

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FRIDAY, 18th OCTOBER, 1946.

The Council met at 2 p.m., the Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C., Deputy President, in the Chair.

PRESENT :

The Deputy President, the Hon. E. G. Woolford, O.B.E., K.C., (New Amsterdam)

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. F. W. Holder.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Mr. W. O. Fraser (acting).

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

The Hon. H. N. Critchlow (Nominated).

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

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

The Hon. Percy C. Wight, O.B.E. (Georgetown Central).

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. A. G. King (Demerara River).

The Hon. T. Lee (Essequibo River).

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

The Hon. G. A. C. Farnum (Nominated).

The Hon. H. Rahaman (Nominated).

The Hon. J. A. Vcerasawmy (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 17th of October, 1946, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT.**VERGENOEGEN LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.**

The COLONIAL SECRETARY communicated the following:—

MESSAGE No. 10

Honourable Members of the Legislative Council:

You will recall that in October, 1945, this Council approved of the acquisition of Plantation Vergenoegen cum annexis for the sum of \$78,600 for land settlement.

2. A survey of the front lands of the estates between the railway line and the Essequibo River disclosed that certain pieces of these lands which are privately owned are used for rice planting. The front lands of the estates are to form the residential area of the settlement and as planting rice in this area will be harmful to the health of the settlers, it is essential to acquire these pieces of land.

3. Another piece of land privately owned immediately south of the railway line falls within the area to be reserved for dairy cattle and it is necessary to acquire this land also.

4. The lands were valued by the Government Valuer at \$5,861.04. but the prices asked by the proprietors were far in excess of the valuation.

5. The matter was considered by the Vergenoegen Land Settlement Committee and while it was considered that the proprietor's prices were too high, the Government valuation was thought too low. The Committee advised that the Commissioner of Local Government should see the owners and try to arrange a fair price as they considered it desirable that acquisition of the land under the provisions of the Acquisition of Land (Land Settlement) Ordinance,

No. 14 of 1943, should be avoided if possible. The Commissioner of Local Government has accordingly interviewed the owners and after long negotiations, a price of \$7,217.80 was agreed upon which includes compensation for all coconut and fruit trees.

Two pieces of land north of the railway line in the residential area will be laid out as house lots and may be sold so that the purchase price can be recovered, but the piece of land south of the railway line will be retained and will be rented for the use of dairy cattle.

Members are therefore invited to approve of the purchase of the lands and to vote the sum of \$7,217.80 therefor.

GORDON LETHEM,
Governor.

16th October, 1946

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

VERGENOEGEN LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY gave notice of the following motion:—

That, with reference to Governor's Message No. 10 dated 16th October, 1946, this Council approves of the purchase of certain lands at Vergenoegen for \$7,217.80.

ORDER OF THE DAY.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING BILL.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved the first reading of a Bill intituled:

"An Ordinance to make provision for the orderly and progressive development of land, cities, towns and other areas whether urban or rural, to preserve and improve the amenities thereof and for other matters connected therewith."

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

WORKING CLASS HOUSING BILL.

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

"An Ordinance to make provision with respect to the housing of persons of the working class and for purposes connected therewith."

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I wish to point out that Mr. Laing, Commissioner of Local Government and his Department will, no doubt, in the course of time, have a great deal to do with the operation of this Bill. Mr. Laing is not, of course, a Member of this Council, but if hon. Members think they should hear him at this stage—before you make any contribution to the second reading—it is a matter entirely for yourselves. Mr. Laing will be ready—I do not know at what stage—but the point is if hon. Members would like to hear him on the Bill before they make their contribution, they could do so. I have no objection to doing so, and perhaps Mr. Laing's remarks might avoid criticism. Perhaps hon. Members will speak the whole afternoon, and in that case I would like Members to indicate what they desire to do. He (Mr. Laing) cannot anticipate when we would be finished.

Mr. JACOB: I think the best course would be for Mr. Laing to hear criticisms and reply to them. He has been responsible in a large measure for the preparation of this Bill and unless he hears what hon. Members of this Council have to say he would just be repeating his own views, perhaps. I am prepared to go on now.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Would any other Member like Mr. Laing to speak first?

Mr. FERREIRA: I prefer to hear Mr. Laing today.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: So do I.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The hon. Member for North Western District prefers the other course. As there is no general uniformity as to what should be done, I think the best course is to let hon. Members make their own contributions.

Mr. JACOB: I am most anxious that we should proceed with this Housing Bill. The housing situation is an acute problem not only in this Colony but in other parts of the world and, particularly, in Great Britain. I am a little surprised that in this Colony we have not made much progress in this matter up to the present time. I do not know if I can say that we have made some progress. I do not share that view, but perhaps other Members

would say so. What I have to say would be very brief, and I wish to point out that no progress has been made at all. Some of us might say that we have made some progress, and one hon. Member might say we have made a great deal of progress. I was interested to hear the address of the hon. Mover of this Bill. He quoted largely from the report of the West India Royal Commission and also from the report of the West Indian Housing Committee. Things seem to have been just going from one committee to another in connection with this housing, and they made their reports extensively. I think we have seen many papers about the housing problem and we have a very bulky document before us here today. It seems that we have now got down to something practical.

I have a bulletin here from the Labour Party in Great Britain and, with your permission, sir, I would like to show what progress has been made there, so that we might get some idea as to how we should proceed—after hearing of the marked progress that has been made in Britain. This Bulletin is dated August, 1946, and gives the housing report of the House of Commons up to July, 1946, and here am I referring to it in this Colony of British Guiana on October 18, 1946. It shows the progress that is being made in the matter of housing—a very good account of how it is being carried out. I am very glad Mr. Laing is here, so that he would hear something about it. The pace at which the schemes are being executed in Britain can be gauged from the fact that at the end of one year accommodation for over 330,000 families was completed or being built.

In England and Wales, the houses completed in June were 42,708; while in May the total was 35,594. As regards permanent structures, in June these were 102,085 making a total of 123,919 in England. In Wales the total was 109,483. Then we have the figures for Scotland. The total for Scotland was: Completed Houses—June, 7,348; May, 6,024. Under Construction:—May, 17,456; June, 20,065. The total for Great Britain (of houses under construction) was:—May—126,895; June—144,155. The total completed in Great Britain in May numbered 42,018; and in June, 50,570.

Now, sir, in England efforts are being made to bring production up to peacetime level and yet all these people have done something. They found it possible to do something practical, but we have done practically nothing in this Colony. We have put up a few houses at Wortmanville, but they have been hadly criticized and I am not completely satisfied about them myself. The hon. Member for Western Essequibo who is the Mayor of Georgetown, will probably defend them and say something about the matter. As regards the country districts, I was a member of the Rural Housing Committee and I have the report of that Committee here. It was appointed on February 9, 1943, and it reported on September 30, 1943. The report contains a list of the number of houses to be pulled down, the number to be repaired, the number to be extended, and the total to be repaired in Essequibo. I think it is quite a comprehensive report. That was in September, 1943, and up to now only a few model houses have been built. That is the progress we have made as regards rural housing—model houses are still being built and, perhaps, the Commissioner of Local Government will tell us how many have been built, how many occupied and so forth. I feel very strongly in this matter, and it appears that we in this Colony are only concerned about talking—making long speeches and making long reports, printing them and so on. We are experts in this respect, but we do nothing practical. I say let us begin to erect houses—let us acquire the land. Government have enough power to acquire the land and I do not think they require any more. If they do, let them get it. We have the machinery to do these things and yet we are wasting time and doing nothing practical.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I just like to point out to the hon. Member that there is another very long Bill that is necessary besides this.

Mr. JACOB: Perhaps we will continue to have Bills and legislation, but nothing practical.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I just want to say that there is only one more—not two.

Mr. JACOB : I am not prepared to enter into any acrimonious discussion about this matter. I want to see houses built and I want to see the people in them too.

As regards this Bill, Clause 4 (3) says :—

- “(3) The Governor shall appoint —
- (a) five fit and proper persons, and
 - (b) five fit and proper persons who are not officers in the public service,—
- to be the ten other members of the Central Authority.”

I have always advocated in this Colony—and I think Government has conceded it to some extent—that on these Authorities, Boards and Committees there should be a majority of persons elected by the people and responsible to the people, so that some responsibility could be placed for their action or inaction when the time comes. I suggest that this clause be amended to read “four fit and proper persons, and six fit and proper persons who are Members of the Legislative Council of the Colony.” That would mean that the Authority would be composed, as suggested in this Bill, of eleven persons, six of whom would be representatives of the people—whether nominated or elected it does not matter—on whom the public would place some responsibility for anything done or not done. Government has failed, I am sorry to repeat, up to the present time to do anything practical in this matter. Government must put some of its responsibility on the people’s representatives. That is the cry throughout the world, but I think it is not recognized here. I would further suggest that six members of this Council should be on this Authority, along with four other persons and the Chairman. I am going to move an amendment to that effect at the proper time.

Clause 8 (3) reads :—

- “(3) Where three members of the Central Authority address a requisition, in writing, to the Secretary asking that a meeting of the Central Authority be summoned to consider the business specified in the requisition, the Secretary shall forthwith summon an extraordinary meeting of the Central Authority to be held for the purpose on a day not later

than twenty-one days after the date upon which he received the requisition. Except by leave of the Central Authority, no business other than that specified in the requisition, shall be transacted at the extraordinary meeting.”

The point I desire to make is that the Authority will hold its meetings once a month, yet if a requisition is sent in the Secretary must summon a meeting not less than 21 days afterwards. If there are going to be monthly meetings and immediately after a meeting is completed the members feel another should be held, why should the Secretary have the right to see that 21 days elapse before he summons another meeting

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : That is really with the object of allowing time for a special meeting. It does not necessarily mean a delay of 21 days, but you will find there is usually a long time.

Mr. JACOB : My point is that rather than sending in a requisition to the Secretary, it is better to wait and let the member circulate it, putting the matter on the agenda for the next meeting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : If you look at it you will see that the particular subject can form part of the usual meeting.

Mr. JACOB : I have had experience of meetings of all kinds—directors’ and company meetings, and so on—and I am of the considered opinion that the time should be not more than 10 days after the requisition is received. That would give enough time to arrange for the meeting. Twenty-one days is certainly too long, and the object of this clause would not be achieved if that is carried. As a matter of fact, a requisition may be written today but the Secretary might not receive it for three or four days. It might be delayed in the post, or the Secretary might not be in town, and so on. I suggest, therefore, that 21 days is too long and that the period should be reduced to 10 days. If hon. Members think 10 days quite enough, then let us have it. Sub-clause (6) states :—

- “(6) ...The Chairman, or other member presiding at the meeting shall have an original and a casting vote.”

I think that no one present should have two votes. Whether he is Chairman or not, a man is a man. Even the President of this Council has not got two votes and I am going to suggest that the Chairman of the Authority be given one vote, or that he be given a casting vote only. He need not vote if a matter is decided, but if there is a tie he could vote and have it decided one way or the other.

As regards clause 11 which deals with "General Powers of the Central Authority", it says:—

"Subject to the provisions of this Ordinance, the Central Authority may—

(a) acquire land or buildings..."

I have a very strong criticism to make on the silence of this clause as regards the Municipality of Georgetown. Here we have Thomas lands laid out in some form or other with roads and so on there, yet for some reason or other the Georgetown Town Council would not allow buildings to be erected there. I think this Authority should take hold of Thomas Lands and begin to do something there immediately. Here you have a strong case. After these lands have been occupied and buildings put on them taxation should be reduced in the Town because more houses would have been put up there and lot of congestion would be relieved. We could house a few thousand people on Thomas Lands. You can decide what kind of people you want to put there and what kind of buildings you wish. The people who remove from Georgetown to Thomas Lands would relieve the congestion in Georgetown, and why the Town Council of Georgetown has done nothing in this matter beats me. Then also, there is the old Water Works site on which you have a building rotting. In the case of the Bishops' High School old building a member of the Town Council may have purchased it, but—

Mr. C. V. WIGHT: Perhaps if the hon. Member will allow me to interrupt, I would say that no member of the Town Council has purchased it. It is very easy to find out these things. No member of the Town Council or of any other body has purchased it. An ordinary private citizen has purchased it.

Mr. JACOB: I think it would have been a very good thing if a member of the

Town Council had purchased it. My hon. friend is always making some innuendo. I am just stating certain facts as I know them. Here is a building sold and, as I have said, to a certain member of the Town Council who was seen supervising it. Possibly he did not buy in his own name. The explanation by the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight), has left me with a very peculiar impression. This building was sold and it is being used to relieve congestion elsewhere. Similarly, if the building at the old Water Works is sold the bricks and other materials could be used for relieving congestion and the Town Council would receive some revenue. Perhaps I will be told that the building is being occupied, but I say it is not being beneficially occupied and should have been sold long ago.

Further, I think the Georgetown Town Council — if they had initiative — but they have not got sufficient initiative to my mind — could have carried out a housing scheme on lands both on the East and West of the Water Works which are not occupied. The trenches could have been filled up, and there would have been no need to maintain the Canal, and what is more, the health of the city would have improved. If it has not occurred to the members of the Town Council that that should have been done, may I suggest that the Central Authority acquire this site and do the necessary work. You can at least house a few thousand people there, if you put up the right type of houses there. I do not know why there should be a particular type of houses at any particular place until and unless we have proper planning, etc. I think that as long as a house conforms with the Public Health Authorities' design it should be constructed anywhere. So I commend to the Central Authority to take over the Thomas Lands immediately as well as other sites—I can name a few others — which are not being beneficially used, so that the congestion in Georgetown can be relieved.

Clause 15 reads:

"It shall be the duty of the Central Authority—

- (a) to consider the needs of the Colony with respect to the provision of housing accommodation for persons of the working class in any particular area...

That is, it shall be the duty of the Central Authority to prepare housing schemes. I would like the Commissioner of Local Government to tell us something practical. He knows; he is in close touch with the activities of Government. As to what is really being done in regard to rural housing in the Essequibo area and other areas, I certainly do not know. It is true a Rural Housing Committee has been appointed under the Ten-Year Development Plan, but apart from that, I think, the sooner the Commissioner of Local Government makes up his mind and puts up something practical so that something can be done expeditiously the better it will be for all concerned. I now come to clause 46 in Part VII of the Bill. It reads :

"(1) For the purposes of this Ordinance the funds of the Central Authority shall be

(a) the proceeds of loans which may be raised by the Governor from time to time for the purposes of this Ordinance:

Provided that pending the raising of any such loans it shall be lawful for the Governor by warrant under his hand to authorise the Colonial Treasurer to make advances to the Central Authority in such sums and on such terms and conditions as he may think fit;"

I do not think the word "Governor" there is properly put, but that is not my comment at this stage. I just draw the attention of the hon. Mover of the motion to it, so that it may be amended. I desire to refer to paragraph (b) of this sub-clause which reads :

"(b) such other moneys as may be authorised by resolution of the Legislative Council to be paid to the Central Authority out of the revenues or surplus balances of the Colony;"

Now, sir, whatever may be Government's intention regarding the composition of Boards and Authorities, etc., if this Council is responsible for financing the scheme it should commend itself to Government that a majority of Members of this Council should have the oversight of this expenditure. So long as this Council is going to vote the money either from revenue or surplus balances, this Council should have a majority voice in the control of this Authority. Clause 47 deals with financial and accounting matters. I am not at all happy about this clause.

Sub-clause (3) says :

"All payments out of the funds of the Central Authority shall be made, upon vouchers submitted to and approved by the Chairman, by an officer appointed for the purpose by the Central Authority."

That is not good enough. The whole Authority should be able to approve of payments and to see after the finances of the Central Authority and not only the Chairman must approve of payments. The Chairman, according to this Bill, is appointed by the Governor. His appointment is statutory, and he only is to have the right to approve of payments. This can be interpreted to mean a lot of things. I see the hon. the Deputy President smiling.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : I am amazed at your construction. I think, it means that the payments and vouchers will be supervised by the Chairman, but the authority for payments will be by the whole Authority. You may be right that I was smiling, but that is all I am thinking of at the moment.

Mr. JACOB : I am not a lawyer. I am not skilled in that profession, but I am a little skilled in accounting. I have been Secretary of several companies and to Directors. I run my own business, and I am not at all happy about the wording of this paragraph. I have in mind what happened to the B.G. Rice Marketing Board—the great frauds that have gone on there from time to time in Georgetown and in the country districts. So I should be most unhappy to see legislation passed here not giving security to expenditure and not seeing that the accounts and vouchers are properly audited. I am not happy about the Rice Marketing Board's audit at all. It is audited by one of the Colony's best accountants I am told, but the certificate issued by that firm of accountants is not worth the paper it is written on. I have said it here, and I shall continue to say it so long as I remain a Member of this Council. I want to see public money properly spent and the vouchers properly inspected; then I will be satisfied. I cannot understand this clause being worded in this way to give the Authority—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I appreciate the point the hon. Member is making.

Mr. JACOB : The Chairman can say "Here is my authority." It has happened and it is happening in the Rice Marketing Board at the present time. I challenge any Government Officer to dispute that fact

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : The hon. Member should stick to the point at issue, and when we come to the Rice Marketing Board he can take opportunity to refer to it. The Chairman of the Board is not here.

Mr. JACOB : I am not concerned about that. I am sorry he is not here. I am just making this particular reference in support of my argument. It cannot be disputed. I am saying that I do not like the wording, and I suggest that the clause be worded in a different way. Sub-clause (6) of this very clause says :

"Cheques against the banking account required to be kept by the Central Authority shall be signed by the Chairman or such other member of the Central Authority as may be appointed by resolution for the purpose, and countersigned by an officer authorised by resolution of the Central Authority."

That, I say, is not good enough too. As in most Companies' Articles all these accounts should be signed by two members. The Chairman can be included, but there should be no special preserve for the Chairman. Two members of the Authority, one of whom may be the Chairman, should sign with another officer. As in most Companies two Directors and the Secretary sign all cheques. Everything should be done in the proper way, and I think every hon. Member of this Council would support that suggestion of mine. Here you are going to have millions of dollars spent. If this Government is serious and wants to do something in connection with housing, millions of dollars will have to be spent. Otherwise, then I anticipate nothing will be done. My idea is that millions of pounds (sterling) will have to be spent. This is a most comprehensive scheme, and you must have confidence in the people and the methods should be such as to arouse no suspicion at all. I suggest that this clause be differently worded and that the Chairman should have no special authority whatever. The Chairman must be a member. The Governor should take one of the mem-

bers and make him Chairman and not that the Governor should appoint a person as Chairman and as a member.

I was dumbfounded yesterday when I received certain replies to questions about the finances of this Colony to find that the Governor's approval is sufficient to pay out any sum of money. Then, we are a dictatorship here. I am very jealous of my privileges as a Member of this Council. Before the Constitution of this Colony was changed, the Combined Court held the purse strings of the Colony. We are given greater powers I am told, and yet you have a single individual—the Governor of the Colony, whoever he is—having the right to pay out money. I am taking the matter up; I am not leaving it there. It is not right. Here you have a Bill coming forward providing that the Governor shall appoint a Chairman and that Chairman can do what he likes. The Deputy President may shake his head and smile.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : I am not smiling. If you are referring to this clause it says "Cheques shall be signed by the Chairman and countersigned by an officer....." You object to that !

Mr. JACOB : I keep a cheque book in my store. I can write a cheque, sign it and have it cashed. That is done every day. As long as it is cashed we would collect the money after. I think the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Percy Wight) would appreciate the point I am making. The clause says : "Cheques against the banking account required to be kept by the Central Authority shall be signed by the Chairman....."

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : Read on !

Mr. JACOB : "or such other member of the Central Authority as may be appointed by resolution for the purpose, and countersigned by an officer authorised by resolution of the Central Authority." That is saying that two persons shall sign, and I am saying that it must not be less than three.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : You want some other person than the Chairman. You did say that.

Mr. JACOB : I said three persons, any three—two members of the Authority, including the Chairman, and an officer of the Authority.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : You did give the impression by the statement you made that you object to cheques being signed by one person alone. The clause makes it possible for two persons to sign, the Chairman and another person authorised by the Central Authority itself.

Mr. JACOB : And I went on to say "countersigned by the Secretary." I think I repeated it—two members of the Authority, the Chairman may be one.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I understood what the hon. Member said. He said that the cheques should be signed by two persons and the Chairman should have no special authority. In other words, any two members of the Authority should be permitted to sign cheques countersigned by an officer of the Authority.

Mr. JACOB : That is my point. Then I do not understand paragraph (c) of subclause (7) which says :

"the appointment of officers to receive and to make payments on behalf of the Central Authority;

Perhaps that will be explained. That is a little bit too complicated for my intelligence. Then paragraph (e) says :

"the vouchers required and the method to be adopted in making payment out of the funds of the Authority;"

I lay emphasis on the word "method." I am not at all happy about clause 47 of this Bill which deals with financial and accounting matters, and particularly paragraphs (c) and (e). I am unable to understand what is meant. I trust that will be explained when the time comes. Clause 57 deals with the transfer to the Central Authority of certain rights, assets and liabilities. There again, what are we doing? We have done something before and we are now transferring it to this Central Authority to run and control when this Bill becomes law. That is what we are experts in doing—shuffling papers and repealing and amending.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I think the hon. Member is not justified in making that comment. At the time when the Wortmanville Housing Scheme Bill was before this Council, it was mentioned by me that there would be a comprehensive Bill dealing with the whole matter of housing, and that when that Bill comes before the Council the Wortmanville Committee will disappear and the whole scheme will come under this Body. It is not a question of shuffling.

Mr. JACOB : I accept that explanation, but that does not explain the report of the Rural Housing Committee.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I was answering the question with regard to the Wortmanville Housing Committee with which the Bill is dealing.

Mr. JACOB : Sub-clause (2) of clause 57 goes further. I do not think I have much more to say

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but I want to tell the Council that the hon. Member has spoken for more than half an hour.

Mr. JACOB : I think I have made a very valuable contribution. I want to make my last comment on clause 75—"Expenditure by Committee to be defrayed by the Central Authority." There again it says :

"Any expenditure incurred by the Committee shall be deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the Central Authority and shall be defrayed by the Central Authority on the certificate of the chairman of the Committee."

The whole Bill gives the Chairman very great and wide powers, especially in regard to financial matters. If there was any doubt as to what I was saying in regard to the other clauses when I said the Chairman should not have special authority, here you have clause 75 declaring that any expenditure incurred by the Committee shall be deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the Authority and shall be defrayed by the Authority on the certificate of the Chairman of the Committee. These powers are far too wide for the Chairman, and I suggest that the clause be amended. There should be a certificate by two members

of the Committee, countersigned by the Secretary. As I have said already, most business people do that. That is all. I am sorry I have taken half an hour of the Council's time, but I would like to say that when the hon. Mover was addressing the Council he took more than three times that period.

Mr. FARNUM: Although it is rather late I still feel Government should be congratulated on bringing forward this Bill. We in the villages are indeed very pleased to see the provisions of this Bill applied to the villages. To me it ushers in a new era in village administration. I have in mind a particular district where it was hoped to lay it out on modern lines but there was no assistance to be had when one referred to the Public Health Ordinance of the Colony. Consequently, certain conditions had to be inserted in the transports for the land which the Local Authority sold in order to achieve the object of that Authority. I look forward to great assistance from this Central Authority to make the village districts really become up-to-date places of which the villagers can feel proud to be residents. We look forward to help in providing the amenities of life—social services, and improvement in our housing conditions—so that instead of the youths of our villages finding themselves into Georgetown to swell the ranks of the unemployed our villages will be made so attractive as not only to retain them but to cause people from the city to take up residence among us.

I am also glad to see one particular provision in this Bill, and that is in respect of the compulsory acquisition of land. Very often we are unable to carry through roads or to do certain things to improve the districts on account of not being able to acquire the land, and I am very glad that power is being given to the Committee to do so. Lease is another thing I would like to refer to. The leases one finds in the rural districts are as a rule very large, and I am glad the Central Authority will have power under clause 54 (c) to define the terms and conditions of these leases.

As regards the interpretation of "persons of the working class", I feel it does not go far enough. It does not seem to me that

any provision has been made for that, perhaps, long-suffering group of persons known as the middle class. I think they are in need of help in the same way as artisans and people of that kind and, I think, the amount of \$15 in paragraph (d) of the definition should be increased to \$25. The paragraph I refer to reads:

"(d) Persons whose income in any case does not exceed an average of fifteen dollars a week or of such other sum as the Central Authority may in their discretion decide;"

That amount of \$15 should be increased to \$25.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: When the Committee stage is reached the hon. Member can move an amendment to give effect to his suggestion. The hon. Member is quite in order, however, to refer to it.

Mr. FARNUM: I have nothing more to say, except that I hope this Bill will soon be implemented and will not take years to be brought into operation. There will be no difficulty in finding land in and around Georgetown, perhaps towards the eastern end of the City. I do not know if I would be justified in saying—in fact it has been suggested—that D'Urban Park is the property of the inhabitants of this Colony, and perhaps it may take a good housing scheme.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It belongs to the inhabitants and is held by the Demerara Turf Club, Ltd., who pay an annual lease.

Mr. KING: Every once in a while a law is placed in the Statute Book of this Colony for which the Governor, the draughtsman of the Bill and the Members of this Council who approve of that Bill can justly be proud. I think this is such a measure. I have often said that so far as I am concerned, I would rather lead a dog's life than to lead the life of the poor in this City. Efforts have been made for years and years to relieve the anxiety and financial worry of the poorer classes but no attempt has been made in the last 150 years to improve the living conditions in which the poorer classes of the Colony have to exist. They are shocking. This Bill is overdue by about 100 years, and I am glad

to think I am one of the Members of this Council who is going to put on the Statute Book a Bill which, I hope, will relieve in a great measure the shocking living conditions of the poor. I have always said that the education of the poorer classes, the provision of cultural and social services are just so much eyewash and money wasted unless you can improve the conditions under which they live. I will never believe that you can take a boy of this City living in the appalling and shocking conditions under which some of them have to live and tell me you are going to make somebody of him because you put him in a school for five or six hours a day and give him a certain amount of social services. To me it is nonsense. First improve the conditions in which he has to live. Take him out of the slums and dirt and the hovel in which he and his family have to exist, and then make him one of whom we can be proud as a citizen of this Colony.

I sincerely hope that this Bill is going to be enforced to its fullest possible measure. It is not going to be passed today or tomorrow, but whenever it is passed I hope it will not be forgotten and pigeon-holed, and that we with a somewhat free conscience will feel we have done well by the people in this Colony. If the provisions are enforced we will have taken steps to solve the problem of providing houses for the classes to whom we undoubtedly owe something. The efforts made recently by the Town Council are what I consider to be a most laudable effort to improve the living conditions of the working classes. The houses put up at Wortmanville have been very foolishly referred to as cowsheds, but I am perfectly sure that the class of person who would live there would not find better houses anywhere and would not describe them as such. To refer to them as cowpens only shows a certain amount of pique and meddling which, to my mind, is perfectly unjustified. For each of those buildings to be rented at \$10 per month to persons who are now in hovels and rooms in shocking conditions, would mean a definite improvement in the living conditions of these people.

I say again that the Town Council and Government should be congratulated for endeavouring in this way to improve the living conditions of people in this City. I only hope that instead of providing accom-

modation for 48 families they would be able to provide for 4,000 families, because I am perfectly sure that conditions of that kind would greatly benefit the class of persons for whom they are intended. I think Government should be congratulated on this measure, and I am sure that subject to certain amendments every Member of this Council would support the principles of this Bill. It is really a laudable object and I think every possible opportunity would be taken to give effect to its provisions and in that way try and make this City, especially for the working classes, something of which we will all be proud.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT: I would like to disagree with the last speaker when he makes a statement about congratulating the Municipality of Georgetown and the Government with respect to this Bill. I am a member of the Town Council and would say that it is not the Town Council at all. It is Government and this Council. I quite agree that this Bill has come at the right time, and I do not think the criticism levelled at it by the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) would prevent Members from giving it the support it deserves. I think it would serve a most useful purpose in providing the poor people with houses they desire to have. I can say that I have ventured myself to meet the conditions of the working classes—servants particularly. I ventured to put ranges and cottages in Carmichael Street, and although they cost a lot of money for materials the houses were rented fairly cheap. I can see the question will arise as to how the money is going to be raised to carry out the housing schemes under this Bill. If we are to issue debentures for it I can appreciate that this is the right time to do so because money is very cheap.

With regard to the statement made by the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob), I think every Member here knows that you are not only a prophet but also a fair-minded person and, perhaps, that is why you allowed what the hon. Member said to go unchallenged. The question of rice marketing has occupied a great deal of his attention, no doubt, but when he takes the liberty—and you permit him—to challenge a reputable firm of auditors, I think that is

giving him very considerable latitude. I think it is regrettable that this gentleman should be allowed to use this Council as a cockpit for his battles. I appreciate the work that he can do—he takes a keen interest in things and is also a credit to himself financially—but he is a businessman and for him to come here and criticise a reputable firm of auditors in the manner he has done, I maintain, is not proper.

Mr. JACOB : May I rise to a point of correction? I said that form of report was not worth the paper it was written on. I also said that the firm is one of high repute, but they had not gone into matters very carefully.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : They have affixed their signature to that document and that is sufficient for anybody. I repeat that, but perhaps the hon. Member speaks a different language from myself.

As regards this Bill, I say again that it has taken a long time before it has got here. There are certain points which I would raise when the Committee stage is reached and I hope they would be considered carefully. As regards Thomas Lands, in reply to the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) I would say that it is too absurd for words to talk of allotting spots there to put up buildings of the description that we want to put up for these people. I happened to be Mayor at the time when the lots were put up for sale and people, I am quite sure, did not know what they were purchasing. Some thought they were buying lots from Camp Street going East, whilst, as a matter of fact, they were purchasing less than half that distance. The sales were not concluded by the Council because of the fact that they could not get water and sewerage connections. Government then held that the lands should be left open, especially as they were opposite the hospital.

With regard to the statement made by the hon. Member for North Western District about the purchase of the Bishops' High School old building, he turned and looked at me when he was making it, but I want to assure the world, as a man, that Percy Claude Wight has nothing whatever to do with the purchase of that building.

At a meeting of the Public Works Advisory

Committee I heard that the building had been sold and I remarked to the Director of Public Works and the Chairman of the Committee that I thought it was a great mistake to sell it for the amount mentioned. I was told that the Colonial Secretary had confirmed the purchase which I tried to veto.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : To a point of correction. I confirmed the sale.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : The Colonial Secretary confirmed the sale before it reached the Public Works Advisory Committee; is that correct?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Absolutely correct.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : I have had nothing whatever to do with it and I am quite sure the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) knows that I had nothing whatever to do with that purchase. Not a penny of mine went into it.

Mr. JACOB : May I say that the proper thing was done? Here is a building that was old and sold and is now being used. I cannot understand why this interpretation is being put on what I have said.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : Every Member of the Council sitting around here heard what the hon. Member said and I cannot understand why such statements are being made. The hon. Member should try to say what he wants to say in a few minutes and do without giving us all these harangues. I am going to make a few suggestions in Committee stage and I am sure they would meet with the approval of every Member of this Council. I have gone through the Bill and read it, but I understood His Excellency to say yesterday that we would be given an opportunity to digest it properly and to come back here next week and proceed with it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : That is so. Every opportunity will be given.

Mr. PERCY C. WIGHT : Perhaps when the different clauses are in Committee I would say something more. With regard to the question of distrust and the number of persons to sign on behalf of the Central Authority, we have to put confidence in someone and there must be somebody to do

such things. Someone has to be honest and you cannot be always suspecting people. There is no suspicion of disinterest on the part of anyone. Money has been thrown away by Government in the past, but without venturing nothing could be done. I have been told in this Legislature, once, that I am a Jonah, but I am satisfied that it is not true. My prophecy has come out true. I said there would have been a requisition for more money for the Vergenoegen Land Settlement Scheme and my prophecy was perfectly correct when I said that we could not buy all the lands for the money then being voted. Before it is finished we might require twice as much money, but I am giving it a chance. As regards this Bill, I would say that we should delay as little as possible. Let us act more and talk less and give the people what they have been waiting for all these years.

Mr. LEE : It seems to me that all of us in this Colony desire this Bill and, as has been stated by the hon. Member for Georgetown (Mr. Percy Wight) we have to consider whether we are going to raise the money now or after this Authority has been nominated and starts to function. If we wait until that time we might lose the opportunity to get money at a cheap rate. What I desire is that this Council should give the scheme 15 years from now and we would see if the City has increased in population. The residents are becoming conscious of the need for certain social amenities and they are looking around and asking whether we are going to expand. We cannot go upward, downward, or northward. If we go southward and start slum clearing, carrying out something like the Wortmanville scheme, that would not meet the idea of living standards as approved by socialism throughout the world. Let us assume for the sake of argument that we would accept such a scheme as suitable for the working classes; can anyone say whether we would be able to raise sufficient money—even with the assistance of the Imperial Government—to clear all the slums in the south of the City to say nothing about the clearing of lands in other parts? I would ask hon. Members of this Council to go and see how these people live, and would urge that if there is any real desire to improve the standard of their living conditions we should

not advocate that schemes similar to the Wortmanville Housing Scheme be carried out anywhere else. It has been stated that when the people live very near each other many discords and rows take place resulting in cases in the Magistrate's Court. Children would also come into contact with each other too much, and that is not in keeping with socialism as taught throughout the world.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : May I ask the hon. Member if he thinks the people in this Colony are entirely different from those in England, America and even Trinidad where, instead of building small cottages they are putting up flats of two and three storeys to house the working classes?

Mr. LEE : I do not think the hon. Member for Western Essequibo has grasped the idea of the standard of socialism which is being preached throughout the world including British countries. Wherever socialism is being preached it is being advocated that each family should live in a house by itself and not put in flats along with others.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : Is England socialistic?

Mr. LEE : England is not socialistic if I may say so, but the people there are trying to reform and to accept certain forms of socialism where it is practicable. I am asking whether Government would give the assurance that they would raise sufficient money for slum clearance in this Colony and for the acquisition of some of the lands at La Penitence estate? If hon. Members go there they would see the terrible conditions under which the working-class people live. If we are going to improve those conditions then a promise must be given that the Colony would raise the money, otherwise this would be just an Ordinance on the Statute Books and hedging on the part of Government to give the people what they want and what they deserve. I am a member of the Essequibo Housing Scheme Committee and I am anxious to see houses erected for the working classes.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : May I ask the hon. Member what he means by "hedging"?

Mr. LEE : I am only suggesting so.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Yes; but what do you mean ?

Mr. LEE : I would give an analogy. Under the Essequibo Housing Scheme a proposition was put up that the cost of a building would be \$750, but at this time the cost of the materials alone—if you are able to get them—would be much more and one cannot erect a house in accordance with the plan drafted by the Colonial Development and Welfare Organisation without financial assistance from the Imperial Government. That is what I call “hedging”, and it would be necessary to increase the amount in order to give the working people an opportunity to improve their dwellings. This Council agrees that the slums should be cleared and we are prepared to vote the money to do so. If it is desired to carry out the scheme in a proper manner it should be started at once as it would take about seven years or more to put through. As I have already stated, it would just be “hedging” if we are going to put this Ordinance on the Statute Books and have the Imperial Government saying “you have got no security for the raising of the necessary funds.” Perhaps only \$1,000,000 would be raised and then the greater part of the scheme would not be carried out. Similarly, a just method should be evolved for the Essequibo Housing Scheme. Government have erected some model houses in that district and some of the people there have been asking for financial assistance to improve their houses, but Government have not been able to grant any. I would ask the Commissioner of Local Government to say what is the cost of the model houses that they want to build for the people. The cost is not really known, and that is why I say there has been nothing but “hedging”, and that Government is not going to carry out the scheme. This Bill is being passed for that purpose, however.

Clause 4 of the Bill states that the members of the Central Authority shall hold office “during the Governor’s pleasure”, and if that is going to be done what kind of persons are we going to have there ? I know that certain Members of this Council would be able to serve as Chairman and would be able to carry the fight to Government but, would Government appoint these men ? I urge, therefore, that the Chairman of the Central Authority should be an

Elected Member of this Council and that the Nominated Members should be left out. I will move that as an amendment at the proper time, the reason being that if an Elected Member is appointed Chairman he would be responsible to the people for what he does. Let us assume for the sake of argument—and here I might say that I have a certain liking for the hon. Member for North Western District—

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : If this is going to be a mutual admiration society, then I do not know where it would all end. (Laughter).

Mr. JACOB : I rise to a point of order. I think there should be some order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : The hon. Member who has spoken has interrupted. The hon. Member (Mr. C. V. Wight) was speaking about the hon. Member (Mr. Lee) who was expressing much appreciation of another Member, and we were prevented from hearing it. (Laughter).

Mr. LEE : The key to the success of every constituted body lies in the constitution of that body, and that constitution should be of men who would express their opinions freely and without fear or favour. The first thing we find here is that the Chairman of the Central Authority would be nominated by the Governor. We should get the proper men to be members of the Authority. I am in agreement with the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) in respect of the ten remaining members of the Authority. I take it that the five fit and proper persons in paragraph (a) will be Officials. I may be wrong but, if they are not, they will be men who represent certain institutions and particular associations in this Colony. If that is so, I have no quarrel about that, save and except that the number should be four and not five and the other six members should be elected from this Council by Members of this Council, because the Members of this Council should be responsible for the proper administration and success of any housing scheme in the Colony. There is this to be said about why I have raised that point. When you take —

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I do not wish unnecessarily to interrupt the hon.

Member, but do I understand him to say that he agrees with the hon. Member for North Western District that there should be four members appointed by the Governor and the other six to be elected from this Council?

Mr. LEE: To be elected from this Council by Members of this Council. There is a clause in this Bill whereby any landed proprietor can make application to the Central Authority for the purpose of clearing a slum area and erecting buildings in respect of his land. In my opinion landed proprietors or proprietors of estates will then be given an opportunity to clear their slum areas and to erect buildings. I would like to warn Government that such applications must be considered in a very searching manner, because at the present time you will find, if you travel through the country, that certain proprietors—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Is the hon. Member referring to clause 24?

Mr. LEE: That is the clause in respect of which I am asking Government and Members of this Council to take particular note. Why I refer to this clause is this: If the Government does not accept the principle of electing Members of this Council to be on the Central Authority the Governor may appoint as Chairman and members of the Authority such individuals that immediately the Colony might be pushed into something that has not been asked for, because the dwellings that might be erected and the areas that might be given to the people may not be what this Bill is calling for. The Bill is calling for slum areas and in the rural areas there should be separate buildings wherein persons can be housed with land space on which to have chicken farms or cow-byres as well as space for kitchen gardens. If you look carefully at the idea of the proprietors of sugar estates you would find they are giving neither a lease nor are they allowing people to build houses on their lands. That is not slum clearing under this Bill. Therefore I ask hon. Members to consider carefully the constitution of this Bill. I am concerned only with the consideration of this Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Do you mean the Central Authority?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I do not think the hon. Member needs to labour that point. I may give a recent instance in our experience of the way in which the Governor may be expected to nominate a Chairman and that relates to the nomination of the hon. Member for Central Demerara to the chairmanship of the Rice Marketing Board. I cannot conceive that in these days a Governor will not either consult the Legislature or the Executive Council on this question of nomination. The hon. Member is quite right to draw attention to it, but that has been already done by the hon. Member for North Western District. If the hon. Member says he agrees with his comment, is not that sufficient?

Mr. LEE: But he did not develop it sufficiently to my liking. I desire to point out that that is the root of the evil. That is what I would like hon. Members to see and to appreciate fully, so that when the time comes we can fight for it. I do agree that the present Governor is following that line of action, but I would still like it to be in black and white in the Bill so that there should be no change according to the whims of a Governor. There is this which I would like to point out as regards the acquisition of land by the Central Authority, and it is my last point. There is nothing provided in the Bill to enable us to extend the limits of Georgetown to Kitty and that touches the comment of the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Farnum—that we can apply the powers of this Bill. Can we acquire Kitty or shall we, according to this Bill, go to the Local Authority? If we have to do that, then we have not the requisite power which this Bill requires to be given. That requisite power is that wherever there is slum clearing to be done the Central Authority can go and do it. But it seems that according to this Bill the Central Authority will have to obtain the concurrence of a Village Council or a Country Authority to carry out slum clearing in their district. The Central Authority should be empowered, wherever there is a slum area in any village or estate or anywhere in the Colony, to go there and say "We intend to clear this slum area". I

desire to make it clear that the Central Authority should be given power to carry out slum clearing in any area without any intervention. With that I heartily agree and I also think Government should pass this Bill as early as possible. Further, I sincerely hope that within three months from the date of the passing of this Bill slum clearing will be undertaken in certain parts of Georgetown, because if the Central Authority do their work they would see the necessity for doing so as early as possible.

Mr. THOMPSON : I regret to say, it seems that the Romans are fiddling while Rome is burning. Here we have a very serious matter before us in this Council, the housing question, and we are still playing a fast and loose game. I want to say that Government has my heartiest congratulations on bringing forward this Bill. It is long overdue and I thought we would have gone a far way with it today instead of bringing forward so many matters which do not come within its ambit. Nominated Members of this Council represent not only Government, as it is said, but, as I feel, they represent the people's interests far more than other Members do. An Elected Member represents his constituency only, but a Nominated Member represents the Colony as a whole. That is my position here, and towards that direction I have always travelled. So when a Nominated Member is placed on a Committee he should be manly enough to carry out the dictates of his conscience. Not only should he have an opinion of his own, but when the necessity arises he should give a correct vote without any hesitation. The principle of the Bill I accept and, as I have said before, I am prepared to support it readily.

As regards the Wortmanville Housing Scheme, I am one who did not give it my full benediction. I am satisfied that the buildings could have been better arranged and could have afforded better accommodation. Not because they are intended for the working class people one should think first of the rental value of the buildings and not of the arrangement. Recently the sugar estates were told to erect better buildings for the labourers than hitherto, and they have erected cottages for them. I have visited the East Coast Demerara and seen some of the buildings that have been erected.

Why not have separate buildings for separate families rather than communal buildings as at present? I visited the buildings of the Wortmanville Housing Scheme and was the first to raise my voice as to conditions there. I said I thought those conditions very satisfactory. We should not have buildings with the people huddled as intended there. In the event, as I have said, there is a rainy day and the windows have to be kept closed the inmates of those buildings will not know when the sun is setting. It is not because the buildings are being erected to help the existing housing shortage situation that anything will do.

We have been told that there are many applications for occupancy of the buildings, but I do not take that as being indicative of their suitability. We have a town which is going very much down already, and the social atmosphere is very much polluted. In the evenings you can find young people actually sleeping on the street pavements. I think the time is ripe when these matters should be taken in hand. What are we doing for the people? In what way are we helping them? Are we going to have buildings which cannot be looked upon as being worthy of Government? It is not because you are providing housing accommodation that the people must be given anything. If we are embarking on a housing scheme, let us launch out along the correct lines and not think of quantity but of improving the social conditions of our people. Just there I want to say a word for the poor people. Their buildings may be demolished, but I hope provision is being made so that they will not be dispossessed. Whatever may be the condition of their houses, I hope they will not be dismantled and the people thrown completely out of them.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Provision has been made for that.

Mr. THOMPSON : I will not, therefore, harp on that. I have not been able to study the Bill carefully, and I therefore depend on your explanation to see where we are. Let us aim at having buildings that will be satisfactory. I suggest that you do not have buildings such as those erected under the Wortmanville Housing Scheme, but small buildings to accommodate three or four families. We know

that the influence of the home is lost, and that is the cause of all the trouble today. We have to improve the conditions under which the people live.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Clause 22 deals with the demolition order. In so far as Government's pleasure is concerned, I see no anxiety about that. Not because the people are getting the buildings at Government's pleasure they will not be there permanently. Not because a man is a misfit or is given a small income he is to be placed there. It is not proper for those statements to be made here. The shorter the time spent in useless discussion the better it would be for us. I sincerely hope our discussion here will so boil down that we will get through this Bill in a short time.

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : I am always afraid of pontifical prognostications on matters about which I know little and have probably a lot to learn. It is very difficult for one to speak on matters with which one is personally connected, especially when one hears a lot of laudable epithets and congratulatory remarks about this Bill which has been put before the Council. His Excellency the Governor, we all know, has a certain amount of initiative and a certain amount of energy. He started off by saying we must face realism. If we are given advice we must accept it unless we can find something better. His Excellency on the 18th February, 1943, appointed a Zoning Committee of which I happen to be Chairman, and I am still the Chairman until this Bill takes away that power. A survey was made, and that survey was described by the expert of the Colonial Development and Welfare for the West Indies as the best survey of its kind. It had been printed, but whether Government published it or not I have nothing to say. If we are not trained lawyers let us have our minds trained or regulated and get our facts before we criticize for the sake of criticism and nothing else. I particularly invited Members of this Council and the people of the community among whom I was born to resent, if necessary with violence, the attitude of those persons, strangers in the community, who are endeavouring to stir up sedition and dissension in one form or another. I am not going to say more on that

point. We know we have a couple of strangers who have come to the Colony and told us why we should put up buildings and how we should put them up. One, I believe, is a naturalised American and the other, I do not know what he is.

In this housing survey which we have had prepared Mr. Gardner-Medwin, the Town Planner, it was suggested that the Zoning Committee should be considered as an experiment. A Planning Authority combining the functions of a Planning Committee with that of a Zoning Committee has been operating. I refer to the statements made about what should be done and what should not be done. I thought along with others that hon. Members seemed to have forgotten that. I was Chairman of the Urban Housing Committee, which sent in a report to Government and which was appointed on the 13th February, 1943, with the following terms of reference which can be found in Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1944 (C.S.O. No. C259/1/3/3).—

"To consider and make recommendations in the light of the Housing Committee of 1934 and of any developments since, such as the recommendations of the Royal Commission or of the Comptroller for Development and Welfare as to the action which should be taken by Government in the immediate future to enable a housing scheme for Georgetown to be initiated and as to any necessary legislation for such project: and as to its financing."

I do not know if hon. Members have read this report. It was in the report of that Committee of which I happened to have been Chairman and of which the other members, if I may mention them, were Rev. Fr. Morrison, S.J., Mr. J. A. Luckhoo, Rt. Rev. Dean Hughes (now Bishop of Barbados), Hon. J. Gonsalves (a Member of this Council), Mr. H. G. Seaford and Mr. A. A. Thorne, that all the recommendations in this Bill were dealt with. These are facts which neither criticism—unless it is constructive, unless it is fair and in the interest of the community—nor anything else can get over as they are in black and white. We all thought that the Housing Board should be empowered to acquire land in the areas affected and also land with buildings which have been condemned by the Mayor and Town Council as unfit for

human habitation so as to erect small cottages at a rental ranging from \$5 to \$15 per month.

Then there is another recommendation—the erection of model cottages where necessary. As Chairman of the Wortmanville Housing Scheme and one who takes much interest in trying to get something practical done, I have had the benefit of criticism, and the community will judge for themselves. Those who have seen the houses—and there are hundreds—cannot understand the criticism; they are satisfied that the buildings are 1,000 per cent. better than anything existing in the Colony for the purpose for which they have been built. When I say hundreds I mean persons from the top right down who have been given permission and have been there. They have expressed surprise at the criticisms levelled at those buildings. What is rather unique—but I am not surprised—is our starting off with the idea of having model cottages—an ideal Utopian matter. We have experts saying that it is a great pity that the first public-spirited offer should be so criticized. Those criticisms are based on technical matters to be found in books. There are lots of books by experts which I have had the privilege of reading on the subject. In England today they are building similar flats, and in the United States of America they are doing the same thing. I have just been told so by someone who has been residing in one of the fashionable quarters just outside New York.

Mr. JACOB : May I rise to a point of information? Are they building these flats of stone or porous wood?

Mr. C. V. WIGHT : Whatever they are building them of it matters not—whether the flats are of porous or cured wood or of stone or otherwise. Perhaps they may get from the North Western District wood which the hon. Member considers cured. I shall read a fair amount of what has been told to the Committee by the expert who inspected the Wortmanville Housing Scheme.

“It was a great pity”, she said, “that the first public-spirited efforts should be so criticised. The merits and demerits of the house and the flat have been argued and discussed in every country. It is, however, generally true to say that where the clearance

of dense areas in towns is contemplated, and where (as is usual) land costs in built-up areas are high, blocks of flats are the more economical form of development in spite of the fact that the actual cost per dwelling unit is higher than that of a house”.

In Trinidad they started with the idea that they could not get into the city. The cost of building cottages would be higher than the cost of building flats, and in the case of cottages the workers would have to travel to the city in order to get to their work-place. All these things have to be taken into consideration.

Mr. LEE : To a point of information. I would like to ask the hon. Member whether the cottages in Trinidad are a success.

Mr. WIGHT : I would rather not quote the opinions expressed to me on that point. Perhaps the hon. Member has had the opportunity of hearing them also. This document goes on to say :—

“The flats at Wortmanville seem adequate in space standards, provided they are not occupied by more than two persons per room (excluding infants under one year). With the slight alteration now being made” (and this was agreed upon long before the criticisms appeared in the Press) “and provided that such overcrowding standards are accepted, the flats should form pleasantly healthy dwelling units. The general plan arrangement seems to be quite good. It provides for separate access to each flat, an unusual luxury even in better class flats in Europe and the U.S. The scheme should prove reasonably successful.”

No housing scheme is perfect. In the case of the Wortmanville Scheme it conforms to the principles laid down by the Development and Welfare in their publication “Housing in the West Indies”. The design and everything else have been strictly complied with.

Now, that is where a poor layman like myself came in. We started off thinking we should have these model flats. We started getting advice and we thought we should get something like what we have at Wortmanville and that is the result. I myself have a serious criticism to make—it is constructive and I have always done it

—because we have always been waiting on this Council for the necessary legislation. Does any hon. Member really think that after this legislation is passed we are going to have everything right within the next two or three years? The Wortmanville Scheme was intended to meet an emergency and it has alleviated the position somewhat. We are told by the experts that it is a success—that is the sum total of the matter—and people would be getting these flats at \$10 or \$12 per month each, but we are being told by laymen that the scheme is a hopeless mess and would never work. Similar schemes are being carried out, however, in England and the United States of America where they are going as high as five storeys. But, as I have already stated, anything can happen in British Guiana.

The criticism I have to make is this: not a single Member has told us anything about finance. It may be staggering, but that has been the attitude of the representatives of the people. I have no hesitation in saying that the Colonial Development and Welfare has let this Colony down—and let it down very badly. We were told that under a 10-year scheme we were to get \$1,000,000 for the whole Colony—for rural and urban housing. I make bold to say that \$10,000,000 would not be enough now that the cost of materials has increased, but yet we find that the Colonial Development and Welfare has done nothing where the question of finance is concerned. That is the first thing to be considered. This Legislature has to find the money, and I think I have stated that over and over again in another place. We have to purchase land, but are we going to do it without money? As the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Farnum, has stated—and I think I mentioned it elsewhere—we are now finding out whether we can build on D'Urban Park and put the race course on the Wireless lands if necessary. We might be able to build on the land at D'Urban Park, but build on it with what—where is the money?

Mr. JACOB : Raise a loan.

Mr. WIGHT : Raise what? \$3,000,000 is nothing. I suggest to this Council to let us get down to practicality and do something. I suggest that this Government and the Town Council have

done everything possible except finding the money. They have done everything and the springboard is with the Town Planner because he would tell us where to put our schemes. We are told he would be here shortly. The whole stage is set, and we have had criticism and other things but we have not been told where we are going to get the funds from. I think they would have to come under this clause relating to the surplus revenue of the Colony. That presupposes that this Colony would always have surplus revenue to finance this scheme. I have given instances of how Government has been moving from 1943 right away down to 1946. Legislation has been held up because we could not get printing done, owing to the fire. Every man has a right of criticism, but let it be fair, let it be real and let it be honest.

When the Town Planner comes he would tell us how to go about the scheme. We have experts in this Colony, however, who have not read a single book on the subject and yet they are ready to criticise. If we have experts here, why bring out these others to tell us what to do. We have the Colonial Development and Welfare coming down here and advising us to put up these houses, but they have failed this Colony when it comes to financing the scheme. I have no hesitation in saying that the prophecy that the Wortmanville Scheme will fail is mere verbiage. The Colonial Development and Welfare have, however, recently failed us in their allocations to this Colony and they will always fail us in matters of this kind. Let me say this—and let it go down in Hansard—that I don't care whether the Colonial Office is run by Conservatives, Labour or any other Party, I know that the sooner this Colony gets self-Government and be run by men of ability and integrity, the better it would be for British Guiana and the lower classes in this community.

Mr. JACOB : Hear, hear.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : Does any other Member wish to speak

Mr. CRITCHLOW : I rise to congratulate Government for bringing forward this Bill. I can assure this Council that it would be very much appreciated by the working classes especially, who have been

suffering great hardships at the hand of landlords. We have wasted a lot of time on this Bill already and—

Mr. JACOB : May I rise to point of order and point out that this Bill is not yet ripe to go through the second reading? Let us not fool the public.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I do not think the hon. Member is right in saying that we should not fool the public.

Mr. JACOB : Yes; two or three speeches have been made here and it is being made to appear that somebody is endeavouring to humbug this Bill.

Mr. CRITCHLOW : I am saying that we have wasted a lot of time on it already and even if it is not ripe now it will be ripe soon. Even if we have to put ashes on it—in the same way as ashes are put on sapodillas to ripen them—we will do so and get it through so as to help the poor people.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : It would appear that the majority of hon. Members who are present here this afternoon and have not spoken do not wish to make any contribution to the debate. In any event and in the possible hope that His Excellency the President might wish to be present, I am going to postpone further consideration of this measure until next week. I think we might proceed with the consideration of the next item. It is the motion relating to the Colony's participation in the proposed Regional Tourist Organisation, and I think the matter is urgent. I hope that hon. Members will remain and listen to what the Colonial Secretary has to say. The debate on the second reading of this Bill will be resumed on Thursday next.

PURCHASE OF LANDS AT VERGENOEGEN

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Sir, I desire to ask permission of yourself and of this Council to postpone consideration of the Motion dealing with the proposed Regional Tourist Organisation. This morning I received from Washington a Committee report relating to the Caribbean Tourist Conference and it would seem to be a waste of time for Members to consider the Governor's Message on this subject without a study of the report of the deliberations of that Committee. I will therefore ask your

permission to allow me to study the report and to come back to the Council again.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : Is that the feeling of all the Members present?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I may say that I am going to refer the report of the Washington Committee to the local Tourist Committee before coming back to this Council.

Mr. LEE : May I ask that a copy of the report of what occurred in Washington be sent to us?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : I think that would be done, but I cannot give a definite undertaking until I have studied it. There is another motion of which I have given notice and I would ask permission of this Council to have the Standing Rules and Orders suspended in order that we might consider the motion relating to Message No. 10, seeking the approval of this Council to purchase certain lands at Vergenoegen.

Motion for the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders put and agreed to.

Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

PURCHASED LANDS AT VERGENOEGEN

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : Sir, as Mr. Laing, the Officer who deals with this subject is present, with your permission and with the consent of the Council I think it would be proper and better if he himself speaks on the motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT : With the consent of hon. Members we will hear Mr. Laing.

Mr. LAING : Sir, some eight months ago, with the approval of this Council, Pln. Vergenoegen, *cum annexis*, was purchased for the sum of \$78,600 and, also with the approval of this Council, certain sums were provided for reconditioning the drainage of those estates, while a grant was made under the Development and Welfare Act for converting the estates into a Land Settlement to be administered in accordance with the principles approved of by this Council in 1943. The sum of money provided by this Council is being spent on the reconditioning and the drainage of those estates, and the front lands of the estates

are to be used as residential sections. On examination of the estate after its acquisition, it was found that certain pieces of land which were privately owned and which fell within the residential area were being cultivated with rice. I am advised by the Public Health Authorities that it would be harmful to the health of the settlers if rice cultivation is permitted within the residential area and I therefore applied to Government for permission to acquire these lands. Negotiations were started and we have now reached agreement as to the price of these lands, and that is the sum which this Council is now being asked to provide. That sum is \$7,217.80. If this Council approves of the purchase of these lands, the area will be laid out in house lots of one-fifth of an acre each and those lots would provide additional accommodation for our settlers. I do feel, sir, that if we are to establish this settlement along proper lines and if the health of the settlers is to be safe-guarded, we must acquire these lands for the reason that they are in the residential area and are required for the purposes of house lots for our settlers.

The hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Percy Wight) made a statement in connection with the last debate when he prophesied that we would have had to come back for more money for this scheme, but I can repeat that this is not an excess of the original estimate. We have expended the amount voted for the purchase of these estates and for the laying out of the lands for the Land Settlement Scheme. This sum is in addition to the purchase money and is needed for these house lots, and particularly because we cannot expect the settlers to be healthy in a residential area where rice is being cultivated. We were advised by the Public Health Authorities that the cultivation there would be harmful to the health of the settlers. I therefore commend to this Council the motion which has been moved by the Colonial Secretary and would ask that the purchase of these lands be approved.

The Deputy President has directed my attention to the fact that it would be necessary to provide rice lands for the persons now planting rice in the residential area and these would be provided in the cultivation section of the scheme. I may mention for

the benefit of hon. Members here that we have been able during the short time these estates have been in our possession, to put under cultivation some 690 acres in the cultivation section from which rice is now being reaped and is showing a very satisfactory return. When these persons are dispossessed, if this Council approves, other rice lands would be provided for them in the cultivation section and the Settlement can invite them to become settlers and a part of the Scheme.

Mr. JACOB: I desire to second the motion. I, like the hon. Member for Georgetown Central, thought that more money would have been necessary. Land Settlement schemes, like Housing schemes, require a lot of money — possibly \$10,000,000. The additional lots now being purchased are required for residential purposes and, as already stated, the people dispossessed would get lands in the cultivation section of the scheme. The Committee is endeavouring to improve Vergenoegen as a whole and I am a little surprised that certain Members do not appreciate what is now being done.

Mr. ROTH: His Excellency the Governor has put up a very good case, but the Message has left out a somewhat important feature and that is, how much land are we going to get for this \$7,200? What is the acreage?

Mr. LAING: Very nearly 28 acres.

Mr. LEE: Although I am not a member of the Land Settlement Committee, having a knowledge of this district I commend the purchase of these lands to this Council, but I would ask the Commissioner of Local Government that in acquiring these lands and in distributing them as house lots the sellers be given the right of first purchase of the lots on which their fruit trees are situated. Some of them have these lands by transport and have planted fruit trees on them. Now that they are selling to the Government it is but right that Government should give them the first right of purchase of the house lots.

Mr. PEER BACCHUS: Just for the purpose of explanation! The Committee may sell some of the lots to recover some of the purchase price. I would ask

the Committee seriously to consider whether it would be in the best interest of the present holders to bring in new proprietors. I would much prefer in the interest of the Settlement that these lots be retained by the settlers themselves rather than be sold to different proprietors. As regards giving them lots on which to reside, I think that would be in the best interest of the Settlement, but if we divide up the lands and bring in new proprietors I anticipate trouble. I think the entire control of that Settlement should be under one Authority.

Mr. RAHAMAN: Without hesitation hon. Members of this Council should approve of this sum. These rice fields are very injurious to health. I am sure from what I have learnt that residents get malaria from these rice fields, and the settlers will not enjoy health if we allow them to remain. I think this Council should approve of the sum without hesitation.

Mr. LUCKHOO: The scheme is a very good one, and the point made by the hon. Member for North Western District (Mr. Jacob) is deserving of some consideration. The right of purchase should be given to those who are already settled on the estate and not to outsiders. I suppose that is Government's intention. Care should also be taken to see the lots are sufficiently wide to enable the people to erect houses there. Recently, certain partitioning of land carried out at Letter Kenny led to a great deal of trouble as some proprietors' houses were found to have been built on other persons' lands and

some residents were asked to remove their houses. Care should be taken in the sale of the lots, to have them properly divided for building purposes and to see that there will be sufficient room to comply with the Building Regulations.

Mr. LAING: With regard to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Mr. Luckhoo) the size of the lots will be one-fifth of an acre which Government recognizes as being a reasonable size for a house lot, including accommodation for a small house and a garden as well.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It must be a settlement of houses with garden conveniences.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would just like to thank Mr. Laing for speaking on the motion on my behalf. He knows all about it and no one better could have been asked to do so. I would like also to thank hon. Members for so readily agreeing to the motion which I now formally move:

"That with reference to Governor's Message No. 10 dated 16th October, 1946, this Council approves of the purchase of certain lands at Vergenoegen for \$7,217.80."

Mr. JACOB seconded.

Motion put, and agreed to.

At this stage the Council was adjourned to 2 p.m. on Thursday, 24th October.