

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**WEDNESDAY, 29th JANUARY, 1947.**

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G., President, in the Chair.

PRESENT :

The President, His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. L. Heape, C.M.G.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Hon. Peer Bacchus (Western Berbice).

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

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

The Hon. V. Roth (Nominated).

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

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

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

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

The Clerk read prayers.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 22nd January, 1947, as printed and circulated were taken as read and confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS**CUSTOMS AND TAX BILLS**

The PRESIDENT : At the request of some hon. Members I will agree again to a postponement of the consideration of the Customs and Tax Bills on the Order of the Day. But, I think, hon. Members will agree also that we cannot continue to postpone them much longer, and I suggest that we definitely decide to take them on Thursday next, when Members will have full opportunity and there will be a full-dress debate.

PAPERS LAID

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Parkinson acting) laid on the table the following :—

Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic (Provisional) (Amendment) Regulations, No. 2 of 1947.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. McDavid) laid on the table the following :

Schedule of Additional Provision for the month of January, 1947.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Duke, acting) gave notice of the introduction and first reading of the following Bills intitled :—

“An Ordinance to make provision for granting a pension and gratuity to John Aldie.”

“An Ordinance to amend the Rent Restriction Ordinance, 1941, by enlarging the application and the duration of the Ordinance by making provision for the fixing of maximum rents, and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.”

“An Ordinance further to amend the Widows and Orphans Pension Ordinance with respect to the control management and valuation of the Fund, voluntary contributions, repayment of contributions, contributions after retirement, and payment of pensions; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.”

ADDITIONAL PROVISION

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I beg to give notice of the following motion:—

“That, this Council approves of the Schedule of Additional Provision for the month of January, 1947, which has been laid on the table.”

If it is agreeable to the Council I would ask that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended to have the motion taken today.

ORDER OF THE DAY

PROCEDURE OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT : The questions asked by the hon. Nominated Member, Mr. Roth, will be answered, and the hon. the Attorney-General will move a motion for the suspension of the Standing Rules and Orders to take the Teachers' Pension Bill through all its stages, if Members concur. The hon. the Attorney-General will also move the adoption of the Crown Lands (Amendment) Regulations. Mr. Attorney-General, do you propose to proceed with the Bill for the grant of a pension to Mr. Aldie ?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : With Members' consent.

The PRESIDENT : In other words, if Members consent we would get through as much as we can, and at the end of the proceedings the hon. the Colonial Treasurer wants to move the adoption of the Supplementary Provision for January, 1947.

WALLABA WOOD PULP AREA

Mr. ROTH asked and the COLONIAL SECRETARY replied to the following questions:—

Q.—1.—For how many years has the area of Crown land situate on the left bank of the Essequibo River, above Bartica, and known as the wallaba wood pulp area, been reserved from exploitation by others than Mr. R. Evan Wong, pending the development of his wallaba pulp project ?

A. —An agreement giving Mr. R. Evan Wong an option over this area in connection with the de-

velopment of the paper pulp industry was entered into by Government in 1937. This agreement lapsed in 1941, but owing to war conditions the matter was allowed to remain dormant.

Q.—2 —Is Government of opinion that this pulp project is likely to be brought to a head in the near future ?

A. —Yes. Mr. Hebbs, a paper pulp expert, is now in the Colony and on the receipt of his report as to the suitability of the area for development of the paper pulp industry, a decision will be reached as to whether Mr. Evan Wong's option should be renewed or whether the area should be allocated to other applicants.

Q.—3.—How much longer does Government propose keeping this area closed from exploitation of its forest resources ?

A.—3.—See answer to 2. Permission to extract limited quantities of greenheart from the area has, with the concurrence of Mr. Evan Wong, been granted to certain firms

Q.—4.—Has Government received any alternative proposals from parties other than Mr. R. Evan Wong for the development of this area ?

A.—4.—Yes, Sir.

Q.—5.—If the answer to question 4 is in the affirmative who are the parties and what were their proposals ?

A.—5.—Messrs. Bookers Timber Company and Charlestown Sawmills, Limited, applied in 1946 for wood-cutting leases within the area.

TEACHERS' PENSION (AMENDMENT) BILL.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that the following Bill be read a first time —

A Bill intituled “An Ordinance further to amend the Teachers' Pension Ordinance with respect to the computation of pensions and the payment of a reduced pension with a gratuity, and by providing that where teachers are appointed to the Civil Service their right to pensions earned by them as teachers shall be preserved.”

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

Mr. THOMPSON : I am asking for the postponement of further consideration of this Bill for a week. I am pursuing enquiries into it and hope to get through by then.

The PRESIDENT : I thought the Bill was not controversial. All right, I agree.

Further consideration deferred.

JOHN ALDIE PENSION BILL

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that a Bill intituled —

"An Ordinance to make provision for granting a pension and gratuity to John Aldie."

be read a first time.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended in order to permit this Bill to be taken through all its stages to-day.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Mr. JACOB : This Bill was only published on the 25th January. It is not yet ripe for passing and, I think, there are one or two controversial things in connection with it. I see that the gentleman retired on the 31st October, 1946, but he is still being employed. There must be a limit to people working when they have reached the retiring age. If they get a pension they must cease working. It is the regular practice in the Government Service that a person retires, gets a pension and is then re-employed. I have seen this gentleman working during the latter part of last year. In view of these circumstances Unofficial Members should have an opportunity to go into this matter in order to see whether there should be any opposition.

Further consideration deferred.

CROWN LANDS (AMENDMENT)

REGULATIONS, 1947.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : I beg to move

"That this Council approves of the Crown Lands (Amendment) Regulations, 1947."

These Regulations have been laid on the table and, shortly their object is to provide that Government shall not suffer any loss in respect of surveys made on behalf of private persons.

Mr. CRITCHLOW seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion adopted.

1947 SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE

The COLONIAL TREASURER : I beg to move that Standing Rule and Order No. 9 be suspended in order to enable me to move the approval of the Schedule of Additional Provision for January, 1947, which I have just laid.

Mr. SEAFORD seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Rule and Order, No. 9, suspended.

The COLONIAL-TREASURER : I beg to move—

That this Council approves of the Schedule of Additional Provision for January, 1947, which has been laid on the table.

Copies of the Schedule are in front of Members. As there is only one Service involved I take it that the Council does not desire that we should go into Committee to examine the Estimates. Furthermore, Members will recall that this matter was very thoroughly discussed at the informal meeting which took place last week. I do not think I need press the point but still, for the sake of record, I think it is desirable that I should indicate briefly what this is about. An explanatory memorandum is attached to the Estimates from which I will quote a few phrases. The

position is that a Senior Officer of the London Metropolitan Police was asked by the Secretary of State to visit the Caribbean to inspect the Police Forces of Jamaica and Barbados. His recommendations for the improvement of those Forces had reference to their rates of pay. As the result of giving effect to those recommendations the salary scales of the Police in Barbados and in Jamaica were considerably increased for the good reasons given by the Reporter.

Following on that, the Government of Trinidad also took similar action and the result is that the pay of the Police Force in British Guiana is now considerably below the scales of pay in Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica. It has been the practice in recent years for the pay of the larger Police Forces in the Caribbean area, including British Guiana, to be more or less on the same basis of uniformity, and Government has taken the matter at once into consideration and desires that the rates of pay in our Colony should be brought more into line with the increased rates in the Islands to which I have referred.

And again, for the sake of record may I just quote from the Statement which has been circulated to Members. I will illustrate the position in regard to Constables.

"The maximum salary in the scale of salary for Police Constables in Jamaica is now \$832 per annum, in Barbados \$749, in Trinidad \$840 and in British Guiana at the present time it is only \$600.

Members will realize that that is a considerable drop. The scale which Government proposes to adopt is, as I said, in line with that in the other Colonies, although it will still be somewhat lower fractionally. For example, we propose that the maximum for a Constable should be \$720 a year, which is still below that of Trinidad, Jamaica and Barbados. For the other ranks corresponding increases have been made, except that no provision for increased pay for Warrant Officers and Sergeants-Major has been allowed.

The next point is that on the very strong recommendation of the Commissioner of Police and accepted by Government, it is proposed to increase the rank

and file of the Police Force by twenty (20) Constables. Provision has been made for that in this Supplementary Estimate. A small increase has also been made to permit the payment of house allowances to certain Non-Commissioned Officers who, although entitled to free quarters, have not got them. Provision is made to permit payment of these allowances at the rates of \$240 per annum and \$180 per annum, respectively, to those Warrant Officers and Sergeants-Major.

There is one point to which I should refer and which did not come out in the course of the discussion at the informal meeting. These increases affect the members of the Fire Brigade. Obviously, the increases must apply throughout the Force and certain Members of the Fire Brigade are policemen in the ordinary way. Since the Georgetown Town Council are partners with us in the Fire Brigade, it follows therefore that we should have to represent this matter to the Georgetown Municipality and obtain their permission to charge them with the small increase which the advance in pay will make necessary. The total must be provided, but there is the refund of a small amount which the Town Council will be asked to pay for the slight increase. Government always feels it desirable to consult the Town Council before taking action of this sort, but Members will appreciate the necessity and the reason why it is not possible to do so before now. I think the Town Council are entitled to an explanation as to why this sudden increase of their bill. This matter was very fully discussed at the informal meeting and I do not propose to say more unless any Member wishes to debate the question more. I move that this Supplementary Estimate which has a total of \$75,807.00—the cost for 1947 which may be accepted as being more or less an annual cost in future, be passed.

Mr. SEAFORD seconded.

Mr. JACOB: I do not think we have a majority of the Members here, but I think it is almost the unanimous desire that these increases should be paid and that the members of the Police Force should be paid something equal to what

the Police Forces in Trinidad, Barbados and Jamaica are paying. To my mind these increases may have been brought forward a little earlier. I have no objection whatever to their being paid, but I do think that the time is well at hand when we should consider very carefully what they mean. In addition to increased salaries of these people the number of Constables is being increased by twenty. I do not think this is the time for British Guiana to increase the Police Force. During the war, I think, the Force was increased and, bearing in mind that almost everybody in this Colony is complaining about increased taxation and the further increase to be levied now, the only way to check increased taxation is to curtail increased expenditure or expenditure on the whole. You cannot have it both ways. If this Council wants to have lower taxation, this Council will have to reduce expenditure. I do not know what my colleagues think about this matter, but I am strongly against the proposed increase of 20 new Constables.

As I say, those who are now serving should be paid a living wage and, I think, when we ask them to do a little more work for the increased pay they get the Council will not be asking the Force too much. I think the entire Civil Service should be asked to do more work—regular work and to work on time. I am 100 per cent. satisfied that more can be got out of the Civil Service if you increase the working hours, and the time has arrived, to my mind, when the entire working hours of the Civil Service should be gone into and the Regulations amended so that we can get reduced expenditure and reduced taxation. I feel, sir, that perhaps the arrangements have been already made, but I would not be surprised if we get a further application next year for an increase of Police Constables and other Officers. I think the Non-Commissioned Officers and senior men will have to be increased too to supervise the increased Constables. I think we are not pursuing the thing in the proper way. We are giving increased salaries and emoluments and are increasing the number of employees. I think the time has arrived when this Council should take a strong hand in it, and I would be very disappointed if the Council does not.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. Member must not forget why I brought this matter before the Council at this particular time. The hon. Member spoke suggesting why it did not come up earlier. The whole question is also interlocked with the disbandment of the Battalion. The Police are now the front-line defenders of the Colony, and, if you disband 500 men of the Battalion, it is not asking very much to put twenty additional men on your Police Force. I think Members should not overlook the connection between Government's motion and the disbandment of the Battalion. I am in sympathy with the hon. Member for North Western District. I think on the whole it is a fair request to ask for longer working hours, and the Commissioner of Police will probably ask his men to work longer hours. That is up to him, but I do not think Members need feel that in asking for an additional twenty Constables when you have disbanded 500 men of your front-line defences, the request is unreasonable. I think Members should be aware that immediately after the war Government reduced the Police Force to 1,011 rank and file. I think we reduced the Police Force by nearly 100 men after the war. Weighing it up very carefully, we had a Police Force of close on 1,200 men and a Battalion of 500 men, and after the war we reduced the Police Force to 1,011 approximately. We are now told that by the end of June the Battalion of 500 men will be disbanded and our front-line defence is now the Police. They are the trained defenders of the Colony. I am going into the question of the establishment of Volunteers on an approved basis, but I am not going to deal with that this afternoon. I only propose at this stage to explain why, in my opinion, the request for an additional 20 men for the Police Force has real good merit.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion adopted.

DEATH OF SIR IVAN DAVSON

The PRESIDENT: Government has come to the end of its business of the day on the Order Paper, but the hon. Member for Georgetown North wishes to speak on the subject of the tragic death of Sir Ivan Davson.

Mr. SEAFORD : Sir, I ask that the Standing Rules and Orders be suspended to allow me to move a motion on the subject of Sir Ivan Davson's death.

Mr. De AGUIAR seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Rules and Orders suspended.

Mr. SEAFORD : Sir, I would like to move —

"That this Council places on record its sincere regret at the passing in this Colony of Lieut.-Colonel Sir Ivan Davson, O.B.E. and requests His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government to convey the Council's condolence and sympathy to his relatives."

It does not need any words from me to tell Members of this Council and, indeed, the Colony as a whole anything about the Davson family. They have been associated with this Colony for well over a hundred years and the family name of Davson is synonymous with the name of Berbice. Those of us who have been here for a long time know fully well what a great asset that family has been to this Colony—and not only to this Colony but to the West Indies as a whole. The Davson family has been a family of great ability and of the highest integrity. They have been loved by all those who have had dealings with them.

I am proud, sir, to be able to say that I was a personal friend of Sir Ivan Davson. I knew him extremely well and I know the very high esteem in which he was held, not only by the Colonial Office but also by others in the United Kingdom who have connections with this Colony. It was indeed tragic that he should have come to this Colony on one of his periodical visits after visiting some of the islands in the Caribbean, and pass away so suddenly. Everyone is well aware of the valuable work which Sir Ivan did for the West Indies and British Guiana and of what he achieved on their behalf. I know that this motion is one which will appeal to every Member of this Council, and I know too that we all feel the very great loss which this Colony

has sustained and I am sure we would like to express our profound sympathy with his relatives.

Mr. RAATGEVER : Sir, I beg to second the resolution which has been so ably moved by the hon. Member for Georgetown North, and to endorse all the sentiments expressed by him. I, sir, have had the privilege of being personally associated with the late Lt.-Col. Sir Ivan Davson for many years—during the time I was connected with the firm of Davsons—and I can say without fear of contradiction that by the death of Lt.-Col. Sir Ivan Davson this Colony and the West Indies have suffered an irreparable loss. Sir Ivan Davson was a man of the highest integrity and was beloved by everyone with whom he came into contact. The name of Davson, as the hon. Member has said, is highly respected not only in Berbice where the firm has been established for over 100 years, but also in England where it has had connections for a similar period. I do not think I can usefully add more to what the hon. Member has said and I suggest, sir, that you ask Members to stand for one minute as a token of respect to the passing of one of the greatest sons that this Colony has known.

The PRESIDENT : I should like, personally, to associate myself with the remarks of the last two speakers. Sir Ivan's death was a very great shock to all of us. He was my guest only a few days before, with his usual charming and very happy self. No one could have dreamt it but, naturally, he must have been a very sick man. I feel that it is very fitting indeed that this Council should pass this motion which has been so ably moved and seconded. The loss of a member of so distinguished a family is indeed a very great blow to this Colony. I will now put the motion and ask Members to stand as a mark of respect to the late Sir Ivan Davson.

The motion was passed, the Members of Council standing.

The PRESIDENT : There is no other business and I now propose that the Council should stand adjourned until Thursday, February 6, at 2 P.M.