the Constitution was justified, secondly, that there has been no change of heart since then, and thirdly, perhaps in desperation, "I do not know the remedy; I do not know what can be done." Is that not a false syllogism? Yet he asks that the Constitution be reintroduced.

Mr. Lee: On a point of order. I never said that the Constitution should be reintroduced.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I should have said Mr. Correia.

Mr. Lee: Oh, well. The hon. Member must be sure of his language.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am very grateful to the hon. Member. Looking at those three propositions: suspension justified in 1953, no change of heart and reintroduction now —

Mr. Correia: The hon. Member cannot take quotations from my speech and that of the hon. mover at once. He is wrong to do that. I never said there was no change of heart.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I do not wish to misquote the hon. Members. Both have spoken: one is in favour of a

Royal Commission and, if I understand him well, the other is for the reintroduction of the 1953 Constitution—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: But has stated that he supports the motion.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Yes sir. I could not single out any particular Member supporting the motion. I was taking the three propositions as a whole, and I leave it to this Council to judge them. I think that, in effect, the first and major premise, that the suspension of the Constitution was justified, does not hold water. If the suspension was justified and there has been no change of heart how can the reintroduction be asked for now? I wish to support the view urged in this debate that if this motion is accepted it will have the effect of extending the life of the Interim Government and the Renison Constitution is described as an Interim Constitution. Would we, sitting here as Members of the Interim Government use our position here to support a motion to extend the period of our being here as Members of the Legislature? We have had four years of it and it is no reflection—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think it is nearly three.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I am subject to your correction, sir. I do not know why I am increasing the number — perhaps it will be for the best. It has been no reflection on the people of this country that we have had an Interim Legislature. We have had in our history, particularly our Constitutional history, men whose names are fragrant to the memory of Guianese, yet they were not elected representatives. Nevertheless it is our duty to end this Interim status as early as possible. Those of us who have gone abroad know what indignity we have had to suffer when our country's poli-

tics came to be discussed. We had the Waddington Constitution and it was suspended. Now we are asking for the return of that Constitution.

Mr. Lee: Again, I must ask the hon. Member to stick to the motion. The motion does not say anything about the return of the Waddington Constitution.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: That is not the point. My friend is a lawyer. He knows I have mentioned Mr. Correia's name.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. Member, Mr. Lee's point is that there is no motion before the Council asking for the 1953 Constitution, known as the Waddington Constitution.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: I agree with that point, sir. Shall I leave the motion? I think I have the right to discuss the point raised by the hon. Member, Mr. Correia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: His amendment was ruled out of order.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Sir, in his speech he referred to it, and now, in passing, I am referring also to it. If he did not say anything, then I would have said nothing. If he wishes to eradicate his remarks in that respect from the record, then I will say no more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that is possible. You cannot just eradicate one's remarks.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Is it not significant—and I have no desire to be impolite—that the hon. mover of this motion is one of those lucky persons who is assured of his seat and the hon. Member who champions and supports such a motion is also sure of his seat?

Mr. Correia: Sir, these statements—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am surprised that the hon. Member, Mr. Sugrim Singh feels that anybody can be sure of anything.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: My sense of the political situation leads me to that point. I would like to see other Members with equal eloquence support a motion of this kind. I do not agree with the Renison proposals, and I have said so in the Press referring to them as a "humiliation to British Guiana." But while I may not agree with them and they are a humiliation, what else can we do? What other alternative? A Royal Commission? Is that an alternative? Are we going to be in this quagmire all the time? Is it not reasonable to work the proposed amended Constitution and from within it move forward? That is my view.

I do not hold any brief for the Colonial Office but with some sense of responsibility I say that the British Government today is conscious of world opinion against colonialism, and every assistance will be ours for the asking, if we can show the capacity to take responsibility and handle our affairs. We have no better example than the Caribbean Federation. (Hon. Members: *Hear, hear*) I said Caribbean Federation, and I do not want to get myself involved on this question. The British Government has done its best to try to get British Guiana into it. My friends may draw inferences as they like. If we show the capacity to control ourselves and our affairs there would be no hindrance to the achievement of our objectives, but if we continue to show irresponsibility, to quibble about small matters, to try to make trouble in the country which would result in insecurity, then we have ourselves to blame.

(Mr. Sugrim Singh)

After all, there are other interests in this country which have to be protected. Every one in this Council would unhesitatingly agree that the suspension of the constitution in 1953 was justified. If this is so, well, let us move forward to political maturity, slowly, but surely, and the Renison proposals would certainly provide the opportunity for some of these leaders to show not only their capacity to take responsibility but whether indeed there is any change of heart for the welfare of this Colony. I advise caution rather than plunging into the dark and running the risk of a record such as the evidence of 1953.

I would like my hon. friend, the mover of the motion and my hon. friend, Mr. Correia, to read thoroughly and digest the statement in the Robertson Commission Report which I have just read. Are my hon. friends serious when they say that there is a change of heart among the leaders of this group? Surely, this is playing politics and playing up to a group which no such tactics can change. My hon. friend, Mr. Correia, has chosen to deem "rubbish" the suggestion that the people should support this group of communists. I agree that the supporters of the P. P. P., are not communists. and His Excellency the Governor in his statement has dealt with this point very clearly.

I am of the view that there is no necessity for any Royal Commission to direct us to solve this problem. The Commission that came, clearly analysed our present situation and gave their observations and recommendations in their Report. All this is on record for perusal and guidance. The plain question is, "Can we run the risk of asking this House for the introduction of the 1953 Constitution immediately, or should we accept the

Renison proposals, work them, and then move forward to a better and fuller representation?" I believe that we should try out the Renison proposals, see how the leaders will work for the benefit of the country, and then decide. I am even prepared to support an increase in the number of the elected seats from 12 to 14, as the position was in 1947, but I cannot support this motion which is surely going to postpone elections for another two or three years.

The whole situation is regrettable and unfortunate, and every Guianese with any sense of self-respect would be ashamed of the position in which we have found ourselves. This small group of destructive people are experts at twisting and distorting facts to sway the illiterate masses to keep on supporting them in spite of all that they have done to wreck the Waddington Commission. For instance, they claim credit for bringing about all the achievements in the Development Programme and they put it at their street corner meetings in the following way:

"We have suffered for you and we are responsible by our suffering for bringing all these good things to you. Therefore you will be ungrateful if you do not continue to support us."

Surprisingly, quite a few shortsighted people, supposed to be intelligent and educated, have succumbed to this argument. This is a great pity, and I must here say that more people outside of the P.P.P, are unconsciously advertising this destructive group and causing it to gain more support than the members themselves have done. So often we come across people who perhaps did not get something done or achieved from Government in the manner they expected, and the next thing is they

say, "Support the P.P.P. to fight down Government Officials and Government Departments and wreck everything." Right here I want to make the point that while this small and destructive group of people are directly responsible for our political setback, the people who have backed them and who continue to back them, cannot be free from blame and are indirectly responsible. And, if they continue to use their votes to return the people, who are determined to wreck the future of this country, then, sad to say, they would not have proved themselves responsible citizens capable of exercising that sacred right of choosing their representatives. If they are going to allow themselves to be shepherded once again, then they will have themselves to blame for the consequences, and cannot hope to convince anybody by shedding crocodile tears afterwards.

How many people know that this subversive group when they got into power, had money from the World Bank to develop this country, but instead of applying their minds to constructive schemes for the development of the country they converted our Legislature into a forum for abuse and communist propaganda, passing resolutions to free the Rosenbergs in the United States, calling for loud speakers attached to the Legislature for their comrades to hear their empty and destructive speeches, each trying to rival the other, for eminence in hurling abuse on the Government and Government Officials. The argument, therefore, that they are responsible for the Development Programme is without foundation and is a glaring fallacy. To me, it amounts to this: The Georgetown Fire destroyed all the old buildings in Water Street near Bookers, as a result of which we got the modern buildings in that square. Therefore, to put this destructive

group back into power is to say, in effect: "Let us have more fires and burn down everything so that we will have more modern buildings in Water Street". Is this good argument to convince anyone who has the interest of this country at heart?

Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend, the hon. mover, cannot seriously expect this Council to support this motion. It cannot solve our problem but instead would delay our march to normalcy and Constitutional stability. I strongly advocate that we try out the Renison Proposals and be afforded an opportunity to see what would be the turn of events. Then, I have no doubt that Her Majesty's Government would, without hesitation, assist us to get back a Constitution we all desire.

Recently there has been an All-Party Conference. Some of those people have made representations in the proper quarters, and they have been told in clear and categorical terms what the decision was. Is this Legislature to be used as another forum to make that request? I was born in this country; I have all my interests here, and I intend to remain here. After all a leader is no leader unless he has the backing of the people, and I want to say with some degree of responsibility, that after what the people of this country have seen done by a small group to lose a Constitution which was the best in the Caribbean, if they continued to support that group they would be *particeps criminis*. My view is that the future of this country does not lie in the hands of leaders with spurious political ideologies, but in the hands of true and loyal Guianese. The devil can quote Scripture to suit his purpose. I am no authority on communism, but the books which have been written on the subject are written in such a seductive style, the propaganda is so

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

catching when promises are made to make a heaven on earth, that some people are tools in their hands. But they can fool some of the people some of the time—not all of the people all of the time.

Today every Guianese, if he has any sense of responsibility, must be humiliated by the knowledge that only yesterday this Colony was on top from the point of view of constitutional progress. We have records of great politicians and public men who dreamed of a Magnificent Province. Among the younger generation there are irresponsible young men who have taken the blood from this country to make themselves what they are, but their contribution in return for what this country has given them is to destroy, distort and disrupt—a wonderful display of loyalty to a country which has given them birth and all that they have!

I cannot support this motion, and I am asking hon. Members to throw it out. What I have said here will be recorded in Hansard and will be used against me at election time, but I care nothing about that. I speak conscientiously; I do not play politics. I say, let us try the Renison proposals and endeavour to move from it into the light of constitutional progress. Let us not grope in the dark and set the stage for a recurrence of the constitutional set-back of 1953. I sincerely plead with hon. Members to throw this motion out. It is ill-conceived, it is illogical, and it does not reflect the true aspirations of the people of this country.

Rev. Mr. Bobb : Up to the present we have had a very full and interesting discussion on many aspects of this motion. I shall not indulge in any historical review of the events which led up to the suspension of the 1953

Constitution, but I would like to refer to that rather significant date which will remain with us for a long time as an important landmark in the Constitutional history and development of this Colony—the 25th of April, 1956.

If I interpret the hon. Member's motion rightly, I see that he desires to make it perfectly clear that he is conveying the disappointment and dissatisfaction of the people of this country with the modified Interim Constitution proposals announced by His Excellency the Governor, and that because, in his opinion, there exists an important point of divergence between what His Excellency thinks is right, and what the people think is right, there ought to be an independent body to investigate, and that that independent body should be a Royal Commission. Let me say quite definitely that in my opinion the request for the appointment of a Royal Commission at this time can do no good to our present position. I would like the hon. mover of the motion to understand that in saying so I have the highest regard for his enthusiasm and sincerity in bringing forward the motion, and even in wording it as it is. I would not dare to say it was ill-conceived, but my frank opinion—and I say it with the utmost candour—is that I fail to see how a Royal Commission, coming into the country at the present time, could hope to obtain through fully representative channels the opinions of the people concerning these proposals, and to suggest what kind of Constitution the country requires.

I think it is a foregone conclusion that the majority of the people have in some way or other expressed disappointment with the proposals put forward by His Excellency, following his discussions with the Secretary of State. I make no apology for saying

that I regret very much that I find myself unable to agree entirely with those proposals, and I think that is not saying anything that is contrary even to the wishes of His Excellency who, in his Address to this Council, on page 5 of the Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1956, said :

“I do not want to stop anyone from saying what they think of the proposals. On the contrary I look forward to studying the various shades of opinion. But if politicians want to talk I hope they will think it out for themselves with all its ramifications, as I have had to do.”

But having said that, surely I must go on to say positively why I cannot support this motion as it is; what my views are. To begin with, the statement by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, speaking for H.M. Government, as recorded in the same Sessional Paper, says :

“It is intended therefore to take steps to introduce an elected element into the Legislature and Executive.”

Later on it says :

“Her Majesty’s Government hopes that this substantial step forward will encourage healthy political development and enable experience to be gained upon which further progress can be based.”

I believe that that statement has been made with the utmost sincerity and with a realisation of the facts that were then before H.M. Government. I believe that the Secretary of State is and has been honestly trying to think his way through this problem, and that the discussions which he has had with responsible people have been for that purpose, and for nothing else. But that is only one side of the picture. I am sure that H. M’s Government would like also to know to what extent there has been acceptance of these proposals, and to what extent their hopes for a substantial step for-

ward to “encourage healthy political development” may be realized.

It is especially on this question of the hopes of H. M’s Government I would like to say that I am of the view that the proposals put forward by H. M’s Government leave me in doubt as to whether they will, as quickly as is expected, bring about that healthy political development. In a few words, and to be specific, I am very doubtful, sir, that the number of elected seats suggested in the proposals would help to provide the means for that development. I am going to submit two reasons why I think so. In the first place, if I understand the people of this country I would venture to say that we cannot despise their way of thinking, and for some time they have been accustomed to thinking in two directions in so far as the structure of electoral districts is concerned.

The first is the pattern upon which the 1947 Constitution was based; there were 14 electoral districts. The second is the pattern on which the 1953 Constitution was based; then there were 24 electoral districts. I shall not attempt an exercise in permutations and combinations, as the hon. mover tried to do, but I have grave doubts that the introduction of a new pattern of electoral districts would achieve the ends in view, and would not, on the contrary, defeat the purpose. Indeed I am of the view that if the idea is, as I think it is, to get a real gauge of what the people are thinking, I make bold to suggest that fixing 12 electoral districts would not satisfy the conditions to give that true gauge.

The second point I would like to make is that in the proposals themselves there is suggested an addition to the Official section of the Legis-

[Rev. Mr. Bobb]

lative Council and the Executive Council by one. The very presence of the Development Secretary, as suggested, signifies to me—and I believe to the whole country — that a great deal of importance is going to be attached, and properly so, to the economic development of this country and to the proposals relating thereto. Any modification of the Constitution, therefore, must take due cognizance of the measure of the economic development to which this Colony has been and will be committed, and nothing should be done to jeopardize the steady progress in that direction.

If the elected personnel of the new Legislature, as suggested, are to represent the views of the people, to speak for the people and take care of the range of the economic development contemplated, let us think of the burden that will be placed on them. I fear that 12 elected Members could hardly be expected to carry out so onerous a responsibility. This Interim Legislature is now about three Members less than when it was constituted. From 24 our numbers have been reduced to 21, and I am prepared to say that while we do the very best we can (we do not want to sing our own praises but we all know we do the very best we can) we are not in the same sense representatives of the people; we are not responsible to constituencies, and we do not in the same sense have to bring forward to Government the wishes and opinions of the people.

This whole country would be sadly and badly served in my opinion by 12 elected men only, especially since five of those 12 are normally expected to be Ministers with portfolios. I do not wish to suggest by that that Ministers would not be able to represent the wishes of the people, but they will be tied to their duties and I expect they will be so

heavily laden with business between 1956 and 1960 (if I read the statement on the Development Programme aright) that it could hardly be expected of them to get about the country enough and do their duties efficiently and in the quickest possible way.

Now I am all for a large measure of representation. Hon. Members will probably remember on the 23rd of March I gave notice of a motion in this Council which, with your permission, sir, I will read again:

“Be it resolved: That this Council is of the view that an early return to representative Government is desirable and supports the Governor in Council in his endeavour to secure the re-establishment of representative Government in the Colony.”

This was prior to the Governor's announcement. I could have had no knowledge then of what the proposals were themselves, but that was the turn of my own mind. I share with my colleagues the same feeling that as soon as possible the Interim, wholly nominated Government should give way to the people's representatives and because of that I feel that the hon. Member who moved the motion, well-meaning as he is, has perhaps put himself in an embarrassing position in not just pressing for a greater measure of representation in the Government to come and leaving completely out of his motion the idea of a Royal Commission.

If I had my own way I would have wished to move an amendment to that motion. I know I cannot, because my amendment would be of such a nature that it would earn the same fate as Mr. Correia's amendment yesterday. I therefore hope that before this debate is ended the hon. mover will see it fit to withdraw this motion. I really wish he would withdraw it because a request for a Royal Commission would reflect upon the ability of the

people of this country to think their way through their problems at this stage. I do not wish to suggest that a Royal Commission would in any way do injustice to this country, but right now we understand what the people are clamouring for in this country and we have gone so far in that understanding that I feel it is absolutely unnecessary to ask a Royal Commission to come here.

So far in the debate the point has not been sufficiently made that the conservative Constitution which is the subject of His Excellency the Governor's proposals is a modification of the present Constitution. It is not the type of Constitution which anyone who knows this country would like for it permanently. If I were asked for my opinion, on a permanent Constitution, I would say quite definitely, "yes, let us have the 1953 Constitution back, as soon as we are quite ready for it." There is no doubt about that in my own mind, but let us keep things in their proper perspective. This "modified control," to use the words of His Excellency himself, is a half-way house.

Let me reiterate; Members of this Interim Government cannot regard themselves as the chosen representatives of the people in the strict sense of those words. We endeavour to represent the people but we are not their elected representatives. Because that is so there is no need for some of the chosen representatives of the people to come in at this stage and say on behalf of the electorate what they require, what the country requires. That is how I understand the proposals put forward by His Excellency, and I think everyone of us will be glad to give way in order that the representatives of the people can come forward and say "we have been elected by the people, we have consulted them and the wishes of the

people are, everything taken into consideration: our political advancement, economic progress in which we have been assured there will be substantial assistance, and that we should have the Waddington Constitution, or some other constitution." But there is not the same propriety for this Interim Government to say so. Provision must be made for something to be said at some time and, to my mind, this is being made possible through the proposals by His Excellency.

Again I say that I think that the number of seats might be increased. As I said, if I had my way I would move an amendment to the motion but I still think it is well for my colleagues to know what is in my mind; and when I refer to this amendment I gave much thought to I am reflecting also the opinion of many people in this country. I have a copy of a letter which appeared in the Press and which I kept, because it seems to telescope the opinions of many people in the country who neither wish at this present time (and for different reasons) for the Waddington Constitution to be reintroduced now, nor are in full agreement with the proposals made by His Excellency the Governor. The letter was published in April and I will quote from it.

"I believe that if the many-party craze were to disappear and one party were to emerge and come into being and to show itself capable of capturing the imagination and securing the loyalty of the masses of the people there would be good ground for asking the Colonial Office to agree to the provision of an Elected majority for the new Legislature, and that could easily be done within the terms of the present proposals simply by reducing the number of Nominated Members from 8 to 6 or 4. I will prefer 4, and if we act wisely and at once this reduction could come into force within a matter of months."

While this section of the letter does not say there is need for more Elected

[Rev. Mr. Bobb]

Members it nevertheless supports my point to the extent that there should be an Elected majority.

I come back to what I would have liked to propose, and this is entirely in accord with the motion of which I gave notice on 23rd March; may I read it?

"Be it resolved: That this Council recommends that His Excellency should give further consideration to a greater measure of representative Government by increasing the number of Elected seats."

There is no need for me to elaborate on the point. The flexibility of the constitutional proposals offer the way for this further reconsideration of the total number of seats, and I believe that any dissatisfaction or disappointment now felt by many people in the country would disappear, or be greatly minimised, and they would go to the polls with a greater degree of confidence and self-respect if they were given an opportunity to return more than 12 representatives for the next Legislative Council. Of course, I can see that I am opening the way to a controversy, because an increased number of Elected representatives would not preserve the balance in terms of these proposals. I do not want to go into detailed examination of these proposals at the moment, but it would suffice me to say that if further time and thought are given to the proposals it would be seen that in terms of these same proposals the Government would have certain reserve powers which could and would be used to safeguard the country against a calamity.

May I recapitulate and once again say to this Council that I am unable to support the hon. mover in his request for a Royal Commission to come to this country, and also unable to accept entirely in their present form the proposals put forward by His Excellency

the Governor, and that my wish is to see a greater number of Elected seats. If I were asked, how many, I would probably want to say (using the same electoral districts as in 1947 or adding three or four more because of the increase and spread of the population) there should be between 14 and 18. I do think that 12 will not help to achieve the end in view, both from the standpoint of the people selecting their representatives to do a good job of work, as well as from the standpoint of Her Majesty's Government wanting to know the true position in this country. I regard the proposals as, to use the language of the Sessional Paper, a "modified controlled experiment," and I accept the idea of having an experiment and not a full return to the 1953 Constitution because I do not believe this Legislative Council is competent to speak for the people in the same way as the Elected representatives can in order to request or demand that Constitution.

During the Federation debate the point was repeated almost *ad nauseam* that the Interim Government was unable, incompetent to speak for the people and, to repeat some stronger words "force this country into Federation." It will be remembered that when I moved the motion in regard to Federation I myself said I did not think that the Interim Government was competent to commit the country. I feel the same way with respect to the return of the 1953 Constitution. Speaking for myself personally, I am in a position to assess the needs of the people in a large enough sense in order to say confidently what the people want.

Now the Order in Council passed in Parliament gives this Interim Government certain powers which enables it to prepare the way for Elections and for the introduction of this modified Constitution. Beyond that,

and as Members of this Council, to say it will not be competent for this Interim Government to go. It is completely outside its province to say that the 1953 Constitution which has been suspended should be returned, but I think it is within our province, both as Guianese that within the structure of the proposals recommended (bearing in mind that those proposals are flexible and that a larger or lesser measure of Elected representation can be provided) it is in the interest of the people of this country and in the interest of Her Majesty's Government that the Secretary of State should know that a large body of representative opinion in this country would like to see a greater number of Elected representatives in the next Legislature.

Mr. Luckhoo : May I commend the hon. Member (Mr. Lee) for the thought he has given to this motion. Whatever brickbats may be hurled, I would like to pay tribute to him for the great interest he has taken in things which he thinks are for the improvement and progress of the Colony.

I have no doubt that what the hon. Member meant to emphasise by this motion is that we are disappointed with the proposed amendment to the Constitution, and that all of us wish to see more Elected Members provided for in the Constitution. If I have incorrectly read his thoughts, then I apologise, but it seems to me that that was the real purpose behind the motion. If we were to accede to the motion as worded, I feel, with every respect for the hon. Member, that although it is something to which he has really set his heart it would serve no useful purpose. Let me say, like him, that when first I heard of these proposals in what has erroneously been termed the Renison Constitution I was keenly disappointed and I felt we should make representations not only in

this country but abroad if necessary. I have, together with others, openly proclaimed that we should get a greater number of Elected representatives—in the terms which have been put forward so eloquently and so clearly by the last hon. speaker. The only reservation which I have always made, and which I agree must be associated with the demand, is that in these things there must be consideration of the interests of all the people concerned.

It is no good approaching this question with bias and attempting to play politics. We must grapple with the problem: we are shortly going out of the Interim Government and although we are protesting the amendments to the Constitution and making our petitions, we must be prepared to work whatever is given to us and to show before the passage of much more time that we have earned the right to get a more progressive and liberal Constitution. It will serve no useful purpose in turning our backs to what is termed the "new" Constitution, and saying that if we do not get a return of the 1953 Constitution we will not participate in the coming elections.

That, to my mind, would be a defeatist attitude and would not show the spirit required at this moment. *Post mortem* examinations will not serve much purpose at this stage, and I do not propose to go into the realms of history, interesting and intriguing as that history is. The point we should not forget is that the blame must be laid clearly and fairly at the feet of those responsible for the loss of our 1953 Constitution, for which loss we are suffering today in our political progress. Let us not forget that we had a Constitution that was one of the most liberal in the Caribbean, and it was taken away from us because of those who would not use it but did abuse it.

[Mr. Luckhoo]

That is what occurred with the 1953 Constitution—a Constitution which we now wish to regain. Yet it is curious to observe that this very 1953 Constitution which is now hailed, was attacked by the same Party in power. I need only refer to the report of the Robertson Commission, page 32, on which there is a record of what is described as "Attack on the Waddington Report and Constitution" the very Constitution we are all screaming for now, because that is what we want to lead us to independence. Yet the destructive element saw no good in that Constitution. I quote:

"91. The inability of its witness before the Waddington Commission wholly to justify the complete absence of constitutional checks or to produce some check acceptable to the Party did not lead to any modification of the Party's attitude towards a new constitution. On the contrary, the issue of the Party's official journal "Thunder" published after the appearance of the Party's witnesses before the Commission described Waddington as a "camouflage" whose task was "merely to give a new form or appearance to the old reality" and British Governments (the British Government at the time being a Labour Government) as "most clever in devising forms which serve to keep power in their own hands and at the same time give a semblance of democracy." During 1951 and 1952 the Party and its leaders used stronger language to condemn the report and the recommendations of the Waddington Commission. For example:

"The Chairman of the Party (Mr. Burnham) writing in the November, 1951 issue of "Thunder" and adapting the language of Karl Marx said that the Waddington Report succeeds 'in illustrating that indeed the State is an instrument designed to maintain the dominance and power of the ruling class and that there is no advance to be gained except by relentless and determined struggle."

"Of a speech by the Vice-Chairman of the Party (Dr. Jagan) in the Legislative Council in January, 1952, the February, 1952, issue of "Thunder" said that he had 'attacked the Constitution as being merely

a fake and a trap and another tactic of British Imperialism to perpetuate exploitation and to maintain the old order. He urged the struggle for immediate self-government and the setting up of a **People's Government.**" "Thunder" went on to say that the praise given to the Constitutional proposals by "the agents of vested interests and their stooges is a real indication of the worthlessness of the Constitution."

Sir, comment is unnecessary. It is only necessary for any rational and right-thinking man to look back and see that that which these very individuals are courting today is the same Constitution which they derided in 1953. In order to complete what I have to say, I continue to read :

"In a foreword to a pamphlet in which Dr. Jagan published the text of his speech in the Legislative Council, Mr. Sydney King said "the British will write any constitution for a colony except a free constitution, for a free constitution never descends from an Imperialist overlord into the arms of an exploited people but is won and written by the people themselves in the face of battle. We have seen that it is more likely for a dog to surrender a bone, more likely for a crow to relinquish carrion than for an imperialist power voluntarily to hand over control to the people of the Colonies."

"An official statement of the aims and programme of the P.P.P. issued in January, 1952, described the Waddington constitution as "a new formula for the continued subjection of our people."

The September, 1952 issue of "Thunder" said that the dictatorial use of veto powers "is anticipated under the new Constitution. Our Party will never rest content until these checks and veto powers are completely removed."

Sir, the point I make is that while the amendments may be a bitter pill for the people, what they did not know in 1952—53 because of the deliberate assault of the P.P.P., was that the Constitution they had was one which should have been prized and cherished, because it was a Constitution which could have led the country to further progress and independence. Yet they cursed and

ranted, as shown in the extracts to which I have referred. These are the ones responsible for what we have lost, and we must show ourselves worthy of regaining it. No Member here would say that it is satisfied with the amendments made to the Constitution. The hon. Mr. Gajraj has put it very nicely when he said that he could not willingly accept them. I had an opportunity of writing for a newspaper and I described it as "a bitter pill," but if it is necessary for us to take the pill we must do so, for we have people in this country capable of running the Constitution and winning the right to have further amendments more consistent with a progressive Constitution.

People in other parts of the world have suffered a similar fate. Nkrumah suffered a similar experience for he was given a Constitution he did not like, yet he faced it and worked it, and today he has earned the right to a Constitution of which he and his country can be justly proud. We all feel, like the hon. Mr. Bobb and the hon. Mr. Lee, that we would like to see more Elected Members in this Council, but, let us do everything constitutionally—let us make our representations in the proper places and we might be able to achieve that for which we aim. We might be able to influence an amendment for 18 Elected seats as suggested, instead of 12. If we do not get them, we must realise with regret and heavy heart that this is the reward for our failure to work that which we had in 1953. Those who were in power misused that power and wrecked the Constitution they had.

The most priceless Constitution devised by man could be destroyed by brigands or by individuals who aim at rape and destruction. By such kind was a good Constitution destroyed. Even with their so-called limitation

of time, I say they had an opportunity to make full use of that Constitution, but they abused the opportunity which was presented to them. Because of their deeds I think that we should go forward and show our bona fides in this matter, win the support of the people and earn something better. We are all interested in the welfare of the country, and as such we have the right to express our views on this important subject. For one to accept this particular motion it would mean — and I think it was very well put by Mr. Gajraj — a delay detrimental to our interest, a delay which serves no useful purpose. No nominated Legislature can claim to be a popular Legislature.

We are here; we have a job of work to do and we must do it to the best of our ability, conscious of our duty to the country. No nominated Legislature could be popular, because it is not put there by popular support and cannot claim to have been elected by the people. However, if we emulate the the action of those who say they will not participate in the coming election, we would be opening ourselves to criticism justly and well founded, and we would be playing into the hands of those who had ill served our country.

I think the hon. Mr. Lee would be the last person who would like to adopt such an attitude. Further, what would be the result of this motion? What he is asking is for a Royal Commission to visit the Colony so as to make a revision or amendment of the Constitution, but we have no guarantee of what kind of recommendation would be made and whether there would be any further amendment of the Constitution. But, what is pronounced and prominent is that any such steps must necessarily take time. Time means delay; delay means self-extension of the period of our political life. Any such borrowed

[Mr. Luckhoo]

time for our present interim lives would be keeping the country in a state of uncertainty. There is no knowing what a Royal Commission would do. We know now that amendments are being put up, which will give a little more flexibility to the whole question of representation by Elected Members in this Chamber. Not to do so now would be to keep the whole country in a state of uncertainty, and at a time like this uncertainty would be far too dangerous to the economy of the country and detrimental to our tremendous Development Programme which is in being.

A nominated Legislature taking such a step would be guilty of the unwise of actions. The motion is nevertheless a tremendous credit to the hon. Mover in that it has stimulated the debate, but with every deference and every respect I ask him to consider the advisability of withdrawing it. He has said that we should have more elected seats and I join him in that clamour and demand. Twelve seats are too few. We need more elected representation, and since there has been a free expression of that opinion the hon. Member should consider whether it would not be in the best interest of all concerned to withdraw this particular motion before the Council. It is only a suggestion which I offer, but I do so with every respect, deeply conscious that the hon. Member will act in the interest and the good of our country.

In the course of this debate I have heard various views, some of which I cannot reconcile. We heard at one stage that if the people were to go to the polls tomorrow, that one particular Party would capture all of the 12 seats. I happen to be the leader of a Party but I do not think I would be so brazen as to suggest that my Party would get all of the 12 seats, and I think that no Party would be so bold as to say they

would. I repeat categorically and without fear of contradiction, that no Party can claim that it will capture all the seats. What I do know is that the people of the country today are concerned less with politics than ever before. They are concerned with earning a livelihood, and if we provide them with the means whereby a man would be able to earn a reasonable living so as to be able to provide for his family, to see that they receive the ordinary benefits from society and a reasonable and decent education, we would kill all the bogeys of communism, and even the communists would not be able to entrench themselves on the minds of those people.

Forgive me if I digress a little, but I repeat that what we require in this country at this stage more than ever, are land settlement schemes. I know that plans are being worked out, but I repeat with impatience: people are land hungry; provide land for the landless of which they could say "This is my own", and on which they could set up their little houses, however poor and humble, and get something from the good earth. We would be breeding there an independence of spirit and lifting the standard of the individual whereby he could face the world, not as a beggar but as a man who is in a position to afford what are now luxuries to him. The dignity of being a man would then be injected into him, and no longer would he be merely grovelling to catch the crumbs that fall from the table.

I do appeal to leaders and the people of Guiana. We each endeavour in our own way to make our contribution in this country of British Guiana. We may not always agree with each other—so often we disagree—but we are in time going to pass on, but the country remains. Let us make posi-

tive contributions to the welfare of this country. Let us not make destructive contributions. Let us sow seeds of love and not seeds of hate because, like dragon's teeth, they may rise up against us, we who sow them.

Before I take my seat I would wish to repeat that, for the reasons I have stated, I cannot support the motion. I wish again to record the fact that I protested in several places against the number of seats allocated for elected representatives. This, I have no doubt, will receive adequate consideration in the proper places. But as I take my seat let me affirm that it is a misnomer to refer to the present proposals as a "new Constitution." It is not a new Constitution but an amendment to the present interim Constitution, as was stated in the speech which His Excellency the Governor made in this Council on the 25th of April, when he said:

"I will now read to you Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd's reply and statement, delivered to Parliament about three hours ago . . .

Reply: 'Following my recent discussions with the Governor of British Guiana about the present political situation in the Colony, Her Majesty's Government have decided that the time has come when some progress can safely be made in the direction of a return to democratic institutions. It is intended therefore to take steps to introduce an elected element into the Legislature and Executive..'

That is the clearest indication that this is not the be-all-and-end-all, and just as how an amendment is being made now for 12 seats, an amendment can be made for 18 or 20 seats. This is not a rigid hidebound Constitution which has been presented to us. It is an amendment, and let those who would serve the people come forward and say "We will work this Constitution well and truly, and we will work to deserve the right—a right which we shall demand because we have earned it—to a more progressive and liberal Constitu-

tion." We would then be able to return to the Waddington Constitution of 1953, a Constitution which was debased, declaimed and reviled by those who had the opportunity to work it, and who, by a queer trick of fate, are today clamouring for the return of that same Constitution.

As I take my seat I once again appeal to the hon. mover of the motion who has done signal service by presenting us with this opportunity to express our views in this Chamber, where it is right and proper that our views should be expressed, to consider whether, in view of the expressions of opinion, he would not now withdraw his motion. (Applause).

Mrs. Dey: Having listened to the last speaker I hesitated to rise, because I was looking at the hon. mover of the motion to find out whether he intended to accept the suggestion made by the hon. Member, Mr. Luckhoo, that he might withdraw his motion, but perhaps he wants to hear further views expressed before he decides to do so. The hon. Member, Mr. Lee, being an experienced politician and one of the oldest Members in experience in this Council, and being still an elected Member (he always claims that he is), he must have discussed the constitutional proposals with his constituents before deciding to bring his motion. I therefore feel that he should be congratulated for having given us this opportunity to express our views on this very important matter. However, I cannot support his suggestion that a Royal Commission should be appointed to come here. I cannot and will not support the suspense and delay which would result in waiting for the report of such a Commission. We all know only too well what is hurled at us as Members of this Interim Government, and I am quite sure that each and every one of us is anxious to see an elected Council within this Chamber.

I would like to refer to His Excel-

[Mrs. Dey]

lency's broadcast speech after his interview with certain politicians and leaders. His Excellency said:

"In explaining this I made it clear that there is no 'New Constitution' What are being arranged are only amendments to the Interim Constitution."

I am prepared in this Council and outside to stand by my conscience, my honour and, what is more, my faith in what is being termed in this Council the "Renison Constitution". I shall do what my conscience tells me is right, and that is to mix with my people and tell them that the solution lies in being faithful and loyal to that which has been offered to us as the open door to that which we need most of all—the 1953 Constitution. We must go forward step by step. We are far away from the dairy farm, and if we cannot get back the spilt milk we must take the "condensed milk"—the Renison Constitution—and the rest will follow.

A lot has been said about communism. I know that my people, the poor deluded masses, are not and will never be communists, even though some people have been and still are trying to make them so. I make bold to say that those leaders are deep-dyed communists—people who are trying to tell my fellow Guianese that "man made God and not God made man." Because they desire to instil their ideologies for the sake of their own power and aggrandizement they have misled and are still trying to mislead them.

As a Council we should let the Secretary of State know that we do not want a Royal Commission, but we certainly would like an increase in the number of elected seats. I feel that the Renison Constitution will work better than the present Interim Government, and the door will be thrown wide open to receive the 1953 Constitution. Hav-

ing heard all that has been said so far, I am sure the hon. mover will withdraw his motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission and adopt the suggestion that we should join together and ask for an increase in the number of elected seats in the amended Constitution which is offered to us, pledging that we shall endeavour to work it as a stepping-stone to something better.

Mr. Jaiial: I have listened very attentively to the last three speakers and I feel moved at this point to have my say. It is unfortunate that some speakers have indulged in recrimination. I have held the opinion that whatever happened in 1953 was a direct result of adolescence. I cannot lay claim to being a very seasoned politician, but I lay no blame on any group or any party for their failure to work something which was new and which they did not feel was fully right. I cannot lay that at their feet, and I feel that it is wrong to keep on recriminating and saying what should have been and what might have been. What British Guiana wants most decidedly is not looking back. I have said so on at least two occasions in this Council during very important debates. It is of absolutely no use to look back. People who wish to go forward do not need to look back. Looking back upon the past is not looking forward. We think of the past merely for the benefit of the experience gained.

To put the situation in its true perspective I would say that British Guiana had a very good Constitution in 1953. It was tried out but it did not work for many reasons. On one side there are many people who will say that sufficient chance was not given to those who had to work it. On the other hand there are others who will say that it was communism that caused it, but I can never believe that British Guiana would ever become a communist country. Like the hon. Member, Mr. Luckhoo, I

believe British Guiana suffers from a lack of people who are willing to work and who are willing to strive; people who are willing to put every nerve and sinew into the task. People of British Guiana care nothing for politics. Politics for them is a last word or thought. I feel that what British Guiana needs is five or six good leaders with drive, who are willing to sacrifice time and show others how to work and not just stand in the background and criticize those who are willing to do an honest day's work. All the thoughts of most of the people are, "how am I going to feed the empty stomachs in my family". They do not worry over who sits in this Chamber — the vast majority of them do not.

I have heard Members here say that we do not represent any one, but I think that the Governor, having given me a seat in this Council gave me the opportunity to represent the rice people, with whom I am in every-day contact and through whose blood, sweat and tears I earn a living. I have got the opportunity of meeting them and knowing what lies deep down in their minds and what are their interests. It is not politics or how many parties, for instance, we should have. They will support a party if they believe that party will give them a little more opportunity of educating their children and raising their standard of living. The people of the countryside do not worry about whether we will be allowed 25 or 30 Members in the Legislative Council. They worry over whether we will reconstruct Bellamy Canal, do something more to stop the water from flooding out the rice lands and whether they can grow oranges successfully so that we can get them at economical prices, and I lay blame on the Government of which I am a part for any delay caused by it in respect of things which need acceleration.

I am one of those Members of this Council who believe that if no shoes are available sandals must be worn. Under the very unpropitious conditions of the past my people (and I speak of the East Indians of this country) have served and sacrificed. Those have been our watch words, and if we had complete autonomy the people would work it. There is nothing we cannot work. Things go badly sometimes, but we lose a cricket match very often because we did not have a good selection. Our selection committee might have been bad.

Let us look to the future. The position is now that the Governor, either ill-advised or well-advised, has proposed something. The Secretary of State has told him what he can offer and the hon. mover must be congratulated for he has made this Council the forum in which it can be discussed. Through his motion we would be able to pass on to the Secretary of State the feelings of hon. Members for they have had an opportunity to ventilate what they know or what they feel are representative views. As I have said, the Constitution is sadly lacking as far as constitutions go. But I would be willing to work with broken needles and to patch and darn with same, and unlike other Members, I am not advocating that we should have up to 18 seats. Members have voiced the sentiments of a goodly majority of the people that they are not satisfied (and I repeat, not satisfied) that the Renison Constitution is sufficiently forward for British Guiana. But all that we have said here and all that Members have put forward cannot fall on deaf ears. It must be heard. It may not be the full voice of the people, but it is a voice and trust not "a voice in the wilderness".

[Mr. Jailal]

I would suggest to the hon. mover, therefore, that we having taken this opportunity to ventilate this matter fully there is every good reason to believe that those who are formulating the amendment to the present Constitution would be able to study and reflect upon whatever has been voiced here, and he should withdraw the motion and merely request through the Deputy Speaker that our opinions *seriatim* be sent to the Secretary of State at the earliest possible moment.

Miss Collins : The hon. mover having brought forward this motion, it has given every Member here an opportunity to express approval or disapproval of the Renison amendment Constitution. I regret, however, that I cannot support the motion as presented to this Council, because I feel we are all looking forward to Elected government. The appointment of a Commission would only delay this further, and we have already had many delays.

We are in a state of political chaos and I feel that Members should be playing their full part in the country's social and economic advancement by uniting their forces instead of sitting in this Council and holding a *post mortem* examination. We should go to the people telling them what is right and what is wrong and asking their views on various matters.

If the hon. mover was asking for the return of the 1953 Constitution, I would have supported him because I have faith in British Guiana, and while I know the people have made mistakes in the past I am quite sure there is a change of heart. We can never be satisfied with 12 seats for the next Constitution and I humbly submit that this number would do more harm than good. The seats are not enough for the electorate to enjoy house to house canvassing. The hon.

Member, Mr. Gajraj drew an analogy with Great Britain which I do not accept. He suggested less representatives to constituencies but British Guiana is not like Great Britain where there are no emergency restrictions on people and where there are easy communications to get around. We are at a great disadvantage here.

I am associating myself with the remarks of the hon. Member, Rev. Mr. Bobb, and others who do not agree that 12 seats are enough to serve as the Elected element in the Constitution. I think that number would be creating just the same situation as that we experienced in 1953. I do not represent any constituency but I am quite sure that when I speak here today I am speaking for thousands of inhabitants of this country, because I go around the country and I speak to them. Some people told me they were looking forward to the return of the 1947 Constitution. I regret I cannot accept the motion.

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

Mr. Tello : I desire to speak, but as there is not much time left I propose to speak tomorrow.

Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Bill

Mr. Deputy Speaker : When will the hon. Member for Agriculture be ready to proceed further with the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Bill?

Sir Frank McDavid : I am ready at any moment.

Mr. Lee : I would like to continue my speech on that Bill, and I might mention that I will be engaged out of town next Wednesday.

Sir Frank McDavid : It is of the utmost importance that this Bill should come into force as soon as possible. It is very important that we should have the machinery for carrying out the provisions in force, and what is more, it is more important still that the rice producers of the country should know where they stand. As the hon. Member, Mr. Lee, knows, the Bill is retro-active and there must be no continued uncertainty, I am sure. I would appeal to the hon. Member to try and be here, if we are to continue the debate on the Bill next Wednesday.

Mr. Lee : I appreciate the difficulties, and if I knew before I would not have fixed so many cases for Wednesday next. People will be coming from the West Coast and the West Bank for these cases. If hon. Members conclude their speeches tomorrow, I would be able to finish before three or half past three, and then we can proceed with the Rice Bill. I shall

curtail my criticisms as much as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : I am sure other Members are going to speak on that Bill, but we should reach the Committee stage by Wednesday next week.

Mr. Lee : I will conclude my criticisms on that Bill tomorrow, and we can adjourn until Next Wednesday when we will have an opportunity to put forward amendments on the Bill in Committee stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : I do not want to waste any time tomorrow, so we should get on with the Rice Bill as Mr. Lee has suggested.

Sir Frank McDavid : I hope that Mr. Lee will conclude his speech on the Rice Bill tomorrow as well.

Council was then adjourned until 2 p.m. the following day.