Copy of minute by The Hon. J. Mullin, Commissioner of Lands and
Wise, dated 21st November, 1883.

Hon. Colonial Secretary,

I agree that it is quite time that the British
Guiana - Surinam boundary should be definitely fixed by
treaty; but the question of its actual demarcation, beyond
what is involved in the fixing of the source of the
Courantyne river rendered imperative by the treaty recently
concluded, for the demarcation of the British Guiana - Brazil
boundary at the source of that river, could well be deferred
until the latter boundary surveys have been completed.

2. As the matter has become rather involved, both
as regards the actual boundary line in the lower reaches of
the Courantyne river and the question as to which branch
of that river in its upper reaches is the true source of
the Courantyne, I have prepared a precis in continuation
of the memorandum prepared by C. S. Bayley.

3. From this it will be seen, I think, that the
"Thalweg", or middle of the deepest channel of the river cannot
be laid down as the boundary between the two Colonies unless
the Netherlands Government agrees to hand over to British
Guiana, the islands in the Courantyne river falling to the
West of the "Thalweg".

4. The suggestion by the late Attorney General
Mr. (now Sir Joseph) Rannan for the adoption of a "Thalweg"
which would wind around between the islands and the British
shore
shore whenever no island is met is wholly impracticable both
from navigation and demarcation points of view, as such a
channel would not be navigable and the point at which the
boundary line would leave and rejoin the "thalweg" could not
be demarcated.

5. If the Netherlands Government agreed to accept
the "thalweg" as the boundary and to east the islands to
the West of it to British Guiana, its demarcation would
be a long and costly affair, as soundings would have to
be taken to locate it and permanent marks be erected on each
side of the channel where practicable - such as between
either shore and an island or between two islands - as the
thalweg which existed at the time of demarcation would be
the boundary for all time (failing another treaty) no
matter what changes occurred in the position of the deepest
channel afterwards.

6. The Courantyne is very wide in its lower reaches
and has a good few islands, whilst in its middle and upper
reaches there are thousands of islands. The cost of a
demarcation of the thalweg can therefore be better imagined
than described.

7. The islands in the river are valuable; but the
navigation rights are important. The simpler procedure
would therefore be to make extreme low water mark along
the British shore the boundary line and to secure free
navigation rights over the whole river beyond that zone for
British and Dutch nationals.

(Sgd.) J. Malinn.