

# FIGHT FOR FREEDOM



## Waddington Constitution Exposed

by CHEDDI JAGAN

Member of the Legislative Council

With foreword by

SYDNEY KING

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## FOREWORD

The insipid document called the new constitution was written by an old colonial governor accustomed to the sweets of domination, a professor of history who said that British colonial pirates were motivated "by a spirit of adventure" and a Fabian socialist who believes that only gradually, step by step and inch by inch, must any progress come about. This constitution is quite the latest thing in British imperialist policy of deception of the awakening coloured people in the colonies. It is said that the rich will do anything for the poor except get off their backs. If we cry out against being ridden too roughly, then they will ride us with cushions, but ride us nevertheless. Just so the British will write any constitution for a colony except a free constitution. For a free constitution never descends from an imperialist overlord into the arms of an exploited people but is won and written by the people themselves in the face of battle. We have seen that it is more likely for a dog to surrender a bone, more likely for a crow to relinquish carrion than for an imperialist power voluntarily to hand over control to the people of the colonies.

It is in the light of this experience that Comrade Cheddi Jagan whom someone called "the foremost exponent of liberty in British Guiana" was able to discover in the "new" constitution the actual methods by which power in B. G. will be safely left in the hands of the present rulers, and to tear the fraudulent constitution into bits in the Legislative Council on January 18th, 1952. The occasion was the debate on the bill to grant adult suffrage. Hon. Theo Lee had spoken and had sat down. There was silence. No one stood up to speak. The President called on the Attorney General to reply. It was at this point that Comrade Jagan delivered his famous speech. The reactionaries, Hons. G.H. Smellie, W.A. Macnie, L. Luckhoo and John Fernandes followed. Hon. G.H. Smellie began: "the Hon. Member for Central Demerara (C Jagan) has certainly taken advantage to give his peculiar ideologies full play. He ran true to form, and while he was speaking, I could not help being reminded of a line of verse which I heard many years ago: "His faith, unfaithful, kept him falsely true"

Hon. W.A. Macnie, the chief of the Sugar Producers, listening to the exposure of their latest political strategy by Comrade Jagan came to the conclusion that such talk from a "slave" was all "foreign" to British Guiana. Macnie, instead of replying to the points raised, treated the Council to an excursion into the "slave labour camps" of Russia. He criticised the "soviet law-the law behind the iron curtain" as he called it. He quoted the following out of the mouth of a well-known enemy of the U.S.S.R. "Absence without cause is prohibited (for a worker.) Any absence or three times late within a month means dismissal with loss of trade union card and housing". Macnie went on to weep in the following strain: "Then we have it that a law of June 9, 1948 made all strikes illegal." What he failed to mention was that in the Soviet Union there were no more imperialist exploiters like Bookers Bros, Mc Connel & Co. Ltd, Davson & Co. Ltd, etc. and that the factories and the wealth produced in the factories belong to the workers. Let me remind Mr. Macnie that in June 1948, workers, claiming the right to strike were shot down at Enmore. Five of them were shot dead by police. That is how the Sugar Producers recognise the right to strike. What about absence from work on the sugar estates of British Guiana? He said the Russian workers will be deprived of housing. Has he ever seen an eviction notice? It reads thus:

## NOTICE TO QUIT

To-Kampta Persaud, House 27, Range 7, Room A, Richardstown East, Plantation Lusignan.

Take notice that we, the Enmore Estates Ltd. hereby determine your interest and right of possession in and to the premises situate at Pln. Lusignan in the County of Demerara and Colony of British Guiana belonging to us and now in your possession and we require you forthwith to quit and deliver up possession of the same premises.

Dated the 17th day of October 1952

For and on behalf of Enmore Estates Ltd.

J. Baxter, Reg. Agent

Notices like the above were served on the branch secretaries of the Guiana Industrial Workers Union and their wives on all estates where the strike began to be effective in the colony-wide strike of 1952 for union recognition. In the case of Kampta, it was served on himself, his wife, his son and his daughter-in-law. This happens during every strike. Workers who have been resident on sugar estates since birth, and their parents before them, are evicted for participating in a strike. The sugar gods, by pointing to alleged "evils" in a country thousands of miles away hope to hide from our eyes what is happening in British Guiana. Their depravity is beyond dispute.

Hons. John Fernandes and Lionel Luckhoo followed in the same strain as Macnie, attacking the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies. The constitution makers were praised to the skies - the constitution was a "step in the right direction". John Fernandes stated "I am very pleased with the proposed constitution, with its checks and double checks and even with Your Excellency's veto -- or your successor's veto" and later, "The new constitution is a stepping stone to complete Self-Government".

The new constitution is no such thing. It is merely a changed form of oppression. As Comrade Jagan was at pains to point out, it cannot be discussed without constantly referring to the economic set-up of the country. The refusal of the constitution commission to listen to views on the economic set-up shows that the last thing in their minds was to change it. Hence the constitution was written with a view to "working off" the protest of the masses, to giving them the shadow of power. In plain words, the constitution was written to fool the people into thinking that their elected representatives could now control the country. That it is nothing but a great British lie is proved by Comrade Jagan's speech.

The colonial empire is rich in constitutions of all shapes and shades, all leaving the power in the clutching hands of the British and their mercenaries - those who live by performing services for imperialism. The Waddington Constitution is no exception. There is a show of full democracy at the bottom with adult suffrage. When we come to the Legislative Council, the process of adulteration has begun. Three civil servants have ready-made seats in the "elected" house, and of course they will take a very active part in politics. As we go higher all show of democracy disappears. The Upper House is nominated and has power to obstruct and delay laws passed in the lower house. The governor has a casting vote in the Executive. And over all the fuss and talking, he has the power to veto or disallow anything done by the people's representatives and not to the taste of the ruling classes. The Governor is the Government. The farewell gift of Governor Woolley to British Guiana which took the form of certain changes in the new constitution accepted by the Colonial Office, makes it quite clear that every care will be taken to see

that the present economic set-up in B.G. remains undisturbed. The nominated upper house will not only be able to delay and obstruct legislation passed by the people's representative in the lower house, but will be able, at the Governor's discretion to sit and vote with the elected members making it very difficult for a single party to pass any measure which is against the ruling class. The last thing the British want to see is Government by the majority.

Take the example of Buxton Village Council. At the elections in April 1952 a people's council was elected, the ratepayers Association and the People's Progressive Party bloc winning all six elected seats. One of the elected candidates soon joined the nominated bloc, while a woman nominated member, disappointing her patrons decided to fight for the people. The majority thus stand at 6-3 in favour of the people. From the start the Local Government Board dominated by Sugar Interests, began to veto and obstruct every important measure passed by the majority on behalf of the people. The first clash was with the estimates. The Enmore Estates formerly paid \$500 per year for passing their canes from Pln-Lusignan to Pln Enmore through the Buxton Right-of-Way canal. The Village Council raised this to \$2400, on the basis of a toll of 8c per punt, the amount payable by the cane farmers of Buxton Village, and increased rates by only  $\frac{1}{2}$ % from 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 5%. The Local Government Board deleted the \$2400 from the estimates and substituted \$500, and raised the rates from 5 to 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ; in other words, freed the rich and soaked the poor.

The Majority in the Buxton Village Council however, stoutly defied the Board (The sugar estate toll case is now being fought out in the Supreme Court) and supported by the people pressed on with its policy, continually exposing the fraudulent democracy of the Local Government Constitution. In the same way that a nominated body, the Local Government Board, obstructed the will of the people in the Village Council, the Governor's veto and the nominated State Council would block the will of the people in the new House of Assembly. It is therefore imperative that like the Buxton Village Council, the House of Assembly should be captured by the real representatives of the people. Otherwise the new constitution as an instrument of oppression will be no different from the present one.

From this, the duty of the electorate at the coming General Elections is clear. Only the candidates of the People's Progressive Party are sufficiently advanced politically to be able to put up a persistent battle against all forms of obstruction and veto and to detect the tactics of the imperialists and expose them to the people which will be used against all constructive measures. Only this party recognised the constitution for what it was from the very first and opposed it. Comrade Jagan was a thousand times right when he said:

"The framers of this constitution have devised things in such way as to make the people feel that they are getting something — something which would change the economic set-up but that is only meant to lull the people to sleep. It is like giving them sedatives. But a sedative never removes the cause of pain, only dulls the mind for a moment."

After the last general elections (1947) Comrade Jagan, encouraged by the "Labour Party" success in quite a number of seats had said "We, the people, have won. Now the struggle will begin." He was wrong as events turned out. It was a one-man struggle. The Labour Party was not in for struggle. Only a Party with our record of preparation; and of struggle on behalf of the working class and the masses is capable of making the necessary war.

I cannot close without adding a word of tribute to this doughty champion of the working class and the popular masses. His name has deservedly become a by-word of resistance, and of exposure of the ruling classes. On the lips of every loyal Guianese of every race and in the hearts of the oppressed, this name has become a banner behind which tramp the revolutionary and progressive masses of our country - to battle and victory.

*Sydney King*

Text of speech on Adult Suffrage and the New Constitution delivered by Comrade Cheddi Jagan on the 18th of January, 1952, in the Legislative Council.

Dr. Jagan: It seems that Members are very reluctant to speak on this very auspicious occasion. There can be no doubt that this issue of universal adult suffrage is one of the very remarkable things now taking place in this Council. I do not want to spend too much time discussing the pros. and cons. of the question because I think it is an accepted fact that no one would really oppose it. What I would like to do is to discuss adult suffrage in connection with this whole report. At the very outset of this report mention is made of democracy and I would like, first of all, to clarify what in my opinion is meant by democracy, and also to discuss whether the Constitution that is being given to us fulfils what we can consider to be democracy. Apparently in these days one word conjures up several meanings to several different people, and democracy is such a word. On page 22, par. 78, of the Commission's report we find these words:-

"78: Democratic governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." This doctrine of consent is distinctive of democracy and fundamental to it. It means, for one thing, that a government elected by a majority of the population should always consult the interests of all. For this reason, and to enable the will of the community to be more perfectly discovered, checks and balances are an integral feature of democratic government as western civilisation understands it...."

There seems to be some contradiction in what I have just read. On the one hand we are told that the just powers of democratic governments derive from the consent of the governed, and we see that checks and balances have been brought into the picture. We must, therefore, ask ourselves this question: If a people by their free votes choose their representatives who, apparently, would sit and make laws and would constitute the sovereign body, then who should be using these

checks and balances these restrictions on the people's will. The answer is covered somewhat ambiguously in the statement that:

"It means for one thing, that a government selected by a majority of the population should always consult the interests of all."

Obviously, we cannot have a democracy in which every single individual would be able to sit in a chamber and speak out his mind—we can not have all the people of a city or a village sitting in a Council with each individual putting forward his views. That is why we have to give these individuals the vote and let them select their representatives who would speak on their behalf. Having got all these representatives together—the men who are supposed to represent all the people—where are those other interests whom we must consult? If men are elected to represent all the people then, obviously, they speak for all the people and all the people's interests. But what seems to be implied here in this report, is that all the people's representatives must sit together and make a certain set of laws and then those laws must be subject to some interest that does not derive from the people at all. I cannot understand that kind of argument.

Throughout the whole of this report there is this idea of checks and balances and it has been put there deliberately—merely to beguile the uninformed and to make it appear that this is a very democratic Constitution. On the one hand the Constitution Commission has given us something—it has given the people universal adult suffrage, it has told them that they can sit in the Legislative Council without having any property or income qualification—but after having done that it proceeds to take away the rights and privileges which it gave to them. It has taken them away by the inclusion of these checks and balances which are mentioned all over the report. Of course, we are told by the Commission at the same time—over and over—that "checks and balances are an integral feature of democratic government as western civilisation understands it." Perhaps the more correct words should have

been "western imperialism". Why must checks and balances be put in any democratic constitution?

Let us take one of the earliest Constitutions—the American Constitution. When the framers of that Constitution were thinking of their independence they drew up what was then known as the Declaration of Independence, and behind that there were men like Thomas Jefferson, Tom Payne, Adams, Patrick Henry and others who were inspired by the motives behind the French ideas of Equality and Fraternity. These people were in France for some time. Thomas Jefferson was an Ambassador there and, holding a post of that kind, he saw despotic French rule and at the same time he saw the democratic movement of the people growing up with their own ideas of liberty and freedom. Therefore, when these people wanted to get rid of British Imperialism in the 13 Colonies in America they took as their model the ideas which were incorporated in the French revolution. There was no Communism in those days. Today Communism is being blamed for everything. When the Declaration of Independence was framed one clearly saw the hand of the people behind it—the people's will to rule themselves and to set up a government for the people and by the people.

But, how did these checks and balances creep in? It may be said that the American Constitution has its checks and balances in the Senate—the upper House—but if we were to accept these checks and balances simply because they are in a Constitution framed years and years ago, then we must analyse the historical reasons behind them and find out whether the same historical necessity exists today. I want to speak about the American Constitution because it is held up as one of the first Constitutions and perhaps the premier Constitution in existence today. The reason why checks and balances were put into the American Constitution was because certain interests in America got afraid after the revolutionary spirit got a-going. If we read the great his-

torian C. Beard we would find that he states that the people who really started the movement in the 13 Colonies were the businessmen who were fighting against the restrictive practices then prevailing—and in that respect we remember the dumping of tea in the sea, and so on.

It was these people who objected seriously to the restricted practices of British imperialism on their profits and their business ventures, in America. But after this spirit of opposition which they started was got hold of by the masses, it became so big and strong that it became a national movement for independence. There we saw the influence of people like Thomas Jefferson who really framed and wrote the Declaration of Independence. But afterwards, because of the influence of people like Hamilton and Washington—people who themselves were large estate owners, slave owners, large businessmen—the original ideas which were incorporated into the Declaration of Independence—the democratic ideas which were then incorporated into the Declaration of Independence—were gone back upon gradually. You must remember, Sir, that the Constitution was drafted a long period after the Declaration of Independence. And so we find when the final Constitution was drafted the interests of big businesses, the interests of the Virginian planters, the interests of the men in the South, the slave owners, prevailed. It was those people's will which finally prevailed.

That was the reason why we have the check of the Senate put into the American Constitution. There was another reason why a check was put on the American Constitution, and that was to give equality to the 13 Colonies or States.

Is that the reason why our State Council will now have two Members from each county? I suppose that is the same analogy. The House of Representatives was to have members represented on the basis of population as our lower body is to be. In order to give equality of representation to the

then thirteen colonies the framers of the Constitution, in order to protect their economic and slave owning rights and in order to play up to the people dominating the various colonies, gave them two members each from within those Colonies. But let us look carefully and we will find that the framers of the American Constitution did not say that the Governor-General or President was to handpick two men from each colony and put them into the Senate. Our Constitution makers, while they preach about checks and balances and they talk about democracy which we all know they care very little about, are really and truly trying to perpetuate the old Imperialist order, the old system of exploitation and plunder of the Colonies, in a different form of course. The thirteen colonies drafted a Constitution which provided checks and balances, but at least they gave the appearance of democracy; laying aside the fact that their economic interests were preserved by the whole constitutional framework, they gave a semblance of democracy by allowing all the Members of the Senate to be elected, two from each State. But our Constitution makers do not feel that that principle should be accepted. In fact even with the Federation Constitution we had the same thing. If we must have an Upper House, then by all means we must profit from the experience of the U. S. A. which at least elected the Members of the Upper House. In Australia strangely the Members of the Upper House are also elected. Why not elect them in British Guiana? Why not elect them for the proposed Federation of the West Indian Colonies?

That brings me to the point, whether the Upper House is necessary, whether checks and balances are necessary at all. We must admit that the people's representatives are the ones in whom are deposited all powers. Sovereignty rests with the people, and the British Government has recognized that since the days of Charles the First,

the one who was beheaded. They recognized that the King could not do as he liked when the Commons told the King that sovereignty rests with the people. If sovereignty is to rest with the people, then surely we must not have a second or Upper House made up of Nominated Members, which in effect implies that the will of the people must not prevail whether it is in respect of policy or otherwise. Under this Constitution the will of the people will prevail but it will be delayed so long that by the time opportunity is given to the will of the people we will find that it will not have time to put anything into effect as the three years will have expired.

Examine the proposed Constitution very carefully, and we find that on money issues the delaying powers will be limited to three months but in the case of other bills, very important bills, the matter can be delayed for at least one year. That means that any measure introduced in the very last year can be completely killed. That means that the Council will have to operate very quickly, within the first two years, if it wants to get things a-going, and from my experience of this Council and the way things move in this Colony. I know very well that no serious legislation will be introduced or any attempt made to push them through. First of all, to introduce serious legislation would mean that we must control the Executive.

When I say "we" I mean the people's representatives. Even then we find the repository of powers is in the hands of the Official Members — the Financial Secretary is the Minister of Finance, the Colonial Secretary will be responsible for Foreign Trade, External Relations and Information Matters. Then the Attorney-General will be responsible for Law and Order and Justice. But we remember the old statement by the philosopher, Schopenhauer, that justice is in the interest of the stronger. It is

'true I may have used an exaggerated statement when I said that justice is bought and sold, but it cannot be denied that justice is in the interest of the stronger who make the laws and rules the Colonies and has been making the laws all these years. It does not matter what the individual feeling or sense of justice of the Magistrate or Judge may be, he has to judge or rule according to the law of the land. So when we find these three Official Members holding the most important positions under this new Constitution—Minister of Finance, Minister of Foreign Trade and External Relations and Minister of Law and Order and Justice—where will the people's representatives come in?

I would like, Sir, to analyse the Executive for a moment. I do not want to spend too much time on the unicameral constitution recommended by Sir John Waddington because that is similar to the Constitution recommended in Trinidad. We saw what happened there. With 18 Elected Members, 6 Nominated Members and three Officials we have 18 against 9 to start with. For one party to appoint all the members of the Executive Council it will mean that party will have to have a majority of at least 13 out of the 18 seats, and they will have to have 14 to have a real control. Let us look at it from the other side as to what may happen, as in Trinidad. The Members of the Executive Council can be hand-picked. You go to a member and say to him "We will put you on the Executive Council as Minister of so-and-so" --and the salary of the very handsome sum of £1,500 a year is a very enticing bait—"provided you vote for four or five others." And so the ball goes around the table and before we find ourselves the Ministers have been appointed. Unless the people's representatives have 13 or 14 seats as a party they will find themselves not having one Member on the Executive Council. That is so far as the unicameral legislature is concerned.

In the bicameral legislature one party must have at least 13 out of the 24 seats. But according to the

Socialist Labour Minister, Mr. James Griffiths'—Socialism has certainly gone down these days—recommendation not only will the 24 Members be allowed to vote for Members of the Executive Council, but also the three Officials, so that instead of having a majority only in 24 one party will have to get a majority in 27—24 Members and 3 Officials, who will be voting together for the Executive Council. It is not impossible that one party will capture in the bicameral set up the majority of those seats—13 or 14 of the 24 seats. In the Gold Coast we saw where the leader of the People's Convention Party was sitting in gaol and his party was able to win 34 out of the 38 seats. So it is not impossible here. It is for that reason that the checks have been put in at a later stage—just in case one party can capture 14 out of the 18 seats in the unicameral set up or 13 out of 24, or 14 out of the 24 according to Mr. Griffiths, in the bicameral set up. Their influence must be curbed at a later stage.

How does this come about? First it will come about in the composition of the Executive Council. In the Executive Council we will have 3 Officials, one representative from the Upper Nominated Chamber and the people's representatives will have six, according to Professor Harlow and Dr. Rita Hinden, and five according to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. So we have there a composition of Officials and one representative from the Upper Chamber against 5 or 6 people's representative from the Lower House. Let us take the Constitution recommended in the despatch of the Secretary of State for the Colonies and examine that in detail, because it is more likely that will be the Constitution which will be handed down.

If we start out with 3 Officials and one representative from the Nominated Council—4 members—as against 5 Elected Members from the Lower House, we would have a very delicate balance indeed. We will have the Governor sitting there with a casting vote. I do not know what will happen in this case, because



in the case of the Constitution recommended by the Commissioners the casting vote is to be employed where the balance was 4 against 6. But in the other case presented by the Secretary for State of the Colonies there will be a delicate balance of 4 against 5. I do not know whether the position will be made more delicate by giving the Governor an original vote which will mean 5 against 5. In Jamaica and Barbados we have a similar position. That point is not clear, and we would like to know whether under the Constitution proposal of the then Secretary of State it is intended that the Governor should have an original vote and also a casting vote to make a delicate balance even more delicate.

**The Colonial Secretary :** The Secretary of State for the Colonies did not suggest any such thing.

**Dr. Jagan :** That is what I am saying. I am seeking information because in the case of the Constitution Commission it was definitely stated that the Governor will have a casting vote, but in that the balance is 4 against 6 so that the casting vote although it does have value can only be exercised if certain members do not vote.

**The Colonial Secretary :** I think the hon. Member is under the misapprehension that the casting vote is used in order to equalize the minority with the majority.

**Dr. Jagan :** I am sorry that the hon. the Colonial Secretary does not follow the trend of my argument.

**The Colonial Secretary :** I follow it all right.

**Dr. Jagan :** I am speaking of the balance of Elected Members against Official and Nominated Members, and I am saying that if the Governor has a casting vote, when the opportunity arises to use it he would use it on the side of the Official and Nominated elements. Of course that is the general practice.

**The President :** Would the hon. Member read paragraph 117 on page 32 of the Report which gives the position of the Governor under this Constitution.

**Dr. Jagan :** I quite agree with that.

**The President :** The hon. Member is talking as if the rest of the Court of Policy is going to be in opposition to the Elected Members. It does not happen that way and it does not happen in practice even now. It is a big assumption that whoever is elected there is going to be in opposition. We know from experience that is not always so. It is very rare and, apart from that, it is the Ministers of the Court of Policy who are going to decide the policy. That is what I said in my address to this Council at the opening of this Session. It will be positive responsibility. The complaint has always been that there is only negative responsibility. The Governor will be bound personally to accept the advice tendered him in the Court of Policy. It may be said that he has reserved powers, but he may never use them. I have never yet used them.

**Dr. Jagan :** I think I understand this report and what you have said. I am sure that is the intention of His Majesty's Government. It is written all over the place, and that is to lead the people to self government in the shortest possible time when they are ready. "Shortest possible time" is never defined. As regards when they are ready, they will never become ready. I do appreciate the fact that what is being sought is to put more powers in the hands of the people, but what I am trying to show is that actually and in fact more powers—I mean real powers—are not going to be put in the hands of the people. I am talking about decisive policy-making powers. That is why I say I was analysing the composition of the Court of Policy, because if this body is going to be the body which is to introduce legislation and make the laws actually they would be the policy-making body. They will discuss

what is to be introduced and then it will be introduced and then it will be brought to the Legislature. That is where the policy will be determined, and we know as a fact that policy is determined according to the interests of the people who are looking at things from their own point of view. One cannot tell me that a representative of Bookers sitting in the Executive Council with me, a representative of the people, will be framing a similar type of legislation. I do not know if anybody can put that over with me, maybe with someone else. Professor Arthur Lewis some time ago wrote a statement, and he is a strong critic of British Imperialist policy, even though he is being drawn into the Imperialist orbit as I see him drawn into the net of the Colonial Development Corporation. This is what he said in his book "Labour in the West Indies".

"The impression is now widespread among the people that the Governor and Officials are little more than the tools of a white oligarchy of planters, merchants and bankers, in whose society they spend most of their time and whose will it is that the policy of the government is the policy of the local club decided on perhaps, over a round of golf or a whisky and soda."

I do not think we are far removed from this state of things today.

**Mr. Carter :** Will the speaker give us the date of the publication?

**Dr. Jagan :** I do not know when it was published.

**The President :** The hon. Member is not aware when it was published.

**Dr. Jagan :** It could not be very long ago. The Professor is only a young man.

**Mr. Carter :** 1939 or 40.

**The President :** What is the document the hon. Member is reading from?

**Dr. Jagan :** It is my paper which I intend to publish later on.

**The President :** I do not think the hon. Member should speak from a paper which is not published.

**Dr. Jagan :** You can be sure that I am not misquoting Professor Arthur Lewis. I can assure hon. Members that British Imperialist policy has not changed much since 1940. Coming back to the whole composition of the Executive Council. I, more than anyone else in this Council possibly, want to see powers put into the hands of the people in the Executive Council but, as I said before the main posts are held by the three Officials. The other posts—the Heads of certain Departments—will be given to the other five Ministers. In another part of the report, (par. 108), it is stated that in case of a dispute between a Minister and the permanent Head of his Department, the Governor will decide.

**The President :** The Court of Policy, not the Governor.

**Dr. Jagan :** The matter will be discussed in the Court of Policy and the Governor will decide who is right. I have referred to that all over the place and have also written to the United Nations about it. The paragraph reads:—

"108. Ministers are entitled to a loyal and willing co-operation from the permanent officials of their departments, and we see every reason to expect that this co-operation will be given, and that they will work in harmonious association. Nevertheless, a minister and the permanent head of his department may, upon occasion, differ upon a matter of principle, and, where this happens, the disagreement should be resolved, after discussion in the Court of Policy, as the Governor may direct....."

Here again we see that there will be no power whatever in the hands of the Ministers.

**The Financial Secretary and Treasurer :** May I interrupt the hon. Member? This relates to a matter of principle and it is quite different from a matter of policy. A matter of policy would be decided by the Court of Policy and any Minister may take part in that. This is something on

a lower level—a matter of principle.

**Dr. Jagan :** So far as I can see, these Ministers will be mere puppets. Let us examine also the framework in which they would be working. It is the same old Colonial system because foreign trade—two of the most important things in any country—will be determined by the Colonial Secretary.

**The President :** They will be determined by the Court of Policy. Every Minister will, necessarily, have to decide on his policy himself. The Ministers will be the policy-making body, and to say that any particular individual like the Colonial Secretary or the Financial Secretary would determine a thing is wrong. He would submit it to the Court of Policy, but he cannot determine. That, of course, has to be done by the Legislature itself. The hon. Member seems to forget that there will be a Court of Policy. Maybe matters of policy would have to be brought before the new Council consisting entirely of Elected Members. The Court of Policy will have executive powers, but they will only derive from the legislature. Whether it is the Budget or a Bill—whatever it is—it would have to go before the Court of Policy, and thereafter before the legislature. Responsibility will be transferred to the elected Chamber and to the Ministers. As I have said before, it is a very real and positive responsibility and I would not like any hon. Member to think that Ministers are going to be puppets— that this new elected Chamber of 24 Members would have no powers. I hope the hon. Member himself would endeavour to appreciate the big transfer of responsibility which is going to take place. I can assure him that it is very great and that in practice it would be very real. The hon. Member describes the Ministers who will be in this new elected Chamber, as puppets, but I can assure him that he is quite wrong.

**Dr. Jagan :** I have been too long in this Council not to know what takes place here and in other places. It is true that if there is any policy to be

determined it would be determined by the Court of Policy as a whole, but it is also true that before it becomes law it would be agreed upon by the Legislative Assembly. One must take care to analyse the situation carefully. If in the Legislative Council itself we did not have any one party with a majority which would enable it to capture most of the elected seats in the Court of Policy then we would find that by a system of bargaining and what not certain people—the Ministers— would get elected to the Court of Policy, and the very fact that they have been elected by the Legislative Council to the Executive Council where they would have to determine questions of policy implies that when the decisions on those questions go down to the Legislative Council they would find ratification there. I am not a child not to know that at present, and that is why these Ministers would be hand-picked in the first place. We all know how each hon. Member thinks here, and one can tell from the ideology and views of a particular Member what kind of legislation he would prefer, and so on. The very fact that certain people are elected to the Executive Council presupposes that a certain type of legislation would be introduced and that it would find favour when it comes before the Legislative Council. That happens all the time, and it has happened in this farcical Council throughout the period I have been here.

Let us go a little further and analyse another check. We have, in the first place, the question of the selection of Ministers. When they sit in the Executive Council—the Executive body—(I prefer to use the term Executive Council because that is more clear in the minds of the people)— laws would be framed by them, whether those laws originate from the Colonial Secretary, the Financial Secretary, or else.

It is also true that the Ministers would not necessarily have to agree with the statements of the Financial Secretary, for instance, in his Budget

Statement, or with those of the Colonial Secretary in determining matters of trade and so on; but that is exactly where the composition of that body comes in as well as the whole question of the delicate checks and balances. You said a moment ago, Sir, that the Governor has reserved powers but he does not use them. We know that as a fact. If we study the history of Constitutions in India and other places, we would find that Governors hardly use reserve powers because the whole Constitution has been so framed that they need not do so.

Let us assume that we would be able to introduce legislation in the policy-making body of this country for the benefit of the working man and would also be able to control the majority of votes in the Executive body. That means that when the legislation goes before the Legislative Council it would be passed, but after that there would come in the checks of the second Chamber. When it goes there, if it is not a money Bill it could be deleted or amended, and it would have to go back before the Legislative Council for approval or otherwise. And, even then, the Upper House can wait for one year before it considers such a Bill, and even if it does not reject it completely it could make amendments sending it backward and forward. That is what these people do when they want to delay legislation, so that by the time it is passed by one House and amended or rejected by the other the time for its usefulness would have expired.

I repeat that if the people's representatives get control of the policy-making body, then there will come into operation the checks of the second House. It is highly improbable that we would be able to control the second House also. That is why the Commission has not recommended the election of members to this second House. They are afraid that if the members are elected the people who control the lower House would also control the upper House. It

does not necessarily follow that the same members would sit in both places. Let us assume the improbability that the same members who control the lower House happen, to some extent, to control the upper House also. It means that legislation would go through very freely—legislation framed in the best interest of the people of this Colony. Then, however, there will come in the last check—that is the Governor's reserve and veto powers. He would say that it is against good faith, good interest and good government. Those are three small words, but they have very large and wide meanings. For instance, if we want to nationalize the sugar industry, we would be told that it is against the good interest of the Colony.

When we look through the whole of this report we find all kinds of statements, and we have been told that we must not do anything that would frighten away capital from the Colony as it would be considered as repulsive action and something that would deter progress. I really did not intend to speak this afternoon, therefore I have not got all the quotations I intended to refer to at hand. However, with your Permission, Sir, I should like to read from page 52, par. 29, of this report where Professor Harlow and Dr. Rita Hinden say this:—

"29. We recognise that legislators new to political responsibility may sponsor projects which, although excellent in themselves, are beyond the financial capacity of the Colony; and we should be failing in our duty if we did not take account of the possibility that legislative measures might be put forward which might endanger the social and financial fabric of the Colony, as, for example, discriminatory taxation, which might cause the abandonment of productive enterprises essential to economic viability....."

This statement is repeated over and over again in this report, and I would like to pause for a moment to examine it. Why must it be assumed that the people's representatives would be so irresponsible—so devoid of brains—that they would simply tear everything apart without looking at

the interest of the people concerned? Why that assumption? In England, the Labour Party themselves were fighting for the abolition of the House of Lords not so long ago. What is ruining the economic and social fabric of this Colony? It is strange that when the Constitution Commission was here it refused to hear evidence about the economic set-up in this country. So far as I am concerned, this report could have been written in England thus saving the taxpayers of this Colony an expenditure of some \$20,000; and it could have been sent to us when it would have been discussed as we are now doing here. The Commission did not listen to any economic evidence. Why? In one part of this report they say that this country has been honourably administered, but I myself would have preferred them to use the word "ably." This country has been efficiently administered, but not in the interest of the people--in the interest of the gods who rule it--the powers behind the Throne--the whisky and soda people at the clubs--the white oligarchy of bankers and planters that Professor Arthur Lewis refers to.

Forgive me, Sir, if I take this opportunity to go into the economic set-up in this country. Since the Constitution Commission did not want to listen to evidence on it they must do so now, because they are going to see the debate on their report. According to them, we must not put complete powers in the hands of the people's representatives; we must have a Constitution with checks and balances so that we can preserve the social and financial fabric of the Colony. Further, we must not introduce legislation which would frighten away capital, or might force companies already in existence to close their doors. It is all well and good for people to talk like that when their bread is well buttered. I am sure that the many experts who come here and examine projects and write that way in their reports have their bread well buttered.

We also have to consider another

factor, and that is, most of these recommendations are always drafted or made so as to fit in with British Imperialism--with British policy as a whole. I want to take opportunity to discuss why people in this country have been so poor for many years under British Administration, and to analyse whether their condition would be improved under this proposed Constitution. In other words whether this Constitution has been drafted in this manner so as to tie it up with the policy of British Imperialism and so control the destiny of this country so that we can continue to send our profits abroad--to drain our wealth away and to let the country remain in a state of utter poverty. Who rules British Guiana? In order to answer that question one has to ask: Who owns British Guiana? Hon. Members of this Council would do well to go into the Deeds Registry and look at the returns of Companies filed there, taking particular notice of the ramifications--the interlocking of Directorates--the shares held in these Companies by people in other countries, and so on--and then they would realise who are the rulers and masters of this Colony. Is this the financial fabric which we are to preserve? Apparently that is the intention of the Constitution Commission.

Let us take the sugar industry as relating to some of the Companies I have referred to. I shall analyse that industry and then we shall determine whether or not we are going to get an opportunity under this new Constitution to make any basic changes in the economy of this country. Unless basic changes are made the people's condition cannot improve. Sugar has been the sheet anchor, as it is always alleged, of the economy of this country. Dr. Eric Williams, another famous West Indian, in his book--"Capitalism and slavery" says this;--

"It is strange that an article like sugar, so sweet and necessary for human existence, should have occasioned such crimes and bloodshed."

Can we say that the period of the "should" is passed? Maybe we do not have the bloodshed and the roaring and thunder of the guns and the whip-lash of the slave-owners but, nevertheless, we have the influence of sugar in this country so protected -- so strategically placed -- that the farmer -- the wage-earner, whether he is in the industry or out of it, is nevertheless in its clutches. Let us examine for a moment the question of land. In a big country like British Guiana we find that there is land hunger. When I attended the agricultural conference in Curacao some time ago, my friends from Barbados and Puerto Rica said to me: "You are very fortunate in British Guiana to have large areas of land and a small density of population." I told them that they must not look at statistics because statistics can certainly create false impressions, but that one must look at realities of a situation. What is the reality in this case? It is that the farmer in British Guiana has a plot of only three or four acres of land. Which agricultural expert will agree that four acres of land is sufficient to make a successful livelihood in farming? No expert will agree to that, but in this country we find that the people have been unable to get land because of one thing or another. The land is there, but it is either held uncultivated in large holdings -- not only by the sugar estates but by other landlords -- or it is not suitable for cultivation.

It suits the policy of the sugar industry, however, not to introduce any land reform in this Colony because the moment any vital land reform is introduced here not only the rapacious landlords in certain areas would be affected, but the main consideration is that the farmers of the country would be afforded an opportunity to have a square deal -- to work freely for themselves and not be exploited by means of poor wages and bad working conditions as obtained on the sugar estate for years and years. It is true that we are now having drainage and irrigation schemes so as to be able to bring more land

under cultivation, but the old saying is that "While the grass is growing the horse is starving." You yourself said in this Council not so long ago, Sir, that it is strange we have not had levels taken before, in relation to our drainage and irrigation problems. I would like to ask why is it that for all these years we have not had levels etc taken? It is rather strange indeed.

**The President :** We had not the money to do it, nor was it possible in those days for the Government to borrow money to do it. That is the real reason.

**Dr. Jagan :** Owing to the way in which the country is being run we would never have the money to do anything. It is now 5 o'clock, Sir, and I do not know if you wish to take the adjournment.

**The President :** The hon. Member has been speaking for a little more than an hour. I don't know if he is going to take much longer.

**Dr. Jagan :** Yes, Sir, I have much more to say.

**The President :** Then Council will adjourn until 2 p.m. on Wednesday next, January 23.

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23rd January 1952

**Dr. Jagan :** On the last occasion when I spoke on this Bill I was pointing out how the proposed new Constitution would not put real power into the hands of the representatives of the people. In fact, I pointed out that in the words of the Constitutional Commission itself there were various sentences and phrases which gave the indication that what was really intended was to preserve the STATUS QUO as it has been for some time. Since the last occasion I have been able to make a few extracts from this Report and I would like to read them in the course of this debate. I think there is certainly a wrong conception of the whole question of the development of British Guiana. It is true that we all want development and an increase in the

national income of the Colony, but my view is that unless we have a Constitution which would give us an unlimited amount of power we would not be able to make the necessary changes that would enable us to increase the national income of the Colony from which the expenditure on social and other services should be defrayed. In this respect, Sir John Waddington has said in this Report that :-

"This situation can only be met by an expanding economy, which will demand for its fulfilment the investment of considerable capital from overseas and, consequently, a full measure of confidence in the rule of Government."

That is what he had to say (on page 41) on the question of an expanding economy -- that we must have capital coming in from abroad -- capital which would only come if there is confidence in the Government. In another part of the Report -- on page 13 -- the Commission states :-

"A prodigal acceptance of debt obligations is no solution, and, if a real measure of economic expansion is to be achieved, further capital must be attracted from official and private enterprise. If this capital is to be forthcoming, nothing must be done which can sap confidence. In a country such as British Guiana, where development is impeded by lack of knowledge, confidence is a tender plant, and its prerequisite is stable and honest government. There must be no fear that impulsive action will undermine industry or that ill-considered taxation will deter legitimate investment . . . ."

We find the same idea being repeated over and over in this Report, that we must not in any way do any thing -- introduce any legislation which might endanger the social or the financial fabric of the Colony and change the present STATUS QUO. From year to year we have been hearing from the Budget Statements of the Financial Secretary the same story -- that we must increase our national income -- but what do we find? If we look at the picture very comprehensively we would find a false economy emerging. The workers employed in the mines and the several industries are being paid relatively small wages. We also know of the small wages

which have been paid on the sugar estates from time immemorial. In the extractive industries -- the bauxite industry particularly -- inadequate wages are also being paid. We know that the Bauxite Company is intimately tied up with companies in Canada and America and that the wages paid in those countries are not paid here at all. The wages paid in British Guiana are about one-fourth of these paid in the metropolitan countries. We know for instance that the Demerara Bauxite Company is practically owned by the Aluminium Company of Canada which is a subsidiary of Aluminium, Ltd, and this (last-named) company is also tied up with the Aluminium Company of America.

We have these mining companies operating here and paying very small wages, and in the end making tremendous profits which are taken out of the country. It is true that some income tax is paid by them, but this goes to the Government which use it for their benefit in one way or another -- taking into consideration the subsidies given to these companies in divers ways -- sometimes open and sometimes hidden. We find that as soon as money comes in it goes back by way of subsidies to these companies.

The hon. Member for Eastern Demerara was making a point in this respect, and that is why we find so much expenditure on air fields, air strips, geological surveys and so on. Why is the country not developed? Can we develop it from the earnings of the people living in it? We cannot, because the wages which are paid to the workers in this Colony are barely sufficient to keep them alive. The same people who own the plantations and the mines also control our foreign trade. If we take our foreign trade -- imports and exports -- we would find that the same people who are the owners of the plantations and the mines have big establishments in Water Street and are the people who control it. Let us take the sugar in-

dustry: Bookers, as we know, own several sugar estates, and we also know the stronghold they have in the commercial community in this Colony. Another big company — Sandoach Parker & Co. — owns large undertakings also. Then we have Davson & Company, Ltd, which also has large interests in business concerns here. This company holds the major shares in Garnett & Co., Ltd., and so we have the story. These people not only control the major industries from which profits are earned and drained away, but they also control our foreign trade — the wholesale import and export trade of the Colony.

A few days ago I criticised the Commodity Control organisation where a large amount of quotas for goods from restricted areas were still in the hands of a few major concerns. The new business which has come in since the beginning of the war has been given to those who have quotas. Therefore, we have the people on one hand being exploited on the sugar estates and in the mines and, on the other hand, we find exploitation in commerce. It is true also that by contriving in one way or another we have not developed a diversified economy in this Colony, and that has been done simply to provide the plantations and the mines with cheap labour. In Africa we have the Hut Tax and the Poll Tax. Lord Hailey, in his book, tells us that the Poll Tax was introduced so as to force the Africans to go and labour on the plantations and leave their farms alone, in order to provide the plantation owners with cheap labour. Today, in this Colony, we have the control of land so rigidly arranged that we have not had any diversified economy in agriculture. It helps the people who control the estates to get cheap labour and, at the same time, to get profit from the foreign trade which they have been monopolising for a long time. These are not the only two ways in which the people are being exploited. These same interests have gone a bit further, and so we have the noble institution of banking, we have the institution of insurance

companies, we have the institution of pawnbrokeries and what not — all taking their tribute from the same workers who are being exploited on the plantations and in the mines. This multiple squeezing of the workers would not permit them to play any part in the development of this Colony, and unless we get the political power which would enable us to remove this squeezing we would not be able to improve the standard of living of the people here.

Is it the intention of the Constitutional Commission to preserve that status quo — that social and economic fabric, as I have outlined it? If we are to develop this country we must have capital, but that capital cannot come out of the earnings of the workers of the country or through the way in which the country has been administered so long. The emphasis of the Constitutional Commission is that the capital must come from outside and that our Constitution must be so framed as not to scare this capital which would come from outside. I, Sir, would rather have a Government and a Constitution with real powers so that we can re-arrange the economy of this country and get the necessary capital out of it for its development. That can be done if we have the real powers. As I have said before, we need land for agricultural purposes. It is true, as you have said, Sir, we are going to embark upon huge drainage and irrigation projects, but I remember that in a Message to this Council in 1950, Your Excellency pointed out that we had never had levels taken from the whole of our coastal belt, and it is necessary to do that in order to carry out the schemes we are now embarking upon. I can only wonder how long these schemes are going to take, and who are going to get hold of the lands when they have been put through. We are hearing a lot about the C.D.C. coming into the rice industry with the plantation system again.

**The President :** There is no such question. I have explained that to this Council two or three times already. The C.D.C. has no intention



of coming into this Colony on the plantation system, if indeed they do come. The hon. Member's statement can only be hearsay and I would like to disillusion him of that idea. There is no foundation in the statement that this Corporation is coming here to squeeze the people as the hon. Member has announced. I hope the hon. Member will contradict such an idea or any suggestion of it.

**Dr. Jagan :** I am not suggesting that, it is a matter which is worrying the people at the moment.

**The President :** If it was, it need not worry them any longer.

**Dr. Jagan :** My contention is that we must make the land available to the people so that they could produce the goods. Let us look at some of our imports into this Colony and we would see what is happening. Let us take fish, for instance. We have here imported salt fish and canned fish of one kind or another. In 1938 our import of fish was 15.8 lbs. per individual as compared with 10.7 lbs. in 1946, 11.4 lbs. in 1949. As regards flour it was 108.3 lbs. in 1938, 83 lbs. in 1946 and 101.8 lbs. in 1949; vegetables and pulses—48.5 lbs. in 1938, 1946—36.6 lbs. and 1949—56.2 lbs. What do we find if we analyse these figures? These are only a few of the food items imported into this Colony which can very well be grown in this country.

**The Financial Secretary and Treasurer :** Flour?

**Dr. Jagan :** The hon. Member picks on flour, but I should like to tell him that while we may not be able to grow flour at the present time, the people's habits and modes of eating can definitely be changed once we have a conscientious policy to do something like that.

**The Financial Secretary and Treasurer :** Of course, Sir, we can impose on the community a law that they shall only eat rice flour, as that is what the hon. Member is suggesting.

**Dr. Jagan :** I am not suggesting any dictatorship. Only a dictatorship

would do that. What I am suggesting is that under a British Government as we have we allow these things freely to come into the country because the big guns who control the Chamber of Commerce are profiting very highly from the import of these products. If we want to continue to let our economy run that way, (then obviously let it run that way,) concentrate on few crops and continue to buy the bulk of our food items abroad.

**The Financial Secretary and Treasurer :** Does the hon. Member advise that the people should no longer eat wheaten flour, that they should stop eating that and eat rice flour instead? Let him do that.

**Dr. Jagan :** I do not know why the hon. Member is talking only about wheaten flour. I can mention several other items—meat, fish, butter, cheese, lard.

**The President :** Kola drinks!

**Dr. Jagan :** Yes, I can mention a lot of them. The hon. Member is talking about one item and giving that a good deal of publicity and emphasis. I am stating only a few of the major food imports of the Colony. My view of this matter is, this Constitution which has been granted is merely a fake and a trap to delude the uninformed, to fool the masses of the country, that we are going to get something whereas in truth and in fact we are not going to get very much. I have before me a statement by Mr. Abraham Lincoln which was made since 1858. With your permission, Sir, I should like to read it. It is from a book which is titled "The Problem of India" dealing with constitutional reforms.

**The Colonial Secretary :** Who is the author of the book, and who is the publisher?

**Dr. Jagan :** It is written by R. Palme Dutt and published by the International Publishers, New York. I quote :

"We will suppose that the Rev. Dr. Ross has a slave named Sambo, and the question is, 'Is it the will of God that Sambo

shall remain a slave or be set free?" The Almighty gives no audible answer to the question, and His revelation, the Bible, gives none — or at most none but such as admits of a squabble as to its meaning; no one thinks of asking Sambo's opinion on it. So at last it comes to this, that Dr. Ross is to decide the question; and while he considers it, he sits in the shade, with gloves on his hands, and subsists on bread that Sambo is earning in the burning sun. If he decides that God wills Sambo to continue a slave, he thereby retains his own comfortable position; but if he decides that God wills Sambo to be free, he thereby has to walk out of the shade, throw off his gloves and delve for his own bread. Will Dr. Ross be actuated by the perfect impartiality which has ever been considered most favourable to correct decisions?"

Sir, in the light of what Abraham Lincoln said there, that is the way we must examine this Constitution. We must examine it from the point of view of "Dr. Ross and Mr. Sambo," whether the Constitution Commissioners have written a Constitution which is really to benefit the people of the Colony, or whether they have written a Constitution which will perpetuate the old Imperialist order and which will preserve the status quo of this Colony as it has been going on for many years. Take the National Income of British Guiana, the last one. We had an annual drain of \$3½ millions from profits of this Colony. That was away back in 1942-3. To day that must have increased a great deal because we have had a large number of new companies operating here. If we take our National Dept we find another drain there. This year's Budget estimates a drain of nearly \$2 millions. Then we have the Insurance Companies, the Banks and even our own Post Office Savings Bank. I would like to analyse the Constitution in that respect to find out whether or not we would be able to develop this Colony, because unless we have development—it is admitted on all sides—we will not be able to raise our standard of living. We have first of all to stop the flow of profits going abroad. In order to stop the flow of profits going aboard we have to do certain things, and in order to do those things we must have political power.

Some of those things I would like to point out to hon. Members of this Council. Whether it appears to be dictatorial or not it is not for me to decide at the moment, because that is the way I see it and that is the way many persons are looking at the problem in this Colony.

If we take the sugar industry, there is definite need for reorganization of the industry either on the basis of complete nationalization or reorganization in the sense that the estates are run on a co-operative system, or some such system as we have in Fiji, Puerto Rico and other places. We must have for the farmers of this country a complete system of diversified agriculture. The people in Surinam are now doing it. We must be able to do it here too. We must be able to plan our agriculture in such a way that the average family will have 15 or 20 acres of land in certain blocks where they can have so many acres under rice cultivation, so many acres under coconuts, so many acres under ground provisions, and so many acres under permanent crops, and not as we have been doing all these years—to keep the sugar workers tied down around the sugar plantations, even those who are not vitally necessary to the industry. The new housing scheme, as I have said on many occasions, is merely to tie the workers, even the surplus workers around the estates. No land has been made available to them or contemplated for them in other parts. That is one way in which we have to reorganize the economy of this Colony. Another method of reorganizing it is to control the market of the products which we sell. We must have control of our foreign trade. That is indeed very important.

**The Financial Secretary and Treasurer :** Will the hon. Member explain that? Control of foreign trade is a different thing from control of the markets in which we sell.

**Dr. Jagan :** Control of the markets in which we sell has some relationship to foreign trade, because if we

have no control of foreign trade, if our trade policy is determined by His Majesty's Government, then obviously we have to sell to the people whom His Majesty's Government directs. That is quite obvious. We must be able to sell our products to the places from which we can get the most money. The hon. Member for the North Western District (Mr. Phang) mentioned in this Council or in Finance Committee some time ago that we can get much more for our gold than we are getting now by selling to other areas directly and not through Great Britain. Why must we sell our gold to the dollar areas through Great Britain? That is not in our interest, and if we examine our dollar earnings at the moment we find that in 1950 we earned nearly \$30 million from the hard currency areas, but we only purchased about \$14 million from those areas. Our bauxite, our gold and some of our timber have been going to those areas. We need to control our foreign trade in order to determine the markets to which we can sell. If we can get more prices or better prices for our gold or bauxite, or for our sugar or whatever it may be, then we should be able to sell to those areas from which we can get the best prices. At the moment we have no alternative than to sell our bauxite to Canada, as the Demerara Bauxite Company sells to its parent body in Canada and we have no control over that. The Bauxite Company in the Berbice River sells to its parent body in the U.S.A. and we have no control over that. Our gold has to be sold not to earn dollars for us primarily, — because obviously we are earning much more dollars than we are spending — but to balance the dollar problem of the United Kingdom, which is growing worse day by day.

Indeed that is now we must look at this Constitution, especially in these critical days of British Imperialism, when Great Britain is experiencing great difficulties in keeping her head above the water. Shall we saddle ourselves to the United Kingdom while the people in the United Kingdom live relatively on a very much higher

standard than the people in British Guiana, simply because the economy of Great Britain is in great danger at the moment? Should we accept a Constitution which is handed down to us by representatives who think like Dr. Ross in the late Abraham Lincoln's speech, who are thinking first and foremost of Great Britain and then of British Guiana afterwards? Control of our trade, Sir, does not necessarily mean only what we sell abroad. Who knows, we may be able to get better prices from other countries for our bauxite, our rice, our sugar, our gold, and our diamonds.

**The President :** Will the hon. Member tell me from what other countries we can get that? Our great fear has been that we cannot dispose of all our sugar. The hon. Member knows as well as I do of sugar being a glut on the market. If Cuba had her own way she can starve us out of the markets. What means have we to sell our bauxite and sugar elsewhere? It is simply impossible, and surely the hon. Member realizes this. I would ask him to be realistic. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member.

**Dr. Jagan :** I do not know if you are taking into consideration the fact that today the two parts of the world are actually isolated from each other in so far as international trade is concerned. I do not know if that is given any serious consideration, but certainly we know that no attempt has been made to find out whether markets are available in the Socialist sector of the world. I thought it was so obvious I would not have to say it. The point is, we think only in one direction. Great Britain is thinking for us, and that is the trouble. Great Britain is directing our foreign trade to suit her interests and her foreign policy, and we have no say in the matter. That is what I mean by control of foreign trade, and certainly this Constitution does not give us that power.

The other factor, Sir, is the question of imports into this Colony. Our

imports must be directed and must be so controlled — not only to determine the quantities and the places from which the supplies must come — but to control the quality of the imports, the nature of the imports. If we are to protect the farmers of this Colony, then we must have a conscientious policy of taxation, control of our tariffs, etc. Can we say that we can control our tariffs at the moment freely as we would like? His Majesty's Government makes all tariff agreements so far as the Colonies are concerned. What about the prices which are paid to the farmers in this country? Are they determined from any scientific evaluation as to the cost of production, etc? They are not. The prices are arbitrarily fixed, depending upon how much the Produce Depot of Government is losing. The other day in the Agriculture Advisory Committee the Director of Agriculture introduced some figures giving the cost of production of seedings, etc., and the hon. Member for North Western District pointed out that the cost was prohibitive and it could be done much cheaper by the farmers themselves. The answer by the Director was that it was done on a system of costing, taking everything into consideration. If we had taken the trouble to do the same in so far as the farmers of this Colony are concerned, we would have found it does not pay them to produce the things they grow, to produce at the guaranteed price the Government is giving them. As I said before, when the price is fixed for plantains it is dependent on what the situation is at the Produce Depot. No thought is given to the imports of foodstuffs into this Colony. If potatoes are selling cheaper in the Street, then potatoes obviously would sell and plantains would continually be dumped into the sea. We need a conscientious policy, to think of the farmer first, to give him the land and when he has grown his stuff to give him a good price.

**The Colonial Secretary :** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but he referred to the guaranteed minimum prices paid by Government which

protect the farmer in the event of a glut. The farmer, I think, is very fortunate and lucky to have those guaranteed prices. As far as I know, the only places with controlled prices for certain vegetables are Georgetown, New Amsterdam, Wismar. Otherwise there is no control of prices of vegetables in the other places.

**Dr. Jagan :** I do not think the hon. Member is really following me very closely.

**The Colonial Secretary :** I am afraid I do!

**Dr. Jagan :** I am not speaking about guaranteed prices in isolation. Obviously I will be the last one to say that Government must not give guaranteed prices to the farmers. Certainly the farmers need guaranteed prices for their crops, but what I am saying is that there must be some control over imports in a direct and conscientious manner so that the farmers can supply many of the things we are now importing.

**The President :** Would the hon. Member make a concrete suggestion so that we know what he thinks are the things which should be prohibited from importation?

**Dr. Jagan :** As I see it, the problem is serious unless it is tackled realistically. I cannot merely say, let us put a tax on imported milk or on canned fish or potatoes coming into the Colony and let us take the same fund and subsidize the farmers for the produce they are selling.

**The President :** Any tax that is put on, the consumer has to pay. If you subsidize the farmers the consumers of that imported commodity would have to pay more for it. I think we understand the hon. Member, and he should move on.

**Dr. Jagan :** I do not think you completely follow me. I am saying that I know the consumer will have to pay for it, but I am suggesting the consumer will automatically turn to the farmer's produce

**The Financial Secretary and Treasurer :** "Thunder" will not get a subsidy!

**The President :** Let us come to the point!

**Dr. Jagan :** They do not get a subsidy. The only people who will suffer are the people controlling imports into the Colony, but the farmers in this country will benefit, and that is the point. At the same time we have shortages of this and that, and that is why we have to import all these products in this country; but if a conscientious policy is carried out and lands given to the people—

**The President :** Will the hon. Member move on to some other point?

**Dr. Jagan :** Sir, I am going to move on from that point to the point that the people in this Colony must oppose this Constitution. I will not object to the Bill which is before us, because this Bill is intended to give us Universal Adult Suffrage. As I have pointed out already, granting us Universal Adult Suffrage only is not democracy at all. We want democracy at all levels. We must be given power to control our economy fully. I am not afraid that this Government will not be able to get the necessary money if it had more power in its hands. That seems to be the fear that is dominating the minds of the people who have written this Constitution. Our neighbours next door in Surinam have been given for some time now a Constitution which has given them more power, and they are experiencing no difficulty whatever in getting money to develop their country. Why is it that neighbouring Surinam can have more political power than British Guiana, when for many years British Guiana was considered developed in one way or another to a far greater degree than Surinam? With your permission, Sir, I should like to read from the Caribbean Commission Bulletin of June, 1949, to point out to the hon. Members of this Council what the Surinam Constitution is like, so that they can follow it in their minds and see where

our Constitution is not good at all and where it is going to allow us no measure for real development of this Colony. I would like to quote from page 304 in order to show what powers have been already given to the Surinam people. It says :-

"The transition from colonial status to autonomy for the Netherlands West Indies and for Surinam (Dutch Guiana) is nearing completion. Both territories will have a legislature chosen by the people in a free and general election. They will have their own government which will be responsible to the legislature only. Autonomy will be absolute, except as regards defence and foreign relations which concern the Kingdom as a whole. As autonomous partner-states in the Kingdom, Surinam and the West Indies will be represented in the Netherlands government and in the Queen's Privy Council. The former position of Governor, as representative of the government, will be abolished. Instead, a regent will represent the Crown."

If we examine that Constitution we will see that it is far from self-government and it is also far from the one given to British Guiana. There is no Nominated Upper House; there is no voting power to the Governor and the Executive Council would be made up fully by the Elected Members of the Legislative Council. Why is it that Surinam can be given such a Constitution, and even Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire — these little islands — have been given a Constitution much superior to our own. The answer is that the status quo in British Guiana must be preserved and British Imperialism continue to hold sway in this territory. As long as that is to be the primary purpose I would seriously object to that proposition. I have mentioned the question of trade, but I forgot to give some figures which have been taken from Dr. Benham's National Income Study which was published some time ago. I think they should be noted with alarm, especially since the Financial Secretary has been giving us figures in his Budget Statements to show that we are experiencing great difficulties in these days in order to maintain our standard of living because of international complications. Dr. Benham, dealing with the question of import and export prices, has pointed out that from 1938

to 1943 our import prices have increased by 136 per cent., whereas our export prices have only increased by 25 per cent. I am sure that the situation is much worse today, when we take into consideration the fact that import prices are rising day by day.

We need a Constitution such as that which Holland has given to the people of Surinam. When the Waddington Commission was in British Guiana we pointed out to them what was taking place in Surinam, and we felt that at least they could have granted us a Constitution similar to the one granted to Surinam. I should like hon. Members to keep in mind a few figures which I collected whilst I was in England, dealing with the position of the British Government as we read of it in the newspapers day by day. The "Times" of November 3, 1951, states that the Colonies' "surplus in dollar trade, which was around about \$150,000,000 in 1948-49, has risen to \$376,000,000 for in 1950 and was already \$314,000,000 for the first six months of this year. The sterling balances held by the Colonies have risen from £510,000,000 in 1947, to £908,000,000 in June last." Further, the "Times" of November 5, of the same year, states that "the sterling areas (dollar) deficit with the rest of the world, was at the appalling rate of about £805,000,000 a year — much more than during the period before the 1949 devaluation," and "a second devaluation of sterling has been freely forecast in foreign financial circles."

I have pointed out these figures because I want to show that our economy in this Colony is being directed or channelled in order to fit in with what is taking place in Britain today. Great Britain needs dollars and the Colonies must be exploited so that they will produce goods which will either earn dollars or save dollars. If we examine the 10-year Development Plans we will find that for all the schemes put together the total expenditure contemplated is about £200,000,000. Out of this only about £4,000,000 has been set aside for industrial and electrification schemes. What is the intention of it all? We

must continue to be producers of raw materials and foodstuff which can be sold to the countries that need them. That is the pattern to which I strongly object, because no country in the world can raise the standard of living of its people unless there is an all-round diversification of agriculture and industry. What have we got in this country, however? What we are developing for the most part is the extraction of raw materials — timber, gold, diamonds and bauxite — and now we are hearing of columbite and so on.

I do feel Sir, that unless we can re-arrange the economy of this Colony and unless we can disturb consciously its present economic fabric, we will never be able to control and make the progress we want. Why can't we control the Banks? Why can't we control the Insurance Companies? Those are methods by which we can raise money in this Colony — methods by which we can find capital to develop it. Are we always going to think of the Government as not taking an interest in business affairs? In England, today, we find that banking is a Government concern. The Banks have been nationalised. In British Guiana while we have Post Office savings, these are sent to the Secretary of State to be invested as he might determine. We do not control the two major commercial Banks in this Colony, and they do what they like with their money and their investments, while the majority of the Insurance Companies operating here are being controlled from abroad. There are some which are being controlled by local people, but these are some of the same people who are controlling the plantations and the mines and the Chamber of Commerce in this Colony.

I do not know what hon. Members feel — I will hear their view later on — on this important subject, but I will end my remarks by saying that the Constitution framers, while they say one thing, mean other things when the issue becomes one of choosing for their own interest and the interest of others. In deciding the issue

of Great Britain and her economy as against the interest of British Guiana and its people a Constitution, inevitably, has to be written which will balance in favour of the interest of Great Britain. I do not regard the checks and balances which have been put into the Constitution as being necessary. I do not regard them as being necessary to preserve the interest of the rich in this Colony, and I do hope that when the final Constitution does come to British Guiana we will be able to get a measure of self-government approaching, at least, that which has been given to the people of Surinam. The People's Progressive Party, Sir, is thoroughly opposed to this Constitution, and through them a large section of the people in this Colony are also opposed to it. We cannot sit by year by year and allow conditions to be run as they have been run in the past. The gods in British Guiana, Sir, have had unrestricted sway, and political power has really been held by them for too long.

The British Government has been saying through their representative in the United Nations that the will of the people should be the authority of Government, but I do not know whether we can regard what is said in the Legislative Council to be the will of the people. In Puerto Rico, I notice that the will of the people has to be determined by referendum. One of the Constitutional Commissioners—Dr. Rita Hinden—herself, a few years ago, writing on this matter of Constitutional reform, championed the idea of people writing their own Constitution but, I notice that, like many other Fabians, when it comes to protecting the interests of British Imperialists, they all join the Tories in the exploitation of the people in the Colonies. The late Socialist Secretary of State for the Colonies made a wonderful speech during the last elections in England, and if I remember his words correctly they went something like this:

“The people in England cannot im-

agine the state of poverty in which the people in the Colonies live.”

That is what he was telling the British people trying to boast that they were the real champions of Colonial liberation and that the Labour Party should be supported to win the general elections. Fortunately, or unfortunately, that did not save them.

The Labour Party's policy has been no different from that of the Tories so far as the Colonial Empire is concerned, and in this Constitutional Commission we have a conglomeration of all interests. We have Sir John Waddington who may be considered a good Conservative; we have Professor Harlow who can be considered a good Liberal; and we have Dr. Rita Hinden who is a Fabian Socialist—a Socialist of the type to be found in the Labour Party who have been carrying out the same Tory policy of exploitation of the Colonies. I repeat that the time has come when self-government must be given to the Colonies. We cannot continue to pay tribute to the people of Great Britain—a tribute part of which is passed down to the workers. Mr. Churchill is now Prime Minister of Britain, and when he was Chancellor of Exchequer in 1929, this is what he had to say—and I would like hon Members to keep it in mind because of the leading role which he is now playing in the Government and the position which the British Government is in at the moment. He said :-

“The income which we derive from commissions and services rendered to foreign countries is over £65,000,000. In addition, we have a steady revenue from foreign investments of close on £300,000,000 a year. That is the explanation of the source from which we are able to defray social services at a level incomparably higher than that of any European country, or any country.

This gentleman is now directing the affairs of Great Britain. In the face of all the financial difficulties of that country we have had the appointment of Mr. Oliver Lyttleton to the important office of Secretary

of State for the Colonies. Indeed, many persons were quite surprised when such an important individual as Mr. Lyttleton was placed in the Colonial Office, but the explanation given by the people and the Press in England was that the problem of the Colonial Empire is now looming so large that it needs an important person such as Mr. Lyttleton to hold the reins as Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Sunday Dispatch of October 28, 1951, had this to say about the situation :-

"Lyttleton's experience ranges wide in the tin industry and with the looming dollar crisis and the need for obtaining more primary products — including tin... from British sources, his appointment is an important one."

That is the light in which we have really to view this Constitution and, indeed, all other Constitution given to Colonial territories within the last few years. The Constitutional Commission states that we should get self-government as economic viability would permit but, as I have said before when discussing the Rance Report for federation of the West Indies, that is putting the cart before the horse. We cannot get economic viability until we get political independence. The Constitutions given to those countries -- whether we speak of Jamaica, Barbados, Honduras, the Gold Coast or British Guiana -- have been so framed as to fit in with the Colonial policy directed by His Majesty's Government through the Secretary of State for the Colonies. So long as we are working within that policy and so long as we do not have self-government which would enable us to control the economy of this Colony, so long will the people remain impoverished. I hope that hon. Members of this Council in looking at this Constitution will do so from that particular point of view and not only from the point of view of detail -- that it is an advance on what we have at present. What we have is rotten -- there is no doubt about it -- and one must not compare a thing with what is rotten. The Constitutional Commission has admitted that the present system no longer represents the

wishes of the people, but it goes on to say that the present system has been honourably administered. These two statements do not seem to fit in with each other. If the system has been honourably administered, then why this terrible dissatisfaction with it -- with the low standard of living of the people and the poverty all around? Clearly, these two statements do not fit in with each other. There is no doubt about it that the present system is outworn and no longer satisfies the wishes of the people, because the people are fed up with the way in which the country has been governed -- with the way in which the economy of these Colonies has been guided for the benefit of Great Britain -- with the way in which profits have been earned and taken out of this Colony. The framers of this Constitution have devised things in such a way as to make the people feel that they are getting something -- something which would change the economic set-up in the Colony and improve their standard of living -- but that is only meant to lull the people to sleep. It is like giving them some sedatives, but a sedative never removes the cause of pain; it merely dulls the mind for a moment.

What we want is self-government, and I hope hon. Members will endeavour to meet the wishes of the people and correctly evaluate the real economic situation in this Colony. If they do so they would oppose this Constitution outright, while accepting the major concessions such as universal adult Suffrage and the removal of property and income qualification for persons standing for the Legislative Council.