

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, 8th January, 1935.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, SIR CRAWFORD DOUGLAS-JONES, Kt., C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. P. W. King (Acting).

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. Hector Josephs, K.C., B.A., LL.M. (Cantab.), LL.B. (Lond.).

The Hon. T. T. Smellie, O.B.E. (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

Major the Hon. W. Bain Gray, M.A., Ph.D. (Edin.), B. Litt. (Oxon), Director of Education.

The Hon. J. S. Dash, B.S.A., Director of Agriculture.

The Hon. R. E. Brassington (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. J. C. Craig, D.S.O., M.E.I.C., Director of Public Works.

The Hon. E. F. McDavid, M.R.E., Colonial Treasurer (Acting).

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

The Hon. J. Mullin, M.I.M.M., F.S.I., Commissioner of Lands and Mines.

The Hon. B. R. Wood, M.A., Dip. For. (Cantab.), Conservator of Forests.

The Hon. N. Cannon (Georgetown North).

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

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

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves (Georgetown South).

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

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

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

The Hon. F. J. Seaford (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. J. L. Wills (Demerara River).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday, 21st December, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

MEMBER SWORN.

Mr. F. Birkitt, Postmaster-General, took and subscribed to the oath.

ORDER OF THE DAY.**EXPLORATION FOR OIL.**

Mr. BRASSINGTON asked the following questions:—

1. What is the policy of Government, if any, in regard to giving the public an opportunity to explore certain areas in the Colony for oil?

2. Is Government aware that the Trinidad Government collected \$835,000 in royalties from those engaged in the oil industry in Trinidad for the eleven months ended 30th November, 1934?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. P. W. King) replied as follows:—

1. Government's policy in regard to the exploration, etc., for oil is governed by the Mining (Oil and Natural Gas) Regulations, 1931.

2. Government has no information as to the amount collected by the Trinidad Government as royalties during 1934.

FLOODING OF LIMA VILLAGE.

Mr. BRASSINGTON asked the following questions:—

1. What steps, if any, are Government taking to prevent a recurrence of the flooding of the Village of Lima, on the Essequibo Coast?

2. Has the Commission to examine and report on the economic condition of the Essequibo Coast been appointed, if so, will Government state its personnel, and when is it likely to commence its investigations?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied as follows:—

1. The present flood conditions have been relieved to a certain extent by making a cut from Lima into Alliance. Expenditure on measures to prevent a recurrence of floods is precluded owing to the impecunious state of the Drainage District.

2. The appointment of the Commission referred to is being proceeded with and its personnel will be announced shortly.

PILOT SERVICE.

Mr. BRASSINGTON asked the following questions:—

1. When did compulsory Pilotage come into force?

2. Under the Harbour and Pilotage Regulations, 1924, what were the qualifications required of—

- (a) First Class Pilots;
- (b) Second Class Pilots?

3. How many Pilots were employed by the Harbour Board from 1st January, 1925, stating—

- (a) Their names in order of seniority;
- (b) The class to which they were then appointed and the salaries attached thereto?

4. Have any Pilots been promoted since 1925 from the second to the first Class? If so, state—

- (a) Their names;
- (b) Date of qualification;
- (c) Date of promotion?

5. When did the Chief Pilot retire from the Service?

6. Is it a fact that the post of Chief Pilot was abolished with the retirement of the last holder of that office? If so, has any financial consideration been given the senior First Class Pilot in view of his seniority?

7. Was the Pilot service re-organised as from the 1st July, 1933? If so, state the number of Pilots now employed, their names, classes and what increase of salary, if any, has been given them?

8. Is it a fact that Captain Gibson, R.N., who made the Hydrographic Survey of the Essequibo River and the mouth of the Demerara River, strongly recommended to the Harbour Board that a very capable local officer who worked with him in the above surveys be appointed permanent Harbour Surveyor? If so, state—

- (a) Who was the officer recommended;
- (b) His qualifications;
- (c) When was he appointed;
- (d) When was his appointment terminated and why?

9. Who is the officer now appointed as Hydrographer to the Harbour Department and what is the salary attached to this newly created post? What are the qualifications of the officer appointed, and is it a fact he has an

assistant drafted from the Lands and Mines Department as his draughtsman? If so, state—

- (a) Salary drawn by Hydrographer's draughtsman.
- (b) Why was the officer recommended by Captain Gibson, R.N., not appointed to the dual post?

10. Give the number of Captains now employed by the Transport and Harbours Department stating—

- (a) Their names;
- (b) Date of appointment to the Service;
- (c) Date of promotion to Captain;
- (d) Present salary of each.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied as follows:—

1. As from 1st September, 1924.

2.—(a) A knowledge of the pilotage districts in the Colony.

(a) A knowledge of the Demerara River from the Lightship to the various wharves in Georgetown.

Pilots are examined by a Committee comprising of the Harbour Master and two senior pilots, and on their recommendation to the Board licences are granted in accordance with their findings.

NAME.	CLASS.	SALARY PER MONTH.
J. McInnis	Chief Pilot	\$ 220
J. V. Mittelholzer	1st Class Pilot	140
J. B. Donovan...	1st	140
E. R. Davies ...	2nd	120
C. H. Walcott ...	2nd	120
F. Stoll ...	2nd	120
V. Stoll ...	2nd	120
A. S. Mittelholzer	3rd	74
F. Venture ...	3rd	74

4. Yes. Two pilots have been promoted to be first class pilots—Walcott and Davies.

- (b) (1) Pilot Walcott—31st July, 1925.
- (2) ,, E. R. Davies—Sept., 1929.
- (c) (1) June, 1928.
- (2) January, 1930.

5. On the 30th June, 1933.

6. Yes. The first class pilots were all put on a new scale of pay, as they had all reached the maximum of their class previous to the retirement of the Chief Pilot.

7. The Service was re-organised and the following pilots were then in the employ:

C. H. Walcott, E. R. Davies and J. V. Mittelholzer, the scale of pay being \$1,584 to \$1,920 by annual increments of \$48 instead of the former scale of a flat rate of \$1,680 per annum. One second class pilot J. V. Stoll \$1,440 per annum. Two third class pilots were then provided for on a basis of \$388 to \$1,080 by \$48 per annum. F. Venture and A. Mittelholzer, former Captain and Mate of the Transport & Harbours Department respectively, were appointed to the posts.

8. Captain Gibson suggested to the Harbour Board that the services of the officer who assisted him in carrying out the work of the Hydrographic Survey of the Essequibo River should be retained, but although the suggestion was put into effect, later it was found that the duties of the office were not sufficiently

understood to warrant his retention in the amalgamated Department.

(a) C. S. Ridley.

(b) Land Surveyor and practical experience under Captain Gibson.

(c) 1st January, 1930.

(d) He was transferred to the Lands and Mines Department as a surveyor on the score of economy when the Harbours were amalgamated with the Transport Department—31st December, 1930.

9. Captain E. R. Davies has been appointed Hydrographer and Pilot to the Transport and Harbours Department, the salary attached to the post being \$2,160 per annum.

Qualifications.—First Class B.O.T. Certificate of Competency as Mate (square rigged). Practical experience in hydrographic surveying under Harbour Masters past and present.

(a) \$960 per annum.

(b) On the score of economy.

10.

Name.	Date Joined Service.	Date of Promotion to Captain.	Salary per Month.
H. B. Archer ...	1915	1915	\$ 60
T. Seaward	1917	1921	60
J. Sampson ...	1921	1921	60
J. H. Benjamin..	1914	1924	60
C. Burrows ...	1925	1926	60
W. Phillips ...	1922	1931	60
E. Benjamin ...	1926	1934	45

GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Mr. ELEAZAR asked the following questions :—

1. How many Government Schools are there in the Colony, where are they situate and the number of children enrolled in each?

2. What is the cost of maintenance of the Government Primary School in Georgetown under the following heads :—

(a) Staff;

(b) Equipment?

Major BAIN GRAY (Director of Education) replied as follows :—

1. The particulars of the Government Schools in the Colony are as stated below :—

Situation of School.	No. of Pupils enrolled.
(1) Broad Street, Georgetown ...	723
(2) Beterverwagting, East Coast, Demerara	329
(3) No. 8 and No. 9 West Coast Berbice ...	273
(4) Rosignol, West Coast, Berbice ...	286
(5) Bush Lot Infant School, Essequibo ...	26

2. The cost of maintenance of the Government School, Broad Street, Georgetown, in 1934 is as follows.

(a) Teaching Staff...	\$ 6,361 94
(b) Equipment	69 53
(c) Other Expenses :—	

Janitor	\$ 240 00
School Stationery ...		72 36
Garden ...		23 91
Needlework Materials		12 00
Text Books and Miscellaneous	10 53	358 80
Total Cost		\$ 6,790 27

BURNT EARTH ON W. C. BERBICE ROADS.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS asked the following questions :—

1. How many cubic yards of burnt earth were bought by Government for the period 1st January to 30th November, 1934, to be used on the West Coast Berbice roads, and the total cost?

2. How many cubic yards of burnt earth were used during the same period on the roads and the cost of laying it down under the following heads :—

(a) Supervision ;

(b) Hire of carts ;

(c) Labour ?

Major CRAIG (Director of Public Works) replied as follows :—

1. 3,650 cubic yards costing \$5,913.

2. 2,496 cubic yards. The cost of laying the earth was as follows :—

(a) Supervision	... \$ 318
(b) Hire of carts	\$1,618
(c) Labour	... \$2,486

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

The Council resolved itself in Committee and resumed consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from Revenue during the year ending 31st December, 1935.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE.

Item 1c—Personal Allowance to Mr. E. O. Pilgrim, \$240, was deleted.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : I beg to move in a new item, "11 Passages of two Assistant Masters and families, \$366," and that items 11 and 12 be renumbered 12 and 13, respectively.

Question put, and agreed to.

Item 13—Equipment of new playing field, \$2,600.

Mr. SEAFORD : I suggest that this work be done by the same labourers who are doing the bonification work at the Thomas Lands. It is all in the same neighbourhood. I also suggest that prison labour which is being used to do

odds and ends might also be utilised and a considerable sum of money saved in that way.

THE CHAIRMAN : A note will be made of the hon. Member's remarks. I have no doubt that something can be done in the direction he indicates.

Item passed.

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.

Item 3—Dietary \$1,600.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : I would like to know what is the present number of boys at Onderneeming. My information is that the number of boys has been greatly reduced, and it would naturally follow that it would not require as much for dietary, bearing in mind that the cost of foodstuffs has not gone up.

Mr. WOOD (Conservator of Forests) : The number of boys is 85.

THE CHAIRMAN : I think if the hon. Member would refer to the Comparative Statement of Expenditure, in which I know he is very interested, he would find that the cost of dietary in the last few years has been somewhere in the vicinity of between \$1,400 and \$1,500. I know that the number of boys in the School has been slightly reduced, but it varies, and on the advice of the Medical Department certain extra food is being given which costs a little more. I do not think the reduction in the number of boys is sufficient to make any great difference in the cost of feeding.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : I ask that the item be allowed to stand over until the present number of boys is ascertained. What is extraordinary is that the Bakery vote has been reduced by \$600. I take it that bread is a part of the dietary, and I know that the answer will be that the vote fluctuates according to the trade that is done in the selling of bread. If that is so then we should have some information to go upon. What I complain about is the paucity of the information given here. All the note about the Bakery is "Considered sufficient."

Item held over.

Item 4—Fuel and Lights, \$240.

Mr. AUSTIN : I notice that the vote

has been increased by \$120. Could it be carried out at \$150 ?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : The Superintendent, referring to the item, says that the vote, prior to the installation of the electrical plant in 1933, was quite adequate, but as the plant is now charged to a certain specific gravity by the direction of the Government Electrical Engineer, the increase on the vote will be \$100. The sub-head 6, Clothing and Bedding, is reduced by that amount. They will have increased light and reduced clothing and bedding. (Laughter .

Mr. AUSTIN : I move that the item be reduced to \$150.

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. Member has heard the explanation, hasn't he ?

Mr. AUSTIN : Yes, I have, but I think it rather amusing.

THE CHAIRMAN : The cost of light has been increased by \$100. It cannot be done for less.

Mr. DE AGUIAR : I am in agreement with that view, but I think \$150 will meet the case.

THE CHAIRMAN : The Superintendent does not think so.

Mr. ELEAZAR : We cannot be guided by the Superintendent at all. We have an electric plant in New Amsterdam which has been running for 32 years without any accident. Suddenly the Government Electrical Engineer went up there and ordered every house to be re-wired. He increased the expenditure of everybody because the wire did not look nicely to him. I think the Engineer wants a little repair and not the plant. I agree that \$150 is quite sufficient.

Mr. SEAFORD : Is it maintenance or renewals ?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : As I understand the position, this plant was being run in a certain way and the Engineer examined it and gave instructions that for the preservation of the plant it must be run at a higher specific gravity which costs more. His point is that if that is not done the plant will deteriorate very rapidly. I can add nothing more.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I ask Government to give the Council some information in regard to items 3 and 12 later on.

Item passed.

Item 18—Purchase of raw materials for Factory and Carpenter's shop, \$850.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I think we are entitled to more information. We have a Forest Department and we are buying wood for the Industrial School. From whom are they getting the wood and at what price? What is being done with the articles they make. If there is no information available I will move that the item be reduced by half.

Major BAIN GRAY: One thing they make from time to time is school furniture which is paid for from the grant. They have made very good school furniture.

Mr. McDAVID (Colonial Treasurer): The footnote on page 64 gives some information as to the credits of the Department from actual receipts and goods and labour supplied to other institutions. A total sum of \$3,833.23 has been received for work done and goods supplied in 1933. In 1932 the amount was \$3,900.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I see nothing about the carpenter's shop.

Item passed.

POST OFFICE.

Mr. ELEAZAR: This Department is one of which Government should be heartily ashamed because the manoeuvring—I call it manoeuvring advisedly—is such as to show that Government depends entirely upon its officers without making any inquiry as to what is happening. What is said of this Department is applicable to many other Departments. The Department makes a boast of having made a saving of about \$79,000. A saving in a public utility service can only mean a restriction of the facilities of the persons who are paying the taxes, and that is what has transpired in this Department. I shall endeavour to show that in a good many instances that is so. When the present Postmaster-General assumed his position we had several post offices in various parts of the Colony. To-day some of the most important offices have been closed down. In

one or two instances a Postmaster, who was considered to be at the age for retirement and forced to retire, has been re-employed and paid \$10 per month to carry on what is called a Postal Agency. Some of the facilities to the public had to be restricted. The Post Office Savings Bank on the East Bank of the Barbice River has been abandoned because the person in charge in only getting \$10 per month and carrying on a Postal Agency. There are several of the younger relief clerks who were engaged at a small salary—a maximum of \$480 which was fixed at that figure because there was a hope of their becoming Postmasters eventually. Their advancement has been checked by the Postal Agency scheme. Some of them have been 9 and 10 years in one position because their promotion has been blocked by these Postal Agencies. What is the advantage of these Postal Agencies? It is an attempt to save the salary of the Postmaster regardless of the inconvenience to the public by the withdrawal of certain facilities they enjoyed. Two evils have been created in order to save that little bit of money, and discontent is being caused.

I do not know what is the idea of the Department: whether they value internal improvements or political arrangements. There is no improvement in the service. All the attention has been directed towards saving \$79,000; at whose expense? Messengers' \$2 bicycle allowance was reduced to \$1, but thanks to Your Excellency that proposal will not be carried out. Some of those messengers have served 14 and 16 years and are 30 years of age and over. They have been working for Government for the miserable pittance of \$12 and \$15 per month and have no hope of getting any further. I do not say that a man who is getting a small salary is justified in being dishonest, but Government must know of the amount of petty thieving that goes on at the Post Office Department. One cannot justify the conduct of the men, but Government must not give them all this temptation. Isn't it temptation to have men handling thousands of dollars and paying them the miserable pittance of between \$18 and \$14 per month? When these large savings are being made Government should inquire into the matter.

The Postmaster of New Amsterdam is

denied a house allowance although his immediate predecessor but one was given an allowance. The maximum salary of the post is \$190 per month, but the man who has been sent there gets \$107, the minimum, and the increments have been reduced from \$96 to \$72. The result is that no officer will ever reach the maximum because it will take him 15 years to do so. There has been a deliberate manipulation and juggling with figures to prevent an officer from reaching the maximum salary. Why has the increment been reduced from \$8 to \$6 in the case of the only first-class office? I cannot account for what is happening in Nyassaland or in any backward country where people go about in loin cloth. I cannot understand people seeing British Guiana through West African spectacles. Is it not a fact that in the past all Postmasters have either received a free house or a house allowance? If that is a fact, why is that differentiation? The Postmaster in New Amsterdam is living in a hovel because he cannot afford to pay more. The idea of Governors or Government officials who come from undeveloped countries and see the people of this Colony living under civilised conditions is that they have too many facilities. When there was an attempt to reduce messengers' bicycle allowance and an increase of the salary of the Head of the Department I cannot help mentioning the fact that the salary of the Postmaster-General prior to the arrival of the present holder of the office was £700 per annum. To-day it is £825.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member has no doubt said all he had to say and I cannot allow him to proceed further.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I havenot heard what Your Excellency said.

THE CHAIRMAN: I do not propose to say it again. Will the hon. Member take his seat?

Mr. DE AGUIAR: My friend has made certain observations regarding the expenditure of the Department and pointed out that certain facilities have been curtailed in order to effect savings. I agree with his suggestion that it is false economy to restrict the facilities which were afforded the public in the past. I am in agreement with him particularly on the question of the Postal Agencies, and I have in mind

what occurred not very many years ago in one of the most populous suburbs of Georgetown. I refer to the village of Kitty on the East Coast. Some years ago when the population in that village was very much smaller than it is to-day the Post Office was conducted in a central part of the village. When the late Sir Gordon Guggisberg came to the Colony—and I believe it was through his instrumentality that Postal Agencies were introduced—the Post Office at Kitty was removed, and it is now being carried on at the railway station, the most southern part of the village. Your Excellency is aware that Kitty has a population of about 7,000 people, and to carry on such an important public service as a Post Office on the present site is ridiculous. In addition to its removal, the activities of the Post Office were reduced. I am informed that at present postal orders can be obtained but not money orders. It will be admitted that the safety of money orders through the post is much greater than that of postal orders, and I think the matter should be inquired into by Government. I understand that Government is looking around for a suitable site for the erection of a Police Station in the district. I know that would be very welcome and I make these observations in the hope that when that time arrives Government might consider it necessary to remove the Post Office from its present site to a more central part of the village where I believe it will also put the Police Station.

That is not my only criticism of the Post Office. I desire to bring to Government's notice what seems to me to be something that is beyond the comprehension of any ordinary human being. I refer to the Parcel Post rates between this country and the United Kingdom. You can post a 1lb. parcel to Canada and the United States for one shilling, but to the United Kingdom there is a sliding scale with a maximum weight of 3lbs. on which the rate is 54 cents. On a 1lb. parcel the rate to the United Kingdom is 54 cents while to the United States, a foreign country, it is only one shilling. If a parcel is posted to the United Kingdom under the letter rate of postage the charge is 44 cents. That is something I do not understand. There must be something wrong about that. I know that representations have been made, but so far as I know the

matter has either not been looked into or we can never hope to have it put right.

Another matter that affects the commercial community is the question of the closing of foreign mails. At the present moment the Postmaster-General states that he requires three hours between the sailing of a steamer and the closing of the ordinary mail, and he claims that that time is required in order to save certain expenditure for overtime. That is where I agree with the view of my friend, the hon. Member for Berbice River, that it is a restriction of the facilities the public formerly enjoyed. I think three hours is too long a time required by the Post Office for the closing of foreign mails, especially in some cases where a steamer arrives in the morning and sails in the afternoon, when there is very little time to attend to mails. I think it is the duty of the Post Office to assist the public so that replies to letters can be sent by the same steamer. Sometimes it is stretched beyond a joke. Not very long ago a steamer for the United Kingdom left the port at one o'clock in the morning but the mails were made up at 2 o'clock the previous afternoon. There was no interval of three hours in that case. The reason given was that the agents of the steamer wanted the mails put on board by 6 p.m. Even then there was an interval of four hours. I know that this Council will be told that three hours is about the shortest period to be allowed having regard to the fact that there are special mails made up afterwards. If that is so it seems to me that Government grasps at every opportunity to obtain revenue from the public. This is a public utility service, and I depreciate the stand being adopted by the Post Office in this matter in charging a late fee for posting half an hour after the closing of mails. Three hours is much too long a time. I see the Postmaster-General in his seat this morning and I hope he has been listening very carefully to what has been said and that he will set about to put these matters right.

Mr. AUSTIN: I am going to touch on another matter. At the beginning of the session it was stated that the Postmaster-General estimated a loss of about \$600 through open letters being sent through the Post Office for one cent. I won-

der if he can stop the leakage which has been taking place for some time, where officials and others have been sending Christmas cards and charity letters franked. There must be some regulation dealing with the use of the franking system. It seems to me that it is being far too liberally used, and often in cases where the envelopes contain no official documents. I think Government should inquire into the matter.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: I am going to join the previous speakers in asking for consideration for the staff of the Post Office. They are being badly treated and not getting fairplay. I refer particularly to the letter-carriers. One can imagine the hardship of a letter-carrier who is a married man getting \$13 or \$14 per month, not living in the district to which he belongs and having to rent a house out of that small salary. It is no wonder that thieving is going on in the Department. The system of recovering losses by the Post Office Department is a novel one. If it happens that money is lost every officer who handled that money has to contribute to its replacement. It seems monstrous to me. It is because of the false economy adopted by the Department, and I think it would be in the best interest of the Colony that officers of the Department should receive fair salaries.

Another method of saving, I understand, is by under-grading officers. I think the postal officers are the most discontented in the Service. Officers who should be in the 3rd or 4th grade are put lower. I think a commission of inquiry into the working of this Department is necessary because it seems to me that the Postmaster-General does everything by himself, and says at the end of the year "I have saved so much." He has made savings to the detriment of the staff.

Mr. WILLS: I would like to draw attention to the high rental being paid by telephone renters. They are also called upon to make a deposit. I do not know whether the money is deposited by way of security, whether it is used by Government, and whether the depositor gets any interest on his money. I know that a private company in this City also exacts a deposit from its customers, and that the depositors are credited with interest on their

money. I would like to know whether the same system is adopted by Government as regards the renters of telephones.

Another point I would like to draw attention to is as regards renters of telephones in the country districts, particularly on the East Coast. Your Excellency is aware that those renters pay a very high rental. Whilst there is nothing in the agreement which they are called upon to make as regards the time they should speak through the telephone, it often happens that as soon as one takes up the receiver he is told that the line is required. It makes conversation through the telephone uncomfortable. Renters should be given a reasonable time to speak. That is the sort of service the public is getting. Perhaps something can be done to remedy it.

I notice that on the Estimate provision is made for a small increase of salary to messengers, rural letter-carriers and auxiliary apprentices. I observe in some cases the increase is from \$2 to \$6 on the incremental basis, and that the increase to be given at \$1 per year. That is playing with the situation. I suggest that the men be given the maximum amount as early as possible.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Earlier in the session when the Public Works Extraordinary vote was being discussed—I am speaking generally on the Post Office Department—I drew attention to the miserable quarters in which the Postmasters live. I believe my remarks were given some attention, and that efforts are being made to improve the living conditions of several of the Postmasters in the Colony. But what I have always felt in regard to Postmasters and other employees at the Post Office Department is that they are miserably paid, taking into consideration the hours they are called upon to work and the responsibility attaching to them. It is all very well for Government to say “We would like to pay quite a number of Civil Servants better salaries but the financial position of the Colony does not permit it.” I beg to differ from Government. I have said it repeatedly during the last 20 years that if a more businesslike attitude was taken up in regard to running the Civil Service of the Colony we would be able to pay Civil

Servants better salaries, but most of our money has been frittered away by successive Administrations in all sorts of gambles. It does not matter to the Head of a Department. He has some pet scheme, and instead of economy being effected a great increase is the result. It does not matter to him; he promptly gets promotion somewhere else. That sort of thing does not obtain in commercial life where a man is paid by results.

As regards the Department I have nothing but praise for most, if not all, of the postal employees. I have been brought into touch with the Postmasters for a very long number of years, long before I was elected to this House, and I have always found them to be most obliging and hard-working and considerate in their relations with the general public. But it is no wonder if there is dissatisfaction amongst a certain number of the employees at the Post Office owing to the number of hours they have to work and their responsibilities. How is it to be remedied I do not know.

Another matter is the Postal Agencies. I protested as far as Essequibo is concerned, and similar protests were made with respect to other constituencies. In Essequibo there are several Postal Agencies, and they have created great discontent. There is one at Danielstown where there was a Post Office, and another at Capocoy where there was also a Post Office. The Postal Agents get a pittance for running these Agencies and have all the work and very nearly the same responsibility as Postmasters have. That is economy in the wrong direction, economy that has created hardships and discontent. It is these things that are creating the dissatisfaction that at present exists in this Colony and has existed for the last 4 or 5 years. What is sad is that the expenditure keeps mounting up but the conveniences keep lessening. Where it is all going to end I do not know. I am looking forward with interest to hear the Postmaster-General's defence in regard to these Postal Agencies, the inadequate pay of many of the junior employees at the Post Office, and what to my mind is a serious charge made by the hon. Member for Berbice River in regard to new appointments. What I will term an unjustifiable experiment to show on paper a reduction

in expenditure is false economy which leads to no improvement.

Mr. ELEAZAR: The Postmaster-General has to reply. I sat down at Your Excellency's request, but there are certain matters which, in fairness to him and his Department he should be given an opportunity to deal with. If Your Excellency will allow me I will tell you shortly. One is that Postmasters, who are in charge of Savings Banks, have had their work increased because they now have to pay out on demand. They do not get a penny extra for that work, but the clerks of the Departments in Georgetown, who only check the accounts, get a bonus at the end of the year amounting to as much as \$100. I am told that the Postmaster-General has a policeman stationed at the Post Office all the time for the purpose of discovering irregularities. If it is necessary for a policeman to be there all the time it is clear that something is wrong. These are criticisms which the Postmaster-General should know of. I also understand that the stamps of the whole Colony are in the charge of a 3rd class clerk.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I would like to emphasise one or two points with respect to the housing of some of these district Postmasters. I know that steps have been taken to provide conveniences for some of them, but there are other cases in which no proper arrangements have been made for the Postmasters and their families to live on the premises. In one case there are two bedrooms for the accommodation of a Postmaster and his family of about six or seven. With respect to the Postmaster in New Amsterdam, I should like to support the hon. Member for Berbice River with regard to provision being made for a house allowance for that officer. Since his arrival in the County he and his family have been suffering from malaria. It is not due to the sanitary condition of the town but of the particular locality where he got a house at a price to suit his means.

With respect to the pay of the messengers I think the matter should be gone into and some revision made in the rates. I think one Postal Agent on the Corentyne is paid about \$14 per month out of which he has to provide a messenger. He is a retired Postmaster, and advantage is

being taken of the fact that he is a pensioner. He asked for a house allowance and the magnificent sum of \$1 was added to his salary. We want to see these men receiving a square deal and a living wage.

Mr. BIRKITT (Postmaster-General): I have listened with much interest to all the remarks made about the Department this morning. I feel that it is rather difficult for me to answer some of the questions. Since I have been in the Colony I have done my best to run the Post Office Department on the least possible expenditure and give the best service. I think it will be admitted by some that there have been improvements made. I do not think there are any subordinates in the Department who are not better off now than when I came here, except for one reason, that is restricted promotion through the forced conversion of Post Offices into Postal Agencies. It should be remembered that about 1928 or 1929 the Post Office, in common with other Departments, was called upon to make economies to assist the Colony in balancing its Budget. As Head of the Department I thought it my duty to save as much as I possibly could within reason. Much stress has been laid upon the miserable pay given to the subordinate staff. I am in agreement that the pay of the subordinate staff is not what it should be. For the past three or four years I have been making representations to Government to improve their conditions, and I am pleased to say that this year the matter has received some consideration, and on the Estimate you will see there are certain increases to subordinate members of the staff. (Hear, hear).

In 1928-1930 those economies involved many sacrifices on the part of the Post Office Department. They did not only touch the lower grades as regards restricted promotion but also affected the senior officers. One example is the abolition of the post of Assistant Postmaster-General. This was offered to Government in order to save further sacrifices by the subordinate staff. Since the abolition of the Assistant Postmaster-Generalship I have endeavoured to carry on with the assistance of two or three other senior officers the duties of the Assistant Postmaster-General, but it has been with very much difficulty. The physical strain upon

my senior officers through this abolition has been very heavy.

As regards the bicycle allowances referred to by the hon. Member for Berbice River, there has been no reduction from \$2 to \$1 on the Estimate. Letter-carriers and what are known as apprentices have been recommended for their first bicycle allowance. Letter carriers in Georgetown have been recommended for \$1 per month as a start, and auxiliaries for 50 cents per month. They have not previously received any bicycle allowance.

With respect to the conversion of Post Offices into Postal Agencies, as I have said before, the Department had to take its share in finding economies, and this was considered by the previous Governor as one method of making economies. The offices which did the least amount of work were marked for conversion, and we have carried on since that time with Postal Agencies. Admittedly the Postal Agencies do not do the same amount of work as Post Offices. Savings Bank work was excluded in most cases, Money Orders, and also in one or two cases telegraphic work. I hope the time is not far distant when, now that we have turned the corner (No, no,) we shall get back not only the Post Offices we have had to convert into Postal Agencies, but more Post Offices which undoubtedly serve a very useful purpose to the communities in the districts. They keep in touch not only with the daily postal requirements but also serve many other purposes including Treasury payments, and there is scope to even extend the work of the Post Office.

As regards the deposit by telephone renters and the alleged high rates charged for trunk calls to renters, on the East Coast particularly, I have already forestalled hon. Members in that respect by making representations to Government that the rental for country subscription should be reduced, that in certain cases deposits should be waived, and that as regards country subscribers the method of paying a fee for every call over the Exchange should be abolished and an inclusive rental charged instead. The matter is in the hands of Government and I am very optimistic that my schemes will be adopted. The Hon. Mr. Seaford some days ago raised the point about pres-

sure on the East Coast lines. Government will endeavour to remedy most of those defects by stationing an efficient faultsman in that district. It means a little more expenditure but I think personally, and so does the Chief Engineer, that that is the best way of dealing with the difficulties there. Every telephone service has difficulties, and when it is realised that our service operates 18 million calls per year, and also that each telephone subscriber on an average has 18 calls per day and pays 7 cents per day for rental, or less than one farthing per call, I do not think the charge of excessive rental is altogether warranted. It must be realised that the cost of material and staff these days is higher than years ago when the rental was low.

The hon. Member for Berbice River made some remark about Nyassaland. I can assure him that it is a very delightful country, like British Guiana, but I would like, once and for all, to remove this bogey about African experience. My experience was gained in the British Post Office. I was seconded to Africa, and I gave them the benefit of the training I had received in the British Post Office. (Hear, hear).

As regards the Postmasters' salaries no one is more fully aware than I am of the fact that the district Postmasters in this Colony are inadequately paid, but it must not be lost sight of that the time is not opportune for effecting considerable improvement in their pay. They work long hours. I cannot speak too highly of the co-operation I have received from them in my efforts to make them give the public the best and most courteous service that can be given. I hope, probably during the next year, to again go into the question of Postmasters' pay. When I came to the Colony it was the first question I tackled, and they were given increased salaries in most cases. Not one of the members of the Postmasters' staff has expressed to me any dissatisfaction with those improvements in their salaries in 1928, but now they are beginning to make representations to me for further improvements. As I have said, I will go into the matter during 1935 and I will see if I can make further favourable representations on their behalf, because I am fully aware that in most cases they are worthy of

better pay owing to their financial responsibilities and the work they have to do.

As regards the Parcels Post rates which the hon. Member for Central Demerara touched upon, I approached the United Kingdom Post Office about 18 months ago to permit this Colony to have what is known as a Parcels Post pound scale, which provides a certain rate for a parcel weighing under 1lb and so on. At present we work by four scales, 3lbs, 11lbs, 17lbs and 22lbs. The reply was that they regretted they could not entertain at the present stage a pound scale, but as the result of those representations a small packet service was introduced. This, as the hon. Member is aware, is a very cheap service. You can send by that service practically everything you wish up to a limit of 2lbs. That service provides at a cheap rate a method of sending small parcels to the United Kingdom, and there are no restrictions that a letter must not be enclosed. Sometimes a Customs label has to be attached. The service has been made very great use of and is very popular. Much as I would like to get better parcels post rates with the United Kingdom I do not think it would serve any useful purpose to again represent the case to the United Kingdom Post Office at present.

The Hon. Mr. Austin touched upon the question of semi-official or unofficial communications being sent through the post under the franking system. The Franking Regulations clearly lay down what can be sent by free post. Anything which is sent by post is sealed and is under the signature of the responsible officer. The Post Office has no authority to open such letters. That can only be done under a warrant from the Governor. However, where cases are found in which the official franking service has been used when it should not have been used—sometimes it leaks out by accident—the matter is immediately brought to the notice of the Head of the Department and it stops immediately. It is a very serious matter undoubtedly to use the franking service when it should not be, and every effort is made by the Post Office Mails Branch staff and by myself to stop any abuse of the official franking service.

As regards the question of closing overseas mails, I have given it very serious thought during the eight years I have been

in this Colony. It is a serious matter to place the despatch of a mail in jeopardy, and in my opinion there are very few overseas mails which leave this country that do not require three hours to fully complete them for despatch to the steamer. I would like to invite one or two of the hon. Members to visit the Post Office when overseas mail is being despatched. I think they would then change their opinion as regards the time which is necessary to despatch the mail. Usually we have to despatch mails to 19 different destinations, and the letters have to be thoroughly checked, because if we mis-send a letter an avalanche falls upon us although we deal with three to four million letters every year. We are not infallible, but we try to take every possible precaution to direct letters to their proper course. The despatch of overseas mail is a big strain on the staff who have much detailed work to do. They have to be weighed, properly checked and divided into sections. Registered letters have to be very minutely dealt with. Each one has to be signed for and closely inspected. In addition to that the bags have to be sealed and properly checked, and all sorts of records kept. I am convinced, after very close study, that much as I would like to give the public here a longer time to post overseas letters before the despatch of the mail it is not practicable to do so without running grave risk of placing the whole despatch in danger. It might possibly be tried if more staff is given to us, but that means that my present staff would also have to work longer hours. Most of them come in at 6 o'clock in the morning and are nearly always in the office until 8 o'clock at night. They get overtime pay but the rate is not what it might be.

With regard to quarters for the district Postmasters, I think the Director of Public Works will bear me out in saying that we are doing our best for the district Postmasters in this respect. During 1934 three district Post Offices had additional bedrooms attached to them. One or two others were painted. We have listed six more to be considerably improved during next year, and I hope we will go on improving and adding to them and making them presentable and suitable for public officers during the succeeding years. I am sure Government will give Postmasters every support in that respect. No one

wishes a Postmaster with 7 or 8 children—I have one with 9—to be in quarters which are not suitable for the upbringing of his children. Least of all I do not want it.

As regards what is called the policeman who is stationed at the Georgetown Post Office, some years ago a very respected deceased Member of this Council suggested that it would be a very good idea to have a police constable posted at the Money Order counter in Georgetown to watch the activities of the public. Following on that it was found necessary to employ the Police Department to a very great extent in connection with what is known as Post Office crime. That happens in every other Post Office. In my opinion there is less stealing in this Post Office than in the others of which I have experience. (Hear, hear). But, at the same time, with a view to obtaining greater efficiency and ferreting out the various inquiries and complaints made against the Post Office, it was considered necessary that instead of calling upon the Police Department on every occasion on which a complaint is made, whether some member of the public had obtained money by false pretence, or said they had sent money through the post when they had not, or of missing letters which require even closer attention, to raise the question with Government of having seconded to the Post Office a suitable Police N.C.O. to inquire into all those cases.

That request was granted and provision has been made on the Estimate for the last two years. This policeman is well trained in the Post Office routine and has done admirable work. He deals with all complaints of alleged non-payment of Postal Orders and Money Orders, missing telegrams and complaints against the Post Office where letters have gone astray, and in most of those cases we arrive at a definite decision, either that the person had forgotten that he had received the money, or his or her sister had signed his signature and received the money, or that a letter had never been posted. We have scores of similar cases, and I think that of the complaints we get against the Post Office 75 per cent. are found to be due to no causes within the Department. The Department is even blamed when people do not get a reply to their letters, or when goods ordered have not been received.

It is not the duty of the Post Office to force correspondents to reply to letters, or firms to send goods, but at the same time we do take a lot of trouble over those cases and we endeavour to satisfy every complainant. I think the employment of the N.C.O. has been a huge success, and I hope there will be no opposition to his continuing in the Department. In every Post Office there is what is known as a Confidential Inquiries Branch which deals with the cases I have quoted. Here usually the Postmaster-General or his assistant has had to deal with those cases, but with the abolition of the post of Assistant Postmaster-General it has not been possible for me to give that attention. The N.C.O. is of great assistance to me and it is necessary that he should continue in the Post Office Department.

As regards the officer now carrying out the duties of Stamp Issuer, known as the Stamp Clerk, some years ago a 1st class clerk combined those duties with other duties. I did not consider that altogether a satisfactory arrangement, and I had one officer placed upon the special duty of Stamp Clerk. He was given the highest pay of the 6th class, and on my recommendation he went up to the 5th class. All his issues are checked by a 1st class clerk. This Stamp Clerk along with others who hold specific titles will probably receive consideration as regards their salaries by a Committee known as the Unclassified Service Committee which has not yet functioned, but it is probable that it will function during the coming year.

With regard to the new Postmaster in New Amsterdam, that officer was at Suddie and his maximum was \$1,176 per year. He was appointed Postmaster at New Amsterdam at the minimum of \$1,284 a year which gave him an immediate increase of \$108 per year. Recognising that the Postmaster had to forfeit his quarters when he left Suddie to go to New Amsterdam, recommendation was made by me to Government that he should be given two extra increments of \$72 each to compensate him for the loss of quarters. It is admitted that \$144 is not sufficient for the payment of his rent in New Amsterdam, but it is recognised that he has lost his quarters and something has been done to assist him. His appointment is still sub-

ject to the approval of the Secretary of State but I anticipate no difficulty in that respect. He has received altogether on leaving Suddie for New Amsterdam, an increase of \$21 per month, and continues to rise by increments of \$72 to as far as he can go before he retires. Admittedly he will not reach the maximum, but I think this scale was on the Estimates more than eight years ago. As far as I know I have never interfered in any way with the scale of the New Amsterdam Postmaster's salary. I increased the scale of the Postmasters in Georgetown to the same maximum. If I remember rightly in 1927 there was some outcry in this Council against the ever-growing expenditure of the Post Office Department, and the hon. Member for Western Essequibo touched upon the increasing expenditure and nothing to show for it. I am pleased to say that the Post Office expenditure has been reduced by \$35,000 since those years, so I do not think I can be expected to show anything for reduced expenditure.

With respect to the switch-board at New Amsterdam, I think Your Excellency will deal with that matter. It has been under consideration of Government I know. As regards the question of interest on telephone deposits, this is not the only country which has telephone deposits. They exist in most countries and are much higher than in this Colony. I am looking for an opportunity whereby I can recommend the total abolition of these deposits, but I must have the support and co-operation of telephone subscribers in this respect. Every quarter, out of 1,000 subscribers in Georgetown probably only about 200 have paid their subscriptions by the 10th day of the quarter, which is the last day on which they should pay. That means that if I carried out the Regulations 800 subscribers would be disconnected. Renters know that we give them grace at least until the end of the month. By the end of the month there are still 200 or 300 who have not paid, and then we have to take other steps. We warn every defaulter not once but twice, and sometimes three times. Eventually we get in another 150 by this very inconvenient method of the Department. Then another small number, probably 20, have not paid. I have to take some step to safeguard myself. I then give instructions that they be disconnected, which

brings in another 15. The last 100 are habitual defaulters. They make all sorts of excuses, but we treat them as kindly as we can. I would like telephone subscribers to realise that as soon as they would pay their rental in the proper time—I will give them until the middle of the month—I will be in a position to recommend the total abolition of deposits. Every Post Office has to protect itself against these dilatory and hard-mouthed defaulters. I would appeal to all telephone subscribers to try to pay their rental within the first ten days, and I shall be the first to abolish the deposit system here.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I do not like to interrupt the Postmaster-General but I made the statement that we had no improvements in the work of the Post Office for the expenditure incurred, and he pointed out that the Post Office generally had greatly reduced its expenditure. May I point out that the actual expenditure under Post Office in 1933 was \$139,950 while the estimate for 1935 is \$152,133. Under Post Office—Telecommunications Branch we find that the actual expenditure in 1933 was \$67,157 while the estimated expenditure for 1935 is \$85,705. Do those figures bear out the statement of the Postmaster-General that the expenditure has been reduced? In the last two years the expenditure has been greatly increased under every head. I however take this opportunity to congratulate the Postmaster-General on the able way in which he has replied to the criticisms, and on his personal ability in the position he so ably fills, but to say that the expenditure of the Post Office has been reduced to an enormous extent is ridiculous. I suppose it may be said in fairness to the Postmaster-General that he selected a year when there was a drop in the estimates, but we are not concerned with the past, we are concerned with the present which is surely the correct time to assess the expenditure.

Mr. BIRKITT: May I refer the hon. Member to page 43 of the Comparative Statement of Expenditure where he will see that the actual expenditure of the Post Office in 1928 was \$172,793, while that for 1933 was \$139,949. I may also point out that the hon. Member made no mention of the fact that on page 72 of the Estimate it is shown that the approved

expenditure for 1934 under Engineering Branch-Wireless Section was \$26,025, while for 1935 it is nil. (Laughter).

Mr. BRASSINGTON: If the expenditure has been reduced and there have been such wonderful achievements I retract every word I have said. (Laughter). I see the Press is rather angry that there have been no honours awarded to the Colony. I think after this the Postmaster-General ought to be made a Baronet. (Laughter).

Mr. SEAFORD: The Postmaster-General referred to criticism I made about the telephone service. It was not meant as a criticism but that I considered the Exchange at Mahaica and Belfield was rather small and hoped Government would do something to increase it. I would not criticise the telephone system because I think it is the best I have ever come across in the world, London included. (Hear, hear).

Item passed.

Item 1 (11)—Postmaster, New Amsterdam (\$1,284 to \$2,280 by \$72)—\$1,296.

Item 1 (12)—Postmaster, Georgetown (\$1,284 to \$2,280 by \$72)—\$1,674.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I move that the increments in both these items be increased from \$72 to \$96. These are the only 1st class offices in which the increment is \$6 per month.

Items passed as printed.

Item 1 (24)—8 Relief Clerks (\$552 to \$576 by \$24)—\$4,416.

Mr. SEAFORD: I think this item requires some explanation. The explanatory note says: "Two Relief Clerks have been transferred to the Unfixed Establishment, sub-head (30) owing to change in holders of office." The reduction is \$384 but the increase under sub-head 31 is \$1,176, an increase of about \$800.

Mr. BRKITT: There is a decrease on the Fixed Establishment. The increase on the Unfixed Establishment is due to new appointments. Two on the Fixed Establishment have been appointed Postmasters and their successors are placed on the

Unfixed Establishment. That is due to an old rule that after a certain number of years' service Relief Clerks should be placed on the Fixed Establishment. I think it is Government's intention not to place any Relief Clerks on the Fixed Establishment. As regards the increase in item (31) it is entirely due to the improved scales which are being granted to Relief Clerks in 1935, subject to the Secretary of State's approval. As has been pointed out by the hon. Member for Berbice River, these Relief Clerks have very heavy responsibilities, and the pay of \$480 a year has not been considered adequate to compensate them for their responsibilities, and that is why they are being granted, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, an increase to a maximum of \$576.

Mr. ELEAZAR: What reason can there be for leaving those Relief Clerks out of the Fixed Establishment? They have succeeded men who have been on the Fixed Establishment, and I am told they are going to get \$8 per month more.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member did not quite follow the Postmaster-General. Two Relief Clerks have been promoted to Postmasters and two new officers have taken their places, and because they are new officers they are not on the Fixed Establishment.

Item passed.

Item 5—Miscellaneous, \$2,300.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I would ask Government to insert a sum of \$360 for a house allowance for the Postmaster of New Amsterdam. The explanation made by the Postmaster-General was certainly not convincing. He has been sent to a more responsible office at a higher pay but at Suddie he had a free house. He is entitled to a house allowance, and if it is omitted his position is not relieved. It cannot be good policy to say that by his promotion he is getting an increased salary and therefore he must pay his house rent. I ask Government to take a reasonable view of the matter.

The Committee adjourned for the luncheon recess.

Mr. ELEAZAR (resuming): I am really holding a brief for the hon. Member

for New Amsterdam who I think will be here shortly. If Your Excellency will re-commit the item when the hon. Member comes I will not say anything more.

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the Postmaster-General will reply on the matter. I do not think the hon. Member for New Amsterdam will be here this afternoon.

Mr. BIRKITT: I think the hon. Member is under the impression that there was a house allowance for the Postmaster of New Amsterdam in years past. That is not so. There was a duty allowance of \$360 some two or three years ago, which was abolished by Government on the recommendation of the Allowances Committee. Neither the Postmaster of Georgetown nor the Postmaster of New Amsterdam has ever got a house allowance as far as I can find out. I am afraid it is not possible for Government to grant a house allowance at the present time.

Mr. ELEAZAR; I think I know a little more than the Postmaster-General. The office of Postmaster of New Amsterdam used to be held not by a Postmaster *qua* Postmaster, but by a Treasury clerk. Then it transpired that Government got it into its head to remove the Treasury and Sir Frederick Hodgson hinted that the work could be done by a Postmaster. A particular Postmaster was therefore sent to Suddie to amalgamate the Post Office with the Treasury. After the Postmaster had accomplished that he left Suddie and went to New Amsterdam where he found he was not getting a house allowance. He clamoured for it and Government gave it to him. You may call it by any other name but it was really for his house and he got it. There was a petition in which I had a hand, but I was not then a Member of this House. He got \$30 per month which went towards his house. Government can call it the same thing if it likes, but let him have it.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have no doubt that the records will show exactly what is the position and I will have the matter looked into.

Item passed.

Item 9—Conveyance of Mails, Mazaruni, \$1,200.

Mr. BIRKITT: I beg to move the reduction of this item to \$960 owing to a very favourable contract having been entered into.

Question put, and agreed to.

Item reduced to \$960.

POST OFFICE—TELECOMMUNICATIONS
BRANCH.

Item 1 (3)—Inspector (\$1,680 to \$2,160 by \$120), \$2,065.

Mr. GONSALVES: I do not know whether an appointment has been made yet, but if the vacancy still exists may I know how the work is being done in connection with this particular office? I understand it is being divided up between every man in the Department, but whilst the work is being spread over the subordinate officers there is no distribution of any extras among the staff. I would like to know what is the position.

Mr. BIRKITT: The position is that the vacancy has been filled with the Secretary of State's approval by the promotion of Mr. Maille to the post of Inspector. His duties have been divided amongst a large number of the more efficient Engineering Branch officers, and the lapsing pay from the abolished post has been or is being divided amongst those six officers as some reward for the general improvement and the extra duties. I can give an assurance to the Council that there will be no reduction in efficiency through this method, and that the officers who are undertaking the duties will carry on the extra work.

Mr. GONSALVES: The expression used is that it "is being divided up." It is proposed to do so.

Mr. BIRKITT: Provision is made in the estimates under the various sub-heads.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I was going to ask the same question. This Inspector has been transferred and it was suggested that there was a man competent to do the work and there was no need for another Inspector. If the Postmaster-General says it is so we have no complaint, but I cannot see why it is here under item 1 (3).

THE CHAIRMAN: I think the Post-

master-General's reply covers the point raised.

Mr. ELEAZAR: If it has already been divided up then you will not want it under item 1 (3).

THE CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member does not understand that there were two officers. One was transferred and the other officer who was paid last year under "Other Charges" has been moved up and is paid under 1 (3). Most of the \$1,920 is being divided up amongst the others.

Item passed.

Item 3—Travelling Expenses and Subsistence Allowances, \$1,450.

Mr. BIRKITT: I move that this item be increased to \$1,810 in order to enable the Department to station an efficient faultsman at or near Belfield during the current year. This is a necessity in order to keep the Belfield-Mahaica and Buxton-Mahaicony Exchanges in a much more efficient manner. There is considerable difficulty experienced at present, when a fault occurs, to send an officer from Georgetown.

Mr. GONSALVES: I thought when the Postmaster-General rose to speak that he had anticipated what I was going to say in connection with allowances to men who go out of town to work. I would like to know from the Postmaster-General what amount is given to those men when they go out of town. I understand that the sum given them is very small—17 cents per day. If the sum provided on the estimate is not sufficient it ought to be increased. There is also the other point that they are very often rushed off with no certainty as to how long they will be away from home, and the question of accommodation arises. If 17 cents is the allowance I think it will be admitted that it is far too small a sum to expect those men to live on for a day. I think they are expected to enjoy the benefit of a decent meal even if it is once a day only. I invite an answer from the Postmaster-General on the point.

Mr. BIRKITT: The subsistence allowance granted to those men who go into the country is based on the usual Travel-

ling Regulations. It is rather difficult to grant any special treatment because undoubtedly other officers will expect the same treatment. It is more a general question than one affecting the Post Office Department. There may be cases where 17 cents per day is ample. It is certainly in accordance with the Travelling Regulations.

Mr. GONSALVES: I am going to recommend to the Council that opportunity be taken to alter those Regulations. I understand that it is necessary for those men to seek the hospitality of people in the country. A little bit of force might be required in order to shift those Regulations aside.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Seventeen cents per day is not sufficient to feed a sparrow.

THE CHAIRMAN: It seems to me rather absurd to expect a man to subsist on 17 cents per day. If there are such Regulations I will have the matter inquired into, but I can hardly believe it.

Mr. ELEAZAR: It happens that the Post Office travelling party is always under my observation in New Amsterdam, and sometimes I see the Postmaster-General on one day and a day or two afterwards I see another officer visiting. There are too many visits.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have the Regulations in front of me and I find that a subordinate employee drawing a salary of £120 per annum draws a subsistence allowance of 50 cents per day, so I think there must be some mistake.

Mr. BIRKITT: If he is away only a third of a day he is entitled to one-third of the allowance.

Mr. ELEAZAR: A man might be in the country until 6 o'clock in the afternoon and might not return to the City until the next morning.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: These people are paid in accordance with the Travelling and Subsistence Allowances which were very carefully gone into. The Regulations have been recently amended and we are now providing that where an officer is absent from the City for more than 7 hours that will count as a whole

day. The Regulations have been amended considerably to the advantage of the officer. They apply to one and all in the Service and everybody will receive the same treatment.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Seven hours sound reasonable. The Dispenser up the Berbice River spends \$2.50 and he only gets 50 cents.

Mr. GONSALVES: They get 17 cents from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. They should get more than 17 cents.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was so up to a short time ago. The matter was brought to the notice of Government and the Regulations have been recently amended. They were amended in June, 1934.

THE CHAIRMAN: Until a few months ago an officer, to earn this allowance, was expected to be away overnight. That was represented as unfair, as very often officers had to leave in the early morning and get back at night, but they could not draw a whole day's allowance. That has now been amended, and if an officer is absent for 7 hours from headquarters he draws a whole day's subsistence allowance. So that an officer may have drawn in the past a proportion of 50 cents, but now he will draw the full amount for any portion of 7 hours he is away.

Mr. GONSALVES: There may have been some oversight on the part of the Department. I have not had a reply to my inquiry whether those officers have been paid 17 cents or 50 cents per day. It may be that the Department forgot that the Regulations have been amended.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The Estimate shows that \$23,546 was spent in 1933 under Engineering Branch—Wireless Section. We know that Government concluded an arrangement to hand over the Wireless Station to a company. What I want to know is how much of the \$23,546 is included under Post Office—Telecommunications Branch. We know that certain officers were absorbed by the present company while others have got bonuses. I took no account whatever of this Wireless Section in making reference to the expenditure in 1933. Reference to the Comparative Statement shows that the expen-

diture in 1933 under Post Office was \$139,949, and under Engineering Branch, \$67,157, making a total of \$207,106. The estimated expenditure for 1935 under those two Heads totals \$237,838, roughly \$20,000 more. So that my statement was correct. I have taken no account of that. If the argument is used that the whole of the \$23,546 has been put into the Engineering Branch then it will about balance and there will be no saving. I would like to know if this sum of \$23,546 has gone back into the 1935 estimates. How am I to follow the Postmaster-General who says that I have not taken into account the \$26,025 for 1934 which has been struck out? I say that all that has not been struck out because certain items have been put back into the estimate for 1935 under Engineering Branch. I would like to hear from the Postmaster-General if my figures are correct.

Mr. BIRKITT: I think I may be able to answer the question without asking for notice. With the amalgamation of the Wireless Station expenditure with that of Telephones and Telegraphs the amount saved was actually \$16,227. The Telecommunications expenditure for 1935 has been transferred from the Wireless Station sub-head. This is a reduction of \$9,798 on the 1934 Wireless Section estimate of \$26,025. These figures are not quite correct but they are near enough. There is a reduction of \$9,798 on the Wireless estimates. The balance has been combined under the new Head of Telecommunications. The transfer of the Overseas Wireless Section to the I. & I. C., Ltd. has caused that reduction in expenditure.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: That is juggling with figures. What I want to know is: are these figures in the Comparative Statement correct, and are the figures placed before me in the Draft Estimate for 1935 correct? There is no getting away from the fact that the expenditure on the Post Office and Engineering Branch, which does not include Wireless, was \$207,106 in 1933, and according to the estimates for those two sub-heads the sum is \$237,838. If you add \$9,000 it would reduce the excess which I claim there is in the Postal estimates since 1933. The Postmaster quoted a big year, 1928, when the estimates were something like \$270,000. My comparison is between 1933 and 1935, and

there is no doubt about it that these figures cannot be challenged.

THE CHAIRMAN: I do not think it is possible, owing to the change that has taken place, to compare 1933 and 1935. If the hon. Member would call on the Postmaster-General he would no doubt give him the explanation required.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: These are simple figures. Calling on the Postmaster-General will not convince me.

Item passed.

Item 6—Maintenance, Telephone Services, \$9,000.

Mr. GONSALVES: I silently agreed with the compliment paid to the Postmaster-General with regard to the telephone service, but I had hoped he would have made provision for me to extend my personal compliment to him on further improvement of the service by reconsidering the question of providing a public telephone on the Sea Wall. Representations have been made before in connection with that matter and I believe, while he is sympathetic towards the suggestion, it is a question of cost which I understand is the enormous sum of £25 for the installation. It was suggested that it should not be used free, but that there should be a slot machine for the collection of revenue. When we hear of the large savings that have been effected I think \$120 is a small sum, and I do earnestly recommend to the Postmaster-General that he reconsiders the matter so that he may be able to add something more to the good work he has done. I think it can hardly be doubted that a telephone would be of immense benefit to everyone who visits the Sea Wall. I hope he will give the matter further consideration and, if possible at this stage, move that a sum be inserted on the estimate.

Perhaps you will permit me, sir, to ask the Postmaster General to give further consideration to the matter of resuscitating the local radio broadcasting station, V.R.Y. I am not suggesting anything new because there has been considerable agitation about it, and now that we are trying to do all we can to advertise the Colony no better means of doing so could be adopted than by having V.R.Y. in opera-

tion again. We know that in the little island of Barbados they have organised a broadcasting station through which we are able to get details of the play in the cricket matches with the M.C.C. as it goes along. I am not saying that V.R.Y. should be revived because the M.C.C. are coming down here, but that if the matter is taken in hand there is no reason why we should not be able to do our own advertising and make the Colony better known to the outer world.

Mr. ELEAZAR: With regard to the suggestion to instal a telephone on the Sea Wall, it will mean that a policeman will have to be placed there all the time to watch the penny-in-the-slot machine. There is one in New Amsterdam in which shillings are put, and more than once it has been rifled.

Mr. BIRKITT: With regard to the installation of a telephone on the Sea Wall I think that strictly speaking it is a matter for the Municipality.

Mr. GONSALVES: If the Postmaster-General would look at the boundaries of the City of Georgetown he would see that the Sea Wall is outside of the Municipal limits. (Laughter).

Mr. BIRKITT: I withdraw what I said, but at the same time the Post Office is not a philanthropic institution and cannot put telephones on sites where there is practically no revenue to be derived. At the same time this project has for some two years rather touched me in a tender spot and has my sympathetic support. Now that a bathing shed has been erected on the Sea Wall with a care-taker in charge it may be possible to overcome the past difficulties, which were that we might lose the telephone and the slot machine, and that if we erected a booth it might be used for other purposes. I promise on behalf of Government that during the present year the Post Office will see what can be done in that direction.

As regards the resuscitation of Station V.R.Y., this is a matter which, so far as an application from a private concern enters it, is under consideration by Government now, and has been referred to the Secretary of State I believe. The reply must be awaited.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: With regard to the radio broadcasting I understand there is some hope that it will be resumed during the forthcoming cricket tournament. (Hear, hear). I have spoken to one of the gentlemen interested in the private venture, and I understand there is every hope that we will broadcast the cricket scores as is being done by Barbados.

Mr. GONSALVES: I hope it will not be limited to the cricket matches.

Item passed.

POST OFFICE—SAVINGS BANK BRANCH.

Item 1b—1 Class II. Clerk, \$1,812.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: A little more explanation is required here. The maximum salary of a Class II. clerk is \$1,620, while that of a 2nd Class clerk was \$1,800.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I see from the note that the clerk who is in that position is being paid according to the scale of the old 2nd Class clerk. Those officers who were drawing that pay have been allowed to continue to hold it until they leave those posts.

Mr. McDAVID (Colonial Treasurer): The maximum salary of a Class II. clerk according to the new scale is \$1,620, and in addition to that it appears that this particular officer gets a service allowance of \$144.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: That is only \$1,764.

Mr. Mc DAVID: It seems to me that it should be \$1,620 plus two increments of \$96, that is \$192, making a total of \$1,812, the figure here. A service allowance is equal to two increments of the class above.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: It is a double increase for the same officer in one year. I must confess that I do not understand it now. Is it a 2nd Class officer or a Class II. officer? I would like to know what was his position in 1934. If he was a 2nd Class officer then he should go up to the maximum.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have no doubt that the matter is capable of explanation if the hon. Member wishes to pursue it.

Item held over.

Item 1r—Temporary Assistance, \$240.

Item 1g—Overtime, \$400.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I cannot conceive what this overtime money is for, but one thing I know is that the Postmasters in the Savings Bank Department are the persons who open and keep the accounts; they receive money and pay out, and if there is a shortage they have to make it good out of their own pockets, but they get no allowance. I cannot conceive why the clerks who check the accounts should get a bonus at the end of the year while those who keep the accounts get nothing. We hear that the Savings Bank Department is doing so well, and it seems to me that if there is any overtime pay those who keep the accounts are entitled to it or nobody at all.

Mr. BIRKITT: As regards item 1f, this is absolutely essential in order to cope with the heavy extra work in the Savings Bank head office where the work is rather more complicated than that of accepting deposits and paying out. It concerns the compilation of the general Savings Bank accounts and the statistics necessary for the Annual Report. The work has increased at least 20 per cent., and I think it is generally known that the expansion of thrift in this Colony is great and is being made in the Post Office Savings Bank Department generally. The extra assistance wanted is in order to deal with this extra work that has arisen. \$240 is a very low estimate, and I am afraid next year we may want more.

As regards the overtime, the money is expended among the Head Office staff and is only paid out during the period that they are computing interest on over 41,000 accounts, and each one has about 100 calculations. It is most tedious work and the officers are all females who work long hours. At the present time they are doing the extra work during the first two weeks of the year. They get overtime pay after the interest period of the Bank is past. They are deserving of it.

Mr. ELEAZAR: Where ladies are concerned I am always very weak, and I cannot move the deletion of the item,—(laughter),—but those men who keep the Savings Bank accounts are certainly deserving of some consideration.

Item passed.

Mr. WOOLFORD entered the Chamber during the discussion and took his seat.

THE CHAIRMAN: During the absence of the hon. Member for New Amsterdam, the hon. Member for Berbice River raised the point that a house allowance should be granted to the Postmaster of New Amsterdam. I gave an undertaking that I would have the matter looked into and would see what it was intended for.

Mr. WOOLFORD: It is quite obvious that that post has always been filled, and should be filled, by a man of experience. It has not always been possible for a man to reach the stage of a Postmaster, and the particular post has always been filled by the transfer from Suddie of some senior officer. In all these cases a house allowance or a duty allowance should be paid. It has always been the recognised principle. I am sorry to say that in this case and in other cases, while I accept Your Excellency's assurance, I do not think even an inkling of an undertaking should be given unless Government means to carry it out. In recent years the Postmaster in New Amsterdam has had to collect Customs duties and things of that sort. I think that is still done to some extent. Those are not duties within the province of a Postmaster, and he is rendering extra service and not getting what his predecessor got.

THE CHAIRMAN: I will have the matter looked into.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Mr. ELEAZAR: This is a hardy annual. I am not going to take up much time because I cannot conceive that Government wants any evidence of the uselessness of this Department. I see bottles on the table in front of the Director. I suppose they are intended to impress Your Excellency with the importance of the Department. What I say is that we are paying too much for it. The Department has outgrown its legitimate bounds. This Department commenced on a very small scale, but every year, from the time the present Director arrived in the Colony, its expenditure has increased until to-day it stands at the enormous sum of \$118,000. After all the flourish of trumpets with which the Department was re-organised we have no new industry. We have

certainly had a good many experiments and speculations, but we are yet to get a single new crop. An agriculturist told me this morning that it is true that the Department will teach the farmer how to grow onions, but that the cost of growing it would be \$1, and that he would have to sell it for 3 cents. Really that is the position of the Department. Sugar was doing very well before the Director came to the Colony, and rice was carrying on itself before the Director came and is continuing to carry on itself. Nothing new has been put on the market and we are paying so much every year for the upkeep of the Department. We are told that we are producing a better class of rice, but we are not exporting a greater quantity of rice by reason of that; we are not getting a better market on that account. The Department is top-heavy; we have too many highly paid officers at the top who have nothing to do. What have the Cane Agronomist and the Chemist-Ecologist to do? Now we are going to get a Plant Breeder. Are we going to get more per bag for the better strain and better produce from the same area? This attempt from time to time to increase the expenditure of this Department by getting highly paid men is not economical.

The Director is now becoming aware of the possibility of growing bananas. Hitherto his complaint was Panama disease while other countries are exporting bananas by thousands of bunches. We are only now experimenting upon grape-fruit. I saw a basket here a few days ago. We knew years ago that we could grow grape-fruit in this country. It has been grown here. What are we paying \$118,000 for? Every year there is a new officer being engaged in this Department. Have we got any industries that we can boast of? Before the Director came there were private individuals growing tobacco. The Department embarked upon experiments, but I do not know of any tobacco being grown under the aegis of the Department. I do not know that there is any industry except rice and sugar that has benefited by the Department. One would expect the Director to say that this or that ought to be done in order to improve the situation and prevent the destruction we had a little time ago. I cannot conceive the usefulness of the

Plant Breeder. The Director confines his energies to writing articles in the *Journal* and thinks that is sufficient. It is true he has made a very pretty brochure and has taken care to put his house on the first page in order that everybody can see what a palatial building he occupies.

We had a flood and drought in one year, and no crop at all; yet we are getting a Plant Breeder—to breed what kind of plants? When we come to the several items I will invite attention and ask Government to delete most of them. I think what we spent last year we should continue to spend, except that we have to give increments where they are due. I do not think Government would be justified in calling upon the taxpayers to increase the expenditure of this Department to the extent asked for in this estimate.

Mr. WILLS: I would like to say a few words in order to record my protest against the amount of money being spent on the Department of Agriculture. This is a very important Department but I think it might be rightly described as a Department which has been experimenting all these years, and I think it is about time the public saw returns. The energies of the Director seem to be wasted. He seems to take an interest in the cultivation of sugar which can well look after itself. The sugar estates are financially able to procure the necessary experts they require to see that they get the best out of their crops and cultivation. The Director also expends a lot of time and sends his men to look after the cultivation of rice. Rice was grown here long before the Director came to the Colony, and will be grown here long after he has gone. He is telling us nothing new. I would say that it is due to the persistency of the people in this Colony that they are still in the rice business. It is due to their persistency that the industry has achieved the position it occupies to-day. The Director does not encourage the farmers to strike out on any new lines at all. His Department lacks initiative. I say that without fear of contradiction. As the hon. Member rightly pointed out, grape-fruit was known in this country since I was a boy, which was some time before the Director came here. Trinidad has embarked upon citrus cultivation and made it a paying concern, but

this Department has done nothing to encourage the farmer here in following up that cultivation. The efforts of the Department seem to me to be directed towards throwing a cold douche upon anything that may emanate from the mind of the humble farmer.

There has been much writing recently about banana cultivation and Panama disease. The Department says there is Panama disease, but in Jamaica where the disease is known—there is much doubt about its existence in this Colony—there is a prosperous banana industry. That is where I doubt the usefulness of the Department in giving a lead to the farmers in this Colony. Owing to the persistent efforts of farmers and certain individuals in this country within recent months we find the Department saying: "Yes, you can grow bananas here, and there is the possibility that you will find a market abroad, and you can grow bananas that may be free from Panama disease." Was that within the knowledge of the Department of Agriculture years ago, or is it a discovery which he has made within a few mornings? I am informed that he has gone the limit of saying that he knows where he can get a market. If that is so I say that the Director failed in his duty to give the necessary lead and encouragement to farmers here during a trying time. As far as I gather the Department assisted two gentlemen who came here and tested the soils, and a report was written by an officer of the Department, but after reading it one was left in doubt as regards what was the view of the Department of Agriculture. It started out by supporting the views of the two men and ended by stating that it is possible to produce bananas but you must go slowly. That has been the failure of the Department for some time—merely throwing cold douche upon anything that the farmers initiated or hoped would bring some relief in the trying times. The Department can well leave the sugar industry to itself and devote some of its energies in finding new crops. It does not take much for anybody to build up or improve that which has already been built up.

As regards the Plant Breeder, I think the Director might well drop him because I do not think he can be of any useful service to the Department. I notice that

although the Department has experts of the soil we will be called upon to vote money for this Plant Breeder to go about and get further information. I do not know whether these excursions at the expense of the Colony have ever done us any good; Whether the knowledge obtained of soils abroad would be of any benefit is open to question, but the community views with great alarm the ever-rising financial obligations which the Colony is called upon year after year to meet as regards the Department of Agriculture. In 1924 the expenditure of the Department was \$87,000, and to-day it has reached \$118,000. That is alarming for 10 years. I notice that the revenue earned by the Department from all sources is estimated at \$10,000. It is hopeless as a business concern.

Mr. LUCKHOO: I would like to make a few general observations. I propose to refer to the Kilmarnock-Springlands empolder which has cost Government a tremendous sum. We are all agreed that there is great need for agricultural activity. Government has gone to enormous expense in empoldering certain areas on the Corentyne Coast known as the Kilmarnock-Springlands empolder. Subsequent to that there was an empolder of five villages. The object of empoldering that area was to attract settlers in that particular locality. It was a very praiseworthy attempt on the part of Government to get people to settle on that part of the Coast, but I am afraid that Government blundered in the first instance in having the land sold under conditions which were intolerable for would-be purchasers of the lands. An advertisement was put in the newspapers inviting persons to bid at public auction for the right and privilege of leasing certain lots in the Macedonia—No. 35 area. The conditions were that they had to pay \$2 per acre for the land so occupied for a period of 10 years, and at the end of that period Government would revise the terms and inform the parties as to what amount Government would take for those lands, selling them outright to the various settlers. That plan has caused a great deal of suspicion, and has in fact been a death-blow to the scheme.

If Government had consulted the proper quarters I am sure it would have put up more reasonable terms. The lands are

now lying idle. I suggest to Government that they be given out for 10 years at \$2 per acre, but Government should state what amount it would charge for sale outright. Nobody will plant permanent crops unless he is assured that he will own the land on payment of a certain sum. There were five bidders at the sale and 10 lots were sold to cattle-owners and not to agriculturists. The primary intention of Government was to get people to settle down on that particular area with a view to increasing agricultural activity in that part of the Colony. Over \$90,000 has been expended on the scheme which might be carried through, but Government must make the conditions easy for the people to acquire lots by transport and not by lease for 10 years. In that way Government would be able to encourage settlers to put down permanent crops. A good many of those people have seen me about the lands but I cannot advise them to lease under those conditions. I suggest that that point be considered. The Department of Agriculture has a big staff and I would like to see those scientists bring their knowledge into play.

There is another thing that has hindered the progress of the Department of Agriculture. It is the want of a proper drainage and irrigation scheme, some comprehensive scheme whereby the lots may be put under cultivation for the benefit of the settlers. During the last drought considerable hardship was experienced by the rice growers on the Corentyne Coast. Fortunately those people on estate lands have benefited by the system of irrigation adopted by the various estates on the Coast, and have been able to reap their crops, but in other parts of the country, from Whim to No. 74, there has been no crop, and that is due to the want of a proper irrigation scheme. If the estate proprietors are in a position to have irrigation pumps installed on their estates so as to enable their settlers to cultivate the lands, surely Government should be in a position to assist the people in some measure in having a proper irrigation scheme for the Corentyne Coast. This matter has been brought up several times in this Council, but evidently Government took the first chance to look after the drainage scheme. Now there is a chance for Government to undertake in a very modest way an irrigation scheme for that

particular area which is essentially suitable for agricultural purposes. Then Government may hope to gain an expansion of the rice industry and the establishment of other crops in that particular locality. Without a proper system of drainage and irrigation I am afraid the efforts of the Department will prove of no avail.

Recently there was a conference between the proprietors and the District Commissioner and it was decided to submit a scheme to Government. I am not aware that the scheme has come before the Government. Government could impose a water rate on the people in order to recoup the expenditure on the scheme. There is a favourable opportunity for Government, now that this large area has been empoldered, to do something to encourage the people by giving them proper facilities. I think if Government did that, that part of the Colony would become very productive. It is eminently suitable for rice planting. Government cannot expect the people to embark on the industry to any large extent unless they are assured of a supply of water. Government should consider the establishment of an irrigation plant on the Corentyne Coast. There is an inexhaustible supply of water in the Canje creek. Let us get something for the Department of Agriculture to do, and the only way is to have well-drained and irrigated lands. Then we will know whether the Department is capable of introducing a variety of crops of export value. I understand that steps are being taken to encourage people to settle on that area, but I would ask Your Excellency to make the conditions reasonable and give the people the right to purchase outright and pay a definite figure for certain proved areas.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: The Department of Agriculture is very important, but it happens that it has not a friend among the farmers. I think the sooner we abolish the Department the better it would be for the farmers of the Colony (Laughter), for the reason that the money spent on the Department could be more beneficially spent on draining and irrigating the lands of the Colony. I extend my sympathy to the officers of the Department because they have nothing to do under existing conditions. I happened to be a member of a Committee which con-

sidered measures to prevent further flooding, and even in that report of the Committee, in which the Director of Agriculture had an opportunity to assist the farmers, there is no recommendation from him. Without proper drainage and irrigation an Agricultural Department is useless in any country, especially in a low-lying country such as ours, and except Government is prepared to provide conditions whereby the farmers can reap what they sow it is useless and criminal for Government to use the taxpayers' money in maintaining a Department of Agriculture that can only see the crops perish either by flood or by drought. Such conditions have been existing since I was a boy and will continue. In the meantime the estimates of the Department are increasing every year.

The hon. Member for Eastern Berbice has referred to the Kilmarnock scheme. I understand it has proved a complete failure because advice was not taken from people who knew the district. I do not know how the officer in charge of the work could expect that the building of a dam on one side of savannah land would form an empolder for growing rice or any other crop. The few lots of land which were taken up were secured for cattle grazing. I think Government will have to spend practically about the same amount that has been spent already before the scheme can be made a success. The farmers have lost everything they owned and are now losing what they borrowed. I cannot see how they can exist much longer without a comprehensive scheme of irrigation. The rice industry has been built upon air and has been financed by people who will finance it no longer because it is evident that they are all gambling owing to drought one year and flood another. If landlords cannot collect their rents when the farmers lose their crops Government collects its dues. If the people cannot pay they are sued. I think the landlords are more sympathetic towards the farmers than Government is, whereas the reverse should be the case. My opinion is that it is all a waste of money to maintain a Department of Agriculture which costs the taxpayers \$118,000 while the farmers have no guarantee of reaping what they sow.

Mr. SEAFORD: I cannot help feeling that in all this criticism there is one great

factor that has been lost sight of. Are there any crops in the world to-day that can be sold at the cost of production? We in this Colony are trying to produce rice and other things which are not protected, and I feel it is perhaps a little unfair to expect the Department of Agriculture to produce something that we have to sell in the world's market without protection. That is beyond the Department's purview altogether. There have been other points mentioned as regards irrigation and drainage. That is a matter which has to be very carefully considered. What crops are there in this Colony or anywhere else that can pay for irrigation and drainage? In Trinidad there is no irrigation and drainage problem, and where we have to compete with a place like that and have to pay for these costly schemes it makes it very difficult indeed for us to compete. I feel therefore that perhaps at the present moment the Department is struggling against insuperable odds. We hope that conditions in the world will not always be the same as they are, and that we will in the near future be able to put out crops that will be remunerative, and perhaps then there will be a few kinder words said of the Department than we have heard to-day.

Mr. BRASSINGTON : I suppose I know a little about agriculture. I have been at it all my life, starting when a boy of 16 years, and for 24 years in this Council Chamber I have heard about drainage and irrigation. In my opinion the failure of agriculture in regard to the peasantry of this country is due to the want of an Agricultural Loan Bank. I am no defender of the principal officers of the Department of Agriculture, but I do not see that they can do very much unless the people have the wherewithal to plant and reap. Some years ago I moved in this Chamber—it was the Combined Court—a motion for the establishment of an Agricultural Bank. It was carried unanimously, every Official voting with the Electives in favour of it. A Committee was appointed to go into the whole question, and I think Mr. Charles Shankland was Chairman. The Committee got facts and figures in regard to Agricultural Banks not only in European countries and Egypt but in Barbados and more recently in Trinidad. I think it is well known what an Agricultural Bank has done for Barbados ; it saved the sugar industry

there. I think it is called an Agricultural Aids Bank. What came of the united recommendation of the Electives to the Government? Nothing. Several years after I brought up the same motion and also a series of questions as to whether Government intended to give effect to the united recommendation of the Legislature. Nothing resulted. I have been told, and not by any unimportant person, that an official of the Colonial Office said that the only way British Guiana would get an Agricultural Loan Bank would be over the dead bodies of the officials of the Colonial Office. I suppose it was some junior clerk drawing about £400 or \$500 who disposed of the affairs of this Colony in that fashion.

Drainage and irrigation schemes undertaken by the planters of this Colony have been a success. I think the Hon. Mr. Seaford will bear me out that the proprietors of Port Mourant, Albion and Rose Hall initiated their own irrigation scheme, and a very successful scheme it is. The Government schemes of irrigation and drainage have been a ghastly failure. I am not blaming my friend the Director of Public Works. They have been built upon the supposition that if you impound many acres of savannah water that would give you an irrigation scheme. A proper irrigation scheme is one that will supply water in a period of drought. In a severe drought even the source of supply failed, but that is perhaps only once in a century. In slight droughts the impounding of savannah water has failed to assist. Despite the recommendation of leading planters and engineers Government persisted with an insufficient sum of money to provide a proper irrigation scheme. What has happened in Essequibo? A scheme was drawn up by a predecessor of the present Director of Public Works, Mr. Pudsey. I can never forget him. He tried to draw up a scheme there and spent several years getting levels in Essequibo, and I think the lamentable state of affairs that exists to-day is due to him.

I have appealed to Government to put down a pumping plant in Essequibo but Government says it has not got the money. The money which has been spent in make-shifts to give drainage there has been frittered away. If Government had put down pumps the condi-

tions that prevail at the northern end of the Coast to-day would not have been in existence. Planters will tell you that you must embark upon a course that will give you some stability in regard to drainage and irrigation problems. Why should Essequibo not need a pumping plant? Years ago there was a pumping plant put up by the sugar planters at Reliance, Anna Regina, Richmond, Henrietta, and Windsor Castle. When I put forward argument Government said I was not an engineer. I am not an engineer but my practical experience is worth a great deal more than the technical knowledge of men who come to this Colony and do not know. One does not learn these things in a day. In fairness to the highly paid officers of the Department I would say that until Government can give the farmers some means of getting money to cultivate the land they can do nothing. It breaks the heart of a man who plants five acres and sees it destroyed by flood or drought. The sugar estates never bother with the Government, but what I do object to is that when a sugar planter tells Government anything it is put on one side.

What we want is an Agricultural Loan Bank of at least half a million dollars. The money would come back to the Colony. What is going to happen in Essequibo?

One of the points of the Commission is how far are the people in Essequibo able to pay assessments in respect of the drainage and irrigation and sea defence schemes? The burden of the agriculturist in this Colony is more than he can bear. I am fully aware that what I say will be regarded by the Government as so much hot air, but there is an end to all things, an end to the patience and forbearance of the people of this Colony when the stigma is put on them that they are lazy, and that the people of Trinidad and Barbados are prosperous because they work every day. I say it is cruel to ask people to take up the cultivation of land in Essequibo, when Government is not providing them with the help that would ensure success, but is harnessing them with assessments for drainage and irrigation and sea defences that are above their power to pay. I ask Government and Your Excellency to put before the Secretary of State again the desirability, the absolute necessity of starting an Agricultural Bank in this Colony.

Mr. AUSTIN : There can be little doubt that a Colony such as we live in must have a Department of Agriculture, and it must be an efficient one.

The Council resumed and adjourned until the following day at 11 o'clock.