

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 6th January, 1932.

The Council met pursuant to adjournment, His Excellency the Governor, SIR EDWARD DENHAM, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., President in the Chair.

PRESENT.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Mr. C. Douglas-Jones, C.M.G.

The Hon. the Attorney-General, Mr. Hector-Josephs, K.C., B.A., LL.M. (Cantab.), LL.B. (Lond.).

The Hon. T. T. Smellie (Nominated Unofficial Member).

The Hon. P. James Kelly, M.B., Ch. B., Surgeon-General.

The Hon. F. Dias (Nominated Unofficial Member).

Major the Hon. W. Bain Gray, M.A., Ph.D. (Edin.), B. Litt. (Oxon.), Director of Education.

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

The Hon. R. E. Brassington (Western Essequibo).

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

The Hon. B. R. Wood, M.A., Dip. For. (Cantab.), Conservator of Forests.

The Hon. S. H. Bayley, General Manager, Transport and Harbours Department.

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

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

The Hon. J. Mullin, A.I.M.M., F.S.I., Commissioner of Lands and Mines.

The Hon. N. Cannon (Georgetown North).

The Hon. A. V. Crane, LL.B. (Lond.) (Demerara River).

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

The Hon. J. Eleazar (Berbice River).

The Hon. A. R. F. Webber, F.R.G.S., (Western Berbice).

The Hon. J. Gonsalves (Georgetown South).

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

The Hon. G. E. Anderson (Nominated Unofficial Member).

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

The Hon. F. J. Seaford (Nominated Unofficial Member).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 30th December, as printed and circulated, were confirmed.

MEMBER SWORN.

Mr. J. MULLIN, Commissioner of Lands and Mines, took and subscribed to the Oath.

PAPER LAID.

THE following document was laid on the table:—

Consolidated half-yearly return of immigrants residing on plantations and in public institutions in the Colony for the half-year ended 30th June, 1931. (*Colonial Secretary*).

GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. C. Douglas-Jones) gave notice that at the next meeting of the Council he would ask leave to introduce and have read the first time:—

A Bill to amend the law relating to Income Tax with respect to the imposition and evasion of tax and other matters.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY gave notice that when Order III. was reached he would move that "A Bill to provide for a surtax during the year 1932 on the amounts levied and collected for tonnage and light dues under the Harbours and Pilotage Ordinance, Chapter 119" be re-committed to enable him to move certain amendments of which he also gave notice.

UNOFFICIAL NOTICE.

Mr. CANNON gave notice of the following questions:—

1. When will it be possible to remove the embargo on the importation into this Colony of grapes, apples, pears, etc.?
2. Is the Government aware that Californian apples, pears, etc., are imported into England?
3. Is the Government aware that grapes from Spain are imported into England?
4. Why does not the embargo apply to fruit imported from Canada?
5. Is the Government aware that importers in this Colony can only obtain from Canada grapes of an inferior quality?
6. Is there any one in the Colony with a knowledge of the Mediterranean Fly? Might the Government not adopt the same method as is done in Trinidad, namely, that imported fruit be examined before being allowed to land?

ORDER OF THE DAY.

FINANCIAL COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

Mr. CANNON: I beg to move the motion standing in my name:—

That a day be set apart for the consideration and discussion by this Council of the Report of the Financial Commissioners.

I suggest that Your Excellency be good enough to fix next Wednesday, if the Council is going to sit as long as that, it being Members' day for dealing with motions.

Mr. CRANE seconded.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Government is prepared to afford the opportunity desired to discuss the report of the Financial Commissioners, and it will be very useful to Government if the hon. Member will indicate in a motion which he will now have to give notice of for next Wednesday the lines on which he proposes to discuss the report and any particular point he wishes to raise. If the hon. Member can do that it would facilitate Government being able to consider the motion and what would be said in regard to it.

Mr. CANNON: I take it that this Council desire what Government promised them—an opportunity to discuss the report. I had hoped Government would have set aside a day without my having to move in the matter. Failing that I moved the motion. It is the entire report my colleagues desire to discuss,

THE PRESIDENT: In one of my speeches to the Council I pointed out with regard to the report of the Financial Commissioners that a number of subjects dealt with in that report will naturally come up in the course of discussion on the Estimates and Members would have full opportunity then of commenting on the suggestions of the Commissioners as far as effect is given to them in the Estimates or any proposals before the Council. I believe the idea on that occasion was that Government had no objection to a full discussion of the report of the Commissioners but it would probably save the time of the House if the discussion dealt with other points in the Commissioners' report than those already dealt with and disposed of. As hon. Members are aware, there are certain recommendations of the Commissioners to which effect has not been given and it is not proposed to give effect, therefore they may be regarded as not within any practical ground for consideration at the present time. There are other suggestions with regard to development and so on which the hon. Member and others would undoubtedly like to discuss. Government has no objection whatever but it would certainly assist in the debate if the hon. Member would give some idea—not necessarily now—of the lines on which it is proposed to discuss the report, because naturally Government would have to answer the points raised and would like to be prepared.

Mr. CANNON: I agree with Your Excellency, but Government might say what points in the report it has been decided not to take action upon. That should come from Government. I do not know what Government is going to accept or reject.

THE PRESIDENT: I suggest that the hon. Member discuss with the Colonial Secretary what the principal points will be to facilitate discussion. I will then endeavour to meet the convenience of the hon. Member next Wednesday.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. Member must give notice of motion worded in any way to deal with the subject matter which he wishes to raise.

THE PRESIDENT: I gather that the hon. Member desires to throw the onus on Government to say what portions of the

report it is proposed to give effect to exclusive of any portion already dealt with. I suggest to the hon. Member to put it in some form that this Council desire information as to what further steps are intended to be taken on the report of the Financial Commissioners. I throw out that suggestion and will accept it as a notice of motion given to-day.

Mr. CANNON at a later stage gave notice of the following motion :—

(1) That the Council consider and discuss the Report of the Financial Commissioners.

(2) That Government should indicate to Council what further steps, if any, it is proposed to take to give effect to the Financial Commissioners' Report.

QUESTIONS.

COST OF REMITTANCES.

Mr. AUSTIN asked the following questions :—

1. Is the cost of remitting salaries and pensions to Civil Servants and Pensioners abroad—resident or otherwise—paid for out of Colony funds?

2. If so, will Government give a statement showing cost of remittance to the various countries where pensions and salaries were remitted for this year up to date?

3. Will the Government state separately the cost of remittance to such countries where the pound sterling has depreciated?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied as follows :—

1. Yes—Under the Colonial Regulations salaries and pensions and family remittances within a prescribed limit when paid through an Agent of the Colony are free of remittance cost to the recipients. For this purpose the Governments of all Colonies to whom the Colonial Regulations apply (as well as the Crown Agents for the Colonies) are agents of each other, adjustments of accounts being effected in the United Kingdom through the Crown Agents.

2. The Crown Agents are kept in funds by remittances for the purpose of making all payments in the United Kingdom on behalf of the Colony. It is not practicable to ascertain the cost of remittance applicable to salaries and pensions apart from the other commitments of Government in the United Kingdom.

3. See replies to 1 and 2. No remittances for salary and pension payments are made to countries where the pound sterling has depreciated. In the case of certain pensioners residing in Canada arrangements are made with the Royal Bank of Canada who collect the pension locally and remit at the expense of the recipient.

TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: In pursuance of notice I move that "A Bill to provide for a surtax during the year 1932 on the amounts levied and collected for tonnage and light dues under the Harbours and Pilotage Ordinance, Chapter 119" be recommitted to enable me to move the amendments of which I have given notice. When this Bill reached the third reading stage on the previous occasion the suggestion was made that the third reading should not be taken until the Chamber of Commerce and other members of the public had had an opportunity of making representations with regard to it. These representations have been made and have been considered, and I will remind hon. Members that in considering this motion for recommitment the general principle of the Bill cannot be debated. The principle of the Bill has been accepted and the only question that can be considered is the details with which the amendments will deal. The representations that have been made to Government—threats I may call them—are that if this tax is imposed freights will be increased by the steamship lines. Government is not altogether impressed with these threats. It is, of course, possible that some attempt might be made to increase rates, but I think the general position will be that although we have been told there is a chance of freights being increased it probably will not be done. Statements have been made that this is the most expensive port in the West Indies, but it is very difficult to prove that and no details have been supplied or attempt made by the public to prove that this is so. Representations have been made on behalf of the Canadian Line, which receives a considerable subsidy from this Colony and not only that but I do not think that Line has the competition in this port that it has in others, so that I do not think the effect of the surtax would be to prejudice in any way the business done by that Line with this port. The hon. Mr. Austin made a very valuable suggestion that a certain amount of tonnage—which we have decided should be 500 tons in the aggregate brought in and taken away—should be exempted from the duties under this Bill. That is to be given effect to in Committee and it may have the effect of removing the main objection to this Bill that on small cargoes the surtax represented a comparatively

high figure. Where the aggregate cargo does not exceed 500 tons it will be exempt, also schooners of a net register of 300 tons.

Mr. SMELLIE seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

The Council resolved itself into Committee and proceeded to consider the amendments.

Clause 1—Short title.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that the words "Transport and Harbours" be substituted for the words "Harbours and Pilotage" in the first and third lines; that "1932" be substituted for "1931" in the second line; and that "1931" be inserted between the words "Ordinance" and "hereinafter" in the third line.

Mr. SMELLIE seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Clause 2—Imposition of a surtax of 15 per cent. on tonnage and light dues during 1932.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that this clause be amended by substituting the word "eighteen" for "four" in the third line and by adding the following proviso to the clause:—

Provided that the surtax shall not be levied in respect of any vessel which lands and takes away cargo not exceeding in the aggregate five hundred tons, or in respect of any sailing vessel of not more than three hundred tons net register.

Mr. SMELLIE seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that clause 4 be deleted.

Mr. SMELLIE seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that the title of the Bill be amended by the addition of the words "Transport and" after the word "the" at the end of the third line; by deleting the words

"and Pilotage" and "Chapter 119" in the last line; and by adding "1931" at the end.

Mr. SMELLIE seconded.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. CANNON: May I ask what revenue this surtax is expected to yield?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: In the original estimate the surtax was expected to produce \$18,000. By eliminating cargoes of 500 tons and schooners of 300 tons net register the estimate must be reduced by \$3,000, so the estimate is \$15,000.

The Council resumed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move that the Bill be read the third time.

Mr. SMELLIE seconded.

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

Bill read the third time.

SUGAR (TEMPORARY) EXCISE DUTY BILL.

Mr. DE AGUIAR: I have a suggestion to make with regard to the second reading of "A Bill to impose a temporary excise duty on sugar manufactured and sold in the Colony." I am asking for a further postponement in view of the fact that in the interim of a conference of the Colonial Secretary and the cane-farmers a further conference took place between the cane-farmers and sugar planters. The sugar estates' authorities have made certain proposals to the cane-farmers which are under consideration. I understood from the Colonial Secretary that the Bill would not have been ready to be proceeded with until to-morrow and perhaps for that reason the decision has been delayed. I ask that the matter be delayed until to-morrow.

Mr. ELEAZAR: I do not see why the business of the House should be delayed because the producers of sugar cannot adjust their differences with their tenants, but in view of what the hon. Member has

said we might give them until to-morrow. From what I understand there is no likelihood of their coming to any agreement at all. The planters have told the farmers that if they persist in their objection to a reduction they would not even take their canes.

MR. SEAFORD : That statement is not correct.

MR. ELEAZAR : I have the planters' figures and the other side told me how it would affect them.

THE PRESIDENT : No statement can be made at present with regard to the decision being either just or unjust. That is the point.

MR. DE AGUIAR : For that reason I ask for a postponement.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : I gather that the position is this. Certain discussions have taken place between the sugar estates concerned in the question of grinding farmers' canes and with the negotiations which took place yesterday there is every prospect of a satisfactory arrangement being arrived at. I understand that the proposals originally suggested by the estates are not altogether satisfactory from the point of view of the cane-farmers.

I also understand that certain other proposals have been made and there is every possibility of an agreement being reached. Hon. Members will recollect that in moving the second reading of the Bill I drew attention to the fact that the cane-farmers were pursuing certain negotiations and suggested that discussion be deferred until these negotiations had been concluded. It would have been undesirable to make any particular reference to any particular class of sugar producer in the Bill, but Government has to be satisfied in introducing this Bill that no particular class of sugar producer is detrimentally affected, therefore Government is watching very closely the arrangements which it is hoped will be come to between the cane-farmers and the estates concerned. There is every hope that a satisfactory arrangement will be arrived at. The figures referred to by the hon. Member for Berbice River have also been shown to the representatives of the estates and are being considered.

THE PRESIDENT : The Council will adjourn until to-morrow on the assumption that it will be possible to proceed with the Bill. If it is not Members in the country will be informed by telegram.

The Council accordingly adjourned until the following day at 11 a.m.