

copy of minute by The Hon. J. Mullin, Commissioner of Lands and
Mines, dated 21st November, 1929.

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 précis in continuation
of the memorandum prepared by G. B. 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) Hunan for the adoption of a "thalweg"
which would wind around between the islands and the British
shore

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The National Archives									
Ms. C 0111/83/1									
204544									
Please note that this copy is supplied subject to the National Archives Terms and conditions and that your use of it may be subject to copyright restrictions. Further information is given in the enclosed Terms and Conditions of Supply of Public Records Material.									

shore whenever an 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 cede 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 created 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 valueless; 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. Mullin.

The National Archives
Ref: C0111/6831
204544

Please note that this copy is supplied subject to the National Archives Terms and conditions and that your use of it may be subject to copyright restrictions. Further information is given in the enclosed Terms and Conditions of supply of Public Records leaflet