

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 5th December, 1940.

The Council met at 11 a.m. pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR WILFRID JACKSON, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr G. D. Owen, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C.

The Hon. F. Dias, O.B.E., (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. J. S. Dash, Director of Agriculture.

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo, O.B.E., (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. E. G. Woolford, K.C., (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. E. F. McDavid, M.B.E., Colonial Treasurer.

The Hon. F. J. Seaford, O.B.E., (Georgetown North).

The Hon. M. B. G. Austin, O.B.E. (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. W. A. D'Andrade, Comptroller of Customs.

The Hon. N. M. MacLennan, Director of Medical Services.

The Hon. M. B. Laing, O.B.E., Commissioner of Labour and Local Government.

The Hon. G. O. Case, Director of Public Works and Sea Defences.

The Hon. J. G. Crease, Director of Education.

The Hon. J. Gonsalves, O.B.E., (Georgetown South).

The Hon. J. I. De Aguiar (Central Demerara).

The Hon. Jung Bahadur Singh (Demerara-Essequibo),

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

The Hon. E. M. Waleott (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. H. C. Humphrys, K.C., (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. C. R. Jacob (North Western District).

The Hon. J. W. Jackson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. C. V. Wight (Western Essequibo).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 26th November, 1940, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

PAPERS LAID.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. G. D. Owen, C.M.G.) laid on the table the following reports and documents :—

Report on the Post Office Savings Bank for the year 1939.

Report of the Committee on Old Age Pensions (Legislative Council Paper No. 11/40).

Report by the Director of Agriculture (Acting) on loans made to Rice Growers under the Rice Growers Loan Ordinance, Cap. 155.

Report of the British Guiana Rice Marketing Board for the period 1st April, to 30th September, 1940.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. E. O. Pretheroe, M.C.) gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bill :—

A Bill intituled an Ordinance to confer power on the Georgetown Town Council to exempt or to exempt partially the owners of certain properties in the city from the liability to pay taxes or rates for a limited period.

Mr. McDAVID (Colonial Treasurer) gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bill :—

A Bill intituled an Ordinance to make provision for the transfer of the colonization reserve to the general revenue of the Colony.

Mr. CASE (Director of Public Works and Sea Defences) gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bill :—

A Bill intituled an Ordinance further to amend the Sea Defences Ordinance, Chapter 118, with respect to the removal from the foreshore by estate owners of the stumps of felled courida trees.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICES.

ACTIVITIES OF THE RICE MARKETING BOARD.

Mr. JACOB gave notice of the following questions :—

1. How many meetings have been held by the B.G. Rice Marketing Board from 1st November, 1939, to 31st July, 1940; and how many members were present at each of these meetings, giving the names of each of the Members?

2. How many persons were employed by the B.G. Rice Marketing Board on a monthly basis as at 1st January, 1940, giving the full names, addresses, previous employment and experience of these employees, the position now held by each, together with the monthly salary paid to each of these employees?

3. Similar information to be supplied for the period as from 1st July, 1940.

4. Is it a fact that 20,000 bags of rice have been bought by the B.G. Rice Marketing Board from Barbados recently for export to Trinidad? If so, at what price, and is the Board doing this business at a profit, if so, how much, or at a loss of how much, bearing in mind that the Board contracted to sell 10,000 tons of rice for shipment to Trinidad by 30th September, 1940?

5. Will the Board consider the question of suspending all exports in view of the probable shortage of rice before the Autumn crop is reaped, say November/December, 1940, as soon as possible?

6. Will the Board consider the advisability of not arranging to sell any rice, or entering into any contract in the future for export from date?

7. Will Government consider the advisability of requesting the Colonial Auditor to examine and report on the Balance Sheet that has been issued by the B.G. Rice Marketing Board as at 31st March, 1940, particularly in regard to the following :—

- (a) Why no provision was made for depreciation of plant and machinery which is shown at cost?
- (b) Why no provision was made for bad and doubtful debts?
- (c) Whether the actual stock of rice on hand was used for asset purposes and whether due allowance was made for loss in weight by wastage and by vermin?

(d) Whether the report of the Auditors was "full and fair" and whether the Balance Sheet as printed exhibited a "true and correct view of the state of affairs of the Board"?

ORDER OF THE DAY.

SUGGESTED LOAN TO U.K. GOVERNMENT.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT asked and the Colonial Secretary laid over replies to the following questions :—

Q. 1. Is Government of the opinion that there will be any repatriation of Indian immigrants entitled thereto in accordance with the provisions of Section 26 of the Immigration Ordinance during the War?

A. 1. It is most unlikely that any return ship will leave during the war.

Q. 2. If the answer to No. 1 is in the negative, will Government offer as loan from this Colony to the United Kingdom the sum of \$345,905.00, the balance at a credit of the Immigration Fund at 31st December, 1939, free of interest to be used during the War to assist in the prosecution thereof?

If not, why not?

A. 2. No. The Colony's financial position does not permit of a loan being offered to the United Kingdom.

RICE STOCKS AND CROPS.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT, on behalf of Mr. Lee, asked and the Colonial Secretary laid over replies to the following questions :—

Q. 1. Will Government state what was the "carry over" stock of rice in the Colony from the year 1939 to the year 1940, fixing the stock in each county separately?

A. 1. The information desired is not available.

Q. 2. Will Government state what was the estimated yield of rice for the 1939 Autumn Crop in each county separately?

Q. 3. Will Government state what was the actual yield of rice in each county separately for the Autumn Crop of 1939?

A. 2 and 3 The original forecast of the yield of the Autumn crop of 1939 was 45,000 tons of rice as indicated in paragraph 8 of the Report of the Rice Marketing Board for the period ended 31st March, 1940. Reference is invited to paragraph 31 of the Board's report for the period ended 30th September, 1940, in which it is stated that the yield of the 1939 Autumn crop could not have exceeded 37,000 tons of rice. The following comparative tables compiled from returns prepared by the Department of Agriculture show the estimates and yield of each county separately ;—

	Original forecast October, 1939.	Final Crop returns May, 1940.
	tons.	tons.
Demerara	11,000	10,340
Berbice	24,000	17,450
Essequebo	10,000	8,210
	45,000	36,000

Q. 4. Will Government state what was the estimated yield of rice for the 1940 Spring crop in each county separately?

Q. 5. Will Government state what was the actual yield of rice in each county separately for the Spring crop of 1940?

A. 4 and 5. Reference is invited to paragraph 20 of the Board's report for the period ended 31st March, 1940, in which it is stated that owing to the severe drought the Spring crop almost completely failed.

Q. 6. Will Government state how many tons of rice were exported from January to September, 1940?

A. 6. 10,755 tons.

Q. 7. Will Government state how many tons of rice were consumed in the Colony from January to September, 1940?

A. 7. Consumption of rice in the Colony is estimated at 25,000 bags (180 lb.) per month. Consumption for the period indicated would therefore be approximately 18,000 tons.

Q. 8. Will Government state what was the amount lost by the Rice Marketing Board from the purchase of the 20,000 bags of rice from Barbados to assist in fulfilling their contract to Trinidad?

A. 8. Reference is invited to paragraphs 8, 23, 24, 26, 27 and 28 of the Board's report for the period April, 1940, to September, 1940.

Q. 9. Will Government state what is the estimated yield of rice in each county separately for the Autumn crop of 1940?

A. 9. No reliable estimate has yet been prepared as reaping has not yet been completed but a preliminary forecast prepared by the Department of Agriculture indicates a probable yield of approximately 30,000 tons.

Q. 10. Is Government aware of the fact that there has been a serious shortage of rice for consumption in the Colony during the last four weeks ending 26th October, 1940, and will Government stop all export of rice from date until it is ascertained if there is an available surplus over consumption in the Colony to the end of November, 1941?

Q. 11. Is Government taking steps to ensure the sowing and reaping of the Spring crop in 1941 so as to find employment for the thousands of people who are unemployed and to provide food for the population?

A. 10 and 11. Government is aware that there was a temporary shortage of rice for local consumption in October. The shortage was due in part to exceptionally severe drought conditions and in part to attempts to hoard padi and delay milling. The position is dealt with in paragraphs 20 to 22 of the report of the Board for the period April, 1940, to September, 1940.

The export of rice is already under full control and no additional regulation is needed. The policy of the Government and the Board

is to endeavour to maintain exports on a minimum basis so as to retain the Colony's export markets. In view of the reduced yield of the Autumn crop steps are being taken to encourage the planting of an augmented Spring crop in 1941. To this end the sugar producers have agreed as a special emergency measure to permit the planting of a Spring crop in 1941 by workers on all sugar estates on the East and West Coasts of Demerara as well as on the Blairmont and Bath estates.

RICE PURCHASES AND EXPORTS.

Mr. JACOB asked and the Colonial Secretary laid over replies to the following questions:—

Q. 1. Will Government state the total quantity of rice purchased by the Rice Marketing Board on or after 1st November, 1939, from the thirty-four registered exporting Agents of rice, giving the names of all Agents and the quantity purchased from each together with the amount paid to each exporting Agent?

A. 1. The question relates to the financial transactions of individuals who are, moreover, business competitors, and it is considered to be undesirable and not in the public interest that the information should be made public.

Q. 2. What quantity of the 10,000 tons of rice contracted to be delivered to Trinidad by 30th September, 1940, was delivered, exclusive of the 20,000 bags purchased from Barbados for delivery, to Trinidad? If the whole quantity is not delivered, when will the balance be delivered?

A. 2. Reference is invited to paragraphs 23 to 25 of the report of the Board for the period 1st April, 1940, to 30th September, 1940, which contain the required information.

BILLS—FIRST READING.

The following Bills were read the first time:—

A Bill intituled an Ordinance to continue certain expiring laws. (*The Colonial Secretary*).

A Bill intituled an Ordinance further to amend the Gambling Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 95, by making it an offence for any person in the Colony to sell or deliver any ticket in any lottery conducted outside the Colony.

A Bill intituled an Ordinance to amend the Firearms Ordinance, 1940, with respect to the date upon which firearms which have been surrendered to the Police may be disposed of at the discretion of the Commissioner of Police. (*The Attorney-General*).

Notice was given that at the next or a subsequent meeting of the Council it would be moved that the Bills be read the second time.

INCREASED PAY FOR MILITIA.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : I beg to move :—

WHEREAS by Resolution passed on the 6th day of September, 1939, the Legislative Council approved of prescribed rates of pay and allowances for members of the Militia while engaged on actual military service;

AND WHEREAS the approved rates of pay were based on the rates payable in the British Army which have recently been increased by 6d. a day for non-commissioned officers and men:

Be it Resolved,—That this Council approves of the rates of pay for non-commissioned Officers and men of the Militia (other than members of the paid staff) while engaged on actual military service being as follows with effect as from the 22nd November, 1940 :—

	per day.
C.S.M. and C.Q.S.M.	8/6 }
Sergeant	6/6 } plus
Corporal	4/6 } free
L/Corporal	3/9 } ration.
Private	2/6 }

When the rates of pay for the active Militia were fixed in September last year on the outbreak of war the rates were based on those then existing in the British Army. Since then the rates in the British Army have been increased by 6d. per day for all other ranks, and it is considered that the active Militia in this Colony should also have 6d. per day added to their scale of pay.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Motion put, and agreed to.

COMPASSIONATE GRATUITY.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : I beg to move :—

THAT, with reference to Governor's Message No. 1 dated 31st October, 1940, this Council approves of the payment of a compassionate gratuity of \$374.40 to the widow of the late Benjamin Campbell, formerly a captain of a sea-going punt of the Public Works Department.

The deceased had served the Department for 38 years and the amount which it is proposed should be paid to his widow is the equivalent of one year's pay which he was drawing prior to his death.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Motion put, and agreed to.

MAINTENANCE (CIVIL) ENGINEER FOR
T. & H. D.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : I beg to move :—

THAT, with reference to Governor's Message No. 3 dated 18th November, 1940, this Council approves of the appointment of a Maintenance (Civil) Engineer to the staff of the Transport and Harbours Department at a salary on the scale \$2,400 x \$120—\$2,880.

Since the retirement of Mr. MacDougall, the General Manager, who was also a Civil Engineer, the Transport Department has had no Civil Engineer attached to it, and the Board of Commissioners considers it essential that there should be a Civil Engineer on the staff. At one time when Mr. MacDougall took over the management of the Department a Civil Engineer was appointed on a 3-year contract, but at the expiration of that period his contract was not renewed because it was then felt that it was possible for Mr. MacDougall to carry out the duties of a Civil Engineer along with his duties as General Manager. There is no Civil Engineer now, and it is essential that one should be appointed. The salary proposed is from £500 to £600, but I think it is improbable that an appointment will be made at a salary any lower than the maximum of £600.

MR. DE AGUIAR : I think it will be generally agreed that the appointment of such an officer is wholly desirable, but I would have liked to have had some announcement from Government this morning as regards the higher post of General Manager. Those of us who recall the appointment of Mr. MacDougall as General Manager will remember that when that officer was appointed to the post it was pointed out that one of the reasons for his appointment was his qualifications as an engineer, and I believe that his appointment followed immediately on the recommendation that was contained in the report of Mr. Cooper. It seems to me now that Government intends to change that policy, that is, that the General Manager should also be a Civil Engineer, and it is now sought in this motion to have two separate officers in the respective posts. I am particularly anxious

to have an answer to this question because I have in mind that the post of General Manager of the Department carries a salary of £1,000 per annum. If Government is going to appoint a civil engineer at a salary of £500 to £600 and in addition to appoint a General Manager at the present scale of salary there can be no doubt about it that the expenditure of the Department will be increased. I had hoped that Government would have announced its future policy with regard to the post of General Manager. We have Government propounding the policy on one occasion that the General Manager must be a civil engineer—and I believe Government had very good reason for adopting that policy—and then a few years later that policy is changed and we are going to have a Civil Engineer and a General Manager. I may mention incidentally that for the purpose of filling the gap that arose with the appointment of an engineer to the post of General Manager an additional post was created, and if I know the facts correctly I think that post still exists. That officer is still in the service, and it seems to me that we are creating too many posts. The appointment of a Civil Engineer is desirable, but I think Government should have taken the opportunity to carry out what was originally planned.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: The hon. Member rather anticipated the point I had intended to make. It seems to me that the question is first of all whether Mr. MacDougall having taken on the onerous duties of two posts, was adequately compensated. Of course that is a matter entirely for that gentleman. Now Government proposes to create two posts which may run on perpetually, although it is stated that the Civil Engineer's contract is to be for three years. The proposal to appoint a General Manager should have been put forward before the motion for the appointment of a Civil Engineer was introduced. One is driven to the conclusion that it is perhaps not possible to obtain a General Manager with civil engineering qualifications. If that is so then perhaps there is some argument in favour of the post it is proposed to create. Perhaps the Colonial Secretary might be in a position to tell the Council whether it is possible to obtain a General Manager with qualifications as a civil engineer.

Mr. JACOB: I am not against this appointment. I think adequate and proper supervision is necessary if we are going to safeguard the funds of the Department and the funds of the Colony. I notice on page 79 of the Estimates that the net deficiency to be voted in respect of this Department is \$253,451. That means that the Department will be run at a loss in 1941 to the extent of \$253,451. The approximate loss in 1940 is \$157,218, while the actual loss in 1939 was \$294,163.

I should like to be told whether the officer's duty will be to see that when plans and specifications are prepared the actual work is carried out in accordance with those plans and specifications, and whether he will have the right to report to the Head of the Department on the activities of other officers who may be doing irregular things. I want to make my position perfectly clear. It is within the knowledge of Government that large works which have been carried out and are being carried out now are not being done in accordance with the plans and specifications, and no one seems to be able to report what is going on. A most unsatisfactory state of affairs has arisen and is going on in the Public Works Department. It is not necessary for me to refer to that at the moment.

In view of the fact that the Transport Department is run at a huge loss year after year, and it is expected to add to the expenditure which will increase the loss, I think all steps should be taken, every means should be adopted to see that the moneys that are spent are properly spent, and that the taxpayers get results from the expenditure. I am not saying that in the Transport Department that is not safeguarded, but I would like it to be clearly stated that this officer will have the right not only to make plans and specifications but to see that the works are carried out in accordance with those plans and specifications, and that the money spent is judiciously spent. When plans are made it is sometimes necessary to revise them, and I have in mind instances where revision of plans has been made, but instead of a saving being effected the entire sum is spent. I know of particular cases of that kind. I am definite about my statements, and I am going to make one or two definite statements later on. My object in speaking now is to

ask that caution be exercised, and that this officer should not hesitate to report irregularities to the proper quarter whether it affects the Head of the Department or not. I do not know whether that is taking it too far, but I suggest that for the earnest consideration of Government.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) asked whether it has been decided who is going to fill the post of General Manager. First of all a recommendation will be sent forward by the Board of Commissioners. Mr. MacDougall was on 5 or 6 months' leave and it was decided that the present acting officer should be appointed to act, and on the expiration of Mr. MacDougall's leave the Board will make a recommendation. Mr. MacDougall's leave expired quite recently, and although we have not had a meeting, I can safely say that the Board proposes to recommend that the acting officer be confirmed in the post. The hon. Member then asked whether it was not possible to combine the duties of Civil Engineer with those of General Manager. Whether it is possible to get such an officer or not I do not know, and the Board does not know. I should think it is very unlikely that one could be got at the present time. Government was very fortunate in having on the staff of the Department an officer who was a civil engineer and who was carrying on the duties of General Manager, but although that officer was in the Department in 1932 Mr. Cooper, who was then on a visit to the Colony, in spite of Mr. MacDougall's presence, recommended that the two offices should not be combined, and that a Civil Engineer should be appointed. A Civil Engineer was appointed on a 3-year contract which was not renewed because Government had to effect drastic economy, and it was possible to get Mr. MacDougall to perform the duties of Civil Engineer as well. It is impossible to do that now.

In 1923, when the railway was taken over by Government, there were on the staff two qualified civil engineers and five qualified mechanical engineers. Since then the Board is responsible for the Harbours Branch of the Department and the road services, and I would like to compare the present staff with the staff in those days. The two civil engineers I referred to were

in addition to the General Manager. We now have no Civil Engineer but four Mechanical Engineers with the increased duties to which I have just referred. The Board is convinced that it is essential to make this appointment. If the present acting officer is confirmed in his post I hope, and I have every reason to believe, it will be possible to put before the Board of Commissioners a slight re-arrangement in the staff of the branch from which the present acting General Manager has come. I am not suggesting that he should combine the duties of Mechanical Engineer with those of General Manager, but it may be possible to make a re-adjustment in his branch which would effect a small saving. I do not promise any large saving, but we do hope to save £200 or £300, if possible, when these appointments are made. The duties of the Maintenance Engineer will be to prepare plans and specifications for the Harbours department and also for the Railway Department, and examine the line. It is most important that regular examination of the line should be made. If there was an accident and Government had to confess that it had not on the staff a qualified civil engineer it would be very awkward for Government.

Motion put, and agreed to.

ESTIMATES, 1941.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I beg to move:—

THAT, this Council approves the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from revenue during the year ending 31st December, 1941, which have been laid on the table.

THE PRESIDENT (after a long pause): As no Member wishes to speak on the motion the Council will go into Committee to consider the estimates head by head.

INCOME TAX INCREASE ABANDONED.

Mr. McDALD (Colonial Treasurer): Sir,—I think that it will assist the Council if, at this stage, I intimate that I am authorised to announce a change in Government's proposals in regard to increased taxation as set forth by the Honourable Colonial Secretary in his Budget Statement.

It had been proposed to obtain additional revenue to the extent of \$300,000 by imposing a surtax of .50 per cent. on existing personal income tax rates accompanied by an increase in the rate on companies from 15 per cent. to 20 per cent., and on life insurance companies from 5 per cent. to 6 per cent. and it had also been proposed to postpone the introduction of an Excess Profits Tax, for which provision had been made in the budget for the current year.

The matter has since been reconsidered by the Government and it has been decided that an Excess Profits Tax should be introduced at once as originally contemplated. It has also been decided to confine the increase in the income tax to the advance in the company rate from 15 per cent. to 20 per cent. The proposal to impose a surtax of 50 per cent. on personal rates and to advance the life insurance company rate from 5 per cent. to 6 per cent. will be abandoned for the present. It is anticipated that these new proposals will yield not less than and perhaps considerably more than \$300,000.

It is not necessary for me to go into details at the moment. I should like to say, however, that the new proposals are obviously considerably less burdensome in their effect on the individual taxpayer than the original proposals. The new company rate of income tax would be slightly less than one half the current rate of tax in the United Kingdom and will consequently, in so far as companies liable to tax both in the United Kingdom and this Colony are concerned, mean no increase in taxation whatsoever, having regard to the provisions for relief from double taxation; while, as regards local companies, as the company tax is only a means of collecting tax from individuals at the source, the 20 per cent. rate will apply only to profits permanently retained and not distributed in dividends. The individual taxpayer would obtain relief from the company tax deducted from his dividends by means of the provisions for "set-off."

As regards the Excess Profits Tax a draft Bill has already been prepared and will be introduced as soon as certain amendments suggested by the Board of Inland Revenue in the United Kingdom

have been considered. The rate of the tax will be 60 per cent. of the excess profits earned over standard profits which, generally speaking, will be the average profit of the best two of the three years preceding the War. Those are briefly the new proposals in the budget.

The Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the estimates.

LEGISLATURE.

Mr. JACOB: I notice from an Order of the King in Council amending the British Guiana (Constitution) Amendment Order in Council of 1928, that an Order was passed at the Court at Buckingham Palace on the 13th day of August, 1935, amending certain Articles of the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council. I wish to make particular reference to Article 25 which states among other things that the property qualification of a voter should be \$350 and not \$500. This amendment came into force in August, 1935, but up to the present time the public has not been made aware of it. As a matter of fact when I say that the public was not made aware of it I mean that it was not printed and circulated in such a manner as to make the public cognizant of the amendment. On the contrary, Form 1 which is used by a person claiming to be registered as a voter, states at the back among other qualifications :—

(iii) Ownership, during the six months previous to registration, of a house or land, or land with a house or other erections thereon, of the value of not less than five hundred dollars ;

For some reason or another since 1935 the public was not aware of the fact that a person who owns a house or land worth \$350 is eligible to be registered as a voter. I consider that very unsatisfactory, especially in view of the fact that the number of voters in this Colony is just a little over 9,000, slightly over 2 per cent. of the population, and attempts have been made by certain persons from time to time to get the number increased. While this is so an incorrect form has been allowed to remain in circulation up to the present time, with the result that large numbers of persons have been prevented from being registered as voters. I do not know whose fault it is; perhaps it is nobody's fault, but I think steps should be taken as soon as possible

to let it be known to the public that that qualification has been reduced. There were other amendments, changes which would have resulted, in my opinion, in thousands of people being placed on the voters' list, and it is desirable that the voters' list should be strengthened in order that this Council should be properly constituted. It has been recommended by the Royal Commission that we should work toward the end of adult suffrage, that is, that every male and female above the age of 21, whether he or she has an income of £1,000, £100, or a dollar, should have a vote. I think Government should be at pains to see that all eligible persons are given every facility to be registered as voters.

Mr. WALCOTT: It seems to me that while Government has been negligent it has taken the hon. Member for North Western District over four years to discover the omission. There is, therefore some excuse for Government.

THE CHAIRMAN: Has the hon. Member only just discovered it?

Mr. WALCOTT: I should think that had he known about it he would have mentioned it before.

Mr. JACOB: As I said before, this Council has no responsibility and the individual Members have none. In my own case I may say that I was not a Member of this Council when the amendment was passed, therefore I can plead ignorance, but my hon. friend was a Member of the Council then and I do not know what can be his plea.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I know that the hon. Member would like his remark to be circulated throughout the Colony that hon. Members of this Council have no responsibility, but I do not think hon. Members will allow such a remark to go unchallenged any more than to remain in their seats and allow the hon. Member to make the astounding statement that this Council is not properly constituted.

Mr. JACOB: I beg to confirm that.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: If the hon. Member is satisfied that the Council is not properly constituted he has a remedy under

the Constitution Ordinance, and if he failed to take the necessary steps to see that the Council was properly constituted the hon. Member has failed in his individual responsibility. I am not here to challenge what he said about the amendment that was made with regard to the qualification of voters. He may be right or he may be wrong. I am not in a position either to confirm or deny what he has said, but like the hon. Nominated Member I think it is surprising that he did not do his duty by bringing the matter to the notice of Government in a different way. I have just risen to let the hon. Member know that so far as I am concerned I appreciate my responsibility not only to the people I have the honour to represent but also to His Majesty's Government, and so long as I am in my seat I shall always endeavour to carry out that responsibility to the best of my ability.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I would like to dissociate myself entirely from the remark of the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) that because he was not a member of this Council at that particular date he was not concerned with what transpired here. I think it is my duty as a citizen to know what transpires here even if I did not occupy a seat in this Council.

Dr. SINGH: I think the hon. Member for North Western District should be congratulated on the keen interest he has shown in discovering the omission and bringing it to the notice of the Council.

Mr. GONSALVES: I cannot see any reason why Members should get panicky over the remarks of the hon. Member for North Western District. He says that nobody knows of the change in the law but I think he ought to know by now, having had some knowledge of the law, that everyone is presumed to know the law, and if this amendment was passed in public everyone should know that the law is there. As Commissioner of Oaths authorised to swear voters on their qualifications he must have known that it was his duty to inform those persons who desired to be registered as voters that the property qualification had been reduced. Other Members of the Council seem to take the hon. Member seriously, but I do not, I think

he has only raised the question with a view to hearing something from the hon. Colonial Secretary. I am not going to answer for Government. It seems to me that the hon. Member is making a mountain out of a molehill because, if the law says that the value of property shall be \$350 that is the qualification required. The form he has referred to is a printed form and is only a guide as to what is required. It might have been better, perhaps, if in issuing those forms the amount of the property qualification was changed, but it does not mean that that is what a person is declaring to. The real qualification is stated in the declaration itself.

Mr. JACOB: I would like to explain. I took the opportunity—I would not say trouble—to ask the Registering Officer for Georgetown a month or so ago whether he was aware of this amendment, and whether it was a fact that the qualification had been reduced from \$500 to \$350, and he expressed surprise and told me he did not know. I think he then communicated with the Colonial Secretary's Office. I then referred him to the Order in Council and I think he agreed that the qualification had been reduced. I want the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) to realize that these things must be stated definitely. It is a fact. He has a habit of trying to confuse things, but I want him to realize that when facts are facts they must be stated as facts, and he must not try to confuse them. If anyone reads his speech he might think the hon. Member is correct and I am incorrect. The Registering Officers do not know of the change—at least one of them told me definitely he did not know.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did any of the candidates know?

Mr. JACOB: I do not know; there were no candidates recently. (Laughter). The Order in Council was passed at the Court at Buckingham Palace in August, 1935, and I remember distinctly I was in the North West District then. If the Order was passed in August, 1935, it did not arrive in the Colony until about the end of the year, therefore if one is engaged on something else, particularly in my own case (laughter) he is likely to forget about it. While I take a keen interest in these things, absence from the seat of Govern-

ment is a reasonable excuse. I am not pleading that I am not to blame. A certain amount of blame I should take, but my point is that the officers of Government who receive these papers should see that they are printed, and the Registering Officers should have known about it and informed the public. There was negligence on the part of someone; maybe, it is this Legislature. I do not know. When the Royal Commission was here I made a specific submission that the property qualification was \$500, which I think was wrong, but nobody corrected it. I do not know whose fault it is but I merely brought the matter up here in order that it should be corrected.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I would like to point out that there has been an election since 1935, and I was a candidate since then. I am rather surprised to hear that the hon. Member was so disinterested in the issue of that election that I did not receive his support in this matter.

Mr. WALCOTT: The hon. Member for North Western District said he was not a Member of this Council at the time, but if the amendment was not published until the end of 1935 then he was a Member of the Council at that time.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: In 1935 I was also engaged elsewhere (laughter), and this is the first time this subject has been brought to my notice. I am afraid I cannot give the hon. Member an answer now.

THE CHAIRMAN: I do not quite know what the hon. Member wants done. If it is that the registration papers should be corrected that will be done.

Mr. JACOB: One experiences great difficulty in getting those forms, and if more were printed after 1935 the amendment should have been made. If a large quantity has been circulated throughout the Colony and cannot be withdrawn I think something should be printed so as to let everybody know of the amendment. Steps should either be taken to withdraw those forms or an amendment should be inserted in each form.

THE CHAIRMAN: Government will see what is the position with regard to

those forms and whether a correction is necessary. It does surprise me that Elected Members of the Council, who are concerned with these matters, should not have been aware of the change as the hon. Member suggests.

Item 6—Subscription to the Empire Parliamentary Association, £480.

Mr. JACOB: I think this is a very deserving contribution but I am of opinion that the debates of the various Legislatures affiliated to this Association should be obtained and circulated.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you mean the Hansard?

Mr. JACOB: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: We would have to contribute more than £100.

Mr. JACOB: This Colony should send a sufficient number of copies to the Association so that they might be bound and circulated among the twelve Legislatures connected with the Association which would send us the debates of the other Legislatures in order that we might be kept informed of what is going on in the various Legislatures.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you suggest that the twelve Legislatures would send their debates to us?

Mr. JACOB: Yes, sir, I suggest that, through the Association.

THE CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. Member promises to read them. (Laughter).

Mr. JACOB: Yes, sir. Perhaps Your Excellency is not aware that I have some of those debates and I have been reading them. I have tried to get the debates of the Jamaica Legislature because I know of certain things that are going on in Jamaica which I think should go on here.

THE CHAIRMAN: What is the hon. Member suggesting that this Colony should do?

Mr. JACOB: This Colony should print additional copies of the debates and send them to the Association for distribution to the other Legislatures.

THE CHAIRMAN: That would not come within the purview of the Empire Parliamentary Association.

Mr. JACOB: I am suggesting that we should ask the Association to request the various Legislatures to send bound copies of their debates for the purpose of an exchange of debates among the various Colonies.

THE CHAIRMAN: We would have to pay a very much larger subscription. I think I probably know the office of the Empire Parliamentary Association better than any Member of this Council. I know their procedure and I should not be prepared to make that suggestion to them, except as a suggestion coming from the members of the Association in this Colony. I am not prepared to put it forward as the suggestion of an individual member. The hon. Member must be aware that copies of the debates are sent to the Association from all the Legislatures that are affiliated to the Association, and it rests entirely with the Association itself to select from those debates what matters it considers are of sufficient general importance to include in its journal. We have nothing at all to do with that selection. To make the Association act as a general exchange of Hansard from all the Legislatures is a burden which I am almost sure it would not undertake.

Mr. JACOB: I accept what Your Excellency has said but I would like to point out further that I think and I hope that within my time there will be a federation of British Guiana and the West Indies, and I think we should be aware of what is going on in the West Indies as a preliminary to that federation which I think would be a very good thing. As a preliminary to that I suggest that those who are interested—and I hope the majority of the Elected Members at least are interested in this aspect of the work of the various Legislatures—would be keen on seeing that those debates are circulated, and those who have time will read those debates. If the local Association is not prepared to recommend it and Your Excellency would be willing to send forward my recommendation—

THE CHAIRMAN: I will not send forward an individual recommendation to the Association,

Mr. JACOB : I suggest that the local Association should consider it.

THE CHAIRMAN : That is entirely a matter for the Association.

Mr. JACOB : Unless it is put to the Association and considered—

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. Member has a perfect right as a member to put it to the Association.

AGRICULTURE.

Dr. SINGH : I have been in sympathy with this Department for the past 10 years. I felt that the Department should be given an opportunity to further re-organize itself in order to overcome the strictures that had been levelled at it from time to time in this Council. I regret, however, to say that in spite of the increased expenditure by the Department from year to year it has not made local agriculture efficient. The community feels that this Department is a burden and is asking for some control of its expenditure. It is true that it is said that the people of this Colony should grow more food but they have been planting cassava, plantains and other provisions without the help of the Department of Agriculture. The Agricultural Superintendents might assist in laying out plans, but when it comes to showing the people how to plant rice and other produce I think they have been doing that long before. I think other Members will support me when I say that the expenditure of this Department is very heavy, especially at the present time when this great war is on, and when economy is needed. I do hope other Members will support me.

Mr. HUMPHRYS : If the hon. Member could point out to the Council ways in which the expenditure of the Department might be cut down I can assure him he would obtain my hearty support, but he has not pointed out a single item which might be reduced. If he could do so he would receive my support because I am going to urge Government not to incur any increased expenditure that could possibly be avoided. At the proper time I shall give my reasons, of which I think Government is well aware. I urge on the hon. Member to say what items he thinks can be deleted or reduced.

Mr. JACOB : I intend to confine my remarks on this Department under two heads. I will deal with coffee, cattle, ground provisions and coconuts together, and I will leave rice until a later stage. (Laughter). As regards coffee the exports for this year up to the end of October were 10,404 lbs. as against 22,110 lbs. in 1939. This industry at one time brought into the country roughly \$100,000 from other parts of the Empire or the world, but all it has brought in for the ten months ending in October is \$791. Various recommendations have been made with regard to help that should be given to this industry so that at some time coffee should be considered one of the agricultural products bringing money into the Colony, but up to the present I do not think anything really practical has been done. The result is that this industry can be considered as practically gone. It is no use stressing the point. The only point I wish to make is that the coffee industry can be considered as practically diminished.

As regards cattle there is much scope for the development of that industry, but I notice that it is also declining. The exports of cattle for the 10 months of this year were 374 head valued \$6,645, as compared with 911 head in 1939 valued \$11,004. Here we have an industry which has been going down gradually and consistently during the last 10 or 12 years. Steps should be taken to improve that industry and I must say that certain steps have been taken which I hope will be continued, and that the industry will be put on a far better footing sooner or later.

With regard to ground provisions I do hope that the experiment that is being carried on will be a success. I am not going to say anything more about it. I have already expressed grave doubts at the last session of the Council, but I wish and earnestly hope that it will be a success, and that something better will be established later on. I say again that I take the view that the whole scheme will be a hopeless failure, but I wish it success.

I will now deal with coconuts, copra and oil. Never in the history of this Colony have we been placed in the position we were in during the last two or three months. The exports of copra are being controlled in a manner which I think is fairly satis-

factory to Government, but very unsatisfactory to those concerned. The coconut industry has been helped all these years, but let me use the phrase I have always used here in regard to the rice industry—the coconut industry has been helped down, not up. The comparisons I am going to make will show how this help has resulted in the industry going down and causing general dissatisfaction throughout the Colony. Instead of conserving oil for the use of the Colony, instead of taking steps to see that the needs of the Colony are supplied first, what has happened? Although there was a drought the Copra Board thought it best to export all available supplies of copra, oil and coconuts, with the result that there has been a huge shortage, and this Colony has had to import oil and copra from other Colonies in the West Indies.

In the case of coffee and cattle we did not export what we did not have in stock in the Colony, but in regard to copra, oil and coconuts I maintain and wish to emphasize that the Board blundered so very badly that it exported what it did not have. In the case of copra 1,027 tons were exported during the 10 months of this year as against 507 tons in 1939, double the quantity. In the case of coconuts 287,483 were exported up to the end of October this year as compared with 253,252 in 1939. The exports of oil up to October this year amounted to 14,980 gallons valued \$7,105, as against 2,199 gallons valued \$791 in 1939.

These figures show a lack of appreciation of the position in the Colony and a general lack of foresight on the part of those connected with the Board. I am not concerned who the members of the Board are, but when the general community is faced with starvation so far as oil is concerned it is time that something should be said, and said very strongly, about its management. The result is general dissatisfaction, and while the figures might show that the coconut industry is progressing, a severe setback has already occurred. I do wish to urge on the members of the Board that more energy be displayed and a little more time be given to these matters which should be viewed from all aspects. They should not allow one or two persons to have their own way. If it is considered satisfactory to export all the copra, a

large number of coconuts and all the oil available and then import in order to meet local requirements I can only say that I feel very disappointed that such a state of affairs should have occurred, and I hope it will not occur again. The coconut industry is going to suffer a severe setback. I have drawn Government's attention to those four industries and I do not know whether any satisfactory explanation can be given or any assurance that it will not occur again. I will resume my seat and later on I shall say something about the rice industry.

MR. SEAFORD: As one of the unfortunate members of this unfortunate Board I feel I should say something, although I am probably not on the Board to represent the various industries referred to by the hon. Member. To deal first of all with the coffee industry I can assure the hon. Member that the matter was considered by the Board of Agriculture—

MR. JACOB: I did not refer to the Board of Agriculture; I referred particularly to the Copra Board, but I would be pleased to hear what the hon. Member has to say about agriculture generally as a member of the Board of Agriculture

MR. SEAFORD: The matter of coffee came up before the Board of Agriculture and I thought the hon. Member was referring to that. The peculiar thing about coffee and several other products such as black-eye peas is that we find that the cost of production here is very much higher than in any other place, and it is quite impossible for us to export things like those in competition with the outside markets. It might interest hon. Members to hear that I personally brought some coffee here from Trinidad which competes with our best coffee and is rather better, I think, and although the duty was 12 cents per lb. I was able to bring it here at a cheaper rate than I could buy local coffee. It is what is called creole coffee.

As regards cattle I am glad to hear the hon. Member say he was pleased to see Government had taken steps to improve the breed. I do not think anyone would gainsay the fact that the breed of milch cattle in the Colony has considerably improved within the last six years, and it is improving every day. I think great credit

is due to the Veterinary Surgeon for the great interest he has taken, and to the improvement made by him and the Department of Agriculture. Government voted a sum of money for experimental work with cattle which I hope may be of help to the Colony generally. Our great bugbear here is a lack of drainage. We are up against something that they have not got in the West Indian islands, and when we realize what drainage costs per acre we can appreciate that it is bound to put up the cost of everything. It is a great hindrance to us, and although Government has taken steps to improve our drainage as best it can the cost is bound to be great and there will always be a rope around our necks.

Dealing with coconuts I am sorry the hon. Member did not give us the months. At the beginning of the year we know that exports were made, but I do not think even the growers themselves realized what the effect of the drought would be on the coconuts and the industry itself. I notice that a short time ago exports of coconuts were made even before the effects of the drought were realized. The amount of coconuts exported for the whole year was 287,000 nuts, which would not produce more than 30 tons of copra.

Mr. JACOB : The figures are so small that I cannot see the force of the hon. Member's argument at all.

Mr. SEAFORD : I maintain that the quantity exported was so very small that it really could not affect the situation at all.

Mr. JACOB : I cannot allow a statement like that to go unchallenged. It is most incorrect to say that it would not affect the situation.

THE CHAIRMAN : Has the hon. Member got the prices?

Mr. JACOB : I am not concerned about prices ; I am concerned about the inconvenience caused the public.

THE CHAIRMAN : It is no use talking about markets and exports except you consider prices.

Mr. JACOB : Is it proper for this

Colony to import copra and oil from St. Lucia ?

THE CHAIRMAN : It is not at all satisfactory to have a severe drought. (Laughter).

Mr. SEAFORD : It was not realized what the effects of the drought would be. We know that if a market is once lost it is almost impossible to regain it. In some businesses articles are bought from competitors at increased prices in order to retain their customers. I would like the hon. Member to name the months in which those exports were made. It is rather unfortunate that we should in this Council try to blame both the Board of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture or the Government for a situation over which they had absolutely no control, and that is the drought.

Mr. JACOB : I have not blamed the Department of Agriculture at all in regard to the exports of coconuts ; I blame the Copra Board. It should not have exported all the coconuts and copra knowing fully well that a drought was on and that they had to safeguard supplies for use in the Colony. If it is the intention of the Board to export oil without taking into account future supplies then all I can say is God help us from that Board and people of that type. In my own home we could not get oil and we had to send to a shop and buy half a pint at a time for six cents. The price was 11 cents per pint and not 12 cents, but we have no half-cent coins here. We had to send a dozen times in order to get 6 pints of oil. That happened throughout the Colony. The shopkeepers had to buy oil at 2/- or 3/- per gallon above the fixed price, and while they will not admit it they had to re-sell it at an increased price. A man who wants a certain article will do anything to get it, and would even break the law. Is that not within the knowledge of Government ? I am concerned about the inconvenience caused the public, and I think there is inconvenience at the present time with regard to oil. This Government is not properly informed. Whether Government takes steps to get proper information I do not know, but I make the definite statement that Government is not properly informed on many things which are happening in the Colony.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Fortunately or unfortunately I happen to be a member of the Board of Agriculture and also a member of the Copra Board which is constituted by persons who are interested in the industry itself and have made investments in the coconut industry. The hon. Member has selected figures for 1940 and 1939, the year before the drought and the year of the drought. I do not know if he can find a more suitable year to make comparisons of figures, but even with those years he has not proved his case. His complaint is that the Board exported copra. He has not mentioned the month, but I think when the Board exported copra there was a surplus stock in the Colony. No one could have anticipated the effect of the drought.

Mr. JACOB: I realize that the Board could not anticipate anything.

THE CHAIRMAN: They ought to have foreseen the drought!

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: The members of the Board cannot foresee the weather as well as the hon. Member for North Western District. He might give us a forecast of the weather for next year. The hon. Member admitted that there was a scarcity of oil and coconut products and yet charged Government with indiscretion in importing copra and oil from another Colony.

Mr. JACOB: I charged the Board with lack of foresight in exporting all it had. It afterwards had to import. Please do not confuse the point.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS The Board exported because it could not foresee the drought. For the information of the hon. Member I may say that since the importation of oil into the Colony it has been sold to the consumer at the rate fixed by Government. For the hon. Member's information also I may say that there was a slight margin of profit between the import price and the price to the consumer. Similarly, in the case of copra it was imported into the Colony and supplied to the mills which manufacture deodorised oil at the same price at which the coconut producers (and I am one of them) told Government it could not pay them to sell it. May I ask the hon. Member if that

was not good business that the Board did? I challenge the hon. Member to prove that there is any scarcity of oil now in the Colony. I think he can get all the oil he wants from any retail shop or from the mills. Six hundred drums of oil recently arrived in the Colony and there is still much oil to be had. The Copra Board is constituted by persons interested in the industry who can well take care of themselves. I do not think they need any assistance or advice from the hon. Member for North Western District as to how to carry on their business.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I had no desire to join in this debate at this stage; especially as we have been promised a further contribution by the hon. Member for North Western District, but I can hardly allow some of the statements he has made to go unchallenged. I would like first of all to state that I am not in the same unfortunate position as the hon. Member for Western Berbice. I happen not to be a member of the Copra Board, and perhaps if I err I would be erring along the lines of the hon. Member himself. But I hardly think I would err as badly as he has done because I think the hon. Member will give me credit for knowing something about buying and selling of oil which is part of my business, and I should be able to express an opinion as to the reason for a shortage or a glut in the market in respect of any commodity in which my firm is interested. It is all very well and fine to be wise after an event, and most of us can always point out any errors that might have been made here and there when one grasps at details to attack a policy. Any Member who attempts to do that starts to err from the very beginning.

I could not remain in my seat and allow the hon. Member to make the remarks he did about the Board which, in my opinion, is doing its best in spite of the very difficult times it has to labour under. I do not know whether it is the hon. Member's view that this Colony should not produce coconuts, rice or black-eye peas for export. In fact I have heard him over and over again in this Council championing the cause of those industries and making comparisons of export figures. To-day he tells us that we should not export. I do not know whether he thinks that Government should have stepped in when

the Board was making those shipments of copra and prohibited the export. I submit that he was quite wise in not making such a suggestion. I must assume that when the Board made the shipments of coconuts and copra it was in possession of more facts than the hon. Member has given the Council to-day. The Board must have been satisfied, and this Government must have been satisfied that the facts were sufficiently sound to permit the export of coconuts and copra. The hon. Member must not lose sight of the fact that the figures he quoted for 1940 relate to exports under war conditions. I happen to know that it is the desire of Government to retain as much as possible for the consumption of the inhabitants of the Colony, and if the Board and the Government permitted those exports the facts must have been against the arguments of the hon. Member.

There is no doubt that there was a temporary shortage of oil; everybody knows that, but I submit respectfully that the blame should not be placed at the doors of the Copra Board. I will advise the hon. Member to try to make some enquiries as to where the blame should be laid. I am not here this morning to assist him in that direction, but I will advise him to make enquiries before he attaches the blame to the Board. I want to remind him that I am not a member of the Board. The opinion I am giving the Council to-day is the result of my own experience as a commercial man and one who is interested directly and indirectly in oil.

There was one remark made by the hon. Member which surprised me. In fact it pained me greatly to hear from the hon. Member that he broke the law and paid a higher price for oil than that fixed by Government. One would have expected him, an honest individual responsible to this Government and to the community, to have brought such information to the notice of the Government, especially in these times when we know—and I do not know that the hon. Member is not aware of it—that it is the desire of Government to keep down commodity prices at a level within the reach of the buying public. Instead of that we find the hon. Member encouraging—I can hardly use any other word—profiteering by paying a higher price just to get a point of oil, with-

out passing on the information to the proper authority so that action might be taken to protect the unfortunate individuals whom the hon. Member himself has the honour to represent. I was pained and shocked to hear that statement by the hon. Member. (Laughter).

Mr. JACOB: Let me correct the hon. Member right away. Whatever I have stated here I never went so far as to say that my family broke the law. I stated clearly that we had to buy oil in half pint lots, paying the extra price for buying in halves. The price was 11 cents per pint, and buying in half pints we had to pay an extra half-cent, and as there is no half-cent coin in the Colony we had to pay 6 cents for a half pint. By paying the additional price we got what we wanted, and Government permits one to buy in half pints. Even if I did exceed the margin it does not matter a row of pins to me; my conscience is clear. The clock has struck, and when we resume after lunch I shall have something more to say about it.

The Committee adjourned for the luncheon recess until 2 p.m.

2 p.m.

Mr. LEE attended.

Mr. JACOB: When the Committee adjourned—

Mr. DE AGUILAR: May I remind the hon. Member that I was on my feet. I do not know whether he wants to carry on with another speech. He has interrupted me before and, perhaps, I may give him an opportunity to interrupt me again.

Mr. JACOB: I was actually on my feet when the adjournment was taken.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the hon. Member wishes to continue he may do so.

Mr. JACOB: When the Committee adjourned I was replying to certain incorrect conclusions arrived at by the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar).

Mr. DE AGUILAR: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but I want to afford him an opportunity of correcting me because I have quite a lot of incorrect

information to furnish this Council. If he waits until I have done so he would have an opportunity to reply. I mention that so as to save the time of the Council. I do not know after hearing that if he wishes still to continue.

Mr. JACOB : I am not saying that my hon. friend deliberately tried to twist what I stated, but I made it specifically clear that there was such a shortage of oil in the Colony that consumers could not get more than a half-pint from certain retailers of oil and to get a week's supply certain persons had to purchase a half-pint at a time thereby having to pay the difference in price consequent on there being no half-cent coin in circulation in the Colony.

THE CHAIRMAN : A difference of one cent !

Mr. JACOB : Yes ; the price was eleven cents per pint and one had to pay six cents for a half-pint. My family had that practical experience, and I give that to my hon. friend to think about. I went on further to say that shopkeepers were deliberately infringing the law, because in order to please customers they had to enter into private arrangement with sellers of oil for a drum at their own price and they were able to get the increased cost from the consumers. It is not my business to go around as a private detective in the matter. On the few occasions that I have acted as a private detective, I regret to say, I obtained no encouragement from Government to continue. I propose to make certain definite statements here and leave them to this Council to accept or treat otherwise. I may be wrong and do not have a proper conception of my duty as an Elected Member of this Council, but I think the time has arrived for me to speak plainly and clearly to certain Elected Members of this Council so as to try and correct their view-point. My hon. friend is in the habit of trying to confuse things in order to make out to the public that I am wrong, and I do ask him not to attempt to do that in the future. I ask him as a special favour to put things fairly and squarely if not the business of this Council would be prolonged. I said nothing this morning to show that I broke the law or as he put it—I aided in breaking the law. That may be so in so far as the opinion of the hon. Member is concerned,

I shall listen very carefully to what he has to say, and if the opportunity presents itself for me to reply I will do so.

As regards the remarks of the hon. Member for Western Berbice (Mr. Peer Bacchus) who, I am sorry, is not here, he made two definite statements—that there is no shortage of oil at the present time, and that customers can get all they want. I think I am right in saying that he said there is a surplus. He made the further statement that the Copra Board in importing oil and copra for local consumption made a profit. I am not in a position to challenge the latter statement as I have not had any information, but I would like to enquire whether import duty had been paid on that oil and copra and whether the overhead charges were added so as to arrive at a proper profit margin. He made the definite statement that somebody was making profit, and I would like that clarified. As regards the first statement that there is an adequate supply of oil in the Colony, I desire to say that is not correct from the information I have received. During the adjournment I took the opportunity to ring up Messrs. Wieting and Richter, Ltd., and speak to Mr. Chapuan who looks after the sale and distribution of edible oil for that firm. He told me over the telephone that on the 12th November he had instructions which were circulated to all the branches of the firm that customers were only to get two pints of oil at a time, and on the 20th of the same month the quantity was reduced to one pint because they feared there would be a shortage. Up to to-day they are not selling more than one pint at a time to customers. That is the information I got through the telephone from a responsible member of the staff of Messrs. Wieting and Richter, Ltd. I wish my hon. friend had been in his seat to contradict that information and confirm the statement that he had made. I go further and say that I was told during the adjournment, that on Saturday morning when a customer went to one of the branches of Messrs. Wieting and Richter, Ltd., and asked for oil he was told that there was no oil available. Whether the statement is correct or not that there is an adequate supply of oil I do not know, and perhaps that member of the Copra Board knows better, but I do protest against Elected Members getting

up here and talking things of which they know very little or nothing. The hon. Member went on to say—I am sorry I have to refer to this—that the Copra Board is better off without me on it.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have no recollection of the hon. Member saying that.

MR. JACOB: I think, he said they did not want my advice on the Copra Board.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think, he said they did not need your advice.

MR. JACOB: I make that statement subject to correction. I have never tried to get on the Copra Board. I speak very little about the coconut and copra industry in this Council because I am not properly informed about it. (Hear! Hear!!) But I have been properly informed recently about the oil situation, and I have attempted to compare the exports with the imports with respect to that commodity. It should not be imported and I lay the blame for that on the Copra Board and no one else. If my hon. friend, the Member for Western Berbice, thought my criticism was too harsh, that is a matter for him, but he must take some of the responsibility for the mess in which this Colony has been for some time and is at the present time in respect of its supply of edible oil. If it is considered satisfactory that customers cannot get what they want—though I admit that it is war-time and it is possible for that to occur—and if that is going to be one of the pleas of Government and Government is going to support the argument of the hon. Member for Western Berbice, then I am sorry for what the future is going to be. I think I have made it perfectly clear that what I do ask of hon. Members is to represent things properly to this Council and to give correct information here. I do not know whether my hon. friend wanted to attack me, but I consider it a personal attack. If his statement had been correct I would not have replied in the way I did, but I do ask him that when he is attempting to contradict another Elected Member in this Council, at least for cohesion and co-operation, he should be very certain of his facts.

MR. DE AGUILAR: I do not know what is the opinion of hon. Members of this

Council who have been following the debate since this Council has gone into Committee, but it does seem to me that the privileges of speaking in Committee are being slightly abused. I refer particularly to the frequent interruptions by the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob), and I venture to suggest to him that if this Council was not in Committee he would not have attempted on the several occasions that he has done so since this Council is in Committee to rise from his seat every time a Member makes a statement, which apparently does not reach his point of view, in an endeavour to impress this Council as to what he thought he meant to say and in fact did not say. I would advise him, whilst it is true that hon. Members have the privilege of speaking as often as they like on a particular subject when the Council is in Committee, that it would come with better grace if the hon. Member makes a few notes while another Member is speaking, and when that Member has finished his contribution he then rises to correct what appears to him at the time to be a mistake or misinterpretation of what he thought he did say. I am glad, however, that whatever I do say seems to confuse the hon. Member and, perhaps, prompt him to interrupt; but whatever I say cannot be validly challenged by the hon. Member for North Western District because I am always sure of the facts, and facts are hard things.

Let us get down to what actually occurred in the case of copra. I am going to forgive the hon. Member for what he said because he has himself admitted that he knows very little about the copra or coconut industry, yet he has attempted in the same breath to claim to know something about the shortage of oil. I am prepared to show that he knows nothing about the subject which he has attempted to bring before the Council this morning. In attempting to make out a case against the Copra Board the hon. Member has produced figures without reason, giving the exports of copra from this Colony in 1939 and 1940. I think he quoted the figures for 1939 as 510 tons and for 1940 something over 1,000 tons and by a simple mathematical calculation he arrived at the conclusion that because the Board exported 1,000 tons the shortage of oil resulted. Those are not facts that the people who

know the industry will countenance at all. I want to tell the hon. Member that I am not a member of the Copra Board, and I do not take part in their discussions. I know nothing of what takes place on the Board, but I am a commercial man and I have some experience and knowledge of the subject. In fact I hope that what I shall tell the hon. Member will make him appreciate the efforts of the Board more than he seems to do so far. The price of copra was very low last year. The average price was between £10 and £11.10s.6d. per ton. From the very book the hon. Member quoted his figures he would find that to be a fact. The Board had gone to the trouble of going into the matter thoroughly. It was considered a very low price and as a result only 510 tons of copra were exported in 1939. At the end of that year the Board found themselves with a heavy carry-over stock. That was to be expected if they only shipped 510 tons that year. Just about the same time—and this is where the difficulty actually arose—the Demerara Cake and Oil Mills, Ltd., were also the holders of large stocks of oil and therefore were not buyers of copra. The Demerara Cake and Oil Mills, Ltd., were the largest buyers of copra in the Colony. The Board was naturally faced with the difficulty of having a large quantity of copra on hand belonging to producers which, if not sold, would result in loss to them. Something had to be done in order to relieve the situation, which went even further than that. The Demerara Cake and Oil Mills, Ltd., themselves during the early part of this year sold very little oil and also became anxious over the situation. Apart from the fact that they were carrying large stocks, as very clever businessmen, as I know them to be, they could not commit themselves to the purchase of a further quantity of copra in view of the slow sales of the finished product, and I have reason to believe that they informed the Board that they were not in a position to purchase any copra from them. The Board had then to take steps to relieve themselves of their stocks, which were losing weight.

I am informed that during that period the total purchases in the Colony were only about 30 tons of copra. I quote that figure because I want the hon. Member to appreciate the difference between the purchase of 30 tons of copra for the manufacture of oil in this

Colony and the export of 1,000 tons which took place subsequently. Faced with that situation the Board had a duty to the producers to perform, and they enquired as to what prices could be obtained for the copra in their possession. Between March and June they were able to obtain a favourable price. I am going to invite the hon. Member to look at the book from which he was quoting, and he will there see that the price obtained by the Board was £13 per ton, an increase in one instance of £3 per ton and in another instance of nearly £2 per ton, thereby benefiting the producers.

I know where the hon. Member has erred. I think it is the same reason why he erred so far as his own personal interest was concerned. Had he the foresight then as he has not to-day, he would not be paying the high price for oil for use in his household but would have secured the oil at the low prices then prevailing. It did not then occur to him that there would be a shortage of oil. He probably felt as all of us who have studied this Colony that the June rains would come, the coconut trees would bloom and there would be a plentiful supply of nuts. That did not happen, and in the meantime sales were made at remunerative prices. Where the hon. Member has also erred, is that although the sales were actually made between February and March the shipments did not get away until either in May or June. By that time the rains did not come, and the hon. Member says, perhaps in his judgment quite rightly, the Board should not have shipped the copra. He never stopped to think that the actual sales were made before June and only the shipments were being made then. But again the shipments were made under what conditions? Conditions I have previously described—no local market. The only remunerative market was closed. Everybody knows that the local market is the only remunerative market to the producer. If the hon. Member does not know that, I would tell him that the copra-producer obtains a better price for his product when the Demerara Cake and Oil Mills, Ltd., can take all he can produce. It is only when it has to be exported that his average price falls.

I am very fond of criticism, but I like constructive criticism. I would have preferred the hon. Member for North Western

District tell this Council or this Government what should be done to remedy such unfortunate circumstances that we had to go through. We know there was a shortage of oil. It is regrettable. I know that to my own cost. There was a serious shortage of oil, but there were reasons. It seems to me that the hon. Member may have advised Government that in the light of the experience resulting out of this shortage Government may now carefully examine the relationship between the copra-producer, the coconut-grower—who are both more or less one and the same party—the crude oil-maker and the refined oil manufacturer. I think this is the time when Government ought to be able to obtain very useful information that will be of considerable benefit to the industry as a whole. But we must not look at the industry from the top end of it—the refined oil end—though we may perhaps start there. Personally I would prefer to see the start made at the bottom end—the coconut-producers' end—and the industry followed right through to the copra-producers, the crude oil makers and up to the refined oil manufacturers. I know that the crude oil position is the hardest part to solve.

Speaking for myself I have acquired quite a lot of information, and as a result of that I have arisen to plead with the officers of Government, who have also acquired a lot of information as the result of the shortage. It is one of those things, I venture to suggest where out of evil may come good. I do not know what steps Government took to relieve the situation, but we have heard that the Board have imported oil. Of course they were right to do so. I did not, however, understand the hon. Member in the course of his criticism to say that the Board or Government had no right to import the oil. I hope that is not so. If he did, then I have something more to say. Faced as we were with the situation as existed at the time—very little or no edible oil in the Colony—it seems that either the Government or the Board acting under instructions from the Government were bound to import edible oil for the needs of the inhabitants of this Colony. It was a duty they owed to the consuming public. I do not think, however, the hon. Member ever meant that the Board or Government should not import oil in those

circumstances. I am very glad to be able to say that up to the present the hon. Member for North Western District has not interrupted me in my remarks. It may well be that he is unable to do so. I shall even make this statement, that if he desires to have all I have said confirmed, he should be able to set about obtaining the confirmation himself.

Mr. JACOB: I did not interfere with my hon. friend because there was no necessity to do so. I have a distinct recollection that before the adjournment was taken he had finished talking on the subject and I had got up to reply. He has now put a different complexion on the debate by stating that he did not finish then. At about 12.28 o'clock he stopped speaking and took his seat. I did not interrupt him at all. I then got up and said that I would reserve what I had to say until after the adjournment. It was very interesting to listen to the statements made by the hon. Member in regard to copra. But what has he got to say about oil? He studiously left that out. In 1939 the Board exported 2,199 gallons of oil valued at \$971, and up to October 31, in 1940 the amount was 14,980 gallons valued \$7,105. I am not prepared to go into all the things stated by him, but if you examine his statements carefully it would be seen that he prefaced them with "I understand" or "I have been told." The hon. Member is not a member of the Board and therefore his statements cannot be taken as definite or authentic.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am sorry I have to rise again, but I must invite the hon. Member's attention again to what are facts. He has not said it and so has left the Council with the understanding that the figures he quoted there for oil are those for refined oil. If that is so, I would like to tell the hon. Member that he is not correct.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I do not know whether it would be too rash a conclusion to draw the inference that the hon. Member for North Western District desires to transform this hall into a lecture-room for the benefit of his fellow Electives. I would remind the hon. Member that in order to obviate the necessity for what has just taken place—recrimination between two hon. Members of the Elective Section—I had addressed to each Elected Member a circular asking him to meet privately in conference in order to

decide what the method of approach in this debate should be in regard to Estimates. Unfortunately the hon. Member for North Western District has not replied to that circular.

I was rather interested to hear the hon. Member for Georgetown North (Mr. Seaford) say that one of the difficulties of the agricultural community is the cost of production. Increased production by local agriculture appears to me, and I submit that it would so appear to hon. Members of this Council, to be a vital question in the needs of the Colony. If that is so, I would ask the Board of Agriculture to see whether they cannot increase the confidence of the agricultural community by making agriculture a more payable proposition. The hon. Member for Georgetown North laughs. There are several suggestions that I can throw out, suggestions not only confined to this particular part of the hemisphere but of a much wider consequence and wider avenues of approach. There are several treatises on the cost of production in agriculture. In the United Kingdom for instance it has been discovered that the fiscal policy should be one which should relieve the agricultural community in the way of rates. The existing fiscal policy of this Colony lays an undue burden, I submit, on agriculture. Then there are recognised principles of approach by which farming can be made indeed more attractive to those who are concerned with the industry. May I ask the hon. Member, who is a member of the Board of Agriculture, whether the Board of Agriculture has considered such legislation as obtains in the United Kingdom—the Agriculture Wages Acts, the Agriculture Holdings Acts—and whether those Acts can be applied to this Colony or not? It seems to me that the high taxation which has to be met out of the poor return from the labour on the land is the whole cause or one of the root causes of the failure of the agricultural policy in this Colony.

I quite agree with the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) when he suggests that now is the time to consider the advisability of co-operative marketing schemes in dealing with the coconut industry. I think that should be gone into very closely and carefully by the Board of Agriculture. The difficulties of the Board are no doubt aggravated by cer-

tain individuals' disinterestedness in communal life, and I have no hesitation in saying that the position is aggravated for personal gain. Those persons are known to Government, and all one can do is to ask Government to act, and that strongly, for the benefit of the community. That is one of the great obstacles of the Board of Agriculture and certain other Boards and Departments in this Colony. There is quite a lot one can say in detail but I think, and I venture to suggest, that if the Board of Agriculture adopts the line envisaged we may get a little further in obtaining that increased production which this Colony desires and will thrive by.

The hon. Member for Georgetown North seems to think that the reduction of rates or giving of loans as suggested may lead to financial disaster. To that I do not subscribe. There is, perhaps, another matter which the hon. Member may consider and that is whether by a reduction of the taxation on those areas under productive cultivation, it may propel the uncultivated areas into cultivation, it would not be an inducement to those persons who leave their lands unfallow and untilled if they can get relief from taxation through tilling the land.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon. Member has attempted to make suggestions to the Board of Agriculture in this Council. I am suggesting that with his vast knowledge of agriculture he might have sent in that information to the Board of Agriculture, as I am sure they would have immediately attempted to the utmost of their ability to follow it up. But when he says a fiscal policy can reduce the cost of agriculture, I am at a complete loss to know what he is getting at. I wonder if the hon. Member is aware that Government does everything it can to promote agriculture at the present time. Does he realize that fertilizers come in at a reduced import duty, that agricultural implements come in free? Is he aware that Government allows the rice people to get petrol duty free for use in ploughing their lands? It so often happens in this Council that hon. Members come here absolutely ignorant of their facts.

The hon. Member also speaks about the taxes on the land. What are those taxes for in the majority of cases? Does he

realize that the tax is for drainage and irrigation? Must the rest of the community be asked to pay for the drainage and irrigation of certain districts? Is that done in any part of the world? Whatever you do or grow, ought it not to be self-supporting? If all agriculture here has to be subsidized it means bankruptcy. Does the hon. Member know what happens as regards loans to agriculturists? I wonder if he knows anything about the Pomeroon District? I wonder if he realizes how much loans are given out by Government in various parts of the Colony? It is a risk to lend on growing crops. It is done to a certain extent with rice by landowners at a very high rate of interest, and that is the complaint that comes in continuously. I do not think he can say that this Government or the Board of Agriculture has not been out of its way to see in what way it can possibly help in promoting agriculture either by loans or by assisting in the various duties, an import tax or things like that. But, as I said before, where you have got to fight against drainage and irrigation problems such as we have in this Colony and which are ever present with us, it is very difficult for the land to produce a low price crop to compete successfully with other places which have not that burden to bear the whole time.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am perfectly aware of the relief mentioned by the hon. Member. I did not intend to mention anything about the Pomeroon Flood Relief Loan but the hon. Member has brought it out. The reason why I did not intend to do so was because I had already indicated to this Council that details would be omitted from what I had to say. As the hon. Member has mentioned the Pomeroon Relief Bill—

Mr. SEAFORD: I do not think I mentioned anything about Pomeroon Relief Bill. I referred to Pomeroon and other districts of the Colony where loans have been given for agriculture.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am referring to the Pomeroon Relief Loan. I may point out to the hon. Member that answers have been given by Government to me in this Council relative to that very loan. Those answers I propose following up, as I am not saying that the higher officials of this Government are unaware of the facts, but

I am saying that they have been wrongly advised and time will tell the tale.

I would also like to point out to the hon. Member that I also intend to enquire in this Council why the Colonial Development Act, and on whose recommendation it wiped out certain loans, including one for \$19,000 odd which was given to the sugar estates and of which I have given notice. Why that sum should be wiped out by the Colonial Development Act and the loans to farmers in the Pomeroon should not also be wiped out, it is difficult to understand. Perhaps there is an answer and the hon. Colonial Secretary will give us it, as I have no doubt there must be an answer. It is just these little details I would rather not deal with in public. I rather that they be dealt with in my own way, but my hon. friend has given me the opportunity of dealing with them openly. It is in relation to that sort of fiscal policy to which reference has been made by me. Why there should be this discrimination, it is difficult to understand. Perhaps the Colonial Development Act and the recommendation for wiping out loans under that Act were not made by this Government. We can only trust, if that is so, that consideration was carefully given and the recommendation made on that consideration. I am quite aware that I am not an "expert" in agriculture, but I would like to point out to the hon. Member that I do read and read considerably outside my own sphere of activities, which is the law. It is to that fact I direct his attention. I have written volumes to Government, and the hon. Colonial Secretary, who I see smiling, will no doubt substantiate the fact that the very minimum is a letter per day I send to Government. I do not intend Government to think that all the suggestions I make are worthy of consideration, nor do I intend Government to think that they are all worthy of being rejected.

Mr. JACOB: I do not want to enter into the controversy which has arisen between the two hon. Members who have just spoken. I would just like to remind my hon. friend, the Member for Western Essequebo, that as regards the letter he wrote to hon. Members I have always been in favour of meeting together and discussing matters concerning the business of the Council. He has made reference to it at the last meeting of the Council and

again to-day. I would like to enquire of him why he did not attend the meeting called by the hon. Colonial Secretary for last Saturday and where he was when the letter was actually sent to him. The hon. Member knows perfectly well that I would always co-operate towards that end, and it is therefore no use his repeating in this Council that he had circulated a letter and the hon. Member for North Western District did not reply. I commend the hon. Member for making one or two attempts, but four or five years ago I made three unsuccessful attempts to get hon. Members meet. I even carried the matter a stage further and asked them to form two parties because it is impossible to get the Electives to agree on any uniform policy. My hon. friend was asked to join one of the parties and when the paper was put to him to sign he refused.

Mr. SEAFORD : I would like to let the hon. Member for Western Essequibo know that I rather deal with things in public than in his own way.

Mr. WALCOTT : I have with great patience listened to the various speakers and their criticisms and personalities. I have no intention to be personal, but it is to my mind unfortunate when hon. Members level criticism at Government they do not produce something that will be helpful instead of always offering destructive criticism. The Agricultural Department has always had my greatest sympathy though, perhaps, not as much as the farmers ; both of them, however, do receive very great sympathy from me. The Agricultural Department has done good work, but it is impossible for a workman to work properly without proper tools. If any blame is to be levelled for the lack of improvement in agriculture, that blame I am afraid has got to be levelled at Government and not at the Department. I am not speaking about the present administration because Your Excellency has not been here long enough to inaugurate schemes for the irrigation and drainage of agricultural lands. When I say irrigation and drainage, I mean proper irrigation and drainage. It is high time that the matter be taken in hand seriously. We have at one period of the year drought and at another time floods, and so it has been going on to my knowledge for the last 20 years and nothing serious has

been done by Government to try and improve that condition. Year after year people plant crops which they do not reap. As regards the weather conditions which have existed within the last year and a half they have been extraordinary. It was impossible to get anything to grow on account of that. With the exception of a few weeks this year there has been no rain since August, 1939. As I said before we have to tackle this question in a big way. I think you are about to do it now, if what I have heard outside this Council is correct. I would earnestly ask you to try and get something done if you have the means at your disposal, as I understand you have from the Colonial Development Vote given by the Imperial Government.

As regards the question of copra, I regret to hear from my hon. friend on my left (Mr. Jacob) the criticisms levelled at the Board. One should think that these Boards are paid bodies. The work they do very often make a great demand on the members' time and members actually lose money by sitting on them. It seems, therefore, manifestly unfair to aim such criticism at them as has been done by my hon. friend on my left, and I hope this is the last time I shall have the misfortune to listen to such criticism. With regard to what has happened in connection with the shortage of edible oil, I was away for three months but on my return I was immediately attacked from all sides about it. It seems to me, Your Excellency, that you may give some further consideration to the price. I know that before I went away the Demerara Cake and Oil Mills, Ltd., were unable to sell their oil and they therefore stopped buying copra, as they had a large stock of oil on hand. Oil is a product that you cannot keep for an unlimited time ; it has to be sold while comparatively fresh. The Company therefore had to stop buying copra for the manufacture of oil, and further the dry weather made it very difficult for the coconut-growers to get the same returns as they would under normal conditions. I am afraid that next year it is going to be even worse. Perhaps Your Excellency does not know that it takes a year from the time a coconut tree flowers to the time the fruit is ripe for reaping, and therefore I can foresee—I am not a prophet but speak from experience—it is going to

be more difficult in that direction than this year has been.

The importation of oil was a necessity, but you have to include in your deliberations a fixed price. You must consider the producer as well as the consumer and, I think, sufficient consideration has not been given to the producers' end. Maybe Your Excellency has been misinformed on the subject and so thinks that the coconut-growers are making a lot of money. I know what it costs to produce coconuts. If you keep your plantation in proper condition, I can assure Your Excellency that a price of \$6 or \$7 per 1,000 would only mean a loss to the producer of coconuts—that is if he keeps his property in order, and he cannot keep his property in order all the time at a loss. Therefore by setting a standard price to the consumer that is too low you will interfere with the ultimate production of coconuts, and I appeal to Your Excellency to give very serious consideration to that. I have now no personal interest in the industry: If you reconsider the fixing of the price—I am speaking of the wholesale price—on such a basis as to give the producer a fair profit whilst not loading the consumer to any great degree, I think it would stop all this acrimonious discussion which is going on throughout the Colony at the present time. Coming back fresh from a country where you don't hear that, it seems to me most unfortunate to have the constant bickering between one side and another and criticisms being levelled all around—destructive criticism and no constructive or helpful criticism.

As regards coffee, I have heard my hon. friend on my left (Mr. Jacob) talk about very low production and dwindling export. Most of the coffee produced here went to Scandinavian ports, and even if you had coffee to export at the present time you would find no market for it. The considerable drop in production as well as no export is due first of all to the floods of 1934, and also to the low prices ruling. Some time ago when there was a discussion on this matter and my hon. friend, the Member for North-Western District, asked for a Committee to enquire into the industry and try to help it, I felt then that the industry needed help but not of the kind that he thought, and that was actual financial assistance. The farmers had a

lot to do with the present situation. They never attempted to produce cleaner coffee and a class of coffee that would find a market at a fair price in competition with the cheap West African coffee. Until they do that they will only have a limited demand for their product, and at the present time it is limited only to the local market. If they produce another 100 tons of coffee it would have to be used in the Colony as there is no market for it at any price in Canada or the United States. I do not think we ever shipped any Liberian coffee to England, but we did ship a certain amount to Canada and that coffee had to be hand-picked in Georgetown because it was not properly cleaned at the mill. Hand-picking, as you may imagine, costs a lot of money. Government can help in that direction by placing proper machines in the various coffee districts for the people to take their pods to be properly cleaned and made ready for marketing. They would then get two cents per pound more. I do not want to go into details because I do not wish to delay the Council too long.

Coffee, as you know, has an import duty of 16 cents per lb. in this Colony. Unfortunately the Colony cannot produce that grade of coffee that can be appreciated here instead of the imported product. It would be surprising to know that a good many of the people here are buying coffee imported from America and paying four times the price that they would pay for the local coffee, simply because the one is drinkable and the other is undrinkable. I just mention that by the way.

I certainly could not understand what the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) was driving at and what was the help he wanted. I certainly saw one memorandum that he had written to Government, and I must honestly say that I could not tell what he was driving at. Perhaps hon. Members are in the same position. He has pleaded ignorance of planting and I appreciate that.

MR. C. V. WIGHT: I am in the dark. I do not know what memorandum the hon. Member is referring to.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am afraid I can-

not help you. The hon. Member has said there have been a good many.

Mr. WALCOTT : I saw it at a place which I should not like to refer to here. I shall therefore say no more about that. My hon. friend on my left (Mr. Jacob) has handed me a note asking me if I do not think members of Boards should be paid. I certainly think so. I am not a member of any Board and therefore can say so. Perhaps they may be paid on the same basis as the Insurance Companies pay their Directors, so much per meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN : A commission on the business done.

Mr. WALCOTT : The Directors are not paid a commission on the business done but on their attendance. If they do not attend the meetings they get nothing. Perhaps the members of these Boards would attend more often if they get a fee when they attend the meetings of the Boards. I am sorry to have taken up so much of the time of the Council, but I can assure the hon. Member for Western Essequibo and the other Elected Members that if at any time I can be of help to them I would be only too pleased to do so. I am not going to talk about rice. I am following the example of my hon. friend on my left. I shall wait until later on so as to hear what he has to say.

Mr. JACOB : I am sorry I have to get up so often. (Laughter). I rise to congratulate my hon. friend, Mr. Walcott, on the first part of his speech. It is not very often that we do agree, but I agree with him entirely in the first part of his speech. As regards coffee, I think my hon. friend misunderstood the help I wanted to get for the industry. He said financial help. If he were to reconsider the speech he just delivered he would see that there is a slight misunderstanding. He has overlooked the fact that unless the producer gets a little more actually in cash or by co-operative means he cannot improve his factory so as to give the better grade of coffee that can be readily sold. For some time now coffee has been an unprofitable industry to the producers.

THE CHAIRMAN : What is the price now ?

Mr. JACOB : I think it is about twelve cents per pound retail.

Mr. DE AGUIAR : Can I help the hon. Member ? It is ten cents per pound.

THE CHAIRMAN : I am informed that the price of coffee has gone up considerably within the last few months.

Mr. JACOB : But whilst that is so, the production has gone down. The people did not get the help of that price at the correct time. If you look up the report of the Committee you would see that we recommended a price of eight cents per pound and not even ten cents. The point I wish to make is that the industry was not given the help at the proper time. If, as the position is now, the policy not only of this Government but of the British Government is to get everything from a British source then I think Canada should and would buy our coffee, but I am forced to the conclusion that it appears that our coffee industry must go out of existence entirely. I have to agree, however, that the coffee industry ought to be saved and especially as it is the major industry in a particular part of the Colony. If it can be replaced by something else then it is a different matter, but I am forced to agree now that it is no use helping the industry now as it has got to a stage where any help is of no practical value. I may remind the hon. Member (Mr. Walcott) that I have been stressing the fact that Government should help the industry to improve the grade and so help the producers. I rise just to say that.

Mr. WALCOTT : I am always willing to be corrected. I thought I had made myself clear that if the coffee is cleaned properly it would get two cents more per pound than at present.

Item 1 (2)—Deputy Director of Agriculture, \$4,320.

Item 1 (6)—Botanist and Plant Pathologist (\$2,400 to \$2,880 by \$120) \$2,400

Mr. DE AGUIAR : I would like to enquire whether it is contemplated to fill the post of Deputy Director, which was left open last year after it had been

discussed *ad nauseam*. Perhaps I may ask the same question in respect of the post of Botanist and Plant Pathologist which is also vacant. I intended to suggest that these two items on the Estimates be allowed to remain over in view of the present situation.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not proposed to fill either of these posts. The intention is to await the visit early next year of the Agricultural Adviser and

of consulting practice. I know that quite recently the Manager of a sugar estate remarked how much he would like to call in that officer in connection with the high bred animals he has. I ask Government to consider that and, if possible, to allow him a limited private practice.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture): This point was raised before and Government decided against it as this officer is so busily occupied with his work.

be more difficult in that direction than this year has been.

The importation of oil was a necessity, but you have to include in your deliberations a fixed price. You must consider the producer as well as the consumer and, I think, sufficient consideration has not been given to the producers' end. Maybe Your Excellency has been misinformed on the subject and so thinks that the coconut-growers are making a lot of money. I know what it costs to produce coconuts. If you keep your plantation in proper condition, I can assure Your Excellency that a price of \$6 or \$7 per 1,000 would only mean a loss to the producer of coconuts—that is if he keeps his property in order, and he cannot keep his property in order all the time at a loss. Therefore by setting a standard price to the consumer that is too low you will interfere with the ultimate production of coconuts, and I appeal to Your Excellency to give very serious consideration to that. I have now no personal interest in the industry: If you reconsider the fixing of the price—I am speaking of the wholesale price—on such a basis as to give the producer a fair profit whilst not loading the consumer to any great degree, I think it would stop all this acrimonious discussion which is going on throughout the Colony at the present time. Coming back fresh from a country where you don't hear that, it seems to me most unfortunate to have the constant bickering between one side and another and criticisms being levelled all around—destructive criticism and no constructive or helpful criticism.

As regards coffee, I have heard my hon. friend on my left (Mr. Jacob) talk about very low production and dwindling export. Most of the coffee produced here went to Scandinavian ports, and even if you had coffee to export at the present time you would find no market for it. The considerable drop in production as well as no export is due first of all to the floods of 1934, and also to the low prices ruling. Some time ago when there was a discussion on this matter and my hon. friend, the Member for North Western District, asked for a Committee to enquire into the industry and try to help it, I felt then that the industry needed help but not of the kind that he thought, and that was actual financial assistance. The farmers had a

lot to do with the present situation. They never attempted to produce cleaner coffee and a class of coffee that would find a market at a fair price in competition with the cheap West African coffee. Until they do that they will only have a limited demand for their product, and at the present time it is limited only to the local market. If they produce another 100 tons of coffee it would have to be used in the Colony as there is no market for it at any price in Canada or the United States. I do not think we ever shipped any Liberian coffee to England, but we did ship a certain amount to Canada and that coffee had to be hand-picked in Georgetown because it was not properly cleaned at the mill. Hand-picking, as you may imagine, costs a lot of money. Government can help in that direction by placing proper machines in the various coffee districts for the people to take their pods to be properly cleaned and made ready for marketing. They would then get two cents per pound more. I do not want to go into details because I do not wish to delay the Council too long.

Coffee, as you know, has an import duty of 16 cents per lb. in this Colony. Unfortunately the Colony cannot produce that grade of coffee that can be appreciated here instead of the imported product. It would be surprising to know that a good many of the people here are buying coffee imported from America and paying four times the price that they would pay for the local coffee, simply because the one is drinkable and the other is undrinkable. I just mention that by the way.

I certainly could not understand what the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) was driving at and what was the help he wanted. I certainly saw one memorandum that he had written to Government, and I must honestly say that I could not tell what he was driving at. Perhaps hon. Members are in the same position. He has pleaded ignorance of planting and I appreciate that.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: I am in the dark. I do not know what memorandum the hon. Member is referring to.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am afraid I can-

thinking of cases where the Veterinary Surgeon is the only available person and his attendance is desired. He may be called in an emergency and it may be done by reference to the Head of his Department.

THE CHAIRMAN: As a matter of fact in such circumstances the officer and probably many others do often give their services.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: One does not like to ask him for his services free, gratis and for nothing.

THE CHAIRMAN: It is a better arrangement that he should be fully occupied with his official work. It is a very difficult business to define cases of emergency and, I think, it is more satisfactory to leave matters as they are.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: If the Head of his Department consents to his seeing a particular case he ought to be allowed to do so.

THE CHAIRMAN: To give the public a sort of right to demand a particular officer's services for a particular case; there is the danger of a very heavy encroachment upon his time. As a question of policy it is very difficult to decide here what he can do.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I throw it out as a suggestion.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the hon. Member thinks it over and puts up a suggestion in a more specific form I may consider it. It is certainly very difficult to decide here now.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I will write and give details.

Mr. JACOB: I think the present policy of Government is more suitable and acceptable. In a case of emergency an officer can be allowed to give private services but as a question of general principle it is not desirable for a Government officer to be consulted and to be asked to give advice. If it is found necessary and there is no other Veterinary Surgeon available, then some other arrangement may be made. If the officer's services are fully occupied, as I think they are,

then I think the suggestion is not a desirable one. I would not like it to be stated that this Council approves of the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara, as there are a few of us here who are very definitely against the principle being changed.

Mr. LEE: I think that in the case of an emergency, if the Director or Government is approached, there would be no hindrance to the services of the Veterinary Surgeon being obtained, but to allow him the right to have private practice this Council cannot agree with that in principle.

THE CHAIRMAN: You see no objection to his attending and giving advice, so long as he is not paid for it!

Mr. LEE: Yes, except in cases where he is directed by the Director.

Item 1 (14)—Agricultural Assistant (\$672 to \$960 by \$48), \$960.

Mr. De AGUIAR: I would like to be informed whether it is now proposed to abolish the post of Agricultural Assistant altogether, because these items have a way of disappearing one year and reappearing the next. I see from the marginal note that one post is now transferred to Technical Assistants. I rather fancy that next year we will find two instead of the one at present appearing on the Estimates.

Item 1 (13)—3 Agricultural Instructors, \$3,927.

Mr. LEE: There was on the Island of Wakenaam an Agricultural Instructor. He has been recently removed and no one has been appointed to the vacancy. I wrote Government in the matter, and was told, that it was not necessary to fill the vacancy as the residents can get the services of the Agricultural Superintendent. It has been proved, however, that the services of the Superintendent are so much occupied on the Essequibo Coast they can rarely be obtained beneficially by the people resident on that Island. During the drought when there was a pest epidemic on the Island many of the people might have saved some of their crops had an Agricultural Instructor been on the spot to give advice. I ask Government to reconsider replacing an Instructor there.

wanted to get for the industry. He said financial help. If he were to reconsider the speech he just delivered he would see that there is a slight misunderstanding. He has overlooked the fact that unless the producer gets a little more actually in cash or by co-operative means he cannot improve his factory so as to give the better grade of coffee that can be readily sold. For some time now coffee has been an unprofitable industry to the producers.

THE CHAIRMAN: What is the price now?

properly it would get two cents more per pound than at present.

Item 1 (2)—Deputy Director of Agriculture, \$4,320.

Item 1 (6)—Botanist and Plant Pathologist (\$2,400 to \$2,880 by \$120), \$2,400.

Mr. DeAGUIAR: I would like to enquire whether it is contemplated to fill the post of Deputy Director, which was left open last year after it had been

Professor DASH: I am in sympathy with the remarks of the hon. Member. I think that when we are able to do so it will be advisable to have a man on that Island, but it is not possible now. The Department is short-staffed, as several members have been seconded for War Emergency work. I agree with the hon. Member that it should be considered as necessary in the future.

With respect to item 1 (14) I think the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Mr. De Aguiar) will recall that the titles of some of these officers were reviewed in the Bain Gray Report and the term "Technical Assistant" was brought in to cover most of the subordinates in the Department at the present time. The term "Agricultural Assistant" which is not a very happy one will eventually disappear.

THE CHAIRMAN: This is the last one!

Professor DASH: Yes.

Mr. JACOB: Do I understand the hon. Member for Central Demerara has raised the question of the two vacant posts, and do I understand you to say that they will not be filled at the moment?

THE CHAIRMAN: It is not proposed to fill them until I have had the opportunity of consultation with the Agricultural Adviser and the Controller of the West Indian Welfare Fund.

Mr. JACOB: What seems peculiar to me is that the salary of the Botanist is noted at \$2,400. If the figures had not been changed I would not have questioned it. There must be some other reason for it.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the post is filled that is the minimum rate of salary for the new man. I assure the hon. Member that is a fact.

Item 1 (27)—Grading Inspector (\$1,440 to \$1,920 by \$120), \$1,920.

Mr. JACOB: I want to refer to the very interesting and exhaustive speech given by Your Excellency on the 26th November and to a particular paragraph. For easy reference I have numbered the

paragraphs of the speech. Paragraph 17 on page 6 states :

Attempts were made by a few people to aggravate the difficulties caused by a temporary shortage in rice supplies due to the aftermath of the recent drought. A deliberate endeavour was made in some instances to delay the movement and milling of padi and to take advantage of the occasion to force up the price to the consumer.

I am going to plead with Your Excellency to take this Council into your confidence and give us some more details as to who those people are, what is the quantity, and whether in the opinion of Government the quantity involved is sufficient to force the price up.

THE CHAIRMAN: It may save time, if I say that I have no intention of doing anything of the kind. I said that I have good grounds for stating so, and I am not going to carry it any further.

Mr. JACOB: I claim to have a very intimate knowledge of this industry. I have studied it very carefully, and I have been able to get information from all sources and to arrive at a conclusion. I think that advantage may have been taken of the situation by some people, but the quantity involved does not amount to half a month's supply. The information has not been correctly conveyed to Your Excellency. It is no use going over the whole ground. I feel, sir, that the industry as controlled now—let me make it perfectly clear that I am not against control but I am against control of the kind that you have now—is not properly managed. The Rice Marketing Board's report has been issued a couple of days ago. I am not surprised that there has been a visible loss. I say a visible loss because it is not practicable to go into all the details here. I asked certain questions about three months ago and they have not been replied to as yet. The loss on the working of the Board for the last six months is shown as \$1,611.34. I gave a forecast of this since last November and, I think, Government has in its possession several letters I have written forecasting a series of losses—loss on the purchase of rice from Barbados, loss on the working of the Board and future loss for the next half year. I have gone so far as to say at one time that the exports of rice for 1940 will not be 15,000 tons and at another time that I did not

think it would be 12,000 tons though Government expected to export 30,000 tons. Owing to the shortage in Demerara I hardly think the exports will be more than 10,759 tons. I recommended that not a bag of rice be exported unless and until we are certain that there are adequate supplies in the Colony to meet our demands up to November next year. I stressed that point last November in this Council but no attention was paid to it, and I stressed it on the Rice Producers' Advisory Committee but no attention was paid to it again even in the replies given to questions. The result has been that the exports continued to the end of September, resulting in the huge shortage which might have caused trouble. At the end of September the exports totalled 10,759 tons, in October nothing was exported, and in November nothing also was exported. Let me hope and pray that nothing will be exported in December. The position then is that the exports for this year will be 10,759 tons as against 30,000 tons anticipated, referred to, and formally given to the hon. Member for Essequibo River and myself by responsible officers of this Government, particularly the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board.

The position on the whole has been very unsatisfactory. Of the members of the Rice Marketing Board there are individuals for whom I have the highest regard and whose ability I respect, but as regards the others I have absolutely no regard for their ability. On the last occasion I was accused of wanting a paid position on the Board. I have not been able to get that cleared up as yet. I have been refused confirmation or the opportunity of getting it clearly stated whether the statement is in fact meant or it was just stated in the heat of debate. It is on the records of the Council that I wanted a paid position of the Board. The hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Walcott, has stated about the payment of persons on Boards just as I had done. Unless you get the right type of people who will give proper service, you are not going to succeed in these attempts. I repeat it because I feel extremely hurt. There are hon. Members of this Council who know as a fact that I have suggested nothing of a personal character. When I spoke to hon. Members of Council about it, I told them I was in a position to help and would help

provided the Board had the right type of people on it. It is a fact that the industry is definitely in a worse position now, and I do not know if that is going to be denied. Exports have been consistently dwindling this year and will not amount to 15,000 tons next year. I have stated in a letter quite recently to the hon. Colonial Secretary that it would be a miracle if more than 8,000 tons were exported in 1941 but if steps, were taken now the exports could be increased to 10,000 tons. However, throughout the whole of last year nothing was done about it. I have urged that not a ton of rice should be exported until the entire crop has been reaped, proper surveys made and the ordinary local demands—such as stock feed, cattle feed, domestic consumption and seed for planting—taken into account. It is my opinion that if attempts are made to export rice there would be a shortage again unless adequate means are adopted to ensure a Spring crop. I made a similar statement in this Council on the 22nd November, 1939, and I repeat it is time that proper attention is paid to these matters.

Your Excellency states you are not saying anything more about the statement you have made in your address which, I have no doubt, was communicated to you. The Board has issued a report, and let me state at the outset that it is not worth the paper it is written on. That is my opinion, and I am prepared to stand by it. Paragraph 8 of the report states :

For reasons which will be explained later in the report, the Board with the approval of the Governor, undertook the purchase of 20,000 bags of Indian rice from Barbados for delivery to Trinidad and certain other West Indian Islands, the result of this transaction being a loss of \$8,307.39.

The hon. Colonial Treasurer—let me give him credit for being an expert on finance although the finances of the Colony are in a chaotic state (laughter)—but it must be apparent that he knows absolutely nothing about the rice industry, and "his expert" knowledge may not have been available at all times. Just as my hon. friend (Mr. Walcott) stated while the Department of Agriculture is abused and criticised mercilessly it is not the officer in charge who should be held responsible. The hon. Colonial Treasurer may give the best advice in financial matters, but to

be put in charge of the Rice Marketing Board and to allow him to go to the West Indian Islands and sell rice he is wholly unsuited for that position. If it is necessary to have a Government Officer in charge, the hon. Director of Agriculture should have been the individual and not the hon. Colonial Treasurer. That is my opinion and I maintain that my opinion on the rice industry and my knowledge of it are second to none in the whole Colony. I know the technique of planting, milling and marketing of rice. I claim that I have studied it and I give this Council the very best and well considered opinion on the industry. Everything I have said here during the last five years about the rice industry has come to pass. It is not a question of becoming wise after the event but of indicating beforehand what was going to happen. The hon Colonial Treasurer, as the Chairman of the Board, and the Secretary, who is the Rice Grading Inspector, went to Trinidad and sold 10,000 tons of rice and were negotiating to sell a further 10,000 tons but after my criticisms they did not pursue it. They were unable to deliver the 10,000 tons. I do not think that the loss on the purchase from Barbados is only \$8,307.39. That is on paper, but if you go into it further it may be more. However, I accept those figures. In another part of the report it is stated that while a loss has occurred on that transaction the Board made profits from other transactions. Perhaps the hon. Member for Central Demerara agrees in principle that you make a profit in one direction and lose it in another. Paragraph 22 of the report reads :

The difficulties of the situation were in its later stages aggravated by action on the part of the few producers to postpone milling and deliveries in the expectation that a shortage would automatically result in an increase in prices, and it is regrettable that in this attempt at exploitation these persons were undoubtedly encouraged by others whose hope and interest it is that any scheme of organised control of marketing should fail.

It is the word "exploitation" I wish to refer to particularly. The Board accuses the growers and millers of exploitation. Practically the same words were used in Your Excellency's address. If I have glass windows I do not think I should throw stones. If I accuse the public of exploitation then I must not be so guilty myself. I hope to be able to convince this

Council and the public that the Board mercilessly exploited the rice producers with the result that there is general dissatisfaction throughout the Colony and there is not going to be any increased production at all, although it had been stated by the hon. Colonial Secretary that larger areas are being planted. Other statements were made in this Council but we would talk about them later on. This is not the time to say much about that, because I am not too sure what quantity is being reaped. When the figures are available I shall have something more to say about it. It has been stated that the millers and growers attempted to exploit the situation and they have been checked. It is a very good thing to check an attempt, but when you cannot actually check something that is happening then the situation becomes regrettable indeed. No one has been able to check the Board, and in truth and in fact the Board has been encouraged in its exploitation. The legislative regulations have encouraged the Board in its attempt at exploitation. I have the original papers here in respect of two instances.

On February 10, 1940, twelve bags of rice were delivered by a grower to the officer of the Board in New Amsterdam. The rice was graded as "white broken" and he was paid at the rate of \$2.50 per bag. To show the deliberate action of the Board, when the man got the papers and asked to be sold back his rice at the fixed price which was \$2.90 per bag the officer told him that he was sending the rice to Georgetown. A little later the man heard that a bag was sold to someone and he returned to the officer and asked to be sold a bag. He was again refused. He then left and sent his wife who obtained the bag of rice paying \$4.20 for it. The paper issued for the rice did not specify whether it was white rice A, B or broken, but just stated "one bag rice, \$4.20." The officer knew—

THE CHAIRMAN: Was it the same rice that he had delivered?

MR. JACOB: Yes; I think the Chairman of the Board is aware of this case. The point I wish to make—

MR. McDAVID (Colonial Treasurer): Before the hon. Member leaves that point I desire to state that I do remember the case, but would the hon. Member state

whether in that case the person selling the rice was not refunded a large sum on the matter being brought to the notice of the Secretary of the Board and the mistake acknowledged?

Mr. JACOB : I am coming to that. I do not think the hon. Colonial Treasurer suspects or anticipates that I am not going to put forward all the facts. I was not going to leave that out.

This person spent a lot of time and energy in the matter. He made application to the Board and was refused. He then came to me and I asked him for his papers. I was given all the papers and I went to the Secretary of the Board. After arguing with him for half an hour he said he would not recommend it but he would speak to the Chairman about it and tell me what was the result. That very day he rang me up on the telephone and told me that the Chairman agreed as an act of grace that the man should be paid a higher price and the Board would just take the statutory profit allowed to the Board by regulation. I accepted it but said I could not agree that it was an act of grace. While the Board and its officers may think it is an act of grace, I think it is a right of the person concerned. That occurred in February, but it is one of several cases. They have been occurring since then, and so the Board has been making exorbitant profits and profiteering by selling rice against the regulations, and at prices in excess of the fixed price. The Board has been selling rice at a price it is not authorized to do, although complaints have been made, the consumers have been made to pay that price and the producers have not benefited by it nor is the money being spent in the protection or improvement of the industry.

On the 19th October, 1940, a more serious case occurred. A producer sent 20 bags of rice to be graded. The rice was graded and passed as No. 3. According to breakage the rice was No. 1 but according to colour it was No. 3. The regulations are there, but when it suits the Board they cannot be varied and when it is to their advantage they are varied. The Board does exactly as it pleases with the regulations. The grading system is not suitable at the present time to the industry. I wish the hon. Director of Agricul-

ture to take note of what I say. The price for No. 3 rice is \$3.40 per bag while that for No. 1 rice is \$4.50 per bag. The producer appealed to the Board. I think he had a conference with the Chairman (the hon. Colonial Treasurer) and other officers of the Board and pleaded with them that he be paid a reasonable price between the two amounts for his rice, or that the rice be returned to him. The Board refused to do either. In fact the Board told him that the rice had been taken to the wharf and blended there with broken rice and sold at \$4.50 per bag. I do not think that can be disputed; if so, I am prepared to bring the individual and prove it. The gentleman threatened legal proceedings against the Board, but legal proceedings are an expensive pastime. This thing happened on the 19th October, and on the 26th October a notice was published in the *Official Gazette*, Notice No. 569, giving the Board power to sell rice other than Super, White A and B at \$4.50 per bag. That was an order by Government legalizing an illegal act by the Board.

Those two cases are authentic. In the face of these facts, these irregularities committed by the Board, can this Government expect the people connected with the industry, who have built it up almost unaided to co-operate with a Board which acts in such a high-handed manner? If that is the opinion of the Council I beg to differ 100 per cent. from it. I have pleaded with this Government over and over again that it has got square pegs in round holes on the Board. I have done everything possible but Government continues to help the industry down to the gutter. The facts are as clear and plain as noonday. It is very unfortunate that I should have to speak like this. I have tried not to be very caustic in my criticism, but when one sees these things going on and nothing is being done to check them one has to say something, so that at least it can be placed on record and that it cannot be said later that Government had not been advised. I wrote Government several letters on the matter. At one time I was very largely interested in the industry, but now I am interested only in a general way. I am a poor man and I have a very large sum of money outstanding to me owing to the measure of control having not resulted to the benefit

of the industry. For the past year I have had no direct interest in the industry.

I notice that posters are being placed all over the country warning the people. I do not know that is going to help. I have asked questions and, as I have stated on the last occasion, the replies received have been very unsatisfactory. This morning I got replies to other questions, and while as a matter of fact replies to questions are very difficult to refer to, what is the reply I have received to this question :

Will Government state the total quantity of rice purchased by the Rice Marketing Board on and after 1st November, 1939, from the thirty-four registered exporting agents of rice, giving the names of all agents and the quantity purchased from each together with the amount paid to each exporting agent ?

That is a very legitimate question and one that involves a good deal of revenue to this Government. If Government gives me an opportunity I can indicate where I think revenue can be obtained through the reply to this question, but this is what Government says in reply :

The question relates to the financial transactions of individuals who are, moreover, business competitors, and it is considered to be undesirable and not in the public interest that the information should be made public.

Frankly I do not know what that means. There are no business competitors now in rice. I am not in the habit of making statements that cannot be proved to a large extent, and they can be wholly proved if I get the assistance of Government. I make the statement here that if this question is answered I can indicate to Government where I have a suspicion. It is based on 75 per cent. facts.

THE CHAIRMAN : It is three-quarters right ? (laughter).

Mr. JACOB : Revenue ought to come to Government if that question is answered. Perhaps it is too tedious a job or perhaps it should not be answered at all in the opinion of Government, but I do protest against these unsatisfactory answers—answers that have no bearing whatever. I cannot for the life of me understand the answer given to my question—perhaps my intelligence is very dull—as there are no rice competitors at the moment. I have heard my hon. friend, the Member for Essequibo River (Mr. Lee), ask the same question but in another way, and the information was not given him. The question was asked so as to get certain information he and I wanted, but it was denied us. I am very jealous of the privileges I enjoy here. I claim it as a right to ask these questions, and I claim too that Government is obliged to answer these questions.

THE CHAIRMAN : In ordinary parliamentary practice answers to questions not in the public interest are not given.

Mr. JACOB : Is it not in the public interest to ask why one person should have a knowledge of certain things and others should not ?

THE CHAIRMAN : That was not the hon. Member's question. The hon. Member's question was how much rice was bought and sold to certain individuals.

Mr. JACOB : If even there were business competitors, it is a matter which has happened a year ago and there are no competitors now.

The Council resumed and adjourned until the following day at 10.30 a.m.