

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, 16th July, 1940.

The Council met at 11 a.m., His Excellency the Governor, SIR WILFRID JACKSON, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C.

The Hon. F. Dias, O.B.E. (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

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

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

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

The Hon. W. A. D'Andrade, Comptroller of Customs.

The Hon. N. M. MacLennan, Director of Medical Services.

The Hon. M. B. Laing, O.B.E., Commissioner of Labour and Local Government.

The Hon. G. O. Case, Director of Public Works and Sea Defences.

The Hon. L. G. Crease, Director of Education.

The Hon. B. R. Wood, Conservator of Forests.

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

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

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

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

The Hon. Jung Bahadur Singh (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

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

The Hon. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

WAIVER OF IMPERIAL AID.

The meeting was summoned for the consideration of the following motion submitted by Mr. De Aguiar :—

WHEREAS it is the earnest desire of the inhabitants of the Colony and of this Council to assist, as far as lies in their power, in the successful prosecution of the war in which the Empire is engaged by relieving His Majesty's Government of the burden of rendering financial assistance to the Colony during the period of the said war:

Be it Resolved,—That His Excellency the Governor be and is hereby respectfully requested to convey to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies the profound and loyal support of the inhabitants of the Colony to His Majesty's Government in the national emergency and to inform him that the Colony hereby waives any claim to reimbursement by His Majesty's Exchequer of the sum of \$250,000 authorised as a grant to cover expenditure on special works this year and any further contributions to or payment from the Colonial Development Fund towards the cost of works now in progress:

And be it further Resolved,—That this Council further pledges itself to provide the necessary funds for the maintenance and continuance of all services relating to the Government of the Colony during the war to the utmost limit of our available resources.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

THE PRESIDENT: Hon. Members of Council—This is a special meeting, called at the request of hon. Members of Council in order that they may give voice to their desire, which I know is also the desire of the people of the Colony as a whole, to reaffirm their purpose to give to Great Britain and to their fellow citizens throughout the Empire the fullest support in their power in the prosecution of the war. The events of the last few weeks have left us in no doubt that what is asked for from all of us is the very utmost of which we are capable. I do not want to delay consideration of the matter before the Council, but with the leave of the Council I would like

to say a few words by way of prelude, in order to remove one possible source of misunderstanding.

I spoke some weeks ago in a broadcast speech of what seemed to me to be the practical ways to which the war effort of the Colony might be directed, having regard to our situation and resources and to the needs which we could best help to fulfill. I said then that our effort might be divided into two main divisions: what we could do in the way of supplying essential commodities and what we could do without, both equally important and indeed vital. I think it is true to say that the first and greatest contribution we can make is to undertake to maintain for as long as we can our own internal economy and to forego all the extraneous assistance which under other circumstances we had been encouraged to hope we might receive: in other words to assure the Government of Great Britain that for as long as we can we shall be a source of assistance and support in the maintenance of essential supplies and not a burden or a liability.

Now that is the purpose of the motion before the Council; it is a declaration that for so long as we can we shall maintain our own internal economy without extraneous assistance, and I lay particular stress on these words because there seem to be some who think that by renouncing outside assistance we mean the cessation of works of maintenance or development work of a productive character. That is not the case I should not regard that as maintaining our own internal economy. A careful survey of our financial and economic resources justifies the belief that for a considerable time to come we are in a position to maintain our standards, keep up the level of internal employment and to bring into operation productive works, such as drainage and irrigation, on a scale that should materially increase economic production and, I hope, may actually improve the level of employment. I will not attempt to put any time limit to this, I will only say that with the full use of the resources in sight, for a considerable time ahead I think the way is clear and I do not myself think it is desirable that any time limit should be placed on these efforts.

That does not mean that these things can be done without sacrifice. Many things to which we look forward in the development of social welfare, educational

and other social services, we must now be prepared to forego for the time being, but it does mean that with hard work and determination there is no reason why we should not be able by our own efforts to keep our internal organization in the material and economic sphere going in good shape and develop our productive resources to a substantial degree.

That in present circumstances is the first and greatest service we can do the commonwealth in support of the supreme effort, which this crisis in our civilisation calls for from the whole Empire. It is not necessary for me to remind you of the urgency of the need or the desperate nature of the struggle we have to face: every hour brings these things home to us and there is no need for words. I would only say to you do not underrate the importance of the contribution to this struggle represented by this motion because it is in no wise spectacular in form. It is in fact the first and greatest measure of help we can give and transcends in importance anything else we can do.

I most heartily welcome this motion as a spontaneous expression of the loyal determination of the Colony to do its utmost to play its part in this great struggle, and I earnestly bespeak for it the unanimous support of all hon. Members (Applause).

NOTICE OF MOTION.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I desire to give notice of the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper and further to state that I propose at a later stage to move the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders in order to enable the motion to be taken:

ORDER OF THE DAY.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING RULES AND ORDERS.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I move that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended in order to enable the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper to be taken.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

WAIVER OF IMPERIAL AID.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Your Excellency, it is a privilege and indeed an honour to me to move the motion that is standing in my name on the Order Paper to-day.

In doing so I think it is hardly necessary for me to explain at any great length the principle which this motion seeks, because it is worded in simple language and it speaks for itself. I feel, sir, and it would be also agreed, that it is the duty of every citizen of the British Empire of which this Colony forms a part to lend every assistance that is within his or her power to the Mother Country in the cause for which she is fighting.

In the motion it is sought to relieve the Imperial Exchequer of a promise, which was made to this Colony to provide funds to cover expenditure on certain special works which are now in progress. In one instance, as is stated in the motion, the sum of \$250,000 is involved. This sum, it is hoped, will be spent during this year, 1940, and the works which have been already started were very carefully considered and recommended by this Government. In the case of grants from the Colonial Development Fund the sum of \$30,000 is mentioned or rather thought of, but that figure may well reach, I think, \$100,000. It will be seen, therefore, that during the year, 1940, it was hoped to obtain from the Imperial Government a sum of \$280,000, but if the additional amount is spent under the Colonial Development Fund that sum may well reach \$350,000.

I wish to emphasize, and I think Your Excellency referred to it in your remarks this morning, that the acceptance of this motion by this Council would not mean that those works would be discontinued, but it is hoped that the Colony would be able to finance them. We know that some of them have been started already and so long as conditions remain as they are it is hoped that the entire amount would be spent during the year. I go one step further and say that if it is found that the works are not completed at the end of the year, it is my belief and understanding that they would be continued until the amount I have referred to has been spent. That being the case, it only remains for us to examine the position in relation to the Colony's funds.

In this connection I would like to offer my grateful thanks for the assistance which was given me by the hon. Colonial Treasurer in the provision of the figures which I would now quote for the benefit of hon. Members of Council. When

the Budget was first framed at the close of last year, it was anticipated that there would be a surplus of a sum in the vicinity of \$300,000. The Budget for 1940 anticipated a surplus of \$180,000, but the Colony found itself in the happy position at the close of 1939 with an actual surplus of \$810,000. Unfortunately, however, a revision of the 1940 figures disclosed that instead of an anticipated surplus of \$180,000 it was only \$100,000. Assuming that all expectations would be realised, there would be a total surplus at the end of 1940 of \$910,000.

Since these figures were made out, conditions have changed considerably. As a matter of fact at present conditions change from hour to hour. In so far as the Colony's finances are concerned new expenditure have had to be met. This Council voted a bonus to Junior Government employees and, I understand, the amount required for that will be in the vicinity of \$170,000. Added to that it is expected that War Expenditure will incur \$100,000. The worst feature was that the revised figures were again recast and a deficit or short fall in revenue was anticipated in the sum of \$250,000, but that short fall of revenue would be met by a sum of \$200,000 from other sources and the actual difference would therefore only be \$50,000. The sum total of all these figures would show that at the end of 1940 after making the additions to and subtractions from revenue there would still be an anticipated surplus of \$590,000.

I know that in some quarters it may be thought that the figure of \$590,000 is not a very large one, but there are several who will agree that it is enough for this Council to put its best foot forward and lend a helping hand to the Mother Country in this hour of her need. I need hardly remind hon. Members of Council of the assistance this Colony has received from the Imperial Government in years past. I hope, I will be permitted to quote the figures not for the purpose of obtaining support for the motion, because I believe every hon. Member of this Council and every citizen of this Colony will gladly contribute every penny that they can afford to assist in this worthy cause, but because memories are very short in this country and one is apt to forget assistance that has been meted out to us at one time or another.

The hon. Colonial Treasurer's Report for 1939, which has just been published, displays those figures in no uncertain terms. We have received from the years 1931 to 1937 a sum of not less than \$2,390,000 to make up our Budget Deficit and \$328,000 for Unemployment Relief—those were loans-in-aid. In addition we have had grants-in-aid for Unemployment Relief in the sum of \$1,256,977, making a total of \$3,894,000. We have also received assistance from the Colonial Development Fund, which is Imperial funds, over the period, 1931-1939,—(financial assistance to balance our Budgets having ceased at the end of 1937)—but the assistance from the Colonial Development Fund still continues. It is for that reason the figures for 1939 are stated in the report. The grants total \$564,000 in round figures, and loans amount to \$930,000, making a total of \$1,495,000.

The effect of this motion would mean the absorption from the surplus balance, I have already referred to, of approximately \$280,000 during 1940. I have already given the anticipated surplus figures as \$590,000. It would be seen at once that this is a small effort on the part of this Colony to relieve the Imperial Exchequer from its promise, which I have referred to already, and there would still be an anticipated surplus of \$310,000 at the end of the year. As I have said, I have gone to the trouble of quoting these figures in order to show that at the present time this Colony can well afford to relieve His Majesty's Government of that burden. I sincerely hope, and I am very pleased indeed to see that Your Excellency shares the same view, that we would be able to carry ourselves for some time longer and in that way relieve the Imperial Government from giving further assistance to us.

This is a very humble effort, but it is a gesture to show that our thoughts are with those who are fighting our cause. We know that the people of Great Britain have given a good deal and may perhaps be called upon to give more than they are giving at the present time. They are giving longer hours of work and are being taxed to the very utmost, and even recently legislation was passed giving the Imperial Government control over persons and property. It is hardly necessary for me to remind hon. Members that this bit of legislation by a democratic government, such as the United Kingdom is unheard

of in its history, and when the people of the United Kingdom, have consented to this bit of legislation it is because they realize that the whole nation is in need of every assistance—perhaps one may even go further and say, that the whole nation is in jeopardy and there is nothing the people should not do to assist in the cause.

There should be no fear whatever that this Colony would not be able to carry on. We must do it. We must make every sacrifice in order to give whatever assistance we can not only to-day, but I hope we would be able to give further assistance later on and, if it becomes necessary, at the greatest sacrifice. It is a solemn duty the people of this Colony owe to the Empire, and I feel sure that this motion will receive the whole-hearted support of this Council. I go one step further and venture to predict that as a result of the sacrifice we may be called upon to make in this cause we will be doing ourselves a justice and will be taking a step in the direction of making ourselves self-supporting.

Before I take my seat I would like to mention that this motion was considered by the commercial community of this Colony, and I am authorised to state that it receives their full support. I have been asked also to state on behalf of the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Humphrys), who through unforeseen circumstances is not in his seat to-day, that he supports the motion wholeheartedly. With these few words I beg to move the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Sir, as a super optimist of this Colony and in its great resources, I felt it was a great compliment paid to me when I was asked this morning by the hon. mover of the motion to second the motion standing in his name. This is a motion which has for its object the release of the Mother Country from her self-imposed obligation to this Colony to support certain works which are in progress to-day. I feel that British Guiana is doing only what is its bounden duty, to assist in relieving the Mother Country of that voluntary offer so as to enable her to divert this sum, small though it is comparatively speaking, from this Colony into channels which will be far more necessary at this juncture. Britain is engaged in a war because all that men hold dear, all that we

hold dear in our religion, in our life, in our liberty, and everything that free people in the British Empire hold dear is at stake, and it is our duty and the duty of every individual to throw in his weight so as to achieve that victory which we all hope is not far off. We are not asking for the glory that victory brings although we cannot turn our faces away from it, but we want to see the ultimate triumph of Truth. We like to see the liberty of free men used as free men should do and that democracy for which Great Britain now stands almost the only bulwark.

As I was proceeding to this Council this morning and without any thought that I would have been honoured by my hon. friend in being asked to second the motion, on reaching Mahaicony something of a pandemonium reached my ear. I could not gather what could have caused this tremendous outburst, a sort of babel of tongues, but on my arrival at the railway station I was very anxious to find out the cause. What did I find? I found, Your Excellency, that a large number of persons were being given "cassava sticks" for planting. Even those humble denizens realized that in this crisis the plough is the greatest creditor. They were anxious to get the means by which they could assist in increased production, which Your Excellency asked us to do and which is a great necessity.

This motion I regard in the light of additional evidence, if such were necessary, of the fact that the British Empire has resources great enough to meet the needs of the hour, resources which would be sufficient to support the gigantic effort which the Mother Country is now making in the prosecution of this war. There can be no doubt that Great Britain is engaged in a war to save civilization, not her own civilization only, and every civilized human being ought to do his share and very much more so those persons who claim to be members of this Empire or Commonwealth of Nations. Are we not all members of that Commonwealth? It is our boast that we are members of this great Commonwealth of Nations, and as such we have great pleasure indeed—every individual—in showing how much we appreciate the blessings which we enjoy under the British Flag.

As a super-optimist in the potentialities of British Guiana and as an hon. Member

here can bear me out, I think our resources would be equal to the task, and if every man would put his shoulder to the wheel and contribute his quota we would be able to stand on our legs not only now but for all times to come. We would be able to contribute more liberally,—not to return what the Mother Country is offering us but out of the abundance that we ourselves produce to make further contribution to assist the Mother Country at the present moment. Necessity is the mother of invention, and in this necessity we ought, each man, to get down and do our best in that sphere of activity in which we find ourselves so that we will be able to stand not only on our legs as individuals but to assist those around and about us to make their contribution to the cause which is now engaging the attention of the whole world and the British Empire in particular.

I feel—and I believe every Member here feels—that this is only a humble gesture by the inhabitants of British Guiana to Britain. I feel, sir, we are just doing "a little bit" to relieve the Mother Country of a self-imposed obligation so as to make her as untrammelled as is necessary for her to be at the present time, if she is to maintain her position in this gigantic struggle against a ruthless enemy, until victory is achieved which, we all hope, would be at no very distant date.

Although I have not been asked to do so I desire to convey to Your Excellency what I believe to be the feeling of the entire community of this Colony. Each man is willing to come forward and do his best, as he realizes that Britain is doing all that can be expected of any country to do. Britain has not attempted to sacrifice her Colonial man-power, but has elected to fight on her own man-power. It is said that the blood of man should not be shed but to redeem the blood of man. I feel certain that is what is animating the spirit of the people here. We are trying to redeem the blood of man by shedding our own blood. They have given their all, but we are giving what we can spare. I regret that is so and hope that we will not long continue to give just what we can spare. I believe that every man in this country stands ready to make even the supreme sacrifice, and no man can do more. I have great pleasure in seconding the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Any other hon. Member wishes to address the Council?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. G. D. Owen): I want to say one word on behalf of the Official Members as we will not like it to be thought that by keeping silent we do not support the motion wholeheartedly. Speaking for my brother Officers and myself, I desire to say that it gives us the greatest pleasure to support the motion and, like the hon. Member who has just spoken, we wish we are in a position to give even more to the Mother Country to assist her in the struggle against the enemy.

I have received a telegram from the hon. Mr. Jackson expressing regret at his inability to attend this morning and asking me to let Your Excellency and hon. Members of Council know that he is in thorough sympathy with the motion.

Question put, and agreed to,

Motion carried unanimously.

THE PRESIDENT: It is the greatest pleasure I shall have in communicating the terms of this motion immediately to His Majesty's Government through the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Council adjourned *sine die*.