

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 3RD 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 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. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

The Hon. T. T. Thompson (Nominated).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E., (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. G. M. Gonsalves (Eastern Berbice).

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th of July, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPERS LAID.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the following:-

The Report of the Registrar General for the year 1949.

The Report of the Comptroller of Customs for the year 1949.

The Report of the Select Committee appointed to consider the enactment in this Colony of an Ordinance containing provisions similar to the Inheritance (Family Provisions) Act, 1938, Chapter 45 I & II Geo. VI, and to submit recommendations thereon.

The Report of the Milk Control Committee

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES.

SUBVENTION FOR KITTY ROADS.

Dr. JAGAN gave notice of the following motion:-

Whereas the city of New Amsterdam with a population of 9,567, according to the 1946 Census, is granted an annual subvention by Government of \$12,000 for maintenance of roads and streets;

And Whereas the Mayor and Town Council, Georgetown, is granted an annual contribution of \$50,000 towards the maintenance of roads and streets;

And Whereas Kitty Village with a population of 8,927, according to the 1946 Census, has to maintain a large number of roads and streets, many of which are in a bad state of disrepair;

And Whereas the revenue of Kitty Village is not adequate to maintain roads, etc., in a proper condition;

Be It Resolved that this Council recommend to Government the granting of an annual subvention of \$10,000 to the Kitty Village Authority towards the maintenance of roads and streets.

REFUND OF STAMP DUTY ON PRIVATE BILL.

Mr. PETERS gave notice of the following motion:-

Whereas a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to incorporate the Board of Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in British Guiana" was on the 15th day of June, 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 over half a century;

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 said sum of one hundred dollars paid in terms of the Tax Ordinance, 1939, for the said Private Bill intituled "An Ordinance, to incorporate the Board of Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in British Guiana, to vest therein certain property, and for other purposes connected with the matters aforesaid."

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS.

STONE SUPPLY FOR COURENTYNE ROADS.

Mr. FERREIRA gave notice of the following questions:-

1. In view of the fact that the construction of the Courentyne Road was contemplated some 5 years

ago, will Government state why the examination for the existence of a suitable stone supply in that area was not carried out earlier?

2. Was Government advised of the non-existence of a suitable stone supply in that area?
If so, by whom were these investigations carried out?
3. Is it a fact that the Geological Department has now confirmed the existence of substantial quantities of granite up the Courentyne River?
4. In view of the fact that Government will save a sum in the vicinity of some \$250,000 on the construction of the Courentyne Road if this granite is quarried, is it Government's intention to quarry granite in this area?
5. If Government is unwilling to operate a quarry in this area, is Government prepared to permit private enterprise to operate in this area?

ORDER OF THE DAY.

BILLS — FIRST READING.

On motions by the ATTORNEY GENERAL seconded by the COLONIAL SECRETARY the following Bills were read the first time:-

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to establish a Court of Criminal Appeal and to make provision for appeals in criminal cases".

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Criminal Law (Procedure) Ordinance".

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Prison Ordinance, 1929, by making provision to bring up prisoners before the Court of Criminal Appeal".

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Pensions Ordinance, 1933, by providing for the pensions of officers with mixed service in Government and the Health Services."

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Cinematograph (British Films) Ordinance, 1933."

On a motion by Mr. THOMPSON seconded by Mr. PETERS the following Bill was read the first time:-

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to vest in the Missionary Board of the Church of God in trust for and for the

use of the members from time to time of the Church of God all property in the Colony now held and which may hereafter be acquired by any person or by any society association or other body of persons on behalf of or for the use or benefit of the Missionary Board of the Church of God in the Colony, and to make provision for the administration thereof."

RICE MARKETING (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1950.

Council resumed the debate on the second reading of the Bill intituled:—

"An Ordinance to amend the Rice Marketing Ordinance, 1946, with respect to the powers and functions of the Rice Marketing Board and the Executive Committee of the Board; and in other respects."

Dr. GONSALVES: Sir, before the debate is resumed may I crave your indulgence to bring to the notice of the Council a letter I have received in connection with this matter.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member will have to let me see the letter. Is it a letter addressed to this Council?

Dr. GONSALVES: No, Sir.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member will have an opportunity later. (Letter handed up and perused by the President). The hon. Member will have an opportunity to bring the matter to the notice of the Council later on, or he can give the letter to some other Member who has not already spoken, to communicate it to the Council.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Resuming the debate on this Bill I would preface my comments by saying that hardly at any time within my knowledge of the history of this Colony has there come before this Council a more important matter affecting the ordinary man or, shall I say, the masses of this Colony. As the hon. the Financial Secretary has indicated, I feel sure that this Council will go into this Bill dispassionately, in order to determine what is best for the future of the people of this Colony. In speaking on this Bill I am conscious of the fact that within my own constituency there is a movement to expand the rice industry between the Mahaicony and Abary creeks, and it

makes my task all the more responsible because there is in that area a very large percentage of the rice farmers of this Colony who depend solely upon rice cultivation for the maintenance of their families. My constituency embraces one of the largest rice producing areas of the Colony, and I believe it is second only to the Courentyne Coast. The Mahaicony-Abary Scheme gives it added importance.

I have had an opportunity again to study the speech delivered by the hon. the Financial Secretary, and I must say that if never before, an attempt has now been made to invade the rights of the common man. I feel that in introducing this Bill the Government of this Colony has crossed the "38th parallel" so far as the rice industry is concerned, and has invaded the rights of our people. If this Bill is passed it would be a close parallel to the Korean war which is so much condemned. The Financial Secretary has not only launched this Bill but at the outset of his speech he made an unprovoked attack on the intelligence of Members of this Council. In fact he has made an attack upon the intelligence of the citizens of this Colony by and large, and I feel sure he did not pause to think of the effect of what he was saying. In his speech he made such references as:

"It is true that in the course of public discussions and journalistic comments which have taken place the objects and reasons of the Bill and the underlying intentions of the Government in introducing it have been misunderstood, misinterpreted and, I fear misrepresented. It is also true, Sir, that attempts have been made by mischievous persons, through selfish motives, to mislead and confuse and agitate the less well-informed."

I wish to say that every bit of the sentiments he expressed, and probably the exact language he used, can well be re-directed to the source from which they emanated. There can be no doubt that in the whole of his speech there have been gross misrepresentation and clear attempts to mislead the public. I have a copy of the speech before me and I shall draw attention to them as I proceed. As if to add insult to injury, the Financial Secretary made special reference to the Indian community of this Colony, and not merely made invidious comparisons

as to their intellectual ability to absorb what he had to say, but referred to them in a manner which, I respectfully suggest, was intended for one purpose only, and that is to claim the sympathy of the non-Indian Members of this Council. I wish to say at the outset that the arrow has certainly missed its mark, because I feel sure that by now the other Members of this Council who are not Indians are satisfied about two things — (1) that the rice industry embraces a very large percentage of Africans, and (2) that they are not bereft of the reason, sympathy and understanding of their own brethren whom they represent. I feel sure that every Member of this Council, no matter where he represents, will approach this Bill with the spirit of a Guianese first of all, and give his final decision in a manner which will bring credit or discredit to his conscience. I have no hesitation in saying that I feel sure hon. Members are going to exercise their consciences freely as representatives of the people of this Colony. Their interest is definitely at stake as a result of this Bill.

The hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer has attempted once more to put before this Council the history of the rice industry, and while I have nothing to complain about so far as his statements relating to the formation of the Rice Marketing Board are concerned, I would say that he has left out some very important aspects in that history. The history of the rice industry is the history of blood, sweat and toil of a people—and by that I refer to people of both Indian and African descent, although it is true that one preponderates in numbers—who have been engaged in it for nearly 100 years; and who brought the industry to what it was before the Rice Marketing Board came into being. It should also be mentioned that these people, at the sacrifice of the education of their children—because child labour had to be brought into it—kept the industry alive and suffered all the setbacks known to it before the last War. When the last War came legislation was introduced whereby the entire industry was wrested completely out of their hands, and in a manner which the Financial Secretary and Treasurer himself condemned. That is where, I say, we

have the first inconsistency so far as his speech is concerned. He admitted, in effect, that the provisions had failed so far as the Rice Marketing Board was concerned, yet he wanted to say that they should still remain—that they were good enough for the people who had sweated and toiled to keep the industry alive, but they would not be good enough for an undertaking which would be introduced into the Colony.

I imagine that the only reason why the Financial Secretary and Treasurer sought to condemn the provisions of the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance and ended up by saying that they could not have been responsible for the expansion of the industry, is because he is endeavouring by this Bill to Exempt an undertaking which we know to be the Colonial Development Corporation, that will operate in this industry. Since the Financial Secretary and Treasurer was extremely proud of the fact that he and Mr. Duke were the authors of the Bill which eventually became law in the form of the Principal Ordinance, I think I am safe in saying that in sponsoring this Bill which is now before the Council his sins have caught up with him. It seems to me that there is no other argument.

I will come to clause 7 of the Bill right away, because I regard this Bill as being one of clause 7 and nothing else. Further, I regard this Bill, coming at this stage in the history of the rice industry, not as a pious attempt to amend the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance, but merely as an effort to introduce the Colonial Development Corporation into this industry, and the clauses other than clause 7 are only protective armour for the steel coat which the Colonial Development Corporation will wear when it comes into this industry. They are definitely intended to give support to clause 7, and are what would have been called a "back stop" in the country districts in the old days. The idea is to give protection and freedom of operation to the Colonial Development Corporation after they have been exempted from control by the Ordinance. It is very important that I should say that as one of the legal Members of this Council, and I think it would be proper for me to deal with the clauses by way

of interpretation as best as I can, for the benefit of fellow-Members in this Council. I shall deal with the clauses in order to remove a grave doubt, perhaps, and in so far as this amendment is concerned I must make the observation that but for the fact that as stated by the Financial Secretary, "in the course of public discussions and journalistic comments which have taken place the objects and reasons of the Bill and the underlying intentions of the Government in introducing it have been misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented," I feel sure the amendment might not have come forward.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: May I have the honour of asking the hon. Member to add the words "and Treasurer" when he is referring to me?

Mr. DEBIDIN: My hon. Friend has been reminding me that I should add the words "and Treasurer" in referring to his post, and I will do so. He has been attempting — there is no question about it — to make the point that the people might have been wholly misled because we did not understand what was really intended by Government, but we who have been sitting around this table will certainly not support him in his argument that there is anything in the Bill before this Council which would give the slightest indication to any Member or to the public that it was the intention of the Government when they introduced it, that matters concerning the introduction and operation of this undertaking would come before the Legislature. The Bill is a clear one and, to my mind, any child who has reached the 6th standard in a primary school can interpret paragraph (b) in sub-clause 36A (1) of clause 7. The entire sub-clause reads:—

"36A. (1) For the purposes of this section, the expression "public rice development undertaking" means any enterprise established in the Colony for the development of the rice industry and the extension of the export trade of the said industry —

(a) by the Government of the Colony; or

(b) by any company in which public funds are invested and which is declared to be a public rice development undertaking by Order made by the Governor in Council."

Sub-clause 3 states, however, that:

"(3) Any Order made under any of the provisions of this section may be varied or revoked by a subsequent order made thereunder."

It does appear that no one else would have anything to do with this question but the Governor in Council, and that must give rise to a tremendous amount of suspicion and comment. Paragraph (b) of sub-clause 36A (1) seems to be one which, unavoidably, the Financial Secretary and Treasurer felt he could not introduce into this Council in the light of the discussions and comments he referred to, and it seems to me that he has made a very subtle move—that is what I regard it to be — when he said, as regards paragraph (b) of 36A, that:

"I would suggest to the Attorney General that it would be better to say:—

"(b) by any company in which public funds are invested with the approval of the Legislative Council under conditions and terms set out in an agreement to be ratified by the Legislative Council."

On the face of it one would say that the amendment gives a certain amount of safeguard to the people of this Colony — let us say the rice producers of the Colony — because the undertaking concerned is a recognized one—a statutory body — and the Legislative Council will determine the terms and conditions under which that body would be induced to take up rice operations in this Colony. There are three stages, according to the Financial Secretary and Treasurer. He says:—

" Since it must be a company in which public funds are invested, this Council will become the authority for determining several things—firstly, whether public funds are to be invested at all; secondly, the terms and conditions under which public funds are to be invested, and thirdly, if no funds are to be invested in actual cash but assets are to be transferred—for example those of the Mahaicony-Abary Scheme —the terms and conditions under which that is to be done."

Those are the three conditions under which the necessary safeguards he proposes would be given if this amendment comes through, but I would ask this Council to consider very carefully the

fact that it is very easy to make an amendment but it is a different thing to control its effect. I must say "Thank God", that I am not so bereft of reason as the Financial Secretary and Treasurer might think as not to be able to see something which is a mere disguise. As a certain friend of mine has stated, this clause 7 is a brick wrapped up in a blanket. Here we have provided a semblance of protection for the producers—those interested in production—but, at the same time, the entire safeguard would be wiped out with one stroke of the pen if paragraph (b) of sub-clause 36A remains part of the Bill. That is where the evil lies—that is the business end of the scorpion so far as this Bill is concerned. It is clear that the Rice Marketing Board, functioning under the provisions of this Bill, would be an iniquitous set-up and would never be responsible for the proper expansion of the industry. After showing all the restrictive features and the highly penal clauses in the Ordinance—how both cultivators and mill owners are bound hands and feet — the Financial Secretary and Treasurer says:-

"Lastly, in this part of my remarks I want to point out how incompatible, how absolutely inimical the provisions of this Ordinance are to any enterprise for expansion and development of the industry on a great scale."

Probably, when he referred to "development... on a great scale", he had in mind the Colonial Development Corporation, as that is the sum total of what the Bill means. If, therefore, this Council even agrees to the terms and conditions under which the C.D.C. would come into this industry, whatever they are, they are going to be completely outside of the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance. Whatever conditions are placed before this Council for acceptance they will hardly be consistent with the provisions of that very restrictive and daring Ordinance. Therefore, it is logical and reasonable to assume that this is merely a sop, and that what would be put—if put at all—before this Council would be merely something to give consent to the parties concerned to operate and to say what proportionate interest this Colony should have -- how much public funds should be put into this Company or Corporation. The Bill would govern details such as that, but would

it govern such details as the price of the rice, the question of marketing and the question whether the rice produced by the Corporation—public or otherwise — would be pooled and graded and then sold to fulfil contracts and other markets abroad? Will the Financial Secretary and Treasurer say that that would be done and that proposals to that effect would be put before this Council? I venture to say that that will not be done because those are things which are controlled by the Rice Marketing Board, and would not be applied to the Colonial Development Corporation.

In my opinion, there is only one condition under which any rice undertaking should come into this Colony, and that is on a basis of equality with other interests — the cultivators, and the mill owners — and particular attention must also be given to the question of marketing and the pooling of produce for marketing. Therefore, when prices are to be determined the selling prices should be fixed through a single seller in order that all the rice farmers would receive the same selling price locally, and the profits made by the Corporation should be subject to control in the same manner as those made by the Rice Producers' Association. I do not know if many Members have considered the agreement under which we are to be bound to the West Indian Colonies, but a clear indication can be got of the obligation which we have to these Colonies when we come to consider how much we have to fulfil.

I am going to ask your permission, Sir, to refer to a bulletin produced by the Rice Producers' Association of British Guiana, and I must make the point that here is an example of the kind of encouragement which rice producers in this Colony are receiving from their own organisation. I think hon. Members are aware of the amount of interest the producers have taken in this debate, and also of the memorandum submitted by Government whilst the debate was proceeding. With your permission, Sir, I would like to refer to the agreement which this Colony has entered into with the Government of Trinidad, and which has been published word for word in this Bulletin, dated March, 1950. The particular clause

which affects the quantity of rice to be sent to Trinidad is clause 4, which reads: -

"4. The VENDOR guarantees to deliver in each calendar year to the PURCHASER not less than 80 per cent of the quantity stated in paragraph (2). The VENDOR further undertakes that no rice shall be exported in commercial quantities to any country or countries other than those of PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS until it has fulfilled its undertakings and delivered to the PURCHASER 100 per cent of the quantity stated in paragraph (2)."

In other words, this is the first clause which makes it absolutely clear that unless the obligation of the Rice Marketing Board is fulfilled 100 per cent by way of delivery of rice to Trinidad, and the other participating Colonies, this Government would not be able to sell its surplus rice to any other Colony.

The PRESIDENT: Not "this Government", the Rice Marketing Board.

Mr. DEBIDIN: That is quite correct, but we must never divorce the affairs and control of the Rice Marketing Board from Government, especially with regard to the question of contracts, because it is clear that the participating Governments made and entered these contracts through their recognized bodies. I quite agree that these contracts have been entered into with the Rice Marketing Board, and I repeat that until 100 per cent. delivery has been made to the participating Colonies, which include Trinidad, Barbados, the Leeward and the Windward islands, not a grain of rice can be exported elsewhere—whether it is to Venezuela, Jamaica or else. The next clause which affects the question of delivery is clause 9; it says: -

"9. The VENDOR agrees that if after supplying the PURCHASER with the yearly requirement of 15,000 tons, as stated in paragraph (2), and after meeting its other obligations with PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS there shall remain on hand a quantity of rice available to be exported then the PURCHASER and other PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS shall be given the first refusal to purchase a proportion of such exportable surplus, such proportion shall bear the same ratio to the total available surplus as the quantity stated in paragraph (2) bears to the total quantity agreed upon to be supplied to the PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS, at a price to be

settled and fixed by negotiation between the VENDOR and the PURCHASER."

In this clause, one sees the extent to which our hands and feet are bound—and I am speaking about those who are being governed by the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance at the present time. After fulfilling all its contracts, if this Colony has by chance an exportable surplus of rice, it will have to be offered to the participating Colonies in proportion to the amounts which they are now receiving. That is to say, if the surplus amounts to 20,000 tons, Trinidad will have to get three-fourths of it, and so on. I know that we have not yet reached a stage where we can fulfil all our contracts quite easily, much less to fulfil the demands of all the participating Colonies, so as we stand today our hands and feet are bound, and the Rice Marketing Board will have to wait for years, perhaps, before it will be able to sell any of its surplus to any but the participating Colonies.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member is not right there. The contracts with these Governments end next year — in another 12 months' time — and we will be perfectly free to do otherwise. If I am not right, the hon. Member for Georgetown Central, who is the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, will say so.

Mr. FERNANDES: That is quite right, Sir. The contract at a fixed price expires at the end of 1951. After that, it is a question of the world's market price subject to arbitration. The arbitration set-up is also provided—a member from each Colony and a representative appointed by the Secretary of State. The price agreed upon is in any case not to be lower than the world's lowest market price.

The PRESIDENT: There is no compulsion.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I was going to come to the question of renewal. If you had not intervened I would have come to the point. The very next point I intended to deal with was one dealing with renewal. It is clear that up to 1954 we are bound

to sell under the same conditions. I will read it, and the hon. the Attorney-General will be able to say whether I am interpreting it correctly:

"After the expiration of the five years' period commencing 1st January, 1947, and ending 31st December, 1951, the purchasing vendor undertakes and agrees to extend the provisions of this agreement for a further period of three years commencing from 1st January, 1952, to provide for the purchase from the vendor of the total annual import rice requirements of the inhabitants of the Island of Trinidad, or so much of the import requirements that the vendor can supply in each year in the appropriate grades or qualities as stipulated or provided for in paragraph 3 of this agreement."

They on the other side seem to anticipate that we might not be able to supply their total requirements and so they say, that so much as we have to export must be earmarked for the benefit of those Colonies until 1955.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The end of 1954.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I think we are clear now on that. Up to the end of 1954 the Rice Marketing Board has to supply all its rice if it is less than their requirements, to the Colonies, and it is only if we step up upon that and exceed their requirements that we can export to any other country. So I shall use this very clause which I have read for another argument, but for the moment the point I wish to make in dealing with this clause 7 is this: The Rice Marketing Board Ordinance—the hon. the Financial Secretary has emphasized it—because the people of this Colony are accustomed to this Ordinance—those are his words—must continue to apply to them. What is the meaning of that? They must be bound to carry out this particular contract to supply all their available surplus rice or available rice without surplus to the participating Colonies under this agreement. They cannot sell to any other Colony. As I have promised, I shall refer to it when we are dealing with that clause which deals with Your Excellency's power in respect of allocations. You speak of the obligations of this Government. Whether this Government can extend further this contract under your

powers in Executive Council, or whether it is some dictation on the part of the Colonial Office in England, the situation may arise where you may say we are bound to supply the Colonies for a further period of 10 years, and more so according to that particular clause which is also introduced. That is why I am saying all the other clauses are props and supports and added armour, that this Colony's Rice Marketing Board will be bound to sell its rice to Trinidad. If you take in Jamaica and some more of the other British West Indian Colonies which are not taken in as participating Colonies, you can see the extent of it. In other words, until they extend the existing rice cultivation sufficiently so as to get free from the low price contracts with participating Colonies—I say low price because I am going to refer to the proper prices in a minute—they are going to be bound to sell at this price for another decade or so.

That is my interpretation of this clause. In other words, the iniquity of it lies in the fact that the present cultivators of rice in this Colony must sell their rice to those Colonies, which have been prescribed already by contract and which, probably, under your colonial obligation might be further prescribed, at prices which will be dictated in my humble opinion, and any corporation that comes into this Colony, because it is not bound by this Ordinance, will be free to sell its rice at a very high market price. I will not say at the minimum world market price—wherever it can get a market. We know in these parts there is a shortage of rice in most Latin American countries, and we know that the Colonial Development Corporation will find it very easy to obtain the best prices in the free market. I look upon that as something which is most iniquitous. It is very unreasonable for it to take over and run the undertaking—quite apart from the question that Government has some funds in it because I look upon that as another sop, if I am permitted to use the term—and be able to compete with these poor farmers in an unreasonable manner.

I want to draw a picture at this moment of what the rice industry is in

relation to this point I am making. Sir, I am positive of the fact—and I feel sure every Member of the Council will agree with me—that given proper irrigation and drainage in this Colony every available acre of land will be occupied by the very industrious people in this Colony who are anxious to take up lands. I want also to introduce into the picture and draw upon the fact that in this Colony we are going to have an over-much population very soon, an excess of population in the rural districts. As a matter of fact the Evans Report gives the figures of the increase of population in the rural districts, and that seems to be very considerable in the very Mahaicony area — 13,000 people added in a certain period. It seems to me that this Colony being short of industries and opportunities for the employment of our youths and the people of this Colony, that is something for which this Colonial Development Corporation can be wrongly criticized for coming and taking hold of industries which are very easy to exploit and not engaging in industries which will add to the other industries of this Colony. This picture, I am drawing, is one in which we have so many people who will be freed from school within a few years without knowing where to go and what to do for their livelihood. The Technical Institute that is being installed now can hardly provide for more than 24 to 30 boys per annum. What is that in the way of taking off our young population and putting them on some vocational lines for their occupation in life? That is nothing. The timber industry which has been taken over fully and is being exploited by the Colonial Development Corporation will be the one to give a limited amount of employment to our people, but that has been already spent.

I think the hon. Member, the President of the Rice Marketing Board, or someone else, has given us the figure. If this industry which is coming up may be highly mechanized, what is the scope or opportunity for employment for our people when every available chance will be the Colonial Development Corporation's to exploit and to improve and to develop the industry? Having free markets it will be able to get considerably higher

prices, probably three times the price that the Rice Marketing Board is getting and is passing on to the producers of this Colony. The Corporation will have the opportunity to expand, the opportunity to develop, because it will be getting sufficient money as income. It will have the opportunity to establish its own irrigation and drainage system which will help it to take over large areas of land and in that way the ordinary man will be left to struggle for an existence and possibly in the competition of prices he will have to resort to giving up entirely to the Colonial Development Corporation and doing something else. I feel sure that my hon. Friend with his ability to marshal the historical side of things will be able to produce argument as to what is going to become possible in this Colony when we have another large plantation system in this Colony, second to none and superior to sugar as far as we envisage. We are not misleading ourselves. We have a right to see into the future. I speak as a son of the soil with the interest of Guiana at heart when I say so, and I know what I am talking. We want no unfair competition in this Colony. We want everyone, whether it is the biggest concern in the world or not, that comes to this Colony to co-operate in the best of partnership for the benefit of all equally. We do not want any corporation to come here and say "Give us the whole hog — freedom to operate, freedom of markets". That is what clause 7 is saying. That is what clause 7 is doing.

To return to this picture, quite apart from the population, quite apart from the fact, as I have indicated, the people of this Colony can take up every bit of land if they get suitable drainage; I want to say this: The people of this Colony have developed the rice industry to a point of which I think, this Colony can be proud. This has not been due to the effect of the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance either. In my picture I am seeing people who had been forced by dint of circumstances to be engaged in the industry in order to get rice and "bajee", which grows between the rice beds, to eat. Those people eke out a bare existence and, though having been forced to pursue the

one avenue of reasonable employment which will keep the wolf from the door, they have nevertheless extended the industry considerably. Except for the peak years of 1932 and 1937 when 28,000 tons were exported, we have not reached that yet. Today we are just at 27,000 tons. We have not yet reached the full contract requirements of our participating Colonies. In this picture I am going to ask Members to consider this fact, that given the opportunity, equal opportunities, the people with that zeal, initiative and industry which are well known of them can develop and expand the industry. I make the very strong point, that we do not care to have the Colonial Development Corporation in the rice industry of this Colony.

I think that is taking it extremely far as, I think, most Members would say and Your Excellency might say, but I have my reason for saying so. I feel when the Colonial Development Corporation comes to this Colony — and I say this with all experience at the back of me — whatever its operations it will be lending a helping hand to the detriment of its neighbours around. I speak feelingly on this matter because of my experience of the Mahaicony-Abary Rice Scheme into which \$2 million, not only C.D. & W. money but funds of the taxpayers of this Colony, were thrown and utilized how? I remember well a series of questions asked which, if answered, would have been in this big report on the Mahaicony-Abary Scheme. We saw a chapter of failures, not merely a chapter of failures so far as administration and working are concerned, not only losses, but also the impossible. I make no hesitation in saying that I challenge anyone to refute by argument that it had not this disastrous effect upon the poor unfortunate people who held rice farms adjacent to the Scheme. I know it only too well. I have had the opportunity of going and seeing how — and my hon. Friend, the Second Nominated Member can bear me out on this point — by the use of four very powerful pumps, the strength of which, I think, is mentioned in the Evans Report as 800 tons per minute each

Mr. MORRISH: To a point of correction! 80 tons per minute.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I know there was some "eight" in it. (Laughter). That is part of their \$400,000 Drainage and Irrigation Scheme, money given by this Colony. By the use of those pumps 320 tons of water per minute was pumped from the Scheme right across into the Mahaicony River, and because of the intervals of the pumping the strong dam, which was formed and was capable of holding up the water beyond the pumps in the Mahaicony area, was cut. What resulted? Any rainfall, which used to be drained off in the normal course by the river and by evaporation, causes tremendous disaster in the regions of the upper reaches of that river and the loss of the people's crops. This matter was taken up by me on the Drainage Board. My hon. Friend, who is Chairman of the Board, will remember how strongly I asked that the Director of Public Works be made to take the responsibility to effect drainage into the Abary River. Everybody on that Board voiced the view that the Board had no authority to go into the question of getting the water from the Scheme, instead of being drained into the Mahaicony River, let out through the Burma Canal, a very wide canal, into the Abary River. No one will take the responsibility, and he will remember how strongly I urged that the Director of Public Works be made to take the responsibility. He gave the assurance, and that was about two months ago, that he would see that the Transport and Harbours Department who, he thinks, is the person who must clear that portion of land below the railway line in order to form the necessary outlet from the Scheme into the Burma Canal, do it so that the aqueduct can be built below the railway line. Up to today that has not been done. We do not know why, but had that been done the people would hardly have suffered as they did.

This Scheme which has an empolder of 13,000 acres of land should not have cut their dams on the north and caused the whole of the Eastern Mahaicony to be flooded out. The very public road which is known to be very high had been

under water in that area. That is what we have got from a scheme which is to be handed over to the Colonial Development Corporation to be operated in that very area. I ask, if that is the consideration Government has for the people of that area? Yet Government is asking for reserve power under this Bill. What are the people of that area to expect when a bigger concern is to operate? That is why I say the picture I have in mind is, if the people of this Colony are given the proper assistance, if instead of \$2,000,000 being thrown into there a part of that goes towards the initial drainage and irrigation scheme for that area, hundreds of thousands of acres more would be put under cultivation. The industry, as operated by the people themselves, is greater in its yield than the mechanically operated industry, because we know from the report that the average yield of the mechanized industry is 50 per cent. of the yield from the planting done by the ordinary farmers. Looking at the schedule and chart to this report we see what is the highest figure given per acre of the yield under the mechanized scheme. That is due to very many causes and chiefly that mechanization of the industry is not altogether a bed of roses where this Colony is concerned. There are too many difficulties to be overcome, and I do not know whether it is because of that very fact the Colonial Development Corporation is asking for a free hand to sell at tremendous prices in order to make up for this very small income from mechanized cultivation. I do not know, but it may be possible. But whatever it is, it will be iniquitous to have a disparity in the control of the industry.

In dealing with this clause I have not said anything about the Colonial Development Corporation, as I know there is one coming after me who will deal with that. I have dealt with the interpretation of this clause 7, what it means, and I have endeavoured to show the gross discrimination even with the amendment of the hon. the Financial Secretary who merely states that this Council will go into the matter of the conditions and terms. There is gross discrimination when the Rice Marketing Board will be made to govern the

rice people of this Colony but not the Colonial Development Corporation. I venture to say, before I leave clause 7, on the speech which he has made that in the way of mills, in the way of whatever operations are to be carried out, if they are to come to this Colony I will welcome them in one way only — if they come in complete partnership with the people and are subject to and bound by the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance. I cannot think of any more reasonable request. I visualize, however, that there might be the necessity for variation of policy, and in that variation of policy in order to obtain a better working of the Government Farm, Experimental Station, Pilot Mill, etc., the Ordinance could be amended suitably.

I will make this point at this stage. Why the whole of this Bill ought to be thrown out, not withdrawn, suspended or deferred, is because we, the Members of this Council, have not been taken into the confidence of Government, and I go so far as to say my information has been that the Rice Marketing Board has not been consulted on this Bill. I stand to be corrected on this point. Up to now there has been no public declaration of the policy so far as rice is concerned, and the only place where we have that is some reference to it in this report, and only those of us who had the time to see this report know what the intentions are. In the Evans Report it is stated that when they come to operate in this country they shall consult and discuss with us. Let me read the particular clause, as the result of which I can say that we have not been treated well. There ought to have been a public declaration of policy and this Bill ought to be put in cold storage and made to suffer the way it ought. I refer to the report of the British Guiana and British Honduras Settlement Commission presented by the Secretary of State to this Colony in September, 1948. At page 186 a summary is given at the end of the report dealing with British Guiana. I will read this passage in support of the point I am making at the moment that the people have not been taking into the confidence of Government.

“The details of the organization would have to be by negotiation both

with the Government of British Guiana and with the existing rice interests, mill-owners and cultivators”.

I ask whether what has been adumbrated in this Report has been carried out, what should be the primary duty to the people of this Colony? Have they at any time shown by public declaration or otherwise what they intend to do? Have they consulted the rice producers of this Colony, the mill-owners in so far as getting up central mills? Have they consulted the people to see what part they play in the marketing of rice in this Colony? Have they prepared the minds of the people and Members of this Council for the Bill now imposed upon it? I say “No”. For those reasons we should never have the cause to debate in a nebulous way, merely feeling our way and suspicious; we should never have the cause to hear the statement made that we are misleading the public and ourselves and the Government is misleading itself. We should not be placed in that position. For that reason this Bill ought to be given its quietus before very long in this debate.

There is nothing wrong with the rice industry at all. All that is wrong is that there is a clear attempt by certain people to emasculate the interests of those engaged in it. There can be no doubt that during the first world war some people made money, some of them unscrupulously, perhaps, and that those who had free markets sold rice at whatever prices they could obtain. It is also true that at the beginning of the last war similar high prices were obtained for our rice. There is no doubt that a child could have sold British Guiana rice to any of the Colonies at maximum world prices, but I venture to say that some creative genius thought that the people of this Colony might get rich too quickly, and that it would have some influence on the cost of living in the other Colonies. Legitimate as that might be, the fact remains that restrictions were clamped down on the legitimate aspirations of the people engaged in the rice industry by means of Defence Regulations. Every possible means of escape was closed by the Rice Marketing Ordinance, and I am glad the Financial Secretary has referred to it, because it gives me the right to slate it as much as I can now. When

rice was sold 20 years ago at \$140 per ton during the period between the two wars—that is 1920-21—people who were hit by Burma rice had to lower their price, not of their own choice but by the design of the Rice Marketing Board, or whatever influence there was behind the Board, because they had to sell at one-third of the average market price—at 5 cents per lb. instead of 15 cents. Through its wisdom the Rice Marketing Board not only lost millions of dollars but the rice producers lost an opportunity to live as people should live, in comfort and with sufficient money to extend their cultivation and develop the industry.

The Rice Marketing Board made an agreement with the West Indian Colonies but it was a Board packed with non-producers, being constituted entirely by Government nominees. I say so because of the fact that although Government created the Rice Producers' Association a statutory body there had not been one popular election of a member of that Association when those contracts were entered into. All the members of the Association were Government nominees, and as the Board was constituted by eight Government nominees—most of them non-producers—and nominees from the Association it could be said that the contracts with the West Indian Colonies were Government contracts. It was a mere coincidence that in the wake of a popular election of the Council of the Rice Producers' Association, as the Financial Secretary has said, democracy was at work for the first time as a result of popular election.

If democracy is to work and the rice producers are to get what is their due it seems to me that the power which clause 1 of the Bill seeks to take away from the Board, which is now more democratized, is something which must be shady in the eyes of the rice producers. I do not know whether the Financial Secretary wanted us to feel that British Guiana had been fairly dealt with when he made reference to prices, but I was fortunate in obtaining the source of his information as to the relative prices. Before I go further, the real point I wish to make is that the Financial Secretary told us that we will contribute

\$2 million worth of assets in the Mahai-cony-Abary Scheme, and that the C.D.C. will put in \$10 million, but the effect of that sop which has been offered to us disappears completely when we consider that we have lost nearly \$20 million within the past 10 yeears, and we are losing \$2 million every year as a result of not getting the world market price for our rice. If we get legitimate prices for our rice we would not need the help of the C.D.C. As I have said before, we would welcome the C.D.C. provided they come within the control of the Rice Marketing Board. I wish to quote from the speech of the Financial Secretary where he said :

"It comes with a little bad grace now from those who severely criticise the action of the Board and blame Government. Government has nothing to do with it. I think it is the easiest thing for one to be wise after the event. Today the Board has succeeded in securing an increased price over the original figure. It may surprise Honourable Members to know that the prices which are being secured by the Rice Marketing Board in its export markets now are not very far below what may be termed world prices. For instance, the price per ton which is being paid for good quality rice sold to Trinidad and Barbados is £32.7s. The Board has just secured a sale to Jamaica for some surplus rice and the price they have secured is £42.7s. per ton. I understand that Jamaica had been endeavouring to secure a supply from, firstly, Siam and, secondly, Burma; and that the Burma price was only £40.7s. as against what the Board is now getting—£42.1s. per ton. I also understand that in the last Bulletin of the Ministry of Food which gives the current prices of rice in various parts of the world, these figures appear: Thailand (I am not sure whether this country is still known by that name) — £38 per ton; Burma—£38 and Australia (which has just come into the rice market) — £36. As I have said, the present price which is being obtained from the West Indian Islands of Trinidad and Barbados is £32.7s. and from Jamaica it is £42.1s. per ton; so it is a mistake for anyone to say that the present position is grossly unsatisfactory to the rice industry, of this Colony".

I have had the opportunity of seeing the Bulletin of the Ministry of Food to which the Financial Secretary referred as the source of his information about prices,

and I am worried by the fact that in law a half-truth is regarded as a falsehood. First of all he ought to have said that Thailand is selling No. 1 rice at £38 per ton with 35 per cent. of broken rice in it, so that it is a very low grade of rice. Again Burma rice is white rice, and I think I am correct in saying that white rice is not of the same grade as our Super No. 1. Under the contract British Guiana is required to sell up to 40 per cent. of Super rice and the balance of No. 1, so that the quality of the rice we have to supply the West Indian Islands is higher than that of Thailand and Burma's white rice. I think we ought to get the Brazil price, because we are so near to Brazil where conditions are practically the same. The last price quoted for Brazil rice was £48 per ton in 1948, as compared with £93 per ton for U.S.A. rice and a paltry £32 per ton for British Guiana rice. In the Latin American countries up to January this year, or late last year, prices were as high as £65 and £66 per ton. At the end of December last year Ecuador was getting £49 per ton, which is a long way from our £32 per ton. The Financial Secretary has given us £32 per ton as the highest price for our Super rice. Why did he not give us the prices for No. 1 and No. 2 rice, which would have dropped to £26? More than 50 per cent. of the lower grades of our rice is exported at \$9 per bag. If all the facts were stated we would see exactly where we stand. It is not right to say that the price obtained for our rice compares favourably with prevailing world prices, because it is far below the average world market price.

The report of the Rice Marketing Board for the period October, 1948 to September, 1949, shows that 187,184 tons of our rice was exported to the West Indian Colonies. If we take the prices given in the Ministry of Food Bulletin we get the amazing facts of our losses annually. On the basis of the lowest world market prices obtainable between 1941 and 1944 this Colony lost \$1,101,978 in 1941. Realising that about 200,000 tons of rice has been exported during that period, and that we have not been getting one-third of the world market price, it seems to me that the Colony has lost between \$20 and \$30 million. Therefore it seems to me

that British Guiana has been bleeding in its side as a result of the operations of the Rice Marketing Board.

I gave notice of a motion at the last session of this Council asking for a review of the rice contracts with the West Indian Islands, because it is trite law that if circumstances developed which could not be foreseen at the time the contracts were entered into that would be sufficient ground for re-opening the contracts or even annulling them. Discussion of my motion was deliberately delayed until the close of the last session of the Council and it has not yet been reached. In the meantime representatives of the Rice Marketing Board went to Trinidad and negotiated for the magnificent increase of one cent per lb. in the contract price for our rice. It seems to be a paradox to find that those Colonies cannot afford to pay more than one cent per lb. more for the rice we are supplying them, while Jamaica can pay £42 per ton for white rice of an inferior quality. It seems to me that something is radically wrong.

There is much more I can say at this point, but I wish briefly to refer to the earlier clauses of the Bill which have a strong flavour of, may I say, a deliberate attempt to destroy the legitimate aspirations of the rice producers of this Colony through their Association. I am assuming that every Member of this Council has read the memorandum circulated to them by the Rice Producers' Association. It must be clear from that memorandum that every effort has been made by the Association to assert itself in a way that democracy demands that it should. The Financial Secretary certainly let the cat out of the bag when he referred to somebody as having said that the Rice Producers' Association wants to dominate the Rice Marketing Board. What of it? If the Financial Secretary was really sincere in his statement in 1943, which he repeated in 1946, that the Rice Producers' Association should be a co-operative organization, and that it should be a case of democracy at work, it seems to me to be completely inconsistent for him, or for Government, to say, whenever the Association attempts to assert itself, that it should be curbed by law.

Where is the democracy? Is a democratic country like British Guiana afraid of democracy? That is what it would mean if those clauses other than clause 7 are allowed to pass. I do not intend to deal with each one of the clauses in this Bill—I feel sure other Members would like to deal with them—but I would like particularly to deal with section 5 (3) of the Principal Ordinance, because an interpretation has been placed upon it by the Financial Secretary and Treasurer. This sub-section reads:—

“(3) Subject to the directions and general control of the Board the Committee shall manage the business of the Board under this Ordinance and may, in the name and on behalf of the Board, exercise the powers, duties and functions of the Board, under this Ordinance other than the powers, duties and functions of the Board under sub-section (1) of section six, section fifteen, subsection (1) of section thirty and section thirty-six”.

To this there is a proposed amendment which varies the first few lines. In other words, whereas the original sub-section says “Subject to the directions and general control of the Board the Committee shall manage the business of the Board under this Ordinance”, the amendment says “The Committee shall manage the business of the Board under this Ordinance in conformity with the general policy of the Board”. It will be clear from an interpretation by any lawyer that when the sub-clause says “Subject to the directions and general control of the Board the Committee shall manage the business of the Board”, it means that the Committee is an agent of the Board. The provision merely seeks to reduce the amount of work which the whole big body which would be unwieldy has to do. The Board need not interfere with the Committee, but it is always subject to their directions and general control. That Board or complicated authority ceases to be a complicated authority, in my humble opinion, in the new sub-clause which vests in the Committee a power superior to that of the Board but that is objectionable, unparliamentary and unethical, when it comes to a recognised statutory body. I respectfully suggest that the words “in conformity with the general policy of the Board” can only

mean one thing, and that is the policy set out by the Board itself. The Board does not direct policy at all; it carries out the policy of industry as set out in the Ordinance. What is the policy of the Board but to buy fixed grade and to sell; it is quite definite what its functions and policy are.

When this amendment says "The Committee shall manage the business of the Board under this Ordinance in conformity with the general policy of the Board", it certainly gives the Committee an over-riding authority, and there must be some reason for it. I have taken up enough time on this point and do not want to repeat what has been said in the memorandum, but it does seem to me that there is some reason for this and, judging from the remarks of the Financial Secretary, there is fear that the rice producers in the Colony would have a big voice on the Board. Therefore, the Committee will have the power and what it wants to do will be done. It seems to me that it is against public policy and true democratic principles to have such a body or machinery selected and appointed by this very Legislative Council. If there is anything good in the Ordinance it is the provision whereby there should be a Board of 16 members — eight to be appointed by the Governor in a particular way and the other eight to be representatives of the rice producers — but now, with one stroke of the pen, this Council is being asked to destroy that set-up. In other words, the Board will be reduced to nothing, and the Committee will be able to dictate to it at any time. This appears to be due to fear of the rice producers, although it has been said that they should operate in the form of a co-operative society. The Board would, probably, appoint a sub-Committee to carry on its everyday affairs. Let me read the original section again and show why we should retain it. This section 5 (3) read:

"(3) Subject to the directions and general control of the Board the Committee shall manage the business of the Board under this Ordinance....."

The PRESIDENT: Will the hon. Member go on?

Mr. DEBIDIN: It continues:

"and may, in the name and on be-

half of the Board, exercise the powers, duties and functions of the Board under this Ordinance other than the powers, duties and functions of the Board under sub-section (1) of section six, section fifteen, sub-section (1) of section thirty and section thirty-six."

I have looked at this section, Sir, and I have no quarrel with that. If it is your wish I shall refer to this Ordinance to show what these sections mean. Sub-section 6 (1) deals with the appointment of a Manager and a Secretary, and the rice producers have no quarrel with that although it is really against democratic principles.

The PRESIDENT: Take section 15.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It reads:

"15. (1) The Board may fix grades of rice, and different grades may be fixed in respect of rice to be purchased from a manufacturer, in respect of the rice to be sold for consumption in the Colony, and in respect of rice to be exported.

(2) The Board may from time to time, with the approval of the Governor, determine and fix —

(a) the minimum price at which padi may be purchased from a rice farmer;

(b) the price at which the Board shall purchase rice; and

(c) the price at which the Board shall sell rice for consumption in the Colony.

(3) The Governor may from time to time fix the price at which rice may be sold by retail for consumption in the Colony....."

If the Board is not satisfactory to the Committee or anybody else the Governor is there; there is the right of veto against it. The original section gives to the Governor over-riding power which the producers are not complaining against. In my opinion there is something which they might say, and that is the fixing of the grades and so on should be done entirely by the producers for themselves. They are saying that provision in the original section giving the Governor over-riding

power should be retained, rather than providing in clause 2 (b) of the Bill that "The Committee shall manage the business of the Board under this Ordinance in conformity with the general policy of the Board." I repeat that this gives the Committee a power which it should not have — a power which is greater than that of its own parent body. I notice that the Attorney General has been slow in giving his interpretation of this sub-clause, and I take it that he is doubtful which way he should turn.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am not doubtful at all; the hon. Member must not interpret me the wrong way.

Mr. DEBIDIN: The hon. the Financial Secretary stated that the Attorney-General had not given a ruling on certain points.

Mr. FERNANDES: To a point of correction; my recollection is that the hon. the Financial Secretary, in the course of his remarks, said that the hon. the Attorney General had given that ruling. He has given that ruling to the Board.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Well, then, I was misinformed. That is another example of the misleading information which sometimes reaches us from the Official side.

The PRESIDENT: There is a great deal of misconception and misstatement going around about this matter. Perhaps it is due to the weather.

Mr. DEBIDIN: In the Principle Ordinance which provides that the Governor may appoint additional members to the Board, there is a democratic set-up.

The PRESIDENT: I cannot see it myself. Any three members of the Executive Committee can insist on any matter going back to the full Board. I think it is only fair to say that.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am glad Your Excellency has said that, because it forces me to deal with this clause. If the Committee is given power to function as proposed — over-riding the authority of the Board — there seems to be a very poor chance that an appeal by any three mem-

bers of the Committee would meet with success. Then again, it would be a most undesirable state of things to find the Committee and the Board always engaged in wrangling. It seems to me that that is an objectionable aspect in this clause. There would be incessant wrangling and, probably, the Board would never be fit for anything. The deletion of this clause would obviate any feud and would give freedom and peace to the Board and to the working of the organization.

The PRESIDENT: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but it is only for clarity's sake. It is not a case of any two or three members appealing to the Board; they can demand that anything be referred to the Board for consideration and decision. That is the wording; it is not a question of appealing, and I hope I am right.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I interpret that as an appeal.

The PRESIDENT: I am only anxious that we should get at the correct facts. There is a great deal of misconception going about — the hon. Member said on the Official side, but now it is on the Unofficial side. I only want clarity.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I am sure I would not be misleading or misrepresenting anyone. I am staking my reputation as a lawyer in this Council and if I am offering an opinion I do not think it should have any semblance of an attempt to mislead. It is an important provision and my opinion is that it amounts to an appeal by the members because they have to bring the matter up.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It is a statutory right.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I agree; nevertheless, in order to exercise the right one has to go to the Board and rehash the whole affair before the Board can come to a new decision. There is one other section I would like to refer to. I have been reminded by my friend on my left—the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice — that the Financial Secretary did say that the Board can reverse the decision of the Committee

if a third party is affected. Section 16 (2) of the Principal Ordinance is to be amended by clause 4 of this Bill and the proposed amendment takes the form of the following proviso:—

“Provided that exports of rice shall be allocated and made in conformity with any international agreement subscribed to, or obligation undertaken by, the Colony, with respect to the distribution of food supplies, and the allocation of exports by the Board shall be subject to the approval of the Governor.”

The PRESIDENT: I am afraid I cannot help saying that there was good reason for that proviso when the Bill was under consideration, because under the International Food Control any surplus which we had over and above our contract had to be placed under that Control. I am glad to say, however, that that condition no longer exists, and we have been freed from that obligation. We have not now to go to the International Food Control before we can dispose of any rice, and the hon. Member need not refer to that question because Government has decided to withdraw the clause.

The FINANCIAL SECRETARY & TREASURER: May I just add that that change has been notified to us, and that it is effective as from January 1, 1950.

Mr. DEBIDIN: It is very pleasant to hear that, Sir. The withdrawal of that clause would remove certain argument and suspicion. There is very much more I can say — and I know that you have given very much latitude in this debate, Sir, because of its importance to the industry. It is something that would affect not only the people concerned with the industry, but it would also have a vast effect upon the economy of the Colony as a whole. I hope, therefore, that every attempt made by hon. Members to discuss this Bill will be on the basis of what is good for the Colony. That is how I have approached the subject, and I am honestly of the opinion that the whole of this Bill should not see the light of day. To my mind, we have not been sufficiently informed as to the intention of the C.D.C., and we cannot agree to any inequitable distribution of power as regards one

particular industry when there should be a united effort.

Further I feel that several clauses in this Bill are not sufficiently important to warrant their being passed at this stage if clause 7 is being displaced. This clause, to my mind, should not be passed, because we should have a new proposal put forward—a new amendment to the Ordinance with new suggestions, and not this one which has been so strongly criticized. At the same time, I feel that several things should be left in the Ordinance because they have the flavour of democracy, and that we should not contribute to a state of things which would bring dissatisfaction to the hearts of thousands of people engaged in the industry. No one would be able to get out of their minds the feeling of suspicion that they are not being treated properly, especially after the criticism of the very Ordinance by which they are bound. I feel it would be one of the wisest things if the whole Bill and especially those clauses which give the semblance of support to clause 7 were withdrawn. I desire to crystalize what I have said in just a few words which I ask permission to read. They are in the form of a seven-point summary, as follows:

“1. That C.D.C. or its Rice Corporation or any other undertaking would be welcomed on the basis of equality in all respects with millers and cultivators particularly in the marketing and the pooling of their rice for marketing, i.e. they must be subject to the same single seller and the same conditions as to local and export prices.”

Then it goes on:—

“Any or all future changes in policy for the rice industry must be —

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member is reading; is he not?

Mr. DEBIDIN: I asked permission to read it because it is really a summary, but if Your Excellency says I should not, I will not do so.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member is going very near to reading his speech.

Mr. DEBIDIN: In this particular in-

stance I thought it would have been well to read a summary of my remarks, and I asked permission to do so.

The PRESIDENT: If I get 24 memoranda being read—one by each Member of the Council when he speaks—I do not know where we would be.

Mr. DEBIDIN: This is not a memorandum, Sir; it is just a summary. I would like to say that the C.D.C. or any other rice corporation would be welcome in British Guiana only on the basis of equality with the cultivators and the mill-owners, especially in so far as marketing is concerned, since their should be a pooling of rice for sale. They should all be subject to a single-seller and to the same control of prices. I also desire to say that any step with regard to the future policy of the industry must only be taken after discussion with the cultivators and the mill-owners in the Colony. Thirdly, I would like to say that if the new undertaking is to come into this Colony it must also be subject to the control of the Rice Marketing Board in all its aspects, and if any amendment to the Rice Marketing Board Ordinance becomes necessary for the introduction of any new policy it must also be discussed and agreed upon co-operatively with the cultivators and the mill-owners. Further, central mills in this Colony must be established on a co-operative basis under the Co-operative So-

cieties Ordinance, 1948, and the mill-owners in the areas affected must be given a right to participate in the erection of the said central mills. My fifth point is that if any new undertaking comes into this Colony and decides to erect any mill it must not be for the purpose of satisfying their own requirements — their own production output — but must include the output of nearby areas with the knowledge and consent of the cultivators in those areas.

Next, I would say that before the C.D.C. is accepted on any basis in this Colony and before any law is amended or passed — whether by this Legislature in future or by the 1946 amendment Ordinance — the C.D.C. must publicly declare its policy and intentions as to proposed sites and area of operation proposed methods of operation and the capital expenditure involved, employment and wages, and drainage and irrigation. They must first publicly declare their policy and intention to these things, and lastly, that the present Bill should be withdrawn or, if not, be thrown out as a whole as being, in my humble opinion, inimical to the interests of the industry and those presently engaged in the industry.

The PRESIDENT: If no other Member wishes to speak this afternoon I suggest that the Council adjourn to Thursday next.