

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SESSION 1950—51

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 27th February, 1951.

Pursuant to adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 7 o'clock p.m. to-day.

Present:

His Honour Mr. K. N. R. HUSBANDS (*Speaker*), Mr. L. E. SMITH (*Chairman of Committees*), Dr. H. G. H. CUMMINS, M.D., C.M., Messrs R. G. MAPP, T. O. BAYAN, F. L. WALCOTT, G. H. ADAMS, B.A., J. E. T. BRANCKER, H. A. DOWDING, E. L. WARD, F. C. GODDARD, W. W. REECE, K.C., J. H. WILKINSON, O.B.E., and F. E. MILLER.

Prayers were read.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting which was held on the 13th February, 1951, having been circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

Messrs MOTTLEY and ALLDER entered the House and took their seats.

DOCUMENTS

Mr. SPEAKER: I have the honour to inform the House that I have received the following documents:—

Financial Report of the Colonial Treasurer for the month of January, 1951.

Report of the Inspector of Trees for the parish of St. Lucy dated 20th February, 1951.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR THE CLERK

Mr. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker,—I am asking the House to approve of leave of absence for to-day's sitting of the House, for the Clerk who is still unfortunately ill.

There being no objection, the leave asked for was granted.

Mr. ADAMS: I beg to move that Mr. D. A. Banfield, Solicitor, be appointed to act as Deputy Clerk, and that the Deputy Clerk be appointed to act as Clerk for to-day's sitting.

Mr. WILKINSON seconded the motion which was agreed to.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR.

Mr. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker,—I am commanded to lay from His Excellency the Governor Messages as follows:—

MESSAGE NO. 8/51.

*His Excellency the Governor
To*

The Honourable the House of Assembly.

His Excellency the Governor has the honour to inform the Honourable the House of Assembly that the Vice-Principal of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture has advised him that the College will celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the grant of its Royal Charter on Saturday, March 17th. The Vice-Principal has expressed the hope that, in view of the long association between this Colony and the College, it will be possible for Barbados to be represented at the Celebrations by one or more Senior Government officials, members of the Legislature, the Agricultural Department and the Agricultural Society, and has extended the invitation to include the wives of representatives. The cost per person is estimated to be in the region of \$100, and it will be necessary to submit a resolution to the Legislature to cover the passage and hotel expenses of all persons who are selected to represent this Colony. A separate invitation has been sent to Sir John Saint who is the representative of Barbados on the Governing Body of the College.

2. It is understood that Sir John and Lady Saint will find it convenient to accept, and the Honourable the House of Assembly are invited to nominate two of their number to attend the Celebrations as representatives from Barbados. The Legislative Council are being invited to nominate one representative.

27th February, 1951.

Bridgetown,
Government House,

L. SAVAGE,
Governor.

MESSAGE NO. 9/1951

*His Excellency The Governor
To*

The Honourable The House of Assembly

His Excellency the Governor has the honour to inform the Honourable the House of Assembly that the Comptroller of the Development and Welfare Organisation has put forward proposals for the extension of Erdiston Training College for Teachers so as to afford accommodation and facilities for training 16 students a year from the Leeward and Windward Islands. These proposals are the outcome of discussions that took place at an Informal Conference of Education Officers held in Barbados in June 1950

under the Chairmanship of the Educational Adviser, Development and Welfare Organisation, and at which the Director of Education, the Principal of Erdiston College, the Federal Education Officer of the Leeward Islands, and Education Officers from St. Lucia, St. Vincent and St. Kitts-Nevis were present. The Director of Education and the Education Board have examined these proposals, with which they agree, but as—

- (1) the wastage of elementary teachers in Barbados through deaths, retirements resignations, etc., per annum is about the same as the number of elementary teachers (32) which the College is at present able to train each year.
- (2) no more staff would be required for an additional 32 students than for 16 additional students,—

the Director and Board of Education have recommended that facilities be provided at Erdiston for an additional 16 students from Barbados, making a total intake of 48 from this Island, and 16 from the Windward and Leeward Islands, each year.

2. The Comptroller is prepared to agree, in principle, to the provision of funds for the entire capital cost of the extension from the West Indies General Allocation, but a definite decision must await detailed estimates of the cost of the proposals.

3. The estimated additional recurrent cost to provide for an additional 32 students, 16 being from this Island and 16 from the Leeward and Windward Islands is \$10,115 per year, of which amount the Governments of the Leeward and Windward Islands will be required to guarantee half, and this Colony the other half. Details of this expenditure are set out below:—

Male Tutor	\$3,672
Domestic Science Instructress ..	2,400
Part time Lecturers	1,100
3 Maids	780
1 Gardener	435
1 Chauffeur	728
Water and Light	1,000
	\$10,115

4. The Honourable the House of Assembly is invited to approve of a communication being sent to the Comptroller of the Development and Welfare Organisation to the effect that this Government agrees in principle to the extension of Erdiston Training College for Teachers to provide training facilities for an additional 32 students (16 from Barbados, and 16 from the Leeward and Windward Islands) on the understanding—

- (a) that the whole of the capital cost is met from the West Indies general allocation from Colonial Development and Welfare funds.
- (b) that one-half of the additional recurrent expenditure is guaranteed by the Governments of the Leeward and Windward Islands.

L. SAVAGE.
Governor.

Government House,
Bridgetown.
27th February, 1951.

MESSAGE NO. 10/1951

His Excellency the Governor
To
The Honourable the House of Assembly

The Governor has the honour to present for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the financial year 1951-52.

L. SAVAGE,
Governor.

Government House,
Bridgetown.
27th February, 1951.

PAPER LAID

Mr. ADAMS: I have the honour to lay on the Table of the House the following Paper:—

The Commonwealth of Agricultural Bureaux—
Twenty-first Annual Report of the Executive Council 1949-50.

NOTICES

Government Notices were given as follows:—

Mr. F. L. WALCOTT: Resolution to place the sum of \$800 at the disposal of the Governor-in-Executive Committee to supplement the Estimates 1950—51, Part I—Current, No. 44 which form the Schedule to the Resolution.

Mr. COX: A Bill intituled an Act to make provision for the control and use of the underground sources of Water Supply in the Island and other matters connected therewith.

Mr. ADAMS: Of my intention to move the House into Committee of Supply at its next meeting to consider the money Resolution of which notice has just been given.

QUESTIONS

Mr. BRANCKER: To enquire of the appropriate member of the Executive Committee present at the next meeting of this House:—

When did the present Commissioner of Police first assume his office?

2. On how many occasions, for what periods, and on what missions, has the abovementioned officer been absent from the island since his first assumption of duty?

3. Is Government aware that dissatisfaction and discontent exist in the Police Force because of incidents in which individual members of the Force have been reprimanded by the said Commissioner in terms of abuse or in language otherwise unbecoming, unseemly or uncultured?

4. If the answer to query 3 (above) is in the affirmative, will Government take prompt and effective action to prevent any repetition or recurrence of such?

BILL READ A FIRST TIME

On the motion of Mr. Cox, seconded by Mr. F. L. WALCOTT, a Bill intituled an Act to make provision for the control and use of the underground sources of Water Supply in the Island and other matters connected therewith, was read a first time.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS TO THE ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH (BARBADOS)
LOAN BILL, 1951.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker,—I am asking leave to deal with the Amendments of the Other Place

to the Bill intituled an Act to authorise the Vestry of the parish of St. Michael in this Island to raise a loan to enable them to grant retrospective pay to all of the Parochial Employees of the said parish. I am asking leave to deal with these Amendments as a matter of expediency that the Vestry Estimates can be considered. Instead of allowing the Vestry to repay the loan over a period of 10 years, the Amendments now make it compulsory for the loan to be repaid over a period of two years with interest not exceeding 4%. Otherwise the Bill remains the same as that which was passed by this House. I think that the honourable junior member for St. Thomas will be glad to hear of these Amendments.

There being no objection, leave was granted the honourable member to deal with the Amendments.

Mr. MOTTLEY: I beg to move that these Amendments be now read a first time.

Mr. WILKINSON seconded the motion which was agreed to.

On motions of Mr. MOTTLEY seconded by Mr. WILKINSON in each case, the amendments were read a second time and agreed to.

Mr. ADAMS: I beg to move, Mr. Speaker, that this House do now adjourn for three quarters of an hour.

Mr. F. L. WALCOTT seconded the motion which was agreed to, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

THE MENTAL HEALTH BILL 1951

On re-assembling,

Mr. SPEAKER: The next Order of the Day stands in the name of the honourable senior member for St. Thomas:—To move the House into Committee on the Bill to amend the law relating to persons of unsound mind and for purposes connected therewith.

Dr. CUMMINS: As you will remember, Mr. Speaker, this Bill was referred to a Select Committee and the Committee has reported. I beg to move that Your Honour do now leave the Chair, and the House go into Committee on this Bill and that it be an instruction to the Committee when the House is in Committee, to consider the Report of the Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Bill and that the Acting Clerk call the Clauses of the Bill by number instead of reading them.

Mr. BRYAN seconded the motion which was agreed to.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair, and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. SMITH being in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive were called and passed. Clause 6 was called.

Dr. CUMMINS: Mr. Chairman,— Sub-clause (1) of this Clause reads as follows:—

"Any Magistrate having jurisdiction in the locality where a person suspected to be a person of unsound mind is living, upon information upon oath of any informant to the effect that the informant has good cause to suspect and believe and does suspect and believe such person to be a person of unsound mind and a proper subject for confinement may, at his home or in any place which he deems convenient other than an open police court, examine such suspected person and in the same place or elsewhere other than in an open police court, in association with a Justice of the Peace, may hold an inquiry as to the state of mind of such suspected person. For the purpose of such inquiry the Magistrate shall have the same powers as if the suspected person were a person against whom an information for an offence punishable on summary conviction had been laid.

Provided that such Magistrate and Justice of the Peace may, if they think fit, proceed with such inquiry in the absence of the suspected person and without proof of the service of any summons upon him."

I ask leave to amend this Clause as follows:—

That from the word "For" appearing in line twelve of this sub-section to the words "upon him," appearing in line sixteen be deleted, and the following proviso be added:—

"Provided that in the case of a person suspected of being a feeble minded person or child, the informant shall be the parent, guardian or other person having the care of such person or child."

The reason for that amendment is that it is a protection for the feeble-minded person or child. The parent or guardian or person who is responsible for the care of the feeble-minded person or child has to take action instead of somebody else who, for some reason or other, might want to do so. I also ask leave that the following be Sub-clause (2):—

"(2) For the purpose of such inquiry the Police Magistrate may summon witnesses and shall have and exercise the same powers for the summoning of witnesses, requiring their attendance and the recording of evidence as a Police Magistrate has and exercises in a court of summary jurisdiction: provided that such Police Magistrate and Justice of the Peace may, if they think fit, proceed with such inquiry in the absence of the suspected person." And that the remaining sub-sections be renumbered accordingly.

As far as this Sub-clause is concerned, the Police Magistrate is given power to take evidence as in the Police Court, and provision is made for carrying on a case in the absence of the suspected person. In order to allay any misapprehension which honourable members might have, I will say that sometimes you have persons who are violent and noisy and they have to be put in a room or in the cell of the Police Court; the members of the Board will visit the suspected lunatic and then come back and take evidence. It does not mean that the Board will carry on the inquiry in the absolute absence of the suspected person.

There being no objection, leave was granted the honourable member.

Dr. CUMMINS: I beg to move that Clause 6 as amended stand part of the Bill.

Mr. MAPP seconded the motion which was agreed to.

Clause 7 was called and passed.

Clause 8 was called. It reads:—

"In all cases when a person has been found a fit subject for confinement in the Mental Hospital, he shall be handed over to the custody of the police authorities, together with such certificate as is necessary under this Act, and they shall be responsible for his safe conduct to the Mental Hospital where he shall be handed over to the authorities of that Hospital who shall thereafter take charge of him and be responsible for his safe keeping."

Dr. CUMMINS: I am asking leave to delete Clause 8 and substitute therefor the following:—

"In all cases when a person has been found a fit subject for confinement in the Mental Hospital, he shall be handed over to the authorities of the Hospital together with such certificate and they shall be responsible for his safe conduct to the said Hospital and his reception, detention and treatment at the said Hospital."

There being no objection, the honourable member was granted leave.

Dr. CUMMINS: This proposed Clause does away with the practice as it is today. As soon as a suspected person is declared to be a lunatic, he is placed in the hands of the Police who take him to the Mental Hospital in a Police van. Under this clause, when a person is declared to be a lunatic, you communicate with the Superintendent of the Mental Hospital who will send the van of the Mental Hospital with one of the attendants and take the person who has been declared a lunatic to the Mental Hospital. I beg to move that Clause 8 as amended stand part of the Bill.

Mr. COX: I beg to second that.

Mr. ALLDER: I would like to know if the Magistrate still has to be called in before a person is declared to be one of unsound mind.

Dr. CUMMINS: The Magistrate is the presiding Officer of the Board.

Mr. MAPP: I think that this Clause is one of the most important recommendations made by the Select Committee. I remember that when I used to work in the Police Court, these suspected people were dragged in and when they were not proved to be insane, they were sent back out. That was an indignity. I think the Committee will agree that this is a recommendation which should be put into effect with great speed.

The question that Clause 8 as amended stand part of the Bill was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 9 to 20 inclusive were called and passed. Clause 21 was called.

Dr. CUMMINS: I am asking leave, Mr. Chairman, to amend this Clause by deleting Sub-clause (1) and substituting therefor the following:

"21. (1) If it shall appear upon any inquiry authorised under this Act that any person who is adjudged a proper subject for confinement in the Mental Hospital is possessed of any property or that any person who is legally responsible for the maintenance of any person so adjudged is possessed of any property, the Magistrate conducting the inquiry shall fix the weekly or other rate which shall be charged on the property of the person so adjudged, or, if there be no such property, on the property of the person legally responsible as aforesaid for the maintenance and care of the person adjudged during his confinement."

The reason for that is obvious. We do know that there are many cases in which people who have been adjudged lunatics and have to go to the Mental Hospital, have property or the persons responsible for them are in a position to pay some contribution towards their upkeep at the Mental Hospital. This Clause seeks to cover such cases and give the Magistrate authority to fix the weekly rate for the maintenance of such persons. That does not mean that people who are unable to pay will be called upon to pay.

There being no objection, leave was granted the honourable member.

Dr. CUMMINS: I beg to move that Clause 21 as amended stand part of the Bill.

Mr. COX: I beg to second that.

Mr. ALLDER: Mr. Chairman,—With regard to that amendment which the honourable senior member for St. Thomas has just read out, I think that great care has to be taken, because this is unlike the case of confinement in the General Hospital where one's illness may only last for a couple of weeks or months. Lunacy sometimes means illness for a lifetime without a cure being effected and you are likely to find that a person who is a breadwinner is taken

to the Mental Hospital and he might have some wealth at the time. If care is not taken in fixing what amount his family might have to pay for his maintenance, you might find that he might have to remain at the Mental Hospital for a long time and his family would eventually lose the contribution which the breadwinner was accustomed to make to them. Therefore we have to be careful that some hardship is not caused in this respect. I want the honourable member to listen to this point because I know he has to deal with this matter. In a case where a husband and father who might have some property is taken to the Mental Hospital, the members of his family might cease to receive income from the source from which they used to receive it when he was able to work. Therefore if a contribution has to be made from his property to his maintenance at this Institution, you might find that his family might be put at a disadvantage. I do hope that in such a case things will not fall too hard on the shoulders of the family, because in turn you might have to assist the family from other Institutions on account of the fact that they might become unable to keep soul and body together.

The question that Clause 21 as amended stand part of the Bill was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 22 and 23 were called and passed.

Clause 24 was called. It reads:

24. (1) The Superintendent may order the discharge from the Mental Hospital of any mental patient or may, subject to the provisions of this Act, allow any such patient to be absent on trial for such period as he thinks fit, and may at any time grant an extension of such period.

(2) No patient shall be allowed to be absent on trial under this section unless some person shall enter into an agreement approved by the Superintendent to take charge of such patient.

(3) If any patient allowed to be absent on trial under this section does not return at or before the expiration of the allowed period of absence, then, unless a certificate signed by two registered medical practitioners certifying that such patient may safely be permitted to be at large is sent to the Superintendent, such patient may be retaken as if he had escaped from the Hospital.

(4) The provisions of this section shall not apply to any person detained in the Mental Hospital under the provisions of sections fourteen to twenty of this Act.

Dr. CUMMINS: I beg to move that Clause 24 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. COX: I beg to second that.

Mr. MAPP: There is a point which I think was raised in Select Committee; it slipped me and I do not see that it has been covered. I would ask my colleague to bear it in mind. The point is this; there might be at the Mental Hospital a patient who has been cured and it is no longer necessary for him to be confined in the Hospital, but under this Clause he can only leave if somebody takes charge of him. The point has been made that if a person has been cured it would be unfair to that person to keep him in the Hospital until some person comes for him when there might not be anybody who is willing to come forward and be responsible for him. If a person is certified by the doctor in charge of the Mental Hospital that he is quite sane and does not come under this Act, some of us feel that in spite of the fact that there is nobody who is willing to take charge of him or come forward on his part, he should still be released. After all, he is a sane man; if you

are sane you do not want anybody to be responsible for you. There might be some persons who are outside the Institution as being sane today and they might have to go back in the Institution in a day or two; but let us not forget that a man might be sane and he might want an opportunity to make good in the world, and because of the fact that nobody comes forward on his part or because of the fact that people leave the Institution as being sane and have to be returned in a day or two, it is unfair to deny the man who has been declared sane an opportunity to make good in the world. Although my colleague has not found any answer to the point I think he will bear it in mind and at some subsequent time have the Act amended.

Mr. ALLDER: The point raised by the honourable member would be quite all right if there were some society to take care of patients who are out of the Institution. It is a fact that lunacy is recurrent and you cannot really release a patient unless you are sure about his rehabilitation. I would like to raise this point; I know of young men and women who did not have any family to protect them when they were released from the Institution and and they found it difficult to reinstate themselves in the community. They did not have the means of renting a home, or any relative to give them a lodging and they had not been able to get any work since their release; they were just thrown on the streets and the problems of everyday life caused them to become ill again and eventually they found themselves back in the Institution. I am hoping that some consideration will be given to the question of setting up a rehabilitation fund to be managed by a Committee; such a Committee would look after patients when they are released from the Mental Hospital and see that they are given some accommodation until they are able to get employment. If you are once a lunatic you are liable to become a permanent charge on the State. If a patient has been cured he should be given work that he is capable of doing so as to prevent him from being worried because of the poverty which a poor fellow always meets when he is sent out of the Institution without there being anybody to take care of him or without his having a job with which to occupy his mind. That is something which is worthy of consideration and I hope that the honourable senior member for St. Thomas will consider it. If you were to go around Bridgetown you will easily see that there are many men and women who have been sent to the Mental Hospital and they have been thrown on the streets; they cannot show you that they have any relatives to take care of them or that they have jobs. Such people will eventually find themselves back in the Institution.

The question that Clause 24 stand part of the Bill was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 25 and 26 were called and passed.

Clause 27 was called. It reads:

27. If any mental patient shall be confined in any private or parochial house, building or hospital, it shall be lawful for any person ordered by the Governor-in-Executive Committee to do so, to visit at all times any such house, building or hospital and to ascertain by examination of witnesses on oath (which oath such person is hereby authorised to administer) if such mental patient is properly treated and to give such orders and directions with respect to the treatment of such mental patient as to him shall seem meet. And if the person in charge of such house, building or hospital shall neglect or refuse to attend to such orders or directions, he shall for every such offence be liable to a fine not exceeding

ten dollars to be recovered in a summary manner on the complaint of any person.

Dr. CUMMINS: I am asking leave to amend this Clause by adding the following proviso:—

“Provided that the provisions of this section shall not apply to a private house where not more than one mental patient is kept and where no charge is made.”

This Clause deals with mental patients in a private mental hospital. It can be construed that where there is a single patient in a private house, that house could be regarded as a private hospital. If a single patient—the relative of the occupant of a house—is kept in that house, that house might be regarded as a private mental hospital; and this proviso seeks to exempt a private house where a single patient is kept from the provisions of this Clause which applies to a private mental hospital. I think that this amendment will appeal to all honourable members because there are those who might be financially able to take care of a mental patient at home, and they would not want the place to be regarded as a private mental hospital.

There being no objection, leave was granted the honourable member.

Dr. CUMMINS: I beg to move that Clause 27 as amended stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cox seconded the motion which was agreed to.

Clauses 28 to 43 inclusive were called and passed.

First Schedule was called.

Dr. CUMMINS: I ask leave to delete the word “First” appearing before the word “Schedule”.

There being no objection, the honourable member was granted leave.

Dr. CUMMINS: I beg to move that the Schedule as amended stand part.

Mr. Cox seconded the motion which was agreed to.

On the motion of Dr. CUMMINS seconded by Mr. F. L. WALCOTT, the CHAIRMAN reported the passing of the Bill in Committee with amendments.

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On motions of Dr. CUMMINS, seconded by Mr. F. L. WALCOTT in each case, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. WILKINSON: Mr. Speaker,—I am asking leave that Order No. 1 under Private Members' Business be taken as the next Order of the Day. That Order stands in the name of the honourable senior member for St. James who, unfortunately, is still ill, and he has asked me to take charge of it.

There being no objection, the honourable member was granted leave.

GAS WORKS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1951

The next Order of the Day was called:—Second reading of a Bill to amend the Gas Works Act, 1911 (1911-9).

Mr. WILKINSON: In moving the second reading of this Bill, I want to give a short history of it. This Bill is of a similar nature to that of which notice was given in this House 23 months ago. In November, 1949, the second reading of the Bill was passed and a Select Committee was appointed to go into the Bill. The Select Committee reported and in this Bill the recommendations of that Committee are included except as regards the question of price on which they could not come to any agreement. Unfortunately, the figures which the Committee had

before them in 1949 are valueless because the price of natural gas has increased between that time and now by nearly 40%. The Gas Company had negotiations with the Government, and I am glad to say that an agreement has been arrived at whereby the price of natural gas will be stabilised; the basic price will be fixed at 1/8 per therm. I should like to remind honourable members that we have recently passed the Public Utilities Bill, and the Public Utilities Board will have all the authority for making any investigation at any time. I am authorised by the Gas Company to state that they are only too willing at any time to allow the Government to inspect their accounts. The main point in the Bill is the price and the rest of it is purely technical; tests are to be made in order to see if the gas is up to mark and inspection is to be made by the Legislature in the month of June instead of March. It has been found to be impracticable to have the accounts audited in England and get them back here by the end of March, but that is a small matter. I understand that the expert who is going to have Government control of natural gas and mineral rights in this island has arrived, and no doubt he will want to investigate all questions concerning natural gas. We are only too willing to co-operate in every way possible. I am happy to say that the Government has agreed that when this Bill has been passed, the price of gas will date back from the 1st January last, and that the Gas Company will in turn, take off the additional 10% which had been put on at the end of last year, as from the 1st January last. At the present moment the consumers of gas are not getting the full benefit from the gas because they are getting a mixture of natural gas and coal gas, and I think it is time that they get the full benefit from what I call God's gift. If there is anything which honourable members want to know I will endeavour to answer when we go into Committee on the Bill. I am hoping that the honourable senior member for St. Joseph will second the motion for the second reading of this Bill and confirm what I have said. I now beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. ADAMS: I beg to second the motion for the second reading of this Bill. I am speaking now as a member of the Government and I want to clarify the position of the Government. The Government feels that in respect of private Bills, especially Bills which are of a general nature, it should adopt a positive attitude and not leave it to individual members of the Government to have, maybe, varying views relative to a Bill brought forward by a private member. I regret to say that I have not got before me the file which deals with this particular matter, but the Government's general attitude towards this Bill is this; the Government has carefully examined the altered position of the Gas Company respecting the price of natural gas. At one time the Government firmly opposed the price of 2/- per therm which was asked for; we did not feel that we should go beyond 1/3 per therm, but the position has been altered so considerably because of the nature of the formula on which the price of fuel is fixed, that the Government saw that it was necessary for us to modify our views as regards the price which should be allowed for gas. As honourable members know, the price of gas is fixed by a formula over which we have no control, and therefore the price of gas distributed by the Gas Company may go up or down without any local control whatever. Without any reference to increased wages or cost of operation, the price of gas may go up because of something external to Barbados. It may be that some of the proposals which we

are considering here are not even worth considering in view of the Public Utilities Bill becoming the law of the land; because of the fact that the existence of any Bill dealing with the three Public Utility Companies—the Electric, Telephone and Gas Companies—does not hinder the Public Utilities Board from saying what prices should be charged for electricity, telephone or gas, it is immaterial what we do in this Bill. I have no hesitation in agreeing to this Bill being proceeded with and to the price of the gas—at present the price is 40 cents per therm general consumption and 36 cents per therm local or Government consumption. There are, however, some things in connection with which I am afraid I shall have to get in touch with the honourable mover—things which represent the views of the Government—and I promised him a few minutes ago that if I could not get hold of the file dealing with this matter in time, I would not object to the Bill being passed with the proposed amendments with the clear understanding that in the Other Place the Government may find it necessary to make some amendments to it. Now that the file is before me, I shall be glad to put the views of the Government on each particular section. I do not want to agree to things which are against the decision of the Executive Committee; the members of the Government do not want to agree to things here and then find that we did not agree to them in Executive Committee. We agree as regards the price of gas which is the main thing, and the honourable mover agrees with the amendment to the new proposed section 15 (3) as regards the time for reviewing the basic price. Although we are making this Bill law, that is immaterial if the Public Utilities Bill is passed, because, I repeat, the Public Utilities Board can change the price whenever it likes. However, until the Public Utilities Bill becomes law, it is not a bad thing to give the power to the Executive Committee to alter the basic price of gas. In fact, we hope that in a month's time or so, it will be unnecessary to make any reference to this section. I am actually seconding the motion for the second reading of this Private Member's Bill in order that the Government's position may be made clear; the Government is as anxious as anybody else to get the new price of gas established as quickly as possible.

Mr. MILLER: I am making a plaintive appeal to honourable members in connection with this Bill which is before the House: I am appealing to honourable members to postpone the consideration of this Bill for a few weeks. We have worked on this Bill for several weeks; I sat with honourable members of the Select Committee which was appointed to consider and report on this Bill when it first came before the House. There is no reason on earth why the consideration of this Bill should not be postponed. Suddenly tonight I learned for the first time after the last session that we are going to discuss this Bill. (MEMBERS: Oh no). After almost a year this Bill has been brought up to Order No. 1 on the Order Paper under Private Members' Business, and suddenly tonight I am told that it is to be dealt with. We have a Petroleum and Natural Gas Expert who has just arrived in this colony and his cost to the Government per month is tremendous. The question which we have to decide is what price should be charged for natural gas at its source. The gas wells have been nationalised by the Government, and there is no earthly reason why the price of natural gas should be tied to the price of oil. We have made strenuous efforts to get at the price to be charged for this gas and in recent days I have seen that the Vestry of St. Michael was asked to pay more for gas for lighting the streets. If the object of the Select Committee was

to keep down the price of gas, I see no reason why we should deal with this Bill tonight when we have an Officer who can go into the matter. I ask honourable members to bear with me and agree to a postponement of this Bill for a few days; the postponement will not harm anybody. Almost two years ago when this Bill was before the House, the honourable senior member for St. James who introduced it, thought in terms of rush; he thought that if we delayed the passing of the Bill for one minute, the consumers would have to pay more for gas. Almost two years have passed and we are still in the same position. I see no reason for rushing through with this Bill in the face of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Expert having arrived in the colony. I again appeal to honourable members to postpone the consideration of this Bill and let the Expert go into the question of the price to be charged for gas and see what is fair to the Gas Company, and what is fair to the Government, so that the consumers will be able to benefit as a result of the examination.

Mr. MOTTLEY: I am supporting the motion for the second reading of this Bill. I regret to say that I cannot agree with the honourable member who has just spoken when he says that this Bill has been suddenly brought up tonight. If I recall well—

Mr. COX: On a point of order. I would like to draw Your Honour's attention to the fact that the second reading of this Bill has already been passed and we were in Committee on the Bill. (Mr. ADAMS: That was in a previous session of the House).

Mr. MOTTLEY: As I was saying, Mr. SPEAKER, I regret that the honourable senior member for St. George has said that we are rushing through with this Bill. That is not my impression at all; I recall that about the last three weeks the honourable Leader of the House had been suggesting that we should deal with this Bill as soon as possible, because the Government had reached some agreement with the Gas Company. I am sure that it was the honourable Leader of the House who suggested that we should make this Bill Order No. 1 under Private Members' Business. The honourable senior member for St. George has mentioned that he saw where a higher price was being asked for gas for lighting the streets of St. Michael, and that is the reason why I am supporting the passing of this Bill. I may say that the lighting of the streets is done by agreement; the period covered by the agreement has expired, and the Vestry have been told that they will have to pay an increased price for the lighting. The Vestry decided to pay that increase until they are notified by the competent people whom they have appointed as the Committee to deal with street lighting that the members of the Committee are satisfied with the existing conditions; they will advise the Vestry in the matter. I would like to draw to the attention of honourable members that section 16 of this Bill sets out the price of gas for local consumption, which cannot be exceeded except under certain conditions, and we are anxious to have this Bill passed. We have close on 200 lamps in St. Michael and we would be more than glad to have the matter settled.

The honourable senior member for St. George also mentioned that the Expert on Petroleum and Natural Gas has arrived in the colony; and he would know about this matter; but I am quite sure that this matter has been gone into most carefully by the honourable member who served as a member of the Select Committee and put up a very strong case. The Governor-in-Executive Committee also put up a strong case and I am in a position to say that they

actually arrived at their own figures. They did not fix the price which the then honourable introducer of the Bill wanted, but the price which they wanted. The price of gas is fixed by the Governor-in-Executive Committee and that price has been increased. If the position remains as it is with the mixture of coal gas and natural gas being half and half, the price of gas will be much more expensive to consumers; but if you reach an agreement whereby you can have natural gas rather than a mixture of coal gas and natural gas, the consumer must get natural gas at a much cheaper price. The honourable Leader of the House has referred to the Public Utilities Bill and I will say that that Bill must be passed. (Hear, hear). There are some Bills in connection with which, if they are not passed, all sides of the House will have to line up against throwing them out. As the honourable Leader of the House has said, this is just a question of coming to some agreement with the Gas Company so that consumers can benefit from the use of natural gas immediately. I cannot see the Public Utilities Board staying out of existence for longer than a year, and it strikes me that with the coming into operation of that Board, all the sections of this Bill relative to the fixing of the price for natural gas and the like will be controlled by the Board. Unlike the honourable senior member for St. George, I counsel honourable members to pass this Bill, not only in the interest of the price of gas, but also in the interest of the general public and the taxpayers. There are about 200 lamps in the parish of St. Michael and we are fighting definitely to get gas cheaply. I repeat that if you are using manufactured gas, that must be more expensive than if you are using natural gas. I am prepared to do anything possible to see that these gas wells remain open; I am hoping to see the Gas Company, which is the only existing Company in this island for selling this gas, get wise to business and let this gas become the main fuel in the island. Kerosene oil has to be imported but this gas is the only natural gift which we have, and I think it is a boon to the people of this colony. I would like to see natural gas installed in everybody's house rather than our having imported fuel. Let us pass this Bill; there is no point in postponing it. I am hoping that this Bill will be passed, that the Gas Company will come to its senses and see to it that gas for the purpose of cooking reaches everybody's home. I venture to say that this Company was dying, but this natural gas has come into existence and it will take some time for the Company to be built up. If the Company is built up to a proper extent, you are bound to see business being carried on in such a way that the public must thereby benefit.

Mr. ALLDER: I appreciate very much the passing of this Bill so that the natural resources of the island can be exploited for the benefit of the community. Some time in 1949 this Bill came before the House and a Select Committee was appointed to go into it. I was a member of that Committee, and we had certain advisers who were able to tell us what they knew about the working of the Gas Company and the exploration of natural gas. Figures were submitted to us and we reached a point where we were convinced that natural gas could be sold by the Company at as low a figure as 25 cents per thermal unit; but because the Manager of the Company intimated that the Company was losing a certain number of therms through the pipes, we decided to allow the Company to charge 30 cents per therm. The Bill died because we failed to reach any unanimous agreement as to the price of the gas and it was re-introduced in this session of the House. I notice that the

Company is asking permission to sell this gas at 40 cents per thermal unit. Now Mr. SPEAKER, I do not know what are the reasons for asking for this new price; I feel that now the Expert on natural gas is in the colony, it would be a good thing if honourable members were permitted to have a little time in which they could further discuss the new proposals which the honourable mover is putting forward in this Bill. I am willing, if I am convinced that what the Company wants inserted in this Bill is right, to give the Bill my blessing. It has been the policy of the Government and the House that when a Bill of such far-reaching consequences is to be considered, honourable members are notified some time in advance. As a member of the Select Committee which considered the Bill during the last session, I was able to jot down some notes and certain points which were made then, but I did not expect that we would have been asked to consider the passing of this Bill tonight. I feel that it would be unjust to ask honourable members to pass this Bill tonight without giving them an opportunity of refreshing their minds as to the ramifications of the Bill. I cannot see any harm being done if we were given a week or two longer. (A MEMBER: Six months). Well, it does not matter so long as the people are protected. The honourable senior member for the City has said that this Bill is a boon to the people, but it might also be a gold mine to big business, and we do not want that.

Mr. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. I never said that this Bill is a boon to the people; I said that natural gas is a boon to the people. In fact, what I did say was that natural gas is a natural gift and a boon to the people of the colony.

Mr. ALLDER: I take it that I was capable of following what the honourable member was saying and I jotted it down accordingly. The honourable member has suggested that if this natural gift were explored, it would be a boon to the country. I followed that up by saying that it might also be a big gold mine to big business. I feel that we should be given some time to consider this Bill; no harm will be done if we were given a week or two longer, because if we make mistakes in this matter, the reactions might be dangerous and we may have to regret. If we put things together with the assistance of the Expert who has just arrived in the colony, I think that we will be prevented from making any mistakes which might harm the colony economically. It seems as if many honourable members are bent on having this Bill passed to-night; some of us are in the fortunate or unfortunate position of being able to discuss things before we reach this House, but it is the duty of this House to give every honourable member the opportunity to study legislation and do justice. I am appealing for time to consider this Bill; let us postpone the consideration of this Bill for a week or two or refer the Bill to another Select Committee, because new things seem to have arisen in connection with the supply of this gas by the Company, and we should be given an opportunity to see if these new things are based on fact. If we were to have a postponement of this Bill I would ask this House to appoint a Select Committee to consider it and give the Committee permission to summon the new Petroleum Expert to give us of his knowledge. I do not think that that suggestion is an unreasonable one; cannot honourable members see the sense in acquiescing in this demand? This Bill was before the House some two years ago and no great injury has been done, and if we were to put it off for two weeks I do not see that any greater hardship would be felt by the community. I feel that it would be in the interest of the public if we were to study this Bill carefully and see the reason why the Gas Company is asking

for permission to sell this gas at 40 cents per therm, which is more than the price on which the Committee agreed, after going into the facts relative to the industry. I beg to second the motion for the postponement of this Bill; I feel that that would be doing justice not only to honourable members who have not had the time to study the Bill, but also to the public to whose benefit the postponement must result.

Mr. MAPP: One of the principal supporters of the passing of this Bill made references to the increased charge made by the Gas Company to the Vestry recently in connection with street lighting, and to the hardship which the non-passing of this Bill will further cause to the rate-payers of St. Michael. I am aware of the fact that the Company has been put in the position of saying "Heads, I win; tails, you lose." So long as the House delay the passing of this Bill, the Company will receive the rates which are based on the old method of calculation, and they will benefit by the fact that we have not passed this Bill. We are now asked to pass this Bill without looking into the effect which it will have in the future, because, we are told, it will bring some benefit to the ratepayers of St. Michael. We know that it will take some time before the Public Utilities Board can be set up; it will take some time before this, that and the other thing can be done, and before the consumers of gas are really relieved of any undue burden which is brought about by any excessive rates charged by the Gas Company, in respect of which rates appeals may be made to the Board. The appeals have to be heard and appeals may be made from the decisions. An appeal may take a long time to be determined, and meanwhile what will be happening? Honourable members who are asking for the postponement of this Bill have put up a case; the Government, who has moved to take over the source of supply of natural gas, now has an Expert from Canada and why can't the Government allow this Expert to go into the figures? Why not let the Expert look into the matter and see what is fair and reasonable? In a Bill such as this, we have been called upon to say what we feel should operate in the interest of the public, and what we feel would be against the interest of the public. The Government is controlling the source of the supply of natural gas and that is an even stronger reason why we should postpone the consideration of this matter, let the Expert go into the question of the price of gas and see if the arguments put up by honourable members are correct. I am not saying that the price of gas is excessive; I am saying that the Government has a good opportunity of seeing whether the price is fair or not without putting us to the delay which the setting up of a Public Utilities Board may occasion, and in the meantime the public may be suffering. The Government has a good case and I am backing it in that case. I am prepared for a Select Committee to be appointed to go into the matter thoroughly along with the Expert. When I heard about figures being presented to the Select Committee, I had doubts in my mind as to whether or not the members would be able to arrive at a reasonable price for gas. I always had reasonable doubts when it was put to me that 30 cents or 36 cents per therm was a justifiable price. The argument must appeal to the honourable senior member for the City that now we have an Expert who is going to advise the Government in respect of natural gas, it would be right that we should be given a further chance to see if 40 cents per therm is not enough or if it is too much. If the motion for the second reading of this Bill goes through, I hope that the Government itself will take steps to go into the matter thoroughly; I hope that they will not only control the supply of natural gas at its source, but

also at the place whence it is distributed to the public. It is of no use controlling the supply of gas at the source if you allow the Gas Company to sell the gas at an exorbitant price. The Company said that they have lost heavily and I think that they are trying to recoup themselves. If possible, they will control the extent of supply so that they will be able to put up their price. The ratepayers of St. Michael can be saved from some big blows if the consideration of this Bill is postponed; I am not making this appeal on their behalf only, I am also appealing on behalf of the people of the colony as a whole.

The question that the further consideration of this Bill be postponed was put and resolved in the negative, the following division being taken:—

Ayes: Messrs ALLDER, MILLER, and MAPF—3.

Noes: Dr. CUMMINS, Messrs SMITH, F. L. WALCOTT, BRYAN, COX, ADAMS, BRANCKER, DOWDING, GODDARD, REECE, WILKINSON, WARD and MOTTLEY—13.

The question that this Bill be now read a second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Mr. WILKINSON, seconded by Mr. MOTTLEY, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair, and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. SMITH being in the Chair.

Clauses 1 and 2 were read and passed.

Clause 3 was read.

Mr. WILKINSON: I beg to move that Clause 3 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. WARD: I beg to second that.

Mr. ADAMS: The decision of the Government—and I want the three honourable members on my right to understand that the Government is not changing it—is that we have examined these figures most carefully. The Government agreed with what was the view of the Party originally, that the computation was based on 72 cents as the first price of natural gas, and as we were advised, with a possible increase in consumption, we agreed that the price of gas should be 30 cents per therm. But things have changed considerably; the first price went up from 72 cents to \$1.00, and it became necessary for the Government to review its decision. The Government has carefully considered various prices for natural gas and we have agreed on figures which will enable the Gas Company to sell gas at 40 cents per therm, and at the same time reduce the price to the consumer. The price of natural gas from the Government to the Gas Company will be considerably reduced from \$1.00 so that the consumers will benefit. No expert is any better qualified than the Government as regards calculating if this cost less what will that cost? The price of gas is an artificial figure based on the cost of fuel outside the island; you put a surcharge on your customers, because of an increase in the price of natural gas, in order to make up for the increased expenditure, and if the price is reduced, you do not have to make up for any increased costs, therefore you can reduce the price. The Government has come to the conclusion that 40 cents per therm is a reasonable price for natural gas, and I would mention that honourable members on my right had agreed to 39 cents at one time. Nobody on these benches is desirous of putting any unnecessary money into the pocket of any public utility company; but if honourable members have not got enough confidence in the Govern-

ment to believe that the Government has given serious consideration to this question, it is a matter for them. The attitude of the Government is that we cannot agree with all these proposed amendments, but we have agreed with the price of gas at 1/8 per therm as a fair price. We have come to an understanding that when we agree to this price of 40 cents we see what extra money the Company has to pay, because the price of natural gas has gone up since we arrived at the price of 1/3 and later 1/7½, and we now allow the Company to charge a rate which will reduce the cost of gas to the consumers. After that careful consideration, the distinguished gentleman, who is an expert in his particular line, is no more qualified to tell us what price we should allow than any other person who can calculate figures. There is no justification for saying that we should wait on this gentleman; he can advise us on a number of other things connected with the distribution of natural gas and the future of natural gas in this island, but on this particular point as to whether we should agree to this price of 1/8 or not he cannot help. He cannot give any better advice than what we have had already and we are acting on it.

There are other portions of this Clause with which we do not agree; we do not agree for instance with the two years mentioned in the proposed Clause 15 (3) in respect of the revision of the price of gas. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition will agree to a change in the period, but the Public Utilities Board can alter the price. I am going to move that the Chairman do now report progress and ask for leave for the Committee to sit again, but I am making it clear that if we come back here every day for the balance of the year, we are agreeing to this price of 40 cents. I am not moving that we report progress on the question of fixing the price; when the Public Utilities Board has the Company's books in its possession and it feels that it should alter the price up or down, there is time enough for that. But at the present moment it is fair to allow the Company to charge 40 cents per therm for gas and the consumers must knock off the surcharge. I now beg to move, Mr. Chairman, that you do now report progress and ask for leave for the Committee to sit again.

Mr. DOWDING seconded the motion which was agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN reported and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

THE ADJOURNMENT

The Order Paper having been fixed,

Mr. ADAMS: In moving the adjournment of the House, I should like to inform honourable members that I would make a start with the consideration of the Estimates for 1951—52 next Tuesday if they are willing to do so. If honourable members are not willing to start the Estimates next Tuesday, I am asking them to be prepared to start them on Thursday next. It is proposed that we sit twice a week in order to get through the Estimates. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to this day week, the 6th day of March, 1951, at 3 o'clock, p.m.

Dr. CUMMINS seconded the motion which was agreed to, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.