

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 1951

The Council met at 2 p.m., His Excellency the Governor, **Sir Charles Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.**, President, in the Chair.

PRESENT :

The President, His Excellency the Governor, **Sir Charles Campbell Woolley, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C.**

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, **Mr. John Gutch, O.B.E.**

The Hon. the Attorney-General, **Mr. A. C. Brazao (Acting).**

The Hon. the Financial Secretary and Treasurer, **Mr. W. O. Fraser (Acting).**

The Hon. **C. V. Wight, C.B.E.** (Western Essequibo).

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

The Hon. **V. Roth, O.B.E.** (Nominated).

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

The Hon. **G. A. C. Farnum, O.B.E.** (Nominated).

The Hon. **D. P. Debidin** (Eastern Demerara).

The Hon. **J. Fernandes** (Georgetown Central).

The Hon. **Dr. G. M. Gonsalves** (Eastern Berbice).

The Hon. **Dr. C. Jagan** (Central Demerara).

The Hon. **W. O. R. Kendall** (New Amsterdam).

The Hon. **A. T. Peters** (Western Berbice).

The Hon. **W. A. Phang** (North Western District).

The Hon. **G. H. Smellie** (Nominated).

The Hon. **W. A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E.** (Nominated).

The Clerk read prayers.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, the 19th of December, 1951, as printed and circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

ORDER OF THE DAY

TAX (AMENDMENT No. 4) BILL, 1951.

The Attorney-General: I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intitled—

“An Ordinance further to amend the Tax Ordinance, 1939.”

I also give notice of my intention at a later stage or at a subsequent meeting to move the suspension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order to enable me to take this Bill through all its stages.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

INTOXICATING LIQUOR LICENSING (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1951.

The Attorney-General: I beg to move the first reading of a Bill intitled—

“An Ordinance further to amend the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance.”

I also give notice of my intention to move, at a later stage, the suspension of the relevant Standing Rule and Order so as to enable me to take the Bill through all its stages.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read the first time.

CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT No. 4)
BILL, 1951.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I beg to move that this Council resume the debate on the motion for the second reading of the Bill intitled—

“An Ordinance further to amend the Customs Duties Ordinance, 1935.”

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

The President: Does any other Member desire to speak on this Bill?

Dr. Jagan: As I said in your absence yesterday, Sir, I do not understand why this Council was not given an opportunity to discuss the Budget Statement before this Bill. I do not know why there has been this departure. We are on the second tax Bill—one was passed yesterday—and all these things have reference to the Budget Statement. As I also stated yesterday, I must lodge my protest against the ever-increasing burden of taxation which is being placed upon the poor people in this Colony. It is true that cigars and cigarettes may be considered luxuries; but, nevertheless, we do know that they are luxuries which the poor man has adopted, and in many cases they have become somewhat of a necessity. Not too long ago—when I first sat in this Council in 1948—we increased the duty on cigars and leaf tobacco, and now I find that

this is again being done. I don't know if the manufacturers have already increased the price of cigarettes, but I feel sure that in many of these cases the increase is passed on to the consumers. In some cases we do know that there is what is called consumers' resistance, but in the case of tobacco I do not know if that can have any effect.

In 1948 we reduced taxation on films, sports goods and so on, but eventually it was put back on. As regards cigars, cigarettes and tobacco, although we increased the cost to the consumers we are now attempting to increase them still further. Yesterday some of us pointed out that it is difficult at the moment for the poor people in the Colony to balance their budget, especially since the indirect taxation being levied is really alarming as compared with direct taxation. Any attempt to increase taxation places an additional burden on the poor people in the Colony, and I am opposed to this taxation being introduced at present. Yesterday we passed a Bill seeking to levy additional taxation on the people's entertainment in the rural areas, and—

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: To a point of correction: This is not an entertainment tax at all. People attending cinema shows in the country districts never paid this tax before.

Dr. Jagan: This tax means an additional burden on the poor man today. In the United Kingdom there are Regulations whereby any cinema in a rural area which does not make an income of £150 per week is not charged any tax at all. I do hope the hon. the Financial Secretary will give some attention to this provision. Although this tax may appear to be small, in its cumulative effect it might add up to quite a huge figure.

Mr. Debidin: In keeping with what I said yesterday, I wish, formally, to record my protest against the type of taxation which is being introduced into this Council as a measure to offset the deficiency in the Budget for 1952. I would like to repeat the proposition which I advanced yesterday, and that is, the people of this Colony will accept any measure of taxation which they know would bring them immediate benefits such as proper maintenance of the public roads. The condition of our public roads is something which I have already criticised as being a standing disgrace to the Colony. I say so whenever I have to think of the East Coast roads and the dust nuisance they cause to the people residing along them. I also think the people will be prepared to meet additional taxation if they can be provided with such things as Cottage Hospitals which they need so badly. They would realize that the advantages are coming immediately and that additional taxation would be necessary to provide them.

I stated some years ago that British Guiana would not be doing good business if she overlooked matters which call for immediate expenditure and merely look at balancing the Budget *via* a couple of hundred thousand dollars. In other words, if there was a deficiency of \$1,000,000 and I knew that it had gone into necessary services for the benefit of the people in the Colony, I would support the introduction of new taxation measures in order to meet it. Here, however, we have an operation from year to year whereby the people are asked to undertake increased taxation—something tacked on here and there—and during the years that I have been a Member of this Council these various measures have amounted to quite a pretty penny. They mean additional burden on the poor people of the Colony, especially in these days of increased cost of living. That is the type of

taxation that is being placed on a people who have to struggle to eke out an existence. Government has to strain its devices, but I know that it is not bankrupt of "grey matter", because we have been told of the wisdom of some of the Members of this Council and how they can raise the necessary money to balance the Budget.

Two ways occur to me, however, although I do not possess the wisdom that certain people have. I feel that one way to meet the deficiency is to curtail expenditure where, to my mind, it is unnecessary and is absorbing just as much money as that which we are now trying to raise by additional taxation. Another method, I feel, would be to tax those industries which can afford to meet this deficiency. I know it would be said that these industries spend millions of dollars in the country and that we—the people—get the benefit, but every individual with a modicum of common-sense is saying that we have a valuable and important ore in this Colony and that we do not get sufficient out of it.

Mr. Roth: To a point of order: The hon. Member is making a general speech on the Budget and discussing this proposed increased taxation on cigarettes.

Mr. Debidin: The hon. Member probably feels that we should have discussed the Budget Statement first, but I do not feel that I am out of order. I am suggesting that this particular measure should not have been brought forward and that the deficiency in the Budget should be met in the way I have indicated. In order to relieve the anxiety of the hon. Member I will say that I do not intend to go into any details as regards the working of the Bauxite Company, as we did some years ago. I repeat, however, that we are not deriving enough revenue from this important and valuable ore in this Colony. It is true

that one does not wish to kill "the goose that lays the golden egg", but if the ordinary man is to be asked to make a sacrifice, I feel that the investors who have had a very good time in the past ought to be willing also to make a sacrifice for the benefit of the Colony. As far as my information is concerned, the Colony of Surinam is raising much more revenue from bauxite than we are doing in British Guiana. By some device or other, they are able to earn American dollars from it and that means much more to that Colony.

In British Guiana we have what I call "a cruel monotony of things"—taxing rum a little more—taxing horse-racing a little bit more, and so on—just the little things we can see at the end of our vision. I think that is wrong, and that that is not the right approach to the problem. It is said that Members advising the Government have the necessary wisdom to do so, but I want to think that Government is in a rut. These taxation measures are highly unwelcome. In support of the hon. Member for Central Demerara I will say that the people are already paying 3c. per packet more for ordinary cigarettes and one cannot welcome any further increase. These items—tobacco, rum and so on—are not the preserve of the wealthy; they are a necessary concomitant to the everyday life of the ordinary man, whether he is a labourer or otherwise. I know also that the people in the rural districts are crying out for the high cost of living but, unfortunately, they have no such power as perhaps the workers of the Transport and Harbours Department to call a strike tomorrow and get a few hundred dollars by Xmas time. We are saying that if you continue to tax the people like this they would become a fertile field for the sowing of ideologies which this Council itself does not appreciate. We are crying out once again against a wrong being done in a manner which

is so monotonous and so degrading. As a representative of the people I do not think I can do anything more, than voicing my opposition to this Bill.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I am surprised that there is not more opposition to the proposed increase of taxation on tobacco. I should like to say that so far as this additional tax is concerned, it was discussed in Finance Committee and all the Members had an opportunity of going there and making suggestions for changing it, but the two hon. Members who have just spoken entirely refrained from attending the meetings of the Finance Committee and that is the reason why we are hearing their voices in opposition today. The proposed increase on the present rate of duty on tobacco would be from \$1.95 to \$2.60 per 100lbs., and it would only cause an increase of 2c. on the price of a packet of 12 cigarettes. An additional cent has also been put on, by the manufacturers, however, in order to cover manufacturing costs. The tax has been arranged in such a way as to have the least possible effect on the consumer, and the Managing Director of the Company has assured me that in any case the price of cigarettes would have been increased to absorb these charges.

It was a coincident that at the same time Government proposed the increased tax the Management of the Company proposed to increase the cost of cigarettes. The Company has entirely refrained from increasing the cost of the cigarettes which are well-known to the people of this Colony, both in Georgetown and in the rural areas. If hon. Members study the Budget Statement they would see that much has been done by way of putting down air-strips and roads in the interior, and that there has also been a substantial increase in hospital and social services. The only way Government can raise this money is by taxation, and I do not think it is un-

reasonable to ask the people to pay 2c. per packet more for cigarettes. In the United Kingdom one cigarette costs 4c., but in this Colony the cost of a cigarette is less than one cent. The two hon. Members to whom I have already referred are the only persons whom I have heard opposing this tax.

Motion put, the Council dividing and voting as follows:—

For: Messrs. Macnie, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Thompson, Roth, Dr. Gonsalves, the Financial Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—12.

Against: Dr. Jagan and Mr. Debidin—2.

Motion carried.

Bill read a second time.

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

Council resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

Clause 2—*Repeal and replacement of Item 48 in the first Schedule to the Principal Ordinance.*

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I desire to move an amendment to the effect that item 48 (c) (i) be amended to read as follows:—

“(1) manufactured in the British Empire entirely from Empire grown tobacco.”

Amendment put and agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, passed.

Council resumed.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed.

The Colonial Secretary seconded.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

ESTIMATES, 1952

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: Sir, if I may I would suggest that the Council go into Committee to consider the Estimates for 1952, and anything Members may wish to say on the Budget Statement may be said under each Head.

Mr. Debidin: There are two Bills for consideration at items 2 and 3 on the Order Paper. Are they to be deferred?

The President: They will be taken tomorrow.

Mr. Debidin: I would suggest that the Council be adjourned to some early date in 1952 to go into the Estimates, and when we should first take the debate on the Budget Statement. It seems to me that to do otherwise would be putting the cart before the horse. Unfortunately we have not had an opportunity of a general debate on the Budget before the taxation measures were put forward. Nevertheless I feel that before the Estimates are considered Members should have an opportunity to express their views generally not only on the Budget Statement but on the affairs and problems of the Colony generally.

The President: If the hon. Member wishes to speak on the Budget generally he is quite entitled to do so at this stage.

Mr. Debidin: But the hon. the Financial Secretary has asked that the Estimates be taken first.

The President: Yes, and that we have the debate on each Head. If the hon. Member wishes to speak on the Budget generally he can do so now.

Mr. Debidin: We should have the debate on the Budget first. I move that the Council be adjourned to some early date in 1952 when it will be convenient for you to convene the Council. This time of the year is inopportune for sittings of the Council, as indicated by the large number of empty seats. Most of the Members are family men who have certain domestic duties to perform. I personally feel that with only three shopping days left before Christmas, Members would like to have the balance of this week for themselves. I think it would be wrong to impose on us in this way. I can see no great urgency and no reason why we should rush the debate on the Estimates. After the holidays we would be able to approach the Estimates with a far better outlook and in a better frame of mind. We have had a busy year both on Committees and in this Council, and I do not think Council should be sitting at this time of the year at all.

Mr. Fernandes: I rise to oppose the suggestion of the hon. Member.

The President: Does the hon. Member move that the debate on the Budget be adjourned?

Mr. Debidin: Yes, Sir.

The President: Does any Member second it?

Dr. Gonsalves: I second it.

Mr. Fernandes: I rise to oppose the motion. It is not correct to say that this is not an opportune time for us to meet in Council. I am one who always likes to see our budget for the coming year passed before the 1st of January of the ensuing year. Unfortunately, we have never been able to do that during my term of office, but we have an opportunity now to get it done before the 1st of January.

At some inconvenience some Members have attended Finance Committee every day of the week in order to have the Estimates passed by that Committee. I am sure that if certain Members had assisted during that time by attending a few of those meetings we would have saved many hours in Finance Committee, for those Members who are here regularly and on time have had to wait some days from 2 o'clock until 3 o'clock before we got a quorum. So that if there has been any delay I think those Members who absented themselves continuously from the meetings of Finance Committee are responsible for the fact that we have to meet to-day and tomorrow almost on the verge of Christmas. In the circumstances I would like the Council to get on with the business before us. Let us get it over, and after that I would ask you, Sir, to give us a break of two weeks.

The Colonial Secretary: I would like to endorse what the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) has just said, and from this point of view: We would all like to have a bit of a holiday at Christmas, but the amount of business which is piling up before the Council, and very important business too, is really becoming staggering. We are in the middle of the proceedings in regard to the Budget. We also have not yet completed our debate on Federation—a most important issue upon which I think we should definitely pronounce our decision at the earliest possible date. We will then have before us the debate on the amendment of the Legislative Council (Elections) Ordinance in order to provide for the introduction of universal adult suffrage, and you, Sir, have already told us that you propose to afford Members of the Council an opportunity on that occasion to express their views on the Report of the Constitutional Commission.

I hope, Sir, and I think you also hope that it will be pos-

sible to introduce that amendment in the middle of January. The amending Bill is now ready and it should be possible to publish it shortly. So that you, Sir, may be aware of the views of hon. Members on the Report and would then be in a position to reply to the Secretary of State's despatch on the subject. Until that is done we cannot get on with the business of revising the Constitution, and our hands are tied in regard to the hundred and one things which will have to be arranged before the new Constitution can be introduced. Therefore it is no exaggeration to say that the proposal by the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara (Mr. Debidin) to defer consideration of the Budget until some time in the new year will definitely delay the introduction of the new Constitution. I really must ask hon. Members to consider that aspect of the matter when voting on the motion for an adjournment.

Dr. Jagan: I do agree with the last two speakers that this matter should not be delayed any longer, but I must join issue with the hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Fernandes) when he suggested that because certain Members did not attend meetings of Finance Committee the consideration of the Estimates has been delayed. I want to suggest that because certain Members did not attend Finance Committee it was able to complete its business so quickly on this occasion. I am sure that that is true. The fact that certain Members did not attend the meetings of Finance Committee is due to many factors. I for one did not attend because I felt it was useless to sit and debate the Estimates item by item when I had nothing to do with the framing of those Estimates. That is why I decided a year ago that I would not attend Finance Committee, because it is a waste of time. I am glad to see that despite the fact that a few Members did not attend the

business was expeditiously handled in Finance Committee, and now that that has been done I feel that we should get on with the job and get it over as quickly as possible. I am opposed to any adjournment.

The Attorney-General: There are certain measures which it is essential that we should get through before the end of the year.

Mr. Debidin: Have I the right to reply, Sir?

The President: Yes, and I hope the hon. Member will not delay us any longer than he can help.

Mr. Debidin: Am I to understand from the speech of the hon. the Colonial Secretary that his reason for opposing my motion for an adjournment is because it is hoped to take the debate on the Constitution in the middle of January next? If that is so I want to say that it is wrong, constitutionally and otherwise, to rush any matter in this Council. It is undemocratic, it is not right and not good, and I feel that if the debate lasts six months it should not be rushed. I do not think it is right to suggest that we should do everything possible to get down to something which can wait. It is true that we have had an extended session of this Council, and I am hoping that everything will be done within a year, but I feel that if the Law Department of this Government is sufficiently enthusiastic all the necessary legislation could be introduced in order to enable the General Election to be held next year under the new Constitution without having to press everything within the holiday period and before the 15th of January, 1952. This attempt to rush matters makes me feel suspicious, and that is why I felt I should exercise my right to reply. Probably with a depleted Council Government is pre-

pared to push everything down the throats of the people.

We have had in just a matter of a few weeks ago a series of important reports laid on the table. If we are to make proper observations on the budget for the ensuing year I, personally, would have liked to have an opportunity to study those reports. For instance, the Department of Lands and Mines has produced an excellent report, only a few pages of which I have been able to get through. There are other reports dealing with vital matters on which I would like to make some comments. We do not wish to sing a swan song every year; we want to be realistic about every suggestion we make for the future. That is why I say that during the Christmas holidays we would have been afforded time not only to go into the Budget Statement but the various activities of Government, and to return here prepared to offer constructive criticisms on matters of vital importance. Instead, we are being rushed to make a lot of empty speeches. I do not think it is the right thing, and I feel that a decision not to grant an adjournment will arouse a great deal of suspicion.

The President: Does the hon. Member wish to press his motion?

Mr. Debidin: Yes, Sir.

The President: I put the motion to the Council that the debate on the Budget be deferred until after Christmas. I think the "Noes" have it. We will therefore continue with the debate. Does the hon. Member want a division?

Mr. Debidin: I ask that my objection be recorded.

The President: Then the debate will proceed.

Mr. Fernandes: May I ask whether we may reply to the Budget Statement now?

The President: Hon. Members are entitled to do so. The suggestion of the Financial Secretary was that if there was a general debate on the Budget Statement Members would say exactly the same thing when they come to discuss each Head of the Estimate. If Members wish to say anything on the Budget Statement they may do so, but I hope that if that is done Members will not say the same thing all over again when we go into Committee. That is all I ask.

ESTIMATES, 1952

COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I formally move that the Council resolve itself into Committee to consider the Estimates of Expenditure for 1952, together with the report of the Finance Committee thereon.

Agreed to.

GOVERNOR

Item 1 (a)—*Governor*—\$21,600 (*Civil List*).

Mr. Debidin: I move the deletion of the salary of the Governor, and I will explain my reason for doing so. As a matter of fact I am reminded of the fact, and I know, that this is an item on the Civil List, but since this Colony has to provide the funds for the Civil List I am moving the deletion of this item. My ground for moving its deletion is first of all—

Mr. Fernandes: I rise to a point of order. The hon. Member is hopelessly out of order in moving the deletion of an item which is on the Civil List.

The Chairman: I am sorry, because the matter affects the Governor, but the hon. Member is quite out of order. The salary of the Governor is provided by law, and if the hon. Member wishes to amend it he must give due notice of his intention to move that the Civil List be amended. I think that is the position, and that the hon. Member understands it too.

Mr. Debidin: I accept your ruling, Sir, but I feel that since this Council has to recommend its payment from Colony funds I am in order. I find that the amount which is provided by law is \$23,800 and not the amount of \$16,094 under the head "Governor" which is provided from Colony funds. I take it that items (e) to (h) and 2 to 6 are items which have to be provided apart from the Civil List.

The Colonial Secretary: Is the hon. Member referring to the footnotes when he refers to items (e) to (h)?

Mr. Debidin: I am referring to item 1 (e) to (h) and to items 2 to 6 of the Head. I am moving their deletion even though I may stand alone in the final vote. I do so not because I do not feel that the Governor of the Colony is an enthusiastic and very capable Administrator, but because I feel very strongly that he is ill-advised in certain respects. We know that in law the Governor need not accept the advice of the Executive Council which is in the position of an advisory body. This is the opportunity I should take to review the impressions I have gained during my four years in this Council. Elected Members of this Council have had a very trying time in understanding exactly what is being done by Government. Regulations are made but we only know of them long after they are put into operation.

The Attorney-General: To a point of correction. Any Regulations that are passed do not take effect until they are published in the *Gazette*.

Mr. Debidin: If the Attorney-General (Mr. Holder) were here he would have been able to substantiate the fact that I have repeated myself *ad nauseam* on this point. I am not dealing with the legal aspect but merely stating that we know of the existence of Regulations some time after they have been made, and when it would be futile to go back on them, because Members of the Executive Council would hardly go back on what they have done.

My second point is that I find that Government's policy has been foreign to us in many ways, and on many occasions. Your Excellency has from year to year given us what may be regarded as scholarly and useful addresses on the affairs and future prospects of the Colony. Your summaries of the activities of the various Departments and projected schemes have been very useful, but as regards Government policy the elected Members, or some of them, including myself, know very little and have very little to do with it. We are made to realize that this is a Crown Colony Government, and those of us who are honest and conscientious towards the masses of this country find that what we desire on behalf of the people is a secondary matter to what the Colonial Office wants through you, Sir.

The Chairman: I suggest to the hon. Member that he is now discussing the Constitution, and if he wants to do that it would be better for him to wait until the new Constitution comes before the Council. It is the things that are and not the things that were. I would suggest to the hon. Member not to delay the Council with matters of that sort.

Mr. Debidin: I was fearful of that word "delay" when we had my motion thrown out just now. I visualize once again when you use the word "delay" that it is in a slight degree an inroad upon my constitutional rights. In other words, our constitutional rights in this Council mean nothing at all.

There are two other aspects of the question, but perhaps what I propose to say may be irksome and I may have to ask for forgiveness. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to speak out what I have in my mind. I do so without any malice whatever and just because of a clear appreciation of my rights and duty as a Member of this Council. Motions tabled by private Members of this Council should be dealt with first, and I want to say very strongly that I certainly criticise this Government for the helpless position in which it puts Elected Members when they move to have things done on behalf of their people and find that they have to depend on the good graces and the smiles of the Members of the Executive Council to have their motions put before this Council for discussion.

I tabled a motion here two years ago to have the provisions of the Adoption of Children Act (in Britain) introduced into this Colony—a useful motion which sought to have the whole of the English Act adopted in this Colony—but what do we find? Although many people thought it would be a wise move to adopt those provisions the motion has not been brought forward, and I doubt whether any hon. Member outside the Executive Council knows the reason for the delay. Yet, another motion which was tabled by the hon. Member for Essequibo River, with respect to family inheritance—a motion which was referred and on which a Committee had to sit—was brought up and thrown out in this Council. As the law stands at present, an adopted child cannot inherit from an adopted parent or *vice versa* as obtains in England. People here

are thrown on their own resources in order to get permission from the Court when the English Act could have been adopted here.

There are even more important motions which I have tabled in this Council, and though session after session has come and gone they were not brought up for discussion. It was only on Tuesday last that the people at Mahaica asked me about a petition they sent to me some time ago asking for a mortuary and better medical facilities in the district. They asked me what I had done in the matter and reminded me that I had promised to move a motion in this Council in order to get the things they were asking for, but they had not seen any result up to the present.

Mr. Wight: To a point of order: Are the remarks of the hon. Member relevant to this particular debate?

The Chairman: I doubt whether they are. If the hon. Member outlines what he wants to say I think that will do.

Mr. Debidin: If what I have to say can be proved by hon. Members around this table I would not mind. They can prove my case for me by their actions and speech. We can express ourselves here, but we do not always get the decisions we want. Certain things are decided by Government and their advisers but we have to regret the facts. Perhaps the hon. Member who has spoken does not know the facts. That might hurt, but he gets up and speaks without knowing the facts and, perhaps, that is his mental attitude always. On this question of motions, however, I should like to make this point. As important as Government measures are—Bills and other legislation necessary for the administration of the Colony—urgent and important motions are also brought forward by Members of this Council in accordance with their constitutional rights and privileges, and I feel it is grossly undemocratic to prevent these

motions from being debated through the sweet will of someone.

There is no doubt about it that we suffer in trying to get proper representation for the people, and I cannot help thinking of the Crown Colony Government that has been imposed upon this Colony with its most trying features. Questions and even motions are brought forward but never put before the Council for discussion, and I do not know whether you, Sir, or your advisers should be held responsible. Your Excellency is the arbiter, however, in so far as the acceptance of these questions is concerned. To my mind, when questions are tabled they should be answered. Let them be published and let them be answered, once they do not infringe the Regulations and cannot be considered seditious or anything of the kind. Even if the questions cannot be answered they should be published and a polite explanation given as to why they cannot be answered. The present practice, however, is to sit upon the questions and just say that they are out of order.

The Chairman: I suppose the hon. Member is referring to the question that was referred to me yesterday. I asked the Attorney-General to explain to him why it was out of order. It was very definitely out of order because the matter was *sub judice*. It related to something in the Committee's report and it was definitely out of order for the hon. Member to ask any question about it. That was the reason and that is the answer.

Mr. Debidin: I see Your Excellency's point. I am a lawyer, and though I may not have the same reasoning power as the hon. the Attorney-General I did not appreciate his explanation. He said that when any matter was under enquiry no question should be asked about it. My question did not refer to any matter under enquiry but to a policy.

The Colonial Secretary: I think the hon. Member should respect the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Debidin: I am only explaining that my questions did not refer to a matter under enquiry. It—

The Chairman: I cannot allow the hon. Member to go on discussing questions which the President has ruled as being out of order. The President's ruling is final, and no matter what is the hon. Member's standing he must know what is meant by that. We have our Standing Rules and Orders; we follow the procedure of the House of Commons and, therefore, I cannot have any debate after a ruling has been given by the Chair.

Mr. Debidin: I can quite appreciate Government's attitude in not replying to those questions, because they are fatal.

The Chairman: They will be answered in due course.

Mr. Debidin: They have been hanging fire for two years. I feel very strongly about the matter, but whether a thing is wrong or not we have to accept it because this is a Crown Colony Government. I feel very strongly on matters in which a number of our rights and privileges as Members of this Council are curtailed. Very early after my entry into this Council, I remember, the then Attorney-General wished to transfer nearly all the powers of this Council to make laws to the Executive Council to make Regulations instead. I was able to detect a very skilful piece of legislation to that effect, but Members of this Council, including myself stopped it. One hon. Member—the hon. Member for Georgetown Central at the time—pointed out that he had very little power already and Government was trying to take that little away. I remember that after a lapse of six years. We come here only to find very often that we have to bow to the ruling of Government—rulings made perhaps or advised by the Members of the Executive Council. I call them Pundits—high Moguls. I suppose they are within their rights to advise in whatever manner they like, but sometimes

other people are adversely affected. I expect that I shall have to vote alone on this motion, but I certainly feel proud to have moved it. I feel proud because of the fact that today I look upon the future of British Guiana as being filled with the sweet perfume of prosperity and progress. I also take pride in the fact that I have expressed at the right time what I regard as a reprobation of certain rights and privileges, and the putting of a definite stamp on what I would call a Government of this nature—a Crown Colony Government. I oppose this item as a protest because the question has been already dealt with, and for the other reasons I have given.

Dr. Jagan: It is rather strange to hear the hon. Member attacking this Crown Colony system of Government and yet, not too long ago I heard him in this very Council Chamber praising our new proposed Constitution.

Mr. Debidin: To a point of correction: I do not know what reason my friend has for saying that, but I will tell him that I do not want to have this country run under any other but one Government.

The Chairman: I will ask the hon. Member to proceed with the debate. I do ask that we do not have interruptions of this nature while we have a debate proceeding in accordance with the Order Paper. I cannot let this question turn into a Constitutional debate between the two hon. Members.

Dr. Jagan: My hon. Friend seems not to be sure about what he is doing.

Mr. Debidin: I cannot have the hon. Member saying that. I am discussing his present statement, and he has no right to introduce something if it is not true.

Dr. Jagan: I agree with the hon. Member that many of the things wrong with this Colony are due to the fact that we have a Crown Colony Govern-

ment. While I agree with him that we should seek the deletion of certain items under the head "Governor," I would like to make my comments somewhat more particular. The hon. Member himself has pointed out that it is not so much an objection to Your Excellency as the representative of His Majesty the King in this Colony—and as such a symbol of the Crown Colony Government which is responsible for the administration of the Colony, especially since our Legislature and our Executive Council are merely debating societies with very little power. All they do is to get up and talk, and that is why I prefer not to spend a lot of time talking here. I prefer to do my talking outside.

When I look at the Budget Statement I find that on the very first page the hon. the Financial Secretary makes a statement which, with your permission, Sir, I should like to quote. He says:—

"The major anxiety which has beset us in this Colony stems from the burden which international tension is imposing on world economy, and which in turn reacts on our economy."

That is true, but we have no say about it. It is all well and good to say that we cannot pay increased wages, that we cannot give the people medical facilities and cannot take care of the aged in this Colony because of international tension and so on, but what I would like the Financial Secretary to say is that we should have some control in this Colony over our financial affairs. I remember having read not too long ago Dr. Benham's report relating to national income in this Colony. It is alarming to know that during the war years our export prices rose by 25 per cent., and that during the same period our import prices increased by 135 per cent. Those are the figures given by an expert who came here to investigate our national income. I am sure that the position today is two or three times

worse. I prefaced my remark by saying that the hon. Member was making a criticism under the head "Governor," and that the Governor even in a small Colony which is a Crown Colony can do very little in certain respects. He is a dictator and can do a lot of things, but we do know that things like foreign trade and international relations are out of his hands. While I know that these things are outside the jurisdiction of the Legislature of this Country at the present moment, there are many other things which can be done in this Colony to alleviate the suffering of the people.

The hon. the Financial Secretary in defending the tax proposals mentioned yesterday that the people are getting increased prices for their produce in this Colony, but I would like to see Government take a firm stand as regards the issue of land. For instance, when we complain about the sharp practices of the landlords on the Essequibo Coast Government says that we must take recourse to the law. What is necessary is the introduction of legislation which would protect the farmers. When they toil and produce their goods Government should see that they profit by their labour and not permit moneylenders and landlords to take away the reward of their labour. That is why I am with the hon. Member in moving the deletions under this head. As he said, it is merely a protest to let the Colonial Office and the Government of Great Britain know that we are not satisfied with the way in which this country is being administered and that we want—at least I want—some fundamental changes made. I do not know about the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara; he wants to go by stages.

I do not want to go further now because, as Your Excellency has rightly said, opportunity will be given to

us to discuss this matter in due course. At the present moment, many little things could be done if Your Excellency had supreme authority in this Crown Colony, to see that the welfare of the small man is protected. Millers and landlords are increasing prices wherever they find it possible to do so, and while it is true that the farmers are getting a small increase in price for their produce it is being taken away from them. They have to pay increased prices also for goods being imported into the Colony, because the taxes on these goods are being increased day by day. I do hope that Government is going to take steps very soon to protect the small farmers so that the value of whatever they produce would eventually find its way into their own pockets.

The Chairman: I will now put the question that Head I, as amended in Finance Committee, be approved.

Question put, the Committee dividing and voting as follows:—

For: Messrs. Macnie, Smellie, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Fernandes, Thompson, Farnum, Wight, Dr. Singh, the Financial Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—13.

Against: Dr. Jagan and Mr. Debidin—2.

Motion carried.

Head I, passed as printed, at a total of \$16,094.

LEGISLATURE

Head II—*Legislature*.

Mr. Debidin: Some time ago I suggested that this Council should provide its Members, especially the conscientious ones, with all the facilities for carrying out their manifold duties. I can assure hon. Members that I lose very much more than the \$150 per month

which I get as an honorarium with respect to my duties as a Member of this Council. I have to visit two or three Courts a day in the course of my practice, and I have to do a great deal of travelling in order to attend Council two or three times a week. I feel that Members of this Council ought to have the facility of franking letters dealing with purely political matters. I have had to pay postage for replying to letters from Government—the District Administration—and I feel that every Member should also be given the facility of a free telephone in order that he might carry out his duties more efficiently. I know that my own private telephone is used for two-thirds of the time on political matters, and I think it would be advantageous to Government to know that a Member of this Council can communicate with other Members or with the members of a Committee on which he is serving from time to time, on matters relating to his political business.

These are facilities which Government can provide without any loss, and they would expedite the affairs of this Council. Sometimes I feel I should not advance any claims to these things because some people might say that I am conscientious and am doing quite a lot, but I do not know whether I can say the same thing about other Members whose allowances should be stopped and so on. I have heard statements like that, and that is why I feel that Government ought to do it and not leave it to a Member to initiate it. I feel like moving that our allowances be stopped and let us have a vote on it, because it seems to me that many Members hardly care about how they vote in the interests of the constituencies which they represent. I am not suggesting that I am the most conscientious individual in this Council. Every Member has his opinion about what he is doing and I am not constituting myself a judge. It is the people who are the judges in these matters.

Mr. Wight: Is the hon. Member afraid to move the deletion?

Mr. Debidin: I thank you very much. I will move the deletion.

Mr. Wight: As the hon. Member seems afraid to move the deletion of item 7 (Allowance to Unofficial Members of Council—\$37,800) I am going to move its deletion.

Mr. Debidin: The hon. Member was very reluctant to give way when I said I would move the deletion of the item. I beg to move its deletion.

The Chairman: I am afraid it has already been moved. I put the motion that item 7 be approved as printed.

Dr. Jagan: I would like to make one observation. I think it is the duty of Members to attend meetings of this Council regularly, and I think that in the Minutes of the Council the Clerk should be instructed to record the time when Members arrive and when they leave the Council, as is done in the Minutes of Finance Committee. I observe that it is the habit of certain Members to drop in, have their names recorded as being present, and then leave the Council.

Mr. Fernandes: I thought the hon. Member for Central Demerara (Dr. Jagan) was going to recommend to Government that we change the system and give allowances only to those Members who attend regularly and according to the amount of time they spend in Council. When I gave evidence before the Constitution Commission one of my recommendations was that a Member should lose his seat if he failed to be present in Council or in Finance Committee for at least half the time those two bodies sit in any one month. That is the way I feel about it. If the hon. Member had made such a suggestion I would have supported it wholeheartedly.

The Chairman: I put the motion that item 7 stand as printed.

The Committee divided and voted.

For — Messrs. Smellie, Phang, Peters, Kendall, Thompson, Drs. Jagan, Gonsalves, and Singh — 8.

Against—Messrs. Macnie, Fernandes, Debidin and Wight — 4.

Did not vote—Mr. Farnum, the Financial Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary—4.

Item 7 approved.

The Chairman: I cannot understand the hon. Member voting against the item when he says that the allowance by no means covers his expenses.

Mr. Debidin: It is all done under protest.

Total of Head passed as printed at \$95,064.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Debidin: So far as Agriculture is concerned I do not know what procedure you will adopt, Sir. I would respectfully suggest that we take each item separately.

The Chairman: Let us take page 3.

Mr. Debidin: There are certain aspects of the Colony's agricultural policy which require a great deal of discussion. I desire to speak first about cattle and milk. There is no doubt whatever that the cattle industry today is very vital and necessary for this Colony. It fills a very substantial place in the Colony's economy and we cannot do enough to enhance the possibilities in this particular field. We are aware of the fact, and I think Your Excellency also hinted at it—that in the march towards the expansion of the rice industry there is a struggle for land and competition between cattle

and rice in some areas. I think there should be a more realistic approach to the cattle industry so far as the coastal belt is concerned. I know that much thought is being given to the Rupununi cattle development, and I also know that there have been criticisms against the sugar plantations curtailing their facilities for cattle rearing. Many sugar plantations have gone in for cattle-rearing, and some of them are still doing so, but I know that agistment fees have mounted up so much that unless a cattle owner has his own land he is hardly able to make any profit from his cattle. I appreciate that Government has enhanced the price of cattle, beef, and milk, but generally the position at the moment is that so far as the coastal belt is concerned the rearing of cattle is finding difficulty to stand as an industry.

I would like to see Government introduce a policy of offering free lands to cattle owners and providing other necessary facilities for rearing cattle. I have in mind the banks of our major rivers. As the representative of a constituency of three rivers, I know that the creek lands have been doing yeoman service to this Colony especially in the supply of milk and beef to the City of Georgetown. I do not think any other district has done more for the City than the creek areas. The point I wish to stress is that there are lands on the Essequibo Coast where there are not the same risks of flood or the same problems of drainage and irrigation. The lands are hilly and the cattle can be driven upland in rainy weather in the event of flooding from the river. I feel sure that the cattle industry can be developed to a far greater extent and be of great assistance in the expansion of the rice industry. But as things stand at present, if people embark upon cattle rearing on the Essequibo Coast they would find themselves up against the difficulty of

transportation not only in regard to beef but particularly with regard to milk.

I venture to suggest that Government should have gone into the matter long ago, not by appointing a dozen Committees but by implementing reports which Committees have already submitted on the subject. I have had the opportunity of sitting on a Committee which went into the whole question and submitted a report which has been pigeon-holed for an indefinite period. Why that has been done I do not know.

The Chairman: To what report is the hon. Member referring?

Mr. Debidin: It was recently laid on the table in this Council after I had asked about it. I think the hon. the Financial Secretary was a member of the Committee.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I think the hon. Member is thinking of the report relating to the preservation of milk, which was intended to take care of the scarcity of milk early in the war years. I think that position has almost righted itself.

Mr. Debidin: I think the hon. the Financial Secretary is minimizing the value of that report because I think it went much further than that. I think the Committee suggested the installation of refrigeration plants on the Essequibo Coast. I think something should be done at once in order that we might utilize the supply of milk from the Essequibo Coast and other areas farther away. A few days ago I was given an excellent sample of butter manufactured by an officer of the Milk Control Department. It is butter of fine quality and it gives a very clear indication of the possibilities in this country and what can be achieved by a realistic approach to the subject. I know that Government has spent a lot of money in establishing stud and cattle farms

in various parts of the Colony, but it seems to me that we can go a little further by combining those projects with real dairy farming for the production of butter and cheese. As a matter of fact, quite recently a farmer in Leguan put up an excellent proposition for the manufacture of ghee from surplus milk if he could be assured of a market. I told him he could secure a market quite readily.

Mr. Farnum: For the information of the hon. Member I may be permitted to say that ghee was manufactured at the Anna Regina factory but we could not dispose of it because the competition from ghee imported into the Colony was so great that we could not sell the local product.

The Financial Secretary and Treasurer: I am afraid that is not quite correct. The trouble was the cost of production. About 1,000 lbs. of ghee manufactured at Anna Regina was sent to the Government Produce Depot but at the price fixed it could not compete with the imported article.

Mr. Debidin: I think we should put up the tariff against imported ghee in order to give the local product a chance. I know that the acting Financial Secretary knows a great deal about the cattle industry, and he should be in a position to say whether milk production in this Colony can be increased. The production of milk depends upon an improvement of the cattle industry, because some people would hardly embark upon cattle rearing unless they can be assured of a market for the milk that is produced. Milk production is the great incentive to cattle rearing. I wish to strike a note of warning against the squeezing out of the cattle industry from the coastal belt.

I would like to make one other point. The operation of the Milk Control Board today is far from being satisfactory. It seems to me that the

Board is not playing the game with the people who have been the pioneers of milk production in the creek areas. It appears that the Board can only handle a certain quantity of milk, and it is said that those who carry out the duties of the Board are deliberately refusing to accept people's milk on the excuse that it is not of good quality. I am informed that that has happened on two consecutive days. I have certificates by the Government Analyst with respect to two samples of milk which had been rejected by officers of the Board and they show that the milk was of perfect quality. I have seen the samples and there are witnesses to the fact that the milk was rejected by officers of the Board, and that the reason for the rejection was not what was given to the people, but because the Board could not handle all the milk in Georgetown.

I was a member of this Council at the inception of the Board. I was opposed to this milk control because I knew that the distribution of the milk would suffer very badly. It has suffered because the distribution system in Georgetown is an apology. The depots in the City distribute for the sake of easy money-making in quantities of 2 pints or a half gallon. They would not sell a $\frac{1}{4}$ pint to a poor person in a tenement yard. Prior to the establishment of the Milk Control Board every yard was supplied with milk.

There is over-production of milk and that is perhaps the incentive to the officer of the Control Board to convert the surplus milk into butter. I do hope he will succeed, because it would tide us over the present difficulty. It is unfair to the producers of milk from the creek areas that there should be no market for their milk. One of them was the first to inaugurate a launch service for the transportation of milk from the Mahaica Creek. This situation affects my constituency and I feel justified in bringing it to the notice of this Council that the Milk Control Board is not fulfilling all that was expected of it. There are employees of

the Board who are not earning their salaries. They do not go into the districts and encourage the people by suggesting proper methods of milk production. The Board is not functioning as well as it did in the days when Mr. Good was in charge.

There are other items on which I would like to speak, if you will permit me, Sir. We are actually discussing items on page 3 concerning the staff of the Department of Agriculture. I do not propose to criticise the staff, except to repeat what I have said on previous occasions—that it is an over-weighted Department. One would expect the most important Department of the Government to be the Department of Agriculture, but I venture to say (and this is honest and sincere criticism) that with the exception of one or two of the more senior officers we have a batch of men in the Department who do very little to encourage the practice of modern methods of agriculture as is expected of them. Instead of teaching, some of them have to learn agricultural methods from the farmers. On this page there are 23 Technical Assistants, 3 Agricultural Superintendents, 5 Assistant Superintendents and 29 Agricultural Instructors who are spread out over the Colony. I have seen some of them at work. Some days they walk around with their pockets filled with seeds which they distribute to the farmers. On other days they make assessment of crops, and I understand that they are useful informers for income tax purposes today. I do not know if such work comes under the head of Agriculture, but that information has been given to me. What is really needed is that the senior officers of the technical staff of the Department should train the junior officers to hold classes for the training of the farmers in the rural districts. I think that in that way we would get far better results from agriculture in this Colony.

But the root of all the ills of this particular Department lies in the fact that there has not been any real-

istic agricultural economy planned for this Colony as yet. We have an Agricultural Economist and he is the man who ought to give to the public a very clear, lucid and realistic plan of the way in which various agricultural schemes should be carried out—the various crops that ought to be planted and so on. In years past the Canal No. 1 area had a flourishing citrus cultivation, but it has been allowed to die out. Truck-loads of oranges and grape-fruit used to come from the area—from Bagotville and other places—but one sees no such thing today. The present situation is largely due to the flooding of the people's lands by the conservancy which is being controlled by the various sugar estates—a situation similar to that of the people in the Mahaica district owing to the water conservancy on the East Coast.

What is the Agriculture Department doing? It should not only give ideas to the people as to where the crops should be planted, but it should also give them sound marketing ideas and so on. Further, I am not satisfied with the publication of the *Farm Journal* by this Department. How many of the farmers know to read and write, and how many can appreciate the articles in these books? I feel that the Department must take full blame for our unsatisfactory agricultural position, and I also venture to think that the Department is badly staffed because of the fact that it has a Head under a Head. That statement might be misconstrued, so let me explain that we have an able man at the head of the Department, but what is the use of having a man like that in the Colony when he has to be in every place and has no time to organize his Department into the full machinery necessary for the agricultural progress of the Colony. He has to sit on about 20 different Committees and he has to be out of the Colony very often if not most of the time.

I think one of the greatest tragedies in the Colony at the moment is to find these Heads of Departments

being sent to various conferences abroad when they are just "birds of passage" here. They may attend conferences 20 times a year, but I do not know what happens to the knowledge and information they collect—whether it is put down and left. I feel sure that is one of the reasons why this Department has not been doing so well. There is a Deputy Head, but one knows that such a man does not take full responsibility if he can help it. He would shelve many of the things that come before him, especially if he has good reasons for doing so. Sitting on various Committees is not sufficient to enable the Head of the Department to co-relate and push forward its various activities. I can assure my hon. Friends that I had good reason not to attend the meetings of the Finance Committee, but I saw in the minutes that some comments were made on this very aspect of the Department's activities, and as we go further into the items of the Department, I shall have something more to say.

Mr. Fernandes: Agriculture is one of the most important sections of Government, and very much depends upon the success or failure of this Department. I have always taken a keen interest in the Agricultural problems of British Guiana, even though my constituency is one which has no agriculture in it. So much depends on agriculture—our food and milk, among other things. There is nothing being produced in British Guiana of which I am more ashamed than our milk. The hon. Member has said that the bulk of the milk supplied to this City comes from the three creek areas, and I do not know whether there is any connection between the three creek areas and the watery appearance of the milk being marketed by the Milk Control Organization. I say unhesitatingly, however, that all the milk the hon. Member spoke about as being surplus is not surplus. We are short of milk, and we have been short of it for quite a while. We are importing more and more milk, and there are more homes in the City today depending on imported milk for their children

and their dogs than there ever was in the history of British Guiana. The difficulty is to produce milk of a purity and quality which the people of this City will accept readily and will use in preference to the imported article. This Department has paid little or no interest whatever in seeing that our milk-producing areas are given special attention and the necessary guidance which would stop the production of the very low-grade article which, as the hon. Member for Eastern Demerara has said, is in surplus supply at the moment. Had the Department done that, I can assure you, Sir, that quite a fair slice of the difference shown to us in the figures supplied by the Financial Secretary between imports and exports would have disappeared.

If this Department was being run on lines which I have suggested in this Council before—and which I am going to repeat now because this might be the last time I will be representing the public here—this being my fifth Budget occasion and my term of office is one of five years—it would have produced better results. If the Department would concentrate on those items badly needed in British Guiana and out of British Guiana—and which can be produced economically and successfully—if the Department would pay attention to these items and ignore all the frills, we would be very much better off and this \$848,560 which we are spending on it, annually, would be spent to very much better advantage. With the exception of rice and sugar, the other products seem to be going backwards. We are in a very difficult situation at the moment with regard to coconut products. We are members of the Fats and Oils Conference or Association of this area, we grow a large quantity of coconuts and yet we find that our coconut cultivation is suffering from various diseases. In my opinion, the proper attention which should be paid to this particular industry and this particular crop has not been paid within recent years, with the result that our coconut production has gone down.

The little island of Barbados which is not too far from here does not produce a single ton of copra in 12 months; nevertheless, in Barbados one can get all the edible oil, soap and margarine one wants produced there and what is more, they have a surplus to sell to British Guiana. Our soap factories are only employed for two days in some weeks and for three days in others, while the Barbados factories are running full time. The Barbados pigs are getting more copra meal than the pigs in British Guiana, and people in that island are actually manufacturing copra meal, soap and margarine and shipping them to this Colony. British Guiana had the right—if we were properly represented at the Fats and Oils Conference—to get her full share of copra in order to manufacture her own supplies, at least, of these products, and not buy them from an island which does not produce any but which, because of superior representation, I suppose, is able to get supplies not only to have a pool for their own requirements but for part of British Guiana's requirements, as well. That has resulted in throwing a few people—only a few, fortunately—out of employment in British Guiana.

But, it is doing more. It is causing Government officials in authority to ignore the loss to British Guiana. I know a gentleman—a very experienced person at that—who got all the necessary permission from the Town Council and so on and bought machinery several years ago when it was recommended that we should try to discourage the manufacture of oil by the boiling process. He went to one of the islands and bought the machinery and brought it here. He set it up and applied for a licence to be granted to him, and I was appalled at the fact that this licence was refused. I went to the hon. the Attorney-General and asked him to oblige me by showing me the law on the subject. I had a look at it, but as I am not a lawyer I would suggest that hon. Members should have a look at it also.

I do not intend to speak on any head which I did not mention in F.

nance Committee that I would speak on, and on this head—Agriculture—there is nothing I can do about it because the Director came to the Finance Committee but had to leave during one of the debates to attend a conference and I did not have the opportunity to get all the information required. The person to whom I have just referred applied for a licence to manufacture oil or copra by the press system, and if the reply had just stated that the Board could not grant the licence it would not have made him see through discoloured eyes, as it were. Arrangements had already been made for this person's copra to be manufactured by one of the two big mills, and my reason for getting hot under the collar over the matter is because it is very often levelled at Government that they would go a long way to protect a monopoly.

I know that the Administration, as such—at the top level—knew nothing about the matter, but it is matters like those that cause all the trouble in British Guiana and unless the Administration takes immediate steps to stop that kind of thing from happening there is going to be trouble ahead. It is my duty to issue that warning and I do so. I hope that the licence in question would no longer be withheld. My latest information is that it was claimed that the machinery was antiquated and therefore there would be waste. All I can say is that the machinery has not been used to manufacture its complement of oil all these months and it is bad for a person who had never seen it to say that it is antiquated and would cause wastage. I think it was the Board's duty to grant the licence, and if the machinery was found to be causing waste it had the power—because the powers of the Control Board in this country are nearly as wide as those of a Dictator—to stop the manufacture of oil by that machinery. The laws of this country will remain the laws of this country so long as they are on the statute books and not repealed. Government should set the example in being fair and law-abiding.

Lawlessness is a big word, but all it means is living without the law.

Before I move from the subject of the coconut industry, I would strongly recommend to Government that immediate steps be taken to approach the Fats and Oils Committee in order to secure for British Guiana an additional quantity of copra. It is needed to meet our local supplies and to prevent us from sending money out of the Colony for the manufactured article when we can obtain the raw materials and when we have our factories idle and we have the labour, trained and otherwise, to turn the raw materials into the finished article. We are spending moneys given to us by the C.D. and W. on experiments of various kinds. It is true that the money is not ours, and it is true that it was given to us to carry out tests or experiments relating to the industries which we know we can operate. Nevertheless, I hate to see money spent in a way that would produce very little benefit, whether it is given to us as a gift or whether it belongs to the taxpayers.

There was another item which came to our notice in Finance Committee but which I would not have mentioned if the hon. the Fourth Nominated Member (Mr. Farnum) had not left, because I was hoping that he would have mentioned it. It is the manner in which this Department is handling the supplies of plants—economic plants. He mentioned the upward spiral in prices relating to plants like economic plants. Some one booked some of these plants and before they were eventually delivered to him the prices changed quite a few times. We are spending \$800,000 a year on this Department and the best we can do is to show that it is giving strong encouragement in those items I mentioned; coffee is one of them. I remember as a youngster when British Guiana was an exporter of several thousand bags of coffee to various markets of the world—to the United Kingdom, Holland, the West Indies and several other places. Today, however, the poor man has to pay not less than \$1 per lb. for ground coffee.

I served on the *ad hoc* Committee in the early days of its existence, and I remember well that the same control kept the price of coffee down to such a level that now the industry is extinct. The price was kept down to 10c. per lb., so much so that the farmers could not reap their crops. The price went down until now that we have found ourselves in a very awkward position. The hon. Member is Chairman of the Agricultural Advisory Committee, having succeeded me, and he referred to the fact that the price of coffee fell to one-third of the usual figure without any previous notice to the farmers. It is things like that that have caused all the trouble in the past and would also cause trouble in the future.

I think I have spoken enough. I have made other remarks which have been recorded in the minutes of Finance Committee. There is just one last matter I should like to mention. Just a short while ago we got the Mahaicony-Abary (Rice Development) Scheme, and that report shows a loss of \$100,000. I am not commenting on the report or the reason for the loss, but I would like Government to know that as a Member of this Council I feel that one day they might need the taxpayers' money to meet this loss and I would like to have it known that some sort of report should be presented to Government from time to time. This Council has no say in the matter, but one day this Council might find itself in the position of having to vote this \$100,000 and perhaps more. I do not know how an Elected Member would be asked to vote money like that, without being told what happened.

As regards the question of Anna Regina and the rice mill there, as I look at the Estimates I do not see anything there about that rice mill. I am told that it has nothing to do with the Estimates, and there again I would like to issue a warning that Government is on very dangerous ground if a loss has to be voted by this Council. I think that the head of the Department and Government should take this Coun-

cil more into their confidence than they have done in the past. I know that the Head of this Department is determined that he would have as little as possible to do with the members of the Advisory Committee and the Members of this Council in general. He did so when I was Chairman of the Advisory Committee and he is doing it with the new Chairman also. This is a most important Department of Government from the economic point of view, and it is only fair that more attention should be paid to the economic products of British Guiana and more information given to the Members of this Council.

Dr. Jagan : I agree with the previous speakers that this Department is one of the most important in this Colony. I have been a perennial critic of this Department and I feel that we must have some strong action if we are to improve the agricultural situation in this country. I have had discussions with many of the agricultural officers. It is not that they are not capable men but, unfortunately, this Department cannot work in isolation. One finds when certain criticisms are put to officers of the Department that they shift the blame somewhere else. When we think of growing bananas we are told of some disease that affects them. I would like to see us concentrate on the food needs of the Colony first and foremost, and having done that we can think in terms of exporting the surplus, and then in terms of producing other articles. I do not agree with the policy which has been pursued for a long time that we should only think in terms of producing certain things which are most economical.

Lest I be misunderstood I wish to make my position quite clear. It was stated a few moments ago that we had to stop the production of ghee because of too much competition from abroad. We are now thinking of producing butter, and today I read in an *Argosy* editorial a similar note that we have to

be careful to find out whether or not we can produce at competitive prices with articles from abroad. I am of the opinion that we have to give protection to the people of this Colony, in respect of whatever they are producing. I know as a fact that hundreds of gallons of milk are being wasted on the Essequibo Coast, not because we have no use for the milk, because there is a great demand for it in Georgetown, but because of the lack of transportation to Georgetown. If we cannot transport that milk to Georgetown then means must be found to convert it into butter on the spot, and for the protection of those people we must control the importation of butter into the Colony. I think the time has come when we must not only think in terms of what countries we should buy from. We are suffering at present because we have to buy from certain areas only. We must also think of the quality of our imports and the country of origin. The U.S.A. is a powerful country today, and it began to become powerful from the days when it consisted of only 13 Colonies, because they set up tariff barriers to protect their industries when they were growing up.

The big countries are today fighting for free trade, and the bigger their industrial potential, the more mechanized they are the more are their demands for free trade. We find that even a country like the U.S.A. which has its own high tariff barriers, is today fighting for the abolition of tariff walls in other parts of the world, because the Government of that country realizes that if there were no tariff barriers the U.S.A. could out-sell practically every country in the world today. If we are perpetually to think that we must produce only those articles which are competitive then I feel that we are not going to produce a balanced type of agriculture in this country. I hope the time will come when we will adopt the policy of the Surinam Government. My friend, the hon. Member for Eastern Berbice (Dr.

Gonsalves) was with me at Curacao when the Director of Agriculture there read a paper which disclosed that the agricultural areas in that country were to be laid out in blocks, depending on the number of people per farm, and the number of acres required, per family. Those blocks were to be cultivated from the point of view of having a diversified agricultural policy.

But what have we got in this Colony? We have a perpetual shortage of coconuts. My friend suggested that we should advocate a more equitable distribution. I have no objection to that, but I feel that the problem of the coconut or oil shortage in this Colony is the basic problem of coconut plantations. Every farmer can plant at least two or three acres of coconuts in this Colony if he had the land. I have been on the Essequibo Coast and on the Courentyne Coast and I have seen many acres of land lying idle without any trees around. Something has to be done about the land holding problem in this Colony. That is the only way we are going to tackle this problem of coconut oil shortage and solve the problem of copra meal shortage. The pig industry is suffering because we have not enough pig feed of the right type. Whatever feed there is, is being handed out to a few large manufacturers.

The Chairman: Has the hon. Member seen the new processing factory yet?

Dr. Jagan: No.

The Chairman: I hope the hon. Member will visit it and see what is being produced in the way of copra meal. I hope he does not think that nothing is being done.

Dr. Jagan: I am not thinking of the processing side of it at the moment because, as the hon. Member has himself suggested, there are two mills lying idle and another is about to be set up, which has been refused per-

mission. But that is not the difficulty. The bottle-neck is that we have not enough coconuts, and the reason is that people are not planting; and they are not planting because they have no land. That is the problem which this Government must tackle. On the Esse-qui-bo Coast the landlords who are interested in rice mills have imposed tight conditions on the farmers. If the farmers cannot plant rice they must not plant anything else. The pig industry is suffering because there is not sufficient copra meal. At one time I recommended to the Agricultural Committee that we should take the copra meal that is available and let the Livestock Officer have it mixed on a scientific basis for equal distribution to the farmers, but that could not be done because certain of the "big shots" were getting large quantities of copra meal while the small people wasted days in a scramble to get half a bag per week from the Produce Depot.

From time to time I have heard the Financial Secretary say that the only way to improve the economic condition of the Colony is to increase our national income. How in God's name are we to raise the national income or the standard of living of the people when the basic problem of the Colony is agriculture? We are thinking of the interior, but what have we got out of it so far? We have granted fixed holidays and remission of Customs duties and income tax to certain industries. We are spending a lot of money on this Department, but I would say that apart from providing good jobs for people in the interior we get very little out of it. That is the basic problem of the Colony but, so far as I can see, we have not up to now tackled this problem seriously. I know that Government has huge drainage and irrigation schemes afoot, but that does not mean that while those plans are being implemented we should just sit, wait and drag on, as we have done all these years. Changes can be made in respect

of the existing land ownership in the Colony. Puerto Rico has done it. Between 1936 and 1940 the Government of that country instituted a land reform policy, and today many people who had no land before are earning a fair standard of living—a far better standard of living than if there were large estates all over the place.

It is easy to say that Government has all these things in mind, but that is not solving the problem in this Colony. The drainage and irrigation schemes are going to take some time to complete, and in the meanwhile I feel that the best way to tackle our agricultural problem is to institute a comprehensive land investigation project to find out definitely what types of holdings there are and whether the lands are beneficially occupied or not, and those that are not beneficially occupied should be given to the farmers for the cultivation of coconuts, cane and ground provisions. At the moment that is not done, and that is the difficulty. I do not object to money being spent on the Agricultural Department, because I feel that we need trained people and experts to guide the farmers. We need people to do research, but what is the use of having people to guide when we have not the people who are to be guided? The average farmer in this Colony does not need to be guided very much. First of all he wants land which he has not got. My friend from the North-West District has told us that the farmers there are teaching many of the experts who go to them. Fortunately there is a good deal of land in that district.

I am one of those people who support generally the policy of giving leasehold tenure as against freehold, but on reconsideration of the matter I have come to the conclusion, taking into account conditions as they are at present, that Government should reverse its policy. In places like Barbados, Puerto Rico and the small islands in the West Indies there is a

real land problem, but in British Guiana we have large areas of land along the river banks, and I feel that if Government's policy were reversed it would be an incentive to people to go into some of those areas and plant permanent fruit crops, coconuts and so forth. It may be proclaimed from the house-tops that security is given to the farmer who has a long lease of twenty-one years, but the farmer himself does not believe it. He has had very better experience in the past and does not feel very confident about these pronouncements. He is always afraid, despite all the promises which have been made, that having planted his permanent crops the time might come when the land would be taken away from him. The result is that he is reluctant to put on those leased lands permanent crops and so forth, and I feel that an opportunity should be given to some of those people with the pioneering spirit to free themselves from leasing land. Those people do not want to plant permanent crops like coconuts because they know they only have a three or four-year lease.

I feel that Government should review this matter very urgently. It is the only immediate salvation of the economy of this country. Let the people become trail blazers, and I think there are many who will be willing to do so at the present moment. If they are given the land on a freehold basis I feel that some of them would plant permanent crops feeling that there would be security for them later on. But as long as we continue the present policy I feel that the money which is being spent on the Department of Agriculture is really a waste. I have said so on previous occasions during Budget debates in this Council. What are the results? We can only judge a Department by the results, and we cannot say that this expenditure of nearly a million dollars is really bringing a great deal of money or benefit to the farmers in this country. I would prefer to have a million dollars spent more use-

fully in other ways; to give the farmers direct help—give him land and free planting material, so that he can go ahead with his work. I hope Government will go into the question of land usage and carry out a thorough investigation to find out whether the lands which are now being held on either leasehold or freehold, are being beneficially occupied. In the past I have criticized the sugar industry for holding considerable areas of land idle, and people have criticized me for criticizing the sugar plantations only, but now I am also saying that there are other people who hold lands idle. Apart from dealing with the problem of drainage and irrigation, Government should carry out surveys to determine whether or not lands are available. That is the only way we are going to solve our agricultural problem and raise the standard of living of the people in this Country.

Dr. Gonsalves: Members having insisted that we proceed with the Budget debates today I do not think I can say much in the short time left this afternoon. I feel very strongly on the agricultural policy which is being pursued in this Colony. I have never been made to feel more conscious of the importance of agriculture until the Conference which my friend and I attended in Curacao. I think it will be realized from the report of that Conference what importance is being attached to agriculture in the present ravished state of the world. Anyone who has had an opportunity to read the expert papers on the importance of agriculture and just what part the Caribbean must play in what may be called a balanced economy, cannot fail to be impressed. I have been made to realize that even countries which are highly industrialized are aware of the importance of a balanced agricultural economy.

I am convinced, as I believe I also heard Your Excellency say, that the destiny of this country is agricultural, but I am not satisfied with the results

we get from the money spent, because, apart from sugar, the only improvement I have been able to see is in the rice industry. I have observed that the sugar producers have exceeded the target set for the year, and I believe they should aim at producing even more, because if the Dominican Republic can achieve such efficiency in sugar production I see no reason why a country like British Guiana, with its vast resources in land, should not produce more sugar. We must realize that our destiny hinges largely on agriculture, but unless we make a complete step forward to bring about the results that we want this country will never have a balanced economy for a long time.

I have not seen the new processing plant, but I can say that although it is able to turn out grapefruit juice I challenge anyone to say that it would be able to do so for more than one or two months in a year. A little country like British Honduras has a plant which produces grapefruit juice during more

than six months in a year. We need a processing plant, and I believe the one we have is very useful and efficient, but the point I am making is that there must be something wrong if it can only produce grapefruit juice for one or two months in a year. We will have to concentrate on producing more citrus fruits, for until that is done it looks to me that we have a plant that we do not need just yet. I do not suggest that there are not other uses for the processing plant.

The Chairman: It is not a citrus juice factory at all. It is for the processing of corn meal, cassava and so on, and the mixing of feed for cattle, pigs, sheep and poultry. I would invite the hon. Member to go and see it.

Dr. Gonsalves: I thank you very much. I should like to say a few more words on this Department tomorrow if it meets your approval, Sir.

Council was then adjourned until 2 p.m. the following day.