

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

THURSDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY, 1957.

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

The Hon. the Attorney General
Mr. G. M. Farnum (Ag.)

The Hon. the Financial Secretary,
Mr. F. W. Essex.

Nominated Members of Executive Council:—

The Hon. W. O. R. Kendall (Mem-
ber for Communications and Works).

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

Nominated Unofficials:

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

Mr. C. A. Carter

Mr. H. Rahaman

Miss Gertie H. Collins

Mrs. Esther E. Day

Dr. H. A. Fraser

Mr. R. B. Jailal

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

Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. I Crum Ewing.

Assistant Clerk of the Legislature

Mr. B. M. Viapree (Ag.)

Absent:

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

The Hon. P. A. Cummings (Mem-
ber for Labour, Health and Housing)—
—on leave.

The Hon. R. B. Gajraj—on leave.

The Hon. R. C. Tello.

Mr. J. I. Ramphal

Mr. T. Lee—on leave.

Mr. W. A. Phang—on leave.

Mr. E. F. Correia—on leave.

Rev. D. C. J. Bobb—on leave.

Mr. Sugrim Singh.—on leave.

The Speaker read prayers.

The Minutes of the Meeting of
the Council held on Thursday, the 31st
of January, 1957, as printed and circu-
lated, were taken as read and confirm-
ed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, notwithstanding the progress of the session there are three Committees that should be appointed. I am referring first of all, in order of importance to the Public Accounts Committee. The Colonial Auditor has a very important departmental report to deal with and wishes to discuss it with the Public Accounts Committee of this Council. I have appointed with your concurrence the following Members to compose that Committee. I think they have all consented to serve. This is not the order in which—

ACOUSTICS OF CHAMBER

Mr. Luckhoo: The acoustics are such that I cannot hear Your Honour. These loudspeakers need, perhaps, some more power.

Mr. Speaker: We all agree that this condition is being continued in disregard of the wishes of this Council. I am speaking here, but you cannot tell what is happening to me—the echo of my voice. If I had my own way I would see that this is remedied within one week. I am sorry that no respect is being shown to the Legislative Council.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

As I was saying, this is not the order in which the Members of the Public Accounts Committee are appointed—Mr. Lord, who is not necessarily the Chairman, Mr. E. F. Correia, Mr. C. A. Carter, Dr. Fraser and Mr. R. B. Jailal. That is the personnel of the Committee. I think they will have to meet and elect their own Chairman. There is no precise rule about that, but it is the practice in some Parliamentary Assemblies and in the House of Commons.

HOUSE AND PETITIONS COMMITTEES

The other Committees are the Petitions Committee and the House Committee, and all those appointed to serve have signified their willingness. The House Committee is composed of Mr. Kendall, who will see that the wishes of the Committee are carried out, Mrs. Dey and myself. The only other Member is Mr. Tello, who is not here.

The Petitions Committee: Mr. Luckhoo, who has been asked to be the Chairman — and I hope he does not mind that; Mr. Ramphal, who is not here, Mr. Carter, Rev. Mr. Bobb and Mr. Sugrim Singh.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Rev. Mr. Bobb has asked to be granted leave of absence until the second of this month, and Mr. Sugrim Singh and Mr. Lee, for today.

ACOUSTICS OF CHAMBER

The Chief Secretary (Mr. Jake-way): May I inquire to what particular section of Government Your Honour was referring to when you said it did not respect the wishes of this Council? I interpret it as an expression of dissatisfaction.

Mr. Speaker: It is an indication that I personally am dissatisfied with this arrangement.

The Chief Secretary: It is working. I can hear it quite well.

Mr. Speaker: What I mean; in other Legislatures it has been attended to. I do think they should see to the defect in the arrangement. I think, myself, that orders given to the Head of any particular department of Government should be attended to.

The Chief Secretary: This is the first time I hear of it. I think it is working perfectly well.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot hear some Members at all, and I would like to do so. Some Members say they cannot hear me. I would like to hear you and you to hear me. It has been so bad that the reporters can tell you that often they cannot hear the floor Members and have to go to them to get an idea of what they said. I do not expect them to hear, as they have not got any apparatus to assist them and this Legislature does not furnish them with any. I think if you (the Chief Secretary) give instructions in the matter we would see some improvement.

Mr. Luckhoo: Perhaps, the ones near to the Hon. Chief Secretary are working but, for example, Your Honour was speaking for the last few minutes and I have not heard one word, and other Members here agree with me that they have not heard Your Honour. Maybe these are not working.

Mr. Speaker: All I can say, I cannot remedy it. I do not suppose my voice would be heard.

Papers Laid

The Financial Secretary (Mr. Essex): I beg to lay on the table the following—

Order in Council No. 5 of 1957 made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance. Chapter 309, on the 10th day of January, 1957, and published in the Gazette on the 2nd of February, 1957.

Order in Council No. 6 of 1957 made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 22nd day of January, 1957, and published in the Gazette on the 2nd of February, 1957.

With your permission, sir, may I on behalf of the Hon. Member for

Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines, lay on the table the following documents:

Trading and Profit and Loss Account and the Balance Sheet as at 31st December, 1955, of the Controller of Livestock and Meat, together with the Director of Audit's certificate and report thereon.

The Financial Report of the Ham and Bacon Factory for the year ended 31st December, 1955, together with the Director of Audit's certificate and report thereon.

The Financial Report of the Government Processing Factory for the year ended 31st December, 1955, together with the Director of Audit's certificate and report thereon.

The Report of the Commissioners of the East Demerara Water Conservancy Board and audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December, 1956.

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

Sessional Paper, No. 2/1957, on British Guiana Airways (Government).

Mr. Farnum (Member for Local Government, Social Welfare and Co-operative Development): I beg to lay on the table—

The Annual Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for the year 1956.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

ORDER IN COUNCIL NO. 5 OF 1957

The Financial Secretary: I beg to give notice of the following motion:

"Be it resolved: That this Council in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order in Council No. 5 of 1957, which was made on the 10th day of January, 1957 and published in the Gazette on the 2nd of February, 1957."

ORDER IN COUNCIL NO. 6 OF 1957

"Be it resolved: That this Council in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order in

[The Financial Secretary]

Council No. 6 of 1957, which was made on the 22nd day of January, 1957, and published in the Gazette on the 2nd of February, 1957."

STATEMENT BY MEMBER OF
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
DISTURBANCES AT PLN. SKELDON

The Chief Secretary: Sir, I regret to have to inform the Council that reports have been received of disturbances at Skeldon estate in the factory compound between the hours of 6 and 10.30 in the evening yesterday. Police reinforcements were drafted into the area and the police had to use tear smoke in order to disperse the crowd which, it is understood, was attempting to stop the factory working. At one stage it was found necessary to discharge a Greener gun. I should explain that the Greener is a shotgun firing a very light pellet. It is a single-action weapon with a safety catch arrangement which prevents it being used as a repeater.

Some persons, including policemen, sustained minor injuries. Thirteen arrests were made. A full investigation is being made into the circumstances of the discharge of the firearms.

I think that the Council is entitled to get that information in advance of receiving it in any other form.

ORDER OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

The Chief Secretary: I beg to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Orders to allow the Hon. the Financial Secretary to proceed with his first motion, if hon. Members agree.

The Attorney General (Mr. G. M. Farnum, acting): I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Luckhoo: May I ask whether the Governor's permission has been obtained so that this motion can be proceeded with now?

The Chief Secretary: Well, it can be given this minute if required.

Mr. Luckhoo: We are now in order.

ORDER IN COUNCIL NO. 5 OF 1957

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move the following motion:

"Be it resolved: That this Council in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order in Council No. 5 of 1957, which was made on the 10th day of January, 1957 and published in the Gazette on the 2nd of February, 1957."

The tariff, as it stands in respect of empty tins which are imported for locally manufactured products, is 20% Preferential and 30% General, which is considered high. Before the 28th of June, 1955, metal containers of this kind were admitted at the rate of 2% Preferential and 5% General. Following the report of the Customs Tariff Anomalies Committee, the tariff on items which included metal containers was raised to 30% Preferential and 36% General, but the intention was that there should be a proviso that the tariff on tin and metal containers imported for locally manufactured products should be 2% Preferential and 5% General as formerly and in fact as other manufactured articles were also.

This Order corrects that position, and in future it will be found that these tin containers like those used from margarine, etc., will come in at 2% Preferential and 5% General like other manufactured articles used for

local products. I think it is perfectly justifiable and I hope this Council will accept it.

The Attorney General: I beg to second the motion.

Dr. Fraser: I would like to congratulate Government on this motion. It will reduce the cost of imported tin containers. In the absence of such a measure there will inevitably be an increase in the cost of local margarine.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion adopted.

SALARIES REVISION FOR NURSES

The Chief Secretary: I rise to move the following motion:

"Be it resolved: That, with reference to Legislative Council Sessional Paper No. 1/1957 on the proposals of the salaries Revision Committee for Nursing, Allied and Subordinate Staff of Medical Institutions and The Palms, this Council approves of the recommendations contained therein."

Mr. Luckhoo: Before this matter is proceeded with further, may I ask whether Government and the Chief Secretary would consider a suggestion which comes from the "floor" Members of this Council? The suggestion is, in effect, that this document is extremely important, as are all salary revision reports, and, as they have done in all other cases, the Members would like to do justice to the people concerned. They would like time to make inquiries into several matters which are constituted in the report. It is a technical document. It is not just an ordinary, straightforward report, and as such we feel greater satisfaction would be derived if the opportunity were permitted Members in Finance Committee to put forward certain views in respect of certain classes and categories of the employees affected

and clear up points through questions and discussion, rather than their coming to this Council and expressing disapproval of certain aspects of the report, as I know some of them are minded to do. I feel that on the Government side as well, it would be most satisfactory to have this matter discussed and the air cleared. This request for a further opportunity for consideration comes from a large body of "floor" Members.

Mr. Jailal: I would like to support and endorse what Mr. Luckhoo has said. I consider it a technical and far-reaching document, and in my search for answers to impressions which have been forming in my mind from the contents of the report, I rather like the suggestion to deal first with the matter in Finance Committee—after all, it concerns salary structure. Something supposed to have come from the dispensers came to my notice only yesterday, showing how important this matter is.

I feel that if we are given an opportunity of having the report rehashed or talked over in Finance Committee and then brought before the Council, that would do some good and we would certainly agree with very many of the recommendations put forward, but nobody would be able to speak on the proposals as they should if we are not given a full opportunity to discuss every phase of the report.

The Chief Secretary: I do not know how many Members are going to support this proposal but, in order to save time, I wish to say that I have no objection to the procedure suggested. The Administration is recommending the adoption of the report in toto. One reason is that it is a fairly complicated document with very close interlocking mechanism and calls for very careful examination. This docu-

[The Chief Secretary] ment has been closely examined in my office but I would be very happy to agree to the proposal that it be referred to Finance Committee. I do not know, however, whether it should be referred by way of a motion, or whether the matter should stand adjourned to permit Finance Committee to consider it.

Mrs. Dey: I am very grateful to the hon. the Chief Secretary for consenting to have this report referred to Finance Committee, because a full opportunity will be given to Members to go into the various recommendations made in it. I happen to have been the only woman member of the Committee and I shall be grateful for a further opportunity of going into the matter.

Mr. Speaker: I know that a certain Member who is absent has made the same request (to have the report considered in Finance Committee). It is only a question of the time when it could be done, since we have to consider the full effect of the report. If there is no objection to it then, automatically, it will be adopted. The Financial Secretary is here and we can agree to consider the report in Finance Committee as soon as it is possible to do so. Mr. Luckhoo has referred, incidentally, to certain people who have not been considered at all, or have been passed over. Isn't that so, Mr. Luckhoo?

Mr. Luckhoo: Yes, Sir, I have done so incidentally, based on my instructions.

Mr. Speaker: Has Mr. Jailal in mind any particular class of people who have not been represented? I will tell Members why I am asking that. If there is anyone who desires

to make representations in this matter opportunity might be given for them to do so in writing to the Chief Secretary, and they could also be dealt with in Finance Committee. I do not know what the exact procedure would be, but it might be possible to adopt that course.

The Chief Secretary: A number of representations have already been received in this respect, Sir. This report has been in the hands of staff associations for some considerable time.

Mr. Speaker: If there is no other opportunity I should like to see those concerned being permitted to forward their representations to the Chief Secretary.

Miss Collins: I am also very glad that the report has been referred to Finance Committee, because I have been asked to make representations in this matter on behalf of certain dispensers and sicknurses. If possible, I shall be glad if the Chief Secretary will receive a deputation representing these interested persons. I am very happy to hear that there will be further opportunity for discussion of the whole matter.

Report referred to Finance Committee.

PUBLIC LOAN ORDINANCE (TRANSFER TO DEVELOPMENT FUND) BILL

The Financial Secretary: I beg to move the second reading of the Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to provide for the transfer of the unexpired portion of the loan raised under the Public Ordinance, 1945, to the credit of the Development Fund."

This, Sir, is a very formal Bill. A sum of \$5 million was raised in 1945 under the authority of the Public Loan Ordinance,

1945, Chapter 294, and the Schedule to the Ordinance specifies the purposes for which the \$5 million will be used—the financing of these purposes. The first purpose will be “to provide for part of the expenditure incurred on services (civil and military) in connection with the war.” The second will be “to defray expenses on other public services as may be approved from time to time by the Secretary of State and the Legislative Council,” and the third will be “to provide for the redemption in part of outstanding 4 per. cent. bonds.” In other words, if we need to use any portion of these funds now we will have to come to this Council and get legislative approval as to how to spend it. The unexpended portion of the loan is only \$5,862.52. It is very much the most sensible course that we should just transfer that \$5 thousand to the Development Fund and use it on the development programme. I would like to move that the Bill be read a second time.

The Attorney General: I beg to second the motion.

Mr. Lord: Will the hon. the Financial Secretary tell us what is the amount unexpended?

The Financial Secretary: Five million dollars was raised under the 1945 loan, of which the unexpended balance is \$5,862,48. It is a small sum of money which Government desires to transfer to the Development Fund instead of having to go through all the paraphernalia of the existing Ordinance in order to spend it.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Council resolved itself into Committee and approved the Bill as printed.

Council resumed.

The Financial Secretary: The Bill having passed through the Committee stage without amendment, I beg to move that it be now read a third time and passed.

The Attorney General: I beg to second the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It is proposed that Members should meet in Finance Committee now to consider the proposals with respect to Nurses' salaries. I adjourn Council *sine die*.