

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.*Thursday, 14th March, 1940.*

The Council met at 10.30 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. F. McDavid, M.B.E. Colonial Treasurer.

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. L. G. Crease, Director of Education.

The Hon. B. R. Wood, Conservator of Forests.

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

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

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

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

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

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

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 13th day of March, 1940, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY.**REPLIES TO QUESTIONS.****INSPECTORS OF LABOUR.**

Mr. C. V. Wight asked the following questions to which the Colonial Secretary replied :

Q 1.—How many Inspectors of Labour are there? Please give names, previous service, if any, dates of appointment and salaries.

A.—There are two Inspectors of Labour whose salaries on the scale of \$2,400 x \$120—\$3,120 are paid from Head XII of the Estimates for the year 1940, approved by the Legislative Council. The offices were filled with effect as from 1st January, 1940, and the appointments gazetted on the 10th of February. The previous service of the officers appointed is given in the British Guiana Civil Service List. The Legislative Council has by resolution passed on the 8th of March, 1940, approved of provision being made for the salary of a third Inspector of Labour.

Q 2.—Is there any vacancy in the office of an Inspector of Labour?

A.—The reply is in the affirmative.

Q 3.—If the answer to No. 2 is in the affirmative, does Government propose to fill same?

A.—The reply is in the affirmative.

Q 4.—If the answer to No. 3 is in the affirmative, who is the Officer to be appointed? Please give name, previous service, if any, and salary of such officer.

A.—It is not the practice to name in advance persons whom it is proposed to appoint to vacant offices.

Q 5.—Are any of the officers referred to in the preceding question, Guianese? If the answer is in the affirmative, please give the names of such officers.

A.—Yes, one.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (VILLAGE COUNCILS)
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 1940.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and resumed consideration of the following Bill:—

A Bill intituled an Ordinance to amend the Local Government Village Councils Ordinance, 1935.

Clause 4—Validity of acts done notwithstanding disqualification.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Pretheroe): When Council adjourned yesterday, it was in order that the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Humphrys) and myself should look up the point as to what is equitable if some of the voters for the Chairman were disqualified. We could not find a case on that point and, in view of the fact that it cannot be stated with certainty what the answer is although I have my opinion about it, I propose with the consent of the Council to move that sub-clause (2) making it retrospective be deleted.

Question "That the new clause 4 as amended stand part of the Bill" put, and agreed to.

Clause passed as amended.

The Council resumed.

Mr. LAING (Commissioner of Labour and Local Government): I give notice that at the next or subsequent meeting of the Council I shall move that this Bill be read a third time and passed.

THE PRESIDENT: Supposing there is not another meeting early?

Mr. LAING: It is essential that the third reading be taken as early as possible, otherwise I will not be able to order a new election.

THE PRESIDENT: The Council will see how to-day's proceedings go and, perhaps, later in the day the Council may see fit for you to move the suspension of the Standing Rules in order to allow the Bill to be read a third time.

TOBACCO CULTIVATION DEVELOPMENT
SCHEME.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture): The motion before Council is the logical outcome of the Tobacco Officer's visit, the cost of which, as hon. Members are aware, is being met from a Colonial Development grant, gratefully accepted by this Council at a previous Session. It will

be obvious to hon. Members that if the fullest use is to be made of this officer's three-year engagement, he must be provided with facilities for work and the programme is outlined in the Sessional Paper which was laid on the table of Council yesterday. I may say that both Virginia and Black Fat types will be investigated, and the intention is naturally to make every effort to reduce the imports of tobacco into this Colony. As I have previously pointed out, Tobacco cultivation is a very highly specialized business, and the climatic conditions in this Colony present many problems which have to be carefully studied, if the results we hope for are to be achieved. I think we must bear that in mind, and the officer must be given a fair chance to put his ideas into practice.

I think the requirements have been framed on modest lines and, I am sure, the Council will readily accept the motion. I do not think it is necessary for me to elaborate on the motion as it is fully set out. I now beg to move:—

THAT, with reference to Governor's Message No. 14 dated 9th March, 1940, and in pursuance of section 11 of the Colonisation Fund Ordinance, 1937, this Council approves of the Scheme for the Development of Tobacco cultivation and the training of local tobacco growers set out in Legislative Council Paper No. 2 of 1940, involving a grant of \$7,800 from the Development Trust Fund.

Mr. D'ANDRADE (Comptroller of Customs) seconded.

Motion put, and carried.

IMPERIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. G. D. OWEN): I beg to move the following motion standing in my name on the Order Paper:—

THAT, with reference to the Governor's Message No. 15 of 13th March, 1940, this Council gratefully accepts the financial assistance offered by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom amounting to \$250,000 to be expended on the following works:—

- (a) \$142,800 on reconditioning drainage;
- (b) \$37,000 on reconditioning roads;
- (c) \$70,200 on reconditioning buildings;

and approves of this expenditure being met in the first instance from surplus Colonial Funds.

Further, that this Council adopts in principle the recommendations of the Committee which reported on the financial position of the declared drainage areas (Legislative Council Paper No. 5 of 1939) with the exception of the proposals relating to the Kitty Drainage area, and approves of the establishment of a Central Drainage Authority as recommended by the Committee.

This is a motion which, I know, will receive the whole-hearted support of hon. Members of the Council. I wish to preface my remarks by placing on record the gratitude of the Government and people of this Colony for the financial assistance which His Majesty's Government has offered to us so soon after the recommendations of the Royal Commission were received by the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The sum which His Majesty's Government has allocated for expenditure in the West Indian Colonies and British Guiana and British Honduras, as hon. Members will remember, is £350,000 and, I think, we have received a fair share in that the amount allocated to British Guiana is \$250,000, one-seventh of the total sum. The Secretary of State has attached certain conditions to his offer, and I shall refer to them presently.

About a year ago the report of the Committee on the financial position of the declared drainage areas was laid on the table of Council, and hon. Members will recollect that one of the recommendations of that Committee was that the Government should bear the cost of reconditioning the works in the drainage areas. The estimate at that time was \$330,000. Since then it is felt that the amount should be increased by fifteen per cent. owing to the increased cost due to the present war. That recommendation is in paragraph 103 of the report. A further recommendation is made in paragraph 109 and that is, that there should be established a Central Drainage Board and the work put under the control of that Board. One of the conditions attached to the offer which has been made to the Government is that the second recommendation should be given effect to, and it is hoped that hon. Members will see their way to express their willingness to adopt the general principle in that recommendation of the Committee.

The works, which it is proposed to carry out immediately, are set out in paragraph 3 of the Governor's Message. All those works, with but one exception, are works recommended by the Committee. The exception is \$7,800 provided for building a sluice at Kilmarnock. A concrete sluice is required in that area to improve the drainage, and it is considered that the cost should be met from this head.

Under "Roads" in paragraph 4 of the Message, an allocation of \$37,000 is shown, \$12,750 of which is not yet allocated, but the other works are most desirable namely the reconditioning of the Sea Wall Road, which has cracked badly from Vlissengen Road down to Camp Street; and the East Bank Road which is in a fairly bad condition. It is felt that \$17,000 should be spent on reconditioning about 2½ to 3 miles of the latter road.

With regard to the buildings mentioned in paragraph 5 of the Message it would be seen that a sum of nearly \$12,000 is not yet allocated, but with regard to the other works hon. Members would admit it is very desirable to spend the money which has been set out there for reconditioning the Public Hospital, Georgetown, the Alms House and the Eve Leary Barracks.

The second condition, if it may be called a condition, which is attached to this offer is that the funds in the first instance should be provided from surplus Colonial Funds on the understanding that when the Estimates go before Parliament for the year 1940-1941 the sum of \$250,000 would be provided therein for refund to this Colony. As His Excellency has stated in paragraph 6 of the Message, all the works set out are of an urgent character but they cannot, strictly speaking, be regarded as works forming part of a development programme although it is very necessary that they be carried out before any long range development programme is started.

Another feature of the works is that of employment. Work will be made available for the unemployed in the several areas throughout the Colony. I move that this motion standing in my name be adopted.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I am sure that this motion will be very gratefully received not only by hon. Members of Council but by the inhabitants of this Colony, especially coming at a time like this. Speaking for myself, I should like to place on record my appreciation of the immediate action which was taken to obtain a part of the assistance which we hope to receive out of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission. There is no doubt that \$250,000 coming at this time would be more than appreciated by the people of this Colony because, as hon. Members are aware and

to use a local expression, we are all going through at the present time very hard times indeed due of course to conditions beyond our control.

It is also very gratifying that the works that are proposed will afford the maximum of relief to the people of this country. There is no doubt that the reconditioning of drainage works is one of the best means of creating employment. But, sir, in so far as the motion itself is concerned, I am a little disappointed at the conditions or rather part of the conditions that are attached to it. Although I fully appreciate that it was essential to attach certain conditions, I personally would have preferred that the latter part of the motion should have been dealt with separately. If that was done, it would have afforded hon. Members of Council a fuller opportunity of dealing with the several matters arising out of the report of the Drainage Committee. It must be remembered that the recommendations of this Committee are very wide indeed. Some of them involve the writing off of loans to various Authorities and, although it would appear at first blush that the major recommendation represents the wholesale writing off of the majority of loans—in fact all of them—hon. Members would have been afforded an opportunity of offering some comments. However valuable they may be, I am not prepared to say at the moment. On that point I regret to observe the exclusion of the Kitty Drainage area and, perhaps, Government may be able to offer some reason for so doing. Perhaps, there is a very sound reason for that, but in the absence of any remarks made by the hon. mover of the motion it becomes necessary for me to deal with it. It may yet be that the recommendations of the Committee in that respect were not wide enough, and it is proposed to enlarge upon them. If that is so, then there would be no necessity for me to deal with the matter. If, however, the exclusion of the Kitty Drainage area from consideration is due to a desire to decline the recommendations of the Committee in that respect, it seems to me that there would be a lot to be said in favour of the recommendations as put forward by the Committee.

It must be remembered speaking on the omission—that is if it is Government's intention to decline the recommendation—

the Committee was at pains to point out that although this district was in a better position financially—I refer to paragraph 38 of the report—and had endeavoured with the means at its disposal to carry out improvements from time to time, it was felt that it would be equitable to recommend that the Authority be relieved of the expenditure on those improvements. I am tempted to the conclusion that because of the fact that this Authority happens to be in a strong financial position, it might be the desire of Government to decline to accept that recommendation of the Committee whereby this Authority would be relieved of this liability. If relief is going to be afforded to other drainage areas, it would only be right and equitable that this Authority should be treated in the same manner.

But, sir, this is all mere guesswork and my fears may be unjustified. As I said before, it may well be that Government has better ideas in so far as this particular area is concerned. I am hoping that it is so, because there is no doubt that this Authority on the outskirts of Georgetown has progressed considerably within recent years. The people have in my opinion showed that they are making every effort to manage their affairs properly for the improvement of the district and, I think, they ought to be encouraged in every respect for the work they are doing.

On the question of the establishment of a Central Drainage Authority, I can hardly conceive any difference of opinion about that at all. I think it would be the proper thing to do. I entirely share the views expressed by the members of the Committee that a Central Drainage Authority for the coastlands is not only desirable but essential. There is no doubt that the Drainage Boards as they exist at the present time are trying to do their best, but their best is very little. I quite appreciate that a Central Drainage Board would undoubtedly give impetus to the various District Drainage Boards. Subject to what I have said with regard to the exclusion of Kitty which I have referred to, I think, I can assure Government that I will not only support the motion but that I appreciate the motion coming as it has at this time, especially in view of the fact that it is not so long since the report of

the Royal Commission has seen the light of day.

THE PRESIDENT: It may save misunderstanding if I say a word at this stage. The hon. Colonial Secretary can elaborate in his reply if he wishes. It is perhaps not clearly stated in the Message that all the Council is asked to agree to at this stage is the acceptance in principle of the Central Drainage Authority being established. I agree that the Message can be read as an invitation to accept all the recommendations of the Drainage Committee. If that is so, I can say quite definitely that that was not intended. All the Council is expected to do is to accept in principle the establishing of a Central Drainage Authority. All questions relating to the writing off of loans, how a particular area should be dealt with in relation to the Authority etc., will remain for discussion later.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Thanks very much for Your Excellency's explanation.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I think that when one is grateful, the less one says the better. I desire only to express my sincere gratitude to His Majesty's Government for this assistance and my great satisfaction at knowing that \$55,200 of this money is to be spent on the East Coast of Demerara on drainage.

Mr. JACKSON: I would like to join in the expression of gratitude for the speedy implementing of the Report of the Royal Commission and to say that while I accept the principle of the motion and I regard with some degree of satisfaction that the various districts would be well served, I want—if this is not the proper time—when the proper time comes to put in a special plea for the continuation of the strip road on the West Coast, Demerara. It was originally intended that three miles of strip road should be done there and a little over two miles were finished when the work was stopped. I notice that there is an amount unallocated, and I am hoping that when the consideration of the allocation comes up it may be found possible for that amount or a portion of it to be spent on the strip road so as to complete the three miles intended to be done.

Mr. KING: I think the hon. Member who has just taken his seat is rather lucky to get two miles of strip road in the

district in which he lives. Perhaps he has not been along the East Bank road for I have no doubt that if he has done so, he would realize that that road is in a deplorable condition, and rather than asking Government to allocate \$12,750 in putting down another mile on the West Coast, Demerara, where the road is quite good, he would put in a plea for the people who live on the East Bank, Demerara. I feel sure that the hon. Director of Public Works agrees with me that the road has almost fallen into disuse, due entirely to the fact that the road is collapsing. I was there recently, and how the people who live there can drive along that road day after day is, in my opinion, something worthy of the endurance which this public so ably expresses. Not so long ago some of the bus-owners came to me and were rather strong in their complaint that they have to pay heavy licences annually for using their buses and something should be done to the roads. I have time and again appealed to the hon. Director of Public Works to do something, and I would be exceedingly grateful to Government even if a small portion of the road be done. I am not an authority on road-building, and it is far from me to say how far the expenditure of the amount mentioned in the Message is going to improve the road on the East Bank, but I have no doubt that under the able control of the hon. Director of Public Works the money would be spent so well that the road would undoubtedly be considerably improved.

I may also add my thanks to the British Government for their generosity, although I hope that the amount in the motion we are dealing with to-day is but a very small portion of what the British Government in its largesse is going to give this Colony. I have always felt that we are entitled to some recognition from the British Government as regards finances, and I have always hoped that the day would come when the British Government would assist us materially with our financial worries. I sincerely hope the expenditure of this money on the works suggested will help to improve considerably not only the particular objects on which it has been spent but will, I am sure, relieve what is far more important in this Colony and that is the universal cry of unemployment. I cannot say that I am too much enamoured with the idea of spending all that money on reconditioning buildings. While Government is

doing so, may I, as a citizen of this City, ask Your Excellency to pass around by the Bourda Market during the course of your drives sometimes in the afternoons and see the deplorable and terrible condition of the Police Station in that locality. It is really an eye-sore.

THE PRESIDENT: I think it is on the programme already.

Mr. KING: I am exceedingly glad to hear that. I had intended to remark that Government should set an example in the City.

THE PRESIDENT: I quite agree with the hon. Member. I think there is a vote on the Estimates for this year to replace it.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I ask leave to move an amendment to the resolution. In the last paragraph delete the words "with the exception of the proposals relating to the Kitty Drainage area, and approves of the establishment of a Central Drainage Authority as recommended by the Committee" in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth lines thereof and substitute therefor the words "with regard to the establishment of a Central Drainage Board as set out in paragraphs 109 to 112 of the Committee's report." That, I think, would get over the points raised by hon. Members.

THE PRESIDENT: That gives effect to the explanation I gave just now.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I would like to remind hon. Members that when we dealt with the Estimates this year, on page 71 the sum of \$17,500 in addition to the amount put down in this resolution was voted for expenditure on the main road and bridges in East Demerara, and similarly \$24,500 for West Demerara.

Mr. KING: I appreciate that, but I have not seen any work started as yet.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member can only rise to a point of explanation.

Motion as amended put, and agreed to.

CINEMATOGRAPH (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1940.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that a Bill intituled "An Ordinance further to amend the Cinematograph Ordinance, Chapter 105," be read a third time and passed.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question "That this Bill be read a third time and passed" put, and agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (VILLAGE COUNCILS) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1940.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) is not in his place and his motion will have to stand over. If the Council is agreeable, I suggest that the Local Authorities Bill, which was discussed just now and which is a matter of considerable urgency, may be read the third time.

Mr. LAING (Commissioner of Labour and Local Government): I move that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended to enable the following Bill to be read a third time and passed:—

A Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Local Government (Village Councils) Ordinance, 1935."

Mr. CREASE: (Director of Education) seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. LAING: I move that a Bill intituled "An Ordinance to amend the Local Government (Village Councils) Ordinance, 1935," be read a third time and passed.

Mr. CREASE seconded.

Question "That this Bill be read a third time and passed," put, and agreed to. Bill read the third time.

TARIFF PROTECTION OF LOCAL PRODUCTS AND INDUSTRIES.

Mr. JACKSON: May I ask Your Excellency's permission to move the motion standing in the name of the hon. Member for Western Essequibo. I have just received intimation from him that he would like it to go through to day. On behalf of Mr. C. V. Wight I beg to move the following motion standing in his name

Whereas unemployment is prevalent and rife in the Colony of British Guiana;

And Whereas it is desirable that local products and industries should be encouraged and protected as much as possible:

Be it Resolved,—That this Council recommend to His Excellency the Governor the appointment of a committee to consider the advisability of revising and re-adjusting without loss to the revenue the tariff duties now collectible with a view to the protection of local products and industries.

It is an acknowledged fact that there is a good deal of unemployment in the Colony and I have noted with pleasure, and I believe hon. Members of Council

have also noted with pleasure, that an effort will be made to reduce unemployment because of the amount that will be spent as the result of the hon. Colonial Secretary's motion. I think, however, that will be only a temporary relief, and I believe it is also admitted that it is desirable that protection should be given to local products and industries in order that the people of the Colony might be induced to do their best in connection with the growing of more food. The "Grow More Food" campaign, I am sure, has actuated Mr. Wight in bringing forward this motion, and I am strongly of the opinion that the motion will be accepted as a matter of course.

I must admit that the resolution is far-reaching; but it is only asking for the appointment of a Committee, and I think the Council would be well advised to ask Government to accept the terms of this motion. I beg to move the motion.

Mr. KING seconded.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: It is difficult to oppose the motion and still more difficult to support it for the reason that it does not disclose what is in the mind of the mover as to what products and industries should be protected. I take it that Government should have been looking after that business all the time, and I cannot see the necessity for a Committee as regards that unless the hon. Member for Western Essequibo (Mr. C. V. Wight) points out in what respect further protection should be given. I am not prepared to oppose a motion of this kind but I want more information before voting blindly, especially as regards the recitals. One does not like to adopt them as they are.

Mr. GONSALVES: I further make a plea for the hon. Member who intended to move this motion. He was suddenly called away from attending Council this

morning and, therefore, is not in a position to put his case. I do not know if the procedure of the Council permits of any further debate on the motion being deferred.

THE PRESIDENT: I think it would be very much wiser.

Mr. GONSALVES: If that is so, I suggest that further debate on the motion be deferred, because I do not think the hon. Member who is responsible for the motion could have been aware at the time he sent the message that the Council was on the verge of adjourning. Evidently he thought the Council would have sat the whole day and he would have been able to get here by 12.30 o'clock. I suggest that the debate on the motion be adjourned.

THE PRESIDENT: Obviously it is difficult to consider a motion like this without any concrete suggestion having been put forward. There will be, of course, in a reasonably short time a complete review of the whole system of taxation of the Colony under the proposals of the Royal Commission, which will cover a motion of this kind. Whether it is really advisable to appoint *ad hoc* a Committee which has no definite proposal before it in advance of that view is another point of view. In any case it is not fair to ask the Council to consider a motion without any definite proposal before it as to the real purpose. If the Council is agreeable it could accept the suggestion by the hon. Member for Georgetown South (Mr. Gonsalves) that the debate stand adjourned. I can give no precise date on which the Council is likely to be summoned again, but I must say that it will not be a very long interval. I cannot fix the date. The Council will therefore stand adjourned *sine die*.

The debate on the motion was adjourned, and the Council adjourned *sine die*.