

## ***182. British Guiana Constitution — Misrepresentations of the British Government in 1953***

### **BRITISH GUIANA CONSTITUTION**

HL Deb 07 July 1975

2.45 p.m.

Lord HALE

My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask her Majesty's Government whether in view of the additional facts now available, they will make a statement on the suspension of the Constitution of British Guiana in October 1953 and in amplification of the White Paper published on 20th October 1953.

The PARLIAMENTARY UNDERSECRETARY of STATE, FOREIGN and COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (Lord Goronwy-Roberts)

My Lords, I understand that my noble friend is referring to recent reports of certain hearings in Washington. I have asked for further details, which I shall study carefully.

Lord HALE

My Lords, while thanking my noble friend for that Answer, may I say that I am not referring to reports which appeared recently in Washington, but to statements made in every American newspaper and copied in *The Times* and the *Guardian*? Will my noble friend recall that some of us in another place at the time, including my noble friend Lord Brockway, challenged this whole White Paper? Does the Minister also recall that the whole story of the plot to burn Georgetown was never substantiated at all and that the trade union now proves to be fictitious? This is the almost-accepted result of the very useful and internationally very important Senate Committee under Senator Church, which is now making a full and clear investigation into all these matters with the intention of—

**A Noble Lord**

Speech!

Lord HALE

—cleaning up history a little. We may have to give some assistance.

Lord GORONWY-ROBERTS

My Lords, I recall the involvement of my noble friend in this matter some 22 years ago. He was most ably seconded by my noble friend Lord Brockway and, to some extent, I helped a little. It is not a question of ignoring reports. Ministerially, of course one is not expected to proceed on newspaper reports, however well-founded. Without in any way impugning the integrity of these reports I ask my noble friend and the House to accord that I am required to rest on official information which I am in the course of securing now. In due course no doubt my noble friend may feel he would like to put down another Question.

Lord BROCKWAY

My Lords, is it not a fact that the Minister is asking for information? May I ask whether he remembers the occasion in another place when this White Paper was introduced and its main argument was the storing of petrol to burn down the Governor's House and Government buildings? Was it not proved on that occasion that this plot, with very flimsy evidence, was not discovered until the emergency was declared? In view of this historic misrepresentation of circumstances in respect of a British Colony, and now the allegations of CIA involvement, is it not up to the Government to make these inquiries very thorough indeed?

Lord GORONWY-ROBERTS

My Lords, I have said that we will pursue these inquiries.

Lord HALE

My Lords, will my noble friend bear in mind that the point of recriminating about the past is to enforce action in the present, and that I have carefully put down the one example which entirely affects British territory and in which we have a clear responsibility to ascertain the truth. It would be greatly to the service of the world if this move to reveal all the facts continued. I think we ought to be grateful to Senator Church and the American Congress for at last saying that they will no longer pursue this policy, which continued right up to the fall of Chile, and indeed until a murder in Chicago a fortnight ago.