

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 1950.

The Council met at 2.00 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT:

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Campbell Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. J. Gutch, O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder, K.C.

The Hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.M.G., C.B.E.

The Hon. Dr. J. B. Singh, O.B.E. (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. Dr. J. A. Nicholson (Georgetown North).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth, (Nominated).

The Hon. C. P. Ferreira (Berbice River).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E. (Nominated).

The Hon. D. P. Debidin (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. Capt J. P. Coghlan (Demerara River).

The Hon. Dr. G. M. Gonsalves (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. Dr. C. Jagan (Central Demerara).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. A. T. Peters (Western Berbice).

The Hon. W. A. Phang (North Western District).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie (Nominated).

The Hon. J. Carter (Georgetown South)

The Hon. F. E. Morrish (Nominated).

The Hon. L. A. Luckhoo (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday, the 30th of November, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID.

The following documents were laid on the table:—

The Report of the Department of Labour for the year 1949.

The Report of the Cost of Living Advisory Committee appointed under Section 6 of the Labour Ordinance, 1942. (Legislative Council Paper No. 10|1950).

The Report of the Committee to investigate, report and make recommendations on proposals for the alteration of licence fees in respect of various types of motor vehicles, trailers and motor bicycles and for licensing motor cars by weight instead of by horse power. — (The Colonial Secretary).

Minutes of the Meeting of Finance Committee of the Legislative Council held on the 23rd of November, 1950. — (The Financial Secretary and Treasurer).

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bills intituled —

- (a) An Ordinance to amend the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Ordinance, 1950
- (b) An Ordinance further to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance, 1940.
- (c) An Ordinance to make provision for the good Government of the Amerindian Tribe of the Colony.
- and of his intention at a later stage to ask permission of the Council to proceed with the Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Pensions (Amendment No. 3) Ordinance, 1950" through all its stages.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES.

COST OF LIVING TO PENSIONERS.

Capt. COGHLAN gave notice of the following motion :—

WHEREAS prior to the revision of salaries with effect from 1st January, 1949, this Honourable Council approved of the payment of Cost of Living Allowances to Civil Servants from time to time to assist them to meet the increased cost of living;

AND WHEREAS by C.S. Circular No. 34/48 of 16.8.48 the Cost of Living Allowance rates effective from 1st August, 1948, for Civil Servants were as follows :

40% on the first \$720 per annum
8% on the next \$720 per annum

Flat rate allowance of \$24 per month on salaries over \$1,440 per annum, provided that salaries between \$120 and \$124.80 a month will be built up to \$148.80 per month;

AND WHEREAS by Resolution No. 28 of 9th September, 1948, this Honourable Council approved of the payment of Cost of Living Allowance to Government pensioners on the same basis as that paid to Civil Servants as specified in above Circular which was also made applicable to pensioners as from 1st August, 1948 ;

AND WHEREAS this Honourable Council subsequently approved of an increase in the above rates to Civil Servants with effect from 1st January, 1949, as follows :—

60% on the first \$30 per month
40% on the next \$30 per month
16 2/3% on the next \$60 per month

with a flat rate of \$40 per month on salaries exceeding \$120 per month.

AND WHEREAS the salaries of Civil Servants were later revised embodying the Cost of Living Allowance and payment was approved by this Honourable Council with effect from 1st January, 1949 ;

AND WHEREAS this Honourable Council has since approved of a Cost of Living Allowance on the revised salaries of Civil Servants up to \$80 per month with effect from 1.10.50 to 31.12.50 as follows :—

20% on salaries up to \$40 per month
\$7.00 per month on salaries over \$40 and not exceeding \$65 per month

\$65 per month

\$6.00 per month on salaries over \$65 and not exceeding \$80 per month;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council in keeping with Resolution, No. 28 of 9th September, 1948, recommends to Government the payment of Cost of Living Allowance to pensioners who retired prior to 1st January, 1949, at the rates which were applicable to Civil Servants with effect from 1st January, 1949, and that these rates should apply to pensioners with retrospective effect from 1st January, 1949, to 30th September, 1950;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council recommends to Government that the following rates should apply to pensioners with effect from 1st October to 31st December, 1950 —

80% on pensions up to \$40 per month

50% on next \$25 per month

20% on next \$15 per month

and thereafter on the basis applicable to Civil Servants in accordance with Resolution No. 28 of 9th September, 1948.

PORT LABOUR REGISTRATION SCHEME.

Mr. CARTER gave notice of the following motions :—

WHEREAS the Port Labour Registration Scheme was inaugurated in order to regulate and stabilize the employment of labour on the waterfront;

AND WHEREAS this scheme has been working until recently to the satisfaction of employers and employees;

AND WHEREAS this scheme provides much needed protection to the

shipping agents and waterfront workers;

AND WHEREAS it was in the contemplation of the Government that this scheme should be protected by legislative sanction;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Council recommends to Government the introduction immediately of the necessary legislation to this end.

RE-INTRODUCTION OF EXCESS PROFITS TAX.

WHEREAS the high rise in the cost of living has resulted in widespread hardship among the lower income group;

AND WHEREAS the recommendations of the Fletcher Report are wholly unacceptable to this group and is causing widespread dissatisfaction;

AND WHEREAS Government contends that the revenue of the country cannot bear any further burden;

AND WHEREAS it is desirable that the daily minimum wage be increased to \$2.00 per day;

AND WHEREAS established commercial undertakings continue to show rising annual profits;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Council recommends to Government the re-introduction of the Excess Profits tax on all commercial undertakings in the Colony in order to meet this increased financial burden.

WEST INDIAN CONFERENCE

REPORT BY DELEGATES.

Dr. GONÇALVES: Before proceeding with the Order of the Day I crave your permission, Sir, to make a statement in this Council with reference to the West Indian Conference to which I and the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) were elected to attend as delegates. We arrived at Curacao on schedule and were there for the opening of the Conference. I must say from the outset, I want to express my extreme thanks to the Members of this Council for having elected me as one of the Delegates to go to that Conference. Little did I imagine it would have been a conference of that type and nature. I have learnt much and, I believe, now that

I have come back that I ought to be somewhat more mellow in experience than I have been.

The Conference, as I said, was extremely interesting. It was opened by the Governor of Curacao and at the first session we divided ourselves into Committees. Nine Committees were formed, and I had the good fortune to serve on four of them *viz.*—Committee No. 2, which might be regarded as the central point of the Conference or the Committee around which the entire Conference revolved; Committee No. 3, on which the Minister of Agriculture of our neighbouring Colony of Dutch Guiana served as Chairman and yours truly as Vice Chairman. I want to say, Sir, I received wonderful encouragement and help from Mr. Holman B. Williams of Trinidad, and through his sympathetic consideration I moved a motion which resulted in the principal recommendation which was presented to the plenary session. On that Committee was Prof. Hardie of Trinidad, a very brilliant man, who was extremely interesting in dealing with correlated subjects. I served on Committees Nos. 7 and 9. Committee No. 9 was the Research Committee of which Mr. Page, a very brilliant man, submitted a paper on "Agricultural Research". I was extremely fortunate and happy to be able to serve on this Committee and to listen to the men and to assist in whatever way I could to put British Guiana where, I believe, it should be and not just to say I was also there.

I want to thank too — it will be unfair not to mention the wonderful support we received from them — the Minister of Agriculture of our neighbouring Colony of Dutch Guiana and the Director of Agriculture, Dr. Van Buckerling, and Mr. Boisdinot, the Mayor of Cayenne and the principal Member of the Cayenne Legislative Council. They were all very kind and helpful to us, aside from the members of our own English-speaking countries. The dividing of the Conference into Committees made the work of the plenary session very easy, and had it not been so we would have been there another twelve days. The people of Curacao were wonderful in their

treatment to us. They took us to see all the works of interest — the water supply plant and their housing scheme which is something we should all see if it were possible. Also we had been taken around on some very good joy-rides, picnics, etc. They entertained us royally. As I say thanks to the Dutch people, I want to make special mention of Dr. Riemens, Chairman of the Conference, and how much we appreciate his patience with us. I believe it was very well indeed that we had the chance to be at such a Conference.

Then we received very interesting and sympathetic consideration from Mr. Lawrence Cramer, who placed his office staff at our disposal. I cannot end without saying a word about Mr. Cooper who was selected to be our adviser. He rendered yeoman service and was given a big hand at the plenary session for the way in which he presented his report. All in all we want to thank the Members of this Council for having given us this opportunity. I am sure my hon. Friend who went with me will be able to say what part he played.

Dr. JAGAN: I want to endorse the words which have been said by the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Dr. Gonsalves). I, too, Sir, have enjoyed being at the West Indian Conference, and I can assure hon. Members that, if we have not achieved anything at all, at least we have placed British Guiana on the map. We have been always hearing that British Guiana is not well known. I am sure now that after this Conference most people know about British Guiana and British Guiana's problems. We were able to introduce several very interesting resolutions, many of them pertaining to British Guiana, one particularly dealing with our Irrigation and Drainage problems and seeking aid from the Metropolitan Government. That is, making it more or less a Caribbean problem and not merely a colonial problem.

Many matters were discussed, some of which aroused heated argument, but nevertheless within the limits of the terms of reference of the Commission. I would say that the Conference was very successful. The necessity for over-all planning

has definitely been pointed out by the various Conference papers, especially the one by Dr. Neumark on "Agriculture in the Caribbean Economy". No doubt, as I mentioned at the Conference, we have to think in terms of over-all planning for the entire region, in terms of possible federation in its initial step and, maybe, some means of organizing not only the British territories but all the other territories on a regional basis. I want to express my thanks to Members of this Council for giving me the opportunity to attend the Conference and, I hope, I have done something which, when the reports are studied, will be of some value to British Guiana.

The PRESIDENT: It is very interesting to hear from our two Delegates to the Caribbean Conference of their activities and the part they played at the Conference, and we ourselves are particularly pleased that they were able to go and to play their part. We shall no doubt receive in due course the recommendations made at that Conference, and when we receive them we will have to consider what action to take upon them. I am myself very pleased to hear from our two Delegates how much they enjoyed it and how useful it was to them and, we hope, to British Guiana.

VENN COMMISSION REPORT.

"That, this Council approves of the action taken and proposed on the Report of the Venn Commission as indicated in His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 4 of the 26th of September".

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Gutch): Sir, in introducing the motion standing in my name I should in the first place like to remind hon. Members of the remarks which Your Excellency made at the opening of this session on the subject of the Venn Commission Report. After a brief recapitulation of the main recommendations in the Report Your Excellency said: "I will say no more about it at the moment save that I hope we shall find in it the means to bring about long term contentment in the industry which is so vitally important to the Colony as a whole". I think there is good ground for optimism that that hope will be ful-

filled. I should like to pay tribute to the excellence of the Venn Commission Report. I myself read it before I came to this Colony, and no one could have had a better introduction to the past history and present day conditions and the requirements of the sugar industry in British Guiana.

Speaking with due respect to the Commission, no one, I think, can fail to be impressed by the very thorough manner in which the Commissioners carried out their task. They probed into every corner of the sugar industry and set out with admirable clarity their recommendations in regard to those points, small as well as great, in which they considered that improvement was necessary. I do not think that this Report, like so many others, will find its way to some dusty pigeon-hole. I think it has already established itself as a guide and a valuable book of reference to all those who are concerned with the sugar industry, and I am sure it will convey lasting benefits to the Colony. Many improvements have been started as a result of the Commission's recommendations, and other improvements, many of which were already on the way, have been reinforced and their tempo increased.

This Message, which we are considering today, has been prepared in fulfilment of the undertaking which Your Excellency gave at the opening of this session, that a full statement would be given as to the action which had been taken on the Report and the action which it is proposed to take. For that reason it presents as full and factual a picture as possible, and I have very little to add to it at this stage of the debate. Hon. Members will note from the Message that there are numbers of recommendations on which there is a measure of agreement as to the action to be taken between Government, the Sugar Producers' Association and the Unions which they recognize. There are a number of points, which I should like to mention, on which additional information has become available since the Message was prepared, and I therefore propose to run briefly through them and give hon. Members the benefit of that information.

Referring to the Message, Recommendations 1 to 6 have been accepted, and I have nothing to add except to say that with regard to Recommendation 5 which, hon. Members will remember, deals with immigration I wish to make it clear that Government's policy is, in brief, that local people should get the first chance of jobs in the country, and I do not think the correctness of that policy can be questioned.

Recommendation 7 — Members will see from the Message that the Entomologist who has been recommended by the Commission is already in the Colony. Government has been in correspondence with the Secretary of State in regard to the other appointment mentioned—that of the Agricultural Engineer. In regard to the prospects of recruiting such persons I am afraid that Agricultural Engineers at the moment are at a premium. People with such qualification and experience are badly needed all over the world in these days of mechanical expansion of agriculture. Nevertheless the Secretary of State has informed us that there is a reasonable chance of obtaining a candidate, and for that reason the hon. the Financial Secretary will be seeking the approval of hon. Members in connection with the 1951 Budget for provision for the appointment. I hope hon. Members will give the proposal their support.

Recommendations 8 to 12 have been accepted and also Recommendation 14, and I have no comment to add. Recommendations 13 and 15, as hon. Members will see from the Message, are under consideration by the Workmen's Compensation Committee. I have made enquiries and, I understand, that Committee is now nearing completion of its task.

Recommendation 16 with regard to the appointment of Factory Inspectors— Here again we have been up against the difficulty of recruitment. People in this particular line are in very short supply, but nevertheless we have recently received information that an Inspector with the necessary basic qualification and experience has been appointed and will be coming out to the Colony shortly.

Recommendation 17 — It was proposed to postpone the introduction of all the Factory Regulations until the arrival of the Inspector, but on reconsideration it has been decided to introduce some of the less technical regulations in the meanwhile, and Regulations dealing with Fire Protection and also First Aid are now under submission to the Executive Council and will, I think, be enacted shortly.

Recommendation 18—I have no comment to make. Recommendation 19—The alternative schemes, introduced by the Sugar Producers' Association are I understand, working successfully. Recommendation 20 for a single Wages Board, is, as hon. Members are aware, one of the few recommendations which it has not been considered necessary or advisable to accept, in the conditions existing here, for the reasons stated in the Message, and I will not add anything at this stage except to say that if this recommendation were adopted, I think, it would prove to be a setback to the progress of Trade Unions in this country.

Recommendation 21 in regard to the Contributory Pension Scheme is also not being implemented at present. Hon. Members will see that Government's attitude is to favour this recommendation, but unfortunately the Sugar Producers' Association for financial reasons have not been able to implement it. It is hoped that the Association will reconsider the matter when circumstances permit. I have no further comment on Recommendations 22 to 27.

Recommendation 28 with regard to State Hospitals — The Joint Committee which the Message mentions has embarked on its task. Implementation of this recommendation is of course largely a matter of finance. Recurrent charges are particularly high and, as hon. Members are aware, we must be extremely careful in the present circumstances not to take on additional commitments beyond our means.

Recommendations 29 and 30 deal with housing. The scheme for the grant of loans from the Sugar Welfare Fund is proceeding. I understand that 250 appli-

cations have been received and will be considered in the course of this month. They are likely to involve expenditure in loans to the extent of \$125,000, and it is expected that this will rise to \$500,000 in the course of 1951. I would remind hon. Members that in addition to the actual building of houses, the setting-up of settlements entails a lot of groundwork before that can be done. Quite a lot has already been accomplished in that way—the boring of wells and the preparation of sites for these village settlements.

I have nothing to add to Recommendations 31, 32 and 33. Recommendation 34 — The Message states that the question of reducing the hours during which retail spirit shops on sugar estates may remain open is receiving consideration. Consideration has been given to this question, and it has been decided to propose the cutting out of the morning hours of opening — that is from 6.30 to 10.30 except on Wednesdays and Public Holidays. It is proposed that this change should have a general application, not only on sugar estates, but should not apply to Georgetown and New Amsterdam.

As regards Recommendation 35 it is stated in the Message that the Sugar Producers' Association feel that Government should encourage shops on co-operative lines on estates and especially on "extra nuclear" settlements. Government is in favour of establishing co-operatives but these co-operative shops apparently only become popular when blackmarketing gets out of hand and when supplies are extremely short. Supplies have been improving of late and as a result the demand for co-operative shops has diminished. Nevertheless, there is a flourishing society at Port Mourant and four others have recently been organized and are in process of building up their share capital. These are at Diamond, Providence, Ruimveld and Ogle, and the Commissioner for Co-operative Development is proposing to start a more intensive campaign during 1951 to promote the development of these co-operatives.

With respect to Recommendations 36 to 38 I have nothing to add. The remain-

ing recommendations are mainly financial and I have no additional comment to make at this stage, except to emphasize what Members know already, namely, that Government cannot lightly ignore any source of revenue, however small.

Having given hon. Members this supplementary information on the Message I am under no illusions that much still remains to be done in order to carry those recommendations that have been accepted into full effect. Nevertheless, much has already been accomplished, and more still is under way, and I think there is solid ground for inviting hon. Members to accept the motion.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER seconded.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Sir, may I crave your indulgence to move that your Message No. 4 be considered in Committee so as to afford this Council an opportunity to discuss each recommendation separately? I do so because the matters to be considered under the various recommendations are very far-reaching and cannot be profitably dealt with in a general discussion of the Message. I feel that there are many recommendations which should have been the subject of motions by individual Members who preferred to wait on the promise you made to make it possible for us to discuss the report. There are some weighty matters, such as housing, a contributory pension scheme, and other related matters, each of which I consider provides sufficient scope for very profitable debate, and I feel sure that this Council will approach the whole matter, not with the view of running over the short motion on the Order Paper but of considering the questions relating to the sugar industry extremely carefully, even if the debate lasts a number of days. For that reason I move that the Council resolve itself into Committee to consider each recommendation separately.

Dr. JAGAN: I beg to support the motion of the hon. Member. I feel that first of all an opportunity should be given to Members to discuss the report of the Commission as a whole, taking

into consideration its broad implications, and then go into Committee, as the hon. Member suggests, to deal with Your Excellency's Message and the various recommendations one by one.

*The PRESIDENT: I take it that hon. Members would like to express general views on the motion and thereafter it can be moved that we go into Committee to consider each recommendation one by one. I have no objection whatever to that being done. I suggest that we discuss the report generally so as to get the reactions of hon. Members to it as a whole as far as we can.

Dr. SINGH: I think Members of the Council should express their views on the principle of the motion, and when the Committee stage is reached we could consider the details of each recommendation.

The PRESIDENT: That is what is proposed.

Dr. SINGH: I was absent from the Colony when the Venn Commission made its inquiries into the sugar industry of British Guiana. The report of the Commission has been circulated to Members of this Council and at the outset I wish to congratulate the members of the Commission on the comprehensive and illuminating report they have submitted. They undoubtedly probed and penetrated the various departments and functions of the sugar industry on which they have made observations and various recommendations. The report clarifies the position of the sugar workers or the estate labourers. It also clarifies the position of the management of the sugar plantations and the responsibilities of Government which are very onerous. If and when those recommendations are implemented the sugar workers or estate labourers will enter upon a new era. They will see better conditions. There will be improved housing, sanitation and social amenities, perhaps better working hours and better transportation to and from the field. As far back as 1901, when I was the G.M.O. of the West Coast District, I advised the Manager of a sugar estate to conserve the energy of the labourers as much as possible, pointing

out that if they were made to walk four or five miles to and from the field every day on a road which was impassable when rain fell, their initial energy would be dissipated on their way to work and it would be impossible for them to give of their best. I have lived to see the day when this point has been amply dealt with in the report of the Venn Commission.

The position of the management of sugar estates is clarified in the report, but I would like to see a better understanding between the labourers and the management. I do not suggest that the management should give way to the workers, but there should be a sympathetic touch which would bring about a better understanding between the labourers and the management. I remember that when I was a boy at Goed Fortuin there was an estate manager in those days who took an interest in the affairs of the East Indians on his estate and gave each person a pound of sugar on the occasions of their festivals. Those things go a long way to establish good relations between management and labourers. If the labourers are treated sympathetically I do not think they would be disgruntled.

I would like to refer to the early 20's when I was the President of the B.G. East Indian Association. I was President for 11 terms. In those days there were no trade unions except the B.G. Labour Union, and whenever there were strikes or other labour troubles on the sugar estates the labourers came to the Association for advice and assistance. On those occasions the Executive of the Association were able to settle those disputes on sugar estates, but we were stified at three places. One was at Pln. Diamond where a strike lasted 11 weeks. We did not go about talking and sending letters of appeal to all races in the community, but we helped the strikers during the 11 weeks the strike lasted. The strikers said that as soon as Mr. Anderson came back from England they would accept his views on the dispute. Mr. Anderson was cabled for and on his arrival I approached him along with others and the whole trouble was settled for a cent more on their pay.

There was also a strike at Enmore where the strikers cut telegraph wires and burned canefields, but eventually wise counsel prevailed.

When we are dealing with a mass of illiterate people they must be handled properly. It was not a question of playing to the gallery but we advised the people and succeeded in restoring peace at Enmore. The last incident occurred on the West Coast where a strike extended from Leonora to Tuschen. Managers and overseers had to leave the estates and in the midst of sticks I and others went into the crowds and appeased them. We succeeded in bringing about a settlement without a shot being fired, or the necessity for a Magistrate to read the Riot Act. But there was a reaction to this when I was summoned to appear before a Commission and asked why the people always sent for me. I gave my answer and from that day I relaxed. The Man Power Citizens' Association then came into being as a child of the B.G. East Indian Association. In those days the bone of contention was that the labourers took up task work at the backdam and were not told how much they would be paid until they received their pay at the end of the week. Another cause of complaint was that women had to wade across trenches with water up to their breasts, and that children below 14 years were made to work on the estates. Then there was the question of the marking of the punts. We were able to settle those difficulties but the settlement did not apply to all the estates. I am glad to see that the Commission has recommended that all those things should be implemented on all sugar estates. I therefore propose to support the motion.

Dr. JAGAN: I have read the report of the Venn Commission page by page and noted its contents very carefully. I think it was Dr. Eric Williams who said some time ago that it was a great irony that such a sweet thing like sugar should be associated with so much bitterness in the Caribbean area. Dr. Neumark, in his admirable paper which he presented to the West Indian Conference, remarked that the pity of the sugar industry is that

its prosperity depended at one time on slavery and now it is based on a war-time economy. Let us hope that sooner or later we will have a sugar industry which can stand on its own legs without indirect support either from the Government in Great Britain or the local Government, and which will not in any way thwart the natural development of this country of British Guiana.

The report of the Venn Commission is admirable, but perhaps we should qualify the word "admirable", because, in my view, it is admirable only within its limitations. When one examines the report very carefully one finds that the recommendations deal with three heads. Certain minor reforms are recommended, such as women being made "headmen" of female gangs, headmen being allowed to rise to higher posts, and women not to be required to work in water. In my opinion those are minor reforms with which nobody will disagree, and I am sure the sugar producers will implement them as quickly as possible.

The second set of recommendations deal with certain concessions to be made to the sugar industry. In the first paragraph of Your Excellency's Message you set out those concessions thus :

"(a) that the Government should assume entire responsibility, financial and otherwise, for education, for hospitals and medical attention on sugar estates and for the housing of sugar workers, excepting nuclear employees;"

Added to that there is a recommendation by the Commission that the industry should be relieved of all taxation except income tax, and that H.M. Government should provide a special subsidy of \$20 per ton for sugar produced in British Guiana.

Mr. MORRISH: Excuse me, 20/- per ton.

Dr. JAGAN: Yes, 20/- per ton. The third category includes what I consider two major recommendations affecting the workers. One is the setting up of a Wages Board, and the other is the introduction of a contributory pension scheme for the workers. From the Message one

gathers that the sugar producers are prepared to implement certain of the recommendations, especially those in the first two categories I have just mentioned, but as regards the third category it seems to me that no action is proposed to be taken. In the words of the hon. the Colonial Secretary, Government has decided that the establishment of a Wages Board would be a backward step. What I fail to see in the report of the Commission is any recommendation of major reform. Are we content to have strife in the sugar industry? It is known that we want to produce more sugar. We are at present producing something in the vicinity of 160,000 tons of sugar per annum, and we have been told by Your Excellency that our share of the West Indian quota is 225,000 tons. So that we are far away from that goal. Does this report provide the basis for the settlement of disputes and the avoidance of strikes, so that we can produce more sugar so as to meet our quota and indeed to ask for a larger quota? I say that it falls short in that respect. It has fallen short because it suggests no means of reorganization of the industry. In other words the sugar industry is to continue as it is with the profits being drained away from the Colony year after year, and leaving the situation in a vacuum, thereby causing a great deal of political strife to enter the industry.

The West Indian Conference, from which my friend, the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Dr. Gonsalves) and I have just returned, had a great deal to do with agriculture, and with your permission, Sir, I would like to read certain relevant extracts from the report of the Conference in order to show what we are faced with as regards sugar and other agricultural commodities in this area. Let me deal with the special subsidy of 20/- per ton of sugar. The Commission makes the point that British Guiana is a high cost producing area and consequently it should be singled out for a special subsidy which H.M. Government has not seen fit to grant. On the other hand we find in the main paper at the Conference on "The Importance of Agriculture in the Caribbean Economy" Dr. Neumark stated that at the present time we have many agricultural crops (sugar for instance) being

grown in several of the West Indian territories. In some of those territories it is not economical to grow them, nevertheless they were being produced, in some cases on marginal lines. In the words of the Venn Commission sugar is being produced in British Guiana at a high cost of production. Dr. Neumark went on to state that the unsatisfactory features of Caribbean agricultural economy mainly hinge around the dependence upon sugar which has a big problem of seasonal employment and a preponderance of casual workers. He suggests in his paper that what is necessary in the Caribbean area is overall planning on an inter-Caribbean territorial basis and inter-territorial specialization. By that he means that we must confine within certain areas of the Caribbean certain crops which can be grown economically, and restrict others which cannot be so grown.

That brings me, therefore, to the main point whether it is in the interest of our country, politically and economically, to think of expanding our sugar industry and then to go hat-in-hand begging H.M. Government for increased quotas. When I say that I have in mind Mr. P. W. King's report which was written in 1944, and in which he stated that residents on the sugar estates were working two or three days per week on sugar estates because they found it more profitable to work on their rice farms. Are we to concentrate on sugar when we know that it is a high-cost producing crop, and when possibly it would pay the people of the Colony much better to grow other crops — to so diversify our agriculture that we should not find ourselves in difficulty later on when the price of sugar drops? We must always keep in mind that this war fever will not always be with us, and we cannot always hope to get special treatment from H.M. Government. At the Conference it was said that that was one of the weaknesses of the Caribbean — that we have to depend upon Imperial protection.

The paper by Prof. Arthur Lewis, whom we all recognize as a brilliant authority in his particular field, was very illuminating in this respect, and with your permission, Sir, I should like to quote certain very relevant passages from it on

page 12 of his study which is entitled "Issues in Land Settlement Policy." In paragraph 58 of his paper he states:

".....New forms of organisation must be tried, and must be tried urgently. In Puerto Rico the government has shown itself alive to this fact, and is greatly to be praised for taking the initiative in experimenting with the Proportional Profit Farm. In the British territories, on the other hand, governments are content to meet a succession of disturbances with a succession of commissions of enquiry. This is not good enough..... New forms must be created which will take the West Indian sugar industry 'out of politics' in the sense of earning general acceptance, or the West Indian community will sooner or later simply tear itself in pieces and destroy the sugar industry in the process."

In a previous paragraph, 56, Prof Lewis, referring to the type of cane-farming in Fiji, states:

"Some people believe that this is the system which will eventually supply the West Indies with a solution to the problems of its sugar industry. A large scale agency will plough the land, control irrigation, supply seedlings and fertilisers, organise harvesting, and operate factories, while peasants will plant and cultivate the crop on their own account, subject to charges for services performed. The peasants will have a representative council, but this will not take over the functions of the agency. In Fiji and in the Sudan the agency has been a private company, but it might equally well be a public corporation, as it is now to be in the Sudan."

I have quoted those points because the report of the Venn Commission is very silent on this aspect of the sugar industry. It leaves the whole matter untouched, but recommends minor reforms which, in my opinion, will not solve the problem in British Guiana. Only recently we have had a strike in the sugar industry and, no doubt, possibly in the future the same thing may occur. We have to look at this problem very realistically, and I am very sadly disappointed that this Commission did not recommend major reforms as are suggested not only by eminent authorities such as Professor Arthur Lewis and Dr. Neumark but by Mr. Frampton, who is Adviser on Agri-

culture to the Colonial Development and Welfare Organization, in his paper "Land Tenure in relation to the British West Indies". On page 20 he says:

"It is no use waiting for a slump and the unemployment which goes with it to lay down so-called settlements with a system of Land Tenure politically acceptable. Let us start now with a new approach to the subject and be really objective about it."

As long as our workers in the sugar industry feel a sense of dissatisfaction, whether that dissatisfaction is based on fact or is merely psychological dissatisfaction, nevertheless it is something we will have to take care of and have to account for. We hear arguments on one side that our people are lazy; that they do not want to work very much; that they have only limited objectives, minor objectives in that they have very limited wants and when these wants are satisfied they do not want to work any more. And the argument goes on that if better wages are paid these people they would have their wants satisfied by working lesser number of days and consequently the industry would suffer and the economy of the country as a whole would suffer. I would recommend to Government's consideration a very illuminating paper written by Mr. Simon Rottenberg, who is Director of the Labour Relations Institute University of Puerto Rico, on "Voluntary Unemployment in the British West Indies." It was a research study made in the Island of Antigua. As hon. Members know, Antigua depends primarily on its sugar production for its economic salvation. The point was well taken there, whether or not workers were voluntarily unemployed themselves where they had few wants or for other psychological reasons. I would like to point out for the benefit of hon. Members a few of the conclusions which this gentleman came to. He said when workers in Antigua were asked whether they would like to prepare their children for work in the canefields, only 1.5 per cent of those interviewed expressed a choice of the canefields for male children and less than one per cent. chose cane-farming work for female children. Of the unemployed people who had no work when asked if canefield work was acceptable, 37 per cent. answered in the

affirmative and the other 63 per cent. objected to canefield work. In paragraph 28 of his report he states as follows:

"The tendency for workers in the sugar cane industry to devote less-than-full weeks seems to be more rationally explained in terms of the unwillingness to accept canefield employment and the desire to escape from the cane fields, which is a pervasive and powerful influence in the community, rather than in terms of low level aspirations and a high preference for leisure. In any case, the simple fact of the short work week is not completely attributable to worker-attitudes nor does it always represent an economic loss. . . ."

This is a study of Antigua. But what is said about Antigua, I feel, is very much pertaining to our Colony of British Guiana, and we have to keep these things in mind. If for one reason or another, as I have said before, whether psychological or economical, workers would not continue to work on the sugar estates, and if this attitude would cause strikes and disturbances, then the sooner we get down to the reorganization, as suggested by these eminent authorities, the sooner we would be producing a better basis for agriculture in this Colony and a better basis for economic salvation not only for Government but for the people as a whole. I, therefore, feel very sorry that this Report does not touch on this aspect of the matter, and consequently I must express my disappointment, because so far as I am concerned this whole matter has been a great deal of wasted time and, no doubt, is merely intended to be a palliative which will not solve our problems in this country.

Mr. MORRISH: I would like first of all to congratulate Government on the clear way in which this Message has been presented and the clear way in which the hon. the Colonial Secretary has explained the further details which have come to him since the presentation of this Message. As the hon. the Colonial Secretary rightly said, Sir, we hope that the Venn Commission Report, which someone suggested might be pigeon-holed, will not be. I am sure it is one of the few reports from any Royal Commission which will not be pigeon-holed. I think the time will come when it will probably become the Sugar

Industry's bible not only on the side of the employer as suggested but of the employee. It is surprising how well informed the employees on sugar estates are of the contents of the Venn Commission Report and how it is valued by a great many of those workers.

We have heard several remarks made. If I may mention, first of all, the remarks of the hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo (Dr. Singh). Dr. Singh spoke only too rightly when he referred to the troubles of many years ago, and in two of those events I, as a young man, knew him. I am sorry we have not a great many more Dr. Singhs in the Colony, people of his standing and standard who will guide and reason and exercise that fatherly influence on the people, which is so greatly needed, rather than the other type of individual who is chiefly seeking self-aggrandisement. I hope the future will bring forth many more Dr. Singhs among us.

It is suggested amongst other things by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) that the people find it more profitable to work on their farms growing rice than to work on sugar estates, and he also said that was one of the reasons why they only work three days a week on the estates. That strikes me as very extraordinary, as I remember only a fortnight ago I was told in this Council Chamber that the profit made from working on an acre of riceland is only \$5.00 for a whole year. Therefore the two statements do not seem to mesh together. I just cannot make that out, but I just mention it in passing, as it seems very extraordinary.

Dr. JAGAN: Those are not my words.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think the hon. Member said that.

Mr. MORRISH: But the hon. Member for Central Demerara made reference also to Puerto Rico, and I gather what he intended to convey was the breaking up of the land in that country. But very recently we have heard a great deal about sedation, and troubles and struggles in

Puerto Rico. We have heard of the considerable expense of the people of Puerto Rico to the U.S.A., and we have read in the Press recently that two Puerto Ricans tried to assassinate the President of the U.S.A. Therefore I suggest that Puerto Rico cannot be the Utopia as is suggested. As it appears to be the case, this Message will be discussed in Committee paragraph by paragraph, and, therefore, I will not make any further comment at this stage.

Mr. LUCKHOO: This Report strikes me as offering solutions to provide for better conditions for workers and for the general prosperity of the sugar industry. There is no doubt that in this Colony the prosperity of sugar will mean the prosperity of those who are employed on the sugar estates. While the hon. Member speaks of reorganization and while, if I understand him correctly, there is a veiled suggestion that the sugar estates might well be scrapped, yet it is necessary for us to provide something in place of those estates if they are to go out of existence. I am particularly struck by this fact, that of the three counties — Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice — the one in which there is, perhaps, the least signs of prosperity is that of Essequibo, and that, Sir, can be attributed almost directly to the fact that there are no sugar estates on the Essequibo Coast. I am told from my humble research that once upon a time Essequibo was a very thriving and flourishing county in the days when sugar was in being in that particular county. Today we do not find it in Essequibo, but we have our sugar estates in Demerara and Berbice. Sir, in going through the various districts of this Colony, one of the richest areas so far as I am able to judge from my humble perspective, is the Rosehall area along the Courantyne Coast which is sandwiched between two rather prosperous sugar estates — Albion and Port Mourant — and, I think, the prosperity of that particular area can be attributed to the fact that there you have two estates producing, grinding and offering employment and maintaining general signs of prosperity.

I am not saying, Sir, that everything is well and that more cannot be done, and

that all the workers are satisfied. One must necessarily find dissatisfaction in places, but where the Venn Commission Report strikes me as being so ideal is that it attempts to provide for the workers the opportunity for better conditions, and there are several instances, not just a few as quoted by the hon. Member for Central Demerara, where we find constructive suggestions being offered and are presently being implemented. It is not my purpose at this stage to go into them, but at a later stage I hope to have much more to say in respect of the individual recommendations. One factor or observation which does not come out in the recommendations was that made, whereby it is shown that some 2,000,000 tons of sugar cane is produced in this Colony and 25 per cent. of that, or 500,000 tons of it, is left as peggasse — that is the fibrous mashy residue. I think that is how it is described. This peggasse is used as fuel and, as has been observed in the Report — a half million tons of this by-product is being utilized as fuel — experiments have shown up to now that it can be utilized for the making of boards, pulp and paper. In Trinidad, I think the reference is made, it is actually being exported for manufacture in the plastic industry. I think, Sir, that does seem to offer an opportunity which may be further investigated, because to have a half-million tons of peggasse being burnt as fuel every year when it may be converted into something bringing in greater revenue to the industry is a matter that might be investigated. I believe it is being investigated, but maybe keen interest can be evinced in the investigation of this particular by-product. I only mention that, as I see no particular relative section under which that can be considered at a later stage.

I reserve my other remarks in respect of the individual recommendations, but I will repeat that it strikes me that this Report here does provide for the workers a solution to very many of their immediate problems. One can say that today those suggestions, observations and recommendations are being implemented; greater consideration is being paid to the workers on sugar estates than has ever been paid before. While one is always interested in hearing criticisms, I make

the remark that it is no good being destructive except one can also be in like manner constructive.

Dr. GONSALVES: I want to say just a few words, and I am tempted to say that and to comment moreso on the last remarks made by the last speaker, the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member. That is to say, I understand him to say that it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Central Demerara that the sugar estates are to be scrapped in what he said at the West Indian Conference. It may be over-zealousness on the part of my friend, the hon. Member for Central Demerara.

Dr. JAGAN: I rise to correct that! I never said that. I mentioned over-all planning that is to come at a later stage. I suppose the past organization might be eliminated then.

Dr. GONSALVES: I do not believe my hon. Friend meant that. That was not the view I got. They were saying that too much attention has been paid to this single economy, and the problems have become so large and important that you must take an over-all consideration and develop other things to work along with this industry. I understood, they went on to say that even though sugar is, perhaps, uneconomical to profits in this Colony and Antigua, yet they cannot get rid of it and they must hold on to it until something better is found. So it means, therefore, that it is the other points which are to be considered. The hon. Nominated Member has mentioned one in particular — peggasse which can, perhaps, be turned into some useful product instead of being wasted. I just want to clear that point. That is not my understanding. The West Indian Conference based its argument on an over-all consideration and did not say that sugar should be got rid of. It merely went on to show reasons why it is so uneconomical to profits in certain countries, and why there is no hope to compete successfully with Cuba because of the method of production, water transportation as against the use of rail in carrying the cane from the field to the factory. Therefore, when

we think of the over-all amount of sugar produced by Cuba, it is very difficult for the very small sugar producing countries to compete with Cuba.

I want to say that as far as the Venn Commission Report is concerned I of myself cannot say that where the sugar estate is not now in establishment the economy of that particular section is better than where there is a sugar estate. I am not going to say, too, that the worker finds more profitable employment in his ricefield. I think both of them should go together. If a man has sufficient rice-lands, then I would have to make another consideration to see whether he would be able to carry on alone. I think he needs them both. As far as I am concerned, I will not advocate that the sugar estates should be scrapped, and I do not think that is what my hon. Friend meant. I think as a whole these recommendations, if they do not go far enough in righting all complaints of the worker, they have gone quite far in improving the worker's lot and making it far better than it has ever been before.

Mr. CARTER: My view of this Report is, it seems to be an honest attempt to solve many of the ills that confront the sugar industry — ills which involve both the method of production and the relationship between employer and employee. I think that at the outset we must appreciate the very special limitations of the sugar industry. At one time in the West Indies the sugar industry was very prosperous to a few people, and it still is. I think it is good to remember also that it was the sugar industry of the West Indies that assisted Great Britain at the time of the industrial revolution. It was the West Indies sugar industry that helped to put Great Britain ahead of the other European countries industrially. So today when the sugar industry finds itself in a bad way, I do not think that we should regard it only as charity when recommendations are made to Great Britain in turn to assist the sugar industry. The people of this country by their sweat and toil have enabled many persons in this country and particularly in Great Britain to amass immense fortunes. Today we have seen the signs of strain and stress in the industry, and I am

beginning to be very concerned by the fact that we still concentrate almost entirely on the sugar industry and do not attempt or make sufficient attempt to stimulate other industries in this Colony. That is why I consider paragraph 5 of the recommendations the most important of all the recommendations made by the Venn Commission. It is more an observation possibly than a recommendation and, if I may read paragraph 5, it says:

“The great increase in population (which is likely to be accelerated in future) brought about by a combination of a falling death-rate and rising birth-rate (due in turn almost entirely to the introduction of D.D.T. and a consequent decline in malaria) leads us to question the overall feasibility of the recommendation contained in the Report of the Evans Commission which advocates the transference to British Guiana of some 50,000 inhabitants of the over-populated islands. The increasing pace of mechanization will inevitably cause a decline in the numbers of this Colony's (Indian) field-workers, the resultant surplus of whom it may be difficult to absorb in fresh industries. On the other hand, certain inland areas, at present undeveloped, could no doubt provide some employment for immigrant islanders”.

It seems to me that in many ways that is a warning by the Commission that we must look to new fields of industry. I think, Sir, you have remarked also at various times in this Council Chamber about the good effects of the D.D.T. campaign with the resultant rise in the population. I do not think that the sugar industry will be able to absorb this increased population. As a matter of fact, with the coming of mechanization, as is suggested and which I regard as some form of mechanization of the industry, we can say that the sugar industry will be able to cater for even a smaller number of workers than that for which it now caters. I think, it is a very serious situation which we have to face squarely and on which we have to take immediate action, because today the sugar estates are admirable fields for persons who want to sow disorder in this country, and the only answer to people who may be seeking political power in this way is to concentrate on the development of the resources of this country. We have to so raise the standard of living of the people

of this country by developing our so-called dormant resources so that they would not be easily led by parties of destruction whom we see in this country at the moment. When we speak of Puerto Rico we must remember that in recent years that country has launched out into tremendous industrial development. Unlike this Colony Puerto Rico does not concentrate on its sugar industry alone. The Puerto Rican Government, I know, has invited capital from America and has given certain easy terms to industrial concerns to establish themselves in Puerto Rico for the improvement and advancement of the people concerned. There would be no harm if we did something similar in this country. We have powerful trade unions which will cater for the needs of the workers, and I think we must take immediate steps to develop other industries in this country.

I do not think it is fair to say that this Commission has not taken the workers' case into consideration. When I look at paragraph 20 of the report I see that a recommendation is made for the establishment of a Wages Board, but it was rather a disappointment to me to see that neither the sugar producers nor the Unions recognized by them considered the establishment of a Wages Board necessary. I should have thought that it would have provided very easy machinery for the employers to recognize the needs of their employees, and for the employees to put their case through their leaders to their employers, because a Wages Board calls for representation of both employers and employees and also the representation of Government.

In paragraph 21 I see a recommendation for the introduction of a contributory pension scheme. Paragraph 22 calls for Estate Joint Committees, while paragraph 23 recommends the recognition of certain Unions which hitherto have not been recognized by the Sugar Producers' Association. Continuing up to paragraph 27 I see that recommendations have been made which can only be in the interests of the employees of the various estates. No one is more concerned than I am at the very low standard of living of the sugar estate worker, the squalor in which he lives on the estates, and the very

difficult times he has had ever since this industry has been in being. As a matter of fact early this year I stated that the agricultural worker has made the least advance of all people in this country, and indeed has made very little advance over a period of 100 years. I am as concerned for their welfare as anybody else, but I think when we approach these subjects we must do so with a true and honest perspective.

I am concerned with the recommendations calling upon Government to make provisions for the erection and maintenance of State hospitals at centres conveniently accessible to the estates and villages. I am concerned because I know that it will involve a great deal of expenditure, and having had warnings of commitments all through the year I do not know whether we should be able to implement those recommendations.

The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) said he did not see any major reforms in the report of the Commission. He read certain general statements by Dr. Neumark and Prof. Lewis but there is very little we can gather from those general statements as to what particular reforms he has in mind. I am sorry he did not elaborate exactly what major reforms he himself would have recommended, because I am sure that if they were constructive we would all be able to support him.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I preferred to listen to what hon. Members had to say before I added my quota. In the first place I would like to refer to a very important aspect of the early stages of the Commission's work. I refer to the time when they arrived in the Colony and held an inaugural meeting in the Town Hall, Georgetown. At that meeting I and others made the very reasonable request to the Commission that all the evidence should be taken in public; that nothing should be done *in camera*. We made that suggestion in order to remove any suspicion, and in order to create the best goodwill between the employers of the sugar industry and their employees. I must therefore at this very early stage take opportunity to remark that it is a matter for great regret that the reason-

able request which was made to the Commission was not granted. The Commission did not see its way to take evidence in public. I say so because I feel that the point of view of the sugar estate employers ought to have been made public to those who represented sugar estate labour. They ought to have been in a position to see how profits were being calculated, and to have an opportunity of seeing whether or not there had been real difficulty in so far as the sugar industry is concerned. As it stands now it is regrettable that a Commission at such a high level, with such an able personnel, should not have made one clear and precise attempt to remove any suspicions that may have existed at the time—suspicions which led to all the disasters which were the chief cause of the Commission coming to the Colony.

Passing on from that I wish to say that, taking the report as a whole, I think it is a very earnest attempt on the part of the Commission not only to explore and examine conditions which exist in the sugar industry but to offer solutions for some of its problems, and for that I must congratulate them not only on the ability they have displayed and their willingness to face a very difficult problem, but on their succinct report. For that we must give them very high credit, and as other Members have said, I consider the report well worth reading, and as a report on an important industry it is worthy of being carefully studied. I wish to say, however, that it is absolutely no use for a Commission to make a series of recommendations and to find that the sugar industry and the Government are not prepared to implement them entirely, but merely disposed to carry them out piecemeal. I observe from Your Excellency's Message that the sugar industry and Government are disinclined to carry out some of the very important recommendations of the Commission. I feel that that will nullify most of the very important recommendations or the entire work of the Commission.

Following on the line taken by other Members who have spoken on the position of the sugar industry in this Colony, I agree that this Colony has reached the stage where it has to vary considerably

its general agricultural policy if it is to remain a successful agricultural country supporting its inhabitants by its particular potentialities. It seems to me that the effort which was made in Great Britain to place the sugar industry on a sound basis is sufficient warning to this Government to take immediate steps to revise its general policy of development, and not to continue to put all its eggs into one basket because, if the basket overturns we shall have nothing left but shell. The hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Carter) has made reference to the possibility of unemployment that faces our population in this Colony, and I would like to take it a little further. There is no doubt that the sugar industry intends to pursue a course of what is termed as efficient production of sugar, which is one of the conditions imposed by the U.K. Government in the agreement with the Caribbean Colonies and British Guiana. By efficient production is meant that every possible means of mechanization must be employed, and we here must realize that as fast as mechanization is introduced into the sugar industry there will be corresponding unemployment in this Colony.

In other words it is important for us to realize that, relying as we do on the sugar industry as the Sheet Anchor of the Colony so far as our industries are concerned, and in view of the fact that the Colony is spending a considerable sum of money in assisting this particular industry directly or indirectly, it seems to me very important that the labour economy of this Colony should be considered not merely in the light of what further should be done to absorb the unemployed population, but the people should be encouraged both on and off the sugar estates to turn their hands and minds to some useful occupation which is capable of sustaining life. In other words I am suggesting that the sugar industry should consider it very important, even in its own interest, to encourage peasant cane-farming in this Colony on a large scale.

It seems to me that if, as has been stated in the report of the Commission, the average profit from sugar was \$8 per ton during the three years prior to the

arrival of the Commission, then cane-farming is a very profitable industry for the small man to engage in. We have the lands and there is in our Department of Agriculture all the machinery concentrated on the improved production of sugar cane. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) and I are members of the Cane-farmers Committee on the East Coast. We know that the farmers are extremely keen, that they make profit from cane-farming, and that they would like to pursue that calling. I trust that the C.D.C., if they wish to do something for the Colony, will consider the possibility of setting up a central mill for cane-farmers instead of a rice mill, because the report of the Venn Commission seems to suggest that none of the existing sugar mills is capable of dealing with farmers' cane, and this might be a disastrous deterrent to the farmers engaged in cane-farming.

The PRESIDENT: What the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) said about Antigua was that only 1 per cent. of interviewed persons expressed a desire for cane-field work, and that 37 per cent. of the unemployed persons were willing to accept employment in cane-fields. I would like to add all these things together. The hon. Member has said that cane-farming is a profitable business. I do not know how all these things fit in.

Mr. DEBIDIN: You will find that my statements can be checked up and found to be correct. The cane-farmers at Plaisance are doing very well and are glad to continue cane-farming because they find it a very profitable source of income. The point I am making is that we have not yet in this Colony a planned agricultural economy. In spite of the fact that we have a very important Agricultural Department, with all its expert knowledge, we have not yet evolved a well diversified or planned agricultural economy in this Colony. I would say that the sugar industry owes it to itself, if it is to meet its quota of 2,225,000 tons, to give every encouragement to peasant cane-farming in the villages and other areas of the Colony. I think the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Morrish) will bear me out when I say that if the

sugar industry of this Colony fails to meet its quota another Caribbean Colony would be required to supply what we are unable to produce, and perhaps in a year or two we may be told that our quota would be only 200,000 tons. I mention that in order to show the necessity of expanding our sugar industry by every possible means—not only by the sugar companies at present operating but also by encouraging peasant cane-farming.

There are many excellent points in the report of the Commission but I am not going to waste time in paying too much tribute to those excellent points. I think it is our duty to criticize those things which are deserving of criticism. There is one criticism I have to make. The Venn Commission came to this Colony for a set purpose. It was as a result of a strike which ended fatally for some people and had disastrous results. I think I am correct in saying that I was one of those who pleaded for a Commission to come and inquire into the sugar industry of the Colony at one stage of the negotiations between the labour representatives and Your Excellency, and I must say at this stage that Your Excellency played a very important part in getting the Commission to come to the Colony.

The PRESIDENT: It was on my advice that the Secretary of State appointed the Commission—not the people who were responsible for the strike.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think the discussion was, whether it should be a local Commission or one from outside, and the general opinion was that it should come from outside. The point I am making is that the Commission came as a result of the strike. It came and inquired into the causes of that strike, and has made recommendations which it is hoped will remove the causes which led up to that unfortunate strike, and obviate in the future any possibility of shooting. But what do we find? The Commission has made what I call soft recommendations. It has made one or two useful suggestions, but its recommendations became softer yet when Government, in conjunction with the sugar industry, refused to implement the most important recommendation by the

Commission—the establishment of a Wages Board. I am glad that the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Carter) made very strong remarks on that point. I endorse what he said and would like to add this: that there will have to be very strong argument put forward in Committee why the sugar industry is loth to accept this particular recommendation, or why Government has not seen fit to advise the industry or to take part in the establishment of a Wages Board. The members of the Commission have had an opportunity of seeing and learning how Wages Boards operate in England, and having examined conditions in the sugar industry of the Colony resulting from the strike, they have recommended the establishment of a Wages Board in this Colony as the one big thing which would eliminate the possibility of future strikes. But that recommendation has not been accepted. I thought the hon. Member would have come out very strongly and said that the Estate Joint Committees have been a failure and a farce. If the intention is to perpetuate the Joint Committee system there will be strikes and rumours of strikes until a Wages Board is established. I reserve my further remarks on this point for the Committee stage.

I wish to make one or two general remarks on the question of a contributory pension scheme. There is no doubt that there will be unemployment as a result of extensive mechanization of the sugar industry. The draglines suggested in the first recommendation by the Commission will eliminate five-sixths of human labour. That alone gives some idea as to what extent human labour will be eliminated. Apart from that there are other forms of mechanization which may be adopted, but most important of all is that, after considering the "cut-and-load" system on the sugar estates, which was the immediate cause of the strike on the last occasion, the Commission made a very important remark about it which was exactly what I was told during the strike—that only the able-bodied young men can perform that particular class of work. If I may be permitted I will read recommendation 18 of the Commission's report which says:

"18. Although we do not propose any interference with "cut and load",

which, as a form of piece-work, leads both to a steady output and to relatively good earnings, elderly workers or those below average physique should not be employed upon these or similar operations. Planks, which should be of adequate width, ought to be freely available at the site and should not have to be carried by the workers to and from their homes."

It suggests clearly that only those who are able-bodied should be engaged in this work. It seems to suggest a reason for recommending the continuance of this work—it gives good earnings to the people. But it also gives quick returns to the sugar industry and makes for efficient production, more sugar. More human effort is used and they benefit from that extra human effort. What I regret is the iniquity of the whole thing. These people are given an incentive bonus instead of a pension scheme. In other words, they are to work for more than three days a week to get that incentive bonus. But what that incentive bonus means? These poor human beings seem to carry my mind back to the "galley" days. They have to do something where it requires special human effort. Their vitality is being sapped to gain that extra incentive bonus. Instead of the "whip lash" of the days of slavery it is money. This extra bonus, which is capable of giving the same incentive as the lash, is being given for them to carry on with the same strain, as they had been carrying on, for more than three days a week. I know that people after working three days as they do want diversity of movement in order to make up for that strenuous work. In one of the recommendations the Commissioners state the Roster system is their way, but instead of that the Sugar Producers' Association insists on this particular system to the detriment of the young men. What is the result? These young men with their vitality sapped will prematurely become old. They will not reach 40 years when they will fall into the category of those elderly workers and those below the average physique. That is why we want a Contributory Pension Scheme, for I feel that the Venn Commission Report, excellent as it is, has by-passed not only the Wages Board, which is important to the proper solution

of what caused the last strike and may likely cause the next strike, but has not tackled the problem of giving full employment on sugar estates where all concerned will get employment. In addition, the Government and the sugar industry have done the next bad thing in not accepting the Contributory Pension Scheme which will make up for it. I am taking it further. It is not only a question of unemployment and the sugar industry merely whittled down—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: On a point of correction! I would like to point out that Government is in favour of that particular recommendation for a Pension Scheme.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I stand to correction.

The PRESIDENT: Government has said it hopes the industry would be able to reconsider the recommendation as circumstances permit.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I also remarked on that in my comments.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I may say in reply to the hon. the Colonial Secretary that I know what was accepted. This is what has been said to Recommendation 21 in the Message:

“The Sugar Producers’ Association state that, in view of the fact that His Majesty’s Government have already indicated that it is not proposed to implement the recommendation for a special subsidy of £1 per ton (vide Recommendation 43 below), the sugar estates would not be able to afford to introduce a contributory pension scheme of the type proposed. It is hoped that the Sugar Producers Association will reconsider this matter when circumstances permit. Ex-sugar estate workers receive benefits, like others, under the Government Old Age Pension Scheme and at the present time about 2,600 or approximately 30% of the total number of old age pensioners are ex-sugar estate workers.”

I am to assume from this comment on the Report that Government is begging in the implementation of it.

The PRESIDENT: You may as well ask Government to pay the sugar workers. It is not a Government Scheme.

Government is not opposed to a Contributory Pension Scheme for sugar workers, but on the contrary it has expressed the hope that the industry will be able to adopt one.

Mr. DEBIDIN: When Government says it cannot compel them, may I just inform this Council at this stage that Government has under one of the other recommendations the right to withdraw certain taxes which are imposed on the sugar industry? Government therefore has one opportunity of saying “We are not going to remove this tax of \$200,000 and over unless this Pension Scheme is implemented”, because the sugar industry is saying it has not got the special subsidy of 20/- per ton and so it cannot carry out the Scheme.

Mr. MORRISH: To a point of correction! The sugar industry does not say that, but says it cannot afford it.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The difference merely amounts to quibbling with words—we will not because we cannot afford it. They are saying that because Great Britain has not given them the 20/- per ton subsidy, but at the same time the Venn Commission Report suggests the withdrawal of taxes which is more than what they will get by that 20/- per ton subsidy. It seems that Government has one opportunity of forcing the issue and making them come to an arrangement to accept something which is vitally important. I wish when we do come to discuss this matter in Committee we will keep this before our minds. There will be sugar estate labourers who will be unemployed, having nothing to do, and these able-bodied boys up to 20 years after their vitality has been sapped by this work will fall into that category. We want to see that does not happen. That is why I make these remarks.

Very briefly I am going to refer to the question of Education. This is to me one of the sorest points in the whole of the question of the Venn Commission Report, for it seems to me that when the Commission has recommended that certain things be done Government says very astutely that steps are being taken or there is law already for so and so, for

better supervision will be made, etc. But we know that these are all pious wishes in respect of things which Government is supposed to have done in the past. We know that the percentage of illiteracy among the principal class of people engaged in the sugar industry is 44 per cent. That is an alarming figure, and I fail to see why the Venn Commission Report after making certain recommendations about the carrying out of Regulations in respect of the employment of children under 14 years did not give some suggestion for a type of adult literacy campaign in this country. It is an important thing to consider, because contrary to what some Members have already expressed and others may think, there is no doubt whatever that the people who are illiterate today are those who have been putting their shoulders to the wheel, whether as child or as adult, in keeping the industry together and making it produce the revenue it has done in the past. If today we are kind and we want to remove all semblance of strikes, let them understand what Government wishes of them. I deplore this idea of strikes. I do not refer to them as a means to get the sugar industry to do this or that. I am concerned with removing everything possible which will make for a state of things which leads to strikes. Educate the masses.

Educate the adults. I have been at pains to point out in respect of these adults, that from my experience of the last strike there were 43 boys arrested, most of them as the result of certain offences committed, and only three could have signed their names when the time came to enter into a bond for their attendance at Court. They were boys between the ages of 17 and 25, and 39 of them could not read and write. What is the meaning of that? There had not been any rigorous supervision by the Education Officers of the Education Department in so far as those boys are concerned. Had there been, those boys could not have been uneducated for they could not have been working on sugar estates and their names appearing on the pay-lists and not being observed by those Officers. I make bold to say that it has been the policy, and this is something which has been brought to my notice: On one sugar

plantation when the Education Officer became too zealous in catching out the pupils in the field—those whose names were on the school register but did not attend school at all—he was transferred from that particular district. That is a fact. There is some truth in the statement that at one particular district the Education Officers were removed because they were too enthusiastic about their work, and the explanation given was that there was no space for the children in the school and there was no use turning them out to school.

The PRESIDENT: What district was that?

Mr. DEBIDIN: On the West Coast Demerara.

The PRESIDENT: When was this? Since I have been here?

Mr. DEBIDIN: Since you have been in this Colony.

The PRESIDENT: I regard it as a most damaging statement and would like particulars.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is a statement which is true. These things do happen in the Colony.

The PRESIDENT: I hope the hon. Member would give the particulars.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I go further and say that when we had the literacy campaign down on the Estimates, the Officer was keen on the question of mass education at Providence. But what do we find? That particular type of training was checked by the sugar estate authorities. That I also have particulars of and can give them.

Mr. MORRISH: Providence is one of the estates with which I am closely associated, and I know we have made every effort to encourage this adult education scheme.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is so easy to make that statement, but the fact remains that we have 44 per cent. of our population illiterate. That is something no one can challenge.

The PRESIDENT: I would ask the hon. Member if he has read what is being done in regard to Education. What is the good talking about years ago? If he wants to criticize, he must criticize what is stated here and the efforts we are making to bring about education on the sugar estates. Hon. Members know the effort that is being made. New schools are being built and old ones are being enlarged. Rapid progress has been made in that direction. Let the hon. Member criticize those things.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Your Excellency has overlooked the point I am making. I am not talking of the efforts made. I am talking about 44 per cent. of the population being illiterate. What is being done for them? The new schools are not going to take in these adults. In how many schools you have adults? The school buildings on the sugar estates are not quite adequate yet, as if all the children of school-going ages were to turn out there would be no accommodation for them. Your Excellency has misunderstood the point I am making. It is that the Venn Commission has not made any recommendation in regard to the liquidation of this large percentage of illiteracy which is existing in the Colony. That is the point I am making. Something must be done. And this is the point I wish to emphasize. Something must be done by the Government or the Government plus the sugar estates authorities to give, if not adult literacy teaching facilities, at least mass education to the people of the sugar plantations who are in the main illiterate. We are moving onwards. This Constitution Commission that is coming may go further and probably recommend adult suffrage. So this remark I am making is all the more important. We want a very informed and very educated and intelligent community to deal with at all times and in all respects.

Those are the remarks I make on the Venn Commission Report, and I fain would say it is no use not carrying out all the recommendations, and it would be better you do not carry out any. We want this industry not merely to give benefit to absentee-proprietors of the Colony. We want the people of the Colony to benefit from the industry into

which we throw so much feeling and otherwise. We want the Colony once and for all to realize the precarious position in which the development of the Colony is by being dependent on one industry and to embark upon other industries and take all the means to provide for the people who will be pushed out of the sugar industry in the future.

Dr. NICHOLSON: The Venn Commission Report is an honest and successful attempt to improve the condition of the workers in the sugar industry in this country, socially and economically. That Report may be regarded as the Magna Carta of the workers in that industry, and my observation is to demonstrate that sugar workers are surely winning their way in that industry. I observe better wages, better working conditions, better housing, better social conditions, better facilities for education. I am happy in that, because I remember at the end of 1947 during the Elections campaign we heard certain strictures made regarding the sugar industry. I am happy that since then things have moved on considerably. I remember saying at one time for all industries that the workers must work hard to produce the fruits of industry. I feel that Capital and Labour should work in harmony. There should be no antagonism between Capital and Labour; the worker should work hard to obtain the fruits of industry and when those fruits are reaped the worker must get sufficient of the profits to enable him to live a decent life. I am pretty well satisfied that this is obtaining in a great measure in the sugar industry. The sugar workers are sharing in the profits made in the form of bonuses. I moved a motion one and a half years ago in this Council for two weeks' holiday with pay for all workers in this country, and I am happy to see the workers in the sugar industry have cashed in on that even before our Select Committee has reported on the subject, because the sugar workers are already obtaining two weeks' holidays with pay.

But the Commission has done more than that. The Commission has advocated considerable relief for the industry itself by shifting certain responsibilities on to the shoulders of Government—Health

Services, Housing — and, therefore, I warn that if the people of this country must bear the whole or any part of the responsibilities of the sugar industry it would not be fair to ask the people of this country to pay more for their sugar, because in other words we are in a great measure subsidizing the sugar industry. But when all is said and done, I do feel that the workers in the sugar industry may well be regarded as the *aristocrats* of our labouring class (Mr. DEBIDIN: Question!) That is all I have to say in regard to this very important question.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

The question "That the Council resolves itself into Committee to consider the Recommendations" put, and agreed to.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: May I suggest that hon. Members signify the recommendations they are interested in and on which debate is required, in order not to waste the time of the Council on those recommendations on which everybody is agreed.

Mr. DEBIDIN: We are given those recommendations which Government accepts or how far Government is prepared to implement them. Are we competent to make here any suggestions that should be taken as amendments?

The CHAIRMAN: The recommendations are for the Estates and the Trade Unions and not for Government. The motion before the Council is that the action taken and proposed on the Report be approved. If hon. Members wish to leave out such recommendations from consideration they may do so.

Mr. DEBIDIN: We can either say we approve or disapprove, but we cannot amend?

The CHAIRMAN: You cannot amend. They are just brought for information by Government.

Recommendation 1—Draglines, or grabs, should exclusively be used for the dredging and cleaning of all canals and other waterways (which upon the combined estates, extend to a length

of more than 5,000 miles). Evidence, derived both from the Colony and from home, shows that, as compared with human (and frequently female) labour, costs can thus be cut to about one-sixth.

Dr. JAGAN: This recommendation has brought out a very interesting point which has been made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) about mechanization and subsequent displacement of labour. We appreciate the fact that at the present time in the price of sugar is included a certain sum kept in reserve and known as the Rehabilitation Fund. That Fund is a very large sum at the present time. I do not know how many millions it is, but that Fund will be utilized for the modernizing of factories, the direct result of other mechanical devices.

Mr. MORRISH: To a point of correction! Field machinery is excluded.

Dr. JAGAN: I do not know whether I will have cause to mention that. It is an important problem, and in discussing this matter with my Puerto Rican friends who were delegates at the West Indian Conference, they mentioned they had to face this same problem and their Government had to introduce a tax on the sugar production, so that later on it could be given back to the people by way of Unemployment Relief. I do hope this Government will give that matter serious consideration, because though it is not specifically stated I do not know whether the sugar industry will be able to use a certain amount of that money for that purpose. If it cannot, then it follows that out of their Reserve Fund what probably should go to Factory Rehabilitation now goes to Field Rehabilitation. Consequently I hope Government will keep that in mind. This question of unemployment is making the fears of Labour very necessary. If possible Government should keep the Puerto Rican action in the matter in mind.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I would just like to add to what the hon. Nominated Member said, that of all the Sugar Industry, Special Funds the Rehabilitation Fund is

probably the most drawn upon at the moment. It is a Fund which is being almost fully used in Factory Rehabilitation that is now occurring, and a large sum of money has actually been paid out of it for work done and a great deal more is being appropriated for Factory Rehabilitation in progress. I am afraid there will be very little balance left of the existing Rehabilitation Fund when the authority for these Reserve Funds comes to an end, and the hon. Member will have to propose some other way to find the money.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The point I wish to make on it is this, and that is with my knowledge of what goes on on the sugar estates. During the period of 1948 when that big strike took place I went very carefully into this matter, and I observed that trench-cleaning is an operation which gives employment to the people on the estates when there is no alternative cane-cutting to be done. The work on the sugar estate is so symtematized that you find nearly all the people get something to do on the estate at all times, and trench-cleaning is an important factor or aspect of work on the estate in order to keep the people employed. If, as is suggested by the Commission, draglines are to be used for dredging and cleaning of all canals and other waterways to the extent of 5,000 miles on the combined estates of the Colony, it means that a considerable amount of work would be taken away from the sugar estate workers. That would result in a gravitation of the whole labour force in one way or another. I would suggest that the introduction of mechanization should be done slowly, so that the labourers on the estates may be able to find some other means of employment.

Mr. MORRISH: I think there is some misundersatnding about this recommendation. Cleaning of canals is usually interpreted on an estate to mean the removal of weeds, and I think that possibly the Commission did not clearly understand the normal procedure. We use draglines and dredges to dig canals or deepen them, but the normal procedure of cleaning, which is the removal of weeds, has been experimented with by the use of machines, and as far as I

know there is one machine in the Colony with which some primitive experiments are being carried out. I therefore think that the hon. Member's fear is a very long way off.

Recommendation 2. — *Women and girls should, as soon as possible, be prevented by Ordinance from working in water.* (Chapter II, para. 26—Page 7 of Report).

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like to know from either a Government spokesman or a spokesman of the sugar producers, why there is this fear of having an Ordinance passed to prevent women from working in water. If after a careful inquiry the Commission made this recommendation they must have had foundation for doing so.

The CHAIRMAN: I should have thought that the hon. Member, being a lawyer, would have been the first to see how extraordinarily difficult it would be to make legislation which could be enforced in a country like British Guiana, to prevent people working in water.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is begging the question completely to say that the Colony is below sea level and is therefore always inundated, or whatever the implication is.

The CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. Member to bear in mind conditions in the rice fields. There is no question about the Colony being below sea level. As a matter of fact most of our lands are under water from time to time.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Let us come down to the particular question and be practical about it. This recommendation relates to the sugar industry. Can legislation not be passed to prevent women being organized into gangs to work in water on sugar estates? This is what is stated in the second paragraph relating to recommendation 2:

"With a view to obviating the necessity for women to wade through the canals, the Sugar Producers' Association have provided boats in order to transport women gangs across canals

to get to certain fields. It is reported, however, that, despite this, women often prefer to wade through the canals to get to their work rather than wait for a boat."

With respect to that I would remark that this is one of those instances where the women are forced to wade through the canals because they would lose time if they had to wait for a boat, and time is money to them. The fact that the sugar estates are making this excuse is sufficient indication that they have not adequate facilities for women labourers to get across those deep canals to the fields. Boats should be available to take them across. They should not have to wait for boats.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not working in water. The recommendation refers to working in water. They do get into the water but that is not working in water.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I made those remarks because of what was stated by you, Sir.

Dr. JAGAN: I would point out that under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, if a person has to wade across a trench to go to his work and an alligator bites him it would be regarded as having sustained the injury in the course of his employment. Even if it is not "working in water" we would like to prevent it as much as possible. I suggest that the following statement should be struck out of the Message:—

"It is reported, however, that, despite this, women often prefer to wade through the canals to get to their work rather than wait for a boat."

The obvious need is that more boats should be provided.

Mr. MORRISH: Within the last few weeks I have watched women wading across a trench while a boat was floating alongside the trench.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. Member is quite aware of what the position is, and I suggest that he should not waste much time on this recommendation.

Recommendation 3. — Particular care should be exercised in the selection and training of Drivers, all of whom should be recruited from the workers' ranks. All of them should be educationally capable of controlling and instructing a force of labour, and an increasing proportion ought eventually to qualify for higher positions. Their title is nowadays a mi nomer and should be changed to "Headmen". (Chapter II, paras. 36 and 39—Page 12 of Report).

Mr. LUCKHOO: The Headmen's Union, in putting forward certain proposals to the Commission, pointed out that the drivers or headmen were in a blind alley; they could not get very much further than headmen, and it was one of the points urged strongly on their behalf, with which the Commission agreed — that opportunity should be provided them for further promotion, but it was also observed that the headmen should be drawn from a very intelligent class if possible. The position is that at the present moment headmen are fully acquainted with the type of work. They are the people who really tutor the young overseers, and I do feel that opportunity should be offered those of the present headmen who have been employed for a number of years, if they are capable, to receive further promotion. The recommendation rather suggests that future headmen would be recruited from workers with a higher standard of education. The point I would make is that there are headmen now on the several estates who are capable of doing honour to the position of overseers, and one would ask that they be afforded an opportunity for promotion if they are deserving of it. One would wish to see eventually the day when a person could rise from a labourer to a headman, a junior overseer and maybe a senior overseer or a Deputy Manager, and if I live long enough, one day to the post of Manager.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I heartily support that view and would ask leave to refer to my old grandfather who had the blessings of an early education by a minister, and carried on a sugar estate not only Algebra, Latin and French but a very sound knowledge of English. The result was that he could not be kept in

the position of a driver and enjoyed all the privileges of an overseer without being so described. He was given a batman and a mule boy, and for 30 years he served in that capacity. There are headmen who are competent to fill the highest positions, and they should not be denied them. Their experience and general knowledge of conditions on the estates are things which should be taken into account. Even in the Civil Service that policy is being adopted.

Dr. JAGAN: I do not like the language in which the comment on the recommendation is couched in the Message. It states:

"The Sugar Producers' Association have accepted this recommendation in principle for gradual implementation, but both the Association and the Unions recognised by them are agreed that it will be necessary to recruit headmen from workers with a higher standard of education than at present. Drivers are now universally referred to as headmen, and the former Drivers' Association has been renamed "The Headmen's Union."

The gradualness of it alarms me. The hon. Member referred to his grandfather. I will come to more recent times and refer to my father who was a driver. He told me that many of the overseers who came from abroad had to be taught by the drivers, and I do not see why the drivers have not been given opportunities for further promotion. In fact during the war, when there was no opportunity for bringing overseers from abroad, local men were employed, but it seems that as soon as the war was over the sugar proprietors resorted to the practice of importing people without any knowledge of sugar estate conditions, to be taught by drivers here. I wonder how gradual the promotion of local workers is going to be.

Mr. MORRISH: Already there are quite a number of men who have gone through that stage, and as long ago as 1914 there was an East Indian overseer in charge of the distillery on an estate on which he had worked as a batteau boy and running behind the Manager's mule. In 1914, when I came to this Colony, that man was the overseer in charge of

the liquor store. There has always been an East Indian in charge of the distillery at Pln. Diamond.

Dr. NICHOLSON: I would like to make this suggestion to the Sugar Producers' Association: that there would be far greater stability in the sugar industry, greater contentment and less strikes perhaps, if some of the workers who are competent could be moved up into executive positions.

Recommendation 5. — The great increase in population (which is likely to be accelerated in future) brought about by a combination of a falling death-rate and rising birth-rate (due in turn almost entirely to the introduction of D.D.T. and a consequent decline in Malairia), leads us to question the overall feasibility of the recommendation contained in the Report of the Evans Commission which advocates the transference to British Guiana of some 50,000 inhabitants of the over-populated islands. The increasing pace of mechanization will inevitably cause a decline in the numbers of this Colony's (Indian) field-workers, the resultant surplus of whom it may be difficult to absorb in fresh industries. On the other hand, certain inland areas, at present undeveloped, could no doubt provide some employment for immigrant islanders. (Chapter II, paras. 48 and 49 — Page 16 of Report).

Dr. JAGAN: I would like to refer to Your Excellency's comment on page 9 of your Message in dealing with the contributory pension scheme. You state:

".....Ex-sugar estate workers receive benefits, like others, under the Government Old Age Pension Scheme, and at the present time about 2,600 or approximately 30 per cent. of the total number of old age pensioners are ex-sugar estate workers."

I wish to speak about that with reference to recommendation 5. It is the same question of technological unemployment and making essential workers become surplus labour later on. I hope Government will give consideration to the levying of a tax so that the Colony would not be burdened with the payment of old age pensions to those people when they get prematurely old. With the present high age qualification many of them are not entitled to Government's old age

pension, and they are suffering greatly as a result of the arduous nature of their work.

Recommendation 7. — *The Department of Agriculture should be re-organised into separate and more autonomous divisions, which would free the Director from his at present far too numerous routine duties. Its personnel should be strengthened by the creation of new posts, e.g., that of Agricultural Engineer: we note that the very important post of Entomologist has been for some time vacant. (Chapter III, para. 33—Page 29 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is one subject which I know will come up when we are discussing the budget, but I am asking this Council to express its disapproval of this particular recommendation. It seems to me that this Colony has always been committed to huge expenditure which it can ill afford, in order to provide a receptacle for companies to come here and operate without any appreciable benefit to the people of the Colony. We have developed a Geological Department and a Forestry Department, and our expenditure has amounted from 6 to 20 million dollars. We agreed to that, but has the Colony developed correspondingly or commensurately with that expenditure? I say "No." Here it is proposed to bring an Agricultural Engineer to this Colony when we have not yet started any real mechanization of industry. The sugar industry is already endowed with its engineering ability and skill. In the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Morrish) it has one of the finest men, I understand. There are other engineers in the sugar industry, such as Mr. Seaford at Enmore, and several others who are competent. I say that the Colony must put an end to expenditure which merely supports industry without taking into account the mounting cost of the administration of the Colony. I am against the appointment of an Agricultural Engineer. When the whole Colony is mechanically driven then we can provide a couple of them.

Mr. MORRISH: I do not quite understand that argument because, as I understand the position, this proposal to appoint an Agricultural Engineer is for Government purposes and not particularly for

the sugar industry. My own Company has its agricultural engineers, and with those of other sugar companies I think there are altogether 12 agricultural engineers employed in the sugar industry.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Agricultural Engineer's activities will not be so much concerned with the sugar industry but with the rice industry, and his services will be required more in that sphere than in the sphere of sugar.

Mr. DEBIDIN: In view of the remarks made by the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Morrish) I suggest that the Council should disapprove of this recommendation, and I ask that a vote be taken on it.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot take a vote on it as it stands. There are two or three other recommendations. The proper place to deal with it is in the budget.

Dr. JAGAN: On the Agricultural Advisory Committee we have already put our thumbs down on this appointment.

The CHAIRMAN: All we are asking is that it should be considered with the budget. That is all the action Government is taking.

Recommendation 8. — *To encourage the further mechanization of field work and of internal transport every possible opportunity should continue to be taken to secure the importation of American and British machines, including those of the heaviest type, e.g., U.S.A. creeper tractors. (Chapter V, para. 81 (i) — Page 42 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I ask the hon. the Financial Secretary whether machinery imported by the sugar industry is exempt from duty?

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: As far as my recollection goes all agricultural machinery qualifies for exemption from Customs duty. Agricultural machinery imported by the Rice Marketing Board or by any firm for a particular individual is exempted.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I will have to add

this to the list of helps given by the Government to the sugar industry. This is a very important one.

Regulation 9. — *Technical instruction in the principles of elementary mechanics, engineering, electricity, book-keeping, etc., should be made available for younger employees (especially the apprentices), either upon the estates or at centres convenient thereto. These courses should be free of cost and provided in the employer's time. The Adviser on Technical Education should supply Instructors and possibly also mobile vans. We hope that the estates would be prepared to afford a generous measure of financial support to this project. (Chapter V, para. 81 (ii) — Page 42 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is another case of assistance to the sugar industry and I am going to make a list of these items and recite them during the debate on the budget. I am not against assistance to the sugar industry but we must get better wages and living conditions for the workers. There must be a corresponding benefit. I am not aware of the functions of this Technical Institute, and even the Director of Education was unable to give a proper reply to a question I put to him as to what its functions will be. I feel that if the sugar industry is to get any benefit from the Institute it must not be at the expense of the boys of the Colony who are qualified for admission to the Institute for training, because it would appear that a very large number will be coming from the sugar estates. Apart from that, the sugar industry should contribute to the cost of running the Institute.

Mr. MORRISH: I think the hon. Member has gone astray again. Obviously, a technical school of any kind, such as is suggested here, is for the public benefit, and not related even to the sugar industry, but to anyone who is anxious to learn a trade and such trades by which they can earn a living. The sugar estates have been running training schools on their own for quite a long time. This is an effort to put on a proper footing such training as has been carried on on sugar estates on the East Bank, East Coast and Berbice — all done by voluntary effort by engineers or chemists on the estates. It sounds as if the hon. Member does not

approve of these young men improving themselves and putting themselves in a position to earn higher wages. Furthermore, when he suggests that the sugar industry should pay for it I think he has again forgotten that the sugar industry is the largest taxpayer in the Colony and is already paying for it.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am not against the training of boys from the estates, but I made it very clear that it must not be at the expense of the Government or those who will enter the Institute. In the Message it is stated that "the Principal of the Technical Institute is drawing up detailed proposals." Which Technical Institute — the sugar estates' or the Government Technical Institute?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government Technical Institute.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Thank you.

Recommendation 10. — *Steps should be taken stringently to enforce the existing regulations which prohibit the employment of children under the age of 14 years. (Chapter VIII, para. 15 — Page 54 of Report).*

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is a point on which there has been much discussion already. I would like to know from those who can give an explanation, what is the meaning of the statement in the Message that "all possible steps" will be taken to prevent contravention of the law. I am not satisfied that the Education Department or the Government is doing its best to eradicate illiteracy or to bring within the schools boys under the age of 14 years. I would like to know whether the number of Educational Officers is going to be multiplied, and whether they will be told that they are not only to look at the school registers but to go to the homes and find out whether boys under that age have been going to school.

The CHAIRMAN: It is the duty of the Departments concerned — the Education Department, the Labour Department and the Police Department — to see that the law is not contravened. It is an offence which is punishable by law. If the hon. Member or any other Member

of this Council, or any member of the public knows that the law is being contravened it is their duty to report it to the Government in order that action may be taken under the law. I do not see what else I can do.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Is Government taking any positive steps in the matter?

The CHAIRMAN: I take it that the Labour Inspectors visit the estates to see that the law is not being contravened.

Recommendation 12. — *As soon as possible every estate, cum annexis, should be required to provide shower baths, a changing (or drying) room and a canteen with cooking facilities. (Chapter IX, paras. 50 and 52 — Page 61 of Report).*

Dr. JAGAN: I observe from the note on this recommendation that the Sugar Producers' Association "are prepared to accept the recommendation and provide shower baths and drying rooms in a few factories as soon as practicable, with a view to giving them another trial." There again we have the same phrase

"as soon as practicable", or "as soon as possible." Those are vague terminologies which I do not think should be inserted in a report like this. Shower baths and changing rooms are simple things to be constructed, and the Sugar Producers' Association should have given a definite assurance that they would be provided in two or three years.

The CHAIRMAN: It is said that the provision of shower baths has been abused in the past. You cannot blame the sugar producers in the circumstances.

Dr. JAGAN: I wonder whether this is like the case of women preferring to swim?

Mr. MORRISH: I think I was the first in this Colony to try out providing a bath room in a sugar factory, but within a week it became a latrine. Therefore we were not over anxious to repeat the experiment.

The CHAIRMAN: With that explanation I think the Council might now adjourn until 2 o'clock tomorrow.