

BRITISH GUIANA

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 2/1963.



FIRST LEGISLATURE

Under the

BRITISH GUIANA (CONSTITUTIONAL) ORDER-IN-COUNCIL, 1961

SECOND SESSION

1962 - 1963

MEMORANDUM BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

on

HIGHER EDUCATION

February, 1963.

FIRST LEGISLATURE

Under the

British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961

SECOND SESSION

1962 - 1963

Memorandum by the Minister of Education and Social Development

on

HIGHER EDUCATION

February, 1963.

INTRODUCTION

It is with some measure of pride that this Government proposes to present to the Legislature the draft of a Bill to provide for the establishment and incorporation of the University of Guyana. The question of a University for our country is one which we feel needs to be discussed from a national rather than from a purely partisan standpoint. It is the earnest hope of the Government that the draft University Bill will be discussed critically but constructively, and that in its intent and main provisions will meet with universal approval.

OUR NATIONAL NEEDS

In an underdeveloped territory like our own the acceleration of the rate of economic development, which necessarily involves educational development, can only be achieved by planned and well-directed action.

The expansion of the economy will create ever-increasing demands for trained personnel at all levels. The nature and extent of training and the pattern and rate of economic development are inter-dependent. On the one hand available skills determine development possibilities, on the other, the growth rate and pattern influence the flow of skills. Accordingly, it is difficult to make precise estimates of the supply and demand for trained manpower in the early stages of planning.

With the big backlog of untrained people already in the field and given the higher level of national effort demanded by Independence, it is already clear that Guiana's needs for training facilities are acute. For example, in our secondary schools out of the 500 teachers, 366 are unqualified, either academically or professionally. This does not allow for the trained teacher needs in the new Comprehensive Secondary Schools which will be established. In the administrative and technical branches of the civil service, efficiency is impaired because of the large number of untrained personnel.

/Secondary.....

Secondary school teachers, laboratory technicians, surveyors, public health inspectors, nurses, pharmacists, statisticians, junior engineers, agricultural officers - all must be trained, and made not merely competent in their jobs but also citizens with a broad general education, imbued with a sense of social responsibility.

These national needs cannot be satisfactorily met if we continue to rely on facilities in institutions outside our country. If Government's objective of providing higher education for the largest number of people who can benefit from it is to be realised, then every effort must be made to create a national University as rapidly as possible. In other countries it has been shown that the biggest national dividends accrue from investment in the higher levels of the educational structure.

This Government is of the opinion that our present diffuse efforts at local training should now be co-ordinated under the aegis of the University of Guyana, which would offer general degree courses in addition, and ultimately opportunities for training in pedagogy, agriculture, engineering and medicine. During 1963, Government will be spending \$1,086,276 on various training schemes and research projects within British Guiana.

The University of Guyana will also be a centre at which active research will be initiated into all the formidable problems, physical as well as social, with which we are beset in British Guiana today. It will be an institution where problems, programmes and activities will be examined in an objective atmosphere, and from which our students will emerge with a greater awareness of the problems of their own country and with an enhanced desire and ability to help in their solution.

BRITISH GUIANA'S INVESTMENT IN THE U.W.I. (U.C.W.I.)

Since the inauguration of U.C.W.I. in 1948 and until July 1961, British Guiana had contributed to the recurrent expenses of the College to the tune of \$3,331,459. During the same period 41 Guianese graduates returned to British Guiana from U.C.W.I. at a cost on the average of \$80,000 per graduate.

By 1963, British Guiana's contribution to U.W.I. had risen to \$772,000 and had our association continued for a further triennium - with the establishment of Liberal Arts Colleges in Trinidad and Barbados - the figure would have been approximately \$1 million annually.

Now that British Guiana has withdrawn from U.W.I. we can look forward to 1968 when the whole of this \$1 million will be available for the development of higher educational facilities within British Guiana. On the basis of the 1963 contribution of \$772,000 and the sums we have agreed to pay for students who are already at U.W.I. progressively increasing amounts of money would be released for the same purpose.

It is relevant to consider as well the fact that British Guiana's investment in U.W.I. has generated incomes in Jamaica and latterly in Trinidad of over \$6 million, yielding tax revenues to these Governments of nearly \$1 million. The investment which this Government proposes to make in the University of Guyana will undoubtedly have a similar tonic effect on our own economy and will make some impact on our employment problem.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Professor Arthur Lewis estimates that British Guiana should require between 100-150 general degree graduates per year of the "Liberal Arts type", for secondary school teaching, civil service, business administration, journalism and other occupations, which demand, in the words of Professor Lewis "a good general education, rather than professional expertise".

It is precisely this type of education which the College of Arts and Sciences, the first of the constituent colleges of the University of Guyana will provide.

The essentials of a good general education at University Level were considered by the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies Cmd. 6647 (June 1945). They reported thus:- "Every student, whatever subject or subjects he is studying in his regular course should be given an opportunity to become aware of certain great conceptions. He should know something of the place of science in modern civilisation and the use of scientific method; he should have learnt something of what is meant by sociology, so that he is aware of the other elements and forms of civilisation. He should be enabled to gain some apprehension of what is involved in philosophy in its widest meaning, and some sense of the past as expressed in great literature and in the record of history. If his time at the University does not open his eyes to the existence of these great forces in modern life, the student, however expert in his own work will have missed one of the great advantages which the University can offer him".

It is because this Government is in complete agreement with this view that we propose that certain elements shall be common to all study programmes in the College of Arts and Sciences, and that all students irrespective of their chosen area of specialisation should do some Science, English, History and Social Studies.

Students will be admitted to the College for two types of courses, Diploma and Certificate courses of 1 or 2 years duration - depending on the field of study - and 4-year degree courses for the degrees of B.A., B.Sc. (Natural Science) and B.Sc. (Social Science).

Diploma and Certificate courses would be designed to meet the specific specialist needs in the various Departments of the Civil Service. They would be intended not only for persons already in the service but also for new recruits. Four committees in the educational, medical, agricultural and engineering and allied fields are at present assessing the needs and will be recommending which particular diploma courses could be started in October 1963. It is hoped that

the content of the diploma and certificate courses would be so planned that those diploma and certificate holders could after some years of service, return to the College and qualify for degrees with due time credit given for their previous studies.

Initially, and because so many able students do not have the chance of writing 'A' level examinations, the minimum entrance requirement for students for most courses would be the G.C.E. Ordinary Level in 5 subjects or 5 credits in School Certificate. For persons of mature age, and for some of the diploma /special and certificate courses, /concessions in entry qualifications may be prescribed.

It should be pointed out at this juncture that although it is for this Government to indicate in bold outlines the higher educational policy which it conceives in the interest of the people of British Guiana, decisions on the detailed regulations for degrees and diplomas, on the structure of University degree courses and on curricula and syllabuses must be the responsibility of the Academic Board, as provided for by the Draft Bill.

FIRST STEPS: FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE - OCTOBER 1963

In October 1963 the Government proposes that the College of Arts and Sciences should begin functioning as an evening college making use of the laboratories and lecture rooms at Queen's College.

Even if it should prove impossible to recruit staff from overseas in time for October, we are confident that there is already in British Guiana a sufficient number of qualified persons to undertake the teaching, in some cases on a part-time basis, of a limited number of subjects in the three faculties. This is similar to the interim plan which it is understood will be put into effect in the case of the Barbados counterpart of our College.

The estimated cost of the first year's operation of the College of Arts and Sciences is about \$500,000 which would rise to about \$800,000 per year in subsequent years. This Government has set aside the sum of \$340,000 from Development funds to defray running expenses during 1963. An appeal has been made to the British Council for books to serve as the nucleus of the College library; similar requests for equipment and grants have been made to a number of overseas agencies.

In no University institution do the fees paid by students amount to a large fraction of recurrent costs. In view of the fact that our main purpose is to make higher education accessible to all in the community who can benefit from it, Government proposes to fix tuition fees at \$100 per year, (cf £20-25 per year for B.A. & B.Sc. courses at U.W.I.), and undertakes to give a number of annual scholarships to selected students of the College. It is hoped that many individuals, bodies and firms will offer assistance in the form of scholarships to students. The example has already been set by Messrs. R.V. Evan Wong & Son who have offered a scholarship valued at \$250 per year to enable a student to pursue a science degree course at the University of Guyana.

UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Committees will be established both locally and overseas - in the U.K., U.S.A., and Canada - to organise fund raising appeals and to advise on building plans for the College of Arts and Sciences, the permanent buildings of which are estimated to cost about \$4 million.

As money becomes available it is Government's intention to set up other Colleges of the University - a College of Engineering, based on an expansion of the facilities now provided at the Technical Institute; a College of Agriculture as a development of the Farm School at Mon Repos; a College of Medicine and a College of Education. With these strictly professional Colleges we shall have to think seriously of measures to make the cost of training the personnel we require much cheaper than is at present in universities overseas. Obviously the non-residential character of the University of Guyana will help us to do this, but there must in addition be many radical and imaginative changes in the whole technique of training. The College of Medicine which has been well established for many years now in neighbouring Surinam should provide us with many useful pointers.

Already, committees have been appointed under the Chairmanship of the Principal, Government Training College, the Principal of the Technical Institute, the Chief Agricultural Officer and the Chief Medical Officer to consider which Diploma courses, appropriate to the needs of their respective departments could be organised from October 1963. On this basis, plans for the development and programmed phasing of Colleges of Medicine, Agriculture, Education and Engineering will be drawn up. Another committee will be appointed in the near future to deal with the question of examinations and certification, as it is intended that all awards should be of the University of Guyana.

HIGHER EDUCATION OVERSEAS

Until such time as we can provide facilities in certain specialist fields, our students will naturally have to continue to go overseas for study in these fields. It shall continue to be the responsibility of this Government to find places for such students and to assist by way of loans or scholarships those who either show promise but cannot afford to pay for their education, or those who are urgently needed to perform specific tasks in the service. During 1962 there were 66 Guianese students on scholarship in the U.K. and 215 in receipt of loan funds, at a total cost to this Government of over \$604,800 per year. As soon as local facilities become available in these specialist fields, this responsibility shall cease and students will be encouraged to take full advantage of the opportunities for training at the University of Guyana.

THE PLACE OF SIXTH FORMS IN THE PROPOSED HIGHER EDUCATION SCHEME

It is clear that only those students who have done G.C.E. Advanced Level work in sixth forms will be eligible for specialist training at least in some Universities abroad, notably those in the U.K. The sixth forms already in existence will continue to act as "feeders" to such institutions.

The establishment of sixth forms in secondary schools is costly and uneconomical both in terms of specialist staff required and laboratory and library facilities. It is proposed therefore that no new sixth forms shall be started in our secondary schools, except for Essequibo and Berbice.

Consideration will now be given, in consultation with the teaching staff in secondary schools, to a reshaping of the sixth-form programme of work to give more weight than is given at present to "general studies". This would eliminate dangers of early specialisation and would make the two years of sixth form work approximate more closely to the work of the foundation years of the Arts and Science College course.

Initially the staff of the College of Arts and Sciences will be too small to cope with two levels of entrants, but it should be possible after the College has been functioning for two or three years to grant "advanced standing" to students who have done a sixth-form course at school.

THE QUESTION OF STANDARDS

This Government is acutely conscious of the necessity for the establishment and maintenance of the highest academic standards in the College of Arts and Sciences and in all other Colleges of the University of Guyana. This is important not merely because we want the graduates from our University to be properly equipped to tackle the jobs that have to be done in our home community, but also because we want our University and degrees to have exchange value in institutions of countries overseas. If our academic coinage is to maintain its international currency value, we must judge the performance of our students in degree and diploma examinations by the same standards which are applied to students who have started from about the same level and have done a similar type of course at reputable and well-established universities abroad.

It is the intention of Government that degrees and diplomas shall be awarded to students on the basis of their performance in examinations and not merely on their record of attendance at a given number of lectures or laboratory periods.

One of the key factors in ensuring that degree standards are roughly comparable throughout the United Kingdom for example is the external examiner system. For all degree and diploma examinations the examiners' board shall consist not only of teachers from our own University of Guyana but also of Lecturers and Professors from established Universities. Draft examination papers will have to be approved and a "spot check" on the corrected scripts made by the external examiners in each subject.

An application for sponsorship of our University has been made to Mc Gill University, Montreal, Canada and is at present under active consideration. It should be pointed out that the College of Arts and Sciences of Mc Gill University (Mc Gill College) has the same entrance requirements as are proposed for our College, and its degree course is also of four years duration. Some form of association with Mc Gill or a University of equal standing in the academic world, in the formative years of the University of Guyana would not only help in the proper planning of the institution but also in securing recognition of our degrees and diplomas by the international academic community.

In the final analysis, of course, the real worth of the University will have to be measured in terms of the social contribution which graduates of the University of Guyana made to British Guiana and the world.

---oo000oo---