

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 20th November, 1935.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR GEOFFRY A. S. NORTHCOTE, K.C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. E. J. Waddington, C.M.G., O.B.E.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. Hector Josephs, K.C.

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

Major the Hon. W. Bain Gray, C.B.E., Director of Education.

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

The Hon. E. A. Luckhoo (Eastern Berbice).

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

The Hon. J. Mullin, O.B.E. Commissioner of Lands and Mines.

The Hon. F. J. Seaford (Georgetown North).

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

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

Major the Hon. J. C. Craig, D.S.O., Director of Public Works.

The Hon. M. B. Laing, District Commissioner, East Coast Demerara District.

The Hon. Q. B. De Freitas, Surgeon-General (Acting).

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

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves (Georgetown South).

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

The Hon. A. R. Crum Ewing (Essequibo River).

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

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

The Hon. S. H. Seymour (Western Essequibo).

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

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 19th November, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

MEMBER SWORN.

The following Member took and subscribed to the oath:—

Mr. F. A. Mackey (Nominated Unofficial Member).

ANNOUNCEMENT.**LABOUR DISPUTES COMMISSION.**

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Waddington) made the following announcement to the Council:—

I am directed by the Governor to announce that he has appointed a Commission, under the Commissions of Enquiry Ordinance, 1933, consisting of:—

The Honourable the Attorney General, Chairman;

Arthur Heyliger Hill, Esq.,
Frank Bayliffe Henderson, Esq., with the following terms of reference:—

(1) To inquire into and report on the causes which led up to and occasioned the disputes between employers and labourers on sugar estates in Demerara and Berbice during the months of September and October, 1935:—

(2) To inquire into and report on—

(a) the remuneration and other considerations paid and afforded to labourers on sugar estates.

(b) the conditions of labour on such estates, and

REMITTANCE OF PENSIONS.

Question—Is Government paying the expenses of remitting pensions and gratuities to retired officers who are resident out of the Colony; if so, by what authority is this being done?

Reply—It is an established practice in all the Colonies of the Empire that pensions may be drawn through the Crown Agents for the Colonies or through any other Colonial Government without deduction for cost of remittance. By Colonial Regulation No. 288 the cost of remittance of pensions not drawn through an agent of the Colony is deducted from the amount payable.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

Mr. JACOB: Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name:—

WHEREAS there is no available area of well irrigated and drained land suitable for farmers to grow certain agricultural products which are imported into this Colony in large quantities at present;

And whereas there are suitable areas of land situate on both banks of the Demerara River, the East Coast of Demerara, West Coast of Berbice, the Corentyne and Essequibo Coasts;

And whereas it is desirable that lands in the districts named should be tested by officers of the Department of Agriculture to determine what kinds of crops may be successfully grown on these lands;

And whereas it is necessary to establish model farms all over the Colony so as to provide work for the large number of unemployed and also to demonstrate to children who have a bias for farming that well irrigated and drained lands well laid out and of convenient size are available;

And whereas failure in settled areas up to the present has been due in a measure to mixed cultivation, difficulties of supervision and transportation and lack of systematic effort;

And whereas the Agricultural Superintendents of the Department of Agriculture should be able to instruct farmers in the proper methods of preparing the land, the right time to plant, manure and reap:

Be it Resolved,—That His Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to appoint a Committee with a view to examining the whole question, and to making recommendations therewith.

In moving this motion I have one object in view and that is to endeavour, with your help, sir, and the co-operation of this House, to stabilise the agricultural industries and improve their resources, especially of the smaller crops. I have asked certain questions having reference to this motion that I thought to be necessary, but the replies to them not having yet been given I propose to use certain other figures so that it may be possible for the House to follow exactly what I am

getting at. I have in my mind the stabilisation of the agricultural industries, and the figures I intend to cite are taken from "The Commercial Review" for the last five years. The exports of sugar, the major industry, were 118,946 tons in 1931, 137,075 tons in 1932, 127,078 tons in 1933, 129,805 tons in 1934, and making a conservative estimate of the remaining two months of the year I have arrived at the figure of at least 165,000 tons for 1935. From these figures it will be seen that there has been consistent improvement in the exports of sugar. During the five years the exports have increased by 37,000 tons, which is a very satisfactory increase, and the sugar planters are to be highly congratulated on their persistency and the improvements that have made the industry what it is to-day.

The next important agricultural industry, rice, exported 23,631 tons in 1931, 28,505 tons in 1932, 29,092 tons in 1933, 14,382 tons in 1934, and for 1935 I have estimated the exports at 11,000 tons—a decrease of 12,631 tons during the five years.

Two other important products are coconuts and copra. Coconuts were exported to the extent of 1,494,195 in 1931, 962,364 in 1932, 1,748,175 in 1933, 2,487,902 in 1934 and I estimate for 1935 around 2,500,000 nuts. That shows some improvement during the last five years. Exports of copra were 1,380 tons in 1931, 757 tons in 1932, 921 tons in 1933, 700 tons in 1934, and for 1935 I estimate 1,300 tons. Copra therefore has remained practically stationary for the five years.

The other important product is coffee. The exports were 795,397 lbs. in 1931, 1,052,451 lbs. in 1932, 1,141,130 lbs. in 1933, 709,064 lbs. in 1934, and for 1935 the estimate is 500,000 lbs. That shows a decrease, roughly, of 295,000 lbs. during the past five years.

It will be seen, sir, that with the exception of sugar and coconuts exports of the principal agricultural products have decreased during the last five years. The population of the country is increasing and, like sugar, production and export of all other products should increase. To my mind there are various reasons why production and export have not increased,

and in inviting the attention of the House to some of the reasons I will recite the various paragraphs of the motion and endeavour to show how these products can be increased.

“Whereas there is no available area of well irrigated and drained land suitable for farmers to grow certain agricultural products which are imported into this Colony in large quantities at present;

“And whereas there are suitable areas of land situate on both banks of the Demerara River, the East Coast of Demerara, West Coast of Berbice, the Corentyne and Essequibo Coasts.”

Taking those two paragraphs together, I find that there are suitable lands—I do not think there should be any question about that—but we need proper and systematic investigation. We have a highly technical Department of Agriculture, but their services up to the present, I am sorry to say, have not been directed in the proper direction. I propose to direct the attention of that Department to a system whereby crops can be properly planted and grown not only to improve the quantities I have mentioned of the four or five crops exported but other crops which are imported and the consumption of which is increasing. Let me take corn, for instance. It cannot be denied that there are suitable lands to plant not only corn but also peas. There are suitable lands but there is a lack of systematic control and advice to farmers when to plant these crops and where to plant. It is regrettable that corn and peas should be imported when we can grow them here. The Department of Agriculture should select the lands and advise the farmers what crops are suitable for certain areas. By these means we would be able not only to have the crops we want but also to improve methods of cultivation, mechanical tillage and other mechanical means for improving the cultivation as in other parts of the world. While there have been attempts in a small measure to improve cultivation by the employment of machinery, very little has been done in regard to the production of minor crops. There, again, the sugar planters are to be highly congratulated on the improved mechanical means used in the production of sugar, and we can well take a leaf from their book for the improvement of other crops.

The question of potatoes and other articles are practically in the same cate-

gory as corn and peas. Peas are imported in very large quantities from Empire sources for the use of Indians, and the question arises whether these crops can be planted within easy reach of Georgetown on the banks of the Demerara River and in the Canals Polder, where we have suitable lands but not properly drained and irrigated. An Ordinance was passed some little time ago authorising expenditure to improve conditions in the Canals Polder, but it has been plainly stated that the improvements contemplated would not prevent flooding. It may be argued that it would require half-a-million dollars to obviate flooding in that area, but I think that the expenditure of such a sum there would adequately compensate the Colony. The sugar estates adjoining the Canals Polder suffer from flood only in exceptional circumstances, and they get water for irrigation purposes when it is required. I cannot understand why different methods should be adopted where small farmers are concerned as against the big sugar interests. On sugar estates the canals are not more than 20 feet wide, and the cultivation lands are divided into blocks of 100 or probably 200 rods by small trenches. It is essential that the trenches should be small, and from the nature of our soils it is necessary also that the lands should be divided up by small trenches into blocks of not more than 200 rods.

I seriously invite the House to consider this question very carefully. On the one hand you have certain things being carried on to the advantage of the people who are carrying them on, and, on the other, much the same things nearby that are not to the benefit of the people for whom those things are intended. I think it is a serious indictment of Government and of this House that a situation of that kind should be allowed to continue. Before any money is spent in the Canals Polder a proper investigation should be made and the lands divided up, otherwise the expenditure will be practically a waste. I am confident that if these lands are divided up in the same manner as sugar estates lands, we would be able to plant any and every kind of crop not only to supply local needs but for export. Again, we want to produce these things in close proximity to the shipping and where the people live in large numbers. We do not want to produce perishable articles in distant parts of the

Essequebo and North West District, where without proper transportation and other facilities they cannot be brought to market in time for consumption or for preservation for export. We want to plant and produce them near the shipping points where they can be transported and put into cold storage and disposed of to the benefit not only of the producers but the Colony as a whole.

I had the privilege of discussing the frequent labour troubles which have occurred, particularly on the East Bank, with Your Excellency's predecessor, other officials and the sugar planters themselves. While several promises have been made—and I have no doubt that they were made in good faith—they have not been fulfilled. It is fair to say that all the estates are not in a position to give lands, especially for cattle grazing, rice farming and other agricultural activities, because they have not got the lands. I do not blame them for that. The estates are maintained for the purpose of producing sugar, and they are doing everything possible to improve and increase the production of sugar. That is where Government comes in. If it is intended to help the people who live around sugar estates and to help the sugar estates as well, arrangements should be made to have suitable lands near those sugar estates for the people to cultivate for themselves. It has been pointed out that Pln. Diamond has no suitable lands for planting rice, as in other parts of the country, so as to enable the people to augment their earnings on the estate. That question was to be gone into, but up to the present time nothing has been done. I appeal to the House to allow my motion to go through, so that arrangements could be made whereby not only the sugar industry and the people in the districts but the whole Colony will benefit by experience and practical knowledge.

That brings me to the fourth paragraph of the motion :—

“And whereas it is necessary to establish model farms all over the Colony so as to provide work for the large number of unemployed, and also to demonstrate to children who have a bias for farming that well irrigated and drained lands well laid out and of convenient size are available.”

Here, sir, animal husbandry, poultry rearing, the rearing of cows, horses, asses,

etc., would help the people. I have in mind particularly an area on the East Bank, Demerara, which, if properly laid out, irrigated and drained at no considerable expense, can be made into a model farm not only for people living in the district but as a demonstration to colonists on the whole. I earnestly commend that to Government's attention. I hope to see, in my time at least, farms well laid out and intensively cultivated. One of the reasons for not increasing production is that there is not intensive cultivation. We have farmers taking up five or ten acres of land and not cultivating it intensively, with results so disappointing that it would have been well for them to cultivate two acres. When these lands are well laid out the advice of the Department of Agriculture will have to be obtained, and the Agricultural Superintendents should be available to advise on the methods of cultivation and on other details, with the object of having the lands properly cultivated and drained and planting done at the right seasons so that communal and mechanical means can be employed in planting and harvesting.

The fifth paragraph of the motion reads :—

“And whereas failure in settled areas up to the present has been due in a measure to mixed cultivation, difficulties of supervision and transportation and lack of systematic effort;

Let us take some villages on the East Coast. You have farmers there planting various products—some coconuts, others canes, and some ground provisions. That system, while it has served its purpose in the past, has outlived its usefulness. I have in mind a system whereby every farmer would live on his own land with his family, and there attend to his cultivation and cattle so that the children may be able to see from an early age what the parents are doing. That, no doubt, would help to obviate some of the criticisms that are levelled at the education system of the Colony—criticisms which I consider are unfounded and could only be made by those who have not studied the problem very carefully. It is only by improvement of methods and conditions that we can really get improvement. I have not had the privilege of travelling to other countries, but, from what I have read and have been told, in Jamaica the

farmers and their children live on their farms and the children see from day to day exactly what is done there. In this Colony the system of laying out of the lands of the homes and the farms is somewhat different, and some start should be made in the other direction so that the children may be brought up on those lines. There are no available lands in the villages for that purpose, and I urge on Government to spend a few thousand dollars each year to make available other lands which are not properly drained and irrigated.

The next paragraph of the motion is :—

“And whereas the Agricultural Superintendents of the Department of Agriculture should be able to instruct farmers in the proper methods of preparing the land, the right time to plant, manure and reap.”

While there has been justifiable criticism of the Department of Agriculture from time to time, I do feel that it has not been wholly justifiable. They have not the facilities to do certain things nor Government the funds to provide those facilities. I think it would be very advisable for Government to begin with a new system so that the Department might be able to help farmers and all concerned, by which means the criticism might be obviated altogether in a short space of time. I hope that something will be done from next year. Even if the Budget does not balance next year—and I see no reason why it should not—half-a-million dollars spent during the next five years would be amply repaid at the end of that time, if not all at least the interest charges and capital expenditure will be there and the land producing all the time. Tests should be made of suitable lands and arrangements made as to what should be planted on those lands. It is no use allowing the farmer to plant exactly what he likes. Certain crops cannot be grown on certain lands and the technical advice of the Department of Agriculture should be brought into play.

I wish to say something more about the exports. In doing so I do not wish it to be understood that I consider the sugar industry has not done its best and played the most important part in the country's exports. I wish to make some comparison whereby the smaller producers may be helped. At the moment I do not see how the small producers are being helped.

It may be a bold, and probably a harsh, statement to make, but I would like to be told how they are helped. Looking through the Estimates I find grants of \$4,319 in 1934, \$3,240 in 1935 and \$3,600 for 1936 for sugar cane research. For the rice industry there was provision of \$4,127 in 1934 for a Plant Breeder and erection of padi barns, but for 1935 and 1936 there is no expenditure whatever to help the rice industry. Some money was spent on an obsolete rice factory at Anna Regina on the advice of Government's expert advisers, but very little has been done for the rice industry. It is no use speaking about the other industries; I have laid sufficient stress on them already. But the rice industry having come to stay, it is necessary to make a comparison with it and sugar.

I have been endeavouring to influence Government to give the rice producers some help, either by irrigation and drainage or some other means whereby they would be able to make two ends meet. It is an open secret that the price of rice is so low that it does not pay the farmer to reap his crop, putting aside the expenditure on preparing the land and cultivating it. We have probably not less than 20,000 people who have been adding to the exports of the Colony and feeding the population on rice during the past 20 years or more. These people have been able to obviate the importation of Indian rice and have been feeding the population at a loss. The price of rice for local consumption is governed by the price of rice for export. The export price to-day is probably \$2.50 and the local price is \$2.75. The point I wish to make is that 25 cents per bag on the export price is all that the producer gets when he sells his rice within the Colony. It is manifestly unfair to expect the rice producers to sell at a loss to consumers in the Colony and that Government should find itself hopelessly incompetent to remedy such a state of affairs. We have been told that we cannot fix the local price of rice because a few people would sell rice in contravention of the regulations. Government could prevent people from doing a wrong by punishing them, and certainly some attempt should be made to remedy such a situation, especially when the people involved are so many.

I propose to make a statement, and I

accept full responsibility for it. The resources of the rice producers are at the lowest possible ebb. They have lived on their assets and reserves and cannot do so any longer. If Government does not help them the position may be better imagined than described. The position is very serious and something ought to be done. I cannot understand why it should not be computed that the Colony benefits to the extent of not less than \$300,000 per annum from the rice consumed so that the colonial revenue could be taxed to the extent of \$300,000 a year to produce schemes of drainage and irrigation for rice producers. That would in the next 10 years adequately compensate the Colony for the expenditure. If it is possible for the sugar producers to carry on with expensive management and expensive control, why is it not also possible for the rice and other farmers to make two ends meet? It must be borne in mind that over 50 per cent. of the preference to sugar is paid by every man, woman and child in this Colony. There is the preference given by the Imperial Government, then the additional preference of £3 per ton on 60,000 tons of sugar, and further a local preference of selling sugar at a fixed price. It is within the ability of this House to make laws to give rice a preference. In addition to the preference, the sugar producers get medical advice free at the expense of the Colony, better facilities for transportation, and reasonable freight rates as compared with other products, due no doubt to the quantity of sugar exported. I am not making these comparisons to show that sugar is not entitled to these benefits but to urge that other products are also entitled to some benefits.

What are the benefits other producers get in return for the preference given to sugar? That is the crux of the whole situation, and I hope some satisfactory answer will be given to the question. An article appeared in the Press a day or two ago giving some idea of what is being given to certain people and enquiring why other producers should not get a similar benefit. When it comes to rice the freight rates are exorbitant, and what makes them worse is that these rates are charged by shipping that is subsidised by the Colony. Rice pays 30 cents per 100 lbs. to Canada as compared with 15 or 17 cents per 100 lbs. for sugar. It is true that very little rice is shipped to

Canada, but the producers of rice are at a great disadvantage. There is growing dissatisfaction throughout the Colony on these matters, and it is up to Government to allay any feeling that might arise by doing something for the benefit of the small producers. There is no use playing with the situation. It is high time that a start be made. Acceptance of this motion is not going to involve Government in any expenditure whatever. It is going to involve Government officers and perhaps a few private citizens who will have to spend time in research. I appeal to the House to allow the motion to be passed unanimously so that a step may be made in a direction which will benefit not only the present producers but posterity.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: In seconding the motion I should like to say, first of all, that I do not subscribe to some of the views that have been expressed by the mover of the motion. It is obviously not my duty to traverse the ground he has covered. I shall merely confine myself to the motion, and for that purpose I will confine myself to four points. If I understand the object of the motion correctly what the mover has in mind is that Government should foster the development of minor agricultural industries, and for that purpose Government should set up the necessary machinery in order to tell the people what to plant, where to plant, and when to plant. It seems to me that the difficulties are not great in regard to the first point. I feel sure that a careful examination of the list of agricultural products imported and consumed will show that a very large number of those articles can successfully be produced in the Colony. I think that if the mover of the motion had confined himself to that point of view and developed his argument on those grounds his object would have been well served. I am not concerned at all as to whether the production of sugar has increased except to the extent that if the production of sugar increase it benefits the Colony. As a matter of fact increased production of any article is to the benefit of the Colony.

I propose to deal with the other three points together. The time is more than overdue for Government to set up the requisite machinery to tell the people where to plant, how to plant, and when to

plant. It is a well known fact that every year in some districts the people who engage in agricultural pursuits suffer loss either through drought or flood, and it seems to me that is the root of the evil. I do not know what the proposed Committee can hope to achieve. The report of the Small Farmers' Committee, which was presented to this Council in 1930, contains some useful and valuable recommendations. Up to the present the important recommendations in that report have been shelved, and I have reason to believe that no matter how strong a Committee is appointed and what recommendations are made the result will probably be the same. I invite Your Excellency's attention to the report of the Small Farmers' Committee, and I feel sure that you will appreciate and grasp fully the reasons why Members of this Council in and out of season endeavour to do what little they can to assist minor industries. I venture to say that if those recommendations are adopted there would hardly be any necessity for us to go over the whole matter again. A recapitulation of the recommendations will be found on page 37 of the report, and in paragraphs 3, 4, 6 and 9 the whole ground is traversed.

I lay a charge at the door of Government of not having attempted to do something along the lines of the report which would result in some benefit to the farmers. At the same time I know that Government has given assistance to cane farming, and the cane-farmers are exceedingly grateful for that assistance, but apart from cane-farming and the small assistance that was given to rice I have no knowledge of any serious effort made to improve the position of other minor industries. Can Government truthfully say that they have encouraged the other minor industries of the Colony? I have knowledge of this fact: that whenever an attempt is made to create a new industry something appears on the horizon, in the way of technical advice from either inside or outside the Colony, that will immediately put a damp cloth on any suggestion in that direction. I am referring to what took place not so long ago in connection with the banana industry. The people of this country are satisfied that they are in a position to grow bananas for export, Panama disease or no Panama disease, yet Government have allowed themselves to be

guided by what was told them from outside about the soil being unsuitable. I know of no attempt having been made by Government to satisfy themselves on that question, or that Government are in a position to agree with that statement.

I do not propose to go lengthily into the banana question to-day because I intend, as soon as I am in possession of the information, to table a motion to give Members an opportunity to discuss that question. I therefore merely confine myself this morning to the development of minor industries. Speaking from my knowledge of the country and as a merchant, I know that if a serious effort is made by Government and the necessary assistance is forthcoming a number of the articles that are imported year after year would be grown here and result in some benefit to the Colony. With these remarks I second the motion and I support the preamble as I visualise that if something is done in that direction the position of the farmers can be improved. Even if Government will not accept the motion for the reasons I have stated, my view is that the appointment of a Committee is absolutely useless. Government should give some attention to the recommendations made in the report of the Small Farmers' Committee, and if that is done I am sure that the question will be solved.

THE PRESIDENT: I understand that the hon. Member is still seconding the motion.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: Yes, sir.

Professor DASH (Director of Agriculture): We are all, I am sure, in sympathy with the aims and objects of the mover of this motion. I am equally sure, however, and most hon. Members will agree, that it is rather unfortunate that the mover should have become so exhilarated in committing his ideas into words, as to lose sight of the fact that the whole preamble of his motion is founded on assumption and unproven assertion. Of such, really, his motion is framed. Fundamentals are of prime importance in considering a matter of this kind. It would appear that the hon. Member has almost completely overlooked the fact that the Department has been steadily giving farmers

the benefit of accumulated information, which is available in all the published reports of the Department and other documents, including Sessional Papers and so on. There is a great deal of other valuable information on soils and crops which have been accumulated in this country since we started work, and which certainly did not exist before. The normal functions of the Department of Agriculture also include the examination and selection of suitable areas, the demonstration on experimental stations of the most suitable crops and the supplying of selected seeds.

These obligations, sir, are being fulfilled as far as finances and conditions justify, but it has to be borne in mind that however much we would like to see more progress, markets are so dislocated at the present time that one has got to proceed very cautiously, otherwise we would find ourselves in a worse condition than if we proceeded to cultivate those things for which there are markets. That is really the crux of the whole thing. These are extremely difficult times in which we are living, and heavy investments in agricultural commitments have to be entered upon with great caution if the man who is engaged in them is not to be placed in a worse position.

The hon. Member quoted some figures which purported to show that there was some increase in sugar, but practically no increase in other directions. I do not think that anyone who has looked at the matter from an unbiased point of view would say that was wholly true. Rice went up by leaps and bounds until two years ago, when we were faced with either flood or drought, but the position has practically righted itself this year. The autumn crop promises to be the best ever reaped in this country. The difficulty will be to find a market for that crop, and that is a point hon. Members more frequently than not do not fully appreciate.

You, sir, put before this Council quite recently a reasoned statement from the Secretary of State for the Colonies indicating the general world position in relation to crop products, and warning that there should be a great deal of caution in developing and expanding industries for which there was practically no outlet at the present time. It is true that the

Secretary of State has stated that in certain minor directions there are possibilities, and from my seat in this Council to-day I say that we have given a considerable amount of attention to all those minor industries that have been mentioned, and gradual progress is taking place along those lines. I do not wish to go too much into detail, but certainly there are well-defined directions in which this is clearly obvious. When it comes to food crops it may not be quite visible in the street, but there is no doubt that the farmer is growing a greater number of things for his own consumption than ever before. The distribution of seeds by the Department shows it. The question of marketing locally grown commodities is a very complicated one. The same difficulty that prevails in external markets prevails in our local markets—the question as to whether we can compete with other places in the production of certain commodities. Take corn mentioned by the mover of the motion. We have made determined efforts to get contracts between farmers and firms, but we have not succeeded because the cost of production is too high in relation to the imported article. How are we going to get over that? Some soils are suitable, such as pegasse areas, but corn is a secondary crop which is put in waiting a permanent crop like coffee.

Take the question of peas and beans. That is one of the things we went into fully. We secured all the data on what was being imported and made a considerable number of experiments testing out what we could grow. We made certain recommendations to farmers both by spoken and written word, and while the farmer will grow a small quantity for his own consumption, when it comes to planting for the market that is another matter. In black-eye peas the greatest progress has been made. There are a number of points about dhol that are not thoroughly understood. There is not only the question of growing but the question of preparing for market. We went into the question of hulling and splitting the peas and found that the cost of machinery was out of all proportion to the value that might be obtained. More recently we examined the question again to see whether we could not get some cheaper machinery, but we have not yet received the information. All those ques-

tions need very close study, and we are doing everything in our power to improve the situation in respect of imported commodities.

Let us take now the question of tobacco. I came here fresh from the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture where they had done good work in tobacco investigation. I found that tobacco growing was possible, but we were up against the vagaries of seasons, and one shower might ruin the whole field. We could not tell farmers that they could extend tobacco cultivation with any hope of eventually ensuring that it would be a profitable undertaking. We still help the farmers to get seed, and a certain number cultivate small areas which in the aggregate may produce a fair quantity, but on the whole it is an industry which they can only tackle in a small way in order that the loss may not be very substantial.

Our efforts with citrus are well known. Before long we should be able to supply most of our requirements in grape fruit and oranges. Whether we can get a footing in the export market is a matter we cannot decide at the moment.

I do not wish to pursue the question of bananas today. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Central Demerara has said, banana cultivation has received more attention and study from the Department than almost any other crop, and it is sufficient for me to leave the subject there for the present. I am glad that the hon. Member will refer to it later because we shall then have all the facts before us and see exactly where we stand. It is not merely a question of growing. It is also a question of inducing some people to put money into steamships to take the bananas away. While it is true to say that nearly every tropical crop in creation can be grown, it is another question to say that such crops will reach export quality for competition with products from other markets. It is far better to grow something that will grow really well and remuneratively than to go into some uncertain line of operations where our farmers get let down. That is why cane-farming has progressed. Cane-farmers know that they will get something out of it when they cannot get it out of other things. So with rice. Most people know

how much help rice has got from Government, and it is no good coming here and making statements which will not bear the light of investigation.

Mention was made of the Anna Regina rice factory. The facts are well known. That is a factory for making white rice, but there is no market for white rice now. The question of taxing food is a big one and I am not dealing with it today. The question of sugar obtaining a preference was also brought up. In reply to that I would say that the benefit sugar reaps is passed on to every person in this community. Sugar is the backbone and the very existence of this Colony, and if sugar gets any preference it is passed on to you and to me and to us all.

The mover of the motion brought up the question of model farms. We have heard that before on many occasions. He suggested that in this country you have conditions for peasant holdings such as exist in Jamaica, St. Vincent and a number of our neighbours. That is not the case. Anyone with even a casual knowledge of agricultural conditions must realise that we have not conditions here for developing those small homesteads and model farms. It is a waste of time to have an argument of that kind. We must get on with what we know we can do. Agriculture must be economic, if we are to pursue it at all, like everything else. In everything in this country there will have to be some large scale effort if you are to get drainage and irrigation brought into the picture. The small individual has got a very difficult time watching his neighbour or what he does with his water and so on. Communal tillage has been debated over and over again in this Council, and those of us who have had experience in other countries and have taken the trouble to read about these things, know what a gamble communal tillage means. The thing bristles with difficulties from beginning to end.

As I said in my opening remarks, we are all in sympathy with the aims and objects of this motion, but too often we get a motion of this kind coming up in the Council that is so general that it does not permit of any possibility of getting down to the bottom at all. They are too vague and too nebulous. I may speak the

whole day on this motion and we will be no better off at the end because it does not offer any practical basis for discussion. I submit that there is to-day a vast amount of information of one kind or another bearing on all these points in papers, documents, reports, files, etc., and we have examined areas and know more or less what is going on in every district. One hon. Member referred to the report of the Small Farmers' Committee, of which Mr. Crane was Chairman. That is a very valuable and very comprehensive report, and Government has been acting on the recommendations in so far as it has been found possible and finances would allow. A lot of the recommendations are, shall I say, far-fetched at the moment. Some of them have been impracticable, in my opinion, but we have not neglected the report.

We had another very valuable report more recently from the Commissioner of Lands and Mines and the Deputy Director of Agriculture, in which the position in respect of Government and available lands is very fully dealt with. I am unaware of any large areas of land Government has at its disposal. There are lots of privately owned lands, but if privately owned lands are not developed by their owners I do not see how Government can develop them. There is no land hunger in the Colony so far as I know. I pointed out too that these are difficult times to attempt large scale development in agriculture. We have to watch every step. We had an Agricultural Conference and a number of resolutions were submitted in 1931, and here, too, action has been taken in so far as conditions justify and warrant. Then we had the visit of Mr. Stockdale in 1932. Mr. Stockdale was at one time Assistant Director of Agriculture here; he went to Mauritius and Ceylon and is now Agricultural Adviser to the Secretary of State. Anything Mr. Stockdale has to say on agriculture in British Guiana is well worth reading and paying attention to, and we cannot afford to neglect what he has to say. I would just like to refer to one or two passages of his report:—

“Sugar is the main industry of the Colony, and, from the data secured regarding the soils of the hinterland and the endeavours at cultivations which have been there attempted, it is clear that it is by sugar that the Colony must try to live. If sugar fails, there is little prospect of an economic future for the Colony.”

He goes on to show how agriculture in the interior has not been successful and is not likely to be. He stresses the need for increased cane-farming, recognises the scope for development of the various ground provisions, and points out the difficulties about marketing. He also stresses that any development of rice pre-supposes rice as the chief subsidiary crop. That is the tenor of his report all through. We have two or three main things that we can push and are pushing. Included in that is meat, which Your Excellency recently appointed a committee to consider. In connection with rice Mr. Stockdale sounds a note of warning about the question of irrigation and drainage. He says:—

“It is doubtful if rice could support such large overhead capital expenditure even when prices are high, and it is equally clear, with the prices ruling at the present time, that such capital expenditure would be unremunerative.”

That is really the crux of all these schemes, and the question is how are we going to make them pay. Somebody has got to pay. I think I have covered the ground as fully as I need do. I wish to emphasise that practically everything that has been referred to has received our very careful study and scrutiny in the light of present day difficulties. Government feels therefore that the questions raised have received considerable attention, and as the finances of the Colony will not allow any major irrigation or drainage works likely to be remunerative to be carried out at the present time, the appointment of a committee is unnecessary for the purpose indicated and any specified case can be dealt with by the Advisory Board of Agriculture in conjunction with the Department.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I regret that the mover of the motion introduced irrelevant matters into his argument, thereby giving the Director of Agriculture an opportunity of following him in those directions. As I conceive the motion it is that Government should discover whether there are cultivable lands, which are not beneficially occupied by reason of the absence of irrigation and drainage, and to do something to develop those lands. That is the foundation of the whole question. Many years ago when the people in the villages started to clamour for help from Government in respect of drainage and irrigation the answer was: why should the sugar planters

be taxed to drain village lands? Every sugar estate has its drainage and irrigation machinery. The villages are without those means of carrying on their agricultural pursuits, and from time to time they have been carrying on a gamble. A visit to the Corentyne Coast would reveal that near the sugar estates where there is drainage and irrigation the rice plantations flourish, and that has always been so throughout the year. These crops flourish because there is control of the water. No person in this country can give Your Excellency any conception of the state of affairs at the end of 1933 and the beginning of 1934.

What the motion seeks to do is to get Government to do something to improve the situation. The people know what crops can grow and the time to plant them, but their efforts are thwarted by droughts and floods. Every year some part of the country suffers from either flood or drought because there are no adequate means of drainage and irrigation, and we want no better demonstration than the sugar estates where money is spent to maintain drainage and irrigation. When they all do it and continue to do it, one is led to enquire why they do it. They realise that it is a necessary concomitant to the successful growing of crops on the coastlands. What the people say is that it is beyond their means and ability to keep water off the land. The reason why nothing has been done up till now is, as I have already stated, because the authorities of the day always argued why should they, who had to keep their own irrigation and drainage in order, be taxed to help the villages. The people are feeling now what they have never felt before, and every year things are getting worse and worse.

THE PRESIDENT: Government does realise the value of drainage and irrigation. The hon. Member should speak to the motion that a committee be appointed.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I am supporting the motion by saying that drainage and irrigation can be provided without any great expenditure. We do not want large areas drained and irrigated but small areas at a time. I am asking Government to accede to the hon. Member's request to appoint a committee, which need not be a large

one, and I am sure it will be of some value.

Mr. LUCKHOO: The question of drainage and irrigation is really a hardy annual, but there is some excuse for the hon. Member bringing it forward by the introduction of this motion. I have listened to his speech with very great interest, but, unfortunately, I cannot subscribe to some of his views. The appointment of a committee seems to be the real point of the motion. At every annual session the Agricultural Department has been open to censure and its agricultural policy has been discussed, and I do not see what more a committee can learn than what we have heard here from time to time and from the records available. I have read the Mullin-Burnett Report and I regard it as a very illuminating and interesting document, and the Appendices attached to that report give ample data in respect of cultivation, soil analysis and other facts and would give the mover of the motion a great deal of information. In 1929 a similar motion to this was brought forward by Mr. Crane and a committee was appointed to consider and report on the question. That committee reported and made many valuable suggestions. It is now for Government to bestir themselves and carry out the suggestions that are practicable. A little push also is required on the part of the farmers themselves.

In Eastern Berbice the Local Authority of Bloomfield-Letter Kenny are putting concrete proposals before Government and asking for a loan of \$10,000 in order to enable them to empolder the third depth with a view to establishing cane-farming in that locality. Pln. Port Mourant has cane fields adjoining the particular land and there would not be much difficulty, nor should there be much expense, to the estate taking the canes from the 660 acres and grinding them. We should act more and talk less. I agree that the intention of the motion is to ask Government to assist as much as possible, but we must try to help ourselves, and when we try to help ourselves I hope Government will assist us to make a success of the scheme I have referred to. Rose Hall already has an area of 109 acres under cultivation, thanks to the goodwill of Pln. Albion which will grind the canes, and we are

hoping that Port Mourant on the other side will help the people in like manner. If the people at Bloomfield-Letter Kenny get encouragement by the granting of the loan it would result in great agricultural extension in that particular locality.

Mr. SEYMOUR: I cannot support the motion in its entirety and I am asking the mover to amend it. This country is really nothing more than a grass-growing country. The farmers in this Colony are up against insurmountable difficulties and are not like the farmers in other places. The absence of drainage and irrigation has been the setback of the country, and we have to consider what can be done to foster minor industries. There is no reason why on the Essequibo Coast and in the villages an Agricultural Instructor should not be going around encouraging the people and showing them how to inaugurate some policy of their own for the development of agriculture. If someone would go around encouraging them to plant potatoes, onions and such things, it would be an encouragement to their growing small crops. Farming here is difficult on account of the conditions and worse still because we have no money. We cannot do anything owing to the stringency of money. What we really need are agricultural loan banks. I propose to ask the mover of the motion not to worry about the appointment of a committee, but to amend the motion for the creation of a Development Board composed of men possessing experience gained in business and local conditions, whose function would be to survey the whole country and to recommend economic policies and public works schemes which could be co-ordinated with the needs of adjacent areas. Before we come to Government with drainage and irrigation we should put forward what we want. We are asking for things without knowing what we want, thereby putting the cart before the horse. As we are now we simply muddle through and don't seem to get any further.

Dr. SINGH: I rise to support the motion. I think that if it is considered it will relieve unemployment to some extent, turn our young people to farming, and also benefit the Colony. There is no doubt that the time has come when we should encourage youngsters to take up farming, providing they are found suitable

land at a reasonably moderate rent. I have met many people in the villages who are reluctant to take up agriculture because the lands are not well drained and irrigated and they feel that they would only be embarking on a gamble. I urge that the motion be given favourable consideration.

Mr. SEAFORD: I am afraid that I am rather at a loss to know what is the purpose of this motion. I have heard three or four explanations and I don't know which is the correct one. I am glad to hear the hon. Member for Western Essequibo make the suggestion he has made. It is quite a different thing to the motion. It is similar to a proposal I made last year asking Government to appoint a committee or a Board to recommend any development work considered necessary or which might be submitted to Government from time to time. That is a totally different matter from appointing a committee to go into drainage and irrigation or suitable lands and such like things, of which we have all the information that is to be had already. It would be merely a waste of the time of Government and of everybody else connected with it.

There are one or two points brought into the discussion by the mover of the motion that I would like to say a few words on although they have nothing to do with the motion itself. He referred to alleged promises made and not fulfilled and to the troubles on the East Bank lately. I look upon that matter as *sub judice* and therefore I do not intend to deal with it. He also referred to the estates not giving people lands on the East Bank, and the gravamen of his complaint seemed to be the estates not giving lands free to the people for growing rice and ground provisions. I do not see why estates should give lands free, and he has not given any reason why they should.

The Council adjourned for the luncheon recess.

Mr. SEAFORD: When the Council adjourned, sir, I was referring to the question of assistance to rice farmers by the sugar estates. I think the mover of the motion made the statement that the rice growers get no land at all. I know definitely that on the East Coast estates over 2,500 acres are given to rice and

provision farmers free of all expenses of any kind. One estate gives land to villagers at a pepper-corn rent of \$1.50 an acre, which pays for drainage alone, all other expenses being borne by the estate. I mention that fact to show that assistance is given to small farmers. Even more assistance is given. When the Sea Defence Bill is brought in it will be found that the sugar estates pay the full rate of assessment, the smaller estates only half and the villages nothing at all. It is paid for the villages by Government out of general taxation. So it cannot be said that no help is given to minor industries.

A great point was also made of the preference given to sugar. The mover of the motion apparently fails to appreciate that sugar is in competition with sugar from foreign countries, the demand in the British market being greater than the supply from the British Colonies. That preference is given to an industry which is able to compete with other competitors in the British market. It is very difficult to say the same thing about other products from this country. Owing to the unfortunate conditions that obtain here—drainage, irrigation and sea defences—it is very difficult to put some of our products on the market to compete with those of other British Colonies. In Jamaica and Trinidad they have only to stick a plant in the ground and it grows. Here we have the essentials I have mentioned, which make it very difficult for us to compete. It is no good our spending money on products, big or small, unless we can do it on an economic basis. A few years ago a gentleman came here to start a tobacco industry, and he said we can grow excellent tobacco but under the conditions here the curing of it was impossible.

It has been stated that it is either a case of flood or drought in this Colony. This is not the only place where floods and droughts occur. In England lately there have been floods and droughts. Swanage was under water, and crops were lost by flood not only in England but in Europe. Nothing we do would ever prevent flooding as took place last year. It is no good our trying to fight against the elements, and the sooner we recognise that we can only deal with normal things the better. A point was also made of the estates being well drained and of the vil-

lages being not so well drained. Last year the villages were equally well drained and Buxton was the first to get rid of its water.

The mover of the motion also referred to facilities for transportation. As regards local facilities the Transport Department's charge for a bag of rice is half the charge for a bag of sugar. The question of freight charges to Canada has been raised in the Chamber of Commerce and referred by them to the Canadian people, who have replied that as soon as rice can be put on the market in larger quantities they would be prepared to reduce the freight rates at once. When you are dealing with 1,000 tons of produce it is a different thing to dealing with a few bags. For that reason I do not think that the comparison is quite fair. At any rate that is the position and I am sure that Government will take the matter up with the Canadian Government again. Much as I would like to I cannot support this motion; I feel that it would be a waste of time. For us to go into all these things we shall have to alter the physical conditions of the country. An earthquake might make it undulating and give us natural drainage, but until that occurs I think it is a waste of time.

Mr. HUMPHRYS: I am not opposing the motion or supporting it. I am not enthusiastic over it because I do not believe in present circumstances that it will do much good, but if it is the feeling that it might accomplish a useful purpose I will support it. This is a country of commissions and committees. This question has been dealt with over and over again. At nearly every session of the Legislative Council the question of agriculture, irrigation and drainage is brought up, and as recent as July this year the hon. Member for Berbice River moved a motion on the subject. If this motion is accepted by Government or passed by the Council, the committee will be appointed and its report will be laid on the table in due course. The report will be referred to by Your Excellency in your Speech—I am forecasting of course—as a very interesting document, adding “the Secretary of State regrets that owing to the present state of the Colony's finances it is impossible to incur the expenditure.” Some Members of the Council will then

heave a sigh of regret, others will say "I told you so," and others "Let us keep on hammering at Government until we get something done." That is our trouble. We keep on hammering and get nothing done, not through any fault of Government but because we cannot put forward something feasible to enable the Colony to get financial assistance.

Unless we can get further financial assistance it is an absolute waste of time to appoint committees to enquire into schemes which must be turned down from lack of funds. Is it possible to persuade the Imperial Government of the urgent necessity for financial assistance to the Colony in order to aid it to develop agriculture, the interior and minor industries? I can see no way of our getting the money necessary for these purposes unless the Mother Country comes to our assistance very substantially. If Your Excellency makes any reply to my suggestion I am hoping that it will be in the nature of encouragement, but I am afraid that I am hoping in vain. There are only two ways in which the Colony can get financial assistance. One way is to reduce the cost of administration by one-third or two-fifths and the other is to make the sea defences an Imperial Question. The cost of construction and maintenance of the sea defences is a terrible burden. Is there any hope that the Imperial Government will accede to a request that the sea defences should be made an Imperial Question, or is there any hope that the request will receive sympathetic consideration? If that is so and Your Excellency would give me the slightest encouragement, having as I do unbounded faith in the country's resources and of our ability eventually to come out on top, I would have the audacity to table a motion asking that the question be sympathetically considered by the Imperial Government.

If that is done the money we have to find each year for interest and sinking fund on loans would be available for the development of agriculture and minor industries. Something has to be done. If it cannot be done that way is there any possibility of reducing the cost of administration to a substantial extent to provide the money? This course does not appeal to me because it would throw out of em-

ployment a great number of people. I don't want it to be felt that any Member of this Council is other than grateful for all the benefits received from the Imperial Government. The assistance to sugar is of benefit not only to the sugar planter but to every person in the Colony. Without sugar this Colony would cease to be. We are grateful for that assistance, but if Your Excellency can vouchsafe to us any word of hope that my suggestion would be sympathetically entertained, I shall have no hesitation in tabling a motion.

MR. PEER BACCHUS: I rise to support the motion. It obviously resolves itself into a question of drainage and irrigation. That question has been discussed fully in this House from time to time, and it is an undisputed fact that on irrigation and drainage rests the salvation of the community of British Guiana. If there is any hope of our succeeding in getting drainage and irrigation every Member of this Council and of the community should join in supporting the motion. A scheme has been submitted to Government for Western Berbice and I hope it will receive sympathetic consideration. Your Excellency has already requested the District Commissioners to submit schemes, and if you will further instruct them to co-opt members of their districts to consider such schemes that would meet the case and render unnecessary the appointment of a committee.

MR. JACKSON: One cannot but be sympathetically inclined to the underlying principle of this motion. I take it that it aims at the agricultural development of the Colony on proper lines. This question has been referred to by hon. Members as a hardy annual, and perhaps it is not unwise that a freshman should initiate discussion on it at this session. My own opinion is that the nearest approach to the question of the successful development of this Colony agriculturally would be by the establishment of farm schools, and until Government finds itself in a position to establish and finance such schools we can only be marking time. I am strongly of opinion that a committee of the kind suggested by this motion would serve no useful purpose. The Director of Agriculture has informed us that all the information required can be gleaned from the numerous

reports on this question already in Government's hands, and I incline to the view that to appoint a committee to go into the question would be to bring about a waste of time and energy which will serve no useful purpose. On this account I feel bound to vote against the motion.

Mr. KING: I must admit that when I came here to-day I was somewhat enamoured with the motion, but after hearing that the report of 1930 fulfils the requirements of the motion, I am afraid that I cannot see any useful purpose to be served in passing the motion. With commissions and committees one gets rather tired. I would prefer to see agricultural plots established by the Agricultural Department in various parts of the country where small farmers could receive ocular demonstrations of what they should do or should not do with various minor products. If that takes place it would do far greater good than any report given in a matter of this kind so far as the constituency I represent is concerned. When the time arrives I intend to approach the Director of Agriculture for the purpose of establishing one or two plots in my division to enable the farmers there to see what can be done with minor products. It might not be possible for people to grow tobacco, but it might be possible for them to cultivate something else. I think a little enthusiasm on the part of the Agricultural Department would do a lot of good, and I intend to force them to show that enthusiasm so far as my district is concerned.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: To begin with I will repeat the words of the Director of Agriculture and say that the hon. mover of the motion has the entire concurrence of Government in his concern for the present and future welfare of the agricultural industries. In fact, it is the duty of everyone here who has any share in public affairs to co-operate to his utmost to assist this industry which is the basis of our economic structure. So far we are all agreed, but, sir, it has really nothing to do with the motion before the Council at the present time. It is that a committee be appointed; that only is what the motion says. Nearly everybody who has spoken during this debate has expressed the view that a committee of this sort would serve no useful

purpose, and that is Government's view in the matter. Firstly, as the Director of Agriculture has stated, reports dealing with all these matters are already on the files in the various Government Departments, and apart from that a committee of that general nature could not in Government's view produce a report which would be of any particular value.

On general matters in regard to agriculture this Council, within the last 12 months, has passed an Ordinance appointing a Board of Agriculture, and the members of that Board are representatives of various agricultural interests in this country. It is the duty of that Board to report to you, sir, any view which they hold would further this industry. That is on the general side. In regard to any particular subject Government is willing, and very ready at any time, to appoint *ad hoc* committees, and in this connection Your Excellency has recently appointed a committee to deal with the meat question. Other subjects dealing with agriculture may come forward, and Government will be prepared sympathetically to consider the appointment of committees to deal with them as they arise, but a general committee of this sort cannot in Government's view serve any useful purpose at all.

Mr. JACOB: I think that on the whole some useful purpose has been served by this discussion and it would be necessary for me to reply to one or two points that have been raised. I agree in the main that the Department of Agriculture has done a lot of good and is probably doing a good deal at the moment, but as the Director of Agriculture himself said, most of those things are to be found in documents and reports and I can really see very little practical benefit to the community as a whole. That is the point I have in my mind; we see nothing practical. If we look at the exports we would see that there has been no increase, and that is what concerns me. Except sugar—and I say great credit is due to those who are responsible—what are the people to do in other parts of the Colony—Essequibo, Wakenaam and Leguan—where there are no sugar estates? There should be some effort to advise the people what should be planted and when they should be planted. That is absolutely necessary if we have any faith at all in agricultural industries

other than sugar. The question of marketing is probably a very difficult one.

The Director of Agriculture says that we cannot produce things here to compete economically with similar things from other parts of the world. That may be so. My motion aims primarily at supplying local demands and not so much producing for export. If that object can be achieved by the appointment of a committee my labours have not been in vain. The main point is to supply local demands with whatever articles are imported. For that alone I think a committee is necessary. If this motion fails now I may bring it again, but I say everything possible ought to be done by way of encouragement to the people, and giving them the necessary advice that certain things should be planted and not imported. There is some idea that we have no markets for rice. The markets are there but we have not the rice to supply them with. That is the position, and it has been brought about by the drought to some extent, but we have never been able to produce rice in sufficient quantity to supply the West Indian demand. If something can be done to increase production around 50,000 tons we would have the West Indian markets to ourselves. I think the appointment of a committee to go into those details would be of benefit to the whole community.

The Director of Agriculture told us that there has been gradual progress. I do not know of gradual progress in any direction except sugar. There has been a gradual reduction of production rather than an increase. I saw suggestions made during Health Week that the community should use more greens and more fruit. We are not growing sufficient of these articles at the present moment. The hon. Member for Georgetown North need have no fear that anything I may do is intended to take away anything from sugar. I made it perfectly clear that the sugar industry deserves all the help it gets, and I hope that there will be greater improvement in that industry. But something should be done for other industries. We are here to suggest how difficulties ought to be obviated, otherwise it is no use our being here day after day. We can provide measures to obviate floods and to supply water in the case of drought. I appeal to Government to let the motion go through.

If nothing comes out of it no harm will be done.

THE PRESIDENT : The Colonial Secretary has outlined the attitude Government feels it must take towards this motion. Government is not unsympathetic to the wishes of the mover and those who have supported him: quite the contrary. It does not think that a committee with so stupendous an agenda as is proposed can really be taken as being within the range of practical politics. Furthermore, the cost of such a committee would be very high indeed.

There are one or two points I would like to mention that have arisen in the course of the discussion. Government is not oblivious to the opportunity that will arise on the East Bank, Demerara, for model farms for agricultural experiments in due course, but, as hon. Members are aware, that opportunity will not arise until the dam which we discussed yesterday has been built and that area has been drained and the land made suitable for agricultural purposes. At the present time such is not the case and it would be merely a useless waste of words to discuss it until the land is less saturated than it is at the present time.

The hon. Member has spoken about the necessity for increased production of rice. That is one of the subjects for which I shall be prepared to appoint a Committee *ad hoc*, if I am so advised by my Executive Council. Other matters were discussed: small expert committees can be set up to discuss those questions if necessary.

The hon. mover also spoke of the small sum of half-a-million dollars to be spent in the next five years. I do wish to appeal to Members not to take up the time of this Council by making suggestions of expenditure on that scale after what I have said in my Address at the opening of this session. I have no hope whatever of obtaining money for schemes of that kind. The Secretary of State would not think of approaching the Chancellor of the Exchequer for half-a-million dollars, or even \$50,000, if it were merely for some vague scheme to benefit agriculture. I should have to put before him, as I said before, specific schemes proving, first of all, that they have been considered by experts

and found to be feasible and that they would be remunerative. Such schemes must be specific, and it is merely wasting the time of the Council to suggest that vast sums of money, like half-a-million dollars, should be spent without the actual objects for which that money is to be spent being fully investigated and explored.

The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has asked me a question with regard to sea defences. I see no reason why I should not inform the hon. Member and this Council that I have already addressed the Secretary of State on the question of sea defences in relation to the claim which I think this Colony can make that they should form part of the Imperial liabilities. That correspondence, I need not say, is confidential and I cannot disclose it to the Council. I regret that the hon. Member for North Western District is pressing his motion. I think it would have been wiser on the whole, having elicited a good deal of useful discussion, to have withdrawn it. It is not too late for him to do so now, but if he wishes it to go to the vote it lies with him to say so.

Mr. JACOB: On your suggestion, sir, I withdraw the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: I think the hon. Member is well advised.

The motion was accordingly withdrawn.

EAST DEMERARA WATER CONSERVANCY BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Hector Josephs): I move that "A Bill to establish the East Demerara Water Conservancy for the purpose of making better provision for the supply of water in East Demerara, to provide for the management of the Conservancy and for purposes connected therewith" be read the third time and passed.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that "A Bill to amend the Workmen's

Compensation Ordinance, 1934," be read the third time and passed.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that "A Bill to amend the Pensions Ordinance, 1933, by making provision for the cessation of special injury awards to, and of special awards to the dependents of workmen in cases where there is a right to compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, 1934," be read the third time and passed.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

ESTATE DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that "A Bill to amend the Estate Duty (Amendment) Ordinance, 1934," be read the third time and passed.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

PLANT DISEASES AND PESTS (PREVENTION) BILL.

Professor DASH: I beg to move that "A Bill to regulate the importation and exportation of plants and to make provision for the prevention and eradication of diseases and pests affecting plants" be read the third time and passed.

Mr. MULLIN seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

PUBLIC GARDENS AND AGRICULTURAL
SHOWS BILL.

Professor DASH: I beg to move that "A Bill to make provision for the control of Public Gardens and grounds and Government Agricultural Stations and for the holding of Agricultural Shows" be read the third time and passed.

Mr. MULLIN seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

PENSIONS (VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT) BILL.

Mr. McDAVID (Colonial Treasurer): I beg to move that "A Bill to repeal the Pensions (Voluntary Retirement) Ordinance, 1932" be read the third time and passed.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

BILL OF ENTRY TAX BILL.

Mr. D'ANDRADE (Comptroller of Customs): I beg to move that "A Bill to amend the Bill of Entry Tax Ordinance (No. 2), 1932, by exempting certain articles from the Bill of Entry Tax" be read the third time and passed.

Mr. LAING seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (VILLAGE COUNCILS)
BILL.

Mr. LAING (District Commissioner): I beg to move that "A Bill to amend the Local Government (Village Councils) Ordinance, 1935, by making provision for the election of a Chairman of a Village Council if a vacancy occurs during the year of office of a Chairman, and for the

resignation of a Chairman" be read the third time and passed.

Mr. D'ANDRADE seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Prior to the consideration of the Estimates in Committee of the whole Council I had moved:—

THAT this Council approves the Estimates of Expenditure to be defrayed from Revenue for the year ending 31st December, 1936, which have been laid on the table.

With the permission of the Council I should like to amend that motion by the deletion of the words "which have been laid on the table" and the substitution of the words "as amended by Committee of the whole Council." If that permission is granted, I beg to move the motion as amended.

Mr. DIAS seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

SAVINGS BANKS' INTEREST.

Mr. McDAVID: I beg to move:—

THAT, with reference to Message No. 8 of 18th November, 1935, this Council resolves in pursuance of section 14 of the Savings Banks Ordinance, Cap. 48, that interest shall be payable only on so much of any deposit as amounts to the complete sum of \$5 or any multiple thereof:

AND that, in pursuance of section 15 of the said Ordinance, the interest payable shall be at the rate of 2.4 dollars per centum per annum.

Hon. Members must have read the Message with which this motion is associated and I think they will appreciate fully the reasons for reducing the rate of interest which is payable on deposits of the Post Office Savings Bank. It is essential that the Bank should be, and should continue to be, self-supporting. In order to ensure that this should be the case it is necessary that the rate of interest to be paid on deposits should be fixed in relation to the rate of interest that can be earned on the investments in which the funds of the

Bank are held. Members are aware that there has been for some time a considerable fall in the yield from investments of this class. To illustrate this I need only recall that this Colony has been able to borrow since 1932 money at the rate of interest of 3 per cent. per annum at very short discount. The Council will be glad to learn that the loan authorised last week was raised in London at 3 per cent. at only 98½ per cent. In these circumstances it is necessary that the rate of interest payable should be reduced from the present rate of 3 per cent. to a rate somewhat below 2½ per cent. The rate which we propose to fix is 2.4 per cent. That rate was formerly in force in this Colony, and the reason for fixing it at 2.4 is that it facilitates calculation. It is equivalent really to a rate of one cent. per month on every \$5. The present rate of interest of 3 per cent. is fixed by Chapter 48, but the section gives this Council power to reduce that rate by resolution, and the reduction becomes effective on publication of the resolution after three months.

Major BAIN GRAY seconded.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: While it is true that the rate of 2.4 proposed is somewhat higher than the rate offered by commercial Banks operating in the Colony, I still consider that the decision of Government to reduce the rate on the Post Office Savings Bank deposits is a retrograde step. The Post Office Savings Bank is looked upon by people, particularly in the country districts, as a means of saving money for a rainy day, and I take it to be the duty of Government to encourage thrift among the people. I was hoping that the mover of the motion would have told us something of the Bank's transactions and of the possible result if the rate of 3 per cent. was maintained. Had he done so I would have directed his attention to the report on the Savings Bank for the year 1934. Paragraph 7 of that report says:—

"The interest received on investments was \$71,842 28. This amount is \$8,206.26 more than the amount received in 1933 and is due to the increased investments. After giving the depositors \$45,920.34 as interest on their accounts, a sufficient balance was left to cover all expenses of the Bank and to leave a surplus of \$12,061 90,"

In paragraphs 8 and 11 we find:—

"A profit of \$87,427.45 was made through the appreciation of the securities and a further sum

of \$3,155.82 was realised on the sale of securities by the Crown Agents. The net operating profits for the year were \$102,713.25.

"The total profits of the Bank from the year 1922 to date, which have been absorbed by Colonial Revenue since 1929, now amount to \$531,132.25."

From 1922 to 1934 the Savings Bank business has resulted in more than half-a-million dollars benefit to the Colonial Revenue. If the Post Office Savings Bank were conducted in the same manner as a commercial Bank I would not have had anything to say, but the Savings Bank is restricted to deposits of \$1,000 per annum. A man who has a lot of "loose money" therefore would not be permitted to take advantage of the higher rate of interest offered by the Post Office Savings Bank but would have to put his money in the commercial Bank and get the lower rate. A man with a lot of money should be made to release that money for industrial purposes, while the poor man, on the other hand, should be encouraged to save by deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank. The reduction of the interest is a step that should not have been taken, especially at a time when there is some little feeling about the rate of interest generally, and I do not think that Government is well advised in introducing it.

Mr. SEAFORD: The hon. Member for Central Demerara is a commercial gentleman and no doubt all he has said is perfectly correct, but if the Bank is to be run on commercial lines I fail to see how it can give a return of 3 per cent. to depositors when Government has to pay 3 per cent. on money borrowed on loan. It takes a certain amount of expenditure to run a Bank. If anyone deposits money in the Bank Government cannot immediately earn interest on that money, therefore there is bound to be a certain loss. I do not see how Government earning 3 per cent. can pay 3 per cent. As regards the maximum deposit of \$1,000, I do not see where there is any ground for complaint. The Post Office Savings Bank is really run for the benefit of the small people and I am in agreement that they should be given every encouragement. I think the limit of \$1,000 per annum for deposit is a reasonable amount.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: The limit of \$1,000 is a safeguard. I was not advocating that it should be increased.

Mr. SEAFORD : I appreciate the point of the hon. Member. What I should like to hear is an explanation of how you are going to pay 3 per cent. when you are only getting that yourself.

Mr. McDAVID : The hon. Member for Central Demerara is quite correct when he suggests that the main purpose of the Post Office Savings Bank is to encourage thrift. One of the requirements is absolute security, and that security is afforded by a guarantee in the law. Other requirements are facilities for making deposits at any time in small sums and for withdrawals also at any time of any amount. Of course, a reasonable rate of interest is also required. The question is : what is a reasonable rate of interest? A reasonable rate of interest is what margin you can afford to pay, having regard to the rate of interest that can be earned on the investments of the Bank, less an adequate reduction for administration expenses. I digress to remind the hon. Member that although there was a profit of \$12,000 in 1934 there are certain charges which should fall on that \$12,000. There is no charge for supervision, there is no charge for the time and services of the Postmasters and other officers engaged on this work, and there is also no charge for a portion of the pensions of these individuals. That points to the fact that the true working profit might be much less than \$12,000.

The hon. Member referred to the large sum of money which appears in the Savings Bank report as having been absorbed by the Colonial Revenue. It has to be remembered that if you have high interest bearing securities to-day when the time for redemption comes you might lose on

the capital, and it is quite possible that in time to come the public revenue might have to meet a charge to replace some of these funds. If the Colony had been in a sounder financial position those sums of money would not have been spent but perhaps carried to some general reserve. Unfortunately, we have not only had to use that reserve but other reserves in order to pay our way. The main point about the motion is that the Bank can only afford to pay something out of what it actually earns in interest on investments and cannot afford to pay a rate as high as 3 per cent. and still provide for expense of management.

Question put, and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : In pursuance of notice I move the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders to enable certain Bills to be read the first time.

Professor DASH seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The following Bills were read a first time :—

A Bill further to amend the Tax Ordinance, Chapter 37. (*The Colonial Secretary*).

A Bill to consolidate and amend the Ordinances imposing duties of Customs. (*Mr. D'Andrade*).

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

The Council adjourned until Friday, 22nd November, at 11 o'clock.