

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

(Constituted under the British Guiana  
(Constitution) (Temporary Provisions)  
Order in Council, 1953)

THURSDAY, 10TH MARCH, 1955.

The Council met at 2 p.m.

## PRESENT :

His Honour the Speaker, Sir Eustace Gordon Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C.

### *Ex-Officio Members:*

The Hon. the Chief Secretary,  
Mr. F. D. Jakeway, O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney General,  
Mr. F. W. Holder, C.M.G., Q.C.

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,  
Mr. W. O. Fraser, O.B.E.

### *Nominated Members of Executive Council:*

The Hon. Sir Frank McDavid,  
C.M.G., C.B.E. (Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines).

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Member for Labour, Health and Housing).

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (Member for Communications and Works).

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.  
(Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development).

The Hon. G. H. Smellie

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj.

The Hon. R. C. Tello.

### *Deputy Speaker:*—

Mr. W. J. Raatgever, C.B.E.

### *Nominated Officials:*—

Mr. W. T. Lord, I.S.O.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal.

### *Nominated Unofficials:*—

Mr. T. Lee.

Mr. W. A. Phang.

Mr. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C.

Mr. W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.

Mr. C. A. Carter.

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb.

Mr. H. Rahaman.

Miss Gertie H. Collins.

Mrs. Esther E. Dey.

Dr. H. A. Fraser.

Lt. Col. E. J. Haywood, M.B.E., T.D.

Mr. R. B. Jailal.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.

Clerk of the Legislature—

Mr. I. Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature—

Mr. E. V. Viapree (acting).

### *Absent:*—

Mr. E. F. Correia—on leave.

The Speaker read prayers.

## MINUTES AMENDED

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is, "that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Friday 4th March, 1955, as printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed." There is one correction to be made on page 12 of the Minutes. The letter "n" should be deleted from the word "withdrawn," to read "withdraw."

Agreed to.

Minutes, as amended, confirmed.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## LEAVE GRANTED TO MR. GAJRAJ

**Mr. Speaker :** The hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, will be leaving the Colony on public business from the 12th to the 19th of March, and he is being granted leave to do so.

## REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

**The Attorney General (Mr. Holder) :** I beg to lay on the table :

The Report of the Administrators of the Patoir Trust Fund for the year 1954 together with the Director of Audit's certificate.

**Mr. Kendall** (Member for Communications and Works): I beg to lay on the table:

The Report of the Director General of Colonial Audit on the Accounts of the British Guiana Transport and Harbours Department for the year ended the 31st December, 1952, together with the Governor's comments thereon.

## GOVERNMENT NOTICES

## CONTINUATION OF PART IX OF HOUSING ORDINANCE

**Mr. Cummings** (Member for Labour, Health and Housing) : I beg to give notice of the following motion :

"Whereas by Resolution No. III of the Legislative Council passed on the 25th day

of March, 1954, Part IX of the Housing Ordinance, 1946 (No. 24 of 1946) was continued in force up to the 31st day of March, 1955;

And whereas it is desirable that the said Part IX of the Ordinance shall continue in force for a further period ;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that Part IX of the Housing Ordinance, 1946 (No. 24 of 1946), shall continue in force for a further period of one year from the 1st April, 1955."

## ORDER OF THE DAY

DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION  
(AMENDMENT) BILL

**Sir Frank McDavid**, (Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines) : I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intituled :

"An Ordinance further to amend the Drainage and Irrigation Ordinance, 1940."

**The Financial Secretary:** I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.  
Bill read the first time.

GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL  
(AMENDMENT NO. 2) BILL

**Mr. Farnum** (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development) : I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intituled :

"An Ordinance further to amend the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance with respect to the payment of a gratuity where an Officer or Servant dies in the service of the Georgetown Town Council."

**Mr. Gajraj** : I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.  
Bill read the first time.

CRIMINAL LAW (OFFENCES)  
(AMENDMENT) BILL

**Mr. Farnum**: I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance further to amend the Criminal Law (Offences) Ordinance."

**Mr. Gajraj:** I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

#### GAMBLING PREVENTION (AMDT.) BILL

**Mr. Farnum:** I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance further to amend the Gambling Prevention Ordinance."

**Mr. Gajraj:** I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

#### SUMMARY JURISDICTION (APPEALS) (AMDT.) BILL

The next item on the Order Paper was the second reading of the Bill intituled :

"An Ordinance further to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Appeals) Ordinance."

**The Attorney General :** I should be grateful if the Council would permit me to defer further consideration of this Bill. As I indicated on the last occasion, the Bill is being redrafted as a result of certain comments by the Judges.

Bill deferred.

#### BRITISH CARIBBEAN FEDERATION

**Mr. Speaker:** Items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 on the Order Paper will not be taken today. The next item is the motion by the Rev. Mr. Bobb:

"That this Council, having noted the steps which are being taken by other Caribbean Governments and by Her Majesty's Government towards the creation of a British Caribbean Federation, and the statement of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Parliament to the effect that the constitutional instru-

ments will provide that British Guiana and other territories which might care to do so will be quite free to join the Federation, is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined.

"This Council further prays His Excellency the Governor to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding towards the setting up of the Federation, and to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation."

**Mr. Raatgever:** Before the motion is taken, Sir, I have a preliminary objection to raise.

#### SPEAKER'S MINUTE

**Mr. Speaker:** One minute. Before the motion is moved I would crave the Council's indulgence to read a minute which I have prepared at very short notice. It reads :

"I am fully conscious that in my capacity as the Speaker of this Council I am empowered to prevent any motion being submitted to the Council which, in my opinion, either in form or propriety is one which should not be allowed to be discussed, especially as there is no appeal from any decision I may arrive at."

"I am also fully aware that the Council is composed of nominated Members only, and that as the proposed motion by the Rev. Mr. Bobb, of which due notice has been given, relates to a substantial alteration in the present Constitution of this Colony, making it subject in many ways to a federal administration and control, it may be thought by some Members that it is one which it is not within the power of the present Council to discuss, and that any decision arrived at by its Members is not binding on those responsible for the administration of the Colony's affairs."

"I think it will be allowed that every form of constitutional change is one in which the community as a whole, i.e. the governed, is entitled to be placed in a position to express an opinion on, and I have no doubt this will be recognised by the proper authorities in a matter so controversial as the subject of Federation is."

"In the circumstances I feel that as this may be the only opportunity for individual Members of the Council to express an opinion as to the wisdom or propriety of

[Mr. Speaker]

the proposed change in the Constitution, that I should not deprive them of the privilege of doing so.

"I take this opportunity of saying that at no time whatever during my occupancy of this Chair, has His Excellency ever, either by way of direction and/or advice, made any suggestion whatever to me as to the attitude I should adopt in arriving at any decision I have been called upon to make in this Council."

The decision is my own. It may be possible for me to allow any amendment to the proposed motion, and I am glad to think that at least there will then be an opportunity given to those who are opposed to Federation to express their wishes either in the form of an amendment or criticism. In the circumstances, subject to any objection there may be by any Member to my decision on a point of order, I propose to ask the hon. Member to proceed with his motion.

**Mr. Raatgever :** Sir, I intimated that I had an objection to raise. I would like to refer you, Sir, to the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953, made on December 22nd, 1953, and to quote from Part V, on page 12 of the document, subsection (2) of section 48, which reads :

"(2) Except with the recommendation or consent of the Governor signified thereto, the Council shall not proceed upon any Bill, amendment, motion or petition which, in the opinion of the Speaker or other Member presiding, would—

(a) dispose of or charge any public revenue or public funds of the Colony . . . "

That is quite clear. In the motion which the hon. Mr. Bobb proposes to move, there is a proposal to charge the revenue of the Colony and its public funds, and I would like to know whether His Excellency the Governor has given his consent to the proposal in the motion.

**The Attorney General :** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Council would be

grateful to the hon. Member for some clarification of the point as to how the motion, as it stands, would create a charge upon public funds. All I see the motion seeks to do is to discuss the question of Federation so far as the principle goes, and then there is a second arm to the motion which requests the Governor to take whatever action he thinks fit in pursuance of any decision by this Council after the discussion has taken place. I personally cannot see how the hon. Member's reference to that section, and to the question of the disposition or charge upon the public funds of the Colony, can be relevant in the particular circumstances of the motion.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh :** Your Honour, I would like to disagree with the hon. the Attorney General. It will be seen that the concluding sentence of the first paragraph of the motion makes the positive statement that this Council :

"is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation . . . "

If this Council accepts this motion *ipso facto* there would not only be a charge on public funds but the entire economics of this country would be affected. We were told in the first instance that 25 per cent. of the revenue of this Colony collected from Customs would have to be surrendered to the Federation, but I have read that the figure has been reduced to 10 or 15 per cent. Then we would have to contribute *pro rata* to the cost of the Federation. I therefore cannot see how the hon. the Attorney General can come to the conclusion that acceptance of this motion would not result in a charge on the public funds of this Colony.

**Mr. Speaker :** Would any other Member like to speak on the point ?

**Mr. Ramphal :** I think that the subsection which was quoted by my hon. friend on my left (Mr. Raatgever) is one of the fundamental provisions in any

Administration which observes the democratic way of life—that nothing which would be a charge upon revenue shall be brought into this Council by way of motion unless the Executive itself has given approval of it, and the Governor, speaking for and on behalf of the Executive, has given his consent. I am inclined to agree with the hon. the Attorney General that all this motion seeks is merely an expression of opinion from this Council that British Guiana should join the proposed Federation, and that the Governor be entitled thereafter to take such steps as he may deem fit. I cannot see—it is beyond logic to say that the motion makes a charge upon the revenue of this country.

**Mr. Cummings** (Member for Labour, Health and Housing): I would like to point out that the hon. Mr. Sugrim Singh read only a portion of the first paragraph of the motion. He did not read the whole sentence which reads :

"is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined."

There is no question of any proposal to charge public funds. This is a re-examination of something which has been already examined.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh** : I have no desire or capacity to enter into any legal quibble with words, but if the hon. Member would look at the subject of the sentence he would see that it says :

"That this Council . . . is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation . . ."

That is positive and complete. Having decided that issue the Council proceeds to the other wing of the motion :

" . . . and that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined."

I do not wish to be impolite, but this is a very important matter in the history of this Colony, and the previous debates in this Council—

**Mr. Speaker:** We are considering a point of order. Please do not go into that.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh** : If this motion is put in its present form there could be no other interpretation than that this Council is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and that being so, the subsidiary commitments follow.

**Mr. Luckhoo** : There is another point of order which I would respectfully like to bring to Your Honour's attention. May I inquire whether I should do so now or await your ruling on the first point?

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know what it is. Are you following along the lines of the previous speakers?

**Mr. Luckhoo**: No, Sir. My point is that this motion in its present form cannot be properly debated, and in furtherance of that objection may I refer Your Honour to the motion itself. As I read it, it is in four parts—

- (a) "That this Council . . . is of the opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation."
- (b) "that the question of this country's participation therein should be re-examined."
- (c) "His Excellency the Governor to take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding towards the setting up of the Federation . . ."
- (d) "to ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards participation in the Federation."

The point I am making is that if (a) is accepted, that British Guiana should join the Federation, then the second part (b)—that the question of its participation therein should be re-exam-

[Mr. Luckhoo]

imed — would be valueless, for joining would assuredly include participation. In other words, although some Members may feel that the question should be re-examined, a decision in favour of the first part would certainly rule out consideration of the second part.

Further, with respect to the third arm of the motion—that His Excellency should take such steps as he may deem fit to keep British Guiana in close touch with the action now proceeding towards the setting up of the Federation—savour to me of a ratification of a step which has been already taken. I do not know whether that is the policy or the idea behind this part of the motion, but to my mind it adds confusion to the fourth; it seems to be purposeless, because if we accept the third arm and public opinion is against it, what then would be the position? What purpose would be served by the fourth part if public opinion is against it after this Council has accepted it and proceeds thereby to further the cause of the acceptance of the motion?

The point I make is that hon. Members, perhaps like myself, may wish to express a true opinion but will not be permitted to do so by a motion which is so involved, and which does appear to express a certain amount of contradiction or confusion in its terms.

**The Attorney General :** I am surprised at the last hon. speaker's reference to confusion. He knows as well as the world that due weight must be given to every aspect of the motion if it is passed in its present form, and there can be no confusion if this Council, assuming that it goes on record as being in favour of the principle of Federation, follows that up with a request that the question should be re-examined in the light of the background history regarding the consideration of the subject by former Legislatures. Then that is followed up by a

request to the Governor to keep in touch with whatever is going on—not that that is really necessary, because it may be assumed that the Governor does keep in touch. One can accept that.

Then the last part of the motion suggests that the Governor should ascertain the state of public opinion in this country towards its participation in Federation. There is no confusion in that, because it follows from the point which the hon. Member made at the beginning, regarding the acceptance in principle of Federation, and having regard to the particular structure of the existing Legislature, I think that it is a proper follow-up of the position in relation to any acceptance in principle of Federation by the presently constituted Legislature.

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** I am very thankful to the hon. the Attorney General for elucidating that point. I just wish to add one point—that the first part of the motion expresses a desire to have something done, which legislators are entitled to have done, and that is to express an opinion. If this Legislature were an elected Legislature—that is to say, if it were wholly elected or partly elected—then the opinion expressed by it would have carried automatically with it the opinion of the country. This Legislature, constituted as it is, is unable to express the opinion of the public, and the last clause of the motion seeks to provide an opportunity for public opinion to be ascertained. I cannot see any confusion of thought or principle in those two parts of the motion.

As to the intermediate sections (2) and (3)—with respect to (2) I respectfully submit that that does not follow necessarily from (1), because if this Legislature, constituted as it is, expresses itself in favour of Federation it does not follow logically that the extent of participation should be examined. That is parallel to, but not

consequent upon, the first. The question of (3), where the Governor has already taken steps to keep British Guiana in touch with the actual proceedings, is a matter of which this full Legislature is now becoming aware. What further steps remain to be taken, this Council does not yet know. One can only glean from the newspapers that certain action has necessarily to follow, but it may not be a fact that the Governor is taking steps to acquaint British Guiana as regards the proceedings. This Legislature is not yet so sure, and on that ground this motion has come in order to make sure that the Legislature has informed the Governor of its desire in that regard. I am entitled to include that part of the motion. If the Governor has already taken action, this reinforce the steps taken, and answers what that section of the motion prays.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. the Deputy Speaker has directed my attention to the provisions of section 48 subsection (2) of the British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council, 1953, and has invited me to rule whether His Excellency the Governor not having previously signified his recommendation or approval of the motion standing in the Rev. Member's name, and it being one which, if adopted, would impose a charge on the public revenues or public funds of the Colony, he is entitled to move the motion. The hon. Member is of the opinion that in the circumstances he cannot be allowed to do so, and with this view the hon. Mr. Sugrim Singh is in agreement.

A further objection to the motion being discussed has been taken by the hon. Mr. Luckhoo on the grounds that the motion may be divided into four parts, and that the wording of the motion is confusing, involved and contradictory.

In so far as the objections of the hon. the Deputy Speaker and the hon. Mr. Sugrim Singh are concerned, I am

of the opinion that the motion—even if accepted—would not involve the Colony in any such financial obligations or commitments as would necessitate its revenues or funds being used or drawn upon in any way: and by reason of this it is, in my view, not a prerequisite that the recommendation or approval of His Excellency the Governor should have been obtained prior to the motion being introduced in this Council, and that any omission or failure to do so is an impediment in the way of the motion being moved in this Council.

The provision in question was, in my view, designed to prevent a motion being made without His Excellency having previously signified his assent thereto, which would have had the effect—if adopted by the Council—of imposing an immediate charge on the revenues or funds of the Colony to provide for some expenditure contemplated by the terms of the motion. But the motion before the Council is not such a proposal, and does not *per se* pledge the public revenues or funds of the Colony in respect of any contribution the Colony may be called upon to make towards the establishment or maintenance of the proposed Federal administration—if it does eventually become a member unit of the Federal Government. Any such contribution and the method of doing so would, in my opinion, have to be determined by the constitutional instruments to be enacted at some future date.

As regards the objections raised by the hon. Mr. Luckhoo, I am of the opinion that they do not in themselves furnish sufficiently substantial grounds for the motion not being discussed in its present form. I am willing to admit that it might have been more happily framed, but any difficulties there may be about the form of the motion itself—whether on the ground of the subdivisions of the objects aimed at or embodied therein, or the ambiguity of the language employed therein, or any

[Mr. Speaker]

difficulty there may be in construing its terms—can be met my amendment, both at the instance of the Mover or by any other Member and/or by submitting the motion in the form of more resolutions than one, if Members are of the opinion that voting on the motion as it stands would be embarrassing.

Finally, I would point out that an opportunity is now given to Members to object to the motion on any grounds they may conceive to be in the public interest. The subject matter of the motion is very controversial and will divide public opinion in the Colony but, as I have already said, it affords Members an opportunity which they may never again be offered, of expressing their opinions on a matter of great public importance.

In view of the conclusions I have reached, I must rule that the objections made to the motion being considered cannot be entertained, and I would now ask the hon. Member to move his motion.

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** What has gone before has made it easy for me now to introduce this motion, because that discussion has cleared one or two points which I had elected to speak upon in the course of moving the motion. I am fully aware, Sir, that there is considerable local interest in the subject of the motion before this Council, and I dare-say that interest is intensified second only to the suspension of the Colony's Constitution in 1953. It is also reasonable to expect that, not only in this country but also in the Caribbean area as well as in London, several eyes are looking on and several ears are listening to discover what is the mind of this Legislative Council, debating such a motion, and what course should be followed as a result of the debate. If I may attempt a simple classification of those to whom I would direct my intro-

ductory remarks, that classification would fall into three groups. There are some who say they have no interest in the subject, and one has to assume that they have not thought about it because it is something too difficult for them to think about and so they dismiss it. There are others who say they have fully considered the subject and they see no advantage for British Guiana, and they in like manner dismiss it. There are others who hold that British Guiana's future is vitally bound up with this plan for Federation, and they would like to pursue it.

It is my responsibility, as Mover of this motion, to indicate in some measure why this debate is before the Council, and if in so doing I stimulate interest in those who so far have no interest, and I succeed in converting those who voice opposition and objection, as well as in strengthening and refreshing those who are entirely in favour of Federation, one object of my motion would have been achieved. Two features of this motion are of special interest at this stage. One has already been the subject of discussion. I anticipate the other would be raised—the question of the propriety of the motion—and my opening remarks which preceded the discussion should by now satisfy Members, seeing, Sir, that you have been good enough to lend the weight of your experience and forensic ability in this respect. Therefore I have very little more to say, save to emphasize that this Council has a right to express an opinion on this matter.

This Council has been expressing opinions and making decisions over a wide range of matters ever since it has been constituted, and it strikes me as an exaggeration of a very minor point to suggest that because this Council is constituted as it is, it has to remain quiet now. I was reading from the Hansard the report of the debate which

took place in this Council in 1951, and I came across the frequent use of the word "dummies." Whether the use of the word "dummies" so often was a true description of Legislatures in those days, it is surely not in these days. This Council is not going to be dumb, and its Members are not capable of being dummies.

So far as the propriety of this motion is concerned, there is hardly anything more that is necessary to say, but it is very noticeable that outside of this Council there has been quite a lot of controversy as to the constitutionality of this motion, and I have listened to a remark made over the air some time ago in which the question was put like this, bearing in mind that this motion would be debated today—"Is the Interim Government competent to discuss this motion?" The motion itself does not talk about committing this country to Federation, which seems to be quite a matter of concern to many people. It does not say that in any shape or form. They are interested to know whether this Government is competent to commit the country to Federation. If we dismiss the last part of that question—"commit the country to Federation"—the question of this Council being competent still has to be answered, and I have gone to the pains of discovering whether my colleagues and myself are competent or not.

I have in my hand the "Letters Patent, Constitution Order in Council, Royal Instructions to British Guiana" covering the Constitution of 1953, and that Constitution was given effect to in the Government which has since been deposed. Also in my hand is the subsequent Order—"the British Guiana Constitutional Amendment Order in Council of 1953"—and when that is compared with the principal Order, even when I add the additional Instrument passed under the Royal Sign and Signet to the Governor and Commander in Chief

of the Colony of British Guiana, I find that the material difference in the action of the Governor and the constitution and functions of the Legislature is in this respect: the Governor need not on more occasions than was the case previously, consult the Executive Council; there is a change in the salaries of Ministers, and the Governor can act in opposition to the Executive Council in a way he could not act under the old Constitution. Beyond that, there is nothing more.

**Mr. Lee:** I would like to draw this Council's attention to the fact that the statement made by the hon. Member is not correct.

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** I am referring to what I have before me. If the statement is incorrect, then what is here printed is incorrect. The point I want to make is that this Legislative Council is fully authorised to do all those acts which were committed to the Legislative Council that it has succeeded, and in that respect I think this Council is quite competent to discuss this matter. In view of that, this Council is competent to commit the country to Federation. There is nothing that says it is not. That is the point I want to make. That is quite clear. But this motion does not talk of committing the country to Federation at all. It refers to the right which we have as individuals and as a body to discuss this matter, and this Council, I am sure, wants to be in touch with what is proceeding in the other Caribbean territories in this matter of Federation.

Speaking negatively, I would say that it would savour of a woeful lack of a sense of responsibility if at this time when the discussion of Federation has reached a more crucial stage, this Council is content to remain inactive and have nothing to say even within the limited range of its activities.

[Rev. Mr. Bobb]

I therefore would like to remind hon. Members of what has gone before, and for a short time I am going to attempt a review of those discussions which have been going on, leading up to the stage which we have now reached.

The first significant event was the Montego Bay Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies, held from the 11th to the 19th September, 1947, and in the opening words of the Report this was written:

"Federation of the British Caribbean Colonies has been discussed for many years both within and without the Caribbean area but until recently the obstacles to it have been thought too great to permit of its pursuit as an active policy."

It is significant also that prior to this conference being held in Montego Bay this matter had been discussed for about 20 years. So that the whole question of Federation has a very long history, and that Montego Bay Conference did what was correct, in that it set out what it was able to find after a great deal of exploration, and it set out a number of resolutions which have formed the basis of further action. Fifteen of these resolutions are recorded. To that conference British Guiana sent two persons.

Voices: Three.

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** Three, thank you, and I remember His Honour the Speaker was one of them. I was very intrigued to find that certain important resolutions were passed at that conference and I would like very briefly to refer to one of those resolutions, with your permission, Sir. Resolution 1 reads like this:

"That this Conference, recognising the desirability of a political federation of the British Caribbean territories, accepts the principle of a federation in which each

constituent unit retains complete control over all matters except those specifically assigned to the Federal Government."

That conference got down to work and made certain valuable recommendations. Those recommendations cover the fields of fiscal matters, Customs services, unification of the Public Service—and that means, Civil Service—shipping, currency and inter-trade agreements. As a result of that conference another conference was called of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee in 1948-49, and it is from that Committee's Report that all the very valuable information has come to form the basis of further discussion on this question of Federation. There again, these main points which I have enumerated were taken up and dealt with at length, and further recommendations were made. It seems that whereas the Montego Bay Conference was more or less exploratory, the Committee on Closer Association endeavoured to be more specific and to make suggestions which might form the basis for the foundation of a Federal Constitution.

In 1951 Dr. Nicholson introduced here in this Chamber a motion which read:

"That, this Council accepts in principle the proposed Federation of British Caribbean Colonies and agrees to consider in a Committee of all the Unofficial Members of the Council the recommendations in the Closer Association Report."

There was quite a long debate on this motion, and I notice there are some Members around this table today who participated in that debate. I hope by now some of them are soundly converted to Dr. Nicholson's way of thinking. Two significant things took place in the course of that debate. One was an amendment by Dr. Jagan:

"That, this Council accepts in principle Federation of the British Caribbean Colonies with Dominion status."

Another amendment by the present Member for Communications and Works (Mr. Kendall), read:

"That, this Council, while unwilling in present circumstances to commit British Guiana to acceptance of the proposed Federation of the British Caribbean Colonies, agrees that this Colony should participate in discussions on the recommendations in the Closer Association Report."

Neither of the two amendments was accepted, and the original motion was lost. That is one stage which I feel we cannot afford to overlook. When Dr. Nicholson's motion was rejected we were told that many of the Members not in favour of Federation were of a certain mind: they were opposed to certain fundamental commitments that were suggested — and, to my mind, rightly so—and they felt that the state of development of the country at that time did not warrant the acceptance of Federation on the terms indicated in the Rance Report.

While this was going on, action was proceeding with the rest of the Caribbean territories, so that in 1953 there was another conference on West Indian Federation, and at that conference very valuable work was done. I am sure that most of the Members who read the report of that conference could not but have the conviction that there were clearer indications at that stage that the background matters which led this Council to reject the principle of Federation had so changed that in 1953 the mind of the Council might well have been moving in a different direction. It was true that the Council had not accepted the principle by 1953, but what did it do? It accepted all those aspects of Federation which were vitally important to this country's development. May I refer to them again? The idea of a Customs Union, Unified Shipping Services, Unification of the Civil Service, the Regional Economic Committee to

which we more than gave our blessing, for we are paying \$24,000 a year—

**Mr. Raatgever:** May I point out that the Regional Economic Committee was set up in 1951, and the hon. Member is speaking of 1953?

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** But by 1953 the functions of that Committee were incorporated in the plan for Caribbean Federation, and I think I am right in saying that for the services of such a Committee we are very glad, and that in this respect we are paying a considerable sum.

**Mr. Speaker:** May I interrupt? The hon. Member is giving some idea of the proposals agreed to without Federation. I am only suggesting that you can have Closer Union and the unification of the Civil Service and other services without Federation, but what I think the hon. Member will have to do is to explore the question of Federation, and what the advantages or disadvantages will be between the territories without Federation. I am only doing this to assist Members.

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** Thank you, Sir, but I was endeavouring to give a short historical review of the stages through which it has gone. I do not wish to suggest that these things were not possible without Federation. Now, continuing along the same lines: the 1953 conference gave particular thought to the cost of Federation as well as to the freedom of movement of persons and trade, and it is true that it decided on a change from 25% of the Customs dues to 10% or 15%, to be contributed by unit Governments.

Since that time there has been a further effort to give effect to the wishes and aspirations of the Caribbean territories, and we remember the statement of the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the 2nd of February this year. With your permission, Sir,

[Rev. Mr. Bobb]

I will read a portion of that statement which is relevant to my remarks:

"It will be recalled that at the London Conference of April, 1953, delegates from Barbados, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands agreed on a plan for a British Caribbean Federation. Her Majesty's Government welcomed the agreement reached on this plan, and stated that if the territories desired to adopt it they would be prepared to take the measures indicated to the Conference to enable the Federation to be set up. The plan was then referred to the Legislatures of those territories for their approval, and the Federal plan has now been adopted by all the Legislatures of the territories concerned. Her Majesty's Government have been most happy to learn of this general agreement.

"In accordance with the suggestion made in the West Indies, Her Majesty's Government will shortly call a conference of representatives of West Indian Governments to reconsider the question of the control of the movement of persons between one member territory of the proposed British Caribbean Federation and another.

"In the meantime, in the expectation of agreement between West Indian Governments on the control of movement of persons, Her Majesty's Government will proceed with the next steps towards a federation. In order that the fiscal, Civil Service and judicial arrangements for the Federation may be worked out with the minimum of delay, Her Majesty's Government propose to appoint three Commissions for this purpose."

The names of the Chairmen of these Commissions were announced in this morning's Press, and it is in connection with the conference on the control of movement of persons that we are asked to send, if we care to do so, a representative who would take an interest in our side of the arrangement. I think someone has been appointed.

That brings me to the main point of this question, and that is whether in view of all that has gone before,

British Guiana should join the Federation? I rather want to put the question the other way: whether British Guiana can afford to remain outside of the Federation? There are already five different services in which we are participating. While it is true that these services may continue without the Council committing the country to Federation, it is logical to go on and say that these services cannot be most advantageously used by this country, except with the help of a Federal authority.

I see it in this way: if the rest of the area had a Federal Government, and British Guiana was only prepared to co-operate with them up to the limit set by the Standing Closer Association Committee, and not proceed further to become an integral part of this Federation, then a stage must be reached when the loyalties of the federal area and the loyalties of this area clash, and I can see that conflict working towards our disadvantage. That conflict may come when agreements have to be made. Would the rest of the area be prepared to 'take in our washing',—to use a well-known phrase—when they have their hands full? Would that area to which that Federal Government must be committed have time to represent the needs of British Guiana when its own matters were pressing? Would British Guiana be able to stand side by side with a Federal authority representing the whole West Indies when their respective economies are bound up, one with the other? If we are to develop the shipping services and all those services which are now admitted to be so useful, at what point would it be possible for British Guiana to remain outside the Federal Authority and enjoy fully the benefits of those services?

When the question of Federation is discussed it is almost fashionable for people in this country to say that

British Guiana is a country of tremendous resources, and in your considering what I am about to say I would like it never to be forgotten that I have been bred and brought up a Guianese, and I hope to die and be buried in this country. I have taken up the cudgels of things Guianese, and I hope to be given strength to do so for many years to come, but I want to be realistic. Some of us are thinking in terms of the coach days—not in terms of the days of the aeroplane. Our times have changed so rapidly, and the outlook of the people has undergone such a complete transformation, that we cannot isolate ourselves in any part of our thinking on a national scale without deleterious effect upon ourselves in this country.

We talk about our natural resources. We know they are many and, at least we hope, there are great mining possibilities. At the present time there are about 62 registered mining companies occupying over 1,700,000 acres of land in this country, but with the exception of bauxite what are our indications as to the great possibilities of those mining resources? Does someone say "oil"? I am thinking of oil too, but we are entirely in the exploratory stage, and we have not yet reached the time when we can stake our future on our mining possibilities.

Do we say "forests"? Yes, we have over 70,000 square miles of forest, but only 20 per cent of it is exploited, and if we are going to hope to increase our revenue on the basis of our forest resources it is a long time before we can see that. I remember the recent debate in this Council on the possibility of establishing a plywood industry. The hon. Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines (Sir Frank McDavid) gave some figures which were not very encouraging. The hon. mover of the motion was not willing to accept those figures,

but if those are the facts let us face them.

Sir Frank McDavid: I do not want to be regarded as having said anything of the nature the hon. Member is suggesting, against our forests as a whole. I was giving some figures in connection with a particular wood called dalli, and I said that its concentration did not seem to be advantageous to the purpose the mover had in mind. I do not want it to be said that I said anything detrimental to our forests as a whole.

Rev. Mr. Bobb: I was not referring to our forests as a whole; I was speaking in the context of the motion which was debated last week. If that is so, what do we have left? We have two major industries — sugar and rice. Whilst sugar does not depend upon the West Indian market for its prosperity, the arrangements for the marketing of that commodity are considered in collaboration with the West Indian Colonies. So far as rice is concerned our markets are also entirely in the West Indies. Therefore, when we speak of the great possibilities of our country we have to qualify what we mean, because so many things are in their infancy. Some are not exploited and others are awaiting larger basic schemes before we can estimate the possibilities. Those which are awaiting larger basic schemes are such crops as we cultivate on the coastlands

In this Council it was urged that attention should be given, even by way of raising a large loan, to the question of putting into effect the Hutchinson schemes. We realise that the drainage and irrigation problems of our country are our greatest set-backs, and our basic productivity can hardly be improved until those handicaps are overcome. So that when we speak of our self-sufficiency let us remember it is a conditional self-sufficiency. But one way is

[Rev. Mr. Bobb]

open, and that way is through more and more co-operation with the West Indies, and more specifically trade with the West Indies and even farther afield.

It has been urged in some places that the West Indies can hardly proceed towards Federation without British Guiana participating. It may be that in the beginning that was in the minds of those who thought in favour of Federation in that area. It may still be an incentive on their part, but I rather think it is rash to assume that there will not be Federation, however valuable to them, without our participation. We have heard in this Council that steps have been taken to bring about a state of self-sufficiency in two or three of the West Indian islands, a conclusion which we desire for ourselves. If momentum is gathering over there — and there is every sign that the energy and enterprise of the leaders of the people in those Colonies are bringing that particular quest nearer realisation—then British Guiana would not be so much needed.

I say definitely that we have been so little industrialised (I heard someone say that this is to our advantage) that unless we are prepared to have some form of economic distribution which could best be handled by a Federal Government, our own development is going to be retarded. To those who say that there are large areas of land, and that we have room for a tremendous population. I would just like to offer a gentle reminder. To develop this country we shall need a great increase in our population, and if the figures forecast for 1960 may point to a substantial increase in that direction, we shall still need much more than a quarter of a million people if it at all happens that we get under way

schemes like the Hutchinson schemes, and such schemes as are envisaged under our Development Programme which is now in progress.

In another field expanding trade relationships have already been developed between British Guiana and the West Indies, and it seems to me the only sensible thing for British Guiana to look towards the West Indies for an increase in its population, otherwise it must look farther afield. It is suggested that we would thus be making way for people to come here at our expense. The answer is that there is enough wisdom in those who have to administer the immigration laws to see that nobody is allowed to come here to add to our unemployment problem, because we have our own people to take care of. I think that is a secondary point so far as this motion is concerned.

On the general question as to whether Federation should be in the immediate future or in the distant future, I think most of us will say that Federation is not around the corner so far as we are concerned. The Federationists would not desire to see it come as quickly as it could come with the West Indies. Why? For obvious reasons. We are not yet ready to take advantage of all the benefits which Federation can give, but I say: do not dismiss the idea of Federation but take active steps to see that we keep in close touch, so that when we are ready we shall be able to enter with the rest of the area on terms that would be of mutual benefit to them and to ourselves.

When speaking in this way I am reminded that it is true that two major races in this country have greatly contributed to the economic prosperity which it now enjoys. That is not at all to ignore the contribution made by others. I raise this point because, on this very question of Federation, it is known

that some leaders of public opinion are using the very wicked weapon to divide those two major groups by playing the advantages of one against the other. I say it is wicked because I think it is a piece of cleverness which is going to do harm in due season. In 1953 something happened in this country, and that something is a tragic memory, but the circumstances which led up to it must never be forgotten, and if the future of the main groups in this country is going to be made the toy of self-interested politicians and leaders of public opinion, let them look out for the day when the younger generation, the 16 and 17-year-old, become 21 and 22, when there will be such a rebound that history will lament to tell. That game should never be played. I have read in the newspapers of this thing being done, and while I do not want to mention names now, I would like what I say to be reported in the Press—that if this sort of division is attempted for people's private advantage we are going to land this country in a worse condition than we found it in 1953.

I think the time has come when we ought to lead our people right for their own good and for the country's good. In the West Indies and this country we have a thoroughly cosmopolitan population, and I hate to think of any attempt to set one group of people against another. Some people are being deliberately told: "Do not accept Federation because the other group wants to become your masters." That sort of thing is entirely to be deprecated. It is one of the things which moved me originally to lend my support to the idea of Federation. I cannot help seeing the British Caribbean growing as one entity. If I were sufficiently insular I might have been able to share the views of those who are not in favour of Federation, but I cannot see the nation coming into its own—Dominion status or no Dominion status, and Dominion status is very far off—unless the common sentiments which

now obtain in British Guiana and the West Indies are properly used and channelled, and I see no way in which that could be better done than by political federation.

There is federation of another order in other directions. There is a lot of interchange, and we are only like Canute, trying to hold back the sea. The time is coming when we shall have to welcome it a lot more readily. We want Federation on terms that are favourable to our own economy and our future prosperity.

One of the points which has been the subject of great attention is the number of seats suggested to be allocated to British Guiana in the Federal Government. I think the number suggested was six. I look at it in a businesslike manner. It is said that the Committee recommended six seats as a basis for discussion. Let us go into Federation in a businesslike manner, demanding our fair share. If we do not think six seats are enough—and I am of the view that they are not enough—is it statesmanlike or businesslike to throw the whole idea of Federation overboard because it is suggested that we should only have six seats?

**Mr. Speaker:** I think it was arrived at on a population basis.

**Sir Frank McDavid :** I beg your pardon, Sir. It is clearly stated in the Rance Report that it was not on the basis of population.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have seen it mentioned so often.

**Sir Frank McDavid :** The Rance Report defies anyone to fix the number of seats on the basis of population by mathematical calculation.

**Rev. Mr. Bobb:** Thank you, Sir, I noted that very point, I think the actual

[Rev. Mr. Bobb]

words were "Our proposal allocation of seats defies reduction to even the most complicated arithmetical formula". The way the number "six" was arrived at distresses me because, if it is assumed that our population on that score only deserves that number, there are other things which entitle us to more seats. So I say, the way to handle this problem is not for us to dispose with the whole matter of Federation, but to approach it in a businesslike manner and insist on what we want. I think that is the attitude of the leaders in the West Indies. The Hon. Albert Gomes is not sitting down and allowing Jamaica to think for Trinidad. But what have we done? We have taken the suggestion of six seats as one of the reasons for rejecting the idea of Federation. I wish we would go into things like these more carefully in the future.

I believe that if this Legislature succeeds in recording a majority opinion in favour of Federation—I expect it will—it would be helping the general public to re-think this whole question and something would have been accomplished. I am sure that this whole question needs to be ventilated, and there are many channels whereby information of the right kind can reach the people. We want the information to reach the people and not poisoned at the source. Let the people have the facts, and when they wake up to the truth we would be sorry for the architects who most shamelessly plan to keep the facts from them.

I want to close this introduction by reference to an extract in which the hon. the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Raatgever) is reported to have quoted from the Bible. As a preacher, when I see the text from the Bible so used, I look at its exegesis more. The passage is "Where there is no vision the people perish." I want to use the same text at the end of my sermon, but I may say that what that text really means is "Where there is an intermittent prophetic vision the

people go naked, and remove that intermittent prophetic vision the people stick to that which is enduring and lawful". I do not know if the hon. the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Raatgever) has that in mind, knowing as I do how that passage is very loosely used and can be employed to support anything. If we have false prophets concerning Federation, the time is going to come when the people would know them, and the vision of the false prophets would also be fully known, and that which is enduring—the future of this country sustained by the loyalty, love and hope of the people of this country—is what would carry them through to a successful Federation with the West Indies. At this point I wish to stop, and I trust that I have said enough to bring to the notice of this hononorable Council the importance of this subject. I will await the comments and criticisms of hon. Members.

Mr. Jailal: I would like to second the motion and reserve my speech for a later moment.

The Chief Secretary (Mr. Jake way): I think it may be helpful to the course of this debate if I take this early opportunity of stating briefly Government's attitude towards the motion. First of all, if I may, I would like to congratulate the hon. Mover for the able and lucid way in which he marshalled his arguments. As the result of the decisions taken in 1952 this country has stood apart from the deliberations and discussions on Federation. We took no active part in the London Conference of 1951. My hon. colleague, Mr. Smellie, attended that Conference only as an observer, but in the eyes of Her Majesty's Government, of the other Caribbean territories and, indeed, of the world we have elected to stay out of Federation. That is the position as it is at the moment.

Since that time the deliberations and discussions on the question of Federation have gone on without us, and

have now reached an advanced stage. The Federal Plan, formulated in London at the London Conference, has now been adopted by the Legislatures of all the British West Indian Islands, and on Monday next a momentous conference will be opened at Trinidad to discuss the vital question of freedom of movement of persons within the Federation. As has been announced, my hon. colleague, Mr. Gajraj, will attend that Conference on behalf of this Government as an observer, in anticipation that this question of freedom of movement will be satisfactorily resolved. Her Majesty's Government has already announced the setting up of three Commissions to work out the judicial, fiscal and civil service arrangements for the Federation.

In the face of all these developments which suggest that Federation may become a reality in the Caribbean at no very distant date, this Government has to consider British Guiana's position. We feel, rightly or wrongly, that there has been a swing of opinion in the country in favour of Federation, but the constitutional position in which we are at the moment makes it difficult to interpret this opinion. Legally, this Council, nominated though it is, is competent to resolve this country into Federation, but none of us here today, I think, would claim that we have a mandate to do that. But does this mean that we should do nothing at all? We feel and say "No".

We cannot expect at this late stage to call a halt to the British West Indian Islands' march towards Federation, so that the whole question of British Guiana's participation in it can be re-examined. I am sure none of us would wish to do anything or say anything which would impede or prejudice the fulfilment of the London Conference Plan for Federation. What we can do is to take stock of our position. If it is demonstrated that it is the wish of

the majority of the people in this country that we should join the Federation, we can open negotiation with the Federal Authority as to the terms on which we may enter. This, as we understand it, is the object of this motion, and as such we welcome it and support it.

The motion is in two parts. The first part seeks an expression of opinion—the opinion of this Council. The second part of the motion makes it plain that it is intended to be no more than that, as it is a prayer to the Governor that His Excellency should take steps to ascertain the state of public opinion in the country towards participation in the Federation. In other words, Sir, this Council does not claim to be in a position to represent the will of the people in a matter so vital as this. It may be asked "If this motion is adopted how will His Excellency implement this prayer?" I do not think it would be right for us to attempt to read His Excellency's mind in the matter, or to anticipate what steps he would take. All I would say is that there are more ways than one of finding out what the country thinks on this subject. One obvious way is by plebiscite, but that is not the only way, or necessarily the best way. Another way is by the establishment of a Commission which would obtain the views of all representative groups in the country, not only on the principle of Federation but on the terms on which this country may wish to join the Federation. This, as I say, is a matter which, in the **arms of the motion**, must be left to the determination of the Governor.

One thing is certain, that whatever steps His Excellency may take will take time to fulfil their object, and during that time the British Caribbean Federation will, we hope, be evolving into reality. The merit of the motion, as Government understands it, is that if it is adopted and implemented we may hope by that time to be in a position, if it

[The Chief Secretary]

is the country's wish, to start discussion with the Federation as to the terms on which British Guiana may join.

**Mr. Smellie:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion and in doing so I should like to compliment the hon. Mover in the first place on its timeliness and, secondly, on the careful way in which it is framed. Whether in Your Honour's view there is any ambiguity or not in certain portions of the wording of the motion, at any rate I think it can be conceded that it was very carefully thought out and carefully framed. We are asked to endorse the Mover's opinion that British Guiana should join the Federation, and I am prepared to support that. His Excellency the Governor is to be asked to keep us in close touch with the action now proceeding. This, of course, has been attended to, and I should like at this stage to congratulate my colleague on my left, the hon. Member, Mr. Gajraj, on having been chosen to represent this Colony as an observer at the forthcoming Conference on Federation in Trinidad which, I note, is called the Freedom of Movement Conference, but which will discuss other aspects of Federation.

The third portion of the motion, in which he asks that the state of public opinion of this country towards participation in the Federation should be ascertained, is particularly important. There is no question about that at all. As a Government of Nominated Members we have no mandate from the people to commit this country one way or the other in this vital matter of Federation.

Sir, I was this Colony's observer at the Conference on Federation which was held in London in April, 1953, I think it lasted for about three weeks. During that Conference the General Election under the new Constitution took place here, and when I returned a week after-

wards the Party which had succeeded to power was not interested in the subject of Federation, and the Administration had many other more urgent and important problems to occupy its attention. I was no longer a Member of the old Legislature which had been dissolved. So I have never had the opportunity of giving an account of my stewardship.

It is not unusual, Sir, where one has been away to another country as a representative of this Colony and has returned, to express appreciation of the arrangements made during one's stay. Even at this belated hour, nearly two years afterwards, I am very glad to have the opportunity of thanking Her Majesty's Government in no uncertain terms for the kindness and consideration which were shown to the delegates. I hope that the hon. Mover of the motion would not mind very much if I fill in, in some greater detail than he did, the background of this Federal idea.

As hon. Members are fully aware, the idea of Federation of the Caribbean territories is not a new one. Lord Halifax, then Mr. Edward Wood, when he was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1922 said:

"The establishment of West Indian political unity is likely to be a plant of slow and tedious growth. If any advance in this direction is to be achieved, it can only be as the result of deliberate demands of local opinion."

We had a Royal Commission in 1938 and they reported that

"Our general impression....is that.... local opinion has made a considerable advance in the direction of political unity...."

—whether rightly or wrongly. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, Colonel Oliver Stanley, who was then Colonial Secretary, in a despatch to West Indian Governments revived the idea. Two years later, Mr. Creech Jones, the Labour Government's Colonial Sec-

retary, decided to hurry matters up and suggested a preliminary conference. To help the territories he sent a Memorandum to the territories which were to take part in the conference, outlining some ideas for discussion. With your permission, Sir, I would like to read paragraph 11 in which he said:

"Possibly the most important reason of all for the view that closer association is necessary lies in the fact that it is clearly impossible in the modern world for the present separate communities, small and isolated as most of them are, to achieve and maintain full self-government on their own. It is not, for example, practical politics to suppose that communities of two hundred thousand souls, or in some cases even less, should play an independent part in international discussions. On the other hand, a community of well over two million people in the Caribbean area, with much that is homogeneous in their culture, could reasonably hope to achieve real self-government, and to be strong enough to stand against economic and cultural pressure and to formulate and carry through a policy and way of life of its own."

The Montego Bay Conference on Federation was accordingly opened in September, 1947, and a resolution was passed agreeing to the scheme in principle. Delegates to the conference were yourself, Mr. Speaker — you were then Deputy President of the Legislative Council, — the Hons. Sir Frederick Seaford and Dr. J. B. Singh, with the Hons. Sir Frank McDavid, who was then Colonial Treasurer, and F. W. Holder, Attorney General, as advisers. Our delegates returned without having committed the Colony in any way.

Not very long afterward a full-dress debate was initiated in the Legislative Council by Sir Frederick Seaford who moved that the Council reserved judgment on Resolution 1 which had been adopted at the Conference at Montego Bay. As you know, Mr. Speaker, that was what they might call the "king pin" or the "lynch pin"—

Resolution No. 1. The rest of the Resolutions were just an effort to bring about closer association among the Colonies. Resolution No. 1 was as follows:

"That this Conference, recognising the desirability of a political federation of the British Caribbean territories, accepts the principle of a federation in which each constituent unit retains complete control over all matters except those specifically assigned to the federal government."

Sir Frederick Seaford, in the motion with which he opened the debate, merely moved that the Council should reserve judgment on Resolution 1 which had been adopted at the Conference at Montego Bay. After a long debate in which I think every Member spoke, Sir Frederick withdrew his motion and Mr. Raatgever moved that the Council did not endorse Resolution 1 in so far as it concerned British Guiana, and this was carried by 13 votes to 5, Official Members not voting. I was prepared to support the original motion which was in effect to reserve judgment, and I pointed out at the time that Mr. Raatgever's motion was not the same thing. Anyhow, this is ancient history.

By May, 1948, all the Legislatures concerned (including that of British Guiana which, as I indicated, had shown no enthusiasm for the proposed scheme) had decided to take part in the Standing Closer Association Committee, the establishment of which had been decided on at the Montego Bay Conference. This Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Hubert Rance, was to report on the most suitable form of federal constitution and the means of financing the federal services. Our two representatives on this Committee were the Hons. Theo. Lee and C. Vibart Wight. Before the Committee held its first meeting Sir Hubert Rance paid a visit to this Colony and spoke to the Legislature, as it was then constituted, on the subject.

It was about two years before the Committee reported, and it proposed a federal constitution on Australian lines

[Mr. Smellie]

which were that the federal government would have only those powers specifically allotted to it, the remainder being within the jurisdiction of the territorial Governments. This Report, as you know, Sir, is often called the Rance Report.

Meanwhile, as all this was going on, the Caribbean territories were making appreciable strides forward so far as Closer Association was concerned. The hon. mover of the motion has mentioned the Public Services Commission which was set up under the Chairmanship of Sir Maurice Holmes. This Commission published a Report on Departments suitable for unification. That was in March, 1950. A year later came the McLagan Report on Customs Union, the Regional Labour Board, the Regional Economic Committee and the idea of a Unified Currency of the West Indies. We had already set up in 1942 the Caribbean Commission; we had the West Indies Development and Welfare Organisation and the University College of the West Indies, founded in 1948. So you will appreciate, Sir, we had in the meantime been making appreciable strides with our neighbours in the West Indies.

The Rance Report was debated in the Legislatures and was accepted by Trinidad, Barbados, the Windward and Leeward Islands, while British Guiana, British Honduras and the British Virgin Islands rejected it. This is how we did it:

On the 29th of November, 1951—and I am going to a limited extent over the ground covered by the hon. mover—Dr. J. A. Nicholson moved in the Legislative Council a motion standing in his name—

"That, this Council accepts in principle the proposed Federation of the British Caribbean Colonies and agrees to consider in a Committee of all the unofficial members of the Council the recommendations of the Closer Association Report."

This motion, which was seconded by Mr. John Carter, was rejected by 15

votes to 4, Official Members not voting. An amendment by the hon. Member, Mr. Kendall (the hon. Member for New Amsterdam) was then put—

"That, this Council, while unwilling in present circumstances to commit British Guiana to acceptance of the proposed Federation of the British Caribbean Colonies, agrees that this Council should participate in discussions on the recommendations in the Closer Association Report."

This amendment was rejected by 13 votes to 3, six Members, including the Officials, not voting.

It was generally felt in that debate that the Rance Report was unacceptable in so far as British Guiana was concerned, for the following reasons. One Member did not wish our vast potentialities to be exploited by what he called "more or less decadent Islands". Another Member was of the opinion that we were British Guiana and not the West Indies, and we had our own destiny to pursue. Another felt there would be a grouping of the Islands under one or another of the great political figures, and that British Guiana would be defeated by a majority vote on every count. Many felt—and I was among them—that we could not alter the Rance Report in any important particular. Indeed, paragraph 7 of the Rance Report stated, and with your permission, Sir, I will read from it—

"We do...put forward our Report and recommendations as a consistent whole, no significant part of which can be modified in any important respect without the most careful consideration of the consequences of such modifications on the remainder of the structure."

To many Members that seemed a very severe stumbling block. It was all very well to go into committee and have a good chat about something, but the whole result was cut and dried. One Member did not want "a federation of slaves;" he wanted Dominion status at once. Another thought that as the majority of powers were going to be al-

located to the Federal Government, it would not be possible for British Guiana to obtain a loan from the United Kingdom without first having to go hat-in-hand to the federal government and ask for permission to apply for the loan. The same Member felt it would be reducing ourselves from the status of a first-class Colony to that of a third-class Dependency. One Member enquired: 'What do the smaller Islands know about drainage and irrigation?' Others felt — and again I must say that I was among them — apprehensive of our financial position if we had to forego 25 per cent. of our Customs revenue as a contribution to the federal structure, which many felt might be used to better advantage for the benefit of the people of the Colony.

Another Member felt we should not fetter ourselves with the chains of Federation when our future prospects looked so rosy for sugar, rice, and bauxite, with their production expanding. Another's view was that the surplus population of the Islands would move in and take the bread out of the mouths of our people. Members objected very strongly, and with some justification, to the attitude of some of the Islands towards British Guiana which, on many occasions, was of a simply disparaging nature. The view was also expressed that with a new Constitution in the offing we should not entangle ourselves with a new 'toy', but that after we had the new Constitution we should then have a referendum.

Some of these objections were born of ignorance, some of them were trivial and, to my mind, almost childish. On the other hand, a few of them were weighty, and they will have to be surmounted if British Guiana seeks to participate in the Federal set-up.

With regard to finance, this proved so great a stumbling block to so many Members of the old

Legislature, and I may say, to some extent to Barbados also, that the London Conference reduced it from 24 per cent. to a maximum of 15 per cent. Furthermore, it was stated that Her Majesty's Government, on the eve of Federation, would send a financial expert to conduct an independent inquiry which might result in an even smaller percentage than had been recommended to carry on the work of the Federal Government. Moreover, H. M. Government would be willing, subject to the scrutiny of plans and estimates, to invite Parliament to make available a grant up to £500,000 towards the capital cost of establishing the federal headquarters, and finally, H.M. Government, also subject to the approval of Parliament, would make available in the first ten years grants intended to cover budget deficits of those units who could not pay their way.

One of the objections which I have not quoted in regard to Federation is that "we will have these poverty-stricken Islands as a millstone around our neck." But all these were taken care of and ventilated at the London Conference. As I mentioned before, the Conference in London opened in April, 1953, and lasted for about three weeks. Trinidad, the Windward Islands and the Leeward Islands had accepted in its entirety the Report of the Standing Closer Association Committee. They took their initial stand on this and were disinclined to budge. Barbados insisted that immigration and emigration should be on the Exclusive List, which comprises subjects on which only the Federal Government may legislate. Jamaica raised certain questions regarding the method of contributing to the Federal Government. At first disagreement was fairly strongly accentuated, but later on the give-and-take attitude became more and more apparent, and I felt that there was a genuine desire on the part of all concerned to reach agreement. That this was at length accom-

[Mr. Smellie]

plished was due in no small measure to the skill and patience of the United Kingdom Chairmen who presided at the Conference. In the end all the delegates signed the Report, though Mr. Hannays, of Trinidad, did so with the following proviso:

"Subject to disagreement as to the choice of the Federal Capital and the placing of immigration on the Exclusive List".

I have already mentioned immigration and the Exclusive List. With regard to the choice of the Federal capital, Grenada was eventually decided on, but I do not think with any great enthusiasm or unanimity. My colleague at the Conference and fellow observer from British Honduras and I naturally, (and I would say correctly) expressed no opinion whatever in public, and in private we only expressed the majority view of the Legislatures which we were representing. As it was clear that neither of the mainland territories intended to participate in the Federal scheme then, the allocation of seats in what was to be the first House of Representatives was altered, and the changes made were incorporated in the Report of the London Conference. With your permission, Sir, I will give first the Standing Closer Association Committee's allocation and then the London Conference allocation. They are:

S.C.A.C.	London Conference	
Barbados	4	5
British Guiana	6	0
British Honduras	2	0
Jamaica	16	17
Antigua	2	2
St. Kitts-Nevis	2	2
Montserrat	1	1
Trinidad	9	10
Grenada	2	2
St. Vincent	2	2
St. Lucia	2	2
Dominica	2	2
	50	45

The total number of seats allocated by the Standing Closer Association was 50. Six went from British Guiana and two from British Honduras, which reduced the number to 42, while extra seats were given to Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica, thus bringing the total number of seats to 45 as a result of the London Conference. One can hardly overlook the fact that if this Council adopts this motion, as I sincerely hope it does, the question of the allocation of seats will pose a very difficult problem in so far as British Guiana is concerned, but I am hopeful, and indeed I expect, that when the time comes for us to negotiate we should be accorded more generous treatment as regards seats than was envisaged in the Standing Closer Association Committee's Report.

I am quite sure that my hon. friend on the opposite side of the table, Mr Raatgever, is going to oppose this motion tooth and nail, and I cannot help admiring the consistent stand which he has taken in the matter. At the same time I am equally sure that on occasions second thoughts are best, and for me at any rate this is one of those occasions. I commend most strongly the motion to the Council, which the well-known quotation to which members of Finance Committee have listened recently. It is to effect that:

"There is a tide in the affairs of men and nations which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

In my humble opinion, if we miss this tide we shall be pursuing a selfish and reactionary policy, which in the years to come will recoil not only on our own heads but on the heads of our descendants for generations to come.

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Your Honour, in spite of the two excellent contributions in favour of the motion before the Council, firstly by the hon. mover and then by my good friend, Captain Smellie, I rise to oppose this motion

with all the vehemence at my command, for I am convinced that there is no justification for this Colony to change her stand against Federation. I say further that the time is inopportune for this Colony to join the British Caribbean Federation, taking all the circumstances into consideration, including our Development Programme, and our economic position. In their enthusiasm the two previous speakers in favour of the motion have chosen to put those who express opposite views in the category of false prophets or reactionaries. Whatever those terms connote in the context in which they were used I do not know nor care to know, but I want to say at the outset, that if in exercising my democratic right to oppose this motion I am regarded as either a false prophet or a reactionary, I make no apology. I however will have had the satisfaction of having the courage of my conviction, in placing the welfare of my country above every other consideration.

I do know as a fact that certain Members of this Council have previously expressed their views in favour of Federation. This is on record. But in spite of this I want to ask them to have an open mind in this debate, as I know they will. They may have been justified then in supporting the motion for joining the British Caribbean Federation, but I venture to think that there have been many changes since then in our future outlook, and I hope to advance arguments for their consideration — arguments which I am sure will not be without merit—and I trust that after this they will reconsider their original stand. What may have been necessary yesterday may not be necessary today.

In my view this debate is of major constitutional importance, and posterity may condemn or laud us for this step into the unknown. I hope to place before the Council a good deal of facts and figures to illustrate my arguments.

If these are accepted in our deliberations on this important motion then my research will have been adequately compensated.

We are all aware of the well-known practice of civil servants and Ministers to support a motion which is desired by the Administration, but I trust that on this important constitutional question my friends in this Council will not hesitate to depart from that practice, if they conscientiously believe that Federation will not be for the good of the Colony.

I have also observed with satisfaction that Officials of Government have previously refrained from voting on this question of Federation, since it is one which must be decided by the people. I trust that they will be consistent in their stand in this debate. By this I do not propose to gag any Member of this Council, but merely to ask for consistency.

**The Attorney-General:** I voted for the motion on each occasion when there was a debate on the subject.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh:** The hon. the Attorney General is unusually sensitive. This question of Federation has been fully discussed in this Chamber on three previous occasions. On those occasions the representatives of the people elected to the Council went into the question fully and decided that it would not be in the interest of this Colony to join the proposed British Caribbean Federation. That was the view of the people through their representatives. It must carry some weight. If this Legislature were a Court of Law there would have been no necessity to re-open this matter, and the plea of *res judicata* might have ended the whole matter. But while this forum is not a Court of Law I do ask hon. Members to consider what new circumstances we have before us now which the previous Legislature did not have when the matter was fully con-

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

sidered. At that time, I respectfully submit, this Colony was not in as good a position as it is today, with all our Development Schemes on the march, our outlook good. If then we decided to stay out, why should we now decide to join? In my view the case against joining is now stronger than ever before.

I have heard it expressed in certain quarters that this Interim Government is not competent to lead this Colony into Federation, since by its very nature it does not, they say, represent the views of the people. I cannot agree with that view, for I can see no limitation to the functions of this Interim Government. What I do say is that this Interim Government is competent to lead this Colony into Federation, but it ought not to do so without first obtaining the approval of the masses, which is the fundamental rule on which every Federation in the Commonwealth of Nations is based. This is clearly stated in the Rance Report, as a prerequisite, and also in every other authority on Federation.

I am very sorry to part company with the mover of this motion on this vital question of Federation. Hitherto we have teamed up together in this Council on several other matters affecting the working-class people in this Colony. I cannot subscribe to the view that this Council, constituted as it is, should take this important decision without consulting the people. In my research on this subject I have examined all the publications of the Government Information Services, and nowhere has any attempt been made to give the opposite view. Opposition is vital in any Democratic set-up. The British Government not only encourages an Opposition but pays extra emoluments to the Leader of the Opposition. The people have been deluged with facts, figures and arguments only on one side of the subject.

I am of the view that the people of the Colony, the majority of them, even the average intelligent ones, have not got a grasp of what Federation is.

Here, with your permission, Sir, I wish to quote the view of Lord Halifax, an eminent authority on the subject, and on colonial affairs, who said that the demand for Closer Association must come from the people of the Islands themselves, and that its realisation would be jeopardised if any attempt was made to force it from without.

To press this motion in this manner and at this time would be tantamount to deciding this important question over the heads of the people of this Colony. With this I shall never agree. I am sure that throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations one cannot find a precedent, where the people have not been consulted in a proposed Federation. The people's representatives who were properly elected in this Colony have already recorded their views against Federation. We now have an Interim Government to carry on the Administration as a result of the unfortunate political behaviour in this country in 1953. I think it is unconstitutional—it is not illegal but unconstitutional for this Interim Government, without consulting the people of this Colony, to take any decision on this motion which would bind the people hereafter. When our constitutional crisis was discussed in Parliament the House was of the unanimous opinion that British Guiana was politically immature—a child in the matter of constitutional development.

Let me relieve the anxiety of a few Members of this Council. I hold in my hand a copy of the Trinidad *Hansard* of the 10th December last when Federation was discussed in the Legis-

tative Council of that island. An amendment was moved relating to British Guiana which reads:

"That every effort be made to include British Guiana in the federation (but by democratic process, i.e., by the expressed wish of the people either through elected representatives or by plebiscite) so that economic resources and land space of British Guiana be also available to the federal nation, and British Guiana be enabled to take its place at an early date in a democratic system."

That is what they have their eyes on—land space.

That was the amendment moved in the Trinidad Legislature by the Hon. Ranjit Kumar, and what was the result? The result of the voting was 7 for, 13 against. They did not want us. They tell us they do not want us. Trinidad has gone into this whole affair.

**Sir Frank McDavid:** May I intervene to state that they suggested to postpone Federation until such time that action could be taken by British Guiana to be partners in it. That meant delaying it for ten years.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh:** I want to say this. I stand firm here this afternoon. I am not going to be pushed around. My point is this : The Trinidad Legislature, on an amendment to include British Guiana in the Federation, recorded its votes against by 13 to 7. That shows they do not want us in the Federation, and yet for some unknown reason this "Magnificent Province," this "Transatlantic Eden", this "Happy Valley of Rasselas", it is felt, must hitch its band-waggon to Trinidad. I wish to pass on to this Council figures relating to the whole of the Caribbean Colonies, which have been dealt with separately. They were referred to in the Trinidad Legislature on the 10th of December, 1954, and have not been questioned. They are reported in column 618 of the Trinidad *Hansard*:

"British Guiana—population 437,022 . . . . ."

I am sure that it is nearly 500,000, but they have given that figure which works out at 5.26 to the square mile.

"Barbados—population 216,169; area—166 square miles; Revenue—\$13,181,295 or per capita revenue of \$61.26."

**Sir Frank McDavid:** The hon. Member is quoting those figures, but they are not accurate.

**Mr. Speaker:** If the hon. Member is speaking about the population of this country, it is more than that quoted. But the hon. Member is referring to what was said at the time—

**Sir Frank McDavid:** If you permit me, Sir, the hon. Member is reading from the *Hansard* of the Trinidad Legislature and is giving those figures authority which they may not have. Not because they are said in the Trinidad Legislature they are accurate.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is a constitutional practice that *Hansard* Reports are recognized as being accurate, and no Member has the right to question them.

**Sir Frank McDavid:** I am questioning the accuracy of what the hon. Member is reading. I am saying that what is said there in the report may not be accurate.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member can quote the accurate figures, but it is quite out of order to dispute the accuracy of the *Hansard* Report from which the hon. Member is reading.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh :** I want to make this clear, Sir, that these figures which appear in this *Hansard* Report are the latest for 1953.

**Mr. Speaker :** The hon. Member need not labour that.

**Mr. Sugrim Singh :** Hon. Members must have some picture of the relative positions of the West Indian Island. The figures I am giving are for the year 1953 and appear at column 618 of the Trinidad *Hansard* of the 10th December, 1954. I quote :

"The population of Trinidad and Tobago is 669,650, and the people live in an area of 1,980 square miles, which works out at 338.2 per square mile. The Revenue of Trinidad for 1953 was \$66,785,889, showing a per capita of \$99.73. Expenditure was \$62,488,766, showing a per capita expenditure of \$93.32. Import figures totalled \$243,939,899 which worked out per head to \$364.28, while Export figures showed an amount of \$234,257,422 with a per head total of \$344.14.

"We move on to Jamaica. The population of Jamaica in 1953 was 1,457,400, working out at 330.4 per square mile within an area of 4,411 square miles. Jamaica's Revenue is \$65,842,690 with a per capita of \$44.97. Expenditure totalled \$68,174,179 which is \$46 per head. Import figures were \$147,326,242 as against export figures of \$82,132,644. Import figure per head was \$101.00 and the Export figure \$56.35 per head.

We come to British Guiana, and then to British Honduras. I wish to give the figures with respect to these two Colonies for the purpose of my point, as British Guiana and British Honduras have chosen a certain stand in this Federation. I quote :

"British Guiana's population is 437,022. That is 5.26 per square mile within 83,000 square miles. Revenue was \$26,417,112 with a per capita of \$60.48. Expenditure was \$25,894,202 with a per capita spending of \$59.48. British Guiana's Import figures were \$81,090,487 which worked out per each person at \$185.55, while the Export totalled \$80,926,149 which per head was \$184.98.

"The population of British Honduras is 70,471, and there is a population per square mile of 8.19 within an area of 8,598 square miles. The Revenue was \$4,921,202 and that is a per capita of \$69.63. Imports totalled \$12,671,851 working out per head at \$180.84 and Exports placed at \$6,189,987 with \$87.84 per head."

I wish to discuss two other West Indian Colonies—Barbados and Grenada. The quotation continues :

"Now I come to Barbados which has a population of 216,169, and that figure works out a population per square mile of 1296.2, by far the largest of all the Colonies. The area is 166 square miles. Its revenue was \$13,181,235 and that per head was \$61.26. Expenditure of that Colony was \$11,015,410 which worked out per head to \$51.17, while Imports reached \$51,918,327 showing a per head of \$98.62. The export figure was \$35,464,166 a per head of \$164.82."

"Next comes Grenada with a smaller population of 80,056 working out a population of 601.9 per square mile. Grenada's area is 133 square miles. Its revenue figure was \$3,942,028, a per capita of \$49.24. Expenditure totalled \$3,840,416, a per head of \$47.97. Import was \$7,895,400 with a per head of \$98.62, and export was \$6,646,291 per head of \$83.02."

From all those figures what do we see? It is patently clear that in the two Colonies of British Guiana and British Honduras, both of which have decided to keep out of this Federation, there is a very small number of population per square mile.

I now come to the important point which has been raised in Trinidad. But before I develop that point I wish to state clearly that the essential elements of any Caribbean Federation, or any kind of Federation in the British Commonwealth of Nations are (a) free movement of persons and (b) free movement of goods. That has been clearly shown in the recent report of the Customs Union Commission which has recently been circulated to Members of this Council. We must have freedom of movement. We must have free trade within the Federation. But what do we find in Trinidad?

I am not concerned with the allocation of seats. I agree with the hon. Member, Mr. Raatgever, that it does not affect this question. All the small Islands can group themselves

[Mr. Sugrim Singh]

and out-vote us at any time. I do not wish to give a derogatory impression by using the term "small islands," because it has got two different meanings to me, and to us in British Guiana. When we in British Guiana say "small islands" we refer to all the islands of the West Indies, but when a Trinidadian says "small islands", as expressed in the Trinidad calypso, "Small islands go back to where you really come from," he puts himself in the place of a larger island compared with the others. It therefore has two different meanings — we call all the Islands of the West Indies small, irrespective of their size, because we compare them with British Guiana. It is a relative term, each one, large or small, referring to the other as "small island" among themselves. I do not wish to convey any derogatory impression by referring to the West Indian Islands as "small islands", but for the sake of my point, or for the sake of argument, I do so.

My point is: what do you notice in the debate which took place in the Trinidad Legislature on the 10th December last? An amendment was moved to strike at the very fundamental basis of any federation by restricting the freedom of movement. Here I want to relieve the hon. Member for Agriculture. During the initial period of five years of the Federation the British Government with an expenditure of not less than £50 million from the British Exchequer will carry out economic development schemes in these economically backward and previously neglected Colonies in order to provide some employment for the people in these Colonies, and thereby reduce the need for emigration. When it is recognised that federation

into a nation must essentially imply unrestricted emigration by nationals over the whole of the national territory, and while in the existing economic circumstances this ideal can only be gradually realised over a period of years, it is therefore important that the tendency ought to be pointing at immigration restrictions between the participating Islands being gradually relaxed over a period of ten years. I do not know if that was the point the hon. Member for Agriculture was referring to. During this time the British and the Federal Governments would carry on works by way of establishing new industries and extending old ones, laying out land settlements and building houses to accommodate the influx of emigrants that is likely to occur when the Immigration restrictions are relaxed, so that such emigrants would not endanger the livelihood and living standards of the natives of the various Colonies.

Mr. Lee: The clock strikes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Member likely to continue for some time? Has he reached his major point?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: My friend's interruption has disturbed my syllogism. I have reached the major premise, but not the minor premise. I would like to stop now.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to know whether it is not "equilibrium" you meant and not "syllogism". Would it not be convenient for you to continue your remarks tomorrow?

Mr. Sugrim Singh: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Council is adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.