



BRITISH GUIANA

REPORT

OF THE

British Guiana Commission

*Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament
by Command of His Majesty.*

April, 1927.

LONDON

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Report of the British Guiana Commission.

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MAP.

Report of the British Guiana Commission.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE L. S. AMERY, M.P.,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.

We were appointed by you in October, 1926, as a Commission to visit British Guiana "To consider and report on the economic condition of the Colony, the causes which have hitherto retarded and the measures which could be taken to promote development, and any facts which they may consider to have a bearing on the above matters."

We left England on the "Samaria" on the 16th October, and, travelling via New York, Grenada and Trinidad, reached Georgetown, British Guiana, on the 16th November. We left Georgetown for England on the 17th December, and arrived back in London on the 4th January, 1927. The details of our itinerary are given in the diary which forms an appendix* to this Report.

We desire to express our thanks to the Governor of the Colony, His Excellency Sir Cecil Rodwell, K.C.M.G., and the elected members of the Court of Policy and the Combined Court for the valuable assistance they unstintingly gave to the Commission; to the heads of departments, to whom we are indebted for memoranda and information of the fullest and most useful kind; to the numerous unofficial associations and the deputations in outlying districts who helped us greatly by their knowledge of local conditions; in fact to all sections of the community for their readiness to facilitate our work in every way possible and to answer the many enquiries which we made. We are under a special obligation to Mr. M. B. Laing, of the Colonial Secretariat, who was responsible for arranging our programme and for piloting us in our journeys about the Colony and contributed in no small degree to the amenities, unofficial as well as official, of our mission. We are also most grateful for the hospitality offered to us and for the excellent arrangements made by the Government both while we were living in Georgetown and on our visits to other parts of the Colony.

We desire, as well, to pay a more impersonal tribute to that very important institution, the climate. Mr. Ormsby-Gore has recently commented† on the surprising difference between climatic conditions in West Africa and British Guiana, though

* Appendix I, p. 65. † Cmd. 2744 (p. 60).

both are in more or less the same latitude. To a great extent this difference is due to the cool sea breezes which in British Guiana blow steadily across the coastlands during the daytime and prevent the weather from becoming oppressively hot. Another feature is the great uniformity of the temperature which rarely rises above 90° or falls below 75° in daytime or 73° at night. The temperature of the forest region is similar, though with slightly greater range of variation, and from personal experience we can say that it would be difficult to imagine a more attractive tropical country, both in its climate and its scenery, than the region round the junction of the Essequibo, the Mazaruni and the Cuyuni, which may one day perhaps become the site of a new and beautiful city, serving as the gateway to the interior.

Finally, we should like to add our testimony to that which has already been borne to the value of the policy of keeping the centre in touch with the circumference by means of periodical missions of this character. The view obtained of a Colony from Downing Street must be that of a star through a telescope, correct in general outline but deficient in details. It is only by first-hand impressions acquired on the spot from direct contact with the main currents of local opinion, official and unofficial, on the major issues of a Colony that we at home can hope to form a correct and just conception of its needs. Whatever may be the value of our impressions we can at least say that to the best of our abilities we have endeavoured to avail ourselves of the opportunity which you have given to us of contributing to the solution of some of the problems which confront a very interesting and valuable portion of the Empire.

British Guiana, the only British possession on the mainland of South America, is a country slightly larger than Great Britain, with a population of a little over 300,000, or less than four persons to the square mile. It consists of the former Dutch colonies of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice, ceded to Great Britain in 1814, and amalgamated in 1831. As its name denotes, it forms part of the vast region of Guiana lying between the Amazon, the Rio Negro, the Orinoco and the Atlantic, and now divided from north to south between Venezuela, Great Britain, Holland, France and Brazil. Bounded on the north-west by Venezuela and on the east by Surinam, it slopes gently down from elevated savannahs on the Brazilian frontier through tropical forests, which cover nearly ninety per cent. of its area, to an alluvial belt on the Atlantic coast. On this alluvial belt, below sea-level or within tidal influence, its capital, its staple industry, and the bulk of its population have been situated since the days when it belonged to the Dutch.

This choice of situation is not due, as is sometimes suggested, to the national predilection of our predecessors for living below

sea-level. For the greater part of their time the Dutch retained their seats of government as far as possible up the rivers, and it was not till well into the 18th century that, in the words of the then Colonial Secretary, "the exceptional salubrity of this district, whither invalids from neighbouring regions came expressly for relief" and "the exceeding fertility of the soil, which really surpasses belief," led to a steady migration towards the Demerara coast coupled with an immigration of rich English planters from Barbados and Antigua where the land was said to be completely exhausted. From the first it was observed that these immigrants spared "neither trouble, industry nor cost," in contradistinction to the Dutch colonists whose methods of cultivation were relatively primitive and who were generally too impecunious to afford the heavy initial outlay on dykes and drainage necessitated by the topography of the alluvial belt. By 1750 the development of the district had led to the setting up of a separate government for Demerara, from the first predominantly British, and in a report to the West India Company at the same date the Colonial Secretary drew attention to the great possibilities of the Colony. "The first thing," he pointed out, "that demands consideration is the urgent need of greater population." Given that, its great timber resources could begin to be exploited; industries such as rice, cotton, coffee and cocoa, for which it was well adapted, could be introduced and reduce its excessive dependence on sugar, "now the principal and practically only industry;" "the interior (which is unknown) could be explored and cultivated;" and the Colony would so "attain a flourishing and, in course of time, a formidable state."

These hopes were not fulfilled under a regime which confined trade to a single port in the Netherlands and conferred a monopoly of the supply of slaves and sea-transport upon a chartered company which in both cases charged exorbitant rates for an inadequate supply. But in 1796, under pressure from British interests established in the Colony, Demerara and Essequibo, together with Berbice, were seized by the British Government on the outbreak of war with the Batavian Republic, and with sugar prices soaring to over £60 a ton an era of unprecedented and unparalleled expansion began. By the end of the Napoleonic wars it was estimated that over £20,000,000 of British capital had been invested in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice, and in a memorandum submitted to the British Government by the merchants and proprietors interested in them it was stated that during the six years between the first British occupation and their temporary return to Holland in 1802 their exports had risen from 1,483 casks of sugar, 2,500 bales of cotton, and 2,000,000 lb. of coffee, to 17,500 hogsheads of sugar, 25,500 bales of cotton, and 12,000,000 lb. of coffee. The whole of this extraordinary increase, it was claimed, was attributable to British capital and settlers, and as these now bore a proportion of 19 in 20 to the Dutch, the Colony must be regarded as being almost

entirely British. Moved partly by these representations, partly by the desirability of having something to hold out to the public in return for the heavy financial charges which were being incurred for Holland, and partly by the desire of the Abolitionists to retain control over colonies which, without strict supervision, might be tempted to slip back to the illicit importation of slaves, Lord Castlereagh excepted them from the general British policy of restoring conquered colonial possessions to their original owners and, in spite of the protests of Lord Lansdowne, who considered that it would be worth paying money to get rid of colonies which produced sugar which we could not consume and withdrew capital which we could not afford, they passed formally and finally in 1814 into British hands.

This era of expansion closed as abruptly as it began, and from 1836, the last year before the effects of emancipation began to be felt, to 1925, the last year for which full figures are available, the economic history of the Colony can be shortly summarised as follows:—

	Population.	Exported sugar. Tons.	Value of sugar and by-products exported. £	Total value of all exports. £	Percentage of sugar, etc., to all exports.
1836	98,000	59,000	1,847,786	2,135,379	84
1925	304,000	97,000	1,551,745	2,967,096	53

For the appreciation of the full implications of these figures it is necessary to add that the increase in population was entirely due to assisted immigration of labour for the plantations and not to any natural increment; that throughout this period the area under sugar has steadily declined; that the whole rise in sugar exports shown had been achieved over forty years ago since when production has remained stationary with a tendency to diminish; and that the relatively smaller proportion of sugar exports to total trade is almost entirely due to a sudden rise in the output of alluvial diamonds which cannot be regarded as a stable or permanent factor in the economy of the Colony.

In assigning reasons for the stagnation revealed by these figures the first place must be given to the sheer physical difficulties which have hitherto retarded the development not only of British Guiana but of the whole continent to which it belongs. It has been said that man is over-burdened by nature in South America as in no other continent; the tropical forests are too dense, the plateaux too high, and on the lowlands nature has neutralised her lavishness in the matter of productivity by her niggardliness in that of population. The continent carries a smaller population than any other except Australia. Throughout its tropical area wealth *per caput* is extremely low. Over the vast water-logged basins of the Amazon and the Orinoco nature still reigns more or less supreme, while between them the Guiana Massif with its dense tropical forests, its cataract-barred

rivers, and its strip of low-lying country requiring elaborate defence against the sea, extensive drainage operations and embankments against flood-waters, presents hardly less formidable obstacles to the enterprise of man.

In the past the cultivation of the South American coast lands was chiefly due to the heavy European demand for sugar. Indeed the New World may be said to have been called into existence to supply sugar to the Old. With the discovery that beet-sugar could be grown in Europe and the development of large scale plantations in other parts of the world, where labour is cheap and plentiful, these sparsely-populated regions with their relatively expensive and inefficient methods of agriculture, were bound to pass through a period of depression and decline. It is not only in sugar that they have found it difficult to compete with the low prices engendered by abundant supplies and large scale labour-saving production. That the sugar industry should have survived in British Guiana is a tribute to the energy, the ability, and the determination with which it was conducted through very difficult years.

The survival of an industry without which the population of the Colony would by now have practically disappeared was however secured only at the price of a plantocracy, or government of sugar, by sugar, for sugar, inevitably tending to restrict development in other ways. As the West India Royal Commission of 1897 observed in their report* on the depression of the British West Indies, including British Guiana: "The representatives of the sugar industry in the West Indies have had special means of influencing the Government of the different Colonies and of putting pressure on the Home Government to secure attention to their views and wishes. Their interests have been to a very great extent limited to the sugar industry and they have seldom turned their attention to any other cultivation except when the sugar industry ceased to be profitable. The settlement of the labouring population on the land and the encouragement of the products and forms of cultivation suitable for a class of peasant proprietors formed no part of their policy; such measures were generally believed to be opposed to their interests which they regarded, no doubt, as identical with the best interests of the community and in, at least, some of the Colonies met with opposition at their hands. If a different policy had found favour, the condition of the West Indies might have been much less serious than it is at present in view of the probable failure of the sugar industry."

The natural obstacles remain, but the factors which have hitherto militated against their conquest are ceasing to operate. After a period of abundance the world is beginning to turn its attention again to the still unexploited resources of South America, and throughout that continent a new era of development seems

* C.8655.

to be beginning. In British Guiana this era has been inaugurated by the introduction of capital on a large scale to establish the great new bauxite industry and by the initiation since the war of a policy of State-aided development on comprehensive lines. Half a million pounds have been allocated to equipping the coastal villages with a reasonably efficient drainage and irrigation system and with a pure water supply, which, together, should do much to mitigate those evils of flood, drought and disease which for generations have prevented the rise of a peasant proprietary. A million pounds are being devoted to providing Georgetown, which up to the present has been described as floating on sewage, with an up-to-date drainage system and a pipe-borne water supply, to the lack of which no small part of its high death-rate has been due. The great timber possibilities of the Colony are at last being explored by a recently-created forest department. The resources of the interior and the question of opening them up by means of a railway are for the first time being systematically examined by a series of scientific and technical surveys. Last and not least, the education system of the Colony, hitherto gravely deficient, has been thoroughly overhauled and its reform, we trust, is now about to be taken in hand.

All this constitutes a record of progress and achievement unexampled in the Colony's history. It represents the laying of foundations without which it was impossible to build. But at the same time it has imposed a very grave strain on slender financial resources already taxed by the abnormal overhead administrative expenses inevitable when a small and extremely mixed population, peculiarly dependent on government services essential to their welfare, are scattered over a wide area requiring, owing to its topography and the nature of its soil, specially heavy expenditure on the public works necessary for the maintenance of communications and protection from the sea. The new expenditure, from the nature of the case, cannot be immediately reproductive. Whether it will become so will depend on the extent to which it is followed up by a wise and farsighted policy of development, both on the coast lands and in the interior, commensurate with the needs but not beyond the capacity of the Colony. And this in its turn raises the more fundamental questions of the adequacy of the existing educational system and political institutions. British Guiana is politically precocious, but educationally backward. It consists of a congeries of races from all parts of the world, with different instincts, different standards, and different interests. These facts add enormously to the difficulty of government and constitute some of the more important problems with which we shall have to deal.

CHAPTER II.

Finance.

The present financial position of British Guiana is unsatisfactory. The Colony's liability for loans raised and to be raised is £4,301,304, which is equivalent to £14 2s. 7d. per head of the population of 304,412. Compared with other Colonies this figure is extremely high. The public debt of the Gold Coast is equivalent to £5 12s. 8d. per head of the population, Nigeria £1 5s. 0d. per head, while that of Ceylon is £2 17s. 6d. The position is all the more serious in that there is a deficit in revenue as against expenditure for the year ended 31st December, 1926, of £178,958, and an estimated deficit for the year ending 31st December, 1927, of £76,667, making together a total deficit for the two years of £255,625.

The following is a comparative statement of the revenue and expenditure for the last seven years:—

	<i>Revenue.</i>	<i>Expenditure.</i>	<i>Surplus.</i>	<i>Deficit.</i>
	£	£	£	£
1921 ...	968,947	1,195,893	—	226,946
1922 ...	905,254	1,097,784	—	192,530
1923 ...	1,114,704	1,081,549	33,155	—
1924 ...	1,056,238	1,065,457	—	9,219
1925 ...	1,095,574	1,126,394	—	30,820
1926 ...	*997,292	*1,176,250	—	178,958
1927 ...	*1,115,000	*1,191,667	—	*76,667
			33,155	715,140
Deduct surplus 1923 ...		...	...	33,155
Net deficit during last seven years				<u>£681,985</u>

* Estimated.

The Colony has a Reserve Fund invested in securities the market value of which is approximately £88,958, and a credit balance in a Surplus and Deficit Fund of £15,833. These two funds are the only ones now available to provide for deficits in the Colony's budgets, and the former fund we understand can only be realised and used with the permission of the Secretary of State. It will be seen, however, that if both funds are applied towards the estimated adverse balances in 1926 and 1927 there still remains a sum of £150,834 to be provided, which will be reduced to £125,834 when a sum of approximately £25,000 owing for 1926 in respect of interest has been received from the Mayor and Town Council of Georgetown.

We understand that the Secretary of State has authorised the application of the Reserve Fund to reduce the deficits, and we were informed that proposals will be submitted to the Combined Court to provide for meeting this adverse balance of £125,834. These will probably suggest that there should be an increase of one-eighth in all Customs duties and taxes, other than export duties, royalties and stamp duties, and it is estimated that the necessary sum can be raised if the increases are continued for a period of three years.

It will be seen from the budget figures of the last seven years that only on one occasion during that period has there been a surplus, and that the total net deficit during the seven years amounted to no less a sum than £681,985.

To secure equilibrium between revenue and expenditure is the first and paramount duty of the Government, and we strongly urge the necessity in framing the estimates each year for adhering to the principle that expenditure must be provided out of revenue.

Prudent finance demands that in future the estimates should be so framed as to show at least a small surplus, the estimate of revenue being taken always at a moderate figure, and expenditure restricted ruthlessly to the amount estimated in the annual budget.

In the Treasurer's report for the financial year ended 31st December, 1925, sales of Crown and Colony lands are taken into the accounts as revenue. It would have been more in accordance with the principles of sound finance if in past years the policy had been adopted of paying these receipts into a reserve fund as a set-off against the Colony's debt, and any budget surplus realised in future years should be treated in the same way.

The definite adoption of a sound financial policy in matters of this kind will tend gradually to improve the financial position of the Colony. It is neither prudent nor expedient to consider a surplus in any year as a provision for a possible deficit in the next, and we advocate a policy directed to the building up of a reserve fund which would justify the contemplation of capital expenditure for the purpose of development. Borrowing in future years for the purpose of opening up the interior would be justified if a substantial sum were available in a reserve fund to provide for interest and sinking fund until the results of development were apparent in the revenue returns.

The estimated revenue for 1927 is, as has been shown, £1,115,000. Of this sum no less than £225,781, equivalent to 20 per cent., is required to provide interest and sinking fund for the Colony's public debt and loan liabilities.

This figure includes the Government's liability for interest on the money so far advanced by the Crown Agents for the Georgetown Improvement Schemes and for certain urgent work now in hand such as irrigation, drainage, pure water supply, all of which are essential for the well-being and health of the

inhabitants. This work in some cases is so far developed that curtailment is impossible, and indeed heavy expenditure in addition to what has been provided for, the amount of which cannot yet be estimated, will have to be incurred in connection with the Georgetown Improvement Schemes. The municipality and villages are, however, liable to the Government for a substantial proportion of the cost of these schemes.

A survey is now being made for a railway in the area known as the Bartica-Tiboku-Potaro triangle, and the surveyor's report will be awaited with interest. But, if the result of that survey is to show that a railway is both feasible and desirable, the cost of construction would be considerable, and, in the light of the present financial position, means should be found to provide for the carrying out of this work without placing the additional financial burden upon the revenues of the Colony.

In regard to the cost of administration, we understand that a Commissioner appointed by you has been examining this important matter, and his report may confirm the impression we formed that departmental re-organization to obviate over-lapping is possible.

It would not be safe to depend upon obtaining any substantial increase in revenue from the Customs duties. These, on the whole, are sufficiently high in comparison with those of other Colonies.

The severe drought in the summer of 1926 undoubtedly affected revenue, but we are of the opinion that it would not be prudent to rely upon 1927 yielding any larger revenue than the amount estimated. Indeed, as prosperity so largely depends upon the sugar industry adverse climatic or market conditions might seriously affect, as they did last year, the revenue of the Colony.

The question of securing an immediate increase in the revenue through new avenues of taxation is urgent and we are of the opinion that the imposition of income tax on a graduated scale might prove to be a useful source of additional revenue. Estimates were submitted to us showing that the annual yield of such a tax, rising from 2½ per cent. on incomes over £300 to 12½ per cent. on incomes over £10,000, might amount to £80,000 and the cost of collection £2,500 per annum, but we were not able to satisfy ourselves as to the accuracy of these estimates. It was also estimated that of the above sum about £20,000 would represent remissions in respect of British Income Tax, since local firms which are now subject to British Income Tax would under the existing regulations be entitled to the relief provided by statute to British taxpayers who can prove that their profits have borne income tax in a British Colony. Thus a substantial accession of revenue would accrue without a corresponding addition to the burdens of the Colony.

Income tax is in operation in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad, and the experience of those colonies as to scale, allowances, and method of collection would be a useful guide if our suggestion as to this tax is adopted.

All commodities grown in the Colony and exported are subject to an export duty of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on their f.o.b. value, and the duties for the year 1925 brought in as revenue a sum of approximately £48,000. The principal exports consist of:—

Sugar, including Molasses and Rum, forming	53	per cent. of total.
Diamonds and Gold,	29	„ „
Bauxite,	6	„ „
Rice, Timber, Balata, etc.,	12	„ „
	—	
	100	per cent.
	—	

We regard the export duties now in force as a vicious form of taxation, and we would advocate the abolition of these duties if the sum realised from income tax was sufficient to cover the amount now realised by the Export Duties tax and to provide a substantial margin for other purposes.

Export duties are a tax upon production and as such cannot be defended. They add directly to the overhead charges of all those engaged in agriculture and they operate with particular hardship upon the sugar industry, which is faced with ever-increasing competition from foreign sugar-producers who are not handicapped with this duty and whose markets are heavily protected.

On the other hand, income tax distributes the burden of taxation in a more equitable manner upon the whole community, and its advantages as a means of obtaining revenue as against the export duties now in force appear to be obvious, alike in the interests of the Colony and of those engaged in exploiting its agricultural products.

There does not appear to have been in the past any consistent policy laid down governing the Colony's finances, and it is regrettable that in the past no serious effort appears to have been made to obtain and set aside substantial surpluses to provide a Reserve Fund so as to improve the Colony's financial position.

The method adopted in assessing taxation in the Colony is not, in our opinion, satisfactory. About 83 per cent. of the total revenue is collected under the Customs Duties Ordinance and the Tax Ordinance, which are passed by the Combined Court for a period of twelve months only. The procedure for considering and passing these Ordinances each year is as follows: after the estimates of expenditure for the year have been finally passed by the Combined Court, the Governor withdraws and the Court resolves itself into a Committee of Ways and Means consisting of seven officials and fourteen elected members, with the senior elected

member, possessing an original and a casting vote, in the chair. In this Committee, where the elected members are in a majority of two to one, the Government's proposals for meeting the sanctioned expenditure for the coming year are discussed and accepted, amended, or rejected, according as the majority of the Committee may decide. After concluding their labours, which usually last for a day and half or two days, the Committee present their report, the Combined Court is reconstituted and the necessary bills are introduced to give effect to the report.

This procedure is open to three serious objections. In the first place, as over four-fifths of the revenue of the Colony is voted for one year only, there is no guarantee that a deadlock between the Government and the Combined Court might not result in a stoppage of supplies and consequently in an inability to provide on the due dates for the interest and sinking fund on the Colony's public debt. Without in any way throwing doubt upon the desire and capacity of the Colony to meet its obligations, the fact remains that in the absence of this guarantee it is impossible for the Secretary of State to sanction its loans being floated in this country under the Colonial Stock Acts. Future loans to be raised on the London money market would, of course, command better terms if they could be classified as Trustee Securities, thus imposing a lighter burden for interest upon the Colony's revenue.

In the second place the fact that the Customs duties can be altered in this way each year is a disturbing factor for the business community. Though this in itself would not be a decisive objection, it will be agreed that in matters of taxation the convenience of business interests should, as far as possible, be consulted.

Thirdly, the practice of throwing the whole fiscal system every year into the melting pot and of leaving the Committee of Ways and Means free to range, without any sort of restriction, over the entire field of taxation, is not conducive to a stable, consistent and sound financial policy. Any member may move the introduction into either ordinance of some provision, no matter how important and far-reaching, of which the Government have had no previous notice. Thus the considered proposals of the Government may be rejected and replaced by others which the Government have had no opportunity of examining apart from that afforded during the actual debate. There is no obligation and no incentive to observe the principle that expenditure should be provided out of revenue. A past surplus may be used to defray an anticipated deficit, and in the absence of any automatic check upon such a proceeding (as in this country, is provided by the automatic application of any surplus to debt redemption) there is naturally a very strong temptation to avoid by this means the unpopularity of retaining or increasing taxation. This in its turn can hardly fail to react upon the

administration, which sees that economies result in no strengthening of the Colony's financial position. Hand-to-mouth finance and haphazard and ill-considered taxation are the inevitable outcome of a system under which the responsibility for the finances rests with a Government who cannot enforce their policy and the financial power with the elected members who have no real responsibility.

We would welcome any change in the existing Constitution which would give to the people's representatives wider powers of usefulness and greater opportunity for constructive criticism. But we do not see how it can be possible either to ensure a consistent financial policy or to exercise efficient control of the Colony's sources of revenue, unless Government have the power, in the last resort, and under proper safeguards, to enforce their own decisions.

We should be failing in our duty were we not to express our definite opinion upon this point. It is but natural that the people should instinctively cling to the constitutional rights inherited more than 120 years ago when British Guiana became a British possession, but we are not without hope that in the light of the altered conditions to-day, and with a desire to restore financial prosperity to the Colony and help in its development and exploitation, they will co-operate whole-heartedly in effecting the necessary constitutional changes.

We are satisfied that the financial position to-day is unsound and the outlook serious, and it is important to remember that the Colony will, at some future date, have to consider the question of funding its indebtedness to the Crown Agents for the Colonies, which now amounts to £1,200,000, by means of raising a loan on the London market. It appears to us that this operation presents difficulties which it may be advantageous here to consider. The financial position disclosed in an examination of the last seven annual budget statements reveals a state of affairs which may well render the raising of a loan in London both difficult and expensive, and it would not be surprising if expert advice proves the necessity for postponing such an operation until the Colony can show a balanced budget, with effective control by Government over taxation.

These considerations serve to emphasize the necessity for the constitutional changes which we advocate in Chapter VII of this Report. We are of the opinion that control by Government of the taxation, the passage of permanent Customs and Tax Ordinances, a continuous and rigorous scrutiny of administrative expenses, with a definite and consistent policy, and a serious and concentrated attempt by all concerned to increase the Colony's exports, are required to bring about a much-to-be-desired improvement.

The Customs returns show that many articles are imported for local consumption which could be grown locally. These

include coffee, cocoa, cornmeal, fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, refined sugar and ground-nuts. No less than 871,000 lb. of refined sugar were imported during 1925, and this in a Colony whose main industry is sugar. We believe that the Colony's export trade is capable of considerable expansion, and the cultivation of ground-nuts for export referred to in Chapter III of this Report is a case in point.

We should not like to conclude our observations upon the financial position without making it clear that while we regard that position as unsatisfactory we do not desire to convey the impression that it is hopeless or that remedies cannot be found which will bring substantial relief.

To obtain a proper perspective of the position to-day, regard must be paid to all the factors which have contributed to retard and delay development. Money, of necessity, has had to be lavishly expended in past years to save the coastal area from the encroachment of the sea, to provide for the maintenance of the sea wall, and to ensure drainage, irrigation, and pure water supply for the people in towns and villages, on a scale which is sufficient for the needs of a much larger population. The demands for these purposes have probably been heavier than the budgets could with safety and prudence provide.

Money has properly and wisely been provided during recent years for a scientific survey of the Colony's undeveloped areas, and the position disclosed in the Survey Report on the Forest Area, referred to in Chapter IV of this Report, may well reassure those inclined to take too gloomy a view of the future.

The Colony is at last approaching a stage in its history when its valuable assets can, with accuracy, be appraised, and with the whole-hearted co-operation of its people and their elected representatives the difficulties of to-day can, without doubt, be overcome. Given these conditions, and a determination to face the defects of the existing constitution, and to apply the appropriate remedies in the light of the Colony's necessities, there is no need to despair as to the future.

CHAPTER III.

Agriculture.

Of the 57,267,200 acres comprising the area of the Colony, about 3,500,000 acres, or 6 per cent. of the total, consist of an alluvial belt to which cultivation at present is almost entirely confined. At the end of 1925 the total acreage under cultivation was returned as follows :—

	<i>Acres.</i>
Sugar-cane	57,500
Rice	29,333
Coconuts	29,979
Ground provisions (plantains, cassava, corn, yams, sweet potatoes, eddoes, tannies, ground-nuts, etc.)	11,715
Coffee	6,243
Cocoa	1,918
Limes	655
Rubber	2,200
Total	139,543

Of these, sugar accounted for 53 per cent. of the value of the Colony's total domestic exports, rice 3·7 per cent., and the remainder about 0·4 per cent.

So far as the agricultural exports of the Colony are concerned it is true to say that the prosperity of the Colony depends at present almost entirely upon sugar. Adverse climatic and unfavourable market conditions for sugar are reflected immediately in revenue as was strikingly illustrated during the year 1926. Although the cane area under cultivation in 1926 was about the same as in 1925, the sugar crop last year was only about 80,000 tons, as compared with 107,000 tons for 1925. Undoubtedly the severe drought last summer accounted in a large degree for the reduced output, but for some months last year the planters claimed to be working at a loss in view of the low price of sugar.

We were able to visit several of the most important sugar plantations and factories, and were struck by their efficiency and evident signs of activity. Most of the large estates make provision for the health and well-being of their employees by fully-equipped hospitals and medical services, while houses with one to two acres of irrigated land are provided for those engaged for permanent service, who are thus able to grow rice for their own profit. We were glad to see that some of the larger estates have installed light railways for the conveyance of their workers to and from the plantations and we hope that in course of time this

practice will be more widely extended. The industry maintains almost entirely at its own expense an Experiment Station at Georgetown, which we had the pleasure of visiting and to which we shall again refer. With regard to the future, its leading representatives stated that British Guiana was admirably suited for the production of sugar and pointed to the way in which the post-war slump had been weathered as evidence of vitality. But they were emphatic that in face of subsidised and protected world competition the possibility of progress and even of survival is bound up with the retention of the existing British preference, and their principal concern was for some guarantee of continuity of British policy in this respect, without which it is difficult for them to make plans for the future extension of the industry. They claimed that a secured market associated with a stabilised preference guaranteed for, say, twenty years instead of ten, would give such an impetus to the sugar industry in the Colony that it would not be unreasonable to expect production to increase to half a million tons annually. We cite this both as an expression of the considered opinion of the Colony's greatest industry and also as an indication of the very substantial contribution, not always sufficiently recognised, which this country is already making to the welfare of British Guiana. We recognise, however, that the whole matter is a controversial political issue for the Imperial Government to decide, and it is one upon which we express no opinion.

This excessive dependence upon one particular product has, as we have shown, always been one of the fundamental weaknesses of British Guiana. The safe thing for a Colony is by diversity of production to protect itself, as far as this can be done, against the surprises and fluctuations of the world's markets. Efforts have been made in the past by some of the sugar planters to grow and cultivate alternative crops to sugar—coconuts and rubber were cited to us by one important firm—but these have had to be abandoned, usually on urgent representations from principals at home to cut down expenses when adverse market conditions were ruling for sugar. It is not surprising that alternative crops of this nature have failed to be attractive to the planters. Both require long periods of cultivation before crops are ready to be gathered. It takes about ten years to bring coconuts to maturity, and rubber trees are not ready for tapping until five years after they are planted. Obviously the ideal alternative crop would be one which would not entail long and costly attention, and which would produce a yield within a short space of time.

We desire to put forward for serious consideration, not only by the sugar planters but by all who are interested in agriculture in the Colony, the suggestion that ground-nuts might prove a valuable crop for cultivation on a large scale. These nuts have already been grown with success for local consumption on the East Coast (Berbice) and on the Corentyne Coast. It does not

appear to have occurred to anyone engaged in agriculture in the Colony that here is an article for which there is a large and growing demand in Europe, which commands a steady price, and which entails very little labour in cultivation. Ground-nuts are ready for harvesting six months after they are planted, and they should in our opinion prove admirable as an alternative or catch crop in the sugar plantations, where they could be sown with advantage in land which from time to time is allowed to lie fallow before again being planted with sugar-cane. The roots of ground-nuts contain nitrogen and the seeds therefore act as an excellent legume. We obtained from the Acting Director of Agriculture samples of ground-nuts grown in various districts and these we have submitted to a leading firm of oil millers in England. Through the courtesy of that firm laboratory tests have been made of these samples to ascertain their oil contents, and the nuts are pronounced to be equal in quality to, and as readily marketable as, those exported from West Africa. It is important to remember that Nigerian ground-nuts nearly all come from Kano and the country surrounding that town. Kano is 700 miles from the port of shipment—Lagos—and consequently all the ground-nuts exported from there have to bear a rail freight of £4 11s. 3d. per ton before they can be placed upon steamers for Europe.* Ground-nuts grown on the east or west coast of British Guiana would be free from this serious handicap, and as Georgetown is about the same distance from England as Lagos the advantage to shippers from the former is apparent. We made close and constant enquiries during our visit to the Corentyne Coast from the local inhabitants who sent deputations to meet us, and in every case we were assured ground-nuts were being grown successfully in small quantities for local consumption, and could be grown on a much larger scale if the crops could be secured by drainage and irrigation. That difficulty does not confront the sugar planters in anything like the same degree. Their plantations are efficiently drained and irrigated and even in a drought year such as last a ground-nut crop in a properly-selected area should be safe for the harvest. We have had the advantage of discussing our proposal with the principal of an important firm in Georgetown which controls a number of large sugar factories in the Colony. He expressed himself as quite willing to examine carefully the question of putting a considerable acreage under cultivation for ground-nuts as an experiment. He and others in the Colony, however, labour under the disadvantage of knowing nothing about market conditions at home, or the particular variety of seed necessary to plant to produce a crop suitable for the market requirements. These are difficulties which can easily be overcome under the guidance of a capable and active Director of Agriculture who would explore energetically this new potential source from which the Colony's exports could be increased and its prosperity enhanced. As we were anxious to obtain independent

* *Vide* Mr. Ormsby-Gore's Report on his visit to West Africa (Cmd 2744) page 170.

and expert confirmation of the opinion we had formed as to the possibility of growing ground-nuts in the Colony on a large scale, we asked the Acting Director of Agriculture to make enquiries and report. Both his own report and one he obtained from Captain E. Beckett, a Travelling Agricultural Inspector, fully confirm our own opinion. These reports state that there is no reason why ground-nuts should not be grown extensively in the Colony for export, that suitable soil for their cultivation exists on the East Coast, Corentyne Coast, and on the West Coast, and that the yield per acre should be fully equal to, if not in excess of, the yield in the Colony of the Gambia, which produces the best West African variety.

Rice is grown extensively in the coastal districts, and with a steady policy of drainage and irrigation by Government there is no doubt that large areas of new ground could be made available for rice growing. The area under cultivation last year was 17,208 acres more than for the year 1925, the return per acre is increasing, and the crop for 1926 was over 69 million pounds as compared with 51 million pounds for 1925. There is, however, much room for improvement in the manner in which rice is prepared for market. The mills are primitive, and, under existing conditions, it is difficult to see how full advantage can be taken of the large market available in the West Indies for British Guiana rice. The rice exported from the Colony is known in the West Indies as Demerara rice, and, owing to the manner in which it is prepared for market, shipments up to now have been so bad in quality that the Islands prefer to import from India the rice they require for local consumption. If this market is to be exploited, some system of grading and inspection by Government before shipment is essential. Government inspection of produce shipped from other Colonies, so as to ensure a proper standard in accordance with the home market requirements, has been found to be both a practicable and useful expedient, and there is no reason why it should not be adopted in this Colony.

The post of Director of Agriculture is at present vacant and it is to be hoped that it will soon be filled by a thoroughly competent officer. No doubt the activities of the Agricultural Department have, in the past, been restricted by financial considerations, but in a country like British Guiana, with great agricultural possibilities awaiting development, the importance of the work of this Department cannot be overstated. Money would be well spent on the establishment and equipment of a Government experimental farm or farms. It is a lamentable reflection that with climate and soil admirably adapted for the growing of citrus fruits the Colony produces such poor qualities of oranges and grape fruit. With regard to bananas, we need only refer to the report* of the Imperial Economic Committee which has recommended that grants of up to £2,000 a year should

* Cmd. 2658 (page 264.)

be made to assist the Department of Agriculture of British Guiana in establishing the experimental cultivation of the fruit in various parts of the Colony. But there is a wide field, too, for experiments in a Government farm in the growth of other agricultural products, and for supplying seed for use in the Colony.

As we have already stated, the British Guiana Sugar Planters' Association have in fact established such a centre of analysis and experiment, under the direction of Mr. Whittles. This Experiment Station is doing excellent scientific work, although its establishment is of too recent a date to have had as yet any marked effect on the industry, but as its activities are confined to the sugar-cane it represents only a valuable beginning of what should be a greatly extended scientific activity. We attach to this question of scientific research and experiment the utmost importance, and we suggest that the new Director of Agriculture should give the matter his early and earnest attention.

We assume that the activities of such experimental stations would include the adaptation of native or imported plants to the local environment, the importation and acclimatization of useful foreign plants, and especially the raising, distribution and oversight of seeds selected for use in the Colony, and instruction in regard to attacks by pests upon agricultural products. The experience and methods of similar institutions established in other parts of the Empire should be available, and there are doubtless trained scientists who would be obtainable if their services were required. We need not dwell upon the proved value of such experimental farms on the tea plantations of India and Ceylon (Assam).

We would like to urge that any scientific work of this kind should be under the control of men of unquestionable skill who have had experience in similar work in other parts of the Empire. Where so much is involved the best service is also the cheapest in the end.

It might be wise not to confine the agricultural experimental farms to one centre, as apart from the question of variation of soils and environment there is the influence upon agriculture which farms in a particular neighbourhood might have.

The cost of equipping and maintaining an experimental farm or farms would be considerable, and it would be a burden which, in the light of the Colony's present financial position, could hardly be justified. We suggest, therefore, that the Empire Marketing Board might be asked to provide an annual sum, for a period of years, sufficient to establish, equip, and provide for the efficient maintenance of such farms.

All the agricultural associations and deputations which we met in Georgetown or in other parts of the Colony were emphatic on the vital need for efficient drainage and irrigation. Of the two, drainage is the more urgent, since drought years are comparatively rare while, owing to the topography of the coastlands,

frequent and prolonged floods, causing great damage to cultivation and the health of the people, are inevitable in the absence of expensive artificial drainage which the ordinary village cannot afford. The bulk of the loan expenditure now being incurred on drainage and irrigation has, therefore, been allocated to drainage schemes which, when completed, will affect 93 miles, or, roughly, two-thirds of the populated coastal lands. Of this area, about 60 miles are already provided with irrigation by water conservancies which are being extended and improved under the present Government schemes. We understand that, in addition to protecting cultivated land from flooding, these works will render available for cultivation a large amount of land which it has hitherto been impossible to utilise.

From the nature of the case these schemes must leave untouched considerable areas where irrigation would be economically impracticable on account of the sparseness of the population or of the lay-out of the holdings. We received many representations from the inhabitants of such districts as to their urgent need of irrigation, the lack of which had, of course, greatly accentuated their sufferings and losses during the late drought. The suggestion was made to us that the best way of dealing with the hardships of agriculturists in these districts would be by bringing them within the ambit of a colonization scheme, that is to say, by offering them the opportunity of exchanging their present holdings for the small grants of prepared land which would be made available for immigrants under such a scheme. We shall refer to this proposal again in connection with the question of immigration. In the meantime we need only say that it seems to be the only practicable way of meeting a very real grievance and that, if advantage were widely taken of such a scheme, it would have the advantage of reducing the present dispersal of the sparse population along narrow strips of land on the coast and up the rivers, which greatly adds to the cost and difficulties of administration.

Before leaving this subject we would record our strong opinion that the operation of the drainage plants and the supervision of the internal drainage under these schemes should be controlled by the Government. To leave these matters in the hands of the local authorities, who do not possess the necessary technical qualifications, would obviously lead to neglect and rapid deterioration of the machinery and of the drainage works, with disastrous effects upon the districts and ultimately increased expenditure by Government. We note that the Committee originally appointed to make recommendations as to these schemes were emphatically of this opinion and we trust that no time will be lost in passing the necessary legislation for the purpose.

We received many representations from all sections of the community as to the desirability of establishing an Agricultural Bank. We understand that a Committee were recently appointed by the Governor to consider this matter and that their report has

now been presented. There can be no doubt that Agricultural Banks have proved to be of great assistance in countries dependent for their prosperity upon agriculture. Notably has this been the case in Egypt, where the Agricultural Banks have undoubtedly contributed largely to the prosperity of those engaged in the cultivation of cotton. We had the advantage of interviewing the Chairman of the Committee who have been examining the question, and we gather that the proposal is to establish a Government Agricultural Bank with a capital of about one million dollars which it is hoped would be raised locally. The advances made would come under two heads:—

- (1) Long-term loans, repayable over a period of 33 years, in half-yearly instalments, covering interest and repayment of principal, the charge for interest to be 6 per cent. per annum with an extra 1 per cent. for sinking fund.
- (2) Short-term loans for seasonal purposes only, repayable over a maximum period of 3 years, by half-yearly instalments, covering interest and principal, with interest at the same rate.

The suggested basis of advance for long-term loans is 50 per cent. of the Bank's valuation of the land forming the security and in the case of short-term loans 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. of the value of the annual crop, and loans would be limited to 25,000 dollars to any one borrower. The Bank would be run for a beginning in the Department of the Director of Co-operative Societies and the overhead charges at the outset, to include salaries, Directors' fees, printing, stationery, etc., were estimated to amount to not more than £1,000 per annum. The Board would consist of four Directors, to be nominated by the Governor, two of whom would probably be Government officials.

It seems to us that the estimate for the cost of administration, etc., is altogether too low. The success of a Government Agricultural Bank will depend very largely upon capable management by someone thoroughly conversant with the risks attendant upon advances against agricultural land and with the procedure which has been found to be necessary in banks of this nature operating successfully in other countries. Great care would have to be exercised in advancing money on the security of land in the Colony, and the valuations by the Bank's own expert advisers would have to be made upon a conservative basis with full regard to the position and marketability of the land offered as security. The whole question, in fact, is one which requires close study under expert advice, and a thoroughly efficient organization, if success is to be achieved.

We are bound to point out that the proposal as submitted to us does not enable us to recommend the formation of a Government Agricultural Bank on the lines suggested, although we approve of the proposal in principle. Even basing calculations upon the very modest estimate for overhead expenses of £1,000

per annum, and even if the full amount of the Bank's capital were lent in the first year of its operations—an unlikely contingency—its maximum amount of profit, after paying 5 per cent. interest on capital—also a modest estimate—could not exceed £1,000.

<i>Revenue.</i>		£
Interest at 6 per cent. per annum on £200,000 lent	... ..	12,000
		<u>12,000</u>
<i>Expenditure.</i>		
Interest on Capital \$1,000,000, say		
£200,000 at 5 per cent. per annum	£10,000	
Administration expenses as estimated	1,000	
		<u>11,000</u>
PROFIT	...	<u>£1,000</u>

No provision is here allowed for special expenses, or for allocation to a reserve fund, and it would be imprudent to assume that the Bank, unlike other long-established similar banks, would encounter no difficulties in receiving prompt payment from its customers of their obligations, or would realise no ultimate loss on selling land or property upon which it might have to foreclose.

If a British Guiana Agricultural Bank is to be a live institution, continuously expanding its operations as time goes on, its Board must envisage the necessity of raising funds in the future by taking money on long-term fixed deposit, or by the issue of redeemable bonds as distinct from share capital. For the first few years of its existence such a Bank should proceed with caution, should be engaged in consolidating its position, gathering experience, and perfecting its organisation. During that period its earning power would certainly not be at its maximum, and therefore it would be prudent to assume that its expenditure would be in excess of its revenue.

We are of the opinion that a fully-equipped Agricultural Bank could not be run on such a modest overhead charge as £1,000 per annum. The management, as we have stated, would have to be in the hands of a trained banker, well versed in the practice of agricultural banking, who would develop the business of the Bank on the lines we have indicated, and the salary of such an officer would involve a serious addition to overhead expenses. For the first few years of its existence such a bank would, therefore, in all probability constitute an additional and substantial charge upon the revenue of the Colony. Moreover, money is urgently required to-day for railway and other development which should be the first call if loans can be raised locally, and, as we have already shown, difficult problems will have to be faced at no distant date in the matter of funding the Colony's floating indebtedness.

For these reasons we are of the opinion that the question of forming an Agricultural Bank should be deferred until the more pressing financial problems of the Colony are satisfactorily settled.

CHAPTER IV.

The Interior.

The Interior is generally defined as the lands above the point from which the several main rivers are barred by cataract and difficult of navigation. Excluding the elevated hinterland savannahs, which include grass-covered valleys, flats and mountains and occupy about 3,968,000 acres, the whole of this area is covered with forest, which, as already stated, comprises over 87 per cent. of the total area of the Colony. The principal products of the interior and the proportion which they bore in 1925 to the total exports of the Colony are as follows :—

<i>Product.</i>	<i>Value of Exports.</i>	<i>Percentage of Exports of the Colony.</i>
	£	
Balata	113,132	3·8
Bauxite	184,654	6·2
Diamonds	845,268	28·5
Gold	27,490	·9
Timber and wood products	51,546	1·7

Gold.—The output of gold, which thirty years ago formed 26 per cent. of the Colony's exports, has gradually declined from a maximum of 138,527 ounces in 1893-94 to 9,107 ounces in 1925. In the best days of the industry about 6,000 men were constantly engaged in gold-washing, or about three-quarters of the number of those now working in the diamond industry. The decline in output is due to the attraction of labour from the gold to the diamond fields and not to exhaustion of the resources of the hinterland. The revival of the industry would appear to depend upon further prospection and improved communication either by road or railway. In the past the major part of the gold has been obtained from alluvial washing by small claim-holders. Auriferous quartz milling has also been tried, but operations of this kind have in all cases been suspended. At present practically all the output of gold is obtained from dredging.

Diamonds.—In 1913-14 the output of diamonds consisted of 93,752 stones, weighing 13,716 carats and worth £21,178. Since the war, output has increased very rapidly, as is shown by the following figures :—

	<i>Number.</i>	<i>Weight (carats).</i>	<i>Value.</i>
			£
1921 ...	507,200	102,603	329,847
1922 ...	816,857	163,640	825,285
1923 ...	1,141,425	214,474	1,033,014
1924 ...	1,055,425	185,585	858,322
1925 ...	1,160,271	182,895	819,816

It is estimated that about 8,000 men are at present engaged in this industry.

The proved diamond-bearing area covers an area of about twelve hundred square miles over the Mazaruni basin and towards the Puruni River more than 130 miles from Georgetown. Nearly the whole production, however, has been obtained within an area of some five hundred square miles. The Mazaruni and Puruni diamond fields have recently been subjected to a preliminary survey by Mr. H. J. C. Conolly, Government Economist, Geologist and Mineralogist, with the primary object of ascertaining whether the resources of diamonds and other minerals in the alluvial deposits are such as to justify the construction of a railway to serve these fields. Mr. Conolly considers that the possibility of a source discovery of importance is very remote and that the economic interest of this area must consequently be confined to the alluvial deposits. He says that the most promising feature is the fact that diamond occurrence, though irregular, is very widespread, but that the other minerals so far found in the alluvial deposits have no economic interest.

His investigations have not yet offered sufficient data to arrive at a reliable estimate of the life of the fields and his opinion that they may last at the present rate of production for another twenty years is admittedly conjectural. Moreover, it must be remembered that the life of a diamond field depends largely on the scale of the operations and that if the new Company which has recently been formed to exploit them introduces up-to-date methods they will be exhausted sooner than by the present unsystematic efforts of individual workers. It must be remembered, too, that the diamond industry is an artificial industry. The world produces more diamonds to-day than can be absorbed, and powerful syndicates are continually engaged in attempting to control both output and prices. For all these reasons it would not appear that the construction of a railway to serve the diamond fields would be justified if its revenue were dependent solely upon that industry.

Bauxite.—This industry has made gratifying progress since it was first started at the end of 1916 by a Canadian Company under the control of the Northern Aluminium Company of America. The quantity and value of bauxite exported since 1921 is as follows :—

			<i>Tons.</i>	<i>Value.</i>
				£
1921	...	...	12,384	12,078
1922	...	...	nil	nil
1923	...	...	100,346	110,488
1924	...	...	154,324	162,861
1925	...	...	174,999	184,654

The Demerara Bauxite Company, to which belongs the credit for the development of this industry, makes admirable arrangements for the health and well-being of its employees. The Company has its own hospital, and the success of its operations is no doubt largely due to the excellent provision made for the proper housing and health of its staff. Some 900 men were engaged in the industry last year, and further developments are in view as a strong British syndicate has been formed to take part independently in the exploitation of the bauxite deposits of British Guiana.

Timber.—Though the forests all told cover some 78,000 square miles or over 87 per cent. of the total area of the country, and consequently constitute, apart from cultivable soil, its greatest known asset, it is only within the last two years that British Guiana has equipped itself with the nucleus of a forest service with a survey department of its own. In saying that forest management and forest policy in the past appear to have been virtually non-existent, we do not wish to detract from the work done by surveyors, appointed during recent years by the Land and Mines Department, who rendered much useful service. It was, however, recognised some years ago that a properly-equipped forest service was desirable and a Committee of the Empire Forestry Conference, sitting in Canada in 1923, were asked to consider the question and report. The Committee recommended the establishment of a forest service with fully-trained forest officers under a Conservator with tropical experience, and their proposal was accepted. Mr. B. R. Wood, of the Indian Forestry Service, was appointed Conservator, and his staff now consists of a Superintendent of Forest Surveys, three Assistant Conservators and three Forest Surveyors.

Most of the staff arrived at the end of October, 1925, and during its short life the Department has already more than justified its existence. Its first year's work has consisted of the exploration, mapping, and valuation for forest purposes of some 650 square miles of country. We desire to pay a tribute to the energy and capacity displayed by Mr. Wood and his staff. They have laboured successfully under great difficulties. No adequate maps of the area were available; tracks had to be cut as the surveys proceeded; travelling was most difficult and expensive; but in the face of all these difficulties the results achieved are remarkable. For the first time in the history of the Colony there is available a complete survey and valuation of a large area of forest, which should be most valuable as a record of the various classes of timber available for exploitation.

The area surveyed is the triangle between the Essequibo and Mazaruni rivers, with Bartica as its apex and the Kaburi river and Roth's trace as its base. Mr. Snell and Mr. Sedgwick in company with Mr. Wood were able to see something of the area which had been surveyed and valued. This survey has revealed

the existence of very valuable forests containing besides greenheart, of which British Guiana is the sole known source of the world's supply, considerable quantities of mora, which is also classified A.1 at Lloyds for shipbuilding and is likely to prove of great use for railway sleepers, and of other timbers of high quality and value such as wallaba, marabukea, kakeralli and purpleheart. The outstanding features of the area are the greenheart forests which were found over the best compact self-contained area of 70 square miles to compose 31 per cent. of the total crop, a most unusual density in a virgin tropical forest. Over the 335 square miles covered by his first survey Mr. Wood computes that there is a total of 306,700,000 cubic feet of timber, of which 67,700,000 is greenheart, with large quantities of the other valuable timber already referred to, all within ten miles of a port on a river where ocean-going steamers could load for export. Mr. Wood values this area as being worth in revenue to the State not less than \$16,000 per square mile, if it were to be exploited by modern methods. This, it should be understood, is a conservative figure, based on the present rate of royalty which, if this country were tapped by a railway, would probably prove to be absurdly low.

This very valuable report represents only a beginning of a vast task of exploration and stocktaking. This year, we understand, the Forestry Department proposes to turn its attention to the North-West District, which consists of nearly 10,000 square miles of undeveloped country, mostly under primary forest and occupied by a population of 11,000 persons, half of whom are aborigines. We were, unfortunately, unable to visit this district, but it includes an area of 120 square miles which a few years ago was inspected in detail by Mr. Keatinge, C.I.E., I.C.S., late Director of Agriculture, Bombay. We reprint in an Appendix* the passage in which Mr. Keatinge describes the climate and agricultural possibilities of this remarkable district, because of its very direct bearing on the activities of the Forestry Department. In the Bartica-Kaburi area the soil appears to be, on the whole, unsuited for agriculture. In the North-West District, on the contrary, it appears to be most suitable, and under such conditions forestry development might proceed hand in hand with agricultural settlement, as it has done already in other countries. The question whether this could be effected by handing over the whole district, as has been suggested, to a chartered company, or by large timber concessions, leaving agricultural settlements to develop, as in other tropical countries, round the sawmills and out of the employees of the exploiting firms, depends in the first instance on the ascertainment of its timber possibilities by the Forestry Department. Without complete information on this point it appears to us most improbable that any chartered company could be formed to undertake the

* Page 66.

development of this district even if the Government were prepared to alienate great tracts of possibly very valuable land at purely nominal rates.

In relation to forestry development we should like to draw attention to the possibilities and future of the aboriginal Indians. As is well known, these peaceful and amiable people, though responsive to good treatment and very far from being savages, have hitherto shown little capacity for absorbing civilisation. They are scattered in small groups or families all over the interior and their inaccessibility and nomadic life makes it difficult to do much for them in the way of health and education. During the recent surveys their great knowledge of the woods, which for centuries have been their home, their aptitude at picking up the methods employed in enumerating and measuring the trees, and their pleasant disposition, were of great service to the Forestry Department, and we hope that that Department will endeavour to be of service to them. Not only are they a real asset to the Colony as a natural source of labour for exploiting and preserving the forest, but with regular employment and considerate treatment they may in time, as Mr. Wood has remarked in a suggestive passage of his Report, acquire more settled habits and develop into a valuable and productive section of the community, practising agriculture side by side with forestry. We are not sure that it might not be a good thing if the care of the aboriginal Indians, at present vested in the Commissioner of Land and Mines, were transferred to the Conservator of Forests, who is in the best position for acquiring their confidence and is deeply interested in protecting and preserving a race on which he may rely in the future for his forest guards. The Indians are part of the forest, and it would seem appropriate to entrust their protection and preservation to the Forestry Department.

It might seem superfluous to insist on the vital importance of this new Forestry Department to the whole future of the Colony, if it were not that the Department has not yet been placed on a satisfactory and permanent basis, that its head has been engaged only for a period of two years, and that shortly before we left one of the elected members of the Combined Court gave notice of a question asking when the work of the Department would be completed and the expenditure on it terminated. We can only characterise such an attitude, which we do not believe to reflect the views of the majority of the elected members, as short-sighted, reactionary and utterly opposed to the interests of the Colony. The universal experience of the world is that in the absence of scientific management under a trained Forestry Department with a far-reaching policy of conservation and development the forests are worked out without any attempt to restock, leaving them in a more or less exhausted condition according to their degree of accessibility. In British Guiana the forests have hitherto been protected from

destruction by their comparative inaccessibility. If the Colony is not to lose this advantage of its backwardness, it must profit by the experience of Canada, Australia, India and indeed every State with considerable forest resources, and ensure that its forests are exploited under scientific control.

For this purpose, we consider it essential that this great undeveloped estate, representing, as we have said, apart from the cultivable soil, by far the largest permanent potential source of wealth in the Colony, should be managed by an up-to-date Forestry Department. The first duty of that Department, on which it has already made a beginning, will be to explore and value the forests, so that the Colony on the one hand and outside capital on the other can know exactly what is there. After exploration comes exploitation, involving very careful consideration of the terms which should be granted to contractors, whether it will be necessary for the State itself to build a railway to open up the forests, or whether this cannot be achieved by privately-constructed logging railways under concessions for long periods. Next comes the phase of reservation and the creation of Forest Reserves in selected and accessible districts, which will be fully restocked, possibly with valuable woods not now grown in the Colony, and of forest management, in which the same process is applied to the replacement of forest as it is felled, thus placing the whole industry on a permanent basis and ensuring that it is developed and not destroyed. It is by the adoption of this policy that Ceylon and the Malay States have doubled and trebled their forest revenue in a very short period; and that in India, where, when conservation was started the accessible forests were all in a more or less ruined condition, the Forestry Department has succeeded not only in building up a huge and continually increasing capital stock of forests, financed out of its own revenues, but in producing an annual surplus of 21 million rupees.

To achieve these results continuity of policy is essential, and for this reason we recommend that British Guiana should follow the example set not only by other Colonies which have recently embarked on a programme of forest conservation and development but by many of the self-governing Dominions, and create a Forest Trust to be responsible for the development and maintenance of the Crown Forests and for the administration of a permanent revenue allocated by statute for that purpose, from which the personal emoluments and other charges of the Forestry Department should be defrayed. The main function of the Trust should be the control of the expenditure of Forest Trust Funds, the general supervision of the operations of the Forestry Department, and the giving of advice to Government in matters of forest policy. It is for consideration whether the Trust should be responsible for the collection of forest revenue. The Trust might consist of two official and two unofficial members, appointed by the Governor, under the chairmanship of the Colonial Secretary.

The merit of this arrangement is that it protects a great national asset from being prejudiced by the vicissitudes of politics or finance and, by freeing the administration from the necessity of handing over its surplus every year and getting fresh estimates on every point, enables it to work out and carry out a far-reaching programme over a long period of years.

The Department, as we have said, now consists of a Conservator with three fully-trained Assistant Conservators and a surveying staff. This technical staff, though it is all that the Colony can afford, is obviously far too small to cope with a forest of nearly 80,000 square miles. We consider that the Colony, which is making great efforts to make its timber resources available on the world's markets, is eminently deserving of aid in the enormous undertaking with which it is now grappling single handed. We do not know whether the question of the forest resources of the Empire is considered to fall within the purview of the Empire Marketing Board, but if it does we can conceive of no better subject for its consideration than the question of assisting British Guiana to maintain and establish a Forestry Department on a more adequate scale during the expensive preliminary period of exploration and valuation which must precede development.

We would also call attention to the important topographical and geological surveys now being carried out by the Colony at a cost which, last year, amounted to £10,000. These surveys, like the forestry survey, have been primarily concerned up to the present with the country which would be served or traversed by the proposed railway to the Mazaruni diamond fields, which we shall discuss in the next chapter. On every ground, scientific and others, it is most undesirable that they should be allowed to lapse after this question has been settled, and the Colony left without reliable information as to its topography and resources. This matter appears to us to be a proper subject for the consideration of the Colonial Research Committee, who have already undertaken geological and mineralogical surveys in British Honduras and the Windward and Leeward Islands, and were expressly appointed in 1919 to administer a Parliamentary Grant for the assistance of the poorer Colonies in undertaking research work upon matters of economic importance. The British Guiana geological and topographical surveys undoubtedly fall within these terms of reference, but if the Colonial Research Committee are to assist materially in the matter it may be necessary for their annual grant of £2,000 to be increased. We observe that the East Africa Commission commented, in their Report*, on the complete inadequacy of this contribution of £2,000 a year for any appreciable effect for Empire development. We entirely concur, and if the Colonial Research Committee find that their

* Cmd. 2387.

funds do not permit them to entertain this suggestion we recommend that the question of increasing their annual grant should be considered.

It will be seen that apart from the possibility of a mineral discovery of economic importance, which appears to be remote, and from the existing diamond industry, which is a vanishing asset, the development of the interior presents itself as a timber proposition. Vast supplies of one of the world's finest timbers of which the Colony has the monopoly have been revealed to exist in a comparatively accessible position. The question is, how is this valuable area to be developed and the timber it contains made available for the world's markets at an economic cost.

Mr. Wood, now Lord Irwin, who visited the Colony in February, 1922, suggested in his report* that development of the interior might be carried out by one of two possible means :—

- (a) The adoption of a policy attracting private capital by means of large land grants or other concessions.
- (b) To divide the Colony into two, leaving one portion under the existing Government, and organizing the remainder under a separate administration.

We do not think that the latter alternative would be desirable, but we think that there is much to be said in support of the first proposal, although we would not be in favour of any policy which would alienate permanently large tracts of the forestal area. The report of the Conservator of Forests, as we have said, now definitely establishes the fact that there is a vast area of very valuable timber in the interior. A copy of that report might with advantage be sent to the Chambers of Commerce in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other large towns, and enquiries made through those Chambers among member firms interested in timber, with the object of ascertaining whether they would like to consider the question of exploiting the timber forests in the area covered by Mr. Wood's report. It would not appear at the outset to be necessary to lay down a railway on a more substantial scale than would provide for the moving of timber to the port of shipment, but definite information on this point will be available at an early date when the railway survey now being undertaken is completed.

* Cmd. 1679.

CHAPTER V.

Communications.

The major questions under this head are those of railway development and harbour improvement.

Railway Development.—Throughout the Colony for many years there has been a widespread demand for railway development to the interior. This is partly caused by the needs of the gold and diamond workers, and the fact that, when illness overtakes them, they cannot be brought to the coast where adequate medical attention can be secured. The sufferings and the mortality-rate among these men combine to make the question one of urgency in the minds of the community generally. Added to this there is also the old idea that an Eldorado exists in the interior if only it could be reached; that somewhere in the hinterland there is untold wealth which a railway would make accessible. Hence a general demand for a railway from anywhere to anywhere, sometimes based upon some knowledge of the interior and upon a reasoned calculation of the benefits which a railway would confer, but very often upon hope rather than knowledge, while ambition, anxiety as to the future prosperity of the coastal lands, and the natural and healthy desire to see the resources of the Colony exploited, contribute to make the demand insistent and urgent.

This demand has led, since the war, to the initiation of numerous surveys, geological, mineralogical, forestal, topographical, soil, and hydrographic, to some of which we have already referred, with the immediate object of ascertaining the nature and resources of the country to be served by a railway having as its primary object the exploitation of the timber in the triangle between the Essequibo and Mazaruni rivers, and as its secondary object the facilitation of communications with the diamond fields on the one hand and on the other with the Potaro District and the basin of the Upper Essequibo and Rupununi rivers. At present it is proposed that the starting point should be either Bartica or some other point on the Essequibo within reach of ocean-going steamers and its terminus the Tiboko Fall on the Mazaruni, from which safe navigation on the Upper Mazaruni begins, but the possibility of extending the present Wismar-Rockstone railway, by means of a bridge across the Essequibo, has also to be borne in mind. The whole question of the route, nature, cost of construction and probable operating charges of such a railway is at this moment being investigated by Mr. Leggatt, of the Railway Construction staff of the Federated Malay States. Until his report has been received any opinions expressed upon this important question must be of a hypothetical character.

Taking first the question whether a railway is the best and only way of opening up the interior, the suggestion was made to us that some of the more modern forms of motor traffic would be sufficient for the present needs of the Colony and that it would be cheaper to build roads than railways for this purpose. This is a question upon which the opinion of experts might be obtained after an examination of the area through which such a road would pass, and after a proper estimate of the availability of suitable material for road-making. Our own opinion is that roads into the interior would be but temporary expedients even were they successful, and that it would be both cheaper and wiser to aim at a system which would be permanent and the utility of which has been proved in every civilised land. The greenheart and other heavy timbers, which would for some considerable time be the main commodity to be carried, would require a system capable of bearing heavy traffic, and for this roads appear less suitable than railways. Roads, too, would require vast quantities of hard material and heavy and constant expenditure to maintain them against the ravages of the heavy tropical rains.

It may be taken for granted that the limits within which tropical commerce can be developed are those which are fixed by the available facilities of cheap and rapid communication. Coastal regions may be satisfactorily served by roads and the modern forms of motor traffic, but interior communication depends almost entirely on railway development together with such facilities as rivers and lakes may supply. It should, however, be clearly borne in mind that a railway itself will not bring about the development of the Colony. It is an essential adjunct, but development depends upon other factors such as easily exploited assets, health conditions and the existence of a population sufficiently large to open up the territory through which a railway runs without draining away from the coastal areas the wealth winning energy upon which the Colony depends for its existence. The neighbouring colony of Surinam offers an illustration of the failure of railway development which precedes the proved necessity for it. The authorities of that colony, responding to the pressure brought to bear upon them, based upon the belief that a railway into the interior would end the industrial depression prevailing there and provide new sources of wealth, built a railway of some 150 miles in length in the expectation that it would attract many and much desired immigrants, but the experiment was a conspicuous failure, sections of the line having to be abandoned year by year. This experience of able Dutch administrators, while it does not prove that similar results would follow railway development in British Guiana, does suggest the need for avoiding hazardous and sentimental enterprises.

Assuming, however, that a bold policy of railway development linking the forest areas with the shipping points along the great rivers is necessary to open up the timber, diamond, gold, and

any other resources which British Guiana contains, we cannot see how, in view of the Colony's small population, and the magnitude of its public debt in relation to its resources, the heavy capital expenditure which railway development entails can at present be borne by the Colonial Government. We should view the matter differently if the Imperial Government were prepared to shoulder over a period of years the interest and sinking fund obligations which a railway development loan would involve. Such financial relief should enable the Colony, once the railway were completed, to reap the benefits of its great wealth in timber; and, averse as we are in principle to the Imperial Government extending their guarantees, yet the special circumstances surrounding the economic position of the Colony to-day warrant, we think, sympathetic consideration of this form of relief.

If this is not possible, some company or syndicate might be prepared to undertake the construction of the railway for the Government on terms which would provide for the Colony taking over the railway upon completion or upon expiration of an agreed term of years thereafter. We think that it should not be impossible to come to an arrangement on these lines, especially if Mr. Leggatt's report discloses the opinion that hydro-electric energy would be cheaply available. There should be contractors or electrical engineers of standing and enterprise in this country to whom the proposal for the construction of an electric railway on the lines suggested would be of considerable interest. The advantage to the contractors would be that electric energy would be required in the area served by the railway for commercial and other purposes which they would be able to provide, and to the Government that they would escape liability for interest and sinking fund until the railway was completed and traffic returns provided them with the necessary additional revenue.

In any event we are definitely of opinion that a railway of this kind should ultimately be owned and operated by Government.

Harbour Improvement.—The direction and control of the harbours in British Guiana is vested in a Harbour Board, consisting of the Colonial Secretary as Chairman, The Controller of Customs, two representatives of the Combined Court, two representatives of the shipping community and a representative of the Chamber of Commerce.

The Board levy dues, fees, handling charges, etc., and thus obtain their own revenue, out of which they defray all expenses in connection with the various harbours in the Colony. These harbours are Georgetown, New Amsterdam, Springlands, Morawhanna, and Yarikita.

It is satisfactory to note that the finances of the Harbour Board are well administered and in a healthy condition. The revenue for the year ended 31st December, 1925, which was estimated to amount to £23,843, realized £27,994, an increase

of £5,711 on the revenue of the previous year, while expenditure, which was estimated at £24,689, amounted actually to £23,837. There was thus a surplus on the year's working of £4,157, and the Board are to be commended for the evident care displayed in the estimate of their revenue and the control of expenditure.

Unfortunately, owing to the accretion of silt, the harbour of New Amsterdam cannot now be used for large craft, and during the year 1925 no steam vessels entered or left it, and only four sailing vessels left. Not only so, but the ferry boat plying between Rosignol and New Amsterdam can only succeed with great difficulty in getting alongside the wharf at New Amsterdam at low water.

The cause of the rapid accretion of silt in this harbour appears to be due to the growth of Crab Island at the mouth of the river, and although it was decided recently to attempt to deepen the river in front of New Amsterdam by the construction of deflectors on both banks of the river some miles above the town the work has proved too costly to be continued, and has had to be abandoned after one of the deflectors had been partially completed. New Amsterdam, therefore, must be regarded at present as a port of no value to the Colony, and only a complete survey of the river by skilled harbour engineers could establish whether, and by what means, the river could be made navigable for ocean shipping, and the cost which such work would involve.

The number of vessels and the total amount of tonnage entering the harbours of the Colony during 1925 was as follows :—

Total ships, 1,419. Total tonnage, 608,713.

Georgetown is the only harbour into which ocean-going steam vessels can come, the others, Springlands, Morawhanna and Yarikita, being used by sailing vessels, although a few very small steam craft enter Springlands.

A hydrographic survey of the Essequibo River is now being made under the direction of Captain Gibson, R.N., and this work should prove of great value to the Colony, particularly in view of the recently surveyed timber area, as its objects are to find suitable places for the mooring of vessels loading timber, and to establish definitely the extent to which the river can be made navigable to Bartica for large ocean-going vessels. The work in connection with this survey, which was begun in November, 1925, is well under weigh, and it should be completed within the present year.

A survey of the Georgetown harbour, and the approaches from the sea to the Demerara and Essequibo rivers has recently been undertaken and completed by H.M.S. "Ormonde." The full results of this survey have not yet been published, but the soundings then made reveal a state of affairs which is giving the Harbour Board some anxiety.

The depth of water at low tide in the channel over the bar, which extends for about $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the entrance to the harbour, is only about nine feet, while at high water it is not safe for vessels drawing more than about sixteen to eighteen feet. We were informed that the soundings of the "Ormonde" showed that extensive shoaling had occurred in the bar since 1886, when the last chart was made, amounting to three feet in the shoalest part of the channel and in other parts to as much as five feet, while to the eastward of the channel it amounted to eleven feet. On the other hand, no appreciable change has occurred on the bar of the Essequibo river, the channel over which is now three feet deeper than the entrance to the Demerara River.

In considering this situation it is necessary to bear in mind the following facts:—

- (1) Although several expert reports had been made on the Georgetown harbour and bar, the programme of work in each case recommended to effect improvements, viz., the building of an extensive mole seawards to protect a dredged channel, would be extremely expensive, and certainly beyond the resources of the Colony.
- (2) Unless countervailing schemes, long over-due, are immediately undertaken to neutralize the accumulation of silt in the channel, the port may at no distant date become inaccessible even to vessels now able to enter it at high tide.
- (3) Expert scientific advice is necessary to ascertain whether it would be practicable to maintain a channel through the bar by continuous dredging, or some other minor scheme that offered an efficient solution of the difficulties caused by the accumulation of silt in the channel.
- (4) The Harbour Board have already in hand works within the harbour, i.e., the deepening of the rivers in front of the stellings which will possibly necessitate the purchase of a dredger, and in any event this work will entirely absorb the available funds of the Board. In the circumstances neither the Harbour Board nor the Colony are at present in a position to initiate or finance improvement schemes in connection with the bar.
- (5) Although the Essequibo bar affords a deeper passage, and conditions there are for the present more stable than on the Georgetown bar, the removal of the chief port of the Colony to some place on the Essequibo River is to be avoided, for obvious reasons, except as a most extreme resort.

The possibility of improving the Georgetown harbour was considered by the West Indian Shipping Committee in 1919, and in their report (Cmd. 372) they expressed the opinion that, while it would be worth spending £100,000 on deepening the harbour by two feet, it did not appear clear from the information before them that this expenditure would achieve the object. Since that date, as will be seen, the position has altered and the immediate and urgent question is no longer that of deepening the harbour but of maintaining it open to ocean-going steamers, a matter of vital importance to the economic existence of the Colony.

This is a technical question upon which expert advice should be obtained, but it seems clear that considerable expense will have to be faced in the near future to keep the harbour open, and this must be borne in mind as an important factor in the examination of the Colony's financial commitments.

The question whether Georgetown can be maintained as a harbour for large ocean-going vessels, or whether an alternative port will have to be provided on the Essequibo River, are problems which might well be pondered by those who advocate the construction of a railway across the Colony to Brazil and Venezuela. Such a railway, even if the Colony could face the huge cost involved, which to-day it cannot, could only be justified if the principal port were capable of handling with expedition the large goods traffic which the railway might be expected to carry.

It may be well to record that the Harbour Board derive nearly 75 per cent. of their revenue from tonnage and light dues, and that during 1925 these dues, which amounted to £20,287, realised 25 per cent. more than the amount estimated, owing to an increase in the export of bauxite during 1925 compared with 1924. The Board's revenue, therefore, will increase with the Colony's exports, while their expenditure will certainly not increase in the same ratio. Thus with increasing exports the Board may reasonably expect to have an increasing surplus with which to provide sinking fund and interest on the capital expenditure to be incurred in the purchase of dredgers. The deduction is obvious, but at the risk of reiteration we emphasize the importance of fostering the Colony's export trade by increasing the production of its agricultural and other products.

Existing Railways.—The Colony at present possesses three separate lines of railroad, all with different gauges. The first, known as the East Coast Railway, runs from Georgetown to Rosignol on the Berbice river, is 60½ miles long and has a 4' 8½" gauge. The second, known as the West Coast Railway, runs from Vreed-en-Hoop on the Demerara river opposite Georgetown to Parika on the Essequibo, is 18½ miles long, and has a 3' 6" gauge. The third line runs from Wismar on the Demerara River to Rockstone on the Essequibo River, is also 18½ miles long and has a metre gauge. The first two of these railways are the property of the Government and are managed by the

Colonial Transport Department. The third is the property of Messrs. Sprostons, a concern which is now owned by the Demerara Bauxite Company.

The East and West Coast railways were constructed by the Demerara Railway Company at various dates between 1847 and 1914. In spite of a subsidy from the Government, which latterly amounted to over £14,000 per annum, the Company were barely able to maintain themselves by exercising the most rigid and narrow economy which limited expenditure to the minimum compatible with keeping their railway in being. By the end of the war inefficiency reached a stage which led the Government to the conclusion that it would in the long run be more economical to take these lines over than to continue to pay a subsidy to a semi-derelict concern, and they were acquired from the Company in return for annual payments in perpetuity amounting to £28,602 per annum. Heavy expenditure, amounting to over £40,000, has been necessary for the purpose of reconditioning these lines, including the whole permanent way, and has been defrayed from loan funds and charged against capital account. In 1924 these railways showed a profit on working (exclusive of interest charges) of £3,260; in 1925 revenue and expenditure were approximately equal; and in 1926 it is estimated that there will be a deficit of about £9,000.

The history of these railways is an instructive illustration of the possible disadvantages of a privately-owned railway which are too often overlooked by those who are pressing the Government to accept any offer on any terms to construct a line to the interior. The fact that a Government may escape in this way the immediate liability for the cost of building a railway does not mean that they will not in the end be forced first to subsidise and then to take over a semi-derelict and semi-bankrupt concern which has for many years only maintained itself by reducing its expenditure to a level inconsistent with the maintenance of a proper standard of efficiency. A railway which does not pay may well be worth maintaining for the sake of its general effects upon the economy of the country. Such a railway, however, for obvious reasons, cannot be maintained by a private company and in the long run it is probably more economical that it should be owned and managed from the outset by the Government.

The present deficit, exclusive of interest charges, on the working of these railways appears to be due to a decline in revenue of about £20,000, of which about £7,500 is attributable to the late drought and £12,500 to a reduction in passenger traffic caused by the competition of motor vehicles. To meet this situation, which, of course, is not peculiar to British Guiana, the Colonial Transport Department suggests certain restrictions on motor competition, coupled with an increase in licence duties which, in view of the large expenditure on road repairs necessitated by the increased use of these vehicles, are considered to

be unduly low. There also arises the question of whether the short West Coast Railway, which has never been a success and is at present competing with the Government steamer service, is worth maintaining, except with a view to the possibility of connecting it at some future date with a railway to the Mazaruni. These, however, are matters which require more local and technical knowledge than we possess and might suitably be referred to a local commission.

Steamship Service.—In addition to these railways the Colonial Transport Department is responsible for all coastal and river steamship services except on the Demerara River. Prior to 1914 these services were operated by Messrs. Sprostons in return for a subsidy of just under £12,000 per annum. In that year Messrs. Sproston's contract came to an end and the Colonial Government decided that it would be more economical to operate a steamer service of their own. This service, so far as we were able to judge, seems extremely efficient and the fare and freight rates are exceedingly low and much less than those charged by Messrs. Sprostons. The receipts from these services have recently slightly exceeded expenditure, which includes contributions to steamer replacement and insurance, but does not include interest on capital. During 1925 the net loss, bringing into account interest charges, on operating these services was about £5,680, a very satisfactory result as compared with the previous arrangement under which the Government were paying a subsidy of nearly £12,000, in respect of which they possessed no realisable assets.

The only question in connection with this steamer service that was brought to our attention was a proposal for the establishment of an inter-colonial steamer service to Barbados, which is estimated to be likely to cost about £5,000 per annum. As, however, this proposal was largely based on the assumption that the Canadian Government did not intend to implement the recent agreement for the provision of a fortnightly service via Trinidad, and on the consequent saving to the Colony of its share of the subsidy under that agreement, we presume that the subsequent decision of the Canadian Government to provide such a service automatically involves the abandonment of this scheme.

CHAPTER VI.
Population, Immigration and Health.

POPULATION.

The last census of 1921 gave the following figures, to which are added for purposes of comparison those of its predecessor in 1911 :—

<i>Race Division.</i>	<i>Number of Persons.</i>		<i>Percentage of total population.</i>	
	1911.	1921.	1911.	1921.
Europeans other than				
Portuguese ...	3,937	3,291	1·33	1·11
Portuguese ...	10,084	9,175	3·40	3·08
East Indian ...	126,517	124,938	42·74	41·97
Chinese ...	2,622	2,722	·89	·91
Blacks ...	115,486	117,169	39·01	39·36
Mixed Races ...	30,251	30,587	10·22	10·28
Aborigines ...	6,901	9,150	2·33	3·07
Not stated ...	243	659	·08	·22
Total ...	296,041	297,691	100	100

During this period the total number of births was 92,770 and the total number of deaths 92,744. Since 1921 the birth and death rates per thousand have been as follows :—

	1921.	1922.	1923.	1924.	1925.
Birth-rate ...	34·5	27·8	30·4	32·4	33·5
Death-rate...	30·9	29·1	28·3	25·6	24·2

By applying these vital statistics and the records of immigration and emigration to the figure of the 1921 census the total population was estimated to amount at the end of 1925 to 304,412, of whom 154,543 were males and 149,869 females.

With the exception of some 9,000 aborigines, the whole of this population has been imported. In 1831, shortly before emancipation, the population consisted of 3,529 whites, 7,521 free coloured and blacks and 89,486 slaves, totalling 100,536. Between 1835 and 1921 the numbers of immigrants and their countries of origin were as follows :—

West Indian Islands ...	...	...	...	98,215
Madeira ...	...	...	...	35,251
East Indian (Indentured)	...	...	...	238,979
" (Casual)	...	...	...	16,111
Chinese ...	...	...	...	16,621
Africa ...	...	...	...	13,355
England ...	...	...	...	13,747
Others ...	...	...	...	1,414
Total ...	...	...	...	433,693

As the recorded emigration during this period was 159,671, it will be seen that not only does the number of immigrants between 1835 and 1921 alone largely exceed that of the present population but that the balance of immigrants over emigrants was 274,022, making, with the 100,000 persons already in the Colony by 1835, a total which exceeds that of the present estimated population by 70,000.

These facts, taken in conjunction with the vital statistics already referred to, show that the increase in population since 1831 has been due not to natural increment but to an organised system of immigration. So far as the future is concerned, the possibility of increasing the inadequate population of British Guiana depends on the problem of immigration and the problem of health.

IMMIGRATION.

After the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 immigration on a large scale ceased till the effects of emancipation compelled the planters to look outside the Colony for a supplement to their disorganised and depleted labour supply. Of the various experiments with Portuguese, Chinese, West Indian, African and East Indian labour, East Indians proved far the most satisfactory and were imported under the indentured system down to 1917. Under this system the immigrant was bound to work on an estate at a prescribed rate of wages for five years, after which he was free to choose his own occupation, while after ten years he could claim a return passage to India. The East Indians who elected to remain now form the largest racial group in the Colony and over 80 per cent. of its largest occupational group, the agricultural. The last census return showed that some 78,000 were then employed as agricultural or general labourers and stockminders and that 7,571 were engaged in rice and provision farming on their own account.

In 1917 the Government of India decided that emigration from India to British Guiana was to cease immediately and that no further emigration under the indentured system should take place. After lengthy negotiations the Government of India last year agreed, as a trial experiment to a larger scheme, to allow emigration to British Guiana to be re-opened up to a limit of not more than 500 families on the following conditions:—Every immigrant must, on arrival, be settled on prepared land suitable for immediate cultivation at a rent not exceeding the lowest paid in the locality; he must be housed and maintained without charge by the Colonial Government for at least one month; he must be advanced sufficient funds for establishing a home, for purchasing farm equipment, for rationing himself and his family and for the payment of his rent; and he must be provided with free medical assistance and free skilled supervision. At the end of three years he becomes entitled to the grant of the holding for four years on payment of a fee not exceeding £5, and at the end of seven

years he becomes absolute owner of the holding or entitled to repatriation at the expense of the Colony. He is also entitled to repatriation after three years on payment of half of his passage expenses, after five on payment of one quarter, and at any time without any contribution at the request of the local agent appointed by the Government of India to look after his interests. In addition there are certain other stipulations relating to the repatriation and treatment of existing Indian immigrants.

The present position is that, while these conditions have been accepted in principle by the Colonial Government, no decision as to bringing the scheme into operation has yet been taken pending the preparation of a detailed estimate of its cost and the consideration of whether the financial position of the Colony is such as to justify the expenditure involved. So far as the former has been worked out, it appears that the net cost of introducing 500 families will be about £127,000 and that that of the larger scheme for introducing 15,000 immigrants (7,500 families) would be £1,147,000, or approximately £76 per head.

In our opinion, quite apart from the extremely high cost of the larger scheme (without which it would presumably not be worth while embarking on the small and very expensive preliminary experiment) the conditions attached to it are such as to preclude its acceptance by British Guiana. These conditions place an excessive burden on the Colonial Government, without any guarantee and indeed without much probability, in view of the repatriation stipulations and the wide powers reserved for the Agent of the Government of India, that it will secure any appreciable return in the form of settlers for its money. Any colonisation scheme presupposes reciprocal advantages. One party gains a satisfactory outlet for its surplus population; the other a supply of population necessary for its development. But in this case though the advantages are reciprocal, the responsibilities are entirely unilateral. The smaller and incomparably weaker of the two parties is to bear the whole cost and risk of the scheme.

While, for these reasons, we should not advise the Colonial Government to agree to so expensive, speculative and one-sided a bargain, we desire to record our opinion that, under suitable safeguards, such as those provided for in this scheme, British Guiana is exceptionally suitable for Indian colonisation. The Indians already there compose the largest racial unit and over one-third of the whole population. There is complete political equality. The climate and natural characteristics of the Colony have been declared by Mr. Keatinge, late Director of Agriculture, Bombay, who in 1922 was sent by the Government of India on a deputation to examine local conditions in British Guiana, to offer splendid opportunities for Indian immigration—opportunities which, he added, Indians had not got in their own home. We would especially draw attention to Mr. Keatinge's remarks

(see also the Appendix*) on the subject of the North-West District, an area which offers unlimited opportunities for development :—

“ Here then is this remarkable land waiting for occupation by good cultivators ; and when I remember the number of cultivators in India, in the congested parts of the Satara and Ratnagiri districts, right good fellows engaged in the heart-breaking task of trying to support a family on two or three acres of indifferent land, I cannot but contrast their present conditions with the opportunity that awaits them in this tract to lead their traditional life as peasant proprietors and to win through to comfort and affluence.”

In fact, in so far as India requires an outlet for her surplus population, British Guiana is her natural Canada or Australia and if the Indian Government were prepared to accept the share of responsibility in a scheme of oversea settlement which the British Government accepts in the case of emigration to the Dominions the result would probably be to establish a great and prosperous Indian colony in South America.

Apart from India, the West Indian Islands appear to us to offer the most promising field for immigration. Barbados and Jamaica are both over-populated. This surplus population now seeks an outlet in Cuba, Porto Rico, Panama, Hayti, and indeed throughout the Central American and Caribbean States, which to a great extent depend on the British West Indies for labour supply. In many of these countries the British West Indian is unpopular and tolerated only because he is indispensable ; and there is even a tendency in certain of them towards excluding him altogether. Since the cessation of Indian emigration an attempt has been made by the British Guiana Government to tap this supply by establishing a Government Emigration Agency at Barbados for the recruiting of labourers to work on sugar estates for a period of twelve months, at the end of which, according to the latest form of contract, they were to be given a bonus of \$12 (£2 10s.) and a return passage. The rate of wage guaranteed was such as would allow earnings of not less than 72 cents (3s.) in seven hours, and free transport, house accommodation and medical attendance were to be provided. Between 1920, when the Agency was established, and 1924, when it was suspended on account of the depression of the sugar industry, which made it difficult to erect the dwellings required for these immigrants, 1,546 souls were introduced of whom, however, a few hundreds only are now working on the estates.

Mr. Stewart, the Acting Immigration Agent-General, has prepared a scheme for re-opening immigration from Barbados, which appears to us to merit serious consideration. The defect of a purely labour scheme, as revealed by this experiment, is the

tendency of the labourer to leave the estate for what he imagines to be more attractive occupation, such as the diamond industry, before his contract has expired. The defect of a purely colonisation scheme, under which the immigrant would be settled on prepared land immediately on arrival, is that it is desirable, for his own sake, that he should reside on a well-regulated estate until he is acclimatised. Moreover, as it would be difficult and indeed inequitable not to offer land settlement on the same terms to resident as to immigrant labourers, a colonisation scheme pure and simple might result in a depletion of the labour on sugar estates. Mr. Stewart's suggestion amounts to an adaptation of the Indian colonisation scheme to Barbadian immigration. As an alternative to the bonus and return passage after twelve months the immigrant would be offered a house and three acres of prepared land on condition of spending three years on a sugar estate. The land would be paid for on the terms of the Indian colonisation scheme, and the house by easy instalments over a period of five years. These land settlement terms would be open to resident labourers in equal numbers to the newcomers who would take their places on the estates. They could also be extended to the small holders in unirrigated districts, to whose case have already drawn attention. Funds for this purpose would be available from the Colonisation Fund which at the end of 1925 amounted to £137,000.

This scheme would have to be systematically worked out and applied under the supervision of a competent authority. Subject to this proviso, it appears to us to be much the most promising way of attacking the problem of immigration. The chief reason why British Guiana, with a capacity for absorbing unlimited numbers of agriculturists, has never attracted the surplus population of the British West Indies is that the physical conditions of the country demand a considerable outlay of capital to make the land fit for habitation and successful cultivation. Given this necessary preliminary expenditure, which under this scheme would be provided by the Government, the land hunger which is so marked a feature of the Barbadian might well lead to a really substantial transfer of the surplus population of that island to British Guiana, especially if great success happens to attend the growing of ground-nuts, a crop likely to prove particularly attractive to these workers as it is so soon harvested after planting and is immune from disease or insect attacks. The same would, of course, apply to Jamaica, where the local redundant labour now goes to Panama and Cuba, in the latter case in such numbers that it has been found necessary for the Jamaican Government to establish a special officer there to look after the interests of its natives. The cost of passages would be trivial as compared with those from India and the question of repatriation after an immigrant had been provided with a house and prepared land would not arise as under the present Indian scheme. By providing for the settlement on prepared land of residents in the

Colony *pari passu* with the arrival of the new immigrants the scheme would not be open to the objection of either favouring the newcomers unduly in comparison with the residents or of menacing the labour supply of the sugar estates. Finally, by offering land on easy terms to inhabitants of badly irrigated districts it would meet a grievance which otherwise cannot be economically removed and, in so far as these inhabitants availed themselves of it, would lead to a much-needed concentration of population and consequently, in the long run, to a great saving in the overhead expenses of administration which, as already pointed out, tend to increase disproportionately in sparsely populated and isolated districts.

Until this avenue of recruitment has been thoroughly explored we should not recommend the Colonial Government to embark, even when its finances improve, upon the enormously expensive Indian colonisation scheme. Still less would we favour any scheme for importing races other than the East Indians and Blacks who now form the principal racial ingredients of the Colony. Quite apart from the practicability of such a proposal, which is open to question, the extensive immigration of a new race would greatly accentuate the incoherence of an already sufficiently composite community and would adjourn, virtually indefinitely, all possibility of the dawn of a common consciousness in British Guiana. This aspect appears to us important and too often forgotten in the anxiety for rapid development.

HEALTH.

From the figures already given it will have been seen that whereas over the decennium 1911-1921 the average birth-rate and death-rate were equal at 30 per thousand, over the succeeding quinquennium the average birth-rate has been 31·7 and the average death-rate 27·6. In Georgetown alone the corresponding figures for the last five years were 32·8 and 29·3, a very satisfactory improvement having regard to the fact that only twice between 1896 and 1921 had the annual birth-rate exceeded the death-rate. This improvement has been accompanied by a most hopeful fall in infantile mortality, which has been reduced in Georgetown from 325 per thousand in 1907 to 225 in 1921 and to 156 in 1925. The health of the Colony should be very favourably affected in the future by the new Georgetown and coastal improvement schemes which will mitigate or remove many of the causes of the high mortality of the past. On the other hand the interior, where malaria and dysentery, both of the malignant type, are prevalent and where, owing to its inaccessibility and the scattered and migratory character of the population, it is extremely difficult to institute adequate medical facilities or sanitary control, is an adverse factor which will have to be faced if this improvement is to be maintained and increased. This factor will become more operative with the opening up of the interior, which cannot be safely

undertaken without the accompaniment of an adequate medical service with power to supervise sanitation and enforce sanitary measures.

But apart from the interior and taking into account the recent improvement, it is obvious that the Colony's death-rate is still excessively high. This is principally due to impure water supply, which conduces to such diseases as enteric fever, dysentery and diarrhoea; to malaria which is at present unavoidable owing to the swampy nature of the soil; to elephantiasis, which we may note in passing is now being investigated on the spot by a research officer appointed by the Royal Society; to tuberculosis, due to overcrowding in unhealthy houses with closed doors and windows; to venereal disease, very difficult to control in an ignorant and promiscuous population; and to hookworm, due to faecal contamination of the soil. Many of these diseases are preventable and due entirely to unhygienic and insanitary conditions of life, and all might at least be greatly mitigated by education and propaganda and a health authority with sufficient power to enforce compliance with primary sanitary conditions.

In British Guiana such an authority does not exist. Shortly before the war a Public Health Department was established consisting of a Government Medical Officer of Health with a staff of sanitary inspectors and responsible for enforcing sanitary measures and stamping out preventable diseases. This progressive and enlightened step was, unfortunately, not accompanied by its logical corollary, the investment of the new Department with powers to carry out its duties. Under the Local Government Board Ordinance of 1907, passed before this Department was created, the responsibility for the necessary health and sanitary measures in village districts is placed upon the Local Authorities, that is to say, the Village Councils elected by the inhabitants. The officers of the Public Health Department have consequently no *locus standi* as Sanitary or Health Officers in these villages except as officers of the Local Authorities. Hence a system of dual control on which a Commission appointed to enquire into Village Administration reported in 1925 in the following terms:—

“ The evidence given before us discloses that the dual control by the Local Authorities and the Public Health Department which exists under this anomalous arrangement does not make for smooth working or efficiency, nor are we led to the belief that under this system harmony and co-operation, which are essential to success, are possible of achievement. We are, indeed, convinced that the future can hold out no prospect of improved health conditions so long as the dominant control in matters of health administration remains by law in the hands of the various Village Authorities who have not yet arrived at a stage to be entrusted with the management of their own health

problems and who, in addition, have not at their disposal the requisite funds to finance and maintain their own sanitary staffs and services. In our view the time has arrived when the important subjects of Public Health and Sanitation should be freed from the petty influence of village politics."

The Commission accordingly recommended that the regulation and control of these subjects should be transferred to a Central Public Health Board, with the Surgeon-General as Chairman, which should be an executive body and the health authority of the Colony, with power to make sanitary regulations and by-laws subject to the approval of the Governor and Court of Policy. Under the proposed arrangement the Public Health Department would function under the Central Board with the Surgeon-General as its departmental head. Provision was also made for the creation of District Health Committees on which the Local Authorities would be represented, with the object of promoting co-operation and consultation between the Local Authorities and the Health Department.

These recommendations have met with some opposition from the Local Authorities on the general ground that to remove sanitation from their control would be a "retrograde step after 30 years of partial self-government" and a departure from the accepted practice in other parts of the Empire, such as the West Indian Colonies and the United Kingdom itself. This attitude appears to us to be a mistaken one and to rest on a total misconception as to the actual facts. We are sure that the Local Authorities would not seriously press the analogy between British Guiana and Great Britain; yet even in the latter the creation of the Ministry of Health, the wide powers with which it is invested, and the ample power which it possesses under the Public Health Acts to compel any recalcitrant Local Authority to comply with primary standards of sanitation show a tendency rather to increase than to diminish the activities of the central government in the sphere of health. In the West Indies, to name only a few cases, Jamaica, Trinidad and Grenada have all recently passed legislation on the identical lines recommended by the Commission, while the mainland colony of British Honduras confers similar powers on its Public Health Department. In other parts of the Empire the case is even clearer. Indeed, the necessity for a Public Health Department endowed with adequate powers is one of the commonplaces of enlightened tropical administration throughout the whole world. Nor is this surprising, in view of the growth of knowledge on the subject of tropical hygiene and sanitation and the numerous demonstrations of the transformation in health conditions which can be effected by the resolute application of modern methods in scientific hands. While, therefore, we admit that local peculiarities might make it unwise to argue that what is good for Jamaica and Trinidad is necessarily good for British Guiana, we can hardly conceive that local conditions in the latter are such as to render inapplicable the

universal experience of the civilised world. So far from being reactionary, the vesting of the control of local sanitation in a Public Health Department would be a forward step, in conformity with the general progressive and enlightened tendency of recent policy in British Guiana. In view of the health record of the Colony and of its mixed population, a large proportion of whom object or are indifferent to any measures of sanitation, it is certainly one of the reforms to which we would attach major importance. Given the provision of adequate funds and control we are convinced that much could be done to enlighten public opinion and to combat devastating and in many cases preventable diseases, with revolutionary effects upon the health of the people.

We naturally do not suggest that the Public Health Department should be armed with complete and autocratic control. Education and propaganda must always be in the long run its most effective weapons and it must always depend greatly on the advice and help of Local Authorities and on their experience of local conditions. This, however, would be provided for by the District Health Committees recommended by the Commission, and we know that the medical authorities themselves are alive to the importance of proceeding by co-operation and not by coercion. Subject to this proviso, the Public Health Department, with its great potentialities for service in the sphere of preventive medicine and sanitation, should not be hampered in its work by political considerations, local prejudices and private interests.

Apart from this matter the general medical service receives sympathetic support, though as the hinterland is not represented in the Legislature there is a danger of the needs of that vast area being overlooked in favour of the represented and more populous districts. These districts are well provided with hospitals and we were particularly struck with the admirable Government Hospital at Georgetown, with its up-to-date operating theatre and efficient staff. The recent decision to appoint a Surgeon Specialist to this Hospital shows a commendable desire to bring it up to the highest point of efficiency. We had practical evidence during our stay in the Colony of the skill of the medical staff and the capacity and devotion of locally-trained nurses. The Colony has every reason to be proud both of this excellent and well-equipped institution and of a medical service of whose efforts in all matters concerning the public welfare we formed the highest opinion.

CHAPTER VII.

Constitution.

British Guiana can be classified as a Colony not possessing responsible government with a partly-elected Legislature not providing for an official majority. The distinctive feature of the constitution is its division of the legislative power between two bodies, the Court of Policy and the Combined Court. To the Court of Policy, consisting of the Governor, seven officials and eight elected unofficial members, and constituted with the Governor's casting vote to secure an official majority, belongs the power of legislation in matters not fiscal; to the Combined Court, that is to say the Court of Policy combined with six more elected members known as Financial Representatives, belongs the power of imposing taxes and in practice the right to control the appropriation of public moneys. In the Court of Policy the Government majority is subject to a potential veto which can be exercised by the elected members inasmuch as if seven of them abstain from attending they can prevent the formation of the quorum required. In the Combined Court, on the other hand, and consequently in matters of taxation or involving expenditure, the elected members possess a majority, and the only limitation to their powers is that they cannot increase, though they can reduce or reject, any item on the annual estimates which are prepared by the Governor in Executive Council. Thus this nominally two-chamber system is in fact merely a method of dividing the subjects of legislation into two classes, financial, in which the elected members possess a majority, and non-financial, over which they can only exercise a negative control.

The origin of this constitution is of some practical importance as well as historical interest. Up to the close of the Dutch occupation the Court of Policy was the only legislative body for Demerara and Essequibo. On this Chamber the planters, after a prolonged period of friction with the West India Company, obtained equal representation with the officials through the intervention of the Dutch Government, who in 1789 sent out a commission armed with a "plan of redress," defining the future political system of the Colony. After the fall of the old Dutch Government in Europe in 1795 the planters took advantage of the interregnum to secure a larger measure of control over taxation on lines which crystallised, a few months after the British occupation of 1796, into the present Combined Court. This innovation was guaranteed by the terms of capitulation granted to the Colony when it was reoccupied by the British in 1803 and, together with the other political institutions of Demerara and Essequibo, was extended to Berbice when the Colonies were amalgamated in 1831. It is not clear whether this guarantee was given and acquiesced in by inadvertence or

through indifference, it not then being possible to foresee that the Colony would remain permanently in British hands. As to its effects, however, there can be no doubt, in view of the reply given in 1840 by the Law Officers of the Crown to the question whether it was within the power of the Crown-in-Council to raise a revenue in British Guiana and to determine its appropriation :—

“ We are of opinion that such a power cannot be legally and constitutionally exercised by Her Majesty. British Guiana does not appear to us to be in the situation of a conquered Colony, in which the Crown has supreme legislative authority. By the capitulation of the 19th September, 1803, it was stipulated that ‘ the laws and usages of the Colony should remain in force and be respected; that the mode of taxation then in use should be adhered to; and that no new establishment should be introduced without the consent of the Court of Policy, as the Legislature of the Colony.’ This capitulation is binding in good faith upon the Crown, and even in strict law we conceive that the sanction of the Crown since the cession of the Colony to the political institutions in existence, has given the same force to those institutions as if they had been established by an express grant from the Crown, like the legislatures in Colonies settled by British subjects.”

The Constitution thus established has survived without substantial structural alteration until the present day. The Combined Court has acquired the right of controlling expenditure, which it did not possess at the time of the capitulation, in return for an arrangement, which still applies, under which it makes statutory provision for the salaries of certain officials for a fixed period of years. The franchise, till 1891 confined by a curious process of indirect election and a high property or income qualification to a small oligarchy of planters, has been extended to anyone with an income of \$300 (£62 10s.) and the electorate now is principally composed of the black and coloured population and numbered at the last elections about 11,000 out of an adult male population of some 86,000.

At no time can this remarkable constitution be said to have worked satisfactorily. Throughout the nineteenth century there was constant friction between the Combined Court and the Government. The characteristics of local politics during the period are described in the following passage from a despatch written in 1855 by Lord John Russell, then Secretary of State :—

“ The history of the Colony since its conquest is to produce compromises between the Governor for the time being and the two legislative and partially representative bodies, by which the Governor gains the object of the moment and the two bodies make permanent encroachments on the powers of the Crown. So often as it has become a duty and

a necessity on the part of the Crown to withstand the wishes of the Colonists on some important question, that of slave melioration, for instance, or that of immigration (which may now again lead to difficulties) or the sugar duty question, the result of the encroachments of the preceding years has been felt in an assertion by the Colonists of rights, not recognised by the Crown or by law, and in a stoppage of supplies, with great loss to the Colony and injury to its agriculture and commerce."

The theory on which the Government carried on under these difficult conditions was defined by another Secretary of State, Lord Grey, who referred to it as acting the part of "umpire" between the represented and unrepresented classes with the object of protecting the latter from the "malversations, oppressions and abuses which are notoriously incident to the exercise of supreme power by irresponsible and oligarchical bodies."

To this state of affairs we attribute in no small measure the stagnation of British Guiana during the greater part of the 19th century.

The disadvantages of this system have not vanished now that the control of the political machine has passed to a wider and more numerous but necessarily, in a racially composite community, where the great majority of the population are too indifferent or too ignorant to exercise their political rights, to a relatively narrow and also inexperienced electorate. Indeed under the new order the practical difficulty of working the old constitution is increased. The Government in British Guiana have never been able to govern. This situation was possible so long as the function of administration was confined to attempting to prevent mis-government. It is not possible when the Government are expected to take a direct and active part in the development of the country and the improvement of the condition of the people.

In Colonies of the constitutional status of British Guiana it is a normal and necessary feature of the political system that power, in the last resort, should reside in the Governor under the control and direction of the Secretary of State. The reasons for this are stated in the following passage from the Report* of Mr. Wood (now Lord Irwin) on the West Indies:—

"Under responsible government the ministry of the day, *ex hypothesi*, commands a majority on all vital questions; if it does not, it makes way for a ministry which does. Under representative [but non-responsible] government no such direct combination of power with responsibility is possible. It is, therefore, essential that there should be in the responsible head of the administration a reserve power

* Cmd. 1679.

to carry into effect the official policy in matters of first-rate importance. This power is not irresponsible. It is exercised subject to the directions and control of the Secretary of State as the authority ultimately responsible for the administration of the Colony. In view of these considerations, it is usual in Colonies not possessing responsible government to give power to the Governor, in grave matters and in the last resort, to put into effect measures which he and the Secretary of State consider essential for the well-being of the Colony, when public order or public faith or other first essentials of good government are in question."

In short, the justification of a reserve power rests on the proposition, which is also a platitude, that under any political system it is desirable that the government should be able to govern.

In British Guiana, as we have said, no Government has ever been in this position. The result in the past has been deadlocks, sometimes culminating in a total stoppage of supplies, when the policy of the Imperial Government came into collision with the views or interests of the represented classes on questions of public policy such as emancipation, immigration, or free trade. We do not suggest that these incidents will recur, but there is no guarantee against a contingency which would now be fraught with much more serious consequences than in the past to the credit and prosperity of the Colony.

The practical consequences of this lack of ultimate control are chiefly to be seen in the financial system of the Colony. This system is prejudicial to trade, inconducive to sound financial policy, and costly in that it prevents the Colony's loans from being issued as trustee securities. We have referred elsewhere in greater detail to the vital importance of establishing a definite far-sighted and consistent financial policy. At present the elected members are in the position of a minor who can overrule his own trustee.

In the sphere of the Civil Service this lack of any ultimate control is hardly less serious. With the exception of certain officials, whose salaries are guaranteed for periods not exceeding five years, no legislative provision is made for the payments of the salaries of the Civil Service. The salaries of all other heads of departments and of all subordinate officials are voted annually, and it is open to the Combined Court in considering the annual estimates to strike off or reduce the salary of any officer not provided for in the Civil List. This is not an inducement for officials from other services to enter the British Guiana service, and might quite conceivably prove to be of great prejudice to the interests of the Colony.

Provision for ultimate control is also desirable on grounds of political psychology. The divorce of responsibility from power, which is so marked a feature of the constitution, places

the elected members as well as the Government in a false position. The elected members tend to be placed in the position of a permanent opposition, unrestrained by experience or prospect of office. Though we do not wish to press the analogy too closely, the position of the Government, under such conditions, might in some respects be compared to that of a ministry without a majority, a state of affairs not tending to inspire respect or promote efficiency and highly detrimental to morale. This is particularly unfortunate in a Colony like British Guiana, which depends so much on the energy and abilities of its officials. There can be no question that the existence of ultimate control would act as a constitutional safety valve, useful not primarily for carrying measures but as an ultimate guarantee and for its psychological effects.

For these reasons we are definitely of opinion that in the present stage of political, economic, and cultural development it is not merely desirable but essential that the authorities finally responsible for the government of the Colony should have power in the last resort to carry into effect measures which they consider essential for its well being. Whether this ultimate control could be best exercised through the medium of a reserve power such as that described by Lord Irwin, or by securing control through nominated members to the Combined Court, is a matter for discussion, which might be referred in the first instance for consideration to a strong local Commission appointed by the Governor. In view of the very special importance of this Commission, every effort should be made to enlist the assistance of the best brains of the Colony and of men with experience of other political systems as well as of local affairs. Especially we hope that the elected representatives of the people will take an active and constructive part in effecting the necessary changes, bearing in mind the desirability of securing the greatest possible measure of agreement on the spot and thus of avoiding the necessity of an imposed reform of the constitution.

Apart from this fundamental defect, the present constitution, though imperfect, cannot be said to be totally unworkable. Though archaic and cumbrous, its eccentricities and anomalies are regarded with an indulgent eye in quarters otherwise untainted with conservatism. Familiarity in this case inspires respect and even representatives of advanced political opinion are disposed to adopt, so far as the constitution is concerned, the advice of the apologist for another unreformed constitution and to "venerate what they are not presently able to comprehend." No one could suggest that if the British Guiana constitution did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it; but, for practical reasons, as it has been invented it may be desirable that it should go on existing subject to the vital change which we have indicated. We are anxious not to tamper unnecessarily with a time-honoured and historic institution. We realise the danger of hasty and ill-considered judgments on so difficult

and delicate a subject. We are not so bold, on the strength of our brief experience of local conditions in British Guiana, as to suppose that we can provide it with a brand new constitution which will stand the test of time. Nevertheless, as some alteration is in any case necessary, it appears to us that the opportunity might well be taken by the local Commission, suggested in the preceding paragraph, to consider very carefully certain other points in which the present political system is obviously open to criticism.

The first of these points is the division of the legislative power between the Court of Policy and the Combined Court. This peculiar constitution is the result of the accident of history and not of logic or sound theory. There seems nothing to be gained by the existence of two classes of elected members, one of which is precluded from dealing with all matters not relating to taxation and expenditure. The mere existence of this distinction constitutes in itself a potential source of friction and there is much to be said for merging the functions of the two bodies into a single Legislative Council.

A more serious cause of friction is the absence of any link between the executive and the elected members. In the absence of such a link it is easy to imagine that decisions may be taken by the Government of which the elected members, if consulted in advance, might have given notice of their disapproval and that in consequence measures may be rejected without adequate consideration or full knowledge of the facts. Instances of both these cases were brought to our attention, and the suggestion was made that they might be avoided by admitting an elected element to the Executive Council. This body was set up in 1891 to take over from the Court of Policy its executive duties, which included the preparation of the annual estimates. It is constituted by Letters Patent to advise the Governor, who is bound to consult with it in the execution of the powers and authorities granted him by the Crown, except where the matter is too urgent or unimportant or where the King's Service would thereby sustain material prejudice. With the exception of two *ex officio* members, the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney-General, it consists of such persons as may be appointed by the King or provisionally appointed by the Governor subject to confirmation or disallowance. In the past this body has contained representatives of the elected members, but for some years this has not been the case and the present Council consists of five officials and three unofficials, none of the latter being a member of the Legislature, with the result that on the one hand the Executive Council includes no exponent of popular opinion and on the other that the Legislature contains no unofficial exponent of the Government point of view. With a view to promoting greater mutual confidence and co-operation, and on the general principle that responsibility is in itself a good thing, we are in favour of admitting to the Executive Council one or more of such elected

members as the Governor may see fit to recommend, for appointment, for the usual period of five years, to His Majesty the King.

It is also for consideration whether the time has not come for considering on its merits the question of importing a nominated element into the Legislature. It is a general phenomenon in tropical colonies that the extension of the electorate and the greater frequency of contests makes it extremely and increasingly difficult for anyone who is not able and prepared to embark more or less whole time on the career of a politician to enter the Legislature by the avenue of the constituencies. The result is the loss to public life of no inconsiderable proportion of those who are best qualified for it, or, in other words, of the small but extremely important European class which still controls the principal agricultural and commercial activities of the Colony. This is especially regrettable in British Guiana, where all parties unite in desiring to encourage by every means the advent of the capital and business enterprise which is essential to development. It is also regrettable that agriculture should be markedly under-represented in the Legislature of a colony which still depends almost entirely on that industry for its economic existence. In these circumstances we are of opinion that the Colony would be wise to consider whether the time has not come for providing by means of a nominated element for the representation on the Legislature of classes and interests inadequately represented by the process of direct election.

The question of replacing the Court of Policy and the Combined Court by a Legislative Council containing an official, an elected, and a nominated element raises the question of the number of the Council and of its various ingredients. On this we are not prepared to express an opinion, but fourteen members for a registered electorate of some 11,000 means an average constituency of less than 800, and this low figure is exaggerated by the great differences between the strength of the electorates of the various constituencies. For example, Georgetown, with 4,584 registered voters, returned at the last election the same number of members as New Amsterdam, North-West Essequibo, and South-East Essequibo, with 594, 675 and 538 voters respectively. Clearly some readjustment of the electoral districts is desirable, and at the same time it might be considered whether the representation of the Colony might not be adequately secured by a reduced number of elected members.

A further point which requires attention is the enforcement of the provision that elected members must possess certain qualifications. In the case of the Court of Policy these involve, *inter alia*, the possession of a certain amount of real property. Since the last general election no less than five out of eight members returned to the Court of Policy have had their election declared void by the Law Courts for failure to possess the requisite qualifications. Steps should be taken to avoid a repetition of this scandalous and unnecessary waste of public time and

money by providing for a preliminary statutory declaration by the candidate that to the best of his belief he possesses the requisite qualifications, and for the deposit of a sum of money which would be forfeited if it were proved that his declaration was unfounded.

Finally we are compelled to refer to the malpractices which appear to be a general and an increasing feature of the elections. Not only in private but in public it is generally stated that bribery and treating are now indulged in on an extensive scale. This demoralising and degrading practice is favoured by the small size of the present constituencies, which reduces the expenditure to manageable proportions, by the actual method of voting, and by the fact that as both the victorious and the defeated sides are equally involved no steps can be taken by the latter to enforce the law on the subject. We need not express reprobation of an evil which strikes at the root of representative government and which all parties unite in deploring. If it is to cease, measures must be taken to strengthen and enforce the law. Steps should be taken to ensure the secrecy of the ballot. It should be considered whether arrangements could be made to provide more polling booths, to hold all elections on the same day, and to close all liquor shops on that day. Provision might also be made for requiring the candidates to make a declaration of their election expenses, as in this country. A re-arrangement of the constituencies, so as to eliminate some of the present small and easily managed electorates, would also tend to diminish the prevalence of these malpractices. Far from regarding this state of affairs as a reason for raising the franchise qualifications, as was sometimes suggested to us, we consider that it is in no small part due to the indifference and apathy in regard to public affairs shown by the fact that, in spite of the very low qualification, only 11,000 registered and only 8,000 voted at the last general election out of over 86,000 adult males. One of the best safeguards of the purity of elections is the number of the electors, and for this reason alone we would urge that every effort should be made to bring within the pale of the constitution those sections of the population which at present, though otherwise qualified, do not take sufficient interest in politics to have their names registered.

CHAPTER VIII.

Education.

Education in British Guiana presents in some ways a comparatively simple problem. Its fundamental importance is as generally recognised there, in theory at any rate, as everywhere else, and the local system has been lately thoroughly overhauled by a strong and representative Commission which enjoyed the assistance of Mr. Wynn-Williams, one of His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, whose services were specially lent for this purpose by the English Board of Education in 1924. This Commission presented a report which consisted of a scathing and admittedly justified condemnation of the existing system and of a comprehensive programme of root-and-branch reform, on the urgent necessity of which they insisted in the strongest possible terms. Since then two years have passed, during which not a single one of their main recommendations has been carried into effect. This, shortly stated, is the problem of education in British Guiana.

The basis of the Colony's primary education is, and always has been, denominational. To quote from the Commission's report, "the task of building primary schools has been left entirely to religious denominations. These religious bodies have been the pioneers, and they continue to be the mainstay of education. For this excellent work they deserve full credit." We entirely agree. But, as time has gone on, and in particular since the advent of compulsory, though extensively evaded, education, the zeal of the denominations, to quote the same document again, "is confronted by the inexorable and chastening demands of finance." Broadly, it is now true to say that the whole of the salaries and the greater part of the cost of maintaining and equipping these church schools are defrayed from State grants-in-aid administered, if such a term can be used in this connection, by a Board of Education on which the representatives of the churches themselves form not only the largest group but practically a permanent majority. These grants, together with the cost of a small Education Department under a Commissioner of Education (of whose powers it is impossible to say more than that they are both restricted and ill-defined), of a State secondary school in Georgetown, of a Board of Industrial Training, and of a quasi-penal institution, none of which is under the control of the Education Department, and of various other contributions towards secondary education, make up a total annual expenditure of over £80,000, representing a higher percentage of the public expenditure than that devoted to the same purpose in Great Britain.

It would be hard to conceive of a more deplorable state of affairs than that revealed by the Commission. "Dilapidated, dirty and insanitary schools," they found, "are the rule rather than the exception." In the most populous centres "it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find even one school which is properly staffed and equipped and in a thoroughly satisfactory condition in respect of water supply." "Unless immediate and drastic action be taken, a large proportion of children of the Colony will continue to be educated among surroundings of the worst kind," surroundings described by Mr. Wynn-Williams as a disgrace to any civilised country, and by the Commissioner of Education, in his report for 1924, as worse than barracks, hospitals and prisons. The position is not improved by the rivalry of the churches, which has led to the creation of large numbers of schools which are redundant to local requirements and which they cannot afford to maintain in a decent condition. On this the Commission record the opinion that "the dissipation of educational energy over a large number of small, insanitary and ill-equipped and inadequately-staffed schools will continue in a greater or less degree so long as the State relies upon competing denominations to provide schools for the people."

The unnecessary increase in overhead charges involved in this accumulation of uneconomic units means that a great deal of public expenditure on education is serving no useful purpose whatever. There are 256 schools in receipt of grants from which, as already stated, the whole cost of salaries and most of that of maintenance and equipment is defrayed. As these schools have an average attendance of 100 pupils, and as the *per caput* cost of education in a school of this size is approximately twice that of education which could be more efficiently given in a school for 500, a very considerable and unnecessary burden is thereby thrown upon the State. The financial results of this competition will press more heavily on the State every year, as the law providing for compulsory attendance is more effectively enforced. The opportunities for waste of the public money have not been diminished by the fact that the majority of these schools have not kept any satisfactory accounts, that until very recently their accounts have not been audited and that in the absence of an efficient Inspectorate there is no adequate provision for verifying the claims on which the grants are paid. From this point of view the present system combines the least desirable features of both private and State enterprise without any of their merits.

The teaching in these schools would be ludicrously if it were not so tragically unsuitable. It approximates, in ideal at all events, to that supplied in similar institutions in England during the latter part of the reign of Queen Victoria. In the majority of schools little or no attention is paid to physical exercises, personal hygiene, the training of the mind through the hand and the eye, or the different requirements of the two sexes.

Little East Indian and other future workers in a tropical colony are supplied, through the medium of obsolete text-books, with an academic and unpractical education based, Mr. Wynn-Williams points out, on a wornout and moth-eaten idealism which results in such absurdities as instructing them on such subjects as "the religious difficulties of Queen Elizabeth" and "the anarchy of Stephen's reign." It cannot be too frequently pointed out that in British Guiana the only way in which a child can hope to obtain the elements of a practical as well as a literary education is by graduating through a criminal court or as an orphan for the Government Industrial School.

The results of this divorce of the educational system, secondary as well as primary, from the realities of life are acutely visible in the almost complete lack of a native class of skilled artisans and in the distaste of large sections of the population for agriculture in a Colony which is and must always be primarily agricultural. We understand that the local supply of skilled labour is almost entirely dependent on workmen from the neighbouring Dutch colony of Surinam. It is generally admitted by all sections and classes of the community that the present educational system is largely responsible on the one hand for the very low local standard of industrial and agricultural efficiency and on the other for the marked reluctance of parents to conform with the law, shown by the fact that up to 1925 the average attendance of the children actually enrolled is only 65 per cent.

No change in the curriculum by itself will mend matters without an improvement in the quality of the teachers. At present, out of 1,329 teachers only 333 hold certificates of competency, and of these only 89 have passed through a training school. The rest are uncertificated teachers and young pupil teachers between the ages of 14 and 16 who are supposed to be instructed in the rudiments of their profession by the head teacher of their school. The salaries of these unqualified teachers are deplorably low and should be raised, but unless a premium is to be put on incompetence it will be necessary to leave some inducement to the pupil teachers to become certificated and not uncertificated teachers. The present system under which the training of these young apprentices is left to their own head teachers is most unsatisfactory. It is obvious that this process of professional inbreeding, as it has been called, under which the products of an unsatisfactory type of education train their own successors, can only result in the progressive deterioration of the present very low level of competence of the teaching profession.

Of the educational administration the Commission remark that it would have been difficult to invent anything more calculated to create chaos and confusion. Half-a-dozen departments deal separately and independently with primary, secondary, industrial, and agricultural education. Primary education itself

is directed by a Board and a Commissioner whose exact relationship to each other it is impossible to define and between whom it is difficult to allocate responsibility. The obscurity of this relationship is only equalled by that of the relations of these authorities to the governing bodies of the schools. One thing however is clear, and that is that the latter are subject to no real control by the State which, as already stated, is now financially responsible for almost the whole burden of education. "All that the Education Department can do when an Inspector finds that a teacher is incompetent is to keep on reporting the fact to the manager and to hope that in due course some action will be taken. Meanwhile the Commissioner has to sign the form authorising the payment of the teacher from the Treasury. By such means is the administrative authority of the Education Department reduced to a sham and a delusion."

The attitude of the Commission towards this state of affairs was made perfectly clear. They warned the Government and the public that "no tinkering with the present machine can possibly be effective, reconstruction alone will serve the very necessary purpose of bringing the Colony abreast of modern conditions and development." Proceeding on this basis, they formulated a comprehensive programme of reform under the two main heads of educational policy and administrative control. As regards the former they proposed that the State should assume a direct responsibility for education instead of leaving it to the denominations, that a policy of substituting State schools for denominational should be forthwith initiated, that the primary and secondary curriculum should be drastically modified and modernised, that steps should be taken to attract a better type and better qualified class of teacher, and that the Colony should be provided with a technical school and a teachers' training institution. As regards the administration, on which will depend the carrying out of this extensive reorganisation, they recommended that all the educational activities of the State should be undertaken by one Department, that the Commissioner of Education, as the head of this Department, should be invested with the power and supplied with the staff, which he does not now possess, necessary to his responsibilities, and that the Board of Education should continue its existence as a purely advisory body. As some of these reforms would involve considerable expenditure, the Commission recognised that it would be impossible to carry them all into effect immediately, but they expressed the hope that they would not be spread over a longer period than four years.

Up to the time when we left the Colony no action had been taken on any of the Commission's main recommendations. We need not discuss the causes of this regrettable delay as we now learn that the report has at length been accepted and that the Government are about to proceed, with the approval of the Legislature, on the inception of these vital, urgent and most

overdue reforms. No delay need arise from the financial situation. Indeed, if the matter were regarded solely from the point of view of economy we understand that it would be perfectly possible, with a system of Government schools and an adequate staff of inspection, to maintain the present standard of efficiency at very much less than the present cost; while, on the present scale of expenditure, a much higher standard of efficiency should be speedily obtained. But, as the Commission pointed out, nothing can be done to restore orderliness and efficiency until the present administrative machinery is relegated to the scrap heap and replaced by a real Education Department, which they regarded as the essential preliminary to efficiency in administration.

The first step then should be to create a real Education Department, the head of which should be entrusted with the task of working out a programme of reorganisation on the lines recommended by the Commission over a period of four or five years. To a great extent, as we have already stated, the cost of this programme can be defrayed from the economies which will follow from efficient administration and, in so far as it cannot be, the items in question should be deferred till the end of the period when, given normal conditions and the adoption of the financial policy which we have indicated, the position, we hope, may have considerably improved. In any case, however, the Colony would clearly be ill-advised to embark on fresh educational commitments until measures are taken to secure that adequate returns are received from the money now being spent.

In giving priority to the reform of the primary schools we do not under-estimate the urgency and importance of better secondary and technical education. And though it may be impossible for the State, over-burdened as it is, to provide at the moment for the cost of building, equipping, and staffing a central technical school and teachers' training institution at Georgetown, and of smaller but no less necessary rural training centres at such places as New Amsterdam and Buxton, it should not be impossible to find alternative resources. When we reflect on what education in this country owes to private munificence we do not think that British Guiana, where so many fortunes have been made, should lack wealthy and public spirited sons who would respond to an appeal for assistance to supply a crying need in her national life. We heard much from the leaders of agriculture and industry of the low standard of local craftsmanship; much of the disinclination of large sections of the people for useful and productive occupations; but is not the importation of skilled workmen from Surinam and the flight from the villages the natural consequence of a system which confines technical education to Onderneeming and fails to give the children either the desire or the capacity to make good in an agricultural life? It has been said that the worth of a State,

in the long run, is the worth of the individuals who compose it; at present in British Guiana that worth is unnecessarily small. Nor will economic resources or political rights avail to increase it so long as the children of the Colony are brought up under an educational system which denies them the opportunity of mental expansion and elevation and allows them to grow up into men and women unequal to the responsibilities of citizenship and unequipped for the activities of practical life.

CHAPTER IX.

Conclusions.

It will be convenient to summarize the conclusions which we have reached on the subject of the development of British Guiana.

One of the greatest impediments to the development of the Colony's undoubted resources is its present financial situation. If it were possible for British Guiana to raise loans both to fund its existing and prospective indebtedness in respect of coastal and other improvement schemes, and also to open up the interior by the construction of roads and railways, the causes which have retarded development would rapidly disappear. But the financial situation to-day is such as not merely to preclude any possibility of an additional loan for the construction of a railway but to render the funding operations, which will in due course become necessary, both difficult and expensive, unless and until the Colony can show a balanced budget and effective control by Government over taxation. This state of affairs is attributable not to any inability on the part of the Colony to meet its commitments but to a thoroughly unsound financial system. It is hopeless to expect proper and efficient control over finance unless the Government have power to enforce, in the last resort, their own financial policy.

It appears to us essential, as well on the ground of immediate financial exigencies as on that of future development, that the authorities finally responsible for the solvency and good government of the Colony should have power in the last resort to carry into effect measures which they consider essential for its well-being. This will involve an alteration in the constitution, the precise nature of which, we suggest, might be referred in the first instance to a local commission convened by the Governor to advise upon the steps which should be taken to confer power upon the Governor to carry into effect measures which he and the Secretary of State consider essential for the well-being of the Colony; and also what other improvements, if any, might be effected in the present constitution.

The granting of this power presumes that the responsible authorities will thereupon proceed to restore financial equilibrium and the establishment of a sound financial system by the methods and on the lines which we have described, and that they will simultaneously continue energetically the policy of freeing the coastal area from the danger of floods, drought and contaminated water, of assisting and encouraging the introduction of new industries, such as ground-nuts, through an efficient Agricultural Department, of stamping out preventable diseases through the instrumentality of an adequately staffed and supported Public Health Department, and of reforming the educational system in accordance with the recommendations of the Education Commission.

No less necessary is it that the opening up of the interior should be pushed on with all speed. A forest trust should be formed and the various surveys now in progress should be maintained and if possible extended, and, in view of the considerable financial burdens which this will impose on the Colony, we have suggested various sources from which assistance might be legitimately forthcoming. Finally, if it should prove that the great potential timber resources of the Colony disclosed by the recent report of the Conservator of Forests require for their economic exploitation the construction of a railway, we recommend that the Imperial Government should assume over a period of years the interest and sinking fund obligations which a railway development loan would involve. If this is not possible, a substantial company or syndicate might be found to undertake the work on terms which would relieve the Government of all financial responsibility for a period of years.

We are convinced that the difficulty in regard to population would settle itself if the coastal area could be made free from the danger of floods and drought and the shortage of pure drinking water. If the inhabitants of that fertile area, the healthiest in the Colony, could be certain that the fruits of their labour on the land would not be denied to them by the ravages of drought or flood, they would not be tempted to seek new fields in the forest areas if and when these are opened up. Development of the interior will, in our opinion, provide its own influx of population, and especially would this be the case if it were known that the Government were opening up by railway construction an area so rich in the qualities of timber for which there is likely to be an ever increasing demand. Meanwhile we consider that the Colony would be well advised to devote such resources as are available to the encouragement of immigration from the West Indies in preference to the expensive and one-sided scheme of East Indian colonisation or remote and dubious prospects of importing Asiatic labour from outside the Empire.

We cannot conclude this Report without recording our high appreciation of the services rendered to us by our Secretary, Mr. Sedgwick. His knowledge of the affairs of British Guiana, of its history and of the problems we were called upon to consider has been of the utmost value to us, and we are grateful to the Secretary of State for providing us with such an excellent and capable Secretary.

R. ROY WILSON.
H. SNELL.

R. R. SEDGWICK,
Secretary.

5th April, 1927.

APPENDIX I.

Itinerary.

1926.

- 16 Oct.—26 Oct.—On s.s. “Samaria” from Liverpool to New York.
- 26 Oct.—3 Nov.—At New York.
- 3 Nov.—11 Nov.—On s.s. “Matura” from New York to Port of Spain, Trinidad.
- 11 Nov.—14 Nov.—At Port of Spain. Visited Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture.
- 14 Nov.—16 Nov.—On s.s. “Matura” from Trinidad to Georgetown, British Guiana.
- 16 Nov.—23 Nov.—At Georgetown. Conferences with officials and unofficials.
- 24 Nov.—By motor to New Amsterdam. Meeting at Town Hall with Mayor and Town Council.
- 25 Nov.—By motor to headquarters of Commissioner, Corentyne; visited Plantation Skeldon; meeting at Springlands.
- 26 Nov.—Meeting at Whim; visited Plantation Port Mourant.
- 27 Nov.—Visited Plantations Providence and Blairmont; meeting at Lichfield; visited rice factory at Bath; returned to Georgetown.
- 28 Nov.—29 Nov.—At Georgetown. Conferences with officials and unofficials.
- 30 Nov.—3 Dec.—By steamer to H.M. Penal Settlement with Conservator of Forests; inspected prison; visited forest; meeting with Bartica Village Council; returned to Georgetown holding meeting on way back at Vergenoegen.
- 4 Dec.—8 Dec.—At Georgetown. Conferences with elected members, officials and unofficial deputations.
- 9 Dec.—By motor and steamer to Suddie; meeting at Suddie; inspected Government Industrial School, Onderneeming.
- 10 Dec.—Visited Anna Regina and Charity; returned to Georgetown.
- 11 Dec.—16 Dec.—At Georgetown. Conferences with elected members, officials and unofficial deputations. Visited British Guiana Sugar Planters Experiment Station.
- 17 Dec.—19 Dec.—On s.s. “Traveller” from Georgetown to Port of Spain, Trinidad.
- 19 Dec.—21 Dec.—At Port of Spain.
- 21 Dec.—Embarked on s.s. “Motagua.”

1927.

- 4 Jan.—Arrived Avonmouth.

APPENDIX II.

The North-West District.

EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF MR. G. F. KEATINGE, C.I.E., I.C.S. (retired), on the Scheme for Indian Emigration to British Guiana.

“ The North-West District consists of the vast tract of undeveloped country to the west of the Colony, between the Pomeroon river and the Venezuelan boundary, a territory nearly 10,000 square miles in extent, occupied by a population of 11,000 persons, half of whom are aboriginals (Caribs, Arawaks and Warraus). In this vast tract the total area under cultivation is only 3,000 to 4,000 acres, of which 885 acres are cultivated by the Indian community of some 400 persons, who live almost entirely in Morawhana, the head-quarters of the District, and in the adjacent tracts on the banks of the Barima and Aruka rivers. The tract of country which I was able to inspect in some detail is the country south of Morawhana, surrounded by the Barima, Aruka, Koriabo, Itabo, Arawaw and Amakura rivers, as far as the Portage on the South (*vide* map). It includes some 120 square miles at present almost entirely under fine primary forest, and consists of ranges of hills running to a height of about 500 feet in places, and dipping sharply in some spots, gently in others, into the rivers, with a strip of swamp land between the foot of the hill and the river. A large area of these hills consists of red and yellow laterite soils derived from epidiorite and hornblende-schist. They contain fine loamy soils and good clays, some black soils which appear to be fertile, some gravels, and at places an outcrop of laterite rock. Towards the south are some soils consisting of black sands and cream-coloured textureless clays, presumably derived from granitite-gneiss, which are very unattractive and would probably not be worth cultivating. Speaking generally, these hills contain a good proportion of very fine loams, upon which various kinds of citrus (Seville and tangerine oranges, limes, grape fruit, etc.), bread fruit, cocoa, coconuts, coffee, pineapples, bananas, vegetables and maize can now be seen growing luxuriantly and fruiting profusely. There are good plateaux, approximately flat, on which I have no doubt that good crops of millets, pulses, ground-nuts, etc., could be grown by ordinary field methods. I also feel confident that onions and garlic, of which the Colony now imports \$140,000 worth a year, largely from Holland, could be grown successfully here, and probably also potatoes. These hills offer good facilities for butter making and an unusually good opportunity for pig-keeping. They provide a charming place to live in, are healthy and have a good supply of excellent drinking water. The climate and general appearance reminds me strongly of

Mahableshwar in the month of May, with this difference, that the trees are 150 feet high instead of being 15 feet. I wish, however, to make it clear that it is in the clay and 'pegass' soils at the foot of these hills that the great wealth lies. These hills were presumably originally islands in the sea, and the clay soils at their foot is Orinoco mud, similar to that of the alluvial belt which stretches along the coast of British Guiana, already referred to. The 'pegass' soils consist of a deposit of vegetable matter, from a few inches to several feet deep, brought down by the local rivers and superimposed on the alluvial clay. In the clay lands rice and possibly jute could be produced to very good advantage, while the 'pegass' soils produce maize, coffee and many kinds of ground provisions (tannias, sweet potatoes, yams, eddoes, cassava, plantains, bananas, pineapples and black-eyed peas) in great profusion and with a minimum of effort. They are cultivated, year after year, with a mixture of these crops without the use of any manure, and with no tillage of any kind or the use of any implement except a cutlass to cut back the weeds. It is the combination of these dry hills, healthy for man and beast, having soils good for ordinary field crops and many kinds of fruit and vegetables, having good natural drainage and supply of drinking water, with the very rich soils at the foot of the hills and an excellent system of natural water-ways, through and round the area, with sufficient draft for large ships and connected with the only river in the Colony which presents no difficulty to the entry of an ocean-going steamer, which makes the proposition attractive to a degree which, in my experience, is unique."

Reports

of the Imperial Economic Committee
on Marketing and Preparing for Market
of Foodstuffs produced within
the Empire

First Report - GENERAL - - 9d. (9½d.)

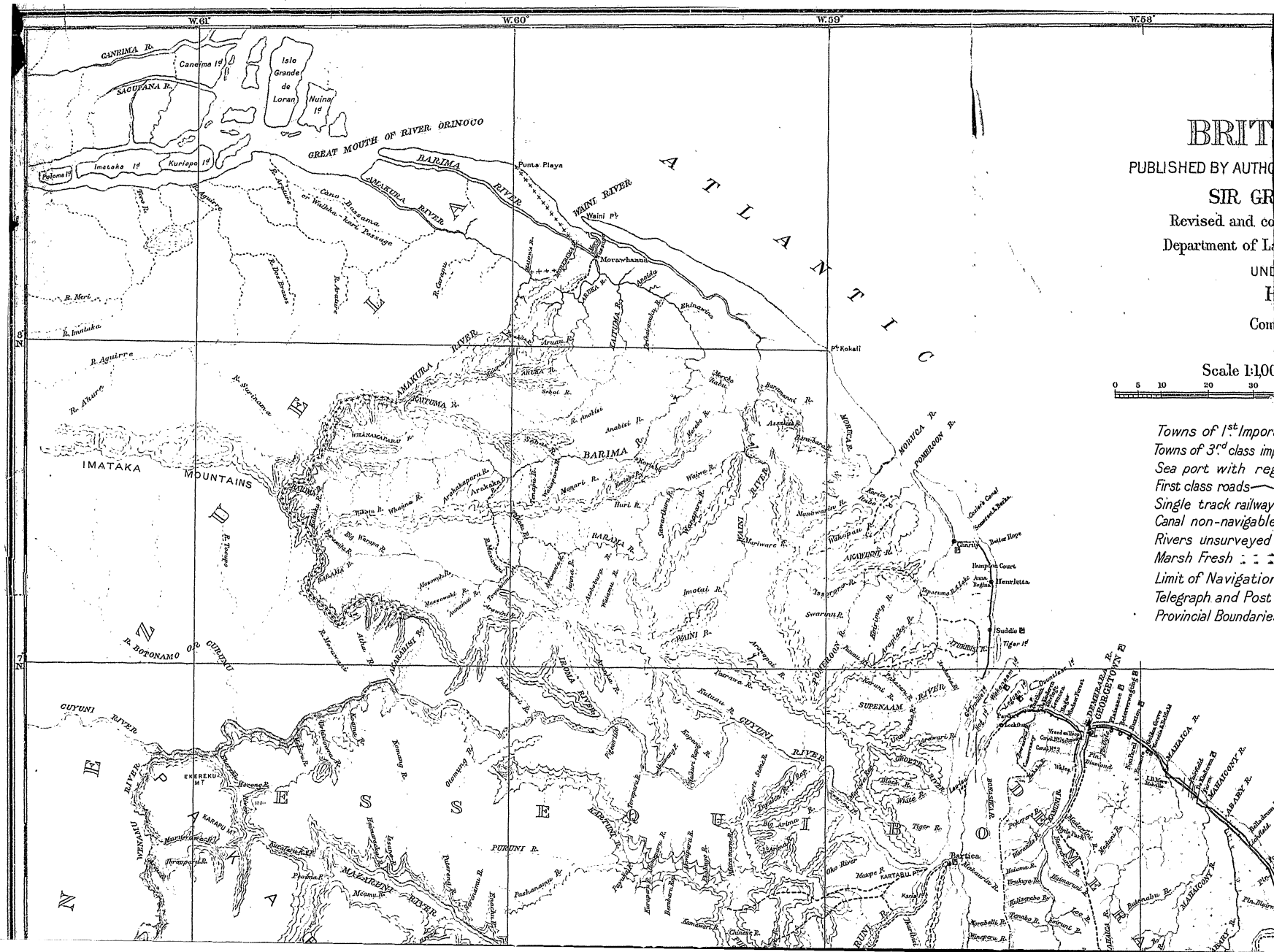
Second Report - - MEAT - - - 9d. (9½d.)

Third Report - - FRUIT - 4s. 6d. (4s. 10d.)

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Towns of 1st Importance

Towns of 3rd class importance

Sea port with regular communication

First class roads

Single track railway

Canal non-navigable

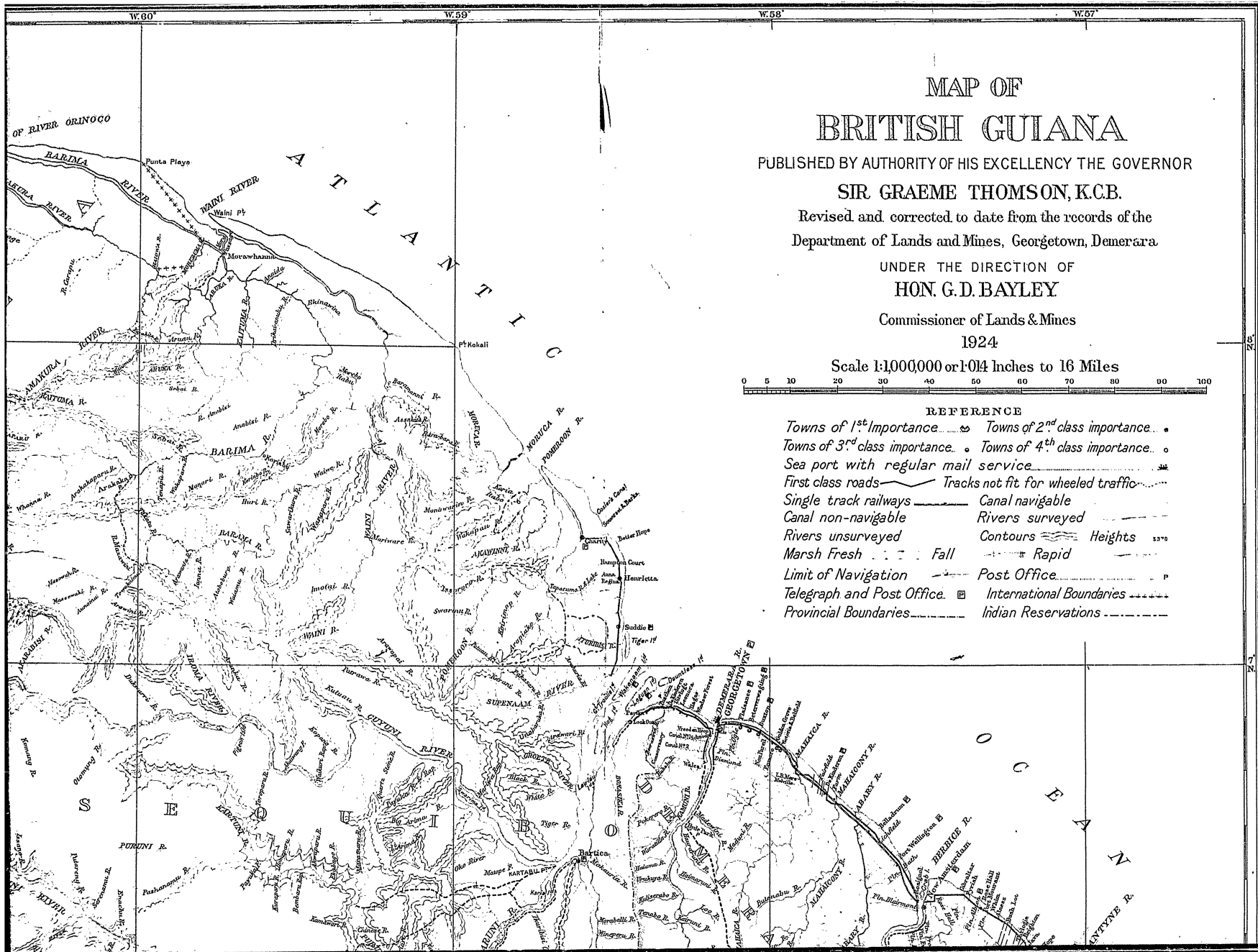
Rivers unsurveyed

Marsh Fresh

Limit of Navigation

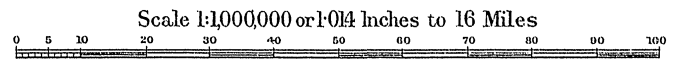
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Provincial Boundaries

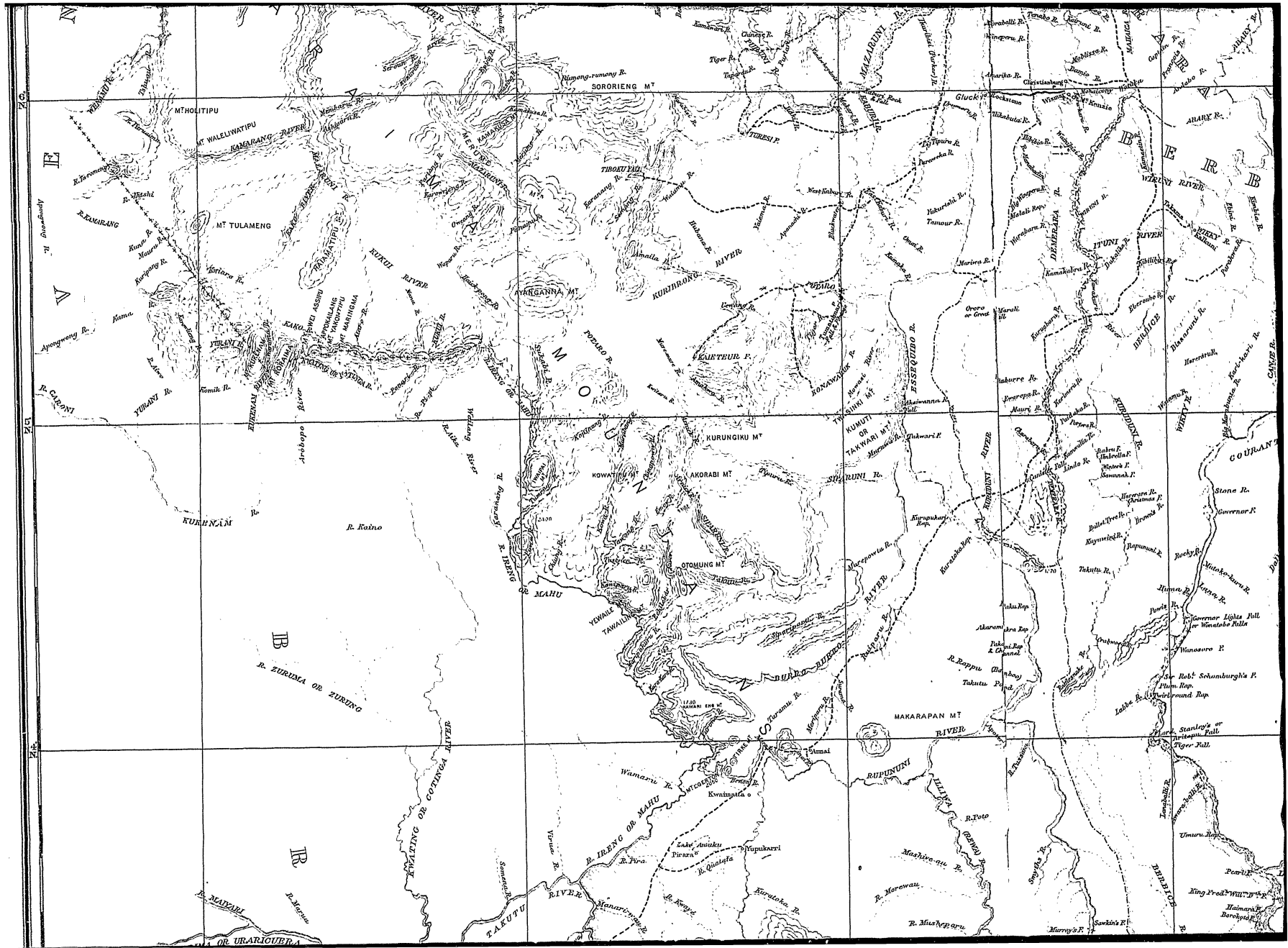


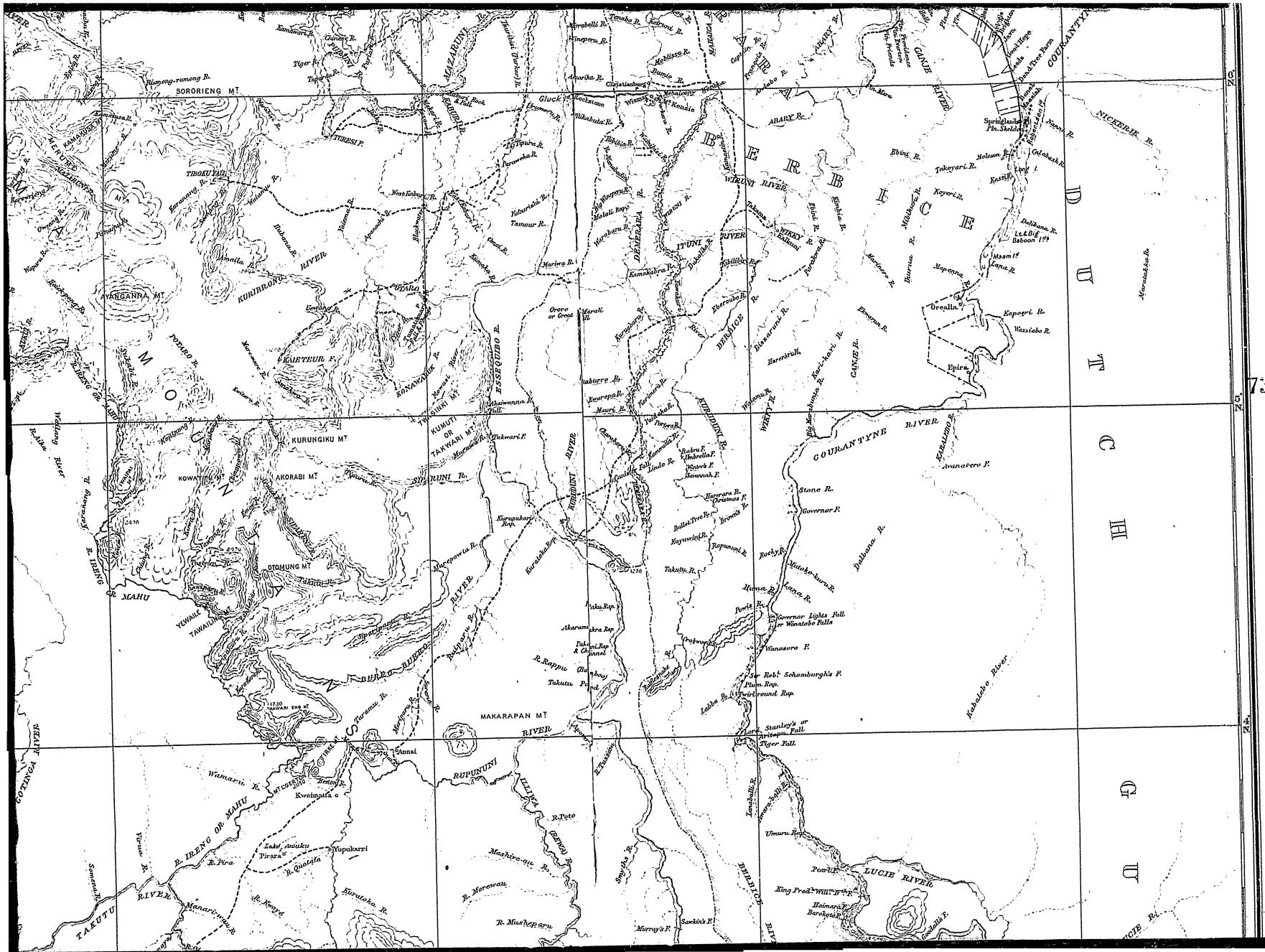
MAP OF BRITISH GUIANA

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SIR GRAEME THOMSON, K.C.B.
 Revised and corrected to date from the records of the
 Department of Lands and Mines, Georgetown, Demerara.
 UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
HON. G. D. BAYLEY
 Commissioner of Lands & Mines
 1924



- REFERENCE
- Towns of 1st Importance
 - Towns of 2nd class importance
 - Towns of 3rd class importance
 - Towns of 4th class importance
 - Sea port with regular mail service
 - First class roads
 - Tracks not fit for wheeled traffic
 - Single track railways
 - Canal navigable
 - Canal non-navigable
 - Rivers surveyed
 - Rivers unsurveyed
 - Marsh Fresh
 - Fall
 - Limit of Navigation
 - Telegraph and Post Office
 - Provincial Boundaries
 - Towns of 1st class importance
 - Towns of 2nd class importance
 - Towns of 3rd class importance
 - Towns of 4th class importance
 - Sea port with regular mail service
 - Tracks not fit for wheeled traffic
 - Canal navigable
 - Rivers surveyed
 - Contours
 - Heights
 - Rapid
 - Post Office
 - International Boundaries
 - Indian Reservations





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