

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1950.

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 Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

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

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

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

The Hon. 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 Rivier).

The Hon. W. J. Raatgever, (Nominated).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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

The Hon. Dr. Jagan (Central Demerara).

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

The Hon. C. A. M. Doom (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 11th of August, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER laid on the table the following:-

Minutes of the Meeting of Finance Committee of the Legislative Council held on the 27th of July, 1950.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice of the introduction and first reading of a Bill intitled:

"An Ordinance to make provision for the Recording of Births and Deaths and of Persons missing in aircraft registered in the Colony; and for other purposes connected therewith".

UNOFFICIAL NOTICE**EMPIRE PREFERENCES**

Mr. RAATGEVER gave notice of the following motion:-

Whereas it is proposed to hold a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (generally known as GATT) Meeting in the United Kingdom commencing on the 28th of September, 1950;

And Whereas no benefits have been received to compensate for the elimination and reduction of Empire Preferences already conceded;

And Whereas such Preferences form a vital part of Commonwealth economy and economic policy;

Be It Resolved that the Colony of British Guiana desires to impress upon the United Kingdom Government the necessity of resisting with all the resources at its command any proposal to grant any further concession either in the form of changes in existing Preferences or binding or reduction of duties in such a way as to impair the value of existing Preferences or to prevent the creating of new Preferences;

Be It Further Resolved that unremitting effort should be made to recover the freedom of action to impose such duties and arrange such Preferences as may be considered necessary to safeguard the position of Commonwealth producers in Commonwealth markets, and to give full opportunities for the greatest possible expansion of intra-Commonwealth trade.

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS

U.S. BASE EMPLOYEES' RATES OF PAY.

Dr. JAGAN gave notice of the following questions:-

1. Will Government state whether any action has been taken with reference to the petition tabled by me on November 17, 1949, in the Legislative Council on behalf of former Base employees?
2. Is Government aware that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of Vermilya-Brown vs. Connell that the Bermuda Base, and consequently Bases in other British territories were subject to the provisions of the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938, setting out minimum hourly rates of pay, overtime, etc.? Is it true that a petition was sent to the Honourable Colonial Secretary in 1949 by former Base employees seeking Government's help in procuring from the American authorities higher rates of pay, and settlement of back pay, allegedly the difference between their then prevailing rates of pay and the rates provided for in the Labour Standards Act of 1938?
3. Will Government state whether there is a clause in the document signed by the American and British Guiana Governments on the transfer of the Base to the B.G. Government to the effect that all labour and staff from the Americans would be paid the prevailing rates as at date of being taken over? If so, will Government state why rates have been

reduced and working conditions changed?

SELLING PRICE OF GASOLENE.

Mr. DEBIDIN gave notice of the following questions:-

1. What are the retail selling prices per gallon of Gasolene for each of the years during the war years and subsequently to the present time?
2. What was the total local consumption of Gasolene for each of the above years and the source or sources of importation?
3. How is the current price per gallon of Gasolene made up giving details including first cost, duty and handling?

ORDER OF THE DAY

ATKINSON FIELD CONTROL BOARD.

Dr. JAGAN asked and the COLONIAL SECRETARY laid over replies to the following questions:—

- Q. 1—Does any member or members of the Atkinson Field Control Board get a special allowance for expenses when visiting the Base; if so, how much?
- A. —No member of the Board gets a special allowance for expenses when visiting the Base. Members are entitled to claim travelling allowance at official rates when visiting the Base but in fact they share their own transportation to the Field. The total amount claimed and paid from the Board's funds from 1st August, 1949, to 31st July, 1950, was \$15.36.
- Q. 2—How much was paid in honoraria for special work done for the Board; to whom was it paid and what was the amount?
- A. —\$120 was paid in honoraria for special work done for the Board as detailed hereunder:—
- (i) Mr. C. A. McWatt, Accountant, Commodity Control Department, who supervised the setting up of the Board's office and books and property records \$50.00.
 - (ii) Mr. M. G. Harding, Mr. J. I. Lee-Ting and Mr. E. E. Moe of the Transport and Harbours Department Stores who formed

the Stores checking party which verified and took over inventories of Engineer and other materials \$10.00

- (iii) Miss E. E. Ramao and Miss D. Foo each \$15.00 and Miss O. Collins .. \$10.00 typists in the Public Service for copying schedules of property and equipment, etc.

Q. 3—Is it true that the Board employed a firm of Chartered Accountants? If so, will Government state how much was paid to this firm and why were the services of the Government Audit Department not utilised?

A. —Yes. Messrs. Fitzpatrick, Graham and Company, Limited, were appointed with the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The fee paid for setting up the Board's accounts and auditing in respect of 1949 was \$1,179. In view of the commercial nature of the undertaking, it was considered desirable to appoint a private firm of Auditor as was done in the case of the Mahaicony| Abary Rice Development Scheme and the Commodity Control Department.

Q. 4—Is it true that an upset price of \$300 was set by the Board on approximately 4,000 feet of 2" and 3" pipes, and that it was actually sold for \$275? Is it also true that this pipe is worth over \$1 per foot? Is Government aware that 1,000 feet of this pipe was sold for \$1,300 to the Berbice Bauxite Company?

A. —A reserve price of \$300 was set on 3,000 feet of 2" and 3" old and used iron piping which was in rusted and bad condition. After due advertisement and circulation of particulars to firms and Government departments the piping was offered for sale by auction conducted by the Surveyor of Customs, on behalf of the Board. There was no bid for the piping at the reserve price and on re-consideration the lot was immediately re-offered for sale and sold to the highest bidder at \$275. In view of the poor condition of the pipe it was not considered to be worth

\$1.00 per foot. Government is not aware how the piping has been disposed of after the auction sale.

Q. 5—Is Government aware that in many villages supplied with an artesian well pure water supply scheme, the shortage of pipes has been given as an excuse for the lack of connections and water taps to various parts of said villages?

—Owing to the delay in delivery of Everite Pipe, extensions to existing pipe lines, and installation of new water distribution systems cannot be carried out in some villages where artesian wells are in operation.

Q. 6—Will Government state whether the pipe requirements for Kitty, Plaisance, Beterverwagting, Buxton and other villages supplied with an artesian well pure water supply scheme have been fully met; if not, will Government state whether pipes sold by the Board as stated in question 4 could have been utilised in the various villages?

A. —Government is aware that there are many villages, quite apart from the ones mentioned in the question, whose requirements have not yet been fully met. The iron pipes sold by the Board could not have been utilised to relieve this situation; experience has proved that steel and cast iron pipes are unsuitable owing to the corrosive action of treated artesian well waters. Only Everite Pipes are suitable for this work and these are on order.

BIRTH OF THE ROYAL PRINCESS.

Mr. ROTH: Sir, before proceeding with the Order of the Day I ask your indulgence and permission to suggest that a telegram be sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies requesting him to convey to Their Royal Highnesses Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh the hearty congratulations of this Council on the occasion of the birth of the Royal Princess.

Mr. RAATGEVER: The hon. Nominated Member has anticipated me but I have great pleasure in supporting his suggestion.

HOLIDAY FOR W.I. CRICKET VICTORY.

I would also like to ask that in view of the fact that the West Indies Cricket team has created history in England you will be good enough to declare a public holiday to mark the occasion. It is an historic event in the cricket history of the Colonies in this part of the Empire, and I certainly think we should take appropriate notice of it.

Mr LEE: I beg to second the proposal.

The PRESIDENT: With regard to the first question I think hon. Members are aware that I have already sent a telegram on behalf of the Colony as a whole requesting that our congratulations be conveyed to Their Majesties the King and Queen and to Their Royal Highnesses Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, but I think we may well send one on behalf of this Council as has been proposed by the hon. Nominated Member.

The other question is quite a different one which I think ought to be considered before being answered. No one is more pleased than I am over the victory of the West Indies cricket team, but how far that justifies a public holiday I am not so sure. It involves certain other questions. Public holidays are not easy things to give. There is a substantially large body of daily paid people who are not paid for public holidays. A public holiday affects business, commerce and the lives of people, and while I am ever appreciative of the desire expressed by the hon. Member I nevertheless think it is a matter which requires some consideration. We might have had a day of mourning if the team had been defeated (laughter), but I am not at all sure about a public holiday, and I am not prepared to make a decision on the spur of the moment, although I do appreciate what the hon. Member has said.

BILLS — FIRST READING.

The following Bills were then read the first time:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Tax Ordinance, 1939."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance

further to amend the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Mitchell Trust Ordinance, 1937, by extending the time for the submission of accounts by the Trustees; by making provision for notices to be given in the case of a vacancy occurring among the beneficiaries; and by increasing the benefits payable thereunder." (The Attorney-General).

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to allow and confirm certain additional expenditure incurred in the year ended the thirty-first day of December, 1949." (The Financial Secretary and Treasurer).

RICE MARKETING (AMENDMENT) BILL.

The PRESIDENT: The next item on the agenda is the resumption of the debate on the second reading of the Rice Marketing (Amendment) Bill. It has been suggested to me by certain Unofficial Members—and I think their views are shared by certain other Members—that before we continue this debate it would help very much to remove misunderstandings and misconceptions, not on one side but on both sides, if I as Governor met in conference the Members of the Council to try to remove those misconceptions and misunderstandings. If such a conference were held it could not, of course, in any way come to any decision affecting this Council, nor could it be allowed in any way to prejudice the debate on the Bill, but if it would help I am very anxious that misunderstandings and misconceptions should be removed on both sides in the interest of the Colony. Thus I am only too happy to accept the suggestion which has been made to me in the hope that it will be of some assistance to Members.

I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this matter. It is vitally important, and it is equally important that we should arrive at a large common measure of agreement on what is to be done to develop the rice industry of this Colony. That is a virtually important issue, and although we cannot on all points see eye to eye, and never shall on all points be able to see eye to eye, we should nevertheless do everything we possibly can to come to the greatest common measure of agreement.

If there is ever to be such a thing as a Rice Development Corporation; if capital is to come into this country—and there is not a single Member of this Council who does not acknowledge very readily the need for capital—then it is important that we should as a Council and as a country come to the greatest common measure of agreement on it. It is no good expecting that we can develop our rice industry if there is a very sharp division and we are divided among ourselves, and I am only too anxious to do anything I possibly can—and I am sure that Members of this Council are equally anxious to do everything they possibly can—to reach the greatest common measure of agreement on this very important matter. It is there-

fore in those circumstances that I propose to adjourn the Council this afternoon until 2 o'clock tomorrow and invite Members of Council, a few minutes after the adjournment this afternoon, to meet me to see what we can do in this matter to reach a far greater measure of agreement among ourselves than apparently exists at present, owing very largely, I believe, to misunderstandings and misconceptions which I will not say exist on one side only. Therefore, if we can do anything, as I say, to present, if not a united front then a substantially solid one, it would be all for the good of the rice industry and British Guiana. Council will now adjourn until 2 p.m. tomorrow.