

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

WEDNESDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1956

The Council met at 2 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Deputy Speaker,

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

Ex-Officio Members:

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

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

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

Nominated Members of Executive Council:

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

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

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

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj

The Hon. R. C. Tello

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

Nominated Unofficials:

Mr. T. Lee

Mr. W. A. Phang

Mr. C. A. Carter

Mr. E. F. Correia

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb

Mr. H. Rahaman

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Dey

Dr. H. A. Fraser

Mr. R. B. Jailal

Mr. Sugrim Singh

Clerk of the Legislature
Mr. I. Crum Ewing.

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

Absent:

His Honour the Speaker,

Sir Eustace Gordon Woolford,
O.B.E., Q.C.—on leave.

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

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.—on leave.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal—on leave.

The Deputy Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council, held on Friday 3rd August, 1956, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

The Financial Secretary (Mr. Essex): I beg to lay on the table:

Schedules of Supplementary Estimates (Development) for the months of April, May and June, 1956.

Schedules of Supplementary Estimates for the months of April, May and June, 1956.

Sir Frank McDavid (Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines): I beg to lay on the table:

Report of Messrs. Preece, Cardew and Rider, Consulting Engineers to the Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administrations on the result of their Hydro-Electric investigations, together with other matters, in British Guiana.

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development): I beg to lay on the table:

Annual Report of the Commissioner for Co-operative Development for the year 1955.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL (AMENDMENT NO. 2) BILL

Mr. Farnum: I beg to give notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intituled:

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

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Financial Secretary: I beg to give notice of the following motion:

(a) "Be it resolved: That this Council approves of the Supplementary Estimates for the months of April, May and June, 1956, totalling \$399,290.71, which have been laid on the table."

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS

HOUSING OF PUBLIC OFFICERS

Mr. Correia gave notice of the following questions:

1. May I be furnished with a complete list of all Government-owned or controlled houses occupied by public officers?
2. What is the cost of the construction of those houses?
3. Are the houses furnished or unfurnished?
4. What rentals are paid by the officers occupying those houses?
5. Are there any Government officers who occupy rent-free quarters? If so, will Government state whether such houses are officially designated as rent-free or are those houses occupied by Government officers who are entitled to rent-free quarters?
6. Are there any Government officers who receive assisted house allowances or assistance towards payment of house rent?
7. Will Government state whether rentals of Government-occupied houses or quarters were increased following the revision of salaries? If so, by what amounts?

COST OF REPRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES

Will Government state in detail the various conferences at which this Government was represented during the period 4th of January, 1954 to date, and the cost to the Colony for representation at each conference?

ORDER OF THE DAY

WIDOWS AND ORPHANS PENSION (AMENDMENT) BILL

The Chief Secretary (Mr. Porcher, acting): I beg to move the first reading of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to amend the Widows and Orphans Pension Ordinance".

The Attorney General (Mr. Wylie): I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

CONSTITUTION — MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF ROYAL COMMISSION

Mr. Lee: I must thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for making this Members' Day possible, thus giving this Council the opportunity to discuss this motion. I desire first to read the motion so that Members would be reminded fully of its details:

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

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

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

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

The Members of this Council are supposed to be Interim Members, carrying on and marking time, and they, in their different spheres of life, would and should know the feelings of the people of the Colony. We are in this Council five Members short and one of us—you sir—has been elevated to the

position of Deputy Speaker. We are therefore short of six votes in this discussion. Those six votes might have helped to make up a majority over the Government element and Members of the Executive Council, and I am respectfully asking all of them, both Executive Councillors and "Floor" Members to assume the responsibility of the absent Members. If they see that the people are dissatisfied with the proposed Constitution—let me call it the Renison Constitution — they should in the people's interest support this motion.

I do not know whether Members of this Council have consulted any group or groups of people to ascertain whether the majority of their group are satisfied with the Constitution. For my own part it was necessary for me to see in what form or fashion and constitutionally, Her Majesty's Government can be got to realize that the people are dissatisfied with the Renison Constitution. They are compelled to be quiet by certain restrictions and to show whether Her Majesty's Government (through the Secretary of State for the Colonies) and the Governor cannot iron out constitutional matters in such a manner as to give contentment to the people who are in their care and trust.

The only way, judging from past situations, is to ask for the appointment of a Royal Commission to come out and inquire into this dispute as was done in Ceylon. There is a precedent to follow in approaching Her Majesty's Government, and I as a Nominated Member of this Council and as an elected member by the last general elections, had deemed it advisable to put forward to that Government that the people cannot and will not accept the proposed Constitution (I use the words "cannot" and "will not" advisedly). I will show that the Constitution as proposed by the Gov-

[Mr. Lee]

ernor in consultation with the Secretary of State is a farce intended to save the face of the British Government in the judgment of the democratic world.

Twelve Elected seats are proposed. I do not know if Members of the Executive Council realize the importance of the British Government's ruling over their people—people who are dissatisfied. Is it not right that the Government should come to some understanding in some way or fashion with the dissatisfied people in which the people's wishes can be looked into?

When first I studied Constitutional law it was always explained that in any such law the people who are being governed are to be first considered. Using that principle what do we find? The wishes of the people were never consulted. A Commission should have been sent in order to find out the wishes of the people. The only alternative we have is to go to the Throne and ask Her Majesty, in the interest of the people and in the interest of justice and humanity, to get someone to enquire from the people what they want and what are their wishes and let them be satisfied that the proposed Government would be in the best interest of peace and goodwill in a British Colony. I speak with certainty when I say that at present the majority of the people of this Colony will say "We do not want this proposed Constitution". Therefore the Constitution should be framed in accordance with the wishes expressed by the people and should give to them an elected majority in the Legislature so that the world might see that the British rule their Colonies with

a Democratic form of Government. I shall do my utmost, within my limitations, to prove to this Council that the Renison Constitution is nothing but a farce. Let us take the principle enunciated in the wages question in which Government has accepted the policy or principle that when there is a dispute between employer and employee the law provides for arbitration. There is usually an Advisory Committee to enquire into a dispute and make recommendations. Taking it for granted that there is a dispute between Government and the Secretary of State and the people of this Colony, would it not be fair and just to the British subjects in this country that a Parliamentary or other Commission be appointed as requested in this motion?

I will give another example which is stronger. When the 1953 Constitution was suspended — something which the Secretary of State had every right to do—Her Majesty's Government, according to the report of the Robertson Commission—appointed this Robertson Commission to see whether her subjects in this Colony had failed to rule themselves in a Democratic manner with a Constitution which was "paramount" in the West Indies. According to the details of the proposed Constitution, the Legislative Council shall consist of four Official and not more than 12 Elected Members, and not more than eight Nominated Members as checks and balances, while the Executive Council would consist of four Officials, one Nominated Member and five Elected Members of the Legislative Council, with the Governor presiding.

Now, let us deal with the report of the Waddington Commission and also with that of the Robertson Commission. The Waddington Commission

enquired from the people whether they were prepared to form a Government, while the Robertson Commission enquired why was there failure of the Constitution that had been given to them according to their wishes. Both of these reports should be taken together in order to see that the motion is a reasonable one. In the proposed Renison Constitution we have 12 Elected Members, four Officials including the Attorney General, the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary; and, seeing that there would be huge expenditure for development, it was suggested that the head of the development Secretary also be appointed an Official Member of the Council.

Let us leave the Nominated Members aside and we would find that both the Waddington and the Robertson Commissions have agreed that we should learn through the Ministerial system and also that we should have universal adult suffrage. According to the proposed Constitution, five of the 12 Elected Members will hold Ministerial posts. That is the set-up which Her Majesty's Government desires to carry and which we are expected to accept in principle. There must be united action between the Government and the people, and they must bring proposals and other things before the Legislature as one body with a Cabinet. In the voting strength the Legislature will comprise 12 Elected and four Official Members, after taking away the five Elected Members who will hold Ministerial posts, there will be all the checks and balances necessary for the Government in an Elected Legislature like this.

Is it the intention of H.M. Secretary of State—to govern us in this way? Re-

membering that the quorum in the Ex-Co. is four, I say it is a farce to have 12 Elected Members in the Legislature in these circumstances, unless we wish to tell the world that we are giving the people these 12 Elected seats in order to test them out again. We have these checks and balances in the eight Nominated Members, but we will have people carrying Ministerial responsibility and if they must vote with the Government, where will the elected element be found in the Legislative Council? Can we say that we are expressing the will of the people in a Democratic manner? I think that H. M. Government is trying to "save face" now by asking us to accept a Legislature with 12 elected Members who could not act entirely free, and saying that there is an Elected majority. I say, as a student of Constitutional Law that if we have a Ministerial system we should have an Elected majority at all times, so that the voice of the people could be expressed on important issues. Even in this Interim Government the Nominated section has expressed the will of the people as a majority against the Government.

Let us look further at the farce of the proposed Constitution. The Report of the Robertson Commission states that in a Democratic Legislature there will be provision for an Opposition, and I repeat that in order to stress this point. Let us assume for the sake of argument that they were not wrong when they said that the minds of the people have to be changed. Members sitting here know full well that the minds of the people have not yet changed, and I would like to know

[Mr. Lee]

what will be the outcome of a General Election tomorrow under this Constitution. All of the 12 Elected seats will be swamped out by the same people whom the Government is trying to protect the inhabitants against. Therefore, if 12 Elected Members of the same group are in the Council under the Renison Constitution, the Governor must appoint five of them to be Ministers.

Let us assume that the Governor, in order to appease, takes five of the leaders and nominates them to the Executive Council; when those five persons go to the Executive Council they do so as a Party; where then will the opposition come from? Would it be from among the seven other Members who will be there? How can that be—possibly seven “Nincompoops” who might offer no opposition whatever, just following the advice of their leaders. The opposition will have to come from the 8 Members whom the Governor would nominate, but can it be said that those Members will be a Party when they are put there as checks and balances? And, if they face the policy of the 12 Elected Members as a Party, what would happen? I was an Elected Member in 1953 and had to go among those people, and I remember what happened. They used to curse me, and even when they passed my home at night the same thing occurred. Does this Government or H.M. Government expect that the opposition will come from the eight Nominated Members? I certainly say “No.” I think that His Excellency will have to exercise his reserve powers, as was done in 1953.

If Government says openly that it wants to save face by this pro-

posal for 12 Elected Members, I would sit down and not contest a seat at the General Election, because I consider the new proposals a farce. Any person who honestly desires to serve the people of this country would consider the constitutional proposals a farce. There will be no violence, but political meetings will be attended by only a few people. The candidates for election will virtually be talking to the wind.

From the reports of the two Constitutional Commissions it can be clearly seen what is the fear of H.M. Government. Is it therefore not right that H.M. Government should appoint a Commission to come here and enquire into the constitutional changes desired by the people of this country? I once said in this Legislature, when it was proposed to separate the interior from the coastlands of this Colony and to spend £20 million on the development of the interior, that I would agree to the suspension of the Constitution for that purpose, if necessary. If Government wants protection in respect of the Development Programme which involves an expenditure of \$94½ million I would say: suspend the Constitution and let the Governor and his officers control the carrying out of the Development Programme.

As stated in the Robertson Commission's Report, this nominated Legislature is merely marking time. When the balance-sheet is prepared and there is any failure, on whom the blame will fall? I will not accept any blame, because we are only marking time here, and most of what Government asks of us is approved. If, therefore, for the expenditure of \$94½ million H.M. Government desires to have control of our affairs so that some “wicked boys” cannot interfere with the Development Programme, I would

agree with that, and we can continue with a nominated Council comprised of different members. Both Reports of the Constitutional Commissions describe those "boys" as wicked. They deserve a good thrashing, and those who have read these Reports and seen what they have done would wish to give them a good hiding so as to teach them that democratic government is not conducted in the manner they employed.

Can this Government say that with the expenditure of \$300,000 on the Government Information Services the people of the country have been made aware of what was done by their elected representatives in 1953? I say "Not yet". But we are offered a Constitution providing for 12 Elected Members, and told that they will represent the voice of the people. The Robertson Commission's Report states in effect that as a result of adult suffrage and the promises made to the people, the majority of the candidates of a certain Party were elected, and that after their election they carried out a policy dictated by a foreign power. Luckily for British Guiana, there were reserve powers in the hands of the Governor. There can always be reserve powers which can be increased if necessary, but we should be given an elected majority in the proposed new Legislature. The present proposals do not provide for such a majority. Some people will say that the nominated element will provide the checks and balances for a democratic Constitution, but I have been a Member of the Legislature for 20 years and I know what that means.

I was told by one of the Nominated Members in a previous Legislative Council—a very good friend of mine who is now dead and gone—that when he received his letter of nomination

from a high official he was told that if there was any disagreement between him and the Government on any matter he should see him before he voted against the Government. That statement is on record in our *Hansard*. That Nominated Member was a true example of Nominated Members of the Legislature; everything that came from the Government was o.k. Even if they did not agree with Government on any matter, they invariably ended up by being convinced by Government.

Therefore, when the proposed Revision Constitution speaks of eight Nominated Members, what am I to understand? Shall I consider that there is a change of policy in the Government with respect to checks and balances? I cannot trust the Government, and I cannot trust the eight Nominated Members. Previously there was no payment of Members of the Legislature, but today they receive remuneration which is an inducement. If other Members wish to take a chance with the proposed Constitution they can do so, but I will not. Certain Nominated Members have not shown that their policies are dictated by the will of the people. On the other hand, I have sat here in previous Legislatures and seen Nominated Members standing up for the people, but the interests which they represented were not involved at that time. What will be the inducement for the proposed eight Nominated Members to side with the Government? The inducement is payment.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I rise to a point of order ! I would like the hon. Member to clarify his statement. If I understand him clearly, he suggests that Nominated Members have fought for the people when their interests

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

were not at stake. I take very strong exception to that statement. Perhaps the hon. Member will clarify it.

Mr. Lee : My friend is out of order and knows he is, but he thinks he can throw me off my feet. Nominated Members at one time represented certain interests in this Colony. Can Government deny that? Once their interests were not at stake we found them defending the people's rights. I need not mention names, but the hon. Member knows fully well what I mean.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Did I understand the hon. Member to say "at one time"?

Mr. Lee : Yes, at one time. We are a Council marking time. I am not referring to the present Council; I am talking about the nominated element in previous Legislatures. I am thinking of the time when the Legislative Council consisted of 14 Elected Members and 10 Nominated Official Members who were eventually removed and seven Nominated Unofficial Members put in their places, representing certain interests. Perhaps some hon. Members have forgotten those days. When their interests were not at stake we found those Nominated Unofficial Members defending the rights of the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Is the hon. Member quite sure that all of the seven Nominated Members represented definite and distinct interests? I would ask him to be careful.

Mr. Lee : It is not right to call names, but I am speaking as far as I knew at that time. Perhaps it was before Your Honour's time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : I still ask the hon. Member to be very careful.

Mr. Lee : I am referring to the time when they represented interests such as sugar and rice, the Chamber of Commerce and the Village Chairmen's Conference.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : That is why I asked the hon. Member the question. I feel sure that if he analyzed it he would have to withdraw the remark.

Mr. Lee : They were there, and the Governor at that time remarked at a certain public meeting — in any case I say with all due deference to His Excellency and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the eight Nominated Members in the Renison Constitution will be the tools of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Would the hon. Member forgive me for interrupting? I have had the privilege of being a Nominated Member under the Constitution immediately preceding the 1953 Constitution or what is referred to as the Waddington Constitution. I also had the privilege of being a Member of the State Council which was a nominated body, and I still have the honour and privilege of being a Member of this all-nominated Council. In none of those three positions was any suggestion whatever made to me by either of the three Governors who asked me to accept nomination, that if my views were contrary to those of the Government I should see him. I would not have accepted the appointment under such conditions, and I was never asked to do so.

Mr. Lee : Sir Gordon Lethem tried to teach us, and he gave us full liberty to express our opinions in the

interest of the Colony. He did not ask of us any reserve power, but prior to the regime of Sir Gordon Lethem, who were the people nominated to the Legislative Council? That is the point. If we had a Governor like Sir Gordon Lethem he would have dealt with those 'boys' in such a manner that they would have ...

Mr. Deputy Speaker : The hon. Member is out of order.

Mr. Lee : Perhaps my language is not parliamentary. I withdraw the remark. Your Honour will remember that Sir Gordon Lethem gave the nominated element in the Legislature a free hand in the interest of the Colony in order that the Development Programme might be carried out, and that the Secretary of State should know that the people's wishes were being satisfied through their representatives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : I am sorry the hon. Member has referred to any Governor by name, and I hope he will refrain from doing so. But in case the hon. Member is led to do so by anything I have said, I would like it to be recorded that I did not serve as a Nominated Member until long after Sir Gordon Lethem's regime. I speak of more recent experience.

Mr. Lee : I bow to the Chair in the ruling that names should not be called, and I would like to apologize if I broke any parliamentary rules. Perhaps I was carried away by the desire that His Excellency the Governor and the Secretary of State should know that this Constitution which is proposed is not in keeping with our traditions or policies or with the teaching that was envisaged by the former Secretary of State for the Colonies. Therefore, it is incumbent

upon me to point out now (and perhaps this is the last time I may have the right to show that the people are not going to co-operate under it) that this Constitution be a total failure if persisted with, and I would ask, sir, that the **Hansard** of this debate be sent through the Governor to the Secretary of State for his consideration.

This is what I would like to be clearly understood: if eight Members are nominated by the Governor and they are there merely as an opposition to the people and to vote on the Government side, would it not be a farce to say there is an Elected element in the Legislative Council? But further than that (I desire to warn the Government and I am now doing so with all my mind and within the limitations of my language), if at all the Governor or the Secretary of State persists in this Constitution it will bring the Government a gain to a farce and into chaos.

I do not know the remedy, but taking examples from several places I find that decisions like these have been made by the people and the Government at conferences. But how can we get our wishes except through a Royal Commission or a Parliamentary Delegation which would report what it has found? And I think they would find, and perhaps rightly so, that the checks and balances required by the Robertson Commission, if adapted into the proposed Constitution would make it possible for an Elected majority to carry on the Government and at the same time show a democratic institution.

Let us see what will happen as it stands: if the five Elected Members in the Government and the remaining seven disagree with the Governor in Council it would be necessary for the

[Mr. Lee]

Governor to refer the matter to the Secretary of State. The Robertson Commission shows that. Assuming that happened, there would be dispute in several matters when the Members cannot get what they want, and it means that the Governor will have to exercise his reserve powers in order that the Government could be carried on as it should. Even if the Elected element works in mutual co-operation the checks and balances would still be necessary, but according to this report the Governor is adamant and he says this Constitution will provide checks and balances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: To what report is the hon. Member referring?

Mr. Lee: I am referring to the broadcast speech by His Excellency the Governor on the 29th July, 1956.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Lee: Now, the Governor is trying to say that the flexibility of the Constitution will be such as to give the Elected element some majority, but it cannot be, because, as I have pointed out, the Executive Council and the Officials have the majority. The only flexibility of the Constitution lies in the Nominated element. There was a time when this country got itself into financial difficulties and H.M. Government came to its assistance. The Constitution was changed, the Governor being made President of the Legislative Council which also consisted of 10 Officials who were Heads of Departments and 19 Unofficials. Of these 19, 14 were Elected and five Nominated. The Elected Members clamoured for it and the number of Official Members was gradually reduced. I will add, quoting from "British Guiana Informatives, Vol. II":

"...after an investigation by a Financial Commission, grants-in-aid of the Budget became necessary, with 'Treasury Control', the latter being lifted only in

1943. In that year too, the liberal character of the Constitution was to a great extent restored. Under the terms of the British Guiana (Constitution) Amendment Order in Council (1943), the Constitution of 1928 was amended so that the Legislative Council consisted of 24 members in addition to the Governor as President. The ex-officio members, were three in number: the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General and the Colonial Treasurer. There were seven nominated members, and 14 elected members, the latter having therefore a clear majority in the House."

Leaving aside the Official Members, the Governor was free to choose the Nominated Members, and if I remember rightly, they were free to express themselves in the Legislative Council if they disagreed on anything. But that is not the intention of the Renison Constitution, and that is why I am saying it will be a farce. That is why I am warning the Government that it will fail. I think my responsibility will cease when I take my seat and the Hansard is sent to the Secretary of State for his perusal.

I do not say that the Governor should fail the people if evidence shows that this or that Party would win the majority of seats and would then upset the Government, but he has reserve powers and if he wants more each and every one of us in this Council would pass a measure to give him; also we could assist the Secretary of State by recommending that legislation be so made that persons who act subversively against the Government must be disfranchised as is enacted against those who contravene election laws. The Robertson Commission passed this over, but I am strengthened in my view that if political parties try to act subversively they can be banned and their members disfranchised, and the majority of the people be represented by a proper, democratic Legislature which we are all clamouring for.

I do not know what the repercussions will be, but I think the sole reason

why the Renison Constitution should not be given to us is that no political party, it may be the P.P.P. or some other party, should be allowed to find that under it they have all the 12 seats and therefore the power to 'raise the roof' and not co-operate with the Government. That is what I am trying to prevent. Do not provoke the people into a farcical constitution, because when they realize that their interest is at stake and they do not have a majority in the Council, what will the Governor say? "Too late?" I do not like those words, "too late." I would not like to know that I did not warn the Government that it would be too late if it agrees to this Constitution.

If the Government would not accept the checks and balances, they could disfranchise persons or ban political parties. The report of the Robertson Commission pointed out that people and even writers were subversive to the interest of the Colony and that if they had been banned the position would have been better. Had it become known that such people would have been banned they—the trouble makers—would have kept scare of being disfranchised, and I repeat that the appointment of a Royal Commission or a Parliamentary Delegation is necessary to enable H.M. Government to appreciate the minds of the people. If the Commission (or Delegation) says that we are marking time and should continue to do so until the Development Programme is executed, then we will bow to that. The Governor can then change us in this Council—if we have served the people—and put in others, but don't let us attempt to work this Renison Constitution, because it will be a total failure.

In his recent broadcast, the Governor stated that the majority of the Political Parties asked him what guarantees he would like, and in his reply

he told them that "I have all those reserve powers already." If that is so, why can we not be given back our Constitution, since the Robertson Commission Report says the Waddington Constitution is good and that we are marking time? The Governor has the power to dissolve the Council and we could see that everything is carried on by the people—through an Elected majority in the Council. If Government wants to get its safeguard in the Executive Council, it could still do so.

I am positive that if we get back our 1953 Constitution with all its rights there would be no need for the eighteen Elected seats any more, because certain people have learnt quite a lot. But, if we reduce the number some will go to the street corners and say that we have suffered and must do "so and so". They would also broadcast a lot of false rumours, all based on false premises. Since the majority of the people have learnt better, they might be told by candidates at the next General Election that they should "stand" for the Elected Constitution they had and decry the Government. The Constituencies have been widened, but the majority of the voters are still persons 21 years of age—under Adult Suffrage. If I may express an opinion based on the report of the Robertson Commission, Government can stipulate that Adult Suffrage should only be exercised by persons who have reached 30 years of age.

At a certain period in England women were not given the vote until they reached 30 years of age, and if it is found that voters in British Guiana are immature at the age of 21 years, the minimum age could be increased to 30 years. During the 1953 crisis, some people proudly stated that every member in the House of Assembly had only one birth certificate but they had two. All these things can be enquired into, and checks and balances introduced to meet them in a

[Mr. Lee]

Government with an Elected majority and it could reduce the qualification for a candidate. If we get back the 1953 Constitution, I am quite sure that I will be able to convince the majority of people in the Colony that that is the time we would get development and progress. But if the idea of 12 Elected Members in the Constitution is insisted on, I am afraid I will have to sing my swan song. I say again that a Commission is absolutely necessary to inquire into this matter, as suggested in the motion.

I think that every British subject would agree that the Governor should have adequate measures for dealing with the use of subversive literature and people with subversive ideas in this Colony, and I am sure that every Member of this Council agrees with that principle. But, the report of the Robertson Commission or anything else cannot convince the world that the proposed Renison Constitution is one with an Elected majority. Even if certain persons try to defeat the purpose for which a Democratic Constitution is necessary, they could be dealt with effectively. I went and fought some of these very people and they threatened to beat me, but that was all. Some of those who had got into power were just about 21 years of age, but now they have learnt some sense. They have learnt that they cannot rule as they attempted to do, and that they cannot fool the people all the time. Can't they be given another chance? We can disfranchise them or ban their newspapers, and things of that sort. I repeat that if the Commission finds that illiteracy was responsible for what occurred in certain places in 1953 the age limit for voters could be raised, still granting Adult Suffrage. There was a stage when a woman in England could not vote unless she was 30 years of age.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not on the basis of illiteracy.

Mr. Lee: No, but the Government of this country could set aside a period of 10 years during which we should earn the right to vote for candidates seeking election to the Legislature. The Robertson Commission pointed that we had a very good Constitution and a Commission can find that candidates are to have better financial qualification. Some success was achieved under that Constitution and, as Your Honour very rightly said, it was a peaceful and successful Constitution. We, the Electives, fought the Government, but we also supported them in measures which we thought were good for the people.

I sincerely hope that Your Honour will support the request for a Royal Commission or a Delegation, as requested in this motion. When we had the old Court of Policy and the Combined Court we did not have the right to make laws, but we had the right to protect our internal financial interest by a majority in the Combined Court. If the Court of Policy asked for funds, unless approved by the Combined Court they did not get them. Such a Constitution was a true example of what we should have—with an elected majority voice whenever we are spending money and with the necessary checks and balances—therefore a Commission can recommend such a Constitution again.

There was a clause in that old Constitution which made it clear that the will of the people must be first consulted before it could be changed. We got into difficulties in those days and H.M. Government said it would come to our assistance but that there must be checks and balances. The next Council consisted of 10 Official and 19 Unofficial (14 Elected and 5 nominated) Members, and with the Governor presiding there was a total of 30 Members. It is possible

that after inquiry by some independent person or persons, we might be given back such a Constitution. We accepted that Constitution because we knew that the Nominated Members were persons in whom the public had confidence and persons who would carry out the wishes of the people. In another later Constitution the Government put matters of policy before Members of the Executive Council, but the Governor only accepted their advice if he cared to. The Members of Executive Council were not policy-makers but merely gave advice to the Governor in the carrying out of policies put forward by the Government. I was once a Member of the Executive Council and I know that on some occasions Members have asked permission to speak in the Legislative Council and to vote against the Government.

In both the Waddington and the Robertson Commissions' Reports they advised the retention of the Ministerial system, and the Governor can select the Ministers from the elected element. The powers of the elected Ministers can be curtailed by an Order in Council giving the Governor power to see that they do not act against the interests of the country.

I am asking this Council to consider the motion I have put forward and the arguments I have adduced within my limitations, for the appointment of a Royal Commission with the object of securing an elected majority in the Legislative Council which would satisfy the recommendations made in both Reports of the Waddington and Robertson Commissions. The Waddington Commission suggested an alternative Constitution—one of a unicameral Legislature comprising 18 elected representatives, six nominated Members and three *ex officio* Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will you please quote the page of the Report ?

Mr. Lee: Page 69. If the Governor desires to add the Development Secretary so as to have four Official Members in the proposed new Legislature nobody would object. In the Waddington Commission's Report Sir John Waddington, who suggested a unicameral Legislature, said that he did not think the time was ripe for a bicameral Legislature as recommended by the other two members of the Commission. That bicameral Legislature has failed. Is it not right that we should try the other ? I do not believe that the P.P.P. or any subversive people would attempt again what they have done. All we need is a strong man at the wheel, and in Sir Patrick Renison we have such a man. But he has proposed a Constitution in which the Government will always have a majority, and that is why I am asking Members to consider carefully the arguments I have put before them. If the General Election is to be held next year we have plenty of time for an enquiry by a Royal Commission or a Parliamentary delegation. Even if it should cost this Colony £5,000—£1,000 per man—we should ask for the appointment of a Royal Commission. The rough water which was flowing under the bridge is now becoming smooth. Are we still going to say that we should not have the situation examined ?

I commend to the Council the motion I have put forward. The second resolution suggests that the Secretary of State be requested to suspend further action on the proposals announced, pending the submission of the report of the Royal Commission asked for. I am not saying that a majority decision of this Council in favour of the motion will necessarily be adhered to by the Secretary of State, but with the Hansard report of this debate it will show that although it is a nominated Legislature we have an independent spirit, and we

[Mr. Lee]

can say what we think and what we feel.

Mr. Sugrim Singh rose—

Mr. Jailal : For the purpose of debate I second the motion and would ask permission to reserve what I have to say for a later stage.

Mr. Sugrim Singh and **Mr. Gajraj** rose.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : Will Your Honour rule that I was on my feet before the hon. Member, **Mr. Gajraj** rose?

Mr. Deputy Speaker : I am afraid I am unable to say.

Mr. Gajraj : I claim that I should have priority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Do you claim that you rose before **Mr. Jailal** took his seat?

Mr. Sugrim Singh : I rose before and immediately after **Mr. Jailal** took his seat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Would it make very much difference? I frankly must confess that I could not see who rose first.

Mr. Sugrim Singh : Whichever way you rule, I shall be speaking tomorrow on the motion, but I would like to speak this afternoon. Of course the motion was not properly before the Council when I rose in the first instance, not having been seconded, but **Mr. Jailal** seconded it for the purpose of debate, and then I rose immediately. I am asking you to rule, sir.

The Chief Secretary : If I may assist I would say that on the second occasion **Mr. Gajraj** was on his feet before **Mr. Sugrim Singh**.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : The Chief Secretary says that on the second occasion **Mr. Gajraj** beat you to it. I am sorry that I was not in a position to say who rose first, but I shall endeavour to be more watchful in future.

Mr. Luckhoo : A photo-finish camera would be useful, I think.

Mr. Gajraj : I can assure the hon. Member that I will not be on my feet tomorrow when we resume, so that he will have an opportunity to speak.

I do not rise at this moment to echo the words or to repeat some of the sentiments which the hon. mover of the motion has made such great use of this afternoon, but I think it is right, fitting and proper that I should give him some measure of praise for having prepared this motion and brought it to the Council, as it certainly gives us all an opportunity of discussing in this Council a subject which we have listened to and read so much about outside of this Council. I believe that it is right that Members of this Council should endeavour to indicate the opinions they hold on this important matter of constitutional change.

Throughout its history this country has seen many changes in its Constitution and its form of Government, and if we were to plot a graph of those many changes we would be faced not with a steady rise of the line of the graph, but we would see quite clearly that there have been occasions when there was a sudden dipping of the line, ending suddenly in 1953. Upon the line of the graph was a sudden plummeting between the months of April and October, right down to the base again, and what the hon. Member has been endeavouring to crystalize his objections to is the attempt to get us back on to the road — to plot one more point in the graph whereby the line could once

again lead upwards and, we hope, onwards thereafter without any further plummeting below.

In 1953, after our short experience of Ministerial government as a result of elections based upon adult suffrage, there was upon the suspension of the Constitution a feeling of great loss and a sense of apathy among leaders as well as the people of this country. Then, when this Interim Government was appointed at the beginning of 1951 and it was made clear that the object of this body of men and women was to try to restore a form of constitutional government based upon economic advancement of this country, everyone hoped that this form of government would continue for a considerable period of time, so that those important economic difficulties which had spread over a period of years prior to the introduction of the 1953 Constitution might be removed forever, thereby bringing a greater measure of contentment, a higher degree of security and a greater measure of prosperity to the people of this country as a whole.

We hoped that when that was accomplished — and I am sure none of us thought it could be accomplished within the first two years of our Development Programme—we certainly did have the feeling and the belief that when the Development Programme was implemented and the happiness and prosperity of the people had been increased, we would find that there was no more need for the considerable number of checks and balances to which my friend has referred, because the people would then realize that it would be in their interest to make sure that their representatives in this Council would be of such a standard and of such a trend of thought that the troubles of 1953 would never recur.

We are still on that road; we have not yet reached its end. Only recently we approved of expenditure, with the aid of H.M. Government, to the tune of over \$90 million, which we hope will bring us nearer to the time when we will have no fears of the future—no fears of ourselves and no fears of the future. We want a stable form of government, and we were told that by the people of the world, the investors of the world, after our troubles of 1953. This Interim Government has attempted to bring about the form of stability which is looked for by investors all over the world. But no matter how much stability we might impart into the Government, how much confidence we might radiate overseas, the time must come when we will have to test our people again in order to prove, not only to those abroad but also to ourselves, that the fears we entertained a few years ago have receded considerably into the background.

It was at the time when the Constitution was suspended that we were told, right there and then, that Her Majesty's Government would set up a Commission to come out to British Guiana and investigate the causes which led to the suspension of the Constitution—that turned out to be the Robertson Commission. After the Robertson Commission presented its Report and after that Report was released with appropriate statements by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Governor of British Guiana, the life of this Interim Legislature was more or less pegged. We realized then that this Legislature, or those who were appointed to this Legislature, would have their appointment limited in the first instance to a certain number of years; speaking subject to correction by Your Honour, until towards the end of 1957.

[Mr. Gajraj]

That brings me to the point which the hon. Member has laboured so strongly. He has made it seem absolutely necessary, from his way of looking at it, that what we need is a Commission, whether Royal or Parliamentary, to come to British Guiana to listen to people who would be prepared to give evidence before that Commission as to what form of Government they would like. In the second part of the preamble of his motion he made no bones about saying that the people are much concerned because they were not given an opportunity of expressing their views on this constitutional matter.

But may I remind him, through you, sir, and Members of this Council that the Robertson Commission came to British Guiana shortly after the Constitution was suspended, at a time when it was safe to assume that the elected representatives of the people still had the confidence of the persons who put them in that position, yet it was the particular Party concerned that decided definitely to boycott the Robertson Commission and refused to put before the Commissioners the views which they held constitutionally or otherwise. Have we any guarantee whatever that a similar state of affairs would not be encountered in which only representatives other than those of that Party would be coming forward to give views? In that case the Commission would not have the full facts before them: they would not have the benefit of the broad views of the people.

• That is not the fatal part of the argument; what I also feel is this: having regard to the experience we have had over the length of time which Commissions take to arrive at their destination, to hear evidence, consider the evidence and write a Report, submit it, have it published and see it implement-

ed, the time factor will be considerable. In the case of the Waddington Commission, it was in December, 1948 that it was announced that a Commission would be coming.

There was quite a lapse between that announcement and the appointment of its personnel, and a further lapse before they came out. As we know, the Report was not available until 1951, and it was in 1953 that the recommendations were implemented. Although the Robertson Commission did not have as part of its terms of reference to suggest a Constitution for this country, nevertheless, it took 12 to 18 months for us to have its report, and I am sure Members will agree with me that if we are to have the type of Commission which the hon. Member, the mover, is suggesting—

Mr. Lee: May I remind my friend of the terms of reference of the Robertson Commission?

“In the light of the circumstances which made it necessary to suspend the Constitution of British Guiana to consider and to recommend what changes are required in it.”

Mr. Gajraj: I thank the hon. Member for reading that to me, but that does not alter the point which I am trying to make. I am dealing with the question of time, and I still maintain that if the hon. Member is seeking the permission of this Council to recommend the appointment of a Commission it would certainly be two years between the appointment of that Commission and the implementation of any recommendations it might make—and that is putting it at the lowest—during which time those concerned would not be able to do anything.

It is on that particular point of delay that I am taking my stand. I think it is sufficiently well known to

Members of this Council or to anyone who takes an interest in public affairs that where an Elected Government is concerned, that Government becomes extremely unpopular when it attempts to extend its own life. We have seen that in this country and we have had recent experience of it in the neighbouring Colony of Trinidad where the Government that has recently been disbanded has been able to arrange for an extension of its life, and this has made it extremely unpopular among the electorate.

How much more unpopular to the people of this country will be a proposal, emanating from an all-nominated body such as this for the prolongation of the life of the present Legislature and the extension of the period of office of the present Government. I feel that the hon. Member who moved this motion has done so with the purest of motives but he has not fully appreciated what would be the result of the implementation of this motion.

There is no question whatever that in spite of the excellent work that this Government has done (and I am speaking as a Member of the Government and claiming some credit for improvements for which it is responsible) in putting this country back on its economic feet and bringing it back in line with respected territories in these parts and on the same high plane with the Commonwealth and the Colonial Empire in particular, there are nevertheless lots of people (probably they would like to take our places here) who are not satisfied with what this Government has done; so let us admit that there is a certain amount of unpopularity with us. Are we then going to accept this motion and extend our own life? I submit that it would be entirely wrong for us to do so, and it would be opposed to the very

thoughts of democracy on which the hon. mover has spoken so feelingly.

The hon. mover condemned in no uncertain terms the proposals which have come to be known in this country as the Renison proposals or the Renison Constitution, and I want to say here and now that the composition of the Legislature under the proposals that have been put forward by His Excellency the Governor and have been accepted by the Secretary of State for the Colonies is the first step back on the road to proper constitutional government and is one that I as a Guianese (and I think I speak for all Guianese on this matter) cannot accept as being the be-all and end-all of our constitutional position in this country. As Guianese certainly none of us want to say that is the form of constitution this country should use for many years to come.

After all, we have had to fight for years and years in trying to better the constitutional position of this country and give to the people's representatives a greater degree of partnership in the Government. We all know that we reached a stage in 1953 when the Constitution of British Guiana was certainly not inferior to any one of the Caribbean Colonies, but we have had to turn the hands of the clock back. Like schoolboys we have been sent down to the foot of the class and no matter how bright we are we cannot just exchange places and go to the head of the class now. In the meantime conditions otherwise are advancing and what we do want as soon as possible is to start moving up again, and that is what I think is the essential virtue of the proposals by His Excellency the Governor.

There is in these proposals the opportunity for us to start again, for us to prove, as I said not only to the

[Mr. Gajraj]

people outside but to ourselves that we have learned the lessons of 1953, that we will take into consideration that we want as representatives people who have a deep and abiding interest in British Guiana and its peoples, not merely for one legislative session or one period in the life of the Legislature, people who have the interest of this country at heart and people who would like to plan for 50 or 100 years to come. We have been told that this is a country with a great future (we know it for a fact) and that if we are to safeguard that future we must train not only for today but plan a foundation with as broad a base as possible so that on that we may build a mighty monument to the people of this country.

We must not one day find that we had been building on shifting sands and that the elements have once again demolished the building. My friend, the hon. Member is asking, "Give us back the powers under the Waddington Constitution and if the people do not behave properly, then the Governor will have to use his reserve powers and suspend the Constitution again." I ask in all sincerity, is that in the interest of British Guiana? Would that not be taking us back into the depths of darkness? It would be a very long time before we could emerge again into the light. I certainly think that should not be the approach. I feel we must move but we will have at every step we take to test the ground under our feet and make sure it is solid, so we can proceed with great anticipation of assuming the position which we once held.

There has been so much of criticism levelled this afternoon at Nominated Members that we are all indebted to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having interrupted at one stage in order to inform the hon. mover of this motion that

in the three legislative bodies to which you have been nominated as a Member there has been never a suggestion that you should vote this way or that, or that your appointment on any one of these was dependent upon your making a promise to support the Government. I join with you in that declaration because I have had the great privilege of serving on all three of the bodies to which you have referred except in the case of the Legislature just prior to that of 1953 of which I was just an acting Member. But I say with the same conviction as you, sir, that there was never a suggestion that my thoughts should be directed in favour of the Government in order to retain my seat. All of us have been nominated to this Legislature. Is there among us a single Member who has been told anything like that? I am sure none of us has been told how he should vote. There is, of course, a cohesion among the Members of the Executive Council and that is to be expected if we are to develop a proper system of Parliamentary Government. We have as an example the Cabinet of the United Kingdom Government. Among themselves they may argue, debate and dispute but they finally come to a decision that the Government would pursue this course or that course and naturally, when the Cabinet goes to the House the Cabinet stands as one.

If in the past Members of the Executive Council were allowed to voice their disagreement with other Members of the Executive Council when they came to the Legislative Council, then those days are passed, I submit, and we should consider that period dead and buried and try not to bring it back, because if we are to progress constitutionally and move on and hold our heads high then we must follow the example not only of the United Kingdom Gov-

ernment but of many others in which this is shown. Recently in London at the Federation Conference when we were examining the Constitutional proposals it was made quite clear to Members that the Executive Council would have cabinet status and would move together as one. My friend (the hon. mover) has been at pains to say that under the amended Interim Constitution out of the 12 Elected Members five would be chosen to sit on the Executive Council and they would have to vote for the Government along with the eight Nominated Members (if there are eight of them). I am sure the hon. Member knows that is where the elasticity does take place, because the proposals are that the Nominated Members should not number more than eight; but these eight, the hon. Member claims will always have to vote with the Government.

Now, sir, if the Party system were to be developed—and we all earnestly hope there will be a proper two-Party system in this country—then certainly the five Elected Members of the Council will become part of the Government established by the majority group of the Elected Members and they should certainly be able to carry with them in the Legislative Council those members of their Party who are not members of the Executive Council. That is the method of legislative functioning and of Party Government all over the world. The Cabinet does not always stand isolated on a rock and divided from the rest of Parliament.

I feel sure that not a single one of those who may be nominated to the new Council would be tied to any Government strings. If they do not express their views as their consciences dictate then certainly no one would be blame-worthy but the Members themselves.

They, as individuals, would be accountable to their own consciences and, as time goes on, to their own people. We have seen ourselves, not merely in this Legislature, but in the period 1948 and 1953, that Nominated Members have expressed themselves in very strong terms against Government measures and voted against them. I do not see why we should have any fear that in the new Council they would be tied to any Party system or Government. This new Legislature has perhaps been referred to as temporary, but we have been assured that its "temporariness" would depend upon our own efforts.

I cannot understand how the hon. Mover of this motion can expect this Council to believe that if adult suffrage is broad-based for election, these 12 Elected Members would not be representatives of the people of this Colony. If he essays to say that he thinks there should be a larger number of representatives of the people elected, that would be a different thing, but I make bold to say that so long as these people are elected on the basis of adult suffrage, then they must certainly be regarded as representatives of the people. We have had 24 Elected Members in the House of Assembly, and on this occasion the Governor proposes that we should go half way across it and have twelve.

In the United Kingdom there are 631 Members of Parliament—I speak subject to correction—and if one divides the total population by the number of Parliamentary representatives he would find that the proportion is one to about 60,000 persons. We have less than half a million people in British Guiana and if we have 12 Elected Members to the Legislature the proportion would be one to about 40,000 persons, and therefore we will still have a larger representation in British Guiana than that of the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Gajraj]

I think I have said earlier that as a Guianese I am not happy about this Constitution, but I still say that the best proposal is for us to try and get back on to the road of representative Government. I believe that all of us would like to see the day dawn when we would have in British Guiana a form of internal self-Government, whether we attain that self-Government standing alone or in association with other Commonwealth bodies. But, sir, all agree that that is our goal. Let us not forget that in order to reach that goal there are bound to be several stages. In other words, the testing ground has to be proved and the proposals which we have in the Renison Constitution are for the purpose of taking the first step forward and showing that we can select men for our Legislature who will prove to be men of goodwill and a sense of responsibility for the general interest of the people of this Colony.

I believe that we want to get on to the road of progress again and, as I have said, quickly, but I still submit humbly that the appointment of a Royal Commission to come and investigate our affairs will not be the shortest and best way of achieving what we have in mind. That will, in effect, postpone the day of progress and mean a longer period before we reach the stage we want. I am also opposed to the view that we should not work the Renison Constitution. The time is fast approaching when we must stand on our feet and be able to say that "so and so" is what we want. The only way in which anyone or any group of persons can stand up and make that assertion is by going to the polls and seeking the return of the candidates they want to be their representatives.

If our people are wise and if the election is contested on that basis, it is possible that they can put on their election platform something to the effect that one of the first things that we, as the elected representatives of the people are prepared to do is to work with the Government of the country and ask H. M. Government to receive a delegation from the Colony to help us along to our Constitutional goal. If we have these 12 Elected representatives coming into the Council and proposing that there should be a change in the Constitution, I am sure that their voice will have a far greater effect with the authorities in the Colonial Office than the voice of any political leader or political party in this country at the present time.

No one would be in a position to say at this time that there is so much weight behind the views he has put forward, since we no longer have political elections based on adult suffrage. That is what I think the people of this Colony should realise and appreciate. I make bold to say that the course I have suggested is the shortest one towards recovery, and if I am a Member of the Council when we have elected representatives of the people, I shall support any reasonable proposals put forward by them for the advancement of this country and I shall be in the forefront of the struggle for an improved Constitution for British Guiana. This is my home and this is my country and I want to put it more in line for securing a programme for its political advancement.

As I tried to point out, this question of the length of time that will elapse were we to accept the recommendation in the motion moved by the hon. Member, is a very important point for consideration. As I have said, every true Guianese accepts the proposition

that the amendment of the Constitution is not the "be end" of it all. But certainly, if we are to move forward we should work the Constitution that has been proposed, and instead of suggesting that we should bear the expense of a Royal Commission, we might be able, after the lapse of a little time, to get a promise of a further change in the Constitution—something that might very well be done by an Order in Council—whereby the Elected representatives would be increased in number and a greater measure of power given to them.

If we were to accept the hon. Mover's motion then some time will have to be spent by us here, because I cannot see how else we can carry on unless the Interim Legislature remains in office for a longer time, since the second part of the motion calls for a stoppage of all work pointing towards the implementation of the proposals that the Governor has put forward. Does the hon. Member appreciate the full consequence of that request? Does he quite realise that part of the machinery has already been set in motion for the revision of the electoral polls? Does he suggest to us that he has given full consideration to the question of the stoppage of the work of revising the electoral polls? I am sure that when he gives full consideration to this aspect of the matter he will realise that the implications are far greater than he expected.

I feel sure that the hon. Member has been motivated by the purest of motives in his enthusiasm and zeal to put before H.M. Government his feelings of disappointment over these proposals, and in bringing forward this motion I think he has done service to us as a legislator. He has given us an opportunity of saying, as I have said, that while we have every desire to cooperate with the Government in work-

ing for our advancement we cannot say that we accept these proposals as a final solution to our problem. It is clear that the length of time the interim Legislature will occupy will depend considerably on the way in which the people choose their representatives.

Perhaps it would be best for me to stress again that the proposed amended Constitution is not unalterable. It will continue, as I see it, in its proposed form no longer than the people who caused it to be established, shall choose to let it continue. If they become convinced that they made an injudicious use of the power they had in 1953—the year in which they misused the powers that were entrusted to them—then I submit that they can alter their present state at will. But, do they honestly desire such a result and I ask the question with all seriousness? Do they honestly desire that the things which took place in 1953 should not be repeated, or are they using them in an artful way with the feeling that they can play some sort of political game with the people of this country as they have been wont to do in times past? Do they intend in all honesty and sincerity that we should move on with this amended Constitution and work with us for the good of the country and in the interest of its people? Why can't they, forget their associations with countries or Governments or ideologies foreign to those we have here and let us go forward together? Apart from the fact that they will have everything to gain under these new proposals, I submit that it would be in their interest and ours if they should use the amended Constitution which has been proposed.

Do these people intend to move forward and take a share in a Constitutional plan commensurate with our ambition? The plan is one which we

[Mr. Gajraj]
 can work I am sure — and none will disagree that there are people in British Guiana with undoubted capabilities and who can play their part in working any Constitution. That is my humble opinion. We have had many opportunities for association with our Caribbean cousins at very high level, and our people are conscious of our high destiny. But, there must be no long delay in returning to the road which we must use if we are to move forward towards self-Government. We should go forward and not waste any time in pursuing ideas such as those which brought such ill repute to this country and to some of its people. We should work towards a brighter and more glorious future for our country.

Mr. Correia: I rise to speak on this motion, but before I do so I would like, with your permission, sir, to submit an amendment. I propose to delete from the ninth line to the end of the first resolution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Member indicate the portion he desires to delete, because the number of the lines depends on the typing or printing on the Order Paper. Is it the ninth line of the first resolution on the Order Paper?

Mr. Correia: Yes, Your Honour. It commences "appointment of a Royal Commission.."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my copy it is the seventh line.

Mr. Correia: No, sir, it is from the eighth line.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid it is the seventh line according to my counting.

Mr. Correia: I propose the deletion of the following words in the first resolution:

"Appointment of a Royal Commission to visit the Colony to ascertain the views of the people and to make recommendations with regard to amendments to the Constitution."

For those words I propose to substitute the words:

"reintroduction of the suspended Constitution".

I am asking the hon. mover of the motion to accept this amendment and allow it to be put to the Council.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member propose to speak to the motion now?

Mr. Correia: I propose to speak to the amendment, sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not an amendment until it is seconded.

Miss Collins: I beg to second the amendment.

Mr. Lee: Before the hon. Member speaks to his amendment, may I ask whether it is an amendment to my motion, or a new motion? From what I gather it appears to be a new motion.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: In my view the proposed amendment negatives the motion, and I respectfully submit that it is out of order.

Mr. Correia: I do not agree, Your Honour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member will appreciate that the effect of his proposed amendment would be to entirely negative the purpose of the motion, and therefore it is out of order. It is tantamount to a substantially new motion.

Mr. Correia: I will have to accept Your Honour's ruling, and I shall continue then to speak on the motion. I will begin by expressing my views with regard to the appointment of a Royal Commission. We had a Royal Commission very recently—the Robertson Commission of 1954—following the suspension of the 1953 Constitution. I therefore do not believe that the appointment of a Royal Commission at this stage would do any good. At the same time I cannot accept, on behalf of the people of this country, the proposed Renison Constitution. I cannot accept it in substitution for the Constitution which we lost in 1953. First of all I would like to ask: what is the purpose of the Renison Constitution? As far as I can see, its purpose is to eliminate Communism. I would also like to ask: what guarantee have we that that Constitution can eliminate the Communists? I say there is no such guarantee. In my opinion, all the Renison Constitution will achieve will be the stirring up of more hatred, more bitterness and more frustration — things which we must strive to prevent.

On the other hand, if the suspended Constitution of 1953 was restored all Guianese, including the irresponsible elements, would support it fully, with the inclusion of further checks and balances, which may be considered necessary. The reintroduction of the suspended Constitution, with the Governor's powers widened, would eliminate the frustration and bitterness which must accrue if we accept a Constitution of the type proposed. It cannot be denied that the proposed Constitution will make British Guiana the laughing-stock of the Colonial world, including some foreign nations. It naturally engenders among the people of the Colony a feeling of frustration bordering on hatred. At present we have a very experienced Governor who is capable of

guiding an all-elected Government under the suspended Constitution. I have no doubt that those who will be elected to serve with him will not only receive good guidance from him but, should the necessity arise for him to use his reserve powers, he would not be afraid to do so. We have a strong Governor now, but we do not know what his successor may do. Therefore, I suggest that the suspended Constitution be restored so as to avoid the natural resentment and frustration of our people.

If there are fears of the return of subversive elements at the General Election if the suspended Constitution were reintroduced, I think it must be borne in mind that what occurred in 1953 is not likely to happen now. We have troops and a strong Governor who would have powers which his predecessor did not have. He will also have the entire support of the responsible elements in the community. If there is a recurrence of what took place in 1953 the Governor would be able to put a check to it immediately. If, however, the new elected Members in power accepted the Governor's guidance and worked the Constitution in the interest of Guianese they would be setting an example to our people of good Government. But should they not be prepared to work the Constitution in the interest of good Government, I think it is better that we should know now rather than perhaps 10 years later, because we would be 10 years behind the goal of self-government.

Guianese have fought peacefully for the past 50 years towards attaining self-government, and it is undoubtedly a travesty to punish the vast majority of a good people bent on progress, because of the failings of a handful. To brand us all as a bunch of communists is a misrepresentation of the true posi-

[Mr. Correia]

tion. My friend, Mr. Lee, in his speech told us that the people have not changed, while in another breath he said that it was possible that if there were 24 constituencies "the boys" would not secure a majority of seats. I could not follow his argument on that point. I am satisfied that our people will never become communists.

Guianese are not made that way, and to say that they are communists or that they are going that way is utter rubbish. This communist bogey is not doing British Guiana any good, it is used as propaganda even by officials; it affects young Guianese leaving this country. I believe that the people have a change of heart and that is why I am suggesting that the suspended Constitution be returned. I am therefore urging with all the power at my command that it is better we give the present Governor all the powers neces-

sary and bring back that Constitution as I am sure we would not have a recurrence of 1953, even if the "boys" were put back. They will be prepared to work the Constitution, and that is why we should work for a more liberal constitution which will lead us to self-Government. It has happened in other places.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member like to continue today? Because after the adjournment this afternoon the Council will meet again tomorrow to discuss the motion further; after that we will go on to Government Business.

Mr. Correia: I will continue when the Council meets again tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Council is therefore adjourned until 2 o'clock tomorrow, to continue the debate on Mr. Lee's motion.