

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 14TH MARCH, 1951.

The Council met at 2 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. C. V. Wight, C.B.E., (Western Essequibo).

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. W. J. Raatgever (Nominated).

The Hon. V. Roth, (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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.

OMISSIONS FROM THE MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 9th of March, 1951, as printed and circulated, were taken as read.

Mr. DEBIDIN : I notice that a motion which was tabled last Thursday by me dealing with the abolition of the Rice Marketing Ordinance of 1946 has not been published in the last minutes or those presented today. I do consider this as being very strange because, as far as I know, there is nothing in that motion which should have caused that delay in its publication in the subsequent minutes. I do strongly contend that Government should not interfere, or has not the right to keep away from this Council's minutes a motion, notice of which had been given at a previous meeting. It is a clear case of something subversive to good government.

The PRESIDENT : The hon. Member, I presume, is referring to a motion of about three pages in length. I had not time to consider it that day, as it seems to contain a whole speech. If the hon. Member is referring to that motion, I am considering it at the moment and I am sorry for the delay.

Dr. JAGAN : I gave notice of a motion too and I have not seen it mentioned in the minutes.

The PRESIDENT: I am afraid I have not had time to consider those motions. I have been away, but I will now consider them and decide whether they are acceptable.

Minutes confirmed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS.

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

"An Ordinance further to amend the Customs Ordinance".

"An Ordinance further to amend the Customs Duties Ordinance, 1935".

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES.

REFUND OF STAMP DUTY.

Mr. PETERS gave notice of the following motion:—

WHEREAS A Bill intuled "An Ordinance to incorporate the Christian Catholic Church" was on the 24th of November, 1950, passed by this Honourable Council;

AND WHEREAS the sum of one hundred dollars was paid as Stamp Duty pursuant to the Tax Ordinance, 1939 (No. 43), in respect of the said Bill;

AND WHEREAS the said Church has made useful contribution to the religious and educational life of this Colony during its operations in this Colony;

AND WHEREAS it has been customary for this Honourable Council to recommend the refund of Stamp Duty paid in respect of Private Bills dealing with the incorporation of Churches;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable Council be pleased to recommend to Government the refund of the sum of one hundred dollars paid in terms of the Tax Ordinance, 1939, for the Private Bill intituled "An Ordinance to incorporate the Christian Catholic Church".

ORDER OF THE DAY.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING RULES AND ORDERS.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move the sus-

pension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order in order to enable me to take today items 5, 6 and 7 on the Order Paper. They are three motions relating to supplementary expenditure. Therefore, if the Council pleases, I would ask that the motion with regard to the Farm Institute be taken next. I refer to item 9.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Rule and Order suspended.

SUPPLEMENTARY EXPENDITURE, 1949.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move the following motion:—

That, this Council approves of the Statement of Supplementary Expenditure for the year 1949 which has been laid on the table being admitted as a charge to public funds under Colonial Regulation 265 (2).

This motion relates to certain items, four of them, which were inadvertently omitted from the final schedule of supplementary expenditure for the year 1949. The omission was detected at the audit, and I am asking Council now to put this matter in order by formally adopting the resolution on this schedule before the Council. The total of the items relates mainly to excesses which had been incurred in giving effect to the Salaries and Wages Commission report. It was inadvertently omitted from the final schedule for that year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion adopted.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1950.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move the following motion—

That, this Council approves of the Supplementary Estimate for the quarter ended 30th September, 1950, which has been laid on the table.

If Council pleases I can deal with items 6 and 7 together, which relate to the supplementary estimates for the quarters ending 30th September and 31st December, 1950, respectively. The first estimate has a total of \$988,682.32 and the second \$1,390,031.26. In the Budget Statement I dealt at very great length with the supplementary expenditure for the year 1950 as a whole, and I explained that the total supplementary provision authorized for the year reached the rather formidable total of \$4,417,000, and that the major part of that amount was in respect of what is called Development Plan Services, (the items being financed from reserves and not current revenue)—\$1,946,359; then Flood Relief and Rehabilitation Measures totalled \$918,016; New items and excesses—\$1,107,117; Arrears of Teachers' Salaries for 1949 paid in 1950—\$165,000; Revotes of unexpended balances of votes in previous years—\$280,946. And I went on to explain that although that was the voted supplementary provision for the year yet I expected, as was shown by the Revised Estimates of Expenditure, the actual expenditure to be over \$1 million less. These two schedules are embodied in those figures and I do not think it is necessary for me to analyse them further at this stage. I would nevertheless move that the Council go into Committee just in case any Member wishes to comment on any individual head. I should, of course, say, that as usual each item has to be specifically approved in Finance Committee in the various monthly schedules presented at our meetings. I beg to move that the Council go into Committee in case any Member wishes to comment on any individual item in both of these schedules for the last two quarters of last year.

Question put, and agreed to.

Council in Committee.

MISCELLANEOUS SUBVENTIONS (OTHER THAN MUNICIPAL).

Item 60—Contribution towards expenses of Trade Commissioner for the B.W.I. and British Guiana in Canada, \$300.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I spoke on this item in Finance Committee. I feel, Sir, that

much time can be saved by not going into the full details, but I wish to record my objection to this head as being unnecessary. I do not know that much has come to light that there is necessity for a new agreement to be entered into, if not entered into yet, between this Colony and Canada, but it seems to me from all the circumstances that this Colony ought not to be made to pay this particular contribution, just as in the case of the attempt made for a Trade Commissioner in the United Kingdom. I hold that our trade is sufficiently taken care of without the necessity to saddle the Colony's expenses with this particular item.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: This particular item has relation to the Trade Commissioner's office and the organization in Canada. Mr. Stollmeyer is our chief representative there, and as Members know, he visited this Colony recently and made contacts with the commercial community and Chamber of Commerce and, I think, some Members of this Council as well. I rather gathered that we were fully satisfied that the work of that organization had great value to ourselves and the other countries of the Caribbean it represents. Quite apart from the normal agency function, Mr. Stollmeyer has done extremely valuable work in connection with the provision of supplies to this Council, and notably in connection with the supply of flour. I understand from our Controller of Supplies that, but for his very able assistance, we might not have had such contracts placed—that is outside the flour agreement—so efficiently as we have had, and have saved such a lot of money on that item.

That apart, I feel sure that Members agree that it is most desirable that we should maintain this organization in Canada. There are many trade interests in respect of trade both outwards from Canada and inwards to Canada from these parts, and I think we would be remiss and not doing the best for ourselves if we came out of this agreement. The organization up to recently has been run very cheaply indeed. Mr. Stollmeyer has had great difficulty in maintaining the office at a proper level in the face of the rise in

the value of the Canadian dollar, and another item which Members know appeared in the Estimates for this year, was designed to give a small increase in the rates of salaries and emoluments. This particular item is in relation to the visit to which I referred earlier. Mr. Stollmeyer had not been to this Colony for a long number of years and it was considered fitting that we should contribute to the cost of the visit he paid here to renew contacts and to seek to enlarge his knowledge of our needs. I do hope that Members will be fully satisfied that our contribution to this particular organization is justified.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I ask the hon. the Financial Secretary whether this particular office is not of greater benefit to the commercial community, as for instance the Chamber of Commerce, than to Government and, if so, is it not a matter which the Chamber of Commerce should take care of, as they are, in my opinion, directly benefited by this particular expenditure?

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: It is true to say that the organisation caters for our commerce and trade, but then our commerce and trade are as vital to the Colony as a whole as to the commercial community, and I see no reason why, because there is a statutory Chamber of Commerce, items of this nature should be borne by that particular body. This is an organisation to stimulate, encourage, help and maintain our trade relations with Canada and, as I said, that particular matter is of very vital interest to the community as a whole, even though the trade passes through the commercial community first. I cannot accept the view that because the commercial community benefits in the first instance directly from the trade, every item of expenditure in connection with the furtherance of colonial trade must be borne by the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. DEBIDIN: We do not import very much less from the U.S.A. Do we have a Trade Commissioner in the U.S.A.?

Mr. MORRISH: My information is, as regards the point the hon. the Financial Secretary made with respect to flour and Mr. Stollmeyer, that the contribution by

this Colony towards this organization was repaid to us perhaps 100 times over in savings to the Colony in the case of flour during last year.

The Council resumed.

Motion put, and agreed to

Motion adopted.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE FOR OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1950.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move the following motion:—

That, this Council approves of the Supplementary Estimate for the quarter ended 31st December, 1950, which has been laid on the table.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and considered the Schedule.

The Council resumed.

Motion put, and agreed to

Motion adopted.

FARM INSTITUTE FOR EASTERN CARIBBEAN.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: May we take now the following motion (item 9) —

That, this Council approves of the participation by this Colony in the scheme for the establishment (with financial assistance under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act) of a Farm Institute at Trinidad for the Eastern Caribbean territories and of the payment of this Colony's contribution of \$41,241 towards the capital cost of the establishment of the Farm Institute such payment to be met by an allocation of available funds for Development Plan Services.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am going to ask you to defer this motion. I quite appreciate the hon. the Financial Secretary's desire to have this motion discussed, and I feel it may be desirable not to have it in the air too long, but at the same time we have a long Order Paper, and in the normal course of things, speaking for myself,

I am prepared to proceed in the order in which the items appear on the Order Paper, and I have come prepared for that. If we had to debate the Venn Commission Report we would not have reached this item today. I am without my notes, the Message and anything else.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I assumed when I moved the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders for this purpose that it was the Council's opinion that we should proceed in that order. One reason for taking this item now is that I wish, with your permission, Sir, to invite the Director of Agriculture to address the Council and, as Members know, he will be leaving the Colony this week for Trinidad on a mission, and he is very anxious to receive the Council's decision as soon as possible. It has been before us quite a long time and I would like to be permitted to move it now.

The PRESIDENT: I think the Council is fully aware of this motion. It is a matter of some urgency. The whole scheme depends on our decision. It is important and we should come to a decision "Yes" or "No" as soon as possible. I agree that we should take this motion now.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like to urge another point. I happen to know, Sir, at least one Member whom I met at a Drainage Board meeting yesterday, who will be attending tomorrow, and I know the other Berbice Member is also likely to be here tomorrow, and this matter concerns them very much. That is another reason why I ask that this particular item be deferred until tomorrow. It may be taken the first thing tomorrow. I think other Members of the Council ought to support me in that.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member was present when the motion was moved for the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders in order to take this motion.

Mr. FERNANDES: I thought this matter was dispensed with already, but it is within the rights of Government to ignore the decision of the Finance

Committee and bring this matter into the Council. We will have to turn it down here. I would just like at this stage to say that it is hardly fair to take this matter if the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice had not been specifically notified that this matter would be taken today. I do not think Government is being fair to him.

The PRESIDENT: It is not a question of Government being fair, it is a question for this Council. If Members want to defer a matter they can defer it. I have pointed out that this is a matter of urgency, but if hon. Members prefer that it be taken tomorrow I am quite agreeable. This matter has been hanging about now for over six months.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I readily concede that the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice, who is certainly one of the protagonists of this matter, should be here. As Members will remember, he moved a motion some time ago in connection with agricultural education, and it is most desirable that he should be here. Consequently I ask that the item be deferred until tomorrow to be taken as the first item.

Mr. KENDALL: Sir, before you put that to the Council I desire to say that we have an Order Paper and it states what should be discussed. I do not think this item should be deferred. The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer would like to carry this thing today and I do not see why it cannot go through now. I do not know that the hon. Member can speak on behalf of the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice. I do not see why it cannot go through, and I am asking that you take a vote on it.

Mr. FERNANDES: With your permission, Sir, I would like to withdraw my opposition.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I withdraw my request that this item be taken today. I think it is most desirable that the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice should be present, as I am quite sure he would wish to express his views, and this Council

should not lose the opportunity to hear the hon. Member on the subject.

Motion deferred.

PUBLIC LOAN BILL.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to make provision for raising in the Colony a loan not exceeding one million five hundred thousand dollars."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

VENN COMMISSION REPORT.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the following motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY:—

"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 23th of September."

The CHAIRMAN: I think the next item is Recommendation 22.

Mr. DEBIDIN: We have not completed our consideration of Recommendation 21. We were debating it when the Council adjourned. As a matter of fact my recollection is that most Members had expressed agreement with the original Recommendation when the debate was adjourned.

The CHAIRMAN: We will have to consult the minutes. I cannot remember whether we completed it or not. I am afraid the Clerk has not the minutes handy. We will go on to Recommendation 22 and return to Recommendation 21 if we find that we have not completed our discussion of it.

Recommendation 22. —

22. *Estate Joint Committees, constituted upon existing lines but with representatives also of the three Unions referred to in Recommendation 23 below should, by Ordinance be set up for each estate, cum annexi. The Chairman should, in the first instance, be*

ex officio the Manager who will, we hope, normally be succeeded in due course by a workers' representative. If, after a reasonable period of time this system does not prove satisfactory, then a neutral should be appointed to the position. Only members of a registered and recognised Trade Union should be eligible for election as workers' representatives upon these committees. (Chapter XIII, paras. 173 and 176 — Pages 95 and 96 of Report.)

This recommendation is generally accepted by both the Sugar Producers' Association and the recognised Unions but Government does not consider that it would be practicable to introduce legislation which purported to make the appointment of Estate Joint Committees compulsory; it is considered that the appointment of such Committees should be a matter for collective agreement between the employers and the employees.

Mr. DEBIDIN: This Recommendation bears some relationship to the previous question of a Wages Board which the Council has already decided against. In speaking on this Recommendation I wish to refer to the position of the various labour unions in the Colony. I want this Council to believe me when I say that I hold no brief for anyone. I am interested not only in the progress of the Colony but the economic condition of the people engaged in the sugar industry. There has been a great deal of disruption in the industry because of the fact that Government has refused to recognize certain unions.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member is absolutely wrong in saying that Government either recognizes or refuses to recognize any particular union. That question does not arise. The law provides for the registration of trade unions, and any trade union can be registered and is registered if it complies with the requirements of the law. This idea of recognition of trade unions by Government does not arise. The question of recognition by employers is an entirely different matter. Government deals with every trade union which is a registered trade union. I hope the hon. Member will not give any wrong impression that there is recognition of any particular trade unions by Government.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I accept entirely the legal correctness of your statement, but

I speak with experience, and I know that the Labour Department has taken the initiative in so far as the recognition of a certain trade union — the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union. I hold no brief for that particular Union. I do not know much about its activities, and with the exception of its President, I do not know who are its executives. That does not concern me. The Labour Department has certainly been taking the initiative in preventing or influencing the non-recognition of this particular union. My contention is — and I speak for the people concerned, especially those on the East Coast of Demerara, part of which is within my constituency — that workers have the right to join the unions of their choice. It seems to me that the decision of the Sugar Producers' Association and the Labour Department not to recognize this union is deliberate.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: To a point of order. The hon. Member is repeating the allegation that the Labour Department has refused to have that particular union recognized. As you have said, Sir, that is quite untrue. It has nothing to do with the Labour Department.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am sorry the hon. the Colonial Secretary has joined issue with me on that, because it will cause me to waste a few minutes in debating that particular issue.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. Member will not wander too far on this question. We are discussing the Estate Joint Committees.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I want to keep within this particular Recommendation but I have been challenged about a statement of mine. I happen to know — because I was one of the participants in some of the conferences which were held — that the Head of the Labour Department made it perfectly clear — and he gave his reasons very strongly — that he would not allow any union to act in a manner which would amount to depredation of the poor workers of the Colony and rob another union of its membership. That is the point I am making. Such action by the Sugar Producers' Associ-

ation — let us put all the blame on them, poor people — forces or tends to force free people to join a union against their own choice. It is fundamentally wrong. If, therefore, for reasons best known to themselves, those people have started a union which is registered in this Colony, it seems to me that it would be very wise on the part of the sugar producers to give them recognition, if not wholly, at least in so far as part of the Colony is concerned.

I say that because it is my opinion that if it is the honest intention of the sugar producers and the Labour Department to do everything to prevent strikes, which affect the livelihood of the people to a great extent, it seems to me that they are doing just what would prevent their intention from being achieved. It gives the union which has been started the right to tell the people that the reason why it is not recognized is because it is standing up for them fairly and squarely, which the other union is not, and for that reason it is recognized. I feel that Government and those concerned ought to take a strong stand in a matter of this kind, a stand which would declare the principle that if a union is sufficiently supported, and not supported for a matter of a few months or a year, then that union must have recognition *pro tanto*. If, as I understand, this particular union has a larger membership than any other in the sugar industry, it bears out my point that it is a sad indictment on everyone concerned that it has not been given recognition so as to avoid recourse to strikes.

I am speaking in the interest of the people and not of any union. If the Estate Joint Committees are to function properly it seems to me to be something of a tragedy that, for instance, on Pln. Enmore those who will be representing the three recognized unions on the Joint Committees will not be representing the bulk of the sugar workers on that particular estate. Is there any sense or logic in such a situation? Government should intervene through the Labour Department and make it abundantly clear that unionism in this Colony must work according to reason and in the interests

of the people concerned, and not according to the fads or fancies of any particular organization, whether it is the Sugar Producers' Association or anyone. I strongly condemn the recommendation which is put forward by Government, that only the three unions referred to should be represented on the Estate Joint Committees to be established.

Dr. JAGAN: I also would like to make a few remarks under this head. There can be no doubt that the system of Estate Joint Committees is a good one, as it attempts to give the workers directly concerned a say in the running of their affairs. If the workers were properly represented I am sure those Committees could do a great deal of good. I know of the great difficulties which are being experienced by trade union leaders if, for instance, they belong to a parent organisation and reside in Georgetown. With the establishment of Estate Joint Committees those leaders are called upon to settle very trivial matters from day to day, but if those Joint Committees were made to function properly I feel sure they would obviate a good deal of unnecessary burden being placed on the union leaders.

There is one factor which must not be lost sight of, and that is this. How are these Joint Committees formed? Therein lies the whole failure of the system. In the first place only workers who belong to the recognized trade unions are eligible for election. Another weakness of the system is that any worker, whether he is a trade unionist or not, can vote at such elections. Those are the fundamental weaknesses of the Joint Committee system which I feel should be corrected if the Committees are to function properly.

The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) has pointed to the fact that one union which is strong on certain sugar estates, is not recognized by the Sugar Producers' Association. It is true that that is a question of recognition, but it does have something to do with the formation of the Estate Joint Committees. If a union is not recognized by the Sugar Producers' Association then

no member of that union can stand for any office on the Joint Committee on any estate. Consequently it means that all members of a union that is not recognized are barred from holding office on the Joint Committee. That is a fundamental weakness which must be corrected if we are to have any peace on sugar estates.

At the present time the question of recognition is causing a great deal of trouble in the British West Indies. In Jamaica not very long ago they had weeks of strikes on sugar estates on the same issue of recognition of trade unions between the rival Bustamante union and the T.U.C. This morning we saw in the Press than even in Grenada the same question of recognition of unions has had something to do with the dispute which is now raging in that island, and I feel sure that unless this Government takes steps and enacts legislation to permit the people's choice to be heeded we are going to continue to have more strikes in the future and more unrest in this country. One cannot accept the proposition that a minority should represent the majority of the people, simply because that minority suits the vested interests or possibly the Labour Department.

While I am on this question I may as well express my views on the next Recommendation which deals with the question of the recognition of the various types of unions. I refer to Recommendation 23.

Mr. ROTH: To a point of order. We started this debate dealing with the Recommendations *seriatim*. I therefore suggest that the hon. Member should wait until we reach Recommendation 23.

The CHAIRMAN: I think it would be better to wait until we reach that Recommendation, otherwise the same argument will be repeated over and over.

Mr. MORRISH: I have listened with considerable interest to the remarks of the last two speakers, and the thing that strikes me is that it is very obvious that

they know nothing about the working of the Estate Joint Committees.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think the hon. Member is taking too much for granted. I will choose a time to tell him how much I know.

Mr. MORRISH: I have taken the chair at many meetings of Joint Committees, and in my view their establishment is one of the best things that has happened on sugar estates for many years. They have opened up an opportunity for the workers to get together with the management and discuss their difficulties, and generally have made for better understanding and better relations between the workers and the management of the estates. However, on the question of whether a union should be recognized or not, I would suggest that Members should read again paragraph 183 on page 99 of the Venn Commission Report which makes reference to the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union. The paragraph reads:

"183. Before discussing the part that can be played by the above five Unions in the industry, we must mention other organizations that have interested themselves in or are operating on the estates. The Guiana Industrial Workers' Union, registered in 1948, grew out of the unrest on the East Coast, Demerara, estates during that year. It is outside our province to touch upon those disturbances, which have already been the subject of enquiry by a local Commission, and we therefore confine ourselves to remarks upon the activities of this Union as we ourselves saw them, or as we were made aware of them, chiefly by the evidence of its officers and members. It claimed to have 4,130 members, but from the register submitted the following figures indicate its true strength at the time of our enquiry:—

Number of members claimed ..	4,130
Number of names entered	3,941
Number who have paid entrance fee (24c.) only	1,300
Number who have paid up to 24c. in monthly subscriptions	1,150
Number who have paid over 24c. in monthly subscriptions	1,490

This still indicates a fairly considerable membership, but it must be remembered that the bulk of it is on the East Coast and the Union cannot with justice claim to represent the

whole of the workers on the sugar estates, although its leaders have been demanding recognition by the employers' Association."

If we turn to the next page, to paragraph 184 of the Report which, as we all know, is the result of a very careful and thorough examination by responsible persons, we find that the Commission came to this conclusion:

"184. This demand is in our view completely unwarranted. The Union has grown as a result of disputes and turbulent action on the East Coast; it is in effect duplicating work which is already being undertaken by the M.P.C.A. and the British Guiana Workers' League, and is taking every opportunity to discredit their achievements and organization. It is opposed to the policy of the Labour Department, disagreeing particularly with the function and purpose of the Estate Joint Committees, which have ceased to operate on those estates where its members are most numerous. It desires to substitute for them, we were informed, *ad hoc* Committees appointed by mass meetings of workers on the estates whenever any dispute should arise. Such a policy would patently lead to confusion and destroy any chance of the sense of continuity and responsibility that the Joint Committee system is steadily fostering."

I have had a great deal to do with those recognised unions in the last few years, and while discussions between unions and employers must of necessity be difficult at times, nevertheless it has been proved that in the last few years we have found that we are dealing with responsible persons whose words can be trusted. The suggestion that there should be a multiplicity of unions in one industry to represent the same type of workers seems to me so absurd that it is hard to conceive how it could possibly be advocated.

Dr. JAGAN: I am not going to sit down here and allow the hon. Member to make statements which are untrue. A moment ago he said that the two hon. Members who had spoken did not seem to know anything about the working of the Joint Committees. Such statements are reported in the Press and I would like the hon. Member to contradict any statement I have made here and point out where I have said something that is wrong,

or which gave the impression that I did not know what I was talking about. I said that the Joint Committees were a valuable institution, provided their make-up was properly arranged for. It is no use asking a man to become a representative of a trade union on a Joint Committee if he does not have the confidence of the majority of the workers, or does not have the backing of a large section of workers who may belong to another trade union. I do not like statements being made here—and it is done over and over in this Council—without any attempt being made to justify contradiction of something a Member might say

Mr. DEBIDIN: What the hon. Member has said is perfectly correct. I am going to give my knowledge of the working of the Joint Committee at Pln. Enmore which is within my constituency. There has not been a properly functioning Joint Committee at Enmore for some time. I do not know if there has been one recently, because I have not been there for a few months, but I know that for years none has been functioning at Enmore. I am subject to correction by any Member of this Council and I have made it a point of duty to examine the reasons for the failure of these Joint Committees. I discovered that when these Joint Committees meet with the Manager as Chairman, the Factory Manager and others, minor matters are discussed, and sometimes settled in favour of the labourer, but on major issues the labourers do not get any redress. The influence of the Manager is so strong that when voting time arrives most of the members of the Committee say "Yes" without intending to do so. It was also revealed—and this is a fundamental point which answers the statement of the hon. Nominated Member — that in the event of a disagreement on any issue that comes before the Joint Committee a member has the right to take that issue to his union, to be gone into by the executive of the union, and the result may be a conference between the Executive of the union and the Sugar Producers' Association.

That brings me to the point which has been discussed by both the hon.

Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) and myself. How can matters of dispute be discussed if there is no properly functioning Joint Committee, or if there is a member who poses to represent the workers on the estate but is one of a few who are members of the recognized union? The result is that he represents just himself and a handful of the sugar workers on the estate. Their problems, which may be specially peculiar to them on that estate, are therefore not fully aired. Who knows those very people might agree because there is that division and competition between that handful of Members belonging to the recognized unions and the mass of labourers belonging to the unrecognized union? We find the few represented on the joint committee agreeing with those who are in authority around the table of the joint committee. One sees, therefore, a fundamental weakness, and I would like to make this point. Just like the hon. Member for Central Demerara, we still seem to recall the fine speech made by the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member on the functions and usefulness of joint committees; most of which I nor anyone else would deny.

Because we know they are institutions which can function well and because we know their union is 100 per cent. strong for members of a community to be able to deal and bargain with others, we find not much stress is being made of the use of joint committees in this Colony. But that is mere theoretical argument which may draw a few people who are members of the recognized unions. This Colony is not on a par with Great Britain or anywhere else where joint committees function well. Those people functioning on joint committees in Great Britain not only know their union is 100 per cent. strong behind them, but they are all literate and educated. We cannot have it both ways. We condemn illiteracy in this Colony twice, thrice over, and yet we have erased the vote for the adult education of these very people whom we are seeking to put on joint committees to face educated Managers and other personnel of the various committees. How one-sided it would be? Sir, that is a point which must never escape us — that so far as these people are concerned they are

uneducated; they are easily led or, let us say, easily overpowered by influence. Where it concerns their livelihood it is an influence greater than the influence Members are thinking of that brings strikes about. Their bread and butter is very important to them and, if they are thinking of favours for themselves they easily succumb to the influence of the Managers and others around.

I have had a considerable number of reports on that score, that these people on the joint committees usually serve in a manner which is very helpful to their own cause. That is why the people condemn their own member on the joint committee and before long that member from fear of being thrashed ceases to attend. That is why with other reasons the Enmore joint committee never functioned at least two years before the famous strike which led to tragedy in 1948. These are circumstances we must bear in mind when dealing with Recommendation 22, 23 and 24. They are so important and so much importance is attached to them that I must add this to what I have already said on Recommendation 22. I am profoundly pained at this moment over the fate and circumstances of the people on the two estates in my constituency. I say so with the knowledge of what has been taking place there up to last Sunday. Does this Government know that only last Sunday—to use a colloquialism—there has been a dog fight over the question of recognition between the two unions in that particular area? The two unions went up there and wanted to hold meetings. I happen to know there was a meeting arranged by one and that meeting was more or less squelched, and the other union was trying to placate the fancies of the other's members. They were going to clash. Eventually both were made to hold meetings. Is it fair to people, my own brethren for that matter, people whom I feel for, to be tugged about in the manner in which they are, for the Sugar Producers to sit down solidly and pontifically say "We are not going to recognize anything else, it does not matter if it leads to a general strike or shooting?"

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member

must not speak of the Sugar Producers' Association in that sense to suggest that they do not care twopence about shooting or anything else. The hon. Member must be careful of what he says about anybody, whether leaders of Trade Unions or Sugar Producers. He cannot say that any body of persons does not care twopence about any shooting. I must warn him not to say that.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am not suggesting there is, but I hope the idea of shooting people willy-nilly will stop. I am saying that because of this obdurate stand by these bodies; with all the activities, the actions and reactions, which are taking place, it may have results which I am going to be mentally pained over, as I have suffered already two or three years ago. I say my mind and that is what it is.

Mr. LUCKHOO: The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara is perfectly correct when he says that the workers are easily led and overpowered by influence.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I said by the management!

Mr. LUCKHOO: The word which I took down was "influence". Anyhow he might have also added "easily misled", because of what has happened on the East Coast, Demerara. The joint committees are functioning and giving adequate service throughout the Colony, save and except the East Coast Demerara, and the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara is perfectly right when he says that at the moment there is no joint committee functioning at Enmore. That may be due to a number of reasons, but primarily because the people have been misled. I say so because, if I may be allowed to use the personal tone which I do not like to do, from enquiries I have made most people on the estates there have been told that a Wages Board is something which is put up on the estates where people may see the rates of wages. Gross canards have been given and false impressions created as to the people's rights and as to what the recognized unions can and may do for them. Sir, it is true, maybe, that many estates along

the East Coast Demerara have not enjoyed the paternal influence of one of the recognized unions. Efforts are being made now to give them that requisite help which the recognized unions can give, and it is a pleasing feature to see, despite attempts made to prevent the people from learning the truth, they are not only learning the truth but are showing their willingness to co-operate and to be guided by one of the recognized unions. There are instances, just this very week, of people from the hon. Member's constituency, from Plns. Enmore and Mon Repos, coming down and receiving the attention of one of the recognized unions.

Sir, for myself it is nearly two years now since I have expressed the view that there should be one union, a view which I had the pleasure of hearing come from Your Excellency's expression as well. There should be one union to control and to guide the workers on the several sugar estates. That is a view, Sir, which I do still adhere to. Members and individuals like the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara himself, a man who represents labour and seeks opportunity to see how he may make right what he considers to be wrongs, are invited to come into the recognized unions and see in what manner or form they may give some assistance. But, Sir, what one does object to is that the union should be used as a political springboard for the propagation of some particular ideology. I say so, Sir, advisedly because I know what politicians are saying and the tenor of their speeches to the poor workers. I say "poor" feelingly, because they can easily be led and are very easily misled, they are not given a square deal by those persons who should know better. It is so very easy to criticize. If these people of the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union are willing to show their bona fides let them go to the M.P.C.A., on which I have some little say, and there make their contribution towards a better country or better provisions for the workers on the sugar estates. But I do know and I am not going to be prepared to permit "pirate" unions or organizations from outside to attempt to utilize a recognized union for the purpose of their own ends without

thinking primarily of the workers. I must apologize, Sir, for the inflection of any personal note, as I say it is not something I approve of that one should speak personally in this matter.

To return to the objective approach, I do feel, Sir, that though estates' joint committees may not provide a 100 per cent. solution to the problem of the people and the workers, it does provide a means or an avenue for them to have their grievances aired and to have them settled. I may tell the hon. Member that the old fear of victimization no longer exists, and usually present at the meetings of the joint committees are not only representatives of the unions concerned but also representatives from the Labour Department. I do not think in any stage of the workers' history have they had that form of representation which they are enjoying today. Before I take my seat, Sir, I would like to stress again that those who are willing to act in the cause of the workers are welcome to enter and participate in one of the recognized unions and to work towards the common end and the good of the workers.

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. Member who has just spoken said that he will not permit "pirate" unions or organizations to come in within the realms of the recognized unions. May I inform him that the very union in which he is was at one time considered a "pirate" union and it had the greatest difficulty before it was recognized by the very same Sugar Producers' Association. What is good for one person one day must also be good for another person some other day. I am also wondering who are to do the recognizing—whether the unions themselves are to permit others to be recognized, or whether the employers are to determine what organizations are to be recognized? It is true, Sir, that certain Members are given very free scope. We also admit, as the hon. Member suggested, that the Trade Union Movement is being used today as a political platform, and we do know, too, that certain Members use the Trade Union Movement for political purposes and as he suggested, to force a certain ideology on the unsuspecting

workers. But there again we have ideology and ideology, and we have been invited by the hon. Member to come into the ranks of the M.P.C.A. I wonder what kind of ideology we are to give and get in that organization? Some of the unions which are now recognized—let us take for instance the Workers' League. When was the last election held, a recognized election by the Workers' League? How many members this League has? These matters do not seem to affect the Sugar Producers' Association at all, neither does it seem to affect the hon. Member who speaks so much of the recognized unions. But it is important from the workers' point of view to know who is representing them.

The CHAIRMAN: That is his trouble very often!

Dr. JAGAN: That is why I want to speak under other heads, so that I can make my point all-impressive. If we must live by democratic standards and if people are non-recognized by one set of persons, then the other side, if the sugar estates would permit them to, should also give vent to their feelings. Certain persons are today easily accepted by the Sugar Producers' Association. Is there any reason that the masses should not become very suspicious? Other persons who are genuinely trying to do something for these poor people are told "You must not set foot on this estate. You must not hold a meeting here, and so on." You spoke, Sir, some time ago about the right to register a union by law. Yes, that is a right, but I would like to know if that right to register a union embraces the full right of association which the I.L.O. accepted years ago that any international body has the right to register an association of their own choosing. The hon. Member referred to the fact that the workers are not intimidated today. One has not to be coerced openly today, because we know there are several indirect means of coercion—starvation, being thrown out of your house and others, which are subtly forced on the people at all times on these estates. If the workers are to have the right to organize free associations, then their leaders must not be obstructed at every turn. Their leaders are giv

trespass notices and are hauled in front of the Courts, whereas others are accepted with open arms. One begins to wonder what is behind it all. Anyway I shall have more to say about this matter under the other heads that are coming up.

But I will insist that Government make provision for the right of free association, the right for collective bargaining. It is no use telling a man that he has the right to join a trade union, a legal right to register a union, and then you tell him you will not recognize that union for the purpose of collective bargaining. The mere fact that a union is registered and goes about making members, it is for the purpose of collective bargaining. If that purpose is obstructed then why have registration and say the M.P.C.A. and the Workers' League represent the workers? If that is to be, then we may go to the United Nations and say "Let the Malan Government be transported to British Guiana." I do not think the Government in Great Britain, which subscribes to the various international conventions on human rights and what not, would sit by idly and see these methods used in British Guiana. I do hope an enactment would be made shortly in British Guiana to permit free association of individuals in this country with the right to collective bargaining.

Mr. LEE: I did not want to say anything with respect to this matter, but I think a false impression is being created by several speakers. The right to register a trade union is free, free association of workers is also free, but the right of bargaining with free associations is entirely left with the employers. Therefore the workers should learn that if they have a majority the employers would recognize them. As far as I am being told, none of the unions catering for the sugar estates enjoys a majority of sugar workers. That is the trouble. On the joint committees they are compelled not to vote for any outsider, and if they do the vote is cancelled. The employers only recognize the M.P.C.A. and the Workers' League members. I wish the hon. Nominated Member would enquire into that. He would find that not all

that is right is being done. I do hope the sugar workers would end. If these unions are fighting for the good of the people, let them get together and have one proper union recognized. If the M.P.C.A. is a recognized union and is willing to join hands with the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union for the benefit of the workers, let them be invited to a conference. I do hope the leaders here would take cognizance of that fact and get on with the benefit which should be given to the workers.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I share the view of the last Member entirely, and for that reason I move that we accept Recommendation 22 without the following words: "*but with representatives also of the three Unions referred to in Recommendation 23 below.*" In other words by this amendment — the deletion of those words — I recognize the fact or the necessity to continue joint committees. I support that. Let us remove the bone of contention. I would add in support of what the last speaker said, I have been trying myself—and not only my efforts but I know the efforts of others—to bring the two unions—the M.P.C.A. and the G.I.W.U.—together. They had almost come together. There was just one small dissenting difference—the question of executive personnel. That is as to who should be head. I am expressing the hope like you, Sir, that these two unions would see the necessity for coming together. I know as a fact that in the election of members of the joint committee a handful of members of one union was hard put to elect representatives because the majority of workers were without the right to elect because they belonged to another union. I am anxious to see that a part of my constituency becomes peaceful, and I am anxious to see the right step taken not by Government but by the Sugar Producers' Association, and the only thing is partial recognition, if not whole recognition, for the Union which has maintained such a long sustained interest in the workers. My friend made a flowery speech. The question of popularity of a union depends on the personnel of the executive, and the M.P.C.A. executive have become un-

popular throughout the Colony and not only in my constituency because they have had an accumulation of wrongs and complaints. If for that reason some other union is able to make good because of those wrongs for which they have themselves to blame, it is wrong for the sugar estate authorities to ban that union and thus contribute to a state of things which is not reasonable and fair to the people.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member suggests that the Estate Joint Committees should be established by law and says that he quite agrees with what I have said in this Council about all joining together in one trade union. Would he go as far then as to suggest legislation making it compulsory that there should be only one trade union? If he looks at it from that angle he would, perhaps, see the difficulty of having compulsory joint committees. I ask him if he would have compulsorily one trade union for the whole industry. But it is, I agree, one trade union we want. There is no quarrel among the sugar workers at all; it is among their rival leaders, and it is by the different unions that they are being torn asunder. Every hon. Member in this Council knows it as well as I do, especially those who spoke in this debate this afternoon. If the hon. Member is talking about compulsion let him go as far as to say there should be one trade union for the sugar industry and it should be compulsory by law. He would see where we get to then, when he is talking about the freedom of the individual and his right but would pass a law to say "No, it should be compulsory."

Mr. DEBIDIN: I hope it is not understood that I am recommending there should be legislation to make one trade union for the industry, but in the case of the joint committees legislation may be made as to how it should function. The whole question of functioning on legislation is an expansion of Recommendations 23 and 24. I am in favour of any committee or union coming within the legislative framework in Recommendation 22. So it must not be thought that by making this recommendation I am proposing that there should be legislation to form one union in the Colony. Not at all.

The CHAIRMAN: I am merely reminding the hon. Member of the difficulties which, sooner or later, he will come up against if he talks about the abolition of trade unions, Joint Committees or anything else. We are getting on to a very dangerous track, it seems to me.

Mr. LEE: I would like it recorded in Hansard that as far as my knowledge goes there is no unpopularity of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Luckhoo.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. Member is out of order. I never suggested that at all. I was speaking of the executive as it existed before.

Mr. LEE: I will accept that.

Government's decision on Recommendation 22 put, and agreed to.

Recommendation 23:—

23. Full recognition should be accorded by all the operating Companies and the individual estates to the Drivers' Association, the Sugar Boilers' Union and the Sugar Estate Clerks' Association. (Chap. XIII, para. 182 — Page 99 of Report).

The Sugar Producers' Association has already accorded full recognition to the Drivers' Association (now renamed the British Guiana Headmen's Union), the Sugar Boilers' Union and the Sugar Estate Clerks' Association.

Mr. DEBIDIN: With all respect to the Venn Commission, who have done an excellent job, I think this is one point on which they have stubbed their feet and stubbed them very badly. I know they have fallen here because they have been misled by a mass of evidence, given privately, as to what is really required by the people of this Colony. This is the place where I am going to mention it. One hon. Member has already referred to the Workers' League. There was evidence at the Enmore enquiry which showed that the records of the League had not been written up for two years before that. A moribund institution has been recognized. What kind of reasoning can any Commission produce for the recognition of an organization that is dead? I personally cannot see any wisdom in this Recommendation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This Recommendation seems to me to deal with the Drivers' Association, the Sugar Boilers' Union, and the Sugar Estate Clerks' Association.

The CHAIRMAN: Recognition has been accorded these organizations by the Sugar Producers' Association. It is not a matter for Government or this Council.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I would like a ruling as to whether we can add to a Recommendation by moving in a new thought. I wish to suggest that all unions with reasonable membership be given recognition with respect to any area or part of an area.

Dr. JAGAN: This Recommendation, in my opinion, is a retrograde step. It is felt in all quarters that there should be only one union in the sugar industry; we are hearing that all the time. Now the Venn Commission comes along and says that the sugar producers should recognize the Drivers' Association, the Sugar Boilers' Union, and the Sugar Estate Clerks' Association. It is a known fact in trade union development that industrial organization is taking over the craft organization in any industry. In other words the tendency is to organize on an industrial basis. We have a typical example in the U.S.A. where the American Federation of Labour, an organization of crafts, was eventually superseded by the C.I.O. Here we find the Venn Commission recommending the very retrograde step of recognition of a multiplicity of organizations in order to split the workers in one industry into several small organizations so as to keep them disunited. I have heard a lot of praise of the Commission in this Council.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: May I invite the attention of the hon. Member to Recommendation 24?

Dr. JAGAN: The hon. the Colonial Secretary is merely coming back to the point I made a moment ago. If we make a Council of slaves to represent free people I do not think they would get very much out of it. That is exactly what Recommendation 24 suggests. The proposal is to federate the Workers' League with the M.P.C.A. and other small unions into an Advisory Council. I do not see

any necessity for that. I feel that the principle of having one trade union for the sugar industry should be accepted. That principle is accepted in the U.S.A. and Canada. Perhaps it does not suit the sugar producers, and no doubt that is the reason why the Venn Commission has reported in this fashion. I suggest that this is a backward step, tending to disunite the workers and allow certain people to exploit them and keep them in the miserable state in which they are existing at present.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would like to point out that you, Sir, have repeatedly said, and you repeated it this afternoon, that Government is entirely in favour of one strong union to represent the sugar industry.

Dr. JAGAN: If Government is in favour of that I wonder if it would authorize me to draft a Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Government is not in favour of making it compulsory.

Dr. JAGAN: It is not a question of making it compulsory but of providing machinery to allow such a union to be recognized.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not see why the workers should be coerced in the way the hon. Member suggests, to form one union.

Dr. SINGH: I may explain how the M.P.C.A. started, and how the Drivers' Association came into existence. Originally the only organization which looked after the interests of sugar estate workers was the B.G. East Indian Association. Representatives of estate workers frequently came to the Association, with their problems which entailed quite a lot of work. I was President of the Association at the time and I had to visit various estates week after week. That took up quite a lot of my time and I thought there should be a Union to deal with labour conditions on sugar estates. Mr. Ayube Edun, who was then the Secretary of the B.G. East Indian Association, organized the Man-Power Citizens' Association which did a lot for the workers

on the sugar estates and got a good deal of prominence. The time came when some of the labourers were not prepared to accept the advice of the Association and they branched off and formed a new union. It was a vendetta to clash with the M.P.C.A. That is how we have so many unions today.

I was the first President of the Drivers' Association, but because the overseers had a Club where they played billiards and other games the drivers thought they should enjoy similar privileges. I came out of the Association because I thought the drivers wanted to go too far beyond their means. I do not think it is necessary to accept the Drivers' Association or the Sugar Boilers' Union.

The CHAIRMAN: I think we should record that this Council commends what has been done with regard to Recommendation 23.

Recommendation 23 approved.

Recommendation 24:—

24. *A Trades Union Advisory Council should be formed of the two already recognised Unions and the three mentioned above to co-ordinate all Trade Union activity in the sugar industry. We deprecate any further increase in the number of Unions catering for the industry. (Chapter XIII. para. 191 — 101 of Report).*

A Sugar Industry Joint Trade Union Committee, comprising representatives of the five Unions recognised by employers, has now been formed.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think we have the power and I move that Recommendation 24 be not accepted — not even the decision of the Sugar Producers' Association.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member can move that this Council does not favour the establishment of a Trades Union Advisory Council as recommended under Recommendation 24, and I will put it to the vote.

Mr. DEBIDIN: There is more than that; it is fundamentally wrong. A Trades Union Council may be something good but not a Trades Union Advisory Coun-

cil based on the set-up provided under this Recommendation. It seems to me to suggest that two already recognized unions, which obviously are the Workers' League and the M.P.C.A., and the three organisations mentioned in Recommendation 23, should co-ordinate all trade union activities in the sugar industry. In their Recommendation the Commission state:

"...We deprecate any further increase in the number of Unions catering for the industry."

I would like to make some brief remarks on that point. First of all there is a desire in this Recommendation to co-ordinate all trade union activity in the sugar industry. From what has been said today it ought to be clear to every Member that all trade union activity will not be co-ordinated when a very strong trade union is functioning. I make bold to say, with all deference to my good friend, the hon. the Seventh Nominated Member (Mr. Luckhoo), that the more attempts are made to curb the activity of the particular union the more it is extended as far as I can see. As a matter of fact it is a case of leading and misleading men that is going on.

As regards the Workers' League it seems to me that it had been completely moribund when it was fanned into life again, or at least an attempt was made to put it back into circulation by recognizing it so that it might be able to speak particularly on behalf of the factory workers. It was clear that the President and others who posed to be an executive committee went forward when they were actually not *functus officio*. In the same way as the Sugar Producers' Association has given recognition to two unions — one active and the other moribund — it seems to me that recognition ought to have been given to the Union which had been standing side by side with the Producers' Association in the industry, and in my opinion there would have been an earlier getting together of those two unions. I feel sure there would have been fusion by now, but instead of that, although the principle had been accepted by the moribund organization, there was slowness in recognizing the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union.

There is just another point. It has to be borne in mind that this question of recognition is not something created by legislation. It is not even governed by any agreement between the Sugar Producers' Association and Government. It is merely an idea — a figment of the imagination of the Head of the Labour Department. I have known him to enunciate this particular principle, and whether it was in collaboration with the Sugar Producers' Association or not, the fact remains that the Labour Department has certainly snapped it up and made it a firm rule. It is what has started all the trouble which ended in tragedy, because it was made just before the incident at Enmore.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: To what particular rule does the hon. Member refer?

Mr. DEBIDIN: A rule which is man-made — the creation of one man's mind; a rule which says that the Sugar Producers' Association should recognize only two unions at that time. There is nothing upon which we can rely to establish the existence of such a rule.

Mr. MORRISH: I am sorry to interrupt but I just cannot understand this reference to a rule. I am aware of no rule which enforces anything upon anyone.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member also referred to a rule that only two unions should be recognized, but five of them are already recognized by this Association.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. the Colonial Secretary is unaware of all the circumstances preceding the fateful year of 1948. At that time there was no question of the recognition of those three Unions at all. They are now being recognized, but before 1948 the whole question was the recognition of two unions and no more, and that had been driven into the minds of all concerned, including the union which was not recognized. That is the reason why, when that particular union started to operate on the East Coast and a strike was called, it ended

as it did. Are we still going to stick to man-made rules?

The CHAIRMAN: Well, who else would you want to make them?

Mr. DEBIDIN: When I referred to man-made rules I think I defined what I meant. Some person out of mere fad or fancy conceived what he considered to be right, and that is what is being acted upon. It is a rule made by one man. It was enunciated by the Head of the Labour Department who has made another ruling which is affecting everybody, and is causing some trouble at the same time. He said that no politicians must take any part in anything that concerns a union. What is the result? People were shot because those who were able to could not call off the strike. Those rules have not been given sanction by anybody except the Sugar Producers' Association who were anxious to snap them up and make use of them. They were made by one man and slavishly adopted by the Sugar Producers' Association without any sanction by Government. I do not know if Government is to be brought into the matter as recognizing the rules made by the Labour Department, but that is what is creating all the difficulty today, and now it has crept into the Recommendation of the Venn Commission. A Trades Union Council may be very good but the real desire is to co-ordinate all the unions' activities.

I am opposing this Recommendation as tending not only to propound the theory that only two unions should be recognized, but that three other unions which really do not represent the bulk of the workers on sugar estates. The Drivers' Association might very well be regarded as another S.P.A., because it carries out the commands of the management. A representative of the Drivers' Association will sit on the Joint Committee and on the Council, and will provide an additional vote which might tend to out-vote the labourers in the two recognized unions. So it is with the other unions. The Sugar Boilers' Union is a small body and it is going to be a queer thing to co-ordinate the activities of

boiling sugar with actual field work which embraces thousands of people as compared with a mere handful of sugar boilers. Yet the sugar boilers are to be represented on the Council. Then there is the Clerks' Association which is an adjunct of the management. I feel sure that the Council would not be a success, at least from the point of view of the general sugar workers.

I am particularly urging that the Sugar Producers' Association should go a little further and give recognition to the Unions which have shown that they have some amount of sway with the workers. After all there is the question of bargaining, and I feel sure that not only would peace prevail if recognition were granted, but the great objective of having the rival unions come together would be more easily achieved. For the reason that I feel that the Council would not succeed I oppose the Recommendation.

Mr. LEE: I am asking my friend to withdraw his objection. We have five Unions being represented by the Sugar Producers' Association, and if representation on the Trades Union Advisory Council will be on the basis of numerical strength the workers will have a greater voice in the Council.

Mr. LUCKHOO: May I point out that the Trades Union Advisory Council has been in operation for some time now, and the policy is really to discuss general principles. We have met on very many occasions, and one of the schemes evolved by the Council is a provident benefit schedule, something which was decided upon after some 24 meetings of the five Unions. This provident benefit scheme is a scheme whereby the Sugar Producers Association would contribute \$80,000 a year, and in addition the recognized Unions would contribute to the scheme and the workers themselves who desire — it will not be compulsory — to benefit in the case of the birth of a child, sickness or death, will make a weekly contribution. That is the kind of work which this Trades Union Advisory Council has been doing. It is not concerned with the working of the individual sections but with broad general principles,

and it has done an extremely good job in getting up material and providing rules for the provident benefit scheme which, unfortunately, could not be put into operation because the various unions had to alter their rules to make provision for the payment of money over to the fund. I think that in most cases, if not all, the unions have made the necessary changes in their rules, and this is a further benefit which the workers will enjoy.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am glad that my friend has argued my point so clearly. He has said that the unions concerned must alter their rules in order to contribute to the provident fund. It is clear, therefore, that all workers who are not members of these recognized unions cannot have these unions putting over anything for them. It follows logically — and that is where there is no co-ordination — how can there be co-operation when another union whose membership is substantial is debarred from this thing, from putting many things in order for the benefit of all?

Mr. WIGHT: Sir, while I agree with quite a few of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara and the hon. Member for Central Demerara, still it does not for one moment seem that this particular paragraph is not a logical conclusion of acceptance of the principles of Trade Unionism as they are at the present moment in this Colony. It is true that the two recognized unions did not enjoy the confidence of the workers and at one time the confidence of the Sugar Producers' Association. These reasons are well known to some of us and, I expect to most of us. It is also true that the re-organization of the M.P.C.A. would possibly bring more popularity to the movement and, perhaps, consolidate the sugar workers on the estates. I do not think the hon. Nominated Member, himself a member of the executive, would doubt there is still further need for improvement within that body itself. I do not want to be particularly personal with regard to any particular executive, but I can name a couple of executive members of his own union who should be removed not only in the interest of the workers but in the interest of the

body itself. Also it is true, as the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has said, that one other union, the Workers' League, is also under a cloud. That, perhaps, it may be agreed also needs a little rejuvenation. That is a matter entirely for the Labour Department to keep strict scrutiny on the workings and activities of these bodies.

While I am in entire agreement with them, their argument seems to me to convey that by the recognition of other unions the Sugar Producers have probably recognized the best, I would say, of a bad bunch. It may be these bodies may ultimately achieve the ultimate objective of all those particularly concerned in the well-being of the workers and the welfare of the Trade Union Movement in the consolidation of those five unions into one large union which will operate in the whole of the sugar industry. It may be that this is the stepping-stone to the ultimate objective of what we all desire. Then, of course, we would not have these disorders and these, perhaps justifiable, attacks in regard to the two duly recognized unions.

But this seems again to be a logical conclusion of a position as found to be obtaining in this country when the Venn Commission made its enquiry. There were these five unions recognized by the sugar industry. Their policy is not to extend them and not to allow the creation of a new union. Ultimately one union was rejected. Therefore they were confronted with the position that they had to accept the five unions which were being accepted by the Sugar Producers' Association. It is not a matter of compulsion, a matter of collective bargaining but a matter of recognition by the Sugar Producers' Association of these five unions with whom they would confer and negotiate.

Dr. JAGAN: I, too, would like to ask the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara to withdraw his objection to this Recommendation, because in actual fact this Recommendation does not mean very much at all. A Joint Trade Union Advisory Council is merely a body that gets together and talk. It is advisory, as it says here, like the Trades Union Council, not very strong, can only talk and

cannot carry out any action but can only recommend. It is very significant to hear it has accomplished one thing, and that is from the joint discussions of the Trade Union Advisory Council with the Sugar Producers' Association a Provident Benefit Scheme has been arrived at.

Mr. MORRISH: To a point of correction! This provident scheme is being worked upon.

Dr. JAGAN: It is good to see how this Advisory Council is working, because it seems to point the way to what the trade unions should do in this country, when the Venn Commission recommends there should be a Contributory Pension Scheme and when a Trade Union Council made up of five unions is trying to get a Provident Scheme. Soon we would have to change the rules of all trade unions to bring them into burial societies and then have a good and sound representation for the working class of this country. I can now see why these five unions are receiving the blessings of the Sugar Producers' Association. I do hope there would be some other progressive trade union to fight for the Contributory Pension Scheme which is suggested by the Venn Commission.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I do not know if my friend was delivering a panegyric or was serious in what he was saying. Even if I stand alone I am going to say that the whole of this Recommendation is abhorrent, because it cannot co-ordinate the activities of the sugar industry. That is my knowledge of what has been done already in so far as recommending or advising the acceptance of a Provident Benefit Society. That is something I regard as being a step towards killing another union which is registered. It may appear when I speak that I am speaking on behalf of that union, but it is because of this battle which is causing suffering to the people. If this is to be there, then it means all the people cannot have the benefits unless they belong to a recognized union. This is forcing the people to join the recognized unions. This is worse than what I was talking about, legislation being introduced. I can see, however, the whole of these designs. I

would like to see democracy at work and not little designs, which on the face seem innocent but are calculated to do harm to any individual or individual association.

I consider so far as the point is concerned about a Council being formed to advise the sugar industry, it is something that can be useful. I want to repeat that today, but I want to say further that if it is going to exclude a portion of the people of the country through their particular union, then it fails fundamentally and the rule which has been made by some people and held to very fast would be relaxed for this particular recommendation. If it is relaxed to bring in the Advisory Council for that particular purpose I feel sure that nothing would be wrong with Recommendation 24 because it is best. But I cannot agree with the Venn Commission at all on the way in which this particular Recommendation is made, and I am going to ask when the time comes for a division on it.

Dr. JAGAN: There is one point I would like to raise, and that is in respect of the latter part of the Recommendation — "*We deprecate any further increase in the number of Unions catering for the industry.*" It is true the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member read a statement from the Report of the Venn Commission intimating that the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union is a new union which gained popularity because of the strike of 1948 and the subsequent shooting, but what he did not say but which is there in that Report also is, after a period of two or three years and that condition — that is the strength of the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union should continue; if it is felt that the Union is still strong then some means should be found whether or not this Union should gain recognition by the Sugar Producers' Association. I am definite about reading that passage somewhere in that Report.

The CHAIRMAN: Paragraph 87 of the Report.

Dr. JAGAN: It is important that

while we read these reports we must give all the facts and not read one section and leave out another section which is very pertinent. This section I am referring to is very pertinent. This Union is very strong today, two years after this Report was written.

Government's action on Recommendation 24 put, and the Committee divided and voted as follows :—

For—Messrs. Luckhoo, Morrosh, Carter, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Fernandes, Raatgever, Lee, Wight, Capt. Coghlan, Dr. Singh, Dr. Nicholson, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary — 16.

Against — Mr. Debidin — 1.

Did not vote — Dr. Jagan — 1.

Government's action on Recommendation 24 adopted.

Recommendation 25 — *None but those whose livelihood depends on their work on sugar estates, in field or in factory, should be eligible for membership of, or ought to hold office, in, a Trade Union concerned with their industry. A qualification of three years employment in the industry should further be required of all the candidates for Union office. We hope that this principle, which should not apply to a full-time paid secretary or organiser, may also be made applicable to all other industries in the Colony. We suggest in addition that the Governor in Council might grant at his discretion exemption from the provisions of our recommendation in respect of those who, though not employed in the industry, have deserved well of their Union and are necessary to its well-being and efficiency. In this we follow the example of Hong Kong Ordinance No. 8 of 1948 and Federation of Malaya Ordinance No. 15 of 1948. (Chapter XIII — paras. 194 and 195 — Pages 101 and 102 of Report).*

While Government agrees that it is desirable that, wherever possible, Trade Union officers should be recruited from

the ranks of workers or persons directly connected with the industry concerned, it is not felt that, in local conditions, 'the workers should be denied freedom of choice in the selection of their own union officers; and it is not proposed to introduce legislation to implement this recommendation.'

Mr. WIGHT: I think, if I may be permitted to say, not having studied the principles of Trade Unionism, this is about one of the best recommendations that ever has been made in this Report. We have heard a lot from certain hon. Members connected with the Trade Union Movement — and I trust we would have a lot more to hear from them — on this particular Recommendation. It is unfortunate, however, that Government cannot find its way to implement by way of legislation this particular recommendation. It seems to me that we have had a lot of flowery opinions and ideology. The only union with which I have been privileged to come into close association was one by which its rules prohibited any person not working in the particular trade or in such employment from holding office. I see the hon. Member for Central Demerara smiles. He appreciates that. That is the Municipal Employees Trade Union. The hon. Member knows fully well that has always been so, despite the efforts made to infiltrate into that Union by persons not so employed. These efforts have been successfully resisted by that Union as far as I am aware, and it is one of the strongest financially and has done a considerable amount of work.

Mr. LEE: Question!

Mr. WIGHT: That is as far as I am aware. Anyway the position is, it is financially sound and thriving, and further it has gained many advantages for its members across the table and, no doubt, will continue so to do. It does seem rather strange that persons who are not engaged in a particular livelihood are able to discuss with others across the table matters of the nature concerned with that livelihood. It may be, it is true, that a lawyer puts forward a case much better than other professional men

and, therefore has the slight edge of having official priority than any other. It is the danger of the total outsider working in the Union and not working alongside of the Union members, who is using the Union for an ideology, such as that of the hon. Member for Central Demerara — another form of progressive labour movement. What that means we can only visualize and attempt to study. I thought there was only one ideology in the Trade Union Movement, but apparently the hon. Member suggests there are two — pacifist and aggressor. I do not know to which he refers and which ideology is meant. There is only one aggressive ideology in the world at large today I am aware of, and it is that aggressive ideology which is keeping the world in a state of tension, a state of uncertainty which will no doubt lead to a state of poverty and depression and misery if it continues. That is the only aggressive ideology I can see for the moment which may permeate the Trade Unions. I trust it would not. I do hope this Recommendation would receive the support of the majority of hon. Members around this table.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I certainly support the views which have been expressed below the Recommendation in Your Excellency's Message. I think that in the circumstances they have been wise, and the wisdom of it lies in this fact that Trade Unionism in this Colony is young. It has not yet reached the stage where it can safely toddle by itself without holding on to something. Another aspect which supports that is this: The people of the Colony are not all of the same standard of intelligence. As a matter of fact so much illiteracy prevails, illiteracy which has been in one way or another indifferently regarded by Members of this Council to the extent that they regard it as not being important enough to have it liquidated in any way whatever, we must find that hand which can easily guide them and represent them, but I would express this view that it must be representation of the best kind, of the genuine kind, of the conscientious kind, those who will see that their conditions improve. That is the platform on

which such intervention and support of the people who are actually dependent on the livelihood of the particular trade or industry must depend.

It seems to me, Sir, that Trade Unionism has been introduced and developed too fast in British Guiana. I have seen a Frankenstein produced because it has been overnight. There is no question about it, if the strikes which took place recently, — I am speaking not of the sugar industry — have been misguided and certainly not anything that a right thinking person can commend, as they dislocated very essential services in this Colony, that is the result of what one would regard as the premature strength of Trade Unionism, in this Colony, premature transference of power into its hands. As long as this condition remains, it seems to me that with the people left to themselves this might be useful, but they still must have guidance but guidance of the best kind. This is something which does answer the last speaker — those who particularly participated in those two strikes are actual workers in the industry or that particular sphere in which they gain their livelihood. They were not outsiders altogether.

The people I am particularly interested in, the people on the sugar plantations, their condition is such, their educational standard is such that though there may be a few of them who can express themselves and exhibit a great deal of intelligence, yet they do look forward and up to others who can properly say something more than they to assist them to determine their various problems. As long as they look forward and up to such things then the encouragement given must be of the best and by the best to be selected. But if I am under an injunction not to participate in their affairs — I say that because I was told in the Colonial Secretary's Office that politicians should not go and interfere in trying to stop the strike, when I was willing to go with others, those particular leaders, and stop the strike but the Head of the Labour Department said politicians must not, including the Vice President of the Trades

Union Council, the hon. Member for Essequibo River, and myself and the hon. Member for Central Demerara who had to do with part of the affected area; we proposed to sit in conference, but that Head of the Department said no politicians must sit on that conference, and the then Colonial Secretary said: "We will get over this particular point and let you know when that point is got over and when you can proceed to address the people." I know the President of this Industrial Union was waiting in his car to find out whether we had succeeded in getting a decision to go and stop the strike, because he was willing —

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. Member would keep to the point.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is very germane.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. Member saying that if he was a member of the Trade Union the strike would not have occurred?

Mr. DEBIDIN: There was a conference to be arranged which three Members of this Council were to attend not as members of any Trade Union. They were to sit in at the conference and try to settle that dispute, and the Commissioner of Labour sharply said "I object to any politician sitting in at any conference". Had we done that not only there would have been a unanimous movement towards stopping that strike but a lot of other things would have been done and much good would have come out of that conference. The time has come when we must know what is good and what is bad, and I am glad to see the suggestion made in the Recommendation, and I would appeal to the hon. Member for Western Essequibo to regard this question not necessarily that only politicians are the people to lead but that those who would wisely lead the people should still have a hand in guiding and helping the people. We hope a great deal of genuineness and consciousness is in it all.

Dr. JAGAN: I do like to record my acceptance of Government's views on this matter, because unlike the hon. Member for Western Essequibo I cannot see anything of value in this Recommendation.

He seems to feel this is one of the best recommendations of this Report. Perhaps I should like to ask him whether he would also approve of the fact that no professional man or any other person should hold shares in a company or should be on the directorate of a company, and whether such a person as a King's Counsel should represent the Sugar Producers because he has direct interest in the sugar industry? I wonder how far he would go, because what is good for the goose must also be good for the gander. If we are to place restrictions on the workers as to their right to choose their leaders, then it seems to me that we would also be using powers possibly to infringe on the rights of other members of the community. I am wondering, Sir, whether such an objection stems from the fact that other members of the community, who do not give their services to Trade Unions but who are quite qualified and on the other hand give their services to the employers, feel that their shares or their dividends will in any way be affected by the representations of others in Trade Unions besides workers? I wonder if the hon. Member is thinking that if individuals who are not workers represent trade unions it might affect his shares.

We do know that the hon. Member has shares in one of the sugar companies, and I am wondering whether the law permits him to be a shareholder in a sugar company, while on the other hand he suggests that workers should not have the right to expert advice and knowledge by people who may not be workers. There are some of us who genuinely feel sympathy for the working class movement. Whether it comes under the head of aggressive ideology or not there is a definite sympathy for the working class movement, and taking into consideration the fact that in this country the workers are hardly removed from the state of illiteracy, every help should be given to those people. What is applicable in another country must not be transplanted here. There may be different historical reasons for legislation such as is proposed under this Recommendation in different countries. In Great Britain we know that the workers have had long

experience in trade unionism. They have had long struggles over centuries, and with that experience gained they are able to manage their own affairs. Who knows what were the reasons for the introduction of this law in Malaya and Hong Kong? Do we know whether it was passed by a capitalist legislature in those countries, and simply because it was passed there is no reason why it should be adopted in British Guiana.

I wholly agree with Government's view in this matter, and I feel sure that to have accepted this Recommendation would have been the most retrograde thing that could have happened in British Guiana. The workers must be led. It is true that some leadership may come from people outside of the workers themselves, and I am not denying the fact that there are a lot of charlatans who prostitute their positions, who climb on a trade union band-waggon in order to gain publicity, but taking everything into consideration, including the state of our development, I feel that Government has done the very best thing in the circumstances.

Mr. WIGHT: The honourable profession to which I belong, and which has the strongest code of conduct, permits me to be a director of a company or a shareholder of a company.

Mr. LEE: I am glad that Government has not accepted this Recommendation, and I hope that the Department of Labour will accept Government's policy.

Mr. LUCKHOO: This strikes me as a Recommendation which is really an ideal to be aimed at, and something to be borne in mind. I would like to state that in the case of the Drivers' Association there is, for the first time, a President who is a driver himself. His election was brought about more or less as an experiment, to see whether the Association could operate successfully without assistance from others outside the sugar industry. In this case I do know that the Association is progressing very well. I take a very personal interest in that Association which has a membership of 95 per cent. of the drivers on all sugar estates, and a bank balance which is in

blue and not in red, to the extent of some \$4,000. The President, who is a driver himself, is acquitting himself very creditably, but I do agree that it should not be made a hard-and-fast rule, especially at this stage of our progress and development, that members of the executive must be workers in the particular industry. Nevertheless, I feel that, all things being equal, preference should be given to workers who should be trained to accept the responsibilities of such offices. In that respect I do say that even though I agree with Government's view in regard to this Recommendation, I feel it is something that should be borne in mind as an ideal which we should aim at.

Government's decision with respect to Recommendation 25 approved.

Recommendation 26:—

26. *Some expansion in the number of small cane-farmers, organised, if possible, on co-operative lines, should be encouraged. The banks of the Berbice River and certain areas upon abandoned estates could provide ample land for this purpose. (Chapter XIV, para. 233 — Page 109 of Report).*

Government views this recommendation sympathetically where land can be made available, and where the capacity of the factory is not already fully taxed. It is understood that the Blairmont factory is already working at full capacity and could not therefore take additional cane from land on the Berbice River.

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is a very important Recommendation. As a matter of fact I am very happy to see that it has found a place among the Recommendations of the Venn Commission, for it does appear from it that they have taken the general economic aspect of the country into consideration. I look upon peasant farming as something which must be encouraged and developed in this country—peasant farming in all directions; not only in rice, ground provisions and cattle but also in cane cultivation. Cane cultivation can be a very profitable enterprise for peasant farmers. It is and has been referred to as the one type of agricultural pursuit which can pay considerable divi-

dends, but I am very disturbed in mind over recent happenings in so far as this aspect of agricultural activity is concerned. At this moment, at Golden Grove village, there is some talk and possibly an attempt to dissuade people from going in for cane cultivation. There are considerable prospects for cane cultivation at Golden Grove but there is something wrong with the right of way there, and because of that the people of the village are not in a position to pursue this particular type of work. I do hope that Government will give full effect to the needs of the people in that area, and particularly encourage cane cultivation there. It may require an expenditure of about \$30,000 to put right a certain aqueduct at Golden Grove. If that is done I feel sure that there would be a thriving peasant cane-farming industry at Golden Grove, but there is a bigger question in respect of which I hope to get an answer from the hon. the Sixth Nominated Member (Mr. Morrish).

There has been considerable cane cultivation on the lower East Coast as far as Golden Grove, and from the Report of the Vern Commission it appears that the Berbice River banks are ideal for cane cultivation, but the farmers are faced with the statement from the Sugar Producers' Association that they cannot undertake the milling of their cane into sugar. This means a full stop to the aspirations of the peasant cane-farmers. It is a very regrettable aspect, and all the more so because the sugar producers have seen fit to close down many of their factories which were in good grinding condition. Cane Grove had an excellent factory. A considerable sum of money was spent on that factory and there was a refinery which other factories did not have. There were factories at Vryheid's Lust and other places which have been closed down, and grinding is being done at one central factory. It seems to me that the sugar producers might have repaired and kept some of those factories, so as to assist the cane-farming industry, instead of placing too much work on a few factories.

It follows, therefore, that if we are going to have — and I do hope we will — some implementation of this parti-

cular Recommendation, that Government should use its good offices to secure the establishment of a central sugar cane factory in the same way as it is thinking of central rice mills for the Colony. A central sugar mill may be erected on the East Coast where the peasant cane farmers can have their cane milled and so develop the industry. It is not right to have such a big possibility open to the people and then to find that milling facilities are curtailed. We know the position as regards our sugar output. This Colony has been awarded a certain target figure towards which the sugar producers themselves will find it very slow going, and it will probably take them some time before they can reach it. If that is so the peasant cane-farming which can be done would be a very useful addition to the industry. I do hope that some strenuous effort will be made to put cane-farming on a much better footing than it is today, so that there may be a greater ray of hope for them.

I also trust that Government may inspire the C.D.C. to take up sugar cane cultivation in the same way as they are taking a hand in the rice industry, on some system in which they might be assisted by the peasant cane-farmers. The C.D.C. may be able to put up a central mill or more than one, to encourage peasant cane-farming. It seems to me that as there is so much talk about the West Indian islands producing rice, the possibility is that the people of this Colony will have to return to cane cultivation. In that event the C.D.C., or Government, should not be slow in recognizing the necessity for assistance to peasant cane-farmers, and I hope this Recommendation will be completely implemented.

Dr. JAGAN: There is no doubt that this Recommendation dealing with cane-farmers is really a good one, but I do not think it is for the want of recommendation that the cane-farming industry in this Colony is not developed. The 10-year planning Committee recommended that the cane-farming industry should be increased fivefold, and that was since 1947. In the Ten-Year Development Plan, which was prepared nearly five years ago Government contemplated in-

creasing cane-farming production about fivefold, but all that Government can say now is that it "views this recommendation sympathetically where land can be made available and where the capacity of the factory is not already fully taxed." I have never seen anything more vague. It seems to me that there should have been some complete blueprint by this time after a lapse of 4 or 5 years, but up to the present there is no plan as to how the cane-farming industry is to be developed. That is the criticism we have to make about Government's plans, proposals and recommendations. We know enough of them and we waste time in discussing them.

There is one point to which I would like to refer with regard to the question of cane-farming. Some time ago I was told that a Committee headed by Mr. O'Conner, who I believe was then Deputy Colonial Treasurer, looked into the cane-farming industry, and I believe some recommendations were made, but up to the present many of those recommendations have not been embraced in an Ordinance. At the last two meetings of the Central Cane-farmers' Committee a very important problem came up concerning the relationship of cane-farmers to the sugar estate proprietors. There is no law determining the relationship of the cane-farmer to the estate proprietors. Recently the cane-farmers at Buxton were told by the estate authorities at Lusignan, I believe, to burn their cane preparatory to being milled. The farmers burnt their cane and transported it to the factory. The order was given on a Friday, but because of a strike which occurred on the following Monday the cane was not ground, and the farmers lost all the money that was due to them. I believe there were about 100 tons of cane. The question arises as to whose liability it was at that point. The cane was not milled because of a strike which was called by an unrecognized trade union.

The CHAIRMAN: I should say that they were responsible or liable.

Dr. JAGAN: Here we have an unrecognized trade union calling a strike affecting the sugar industry, and yet Government does not come in to recog-

nize such a union. Anyway that is a matter which is beside the point. It seems to me that the farmers should know what their position is. During the strike which took place in 1948, the cane-farmers were told that unless they worked in the factory and broke the strike the estate authorities would not take their cane. It seems to me that Government must either embark on some insurance scheme to which the farmers may have to contribute, or an Ordinance should be passed setting out the relationship between the sugar producers and the cane-farmers. Otherwise, on this very shaky foundation I am afraid that the people will not go in for cane-farming. If they are to lose what they have reaped because of a strike by an unrecognized trade union, it seems to me that they will not be encouraged to develop the cane-farming industry. I hope that Government will look into the question of enacting legislation to govern the relationship between cane-farmers and the sugar estate proprietors.

Mr. MORRISH: The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) has sought certain information and has referred to the closing of certain sugar factories making particular reference to Cane Grove. I believe that one of the chief reasons which induced the owners to close that factory was its deplorable condition, and to suggest that it was a very fine factory with a refinery attached to it, I think the hon. Member must have been misinformed. The Cane Grove factory was probably the poorest factory in the Colony. On the score of the possibility of Government building a factory I do not think the hon. Member has the slightest conception of what it would cost to build a sugar factory today. I am dealing at the moment with the cost of a sugar factory only, not a sugar estate, or the immense expenditure involved in empoldering and putting a sugar estate in a condition in which it can grow a crop. The cost of a sugar factory alone today would probably be nothing less than £100 per ton of sugar produced per annum. The hon. Member can take whatever tonnage he likes, work it out and get an idea of what it would cost in these times.

Reference is made in the Message to the Blairmont factory working to its fullest capacity. It may be well to make it clear that there is no suggestion that there is any lack of co-operation in this matter. In actual fact the Blairmont factory was so over-taxed last year that 5,000 tons of cane had to be left in the field through sheer inability of the factory to turn it into sugar. I will go a little further. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) referred to the farmers and their difficulties through loss of their cane on account of strikes. The sugar industry insures its crops against such events, and I suggest that if cane-farming is going to be a bigger and bigger industry in the Colony the cane-farmers would be wise to do likewise.

Recommendation 26 approved.

Recommendation 28 :—

28. *Government should make provision for the erection and maintenance of at least four (and preferably six) State Hospitals at centres conveniently accessible both to the estates and villages. Each of the estates should then be required to provide for their resident nuclear population in lieu of their existing hospitals—*

(1) *A fully equipped dispensary (with qualified attendants) for cases of accident and sudden illness.*

(2) *An ambulance for the conveyance of patients to the nearest State Hospital. (Chapter XV, para. 27 —*

Page 120 of Report).

The Director of Medical Services has drawn up plans for the establishment of six Government hospitals of between 50 and 60 beds each in the rural areas. Of these three would be new hospitals to be constructed and three would be existing hospitals to be taken over from the sugar estates on terms to be mutually agreed. A committee consisting of representatives of Government and the Sugar Producers' Association has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Commissioner of Local Government to consider the terms on which the three estate hospitals might be taken over. The total estimated cost of the three hospitals to be constructed is \$366,000 with recurrent expenditure of \$78,000. The possibility of implementing these plans will have to be considered within the allocation of funds for health services proposed under the revised Development Plan. It should be noted that the Venn Commission itself envisaged that implementation of its recommendation should

be gradual and should depend on an assessment of the hospital requirements of the rural population over the next few years (para. 26 of Section IV).

The Sugar Producers' Association have accepted the recommendation for the provision of fully equipped dispensaries and ambulances for resident nuclear workers as and when the plans for the establishment of Government hospitals are implemented.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I happen to know that some of these estate hospitals may be closed, and that Government will not be able to establish in time cottage hospitals to take their places in the rural districts. It would be a most regrettable thing to find the estate hospitals closed down without proper alternative provision being made. It would be a happy thing to find cottage hospitals established, not only for the use of the estates but for the adjacent villages. I would say that, as in the case of housing, there was a definite obligation on the part of the sugar estate proprietors when indentured immigration was in force, to provide free medical attention for the labourers. It was a matter of agreement, and I would certainly raise a very loud voice in this Council if anything was done which would not recognize that obligation even today.

The sugar producers would be slow, I hope, to make any change-over without proper alternative provision being made. In this respect both Government and the sugar producers would have to hold themselves liable at the bar of equity and justice to those people. They have worked on the estates for many years and, in my opinion, have sweated and toiled for less than economic wages. There was a time when they only earned one shilling per day and they had those facilities which are still looked upon as part of their income. It seems to me that it must be regarded as being part of their wages, and must therefore not be regarded as a mere social service or an act of humanity existing on sugar plantations, but as something as of right to the people. Whether it has been sufficiently emphasized to the Venn Commission or not I do not know, but it must be borne in mind that there is a moral obligation on the part of the sugar producers to those people. I trust that the recom-

mandations by the Commission will be implemented immediately.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member will see that it has been considered under the Development Plan. We must get on with our Development Plan.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The point I am making is that so far as the Development Plan is concerned it is still in the air, because we are told that we must implement other things. It is for that reason I am urging that nothing be done, and that the estate authorities should maintain their obligations completely until this particular recommendation is implemented.

Mr. MORRISH: I would like to point out to the hon. Member that there has been no obligation on the estate proprietors to maintain hospitals since

1937 when the Immigration Ordinance ceased to operate, and that also applies to Trinidad. Every sugar estate in Trinidad closed down its hospital immediately as indentured immigration ceased, but the sugar industry in this Colony was good enough to continue its hospitals up to this date, and I do not think the hon. Member need be unduly worried that the sugar estates will close all their hospitals until alternatives are provided.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I have made it clear that it was one of the terms of the agreement before 1917, and I maintain that there is a moral obligation still.

The action proposed to be taken by Government on Recommendation 28 was approved.

The Council resumed and adjourned until 2 p.m. the following day.