

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, 26th FEBRUARY, 1948.

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The President, His Excellency the Governor, Sir Charles Campbell Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. D. J. Parkinson (acting)..

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. M. Duke (acting).

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. E. F. McDavid, C.B.E.

The Hon. C. V. Wight, O.B.E., (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, C.B.E., (Nominated).

The Hon. Dr. J. B. Singh, O.B.E., (Demerara-Essequibo).

The Hon. Dr. J. A. Nicholson, (Georgetown-North).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

The Hon. J. Fernandes (Georgetown Central).

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

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

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

The Hon. C. A. McDoom (Nominated).

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

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

PRESENTATION.

M.B.E. FOR MR. O. S. WIGHT.

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Wight, it affords me great pleasure to present to you, by command of the King conveyed to me through His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Insignia of a Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. This well deserved decoration has been conferred on you in recognition of your services during the war as Commissioner for Civil Defence. Your untiring efforts and commendable public spirit were largely instrumental in increasing the efficiency of the local Civil Defence Services at a time of great emergency. (Applause).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 25th February, 1948, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

PAPER LAID.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table the following:—

Statement showing the amount of Customs Revenue remitted by the Governor in Council during the year 1947.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES — QUESTIONS.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

Dr. JAGAN gave notice of the following questions:—

With respect to each of the following agricultural products: Cassava (sweet), Cassava (bitter), Corn (Maize), Eddoes, Plantains, Sweet Potatoes, Rice (Peasant), Rice (Mahaicony-Abary Scheme), Tannias, Yams, Coconut, and Sugar Cane (Farmers), will Government supply information on the following questions:—

- (1) What is the total number of man-hours or man-days (8 hour day) required to cultivate one acre of land from the beginning of the preparation for "planting" to the end of "reaping"?
- (2) Wherever machinery and/or animals are used what is the total number of machine-hours and/or animals-hours required to cultivate one acre of land?
- (3) What is the amount allowed as cost per man-hour, man-day, machine-hour and animal-hour?
- (4) What sum of money is allowed as rent for one acre of land?
- (5) Wherever fertilizers are necessary, what quantity is required for the cultivation of one acre of land? On the basis of prevailing prices, what will the above quantity cost?
- (6) What is the yield per acre?

RICE INDUSTRY.

Mr. Mc DOOM gave notice of the following motion:—

WHEREAS the cost of living index has arisen from point 161 in December, 1945 to 191 in December, 1947, with the tendency of rising further;

AND WHEREAS the cost of production has increased considerably in the rice industry;

AND WHEREAS the present prices obtained by the padi-growers, excepting a negligible number who are producing by machinery, are inadequate;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House strongly recommends that a temporary increase of thirty-eight cents per bag of 143 lbs. gross in the minimum price of padi be paid to padi-growers and that the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board pay to the producers a

proportionate temporary increase in the prices of all grades of rice, to take effect retrospectively from the 1st January, 1948, until such time as the cost of producing padi is lowered; and also that the selling prices by the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board of all grades of rice to consumers remain as at present.

MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS.

Mr. DEBIDIN: Before the Order of the Day is proceeded with I wish to bring to the notice of this Council a matter which I regret I could not mention at the last meeting as I could not attend on account of indisposition. This, therefore, is the first available opportunity for me to do so. The matter which I would like to refer to deals with certain publications in the local Press and I would ask leave to exercise the powers given under Standing Rules and Orders Nos. 5 (b) and 8 in order to do so. Standing Rule and Order No. 5 (b) reads:—

"If there should be published in any newspaper an unfair or misleading report of anything which has transpired at a meeting of the Council, the Council may direct that no representative of that newspaper may be permitted to attend the sitting of the Council for such period as the Council may determine."

And, Standing Rule and Order No. 8 reads:—

"8. Before the Council proceeds to the Order of the Day a Member may with the permission of the President, make a statement to the Council (a) drawing attention to any alleged breach of Privilege or (b) explaining any matter affecting his personal conduct as a member of the Council."

In one daily newspaper—the **Guiana Graphic** dated Saturday, February 21, 1948,—there appeared a report with a very large and bold headline which read: "Hon. D. P. Debidin Ruled Out of Order in Legislative Council," and in one passage of the report I am alleged to have said "this Council will find me a person extremely hostile." This report, I submit, is entirely erroneous. I have looked at the Minutes of the meeting which this report is supposed to be concerned with and I have had the benefit of a copy of Hansard dealing with this particular question, and nowhere can I find anything which would indicate that I was ruled out of order by the Chair.

"We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the natives to leave their reservations for the purpose of seeking work."

This compulsion refers to the Toll Tax and the Head Tax which are levied on African natives so that they will be forced to go to work on the plantations which are owned by absentee landlords. The same situation, Sir, exists on the sugar estates here. Perhaps that may be too strong a statement, but I would like to say that the raising of pasturage fees will in effect produce a similar result, in that the persons now residing on the sugar estates will have to sell their cattle and in doing so their economic independence will be lost and they will be thereby compelled to work on the sugar estates as wage-earners. I have spoken at length on this condition of forced labour so as to point out to the Labour Department and to this Council that if we are to introduce any of the principles and practices of Trade Unionism as they exist in countries with free societies like the United Kingdom, we must take care in introducing those same principles and practices in a society like British Guiana's. We must take care to know the environmental background of our people. I am particularly drawing attention to the sugar estates because I am familiar with that department.

I want to come back to the Estates' Joint Committee. The Estates' Joint Committees, as they are now functioning and as they are now comprised, consist of workers of the sugar estates under the chairmanship of the managers. Those workers have to work a certain number of days on the sugar estates and, as I have pointed out, they live in the sugar estates' houses. Therefore I feel that those workers are not free to be able to sit at the same table with the management to discuss problems of wages and conditions of work, when it is realized that those workers have been and are constantly victimized by those officers of the sugar estates. I therefore held a very long time ago that the Estates' Joint Committees as presently constituted cannot in any way encourage the development of democratic principles in Trade Unionism, because those workers are always afraid. If we are to encourage, and I feel that we should, the development of this democracy which, I believe, is the intention of the Labour

Department, I think they should enlarge the constitution and allow those persons who are not even working on the sugar estates to sit on these Joint Committees until such time has arrived when Government will give the workers free housing, when the workers will not be so much under the thumbs of the sugar estates' authorities.

I want also to refer to the Trade Unions as such. On the sugar estates presently there are two Unions which are recognised — the Man-Power Citizens' Association and the Workers League. I cannot regard it as encouraging Trade Unionism when two Unions only are being recognised. In fact I recall about three years ago when there was a motion by the Executive of the Trades Union Council to the effect that there should be an amalgamation of the Unions of British Guiana, which I thought was a very praiseworthy one; the Presidents of those same two Unions openly declared that they were not ready nor willing to accept the principle of amalgamation of the Unions on the sugar estates. The mere fact that the Labour Department and the Sugar Estates' Authorities are recognising only two Trade Unions in the sugar industry, it allows for a supply within the ranks of the Trade Union Movement. I am also aware of the fact that the Department is not willing to recognise other Trade Unions or is not willing to recommend to the Sugar Producers' Association that other Unions should be also recognised. I agree with the Labour Commissioner that there are too many Unions in this country, but I cannot see that this policy as presently adopted will in any way work for the unity of the Trade Union Movement in British Guiana. My argument for that is this: Why does not the Department accept this principle, that after there are two or more Unions in any industry or on any sugar estate the Labour Department recommend to the Sugar Estates' Authorities that they should recognise the Trade Union which has the largest membership. I know in similar cases in the U.S.A. when there are disputes between two or more Trade Unions in one industry, for the purpose of bargaining the Trade Union with the largest membership is recognised. If this Department encourages the Sugar Estates' Authorities to adopt that principle of recognizing the Trade Union with the

largest membership, I am sure it would work for the unity of the Trade Union Movement and the building-up of the Trade Union Movement.

I am afraid the Labour Department is not at all very conversant with the psychology of the people of British Guiana. They are still trying to tell the workers to join Trade Unions and to accept leadership which the people have lost faith in. I feel that if Trade Unions are to be encouraged — I do not care which one there is existing or will come about in the future — this Department must accept that Union which can gain the confidence of the workers and which can call to its body the largest amount of workers not only on the sugar estates but in all phases of the working class organizations in British Guiana.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I just add to what has been said about security of land tenure. I have had two painful instances within recent times. One was from Cane Grove where a lad whose parents were living and working on the estate was evicted. His parents had come indentured from India and had been living there since then. He was given notice to quit just on the eve of the transfer to the Settlement Authority. That case engaged the attention of the Magistrate's Court and from it has emerged that the only sin that this boy had committed was that he took unto himself two wives. He had an aged mother living in the next room to the one occupied by him, and he made out a very good case of the necessity of occupying that room so as to afford his mother protection. He was told by the management that he had to leave the estate because his conduct was unbecoming. He then asked for another room on the estate and one was offered him but subsequently given to someone else. Though he pleaded to be allowed to retain the room in which he had been living since he was born, he was made to leave. Only last month an overseer went to the Magistrate's Court at Cove and John with a car and took a bailiff from there with an ejection warrant to the estate and that man and his belongings were thrown out of the house of which he was almost a part.

The other incident is equally painful. A young man from Vryheid's Lust — I

know of it because I was engaged in the case—could not work for a certain number of days on the estate through ill-health and was given notice to quit. All his trouble was he was not physically fit to do hard work on the estate and so he engaged in some other work. He and his family, an exceptionally large one, had been working for years and years on that estate. His forefather and everybody else connected with his family worked on that estate. Eventually an ejection order was made against him and he had to leave the estate. That in itself may not be something very harsh if this man can go on another estate and secure employment, but that is not possible. There are cases of one with a black mark on one estate being not allowed work on another estate.

I must agree with the last speaker that there is great need for the Labour Department to do something to secure better security of tenure to estate labourers. I feel that just as how provisions have been made for security of tenure for tenants on the Essequibo Coast, and the Islands of Leguan and Wakenaam, similar provision should be made for the labourers who have served for a long number of years on the estates and who for some trifle in some cases are asked to leave the estates; and what is more, the law is against them because they are regarded as tenants at will for which only one day's notice can be given and they can be turned off the estate the next day. A similar case engaged the attention of the Supreme Court of our Colony, but the law had to be exercised and there was no redress for this type of people. I feel that if that state of things is to continue the hon. Member who has just spoken may be to some extent justified in saying that this is a form of forced labour. I am not, however, prepared to go to the full extent that he has gone. I believe—and it is now an accredited question throughout the world—that the question of collective bargaining is one of the best procedures available at the moment, and it may be only necessary to have the correct backing, the correct people, to influence this bargaining from the labourers' point of view. If the Unions are prepared to put their heads together, I feel sure, they can efficiently represent these people in spite of the influence that the management may have sitting opposite

The second statement I have referred to is one which discloses that I was half reported. The whole statement was to the effect that the Council would find me an extremely hostile person if any attempt is made to curtail my privileges. This newspaper, however, only published one half of what I said and the omission of the final words has thrown a completely different light on what I intended to convey. But, that is not all. Referring most likely to the same incident, the *Daily Argosy* of Sunday, February 22, under the caption "Here and There" by Peter Pimpernel, contains a paragraph headed "Need for Polish in Legco" and which reads:—

"In all the reports which have reached me concerning commodity shortages, scarcity and blackmarketing nothing has ever been mentioned of "Polishes—all kinds". Yet this article seems to be in alarming short supply to some Legco members. It also seems that the small sums appropriated from general revenue for polishing Legco chamber furniture, are spent to much better advantage than the huge amounts expended on primary school education if good manners cannot be imparted as essential feature of early training....."

And the next par. continues by saying:—

"... but good old-fashioned Dublin is still obtainable and if a prolonged course of treatment proves to be ineffectual, especially if it be applied by T. T. in characteristic schoolmasterly fashion, then there is no hope and the product needs recasting in a fresh mould." And then the par. ends—and this is the most objectionable part—"O, the times, O, the manners."

Then, in its editorial of Sunday, February 22, the *Daily Chronicle*, among other things, states:—

"... the Hon. D. P. Debidin has had his first "wiggling" from Deputy President the Hon. C. V. Wight when conducting a "personal attack" on fellow-member the Hon. T. T. Thompson. We commend the promptitude with which the Deputy President, on his first occasion in the Chair, quashed unparliamentary behaviour."

There are other passages in this editorial such as "lesson to this young legislator,..." and the part about "... time-wasting debate that is intended only for public consumption in the constituencies which they represent.....",

which are also objectionable. In bringing this matter to the attention of the Council, I am constrained to do so because this is undoubtedly a violent attack upon my integrity as a Member of this Council. These publications, to my mind, have certainly injured my reputation in so far as my public activities are concerned, and I think they are unjustified and unwarranted inasmuch as there is no proof that I was ruled out of order in this Council. It has not been so shown in the Minutes or the Hansard report of the meeting in question. Moreover, reference has been made to a "personal attack" as having been made by me in this Council, when I made two statements which were really intended to be an answer—by way of explanation—to a speech made by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Thompson, who was complaining about certain repetitions and about having to be away from home. I do not think those statements could be regarded as a personal attack. I merely made the statements by way of argument in reply to the hon. Nominated Member and yet the Press has seen fit to make this attack on me. I would like to say that the Press of the Colony has a very heavy duty to perform—no less heavy than ours in this Legislative Council—and that duty is heightened considerably by the fact that there is no daily newspaper catering for labour in this Colony. The prestige of any newspaper in this Colony would depend very much on its accuracy and on unprejudiced and unbiassed reports sent in or taken by its reporters, and certainly, Sir, the publications to which I have referred are not accurate reports of or fair comment on what took place here on the night in question. I remember well that in Finance Committee I stated that I reserved the right to speak on certain items in the Estimates when they came up in this Council. It must be borne in mind that I am a Member representing a rural area whose needs are concerned mostly with labour and I feel I should endeavour as a matter of policy to deal with certain matters in the way I have dealt with them, and that should not be regarded as a waste of time or as repetition in this Council. We are all representing various interests in this Council—I do not think all of us are representing the same interests—and for that reason

much tolerance must be exercised. In that light—in the light of the interests I represent—I feel it is not right for any one to say that I have been in any way unparliamentary or lacking in manners, or unpolished or lacking in good taste. These publications are certainly a vicious attack upon one's integrity. I must thank you, Sir, for the opportunity given to me to mention this matter. I must say that whatever I champion or whatever I say in this Council, I do so with a firm conviction of my own that I am representing and doing a public duty and I feel sure that you, Sir, would commend all those who would like to do their duty honestly, fearlessly and well.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member is quite in order in bringing this matter to light as he sees it. Of course, it is highly important that the Press, if they have to give an abbreviated report of proceedings, should give it as accurately as they can. I wish to bring to the notice of the Press also, Rule 5 (b) of the Standing Rules and Orders of this Council to which the hon. Member has referred. It reads.—

“If there should be published in any newspaper an unfair or misleading report of anything which has transpired at a meeting of the Council, the Council may direct that no representative of that newspaper may be permitted to attend the sitting of the Council for such period as the Council may determine.”

Now, I was not present when the remarks attributed to the hon. Member were made and I am not prepared to give any judgment or to speak upon them. I would, however, ask the Press in the general interest of the public to be as accurate as they can where they have to make abbreviated reports and to ensure as far as they can that they are not unfair or misleading. I am not expressing any view on proceedings at which I was not present, but on the general question of principle.

Mr. DEBIDIN: I may mention that I am not in any way suggesting or am I desirous of asking this Council that the Press be asked to leave since I do reserve my own right to take such other steps as I may be advised to take, but I do thank Your Excellency for your remarks.

ORDER OF THE DAY

ESTIMATES — 1948.

The PRESIDENT: Council will now proceed with the Order of the Day

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that this Council resolves itself into Committee to resume the debate on the following motion.—

“That this Council approves of the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from Revenue during the year ending 31st December, 1948, which have been laid on the table.”

The COLONIAL SECRETARY seconded.

Agreed to.

ESSEQUIBO BOYS' SCHOOL.

The CHAIRMAN. I will put the question that the provision (\$47,374) remains as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Mr. WIGHT: There is only one comment I desire to make and that is the one I made in Finance Committee. As regards Staff salaries I said that if they cannot be increased then when there is opportunity officers should be promoted by way of transfer to other departments. It is appreciated that those officers are working overtime a great deal and I think the Visiting Committee of the School feels that there should be some improvement in the salaries of the staff but the Colonial Treasurer felt that that would disrupt the scale of salaries in the Service. If that is so, I think it is fair to the officers that they should be transferred to other departments where they would receive opportunities for promotion. It should be realised that some of these officers have been at static salaries for the last 15 or 20 years and have little chance of promotion. There is a case where one is a teacher but is not on the usual teachers' scale of salaries and is not even considered as a teacher. I think promotion would give moral strength to many members of the staff.

Head passed.

FOREST DEPARTMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I

move that this head be carried out at \$72,768 as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Agreed to.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that this head be carried out at \$30,310 as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I be permitted to make some observations? I think I am right in saying that the Geological Survey Department, was begun with funds from the Colonial Development and Welfare and was expected to give some results for the money which was being expended. I think a survey should be carried out within a given time and that a chart of the area surveyed should be prepared and given for the use of the Colony. If the surveys are to exist indefinitely then it seems to me that the functions of this Department should be made very clear to the Members of this Council. What I have in mind is that these surveys might be giving more assistance to private concerns than they are entitled to, and while I have no objection to that we should know that this Colony would derive some benefit from those concerns which are getting assistance from this young Department. I cannot conceive that a survey is something which should last indefinitely. There are features of the surveys for development planning which would be something of a semi-permanent nature and should be done by the Lands and Mines Department. I think the whole question should be given some further consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member's point is that sometime limit should be put on geological surveys in this Colony if possible, but I would suggest to him that such a thing is quite impossible at this stage. A geological survey of British Guiana is a technical process of the very highest order. The staff we have is entirely inadequate for a proper geological survey of this Colony, and the question being considered by Government at present is whether we can get assistance from the Colonial Development Central Re-

search Fund. And when I say assistance, I mean assistance on a very substantial scale—probably amounting to some hundreds of thousands of pounds—to enable us to get some properly trained geological officers out here and tackle the whole problem in a very comprehensive way. A geological survey can go to any depth in the earth and it is not known what depth would have to be plumbed to in order to ascertain certain knowledge of what lies underneath. Therefore, to attempt to put a time limit on a survey is practically impossible. The science of geological survey has been greatly developed in recent years, and as time goes on the deeper we have to delve and the greater the surveys in detail we have to make in order to ascertain what wealth lies beneath the earth's surface. I cannot see any time in the foreseeable future when geological surveys will not be needed in this Colony. On the other hand, what has been done with the extremely limited staff which we have is extremely valuable and I think the value of it has been realised already by many of the industries operating in the Colony. Much benefit has already been obtained from the surveys of our own small geological staff. One hon. Member would like to have a time limit placed on surveys but I must confess that I do not know what limit can be placed on them at the present time. I think the hon. Member can be assured that this Department is doing good work and I am hopeful myself, as I have already stated, that we shall get assistance from the Central Research Fund for further geological work here. I think hon. Members are aware that a few weeks ago we had the benefit of a visit from Dr. Dixey who is the Geological Adviser to the Secretary of State. He made a careful study of conditions here — as careful a study as was possible — and we placed before him what our needs were. I am hopeful that as a result of that visit we shall get a substantial grant to enable more thorough surveys to be undertaken.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that Head XIII "Interior Department" be carried out at \$76,963 as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Question put, and agreed to.

Total of Head approved.

LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that Head XIV "Labour Department" be carried out at \$54,926 as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee. When this particular Head was before this Committee and the hon. Member for Central Demerara was speaking at the time, I asked leave to suggest to him to defer continuing his speech so that the Commissioner of Labour might be present in case it is necessary for him to make a reply to statements he was then about to make. I suggest that the hon. Member be invited to continue his remarks at this stage.

Dr. JAGAN: I am sorry my remarks have caused inconvenience to the Labour Commissioner by his presence here this afternoon. I certainly did not want to make an attack on the Labour Commissioner as such. I was merely pointing out what to my mind seems a wrong policy of the Labour Department as a whole. As I recall, I was speaking of the development of Trade Unionism in British Guiana. I would like to continue where I left off. I mentioned, I think, that it is of interest both to employees and employers to have Trade Unions developed to the highest extent in British Guiana, and I further stated that I did not believe that the methods adopted by this Department was in any way encouraging this development. I should like to be specific and to make reference to the Sugar Estates' Trade Unions with which I am familiar. There is one provision within the framework of the Sugar Estates' Trade Unions which is called the Estate Joint Committee. I am not saying that the Labour Commissioner and the other members of his staff are not versed in the principles of Trade Unionism, but I feel that they are merely importing those principles from the United Kingdom and other countries without at first trying to fathom the psychology and the amenity background of the people of British Guiana. It is true that in a country like the United Kingdom the associations of workers are free and the workers are living in relative freedom, but that condition does not exist to-day on the sugar estates. On the sugar estates, Sir, I want to say that a condition which is tantamount to

forced labour exists. I should like to read, if I am permitted, the "Caribbean Land Tenure Emposium" which states as follow:

"In 1842 the labourers' refused the wages and were rejected from their houses on the sugar plantations."

One hundred years have passed, and I am sorry to state a similar situation exists to-day on the sugar estates. The people are constantly told, the labourers, that if they do not like to work for certain wages and under certain conditions they would have to leave the sugar estates and vacate the premises occupied by them. Only a few weeks ago I wrote the Sugar Producers' Association to find out about conditions, for instance, security of tenure and on what basis the houses will be built at Pln. Ogle, and I was informed that the information will not be given to any private individual. I know, Sir, that you have somewhat in a critical manner told me last night that I must first of all try and get all possible information before coming to this Council. I am trying to do so but, as I said, this information was not given me. As I mentioned, on the sugar estates the labourers are living in estate houses and there is no security of tenure. I want to point out to Members of this Council that only a few days ago I had to write to the Manager of Pln. Ogle with reference to a person by the name of Mr. Jacob. He was evicted from the estate lately for refusing to work on the estate and going aback to catch fish and for telling the other workers that they must not work under the wage conditions offered by the sugar estates. I wrote to the Manager asking that that individual be allowed or given permission to enter the estate so as to be able to visit his family and relatives from time to time as may be necessary.

I also want to draw this Council's attention to the agistment fees which I have already mentioned in this Council in relation to forced labour. I have been reading in this pamphlet called "The Colonies, the way forward," and I have found that in Africa a similar situation of forced labour exists even though the Forced Labour Convention in 1930 condemned the practice of forced labour. If I am permitted, I would like to read from page 16 a remark as follows by Sir Geoffrey D'Orr, a former Governor of Kenya:

to them. The Trade Unions in this Colony need to join forces in doing it in a more positive and strong way, and at the same time the estates can do much to relieve the situation in so far as discrimination in respect of the Unions is concerned in going upon the estates and representing the labourers. Some Unions are allowed and some are not. I think if any Union has members on the estate it should be allowed that concession or right. All is not happy with the Unions and it should be remedied by them before complaint is made against the Labour Department.

Mr. SEAFORD: The sugar industry seems to be the target for one Member of this Council on every occasion. He seems to take delight in attacking the sugar industry about which I can tell you, Sir, quite frankly and this Council that he knows absolutely nothing. He quoted something in a report of 100 years ago. Probably it is on that he bases his opinion.

Dr. JAGAN: To a point of correction! The hon. Member says I know nothing about the sugar industry. I was born and I grew up on a sugar estate. I have always had contact with sugar.

Mr. SEAFORD: That is a long time ago and he does not realize what the conditions are on sugar estates to-day. They are very different from those of some years ago. Before replying to the remarks made I would like to refer to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara. He referred to a case at Cane Grove. I am not quite sure which case it is. If it is the one I have in mind, it was a case where a lad was asked to leave some time ago on account of his having two wives. The estate wanted him to remain but there were two factions on the estate over the two wives and they went and complained to the management that if this boy was not removed there was going to be trouble,—there was going to be fighting and rioting—and they insisted that he should be removed. After going into the whole matter and getting advice we thought it was better for the boy's own good and that of the community that he be asked to leave the estate.

Mr. DEBIDIN: That is not so. I had all the parties with me. I spoke to the

grandfather of one of the boy's wives and he said he had nothing to do with engineer anything against the boy.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon. Member says that is not so. I can send him the correspondence in black and white if he desires. But I think it is unkind of the proprietors to have gone last month with an ejection warrant to eject him because last month the estate had belonged to Government and the estate could not have done such a thing. I am sorry if Government has done such a thing.

With regard to the question of Vuyheid's Lust I know little about the case referred to, but I can assure this Council that if anyone is turned out of an estate, and there are not many, it is not a fact that he cannot obtain employment on another estate. The hon. Member speaks of a Black List, but there is no such thing in existence. No estate knows when one labourer leaves and goes to another. It is quite impossible and impractical to have such a thing as a Black List. Are you going to describe the labourer who leaves the estate and give his photograph to all the other estates? The majority of the labourers have a couple of names or go under assumed names, and it is quite an impractical thing to suggest that there is a Black List.

The hon. Member also referred to the security of tenure of the people in Leguan and Wakenaam. I do not know if he has been to Leguan and Wakenaam lately, or if he has seen the report to Government on the question of housing in those islands, but I am satisfied that if such houses existed on the sugar estates to-day Government would order their demolition at once. I do not know if the hon. Member has seen the so-called houses that exist in those islands to-day.

I challenge the hon. Member to give me one case in which a person has been turned off an estate after one day's notice. I do not think he can produce such a case. The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan), referred to the position as being tantamount to forced labour. If there was such a thing as forced labour the output of sugar would not have dropped as it has done. That was due to a shortage of labour which was well

known throughout the Colony. As regards housing and the suggestion of forced labour, the estates are doing everything in their power, as I have stated here two or three times, to encourage the people who live on the estates to build their own houses. They have taken in land, levelled it, and are leasing it to labourers at one shilling per month. They are also providing a pure water supply, proper drainage and sanitation. As I have said before, we find that a man who has his own house is a very much better citizen and a better worker. It is to our own benefit to do these things, and for the benefit of the labourers we are doing our utmost. In addition, we make loans of \$240 in cash or materials to help the labourers to build their houses. That is what is called forced labour by a Member of this Council.

The hon. Member referred to a letter he had written to the Sugar Producers' Association, and to their reply that they could not give information to private individuals. If the Sugar Producers' Association attempted to reply to requests from every individual they would have to employ a special staff and a very big staff. We have given all information to Government and to the Trade Unions who represent the workers on the estates, and we are not prepared to go further than that.

The hon. Member also referred to people going aback to catch fish. There is a distinct order on sugar estates prohibiting people going aback to catch fish. The reason is twofold. In the first place, they destroy the dams of the canals when they haul their seines out, and in the second place, when the estates are carrying out flood fallowing they not only catch fish in the flooded fields, but cut the stop-offs and let out the water so as to pick up fish. The result is that the fields are damaged and the estates are put to the expense of pumping the water back on the land from the drainage trenches. It is for those reasons that people are prevented from catching fish aback, and that prohibition will be maintained. Estates are not run for the benefit of fishermen.

When the hon. Member spoke about injustices in East Africa, I am quite sure

he was not speaking about sugar estates in East Africa, because I can assure him that most of the estates there are owned by East Indians.

Dr. JAGAN: I never mentioned anything about sugar estates. I referred to estates.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon. Member says he did not refer to sugar estates. He could not, because they are all owned by East Indians, and I am sure they would not be guilty of such a thing as exploitation.

Mr. JAGAN: I am not aware that East Indians are any different from other races as regards exploitation.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon. Member also referred to the question of agistment fees and depriving the labourers of their economic independence. We have dealt with that *ad nauseam* in this Council, and I am not prepared to deal with it again. I think the hon. Member is anxious to get publicity, and I would ask a certain section of the Press to give him free advertisement.

As regards the Estate Joint Committees, they were not brought into being at the wish of the estates at all. The estate authorities were asked to allow them to function because it was suggested, through the Labour Department and the Trade Unions, that it would be very much easier to have disputes settled. The point is that if there is a disagreement the obvious thing is, if possible, to get it settled on the estate without having to bring the particular Labour Union and Sugar Producers' Association into the matter. I am quite willing to admit that these Committees have functioned very well indeed. It seems rather peculiar to me that a Member of this Council who is so well versed in trade unionism, should suggest that members of the Joint Committees should be persons who are not even workers. Surely the people to sit on those Committees should be those who work on the estates, and not any Tom, Dick or Harry, called in from outside. I wonder whether the hon. Member himself would like to sit on those Committees. I do not think he would understand what the disputes were all about sometimes.

The hon. Member also dealt with the question of the recognition of trade unionism. He was so contradictory that I am not sure what he meant. He seemed to complain that the sugar estates recognized only two unions, and suggested that they should recognize more unions. I could not help feeling that the hon. Member had something in mind. I know that certain gentlemen have been visiting sugar estates recently. I am wondering whether the hon. Member was trying to lay a foundation for that. We have agreements with two unions at present, and it is not practicable to deal with several unions. It is quite impossible to deal with a large number of unions. If the hon. Member would read the report of Mr. F. W. Dally, a great trade unionist himself, sent out by the British Labour Government recently to investigate labour conditions in Trinidad, he would see what he has to say about trade unions overlapping. I am sure the hon. Member has not read that report, and I hope he will.

I am sorry to have taken up so much time, but I had to reply to some of the points raised by the hon. Member. It seems to me that we are having a debate on the way sugar estates are run in this Colony, rather than on the estimates of the Labour Department, which we are supposed to be considering. I have contradicted a few of the statements which have been made, and I am prepared to substantiate what I have said. As regards the Labour Department I cannot help feeling that it has done an inestimable amount of good in this Colony. It was not received with very great favour at first, but those who have had to do with the Department, whether as trade unions or employers, cannot help feeling that when we have met in conference with the Labour Department we have always been satisfied with any ruling given by the Department, whether for or against us. I think that says a great deal for the Department.

Dr. JAGAN: May I be allowed to reply to a few statements made by the hon. Nominated Member, which I consider really uncalled for. I have had occasion to speak about the sugar estates because of the fact that it is an institution with which I am very familiar, and another reason for referring to sugar estates is the

fact that the sugar industry is one of the largest in British Guiana, and so much depends on it. In fact, the hon. Member for Georgetown North, (Dr. Nicholson), only last night made a comparison of the wages paid on sugar estates with those paid by the Public Works Department. So that we must at all times be aware that it is a large industry, and we should know what is going on so as to be able to ascertain its relations with other organisations.

The hon. Member referred to a drop in sugar production with reference to my suggestion of forced labour. It is not that the people are happy to work on the sugar estates. My point is that they are given inadequate wages and work under unsuitable conditions which, I contend, is tantamount to forcing individuals to work. It is perhaps on that account that sugar production has dropped.

Mr. SEAFORD: To a point of correction. Production is now going up every year.

Mr. JAGAN: The hon. Member seems to be confused about what I said as regards trade unions. He seems to think that while I desire to have a united trade union movement I am advocating that there should be more unions. That is not my point. My point is that if Government would recognise those unions in which the workers have confidence the other unions would die a natural death. If the workers do not support the other unions I am sure that those officials who are mere figureheads would realise that it would be useless merely to keep those organisations going on their books. I am sure that if Government adopted the policy of recognising only those trade unions with the largest membership the trade union movement in this Colony would develop, and the other unions would wither away.

Mr. WIGHT: I think that most Members are agreed that the time for trade unionism has arrived, and will recognise trade unions as such. I know that several Members have been elected to this Council on a Labour ticket. Apparently, they are in no way connected with the trade unions, because they have not risen to say anything, but it appears to a mere outsider like myself that this is

a matter for the Trades Union Council to settle among themselves and not air it in public. There seems to be considerable difference of opinion and wrangling going on within the several unions. I think one could fairly analyse the speech of the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) to that effect. There is one thing I would lay at the door of the Labour Department and it is that perhaps in its enthusiasm it has been somewhat lenient with some of the unions. I happen to know from information obtained from the Registrar's Office that one union has been severely criticised because its Executive voted to one of its members the sum of \$1,500 in one year, and that the matter was commented on by the auditor. The next year the same gentleman received a sum of \$1,200 for services rendered to that trade union, so that \$2,700 of the labourers' money has been voted to one official of the union for services rendered. One would have thought that that official would have received a monthly salary for his services, and that any extra work would have been done free of charge in the interest of the union. I think hon. Members will agree with me that it is the duty of the Registrar and the Labour Department to bring such instances to the notice of the public, which has not been done.

Therefore I say that if the leaders of the trade unions would inspire confidence in their members the trade union movement in this Colony would flourish. I feel sure that if the members of the unions were fully cognisant of the incident I referred to a moment ago they would have something to say about it in general meeting. I think there are certain leaders of trade unions who consider the unions as their private and personal concerns. If the hon. Member had charged the Labour Department with leniency towards that particular union in not bringing the incident to the notice of the public he would have been able to justify his charge of inefficiency against the Department.

Dr. NICHOLSON: I deprecate the remark made by the last speaker that there are Members of this Council who won their election on a Labour ticket but, apparently, were not disposed to say anything on the matter under discussion. I would like to remind the hon. Member

that discretion is the better part of valour, and that one need not make a noise in order to do a certain amount of good. I feel that the Labour Department has done a great deal of good, but it cannot achieve 100 per cent. results in so short a time. It has to cut a clear way between the industrialists and capitalists on one hand and the workers on the other. It cannot do that right away; it must take time to grow to full stature. After all Rome was not built in a day.

I do not like these little asides we get sometimes, such as "What are the Labour Members doing? What contribution are they making to this debate?" My presence here is to serve every interest, whether capitalist or labour. That is my position in this Council.

Dr. JAGAN: I would like to remind the hon. Member that while Rome was not built in a day it was burned while Nero fiddled. (laughter).

The CHAIRMAN: I think Members would like to hear the Commissioner of Labour on the activities of his Department.

Mr. W. M. BISSELL (Commissioner of Labour): Sir, I think the only point I have to address myself to is the criticism made by hon. Members with regard to the policy of the Labour Department. The policy of the Department is quite simple. What we want is not more unions but better unions — not a multiplicity of unions covering one form of employment. The Department set itself against that from the outset and, as far as I am concerned, it will continue to do so unless it is instructed otherwise. The work of the Department in the development of trade unions has from the outset and right up until now (and it looks very much as if it is going to be intensified) been handicapped and hampered at every turn by a small group of people who seek prominence and the limelight through the agency of the control or leadership of a trade union. Look at the newspaper reports of the number of trade unions brought into being to cover forms of employment already covered by trade unions and you will find the same names, the same people, the same group. When I came to British Guiana, for example, there was one trade union covering the

seamen. At the end of last year there were three. There were two trade unions on the sugar estates, to-day there are eight claiming to cover the sugar workers. Last year, despite the fact that the Waterfront Workers' Union had been in existence for 25 years and holding a very high place in the community, one of those undermining sabotaging trade unions accepted 200 waterfront workers to its membership, but eventually they had to let them go. I make no apology for saying that the workers on the sugar estates have, in my view, been subjected to most heartless and shameless exploitation.

In 1941 there were 16 registered trade unions in this Colony. In the period between 1941 and the end of 1947, there were 17 new unions, and in the same period, 4 of the original 16 lapsed, and 12 are in being to this date. Three of the 17 new unions lapsed leaving a total of 26 unions at this day.

In 1942, shortly after the Labour Department was established as a separate Department, I myself undertook to bring about the re-construction of the Trades Union Council. My idea then, as it is to this day, was to endeavour to establish a Trades Union Council so representative of the working class people of this Colony that Government of its own accord would naturally consult them on any question affecting the working classes of this Colony. They have not yet got to that stage, but despite the dissensions and the inability of the unions to agree among themselves, Government has, at the request of the Department of Labour, consulted the Trades Union Council on a variety of subjects. The Trades Union Council went off to a good start. If my memory serves me right I think 14 of the 18 registered unions joined the Council at the start, but they were disjointed; they had no proper way of dealing with things. I asked them at that time to sit down and define their spheres of operation

They told me I was optimistic and seeking the impossible. I pointed out, however, that it was necessary in the interests of organization to prevent individuals from running in and out of trade unions, and that some effort should be made to persuade workers to remain in trade unions covering their trade or occupation. Finally, the Trades Union

Council agreed to form a committee to explore the matter and invited me to be Chairman as I was the only disinterested person in the Colony. In three months they produced a report which surprised the whole of the trade union movement. Naturally, there were some objections to the report, and the matter was referred back to the Committee to deal with these objections, and the final report was adopted in August, 1944. There then began a most lovely piece of procrastination, until in December, 1945, the Trades Union Council decided to suspend their decision of August, 1944, for three years. Mark you they did not set aside their original decision, but simply suspended it. This decision to delay the operation of the Committee's report for three years, has held up the orderly progress and development of trade unionism in this country. If you ask the President of the Post Office Workers' Union, who is also President of the Trades Union Council, if he desires to see two trade unions in the Post Office, he will say "no", and if you ask the Transport workers if they desire to have two unions in their Department, they would say "no". These people, the officers of the Post Office Workers' Union, the Transport Workers, the Subordinate Medical Workers, the Waterfront Workers and others—are people who work in the industry. You will find that the dissension in the trade unions which led up to the present situation has not been caused by unions whose officers are people who work in the occupations and industries covered by the unions for which they are responsible. The lack of orderliness and overlapping is the tragedy of the whole business. What they will do in 1948, I do not quite know.

As regards the sugar industry, it is one that comes in for substantial criticism. There are five trade unions recognised or partly recognised by this industry, and those five trade unions cover factory and field workers, sugar boilers, clerks and drivers. There are three other unions, two of which from time to time butt in and engage themselves in sabotaging and undermining the work of the others. That is the only way to put it: they are sabotaging the unity of the people—dividing a house against itself. It is terrible. When I was a young man in the trade unions in the United Kingdom, I was told it was an employer's

game to divide and conquer, and that it was a trade union policy that unity is strength. In this Colony, however, this policy seems to have been reversed for it is the trade unions which divide and conquer. When I approached the employers in the beginning as the hon. the First Nominated Member (Mr. Seaford) has said—"things were not always easy." There was an edge to our discussions and a certain amount of bitterness. The employers pointed out they were not prepared to deal with several unions on the same question, but they were prepared to deal with one union. For the first time in my career I found employers' association advocating and offering complete trade union organisation in the sense that they would recognise one trade union. If they had stated at that time that they would recognise a dozen trade unions I could understand the present situation, but the policy of the employers and the policy of the Department of Labour has been that, as far as possible, the minimum of of unions should be recognised. I could not get that in the United Kingdom, but I can get it in British Guiana.

As regards the question of sugar estate joint committees, I speak somewhat feelingly because here we have that section of the community—literate and semi-illiterate—who require so much real friendship and real assistance yet these are the people who, to my mind, are being shamelessly exploited in the Trade Union field. These are the people who require the greatest assistance to inculcate in themselves self-reliance and confidence. A few years ago the relationship existing between labour and the management on the various estates was not such as to produce any of these things. To-day the employers in accordance with the scheme of estate joint committees sit around the table and discuss with their work-people day-to-day questions relating to their employment. There has, in effect, been a revolution. I take full responsibility for the introduction of the estate joint committees. There is a qualification for membership of an estate joint committee; the qualification being that the worker must be a member of a trade union party to the agreement. There is a discipline attached to the estate joint committees—the discipline of agreements—and it is, therefore, necessary that the members of

the trade unions should be subject to the discipline of the agreements and of their trade unions. There is also a qualification for a voter in the election by ballot for the estate joint committee, the qualification being that he should work and earn wages during the grinding month immediately before the nominations for the estate joint committee. That is to say, if a man works for one day in the grinding month before the nominations he is entitled to vote. I was told by both sides to the agreement that we would never be able to organise such a ballot vote. We produced a scheme for qualification, voters' roll and a ballot, right down to the nails on the ballot boxes, and the scheme covered some 25,000 workers. The scheme worked and it works to this day, despite the attempts by the saboteurs to prevent it from working. My friend (Mr. Debidin) smiles.

They are not my people: they are your people. If they were my people, I know what would happen—some people would leave this Colony and in a hurry. Let me repeat: the saboteurs endeavoured to see that the system of estate joint committees should not work. At one of the early elections, two of the unions who were endeavouring to intrude in the sugar industry, attempted to persuade the workers not to attend at the polls. If the hon. Member for Central Demerara does not care to believe me, I will give him the date, time and place of the happening. Their obstruction did not work because the then Deputy Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Burrowes—one of the most patriotic Guianese I have ever met—put an end to it, and the workers voted. By getting the people to take part in a ballot vote to elect their own representatives, we are teaching them self-reliance, but results cannot be procured in a day, but much progress is being made — far too much for the liking of certain people. It is making far too much progress for those people who want to be at the head of affairs, and who feel that they will be challenged when the man at the bottom becomes more confident in himself and feels that he can do without them. The sugar estate workers are on the verge of being freed from this form of exploitation, and I am sure that if I left this Colony tomorrow that is something which would be added to my name.

In the matter of collective bargaining, we in the Labour Department see most of the trade unions in action. It is a delight and most heartening to listen to the manner in which the ordinary worker can put forward a case for the trade unions with a credit and skill that has got to be seen and heard to be believed. These people live among the workers they represent, are able to understand the worker, to know what he thinks and why he thinks it. I do not think any professional man can put forward their case and plead their cause any better than they do.

On the educational side we started a series of lectures. The Department, however, never at any time attempted to take credit for this work although we were in the main directly responsible for it. We endeavoured to pass the credit to the trade unions. When they reached a point where we thought they should be left to themselves, they unfortunately began to talk politics, and in the end we were not surprised to learn that the attendance at these lectures flopped. Despite this, we have carried on a certain amount of work, and it may well be we shall have to continue the work on our own. The working man in this country is on the eve of freedom from patronage. He is beginning to understand himself, to rely on himself, and to have confidence in himself, and the only sin which the Commissioner of Labour has committed is to assist in bringing this about.

The CHAIRMAN: I think hon. Members ought not now to be under any illusions as to what are the activities and policy of the Labour Department.

Head passed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — CENTRAL HOUSING & PLANNING AUTHORITY.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that this head be carried out at \$28,654 as recommended by the Finance Committee.

Dr. JAGAN: I should like to draw the attention of this Council to the question of the settlement at Hague backdam. I think the people there were encouraged by Government to settle at the back of that district, but they are not satisfied with the way things have gone.

The hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo knows the problem quite well and I am sure he is going to speak on it. I find that after these settlers have gone there and put in their labour to bring waste lands and other areas under cultivation the whole place is now being put under rice cultivation and they have been told through no fault of their own that they cannot build any more houses or make additions to the existing ones there. Further, the Central Board of Health recently issued an order to the effect that four houses should be demolished. I cannot understand why at this time when there is a great housing shortage and when everything should be done to encourage farming communities especially — the people responsible for the production of the wealth of this country—every obstacle is being placed in the way of these settlers. In fact, I want to say that the Central Board of Health is acting in this matter like a Gestapo; it is more a persecution Board than anything else. I cannot see why the Local Government and the Central Board of Health could not have come to some agreement whereby action would have been delayed as regards demolishing the houses of these settlers. I remember going with a delegation to interview the then Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, and it was pointed out that because of malaria and one thing or another for public health reasons it was advisable to remove these people as quickly as possible, but so far about two or three years have elapsed and nothing has been done by Government to alleviate conditions from the public health point of view. There has been some measure of DDT spraying in the area, but as far as drinking water is concerned no well has been provided. If Government fails to provide adequate public health measures to ensure the safety of these people, then it seems to me that the obligation lies on Government to remove them to more suitable locations. I have been told that Government has been considering several plans—I think three—in this respect, but so far action has not been taken on any one of them. I cannot understand why the Local Government Board and the Public Health Authorities could not get together and permit these people to remain on the settlement until Government makes some arrangement to remove them to a safer location. The reason

given for removing them was, as I have said before, a question of public health, but the decision is to my mind a very inelastic one if the people there are not been allowed to build new houses or to make additions to existing ones. Most of us are aware that the birth-rate among the East Indian population in British Guiana is very high and unless Government is prepared to check that birth-rate it means that the families on the settlement are increasing all the time. Some of the settlers are living at the homes of others and apart from this others are getting married and in need of their own homes, so much so that the necessity has arisen for them to put up small grass huts. I am sure these people do not like to live in the huts, but circumstances demanded that they should provide their own homes for the sake of decency, no matter how humble those homes may be. In these circumstances I am surprised to find that the Central Board of Health has issued notices to the effect that some of the houses of these settlers should be demolished. I appeal to Government to take immediate steps to alleviate the situation of these people who are suffering immensely. I think that through this Department—the Department of Local Government—something can be done to ameliorate conditions in the very near future, in this area.

The CHAIRMAN: What area is the hon. Member referring to?

Dr. JAGAN: The Hague settlement; the residents at Hague backdam.

Dr. SINGH: I did not intend to speak on this subject to-day. I have always been interested in this settlement and since my friend, the hon. Member for Central Demerara, has spoken on it I think it my duty to say something also. As I have already said, I have always been interested in the people at Hague, and being a member of the Central Board of Health I have been interested there on their behalf. I must state, however, that they seem to have no patience; they run helter-skelter and see everybody possible believing that that would bring about a settlement of their difficulties. I know that there is a grievance in this matter and I also know that it is engaging the attention of the Government Medical Officer of Health and the Commissioner

of Local Government. Hague is a village on the West Coast, Demerara, and is about 7½ miles from Vreed-en-Hoop. The front part of the village is called Hague, but where the settlement exists is called Hague backdam and is about 2½ miles away, going south from the public road. This settlement is part of an abandoned sugar estate which Government had to take over and lease out to people for farming. The farmers gradually felled the big trees in clearing the land, and they continued their cultivation for three or four decades with the result that the land is very clear now. As far as the eye can see there is no high bush and the farmers have planted rice, as well as plantains and other provisions. It is true that while these people have been there for the last three or four decades no public health amenities were given to them and they had to look for their own sources of water supply and so on. They suffered considerably from malaria and other hazards, yet they went on cultivating their lands and to-day they have a thriving settlement. There is no road to speak of in the settlement; there is only a middle-walk dam and during the rainy weather it is impassable. When there are cases of heavy sickness no proper attention is received by the patients since it is impossible for the G.M.O. of the district to travel to them.

Some time in the year 1926, as President of the B.G. East Indian Association, I had an interview with the then Governor, Sir Graeme Thompson, and made representations on behalf of these people with the result that a road was started in the settlement. It went a little way, but owing to financial difficulties it had to be discontinued. I made further representations in the matter during the regime of Sir Edward Denham and another start was made on the road. The work was carried a little further, but there again we had a depression in those days and it had to be discontinued. Eventually I introduced on their behalf during Governor Lethem's regime not only a fairly good earthen road, two canals being dug and the stuff used to make the road, but the surface of the road is even and there is great comfort for ingress and egress, and vehicular traffic can go for a certain distance along the road. Now that there is a free passage to this place we find Sanitary Inspectors and

other officials finding their way there, and they have now reported that the place is uninhabitable and there is a lot of sickness. I can assure you that it is far better to-day than it was 20 or 30 years ago.

To make a long story short, these people were told they cannot repair their houses; they cannot build because the Settlement is unhealthy. There again I took a deputation to Governor Lethem. He was very considerate in allowing the people to repair their houses. The people have done so and now they are to be put off the Settlement. I am interested in their behalf. If these people are to be put off the Settlement then some other arrangement should be made for them to occupy elsewhere. This is a time when we are all looking forward to the growing of more food, and if these people are sent away the lands there would be left uncultivated. There is no other land in the neighbourhood which they can occupy. They have to leave that district and go somewhere else, and it is only right that they should have some place near to that district similar to the people at Windsor Forest, who have their settlement with their farms aback while they live in the front. On that score I have already seen the Commissioner of Local Government and he is thinking of a piece of land to put them. But I feel it would be a very costly project to purchase land and fit it up for a settlement for these people. I do not want to say anything more, but I have an apprehension that we were misguided. I am going to bring it up at the proper quarters. I feel that the settlement can be made habitable if we have the co-operation of the Public Health Department.

Mr. PHANG: When the Government of this Colony wanted a political post on the Barima, Mr. Im Thurn, then Government Agent, was instructed by the Governor to find a place in the Barima and he chose Morawhanna and established it. He induced people in the Barima to settle at Morawhanna and promised them the amenities of Post Office, Hospital, Police Station, etc., if they would settle there. The people went there and erected buildings at some cost to themselves. Recently I have been told that Morawhanna no longer enjoys a Local Authority. It came about that the Chairman of the Authority asked me to

get a loan of \$1,000 for Morawhanna, and I went to Mr. Laing who told me they had no Local Authority there. That was the first time I knew of it, and the Chairman did not know of the withdrawal of the Authority. It seems the Government wants the people to remove from Morawhanna but has not produced an alternative site for them. I understand, however, that Government wants to create a settlement at Hobo, but has not prepared the site. It seems unfair to these people that they should be made to remove from Morawhanna without preparing a settlement for them. If Government had definitely pronounced a policy whereby Morawhanna is closed down, the Authority withdrawn altogether and the people given sufficient time to make provision to go elsewhere, I say that would have been all right. But at the moment the people have been told there is no Authority and they must remove, but they do not know where to go. That Hobo scheme has not yet begun. It is unfair.

Mr. ROTH: There is another point about Morawhanna. Government cannot abandon it altogether. It is the jumping-off place for the Barima and the Barama; it is only four miles from the frontier. Whatever decision is arrived at, the importance of the necessity of maintaining a Police Station and Customs Post there must be considered.

Mr. DEBIDIN: May I make one observation on the Hague Settlement question? This question has been a long challenge to the sincerity of Government with regard to Land Settlement. I know the problems of those people, but I am not going to discuss that now. I merely say this: I find the Settlement had been threatened in the past and is still being threatened. Section 136 of the Public Health Ordinance has been, to my mind, unwisely exercised so far as Hague Backdam is concerned. Throughout the Colony that section of the Ordinance is working hardship. Before a man can have his house repaired he must get the permission or consent of the Public Health Department, and that is usually withheld on the pretext that the place is not laid out, though that place is as good as if not better than, some places which have been laid out. It is only that the place has not been surveyed, and if it is laid out it would be an excellent site. As

result of the withholding of the permission to repair their houses the rain falls on the people and they get ill. We had a Law Society meeting at which the Director of Medical Services lectured, and an undertaking was given by him not to pursue that section of the Ordinance. At Hague that section has caused the people much suffering. The hon. Member for Demerara-Essequibo referred to the people being scattered. That is one of the reasons. The people's houses have got into disrepair and they cannot remain there. At present when we are dealing with the question of more production, I think, renewed application should be made for the betterment of the condition of these people.

Generally speaking on this Head, I would like to make this point. Under this Head just like under a few other Heads a certain sum is thrown into general expenditure which might be of advantage merely to a small area or a small section of the population. I see here Town Planning is provided for under the title "Central Housing and Planning Authority." I hope that the work of this Department will be so directed that the benefits from it will reach out far and wide into the rural areas, because we need as much as possible schemes for better housing in the rural areas. At the moment Cane Grove is in a very unsatisfactory state. I spoke only recently to Mr. Laing, the Commissioner of Local Government, about the matter. A site has been chosen which, to my mind is not good. The people are in a dilemma to know how to build and with what. I am hoping to be favoured with an explanation of the scope of the development, whether a helping hand will be given to the laying-out of the site at La Bonne Mere where the Housing Settlement will be.

Speaking of the Local Government Board in general, I want to make this observation too, and I mooted that to Mr. Laing, that the composition of this Board might be rearranged in future. I do comment that thought to Your Excellency, because I know you will certainly give it whatever consideration it deserves. The Board should not be constituted as it is now but extended to include those Members who are elected to this Council from areas in which there are a number of villages and Local Authori-

ties, so that representation may be fuller and more directed in their behalf. There are numerous instances of complaints and cases which come to us for which there can be no solution through us except by ringing Mr. Laing or some other officer of the Local Government. I think much can be done, apart from the fact that when the Board sits it does not have collectively as much information as could be got, if you have Members who have been and will always be in contact with their constituents. I think it is something which commends itself and, if adopted, the efficiency of this Board would be on the move.

Mr. THOMPSON: I think the Local Government Board as constituted, is as laid down by the Ordinance, I think we are fully represented there. You have there Chairman from various areas who are well informed in respect of all that is happening. As President of the Village Chairmen's Conference, I sit on that Board and I can assure the hon. Member that I am fully conversant with most of the happenings in the districts, and I say that without pride. Matters are referred to me and I am in constant touch with the villagers, and in most cases I make personal visits. So I am able to supply the information that the Board requires. We have on the Board, Estate Representatives and two other members who come from Country or Village Districts, men who are quite informed. Also we have on the Board the Medical Department represented. I can assure Your Excellency that the rural areas are fully catered for by that Board. We are now trying to have open meetings so that proprietors can attend and hear what is happening, but I can assure the hon. Member in all confidence that everything possible that should be done is being done by the Local Government Board and by the members they elect.

Dr. JAGAN: I notice under this Head there is included Central Housing and Planning Authority. I would like to make this brief comment with respect to planning in so far as Local Government is concerned. I find in my district that in villages like Plaisance and Beterverwagting, the people are settled on the Coast near to the public road, and have to go aback in some cases five, six, seven miles to cultivate their farms. I am offering the

suggestion, which may be taken for what it is worth, that in future in any scheme or any area to be bought by Government, for instance, this area of La Bonne Intention and Cane Grove, a rearrangement in so far as planning be made. It has been brought to my attention that housing for farmers should be so placed as to have them in scattered areas with a certain amount of land around the houses, as it would be more convenient for the farmers to engage in mixed farming, poultry-rearing, etc., thereby increasing his yield. Why I have brought this point up is because it has some bearing on the Hague Backdam. I think Government is considering from the public health point of view abandoning that Settlement, and it would be most unwise because if we abandon that area we would have to bring those people probably to the Coast near to the public road and there would be the similar difficulty of having the people going miles aback to cultivate their farms. I have been told of cases where the people have to transport bunches of plantains on their backs because there are no good means of communication, no good road. I think it would be of great benefit to the people and to the farms if, in any Land Settlement scheme undertaken by the Local Government Board, such a plan be taken into consideration whereby we will have a certain amount of decentralization and the people being allowed to live very close to the area which they are cultivating. There is a great amount of difficulty, as I have pointed out during the debate on the Agricultural Department. For instance, between Plaisance Village and Beterverwaging Village, there is an area known as "letter A" next to the Conservancy Dam. That area is approximately seven miles away. You can readily see that it would be very difficult for a farmer living near to the road to have to go all that distance to cultivate his farm. As much as he would like to get land and cultivate it, he could not be expected to go aback seven miles, cultivate his farm and return home to take care of other necessities.

Mr. THOMPSON: Just for information, I would like to understand whether the hon. Member is referring to Plaisance or Hague Backdam or anywhere else, because Plaisance and other places I know have waterways which are used for transportation aback. If I am to understand the

isolation is in reference to Plaisance, or Hague Backdam, or to any spot, I may be able to enlighten the Member on the point.

The CHAIRMAN: I gather the hon. Member was referring to Planning generally in the country districts. I think what he advocated was, that it should be made possible for a man to get a livelihood from his farm. There are two different points of view there, and you will find among the villagers themselves very different points of view. You are going to ask them to subsist on their own farms. A series of problems confront them such as Drainage, Water Supply, etc., and present them with real difficulty. It means that each isolated farmer will have to provide those amenities for himself—the same amenities to be got in village community life. From conversations, I have had with a good many farmers, I think that you will find a considerable amount of objection to that isolation which the hon. Member's scheme involves. I do not say there are no strong reasons to support such a policy but there are also great objections to it and, I think, the people themselves are against it.

As regards the other remarks made by hon. Members, I would certainly have this question of Hague Backdam looked into. I do not think the Central Board of Health are so callous as imagined in turning people out. There are certain grave objections to letting them continue to live in such a place. A good many of these places, and we know of them, are unfit for human habitation. It is wrong for Government or anyone else to allow people to live under those conditions. On the other hand if you are going to turn them out you should provide somewhere else for them to go to. I think that will be considered.

As far as the Central Housing and Planning Authority is concerned, its activity will extend to the country parts as well as to urban areas like Georgetown and New Amsterdam. Hon Members are aware that a year ago we passed Town Planning legislation and legislation for Housing, and I may inform this Council that those two laws are about to be proclaimed and that the Central Housing and Planning Authority referred to in this

vote is about to be established. I hope we shall be able to make some progress at an early date with this extremely difficult, extremely urgent and extremely expensive problem. The Government has been endeavouring for some time past to get an expert Town Planner. We have asked the Secretary of State a number of times to get one, but so far he has failed to find a suitable officer. At the same time I feel myself there is a great deal of work that this Central Authority can do even if there is some further delay in getting a Town Planner and, as I say, I propose to bring the legislation into force by proclamation at once.

There is one other point raised about Morawhanna by one or two speakers. That again is a difficult problem. I have not been there but I may tell hon. Members that I propose to go there during the latter part of March. Morawhanna has been strongly condemned from every point of view by my predecessor and the Medical Authorities and, I think, it had been condemned as a suitable residential area as far back as 1922, but nothing has been done about it and we must come to some final decision. As I have said, I propose to visit the North-West District next month and I will certainly go to Morawhanna and Mabaruma and inspect the proposed site for the new settlement. I hope to be able to settle this question once and for all, but I would rather see the place myself before a final decision is made.

Dr. JAGAN : I am sorry the hon. the First Nominated Member is not here. I would like to refer to what he said about housing on the sugar estates. I do not want to make any comment as he is not here. Although he said the Estates' Authorities are making provision for the construction of houses on the sugar estates and are giving the houses to the estate labourers, I am very much anxious as far as land tenure is concerned, and I hope that this Government will make some arrangement with the Sugar Estates' Authorities to give some security of tenure to these people.

Total of Head approved.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — SOCIAL
WELFARE ORGANISATION.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I

move that Head XVIII—"Local Government—Social Welfare Organisation"—be carried out at \$18,316 as recommended by the Finance Committee in its report.

Dr. JAGAN : I would like to make a comment as regards to the Co-operative department of this organization.

The CHAIRMAN : I do not want to curb the hon. Member but the occasion, I suggest, for raising any question about the Co-operative Movement is when it comes up in connection with the special message I have addressed and it will come up to the Council, I hope, as soon as the Budget Debate is over. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer will move a motion for the adoption and the approval of my proposals, and that will be the appropriate time for the hon. Member to make his point.

Dr. JAGAN : What I was going to refer to is this : We have a Marketing Co-operative here in the name of the British Guiana Co-operative League which is experiencing great difficulty at the present time in getting quotas for supplies from abroad. At the present time the League is expecting a free shipment from a Swedish Co-operative and is having much difficulty in getting through the Control Board. I ask Your Excellency to see what can be done in this matter. I do not want to speak any longer on this Head, as you have rightly said this item is to be fully debated later.

Mr. DEBIDIN : I do not quite follow whether this whole Head will be discussed again. As far as I gather you said, Sir, only the question of Co-operatives will be discussed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : The motion of which I have already given notice is to ask this Council to approve of a certain amount being taken to introduce an expansion of the Co-operative Movement, and quite obviously that motion itself will cover very largely the arena of this particular Head. But quite apart from that, the hon. Member will remember that in Finance Committee I undertook to ask you, Sir, in so far as this Head is concerned, (since the provision is only for one-half of the year to carry the Department for six months

over which the present grant does not extend) for special opportunity to be given for the introduction of a motion with regard to this particular Department going on to the Colonial estimates. So there will be two opportunities—the Co-operative Movement motion and later in the year another motion putting on the Establishment this particular staff.

The CHAIRMAN: There will also be a third — the presentation of a Bill of which notice has been given relating to the Co-operative Movement.

Mr. DEBIDIN: In view of that I reserve what I have to say under this Head.

Total of Head approved.

MEDICAL.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that Head XIX "Medical" be carried out at \$564,275, as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Dr. SINGH: Always in the past I made comment on this Head, but since the Medical Advisory Committee has been appointed we went into the estimates thoroughly and, speaking for my colleagues, I can assure you that everything possible has been done under this Head.

Total of Head approved.

MEDICAL — BACTERIOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that Head XX "Medical — Bacteriological Department" be carried out at \$32,806, as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Question put, and agreed to.

Total of Head approved.

MEDICAL — X-RAY DEPARTMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that Head XXI "Medical — X-ray Department" be carried out at \$47,244, as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Question put, and agreed to.

Total of Head approved.

MEDICAL — HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I move that Head XXII "Medical — Hospitals and Dispensaries" be carried out at \$1,262,650, as recommended in the report of the Finance Committee.

Mr. WIGHT: There is only one question I desire to raise, and I do not know whether the hon. the Colonial Treasurer is prepared to put it in or he will have it considered at some later stage. It is in relation to Dental Surgeons, the question of having one on the staff of the Public Hospital and certainly in some of the outlying districts like Suddie. That was discussed in Finance Committee and it was proposed that it should be considered at some later stage by Government.

Dr. SINGH: This question came up at our last meeting a few days ago and because it was late we adjourned that meeting, but we intend to go into it thoroughly, the whole question of Dental Surgeons in rural areas.

The CHAIRMAN: With regard to Dental Service we are very shortly to receive a visit from a very distinguished gentleman who is to study dental diseases in the Colony. I am sure the visit will be of great help to us and the Medical Department generally. I cannot remember on what date he is expected, but it is in the near future.

FINANCIAL BUDGET POSITION.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Sir, the Report of the Finance Committee has now been adopted without amendment, therefore I move that the Council resume.

The Council resumed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: We have now before us the substantive motion, and I have now to report the result of our consideration of the Estimates for 1948. Before doing so I should perhaps explain that I had intended to avail myself of this opportunity to reply to some of the observations which were made by hon. Members during the debate after the introduction of the Budget Statement but, as Members will recall, that

debate took place as far back as January 6, and I feel that perhaps it would be somewhat unrealistic for me at this stage to attempt any comprehensive reply. Moreover, many of the points which were made by Members in relation to the expenditure estimates have been thoroughly ventilated in the course of our discussions in Finance Committee and in this Council. As regards the points made in connection with the revenue side there will, of course, be another opportunity for discussion when the taxation measures come before the Council.

In the course of their speeches some Members referred to the general economic situation and took the opportunity to speak in connection with the import restrictions arising out of the dollar crisis. As regards that I do not think that the extreme gravity of the situation is even now appreciated, but since then the Import Conference at Barbados has taken place and, as Members know, at that Conference this Colony was adequately represented by both unofficial and official delegates. Of course it would be impossible to satisfy some critics, but I think we could reasonably expect that as a result of the work of that Conference a policy, programme and procedure would be developed which would at least allow this Colony to maintain its living standard and not be harmful to its general economy. For those reasons I do not intend to reply to that debate. Certainly I do not intend to answer some specific points which otherwise I might attempt to do, but I cannot avoid referring at least to some observations which were made by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan). The first was his objection to the interest-free loan of \$2,000,000 which was made by this Colony from surplus funds to H.M. Government. That point was answered to some extent by the hon. Mr. Seaford, but I think I should say that it seems hardly generous that we should have to record in the Hansard of this Council remarks of that kind when Members will recall that H.M. Treasury within the last three years' granted \$2,700,000 as a free gift towards our subsidisation measures. At the same time, under the old Colonial Development and Welfare Act we received in free grants from H.M. Exchequer something like 2½ million dollars, and again under the new

Colonial Development and Welfare Act this Colony has an allocation of 12 million dollars, most of which we hope will be a free grant. Therefore it is a bit unfortunate that at our opening session there should be comment like that from any Member of this Council.

The hon. Member also referred to the question of leakage of the Budget proposals. That is always a serious charge to make because, of course, when proposals in connection with changes in taxation leak out certain individuals are able to make a profit at the public expense or at the expense of the community. In this case I can assure the hon. Member that there could have been no leakage. You, Sir, will recall that the discussion of the Budget proposals took place in your office only, I think, two or three days before they were actually presented; the Budget Statement read by me on the 30th December and what it contained was known to three other persons only. But on this occasion I have no doubt that there was a very intelligent anticipation by certain members of the community of what would take place. It was reasonable that people who sell liquor should believe, knowing that there would be difficulty in balancing our budget, that those items would be subject to increased taxation, and the same applies to tobacco. So that if there was any undue removal from the Customs of items of that sort I hope Members will put it down to what I have said—intelligent anticipation, and not to the Budget proposals having escaped.

I would like to refer to another matter. The hon. Member for Central Demerara began his speech by reading a sort of manifesto which he said represented the views of Members who formed the Labour Party. He immediately followed that up by reading from a pamphlet which, on inquiry by the President, was discovered to be some Communist literature. What he read was not of much importance. There were some figures, and I personally prefer to take my figures and statistics in regard to economic matters from the *Economist* rather than from a Communist pamphlet. The only point I wish to make is this: I think this Council ought to know where we stand. If the hon. Member is going to be the

spokesman, the mouthpiece of the Labour Party, I feel sure that unless that Labour Party is also going to adopt Communist ideologies he should not at the same time, in juxtaposition with the reading of a formal statement, start to read Communist literature. I merely mention that because I think Members of the Council are entitled to know just where they stand in connection with the members of the Labour Party.

The position now is this: that the expenditure as shown in the printed Draft Estimates to be met from Colony revenue was a total of \$16,277,835. In Finance Committee we added items which total \$232,812. That I should say is the net addition because there were a few items deleted. Therefore the approved total of expenditure to be met from Colony revenue is \$16,510,647. Now, as regards the other group of expenditure under the head "Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes", shown in the Draft Estimates at \$1,643,637, we have added a total of \$33,054, making a total under this particular category of the Estimates of \$1,676,691. I merely repeat those figures for record, but all the Council need concern itself with at the moment is the fact that there has been a net addition to the expenditure estimates to be met from the Colony revenue of \$232,812. If Members will turn to the first page of the Estimates where the Budget for 1948 is summarized, they will see that we started with an estimated Budget deficit of \$616,889. Consequently, if we add the net addition we have made to the Draft Estimate the deficit would be \$849,701. Members will recall that in the Budget Statement I enumerated a series of variations in taxation, and that I ended that Statement by informing Members that the expected yield from those variations would be the figure of \$850,000. Somewhat fortuitously therefore, we have managed to equate our deficit of \$849,701 with the figure of \$850,000 which the net variations in taxation will yield, so that the Budget is still balanced on the basis

of the statement which I made. But quite apart from that I hope to attempt to further revise one or two of the heads of revenue in the Draft Estimates now that the year is already two months advanced and I have some clear idea of what the actual yield from certain sources of revenue may be. For instance, the position as regards income tax is a little more clear now than I was able to see it then, and of course we have now the actual revenue receipts for 1947, and it is perhaps easier to make a forecast of revenue under all heads except under Customs, which is still a very doubtful item. Therefore we can pass this motion with the feeling that we shall be passing a balanced Budget, even though we have had to make fairly substantial increases in the Draft Estimates as printed. I now beg to move the motion:

"That, this Council approves the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from Revenue during the year ending 31st December, 1948, which have been laid on the table, as amended in Committee."

Motion agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: It is approaching 5 o'clock and I do not think hon. Members would wish to do any further business to-day. I propose that we meet to-morrow at 2 o'clock. Will the Treasurer be prepared to take the revenue measures to-morrow, or will he prefer to defer them until next week?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I would prefer to defer them until our meeting next week. There are one or two Members who have asked me to speak with them on the Tax Bill, and there are some other points to be discussed.

The PRESIDENT: Then if it suits the Council we will postpone items 2 and 3 and proceed with item 4 to-morrow. The Council will adjourn until 2 p.m. to-morrow.