

# National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN**

## Part I

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108<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

14:00H

Thursday, 7 January 2010

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### **SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (1)**

***The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP (AOL)***

### **MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (40)**

**(i) *People's Progressive Party/Civic (39)***

**(ii) *The United Force (1)***

The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP

*(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)*

*Prime Minister and Minister of  
Public Works and Communications*

The Hon Clement J Rohee MP

*Minister of Home Affairs*

The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP

*Minister of Education*

The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

*(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)*

*Minister of Health*

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES 7 JANUARY 2010**

The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

*(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Essequibo)*

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

<sup>1</sup>The Hon Dr Ashni Singh MP

*Minister of Finance*

The Hon Robert M Persaud MP

*(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)*

*Minister of Agriculture*

The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP

*(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)*

*Minister of the Public Service*

The Hon Kellawan Lall MP

*Minister of Local Government and Regional Development*

\*The Hon Charles R Ramson SC, MP

*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*

The Hon Dr Frank CS Anthony MP

*Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport*

The Hon B H Robeson Benn MP

*Minister of Transport and Hydraulics*

<sup>2</sup>The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP

*Minister of Labour*

The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP (AOL)

*(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)*

*Minister of Human Services and Social Security*

The Hon Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Health*

The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Finance*

The Hon Manniram Prashad MP

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<sup>1</sup> *Non-elected Minister*

<sup>2</sup> *Elected Member from TUF*

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES 7 JANUARY 2010**

*Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce*

\*The Hon Pauline R Sukhai MP

*Minister of Amerindian Affairs*

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

*Minister of Housing and Water*

Mr Donald Ramotar MP

Ms Gail Teixeira MP

Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP

*Chief Whip*

Ms Bibi S Shadick MP

*(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP

*(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)*

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

*(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP (AOL)

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

*(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)*

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

<sup>3</sup>Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP

*Parl'y Sect'ry in the Min. of Culture, Youth and Sport*

Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

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<sup>3</sup> *Non-elected Member*

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES 7 JANUARY 2010**

*(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)*

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP *(AOL)*

*Parl'y Sect'ry in the Ministry of Housing and Water*

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP

*(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)*

Dr Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo MP

Rev Kwame Gilbert MP

***MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION (28)***

***(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)***

Mr Robert HO Corbin

*Leader of the Opposition*

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP

*Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly*

Mr E Lance Carberry MP

*Chief Whip*

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr Anthony Vieira MP *(Absent)*

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP

Ms Cheryl Sampson MP

Mr Dave Danny MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr Aubrey C Norton MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES 7 JANUARY 2010**

Mr Ernest B Elliot MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

*(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)*

Mr Mervyn Williams MP

*(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Ms Africo Selman MP *(Absent)*

Dr John Austin MP

*(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)*

Ms Jennifer Wade MP

*(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)*

Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP

*(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)*

Mr Desmond Fernandes MP

*(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)*

***(ii) Alliance For Change (5)***

Mr Raphael GC Trotman MP *(Absent)*

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP

Mrs Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms Latchmin B Punalall MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr David Patterson MP

***(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)***

Mr Everall N Franklin MP *(AOL)*

***OFFICERS***

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs

*Clerk of the National Assembly*

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Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah

*Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly*

*[The Deputy Speaker assumes the Chair]*

**Commencement of Sitting: 14:08h**

**PRAYERS**

*[The Clerk reads the Prayer]*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**(i) Leave of the Speaker of the National Assembly**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Members, I wish to inform you that the Hon Speaker of the National Assembly is out of the jurisdiction attending the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth, which is being held in the Bejan Bhagwan, New Delhi, India.

I will be, therefore, presiding at today's sitting and I am expecting your usual cooperation.

**(ii) New Year's Greetings**

Honourable Members, as this is the first sitting for the New Year, I would like to wish you and your families, the Clerk and the staff of Parliament Office, the Press, the Police on duty and the Hansard staff a prosperous and most productive 2010

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS,  
ETC.**

By the *Minister of Finance*:

1. *Financial Paper No. 5 of 2009 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$1,449,775,969 - advances made from the Contingencies Fund for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> 31 December 2009; and*
2. *Financial Paper No. 6 of 2009 - Supplementary Estimates (Capital) totalling \$6,795,982,309 for the period ending 31 December, 2009.*

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Mde Speaker, I further beg to name Monday 11th of January, 2010, as the date for consideration of these papers.

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**BILL - Second and Third Readings**

**GUYANA LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY BILL 2009 - Bill No. 49/2009  
(published on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009)**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to promote greater efficiency in the livestock and livestock product industry and to provide enhanced services in livestock husbandry, livestock health and research and to establish the Guyana Livestock Development Authority so as to make provision for effective administration and regulation of trade, commerce and export of livestock products and for matters related or incidental.*



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**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Members, we will now proceed with the second reading of the Guyana Livestock Development Authority Bill 2009, Bill No. 49/2009, published on the 9th December, 2009.

The Hon Minister of Agriculture ...

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Mde Speaker, I wish at the outset to offer sincerest congratulations to you for holding the Office of the Speaker while the substantive Speaker is away.

Mde Speaker, the Guyana Livestock Development Authority Bill 2009 is an important piece of legislation, which, when looked at within the strategic framework of the Government's plan for the development of a vibrant livestock sector, but more so, within the context of a diversified agricultural sector, we can see that this Bill, if and when it receives the blessings of the National Assembly, and it goes into effect can be transformational.

And Mde Speaker, I say so because over the past years, we have seen substantial progress being made in the livestock sector, where Guyana has moved from a situation of an importer or a country that is dependent on external sources, take for instance, its poultry needs, to one in which we are now self-sufficient.

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But Mde Speaker, the framework too or the backdrop against which this Bill is being presented has to be seen or has to be understood within the context to where Guyana's livestock sector can go, or as some may say, realizing the true potential of this important activity.

This Bill, Mde Speaker, is important too because, while we have made significant progress in developing a vibrant livestock sector to take care of our internal needs or contributing to overall food security, we have recognised and based on the work done by a number of international experts, there is a vast market out there for Guyana's livestock sector to be modernised or developed to such an extent that we can become a major supplier of livestock products, not only to the Caribbean, but beyond.

Mde Speaker, but what we see taking place in the livestock sector is also reflective of what is taking place in other subsectors of the agriculture sector. But we have recognised that vast potential and that is why today, within the agriculture diversification process, livestock is an important sector.

And Mde Speaker, I can point to the various initiatives that the Government would have made over the past years to develop or to bring our livestock sector to a point where we believe, with further interventions, we can go beyond just taking care of our internal needs, but

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also becoming a leading supplier or exporter of livestock products.

If we look at the production figures and I will only go back for the last three years, but we can go further back; but let us take in 2007 and this is a continuous trend.

- If we look in 2007, we were producing about 25.2 million pounds that is of chicken, 2008 we saw 23.1 million pounds, and in 2009 we saw that figure going up to 31.1 million pounds.
- If we look at beef production, 1.9 million pounds in 2007, 2.3 million pounds in 2008 and 2.4 in 2009.
- Mutton, we have seen going from 71,000 to 99,000 to 106,000.
- In terms of pork, in 2007, 358,000, 264,000 and then to 305,791.
- And if we look at milk production in 2007, 7 million gallons, then in 2008, 20.2 million gallons and then last year, the preliminary figure at 8 million gallons.

This is a trend that has been taking place over the past decade, but what this signifies too is that the investments the Government has been making within the livestock sector, these investments have been bearing fruits.

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Take for instance, what some of these interventions have been:

- We have looked at emphasizing in terms of improving the genetic stock, and we covered nearly all areas of livestock. In fact last year, we saw the development of a sheep, the Texana breed in Guyana to support those farmers.
- We have also imported breeding animals for pig industry from Suriname and the United States and have made that available.
- We also increased our programmes in terms of breeding for the cattle industry and even we looked at new types of ducks, and even in terms of goats.

Also, the support we have given to farmers has increased, resulting from the training program and the initiative that the Government of Guyana and Cuba enjoy. Over the last two years alone, we have seen close to twenty veterinarian doctors returning and these doctors are serving our farmers, especially in areas where veterinary support was nonexistent, and today, Mde Speaker, in all our regions, we can say we have that type of skill available to support our farmers in moving forward in this regard.

Mde Speaker, but we need to situate, too, this legislation within, as I referred to, the Agriculture Diversification Project, and the Agriculture Diversification Project, as

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we know was launched last year and that project is being funded by the Government of Guyana, the IDB and also IFAD. There are two programmes which I am collapsing generally into the Agriculture Diversification Programme and that programme is intended to develop a number of clusters. Is intended to develop the fruits and vegetables clusters, the aquaculture cluster as well as the livestock cluster, but I wish to refer specifically to the livestock cluster and what it is this cluster will do and how this Bill, or the attempt, or the effort being made to create the Authority, is linked to the attainment of the objectives of the Agriculture Diversification Programme.

This project will see the development of an effective animal health system, because we recognise, and if we look at the recent trends in terms of the livestock trade, we have seen that the issue of animal health has been a major concern and even a major impediment, and has even disrupted worldwide trade. But in Guyana, because of the current weak system that we have, this programme is intended to develop an effective animal health system.

Also, we are looking at updating our legislative and regulatory framework, hence the Livestock Development Authority Bill.

Also, working with the private sector to develop a state-of-the-art abattoir, so that we can have a certified

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facility to export livestock products - be it be beef or other products - although we are doing limited exports of beef to a number of countries within the Caribbean.

We also looked at working with the private sector, in terms of providing financing and other support so they too can develop and they too can benefit from this programme, and also be the agent of the growth and expansion of the sector.

So the Agriculture Diversification Project is intended to move the livestock sector and the fruits and vegetables and aquaculture from its current level to a much more competitive, much more viable, but certainly to a level at which we can all say that we have made significant progress. While we can point to a number of achievements in terms of the development of the livestock sector, there are many inadequacies, and based on the technical work done and even looking at the experience and the consultations and the interactions that we had with a number of stakeholders, it was felt that for this sector to move forward, they required the right institutional mechanism or authority to move the livestock sector forward, and that is why the decision based on the consultations, the decision was taken that we propose the development of a Livestock Development Authority.

But Mde Speaker, this did not just come out or fall out of the sky. It came as a result of a lot of sound technical

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work; it also came as a result of consultation, both local and external experts. Further to that I must say that this Bill too seeks to consolidate and build on the foundation that we have already had, and we need to recognise too that the effort made by the PNC administration, because this is the first bold move in terms of a legislative standpoint that we are taken in close to twenty-six years, and in fact we can say that the precursor to the Guyana Livestock Development Authority is the National Dairy Development Programme, and the National Dairy Development Programme, I am quite sure the Honourable Leader of the Opposition can recall, that was formed in 1984 under the late President Forbes Burnham, but since then, Mde Speaker, we have not seen that substantial institutional change so that we can organise and develop a vibrant livestock sector,

So the Livestock Development Authority Bill seeks to build on that foundation. It seeks to harness the recent advancements that we have made within the livestock sector, but it also seeks to position Guyana's livestock sector to take up the many opportunities, the many market opportunities out there, but more importantly, Mde Speaker, it is to give our livestock farmers greater opportunities... *[I love looking at you, Madame]* ... it is to give our livestock farmers, as it were, that better break for them to capitalize on those opportunities, for them to benefit from what we are doing in terms of developing a vibrant livestock sector.*[Applause]*

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But Mde Speaker, the Livestock Development Authority, the Livestock Authority... [*Interruption: 'We are getting to there, Mr Murray; do not be impatient'*]  
Mde Speaker, the Livestock Development Authority will seek to, and this is the objective, this is where we are going with the Livestock Development Authority, is to integrate fragmented unit for better cooperation and coordination with the Livestock Development. Currently, Mde Speaker, the livestock development activities are situated in a number of agencies and in a number of entities, and persons who are engaged, farmers you will talk to, processors, exporters, will tell you about the rigmarole and sometimes they are not sure where to turn to, because of its fragmentation. So the Authority is to bring all of those units; is to bring all of those activities, together under one single Authority.

It is also intended, Mde Speaker, to have an Authority or an institution to deliver a better service to our farmers, to our processors and to all investors who want to expand large scale, and I must say, Mde Speaker, that we have close to six major proposals, in terms of large scale livestock development.

Mde Speaker, it is also intended to have a better working environment for our staff, because they, too, sometimes encounter difficulties in terms of the fragmentation and their ability to better serve the sector is limited by the current state of affairs.



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Also, Mde Speaker, we hope through the Authority we will be able to attract the skills, the competency, the expertise which are required so we can take this sector from the level it is to where we want it to be in terms of being a major exporter and a major economic activity for our country.

Mde Speaker, too, this Authority if envisaged will also have, very importantly, an animal health unit, which will also have a modern lab, which construction will start very soon, to allow us to do proper surveillance in terms of threats and diseases, but also for us to ensure that we are able to prevent outbreaks or occurrences, whether it is foot-and-mouth disease, whether it is avian flu, whether we are talking about H1N1 as it relates to animal health. So it is building that epidemiological capacity, and the lab that we need, which we currently do not have, and within this Authority we will have such facilities and expertise at our disposal.

Further to that, Mde Speaker, it is also looking at how it is we can identify, based on the needs analysis which was conducted, in terms of what is required for the growth and development of a competitive livestock sector, is to develop not only the production, but also the business development support within the Authority. Currently we do not have such support to extend to the sector business development. It is envisaged that within the Authority, we can work and we can support existing

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small, medium large and even potential persons or big enterprises who want to get into the business of livestock activities.

Also, Mde Speaker, it is looking also at putting the emphasis too, on in terms of Cattle Development Unit and this Cattle Development Unit is very, very important, because we want to expand. We recognise that there are inadequacies and that is why, and we are very frank about it. We have made some advancement, but there is much more that needs to be done, and that is why we hope to achieve through this Authority, we hope to achieve that, and because of the potential and what has been identified as the opportunities that exist out there, we believe the use of this Authority, or the development of this Authority, will allow the sector to move forward in this regard.

Mde Speaker, further the Livestock Authority too must be situated within our National Competitiveness Strategy within our National Development Strategy and also if we look at the Low Carbon Development Strategy, in terms of new agricultural activities, there is that nexus. So this effort here, Mde Speaker, of developing a Guyana Livestock Development Authority, is also fulfilling, is also advancing some of the objectives that are contained within those very vital documents or if we are all serious about taking Guyana forward within what is required.

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We hope, Mde Speaker, that this Bill as I said, it is not controversial. It should not be a Bill that should generate any controversy, if we are serious about the development of the livestock sector, if we are concerned about the welfare of our farmers, if we want Guyana to be a major exporter. The Caribbean, Mde Speaker, our CARICOM brothers and sisters, they are eager for us to develop greater capacity to export; they are eager to create joint-ventureship, but they too have recognised, if we can refer to the efforts to export poultry products to Trinidad and Tobago, they too have recognised that there are certain inadequacies in our current systems and even if we look at the examples of other countries, because this is not unique, this is not a Guyana alone phenomenon, what we are trying, what we are attempting or seeking to do here today. If we look at the experiences of other countries which have developed their vibrant livestock sector, we will recognise that they too have travelled or they too have undertaken a similar path.

Mde Speaker, if the Members of the National Assembly are serious about supporting our farmers and serious about realizing the true potential of the livestock sector, they would see the wisdom, they would see certainly, the very laudable objectives and aims that we are seeking to fulfill via the creation of the Guyana Livestock Development Authority.

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So Mde Speaker, with those remarks I wish to encourage the National Assembly to support this Bill, just in the interest of development of a vibrant livestock sector. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Honourable Member Ms Jennifer Wade

**Ms Jennifer Wade:** Mde Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this Bill that is before the House.

The stated intent of the Guyana Livestock Development Authority Bill 2009, though commendable, is counterproductive. This is because it contains clauses that are consistent with the domineering Ministerial authority that is evident within similar State institutions which are established by the PPP/C Government to provide efficient regularity service and impact positively on the development of a specific economic subsector, in this case, the livestock industry.

Mde Speaker, the authoritarian hand of the Minister is evident throughout this Bill that seeks to administer the affairs of an industry that is private sector driven, private sector supported, and overwhelmingly private sector by nature. These are small rural family owned homestead level, medium sized producer, commercial farmer or large scale player. Government is hardly involved at any of these levels within the livestock industry, for apart from the livestock farm at NARI that

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produces ducklings, all of the organizations operating in this industry are in the main private sector. So Mde Speaker, it is mind-boggling to rationalize how the government can attempt to develop an industry that is currently so private sector skewed by imposing so much administrative governmental control.

Mde Speaker, we on this side are heartened that the administration has seen it fit to finally concentrate efforts to seriously manage and promote the interest of stakeholders involved with livestock. Sadly, this endeavor is fundamentally flawed, because the Bill seeks to establish a Development Authority that would have its administration vested in a board that comprising fifteen directors with eight representing the government and seven chosen by the Minister from nominations submitted by the associations or interest groups relating to poultry producers, cattle farmers, agro-processors, bee keepers and traders of livestock or livestock products.

Further Mde Speaker, the Minister will have the authority to suspend the execution of any resolution or order of the board. I know the Honourable presenter of this Bill will be quick to point out that the relevant private sector stakeholders were consulted on the terms herein, but I am willing to wager that this awesome control over the affairs of the proposed Authority was not countenanced by the private sector, yes, as it is

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customary by the Government whose style is reflective of a body of control freaks; clauses supportive of this culture that are very evident throughout this legislation.

Mde Speaker, the Government has declared that the private sector is the engine of economic growth, but they were seeing a callous display of the non-compliance of a stated policy of the administration judging from what is enshrined in the Guyana Livestock Development Authority Bill 2009. Apart from a passing superficial reference at section 16 (3) about the Authority assisting and encouraging the private sector in establishing and running projects in livestock or in the livestock product industry, no other reference is made to the private sector in this Bill, and as if this is far from satisfactory enough, such assistance and encouraging is subject to the general or special direction of the Minister.

Mde Speaker, we on this side of the House have good cause to be very concerned about the political control that is proposed in this Bill. It is far greater for the role of the private sector and civil society combined. Apart from the concerns raised earlier, one cannot help but reflect on how another Development Authority that functions under the purview of the Hon Minister of Agriculture, has been engaged in unacceptable ongoing efforts to deny small farmers access to ancestral lands in the MMA/ADA area. How can one support similar

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measures contained in this Bill, which can lead to similar action by the proposed Guyana Livestock Development Authority?

Mde Speaker, this is no imaginary speculation on my part. I refer to section 16(2)(g) which states that:

*The Authority shall be responsible for promoting and guiding the formation of cooperatives.*

While the PNCR undoubtedly subscribes to the institution of the cooperatives and the philosophy of cooperativism, the track record of the PPP/C Administration leaves much to be desired by the way of supporting the cooperative sector for the benefit of the small man. What a contradiction of a government that claims to be rooted in the working class? The PNCR will be paying close attention to the conduct of this Authority in its treatment of persons currently occupying land leased from the State through cooperatives and will fight hard against any effort to remove long standing occupants and replace them on the basis of political and other nefarious patronage, as in the current attempt by MMA.

Mde Speaker, I wish to point out that the track record of the Ministry of Agriculture in managing livestock industry is far from impressive. For example the Ministry's website, refers to, and I quote:

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*Special focus on this sector has resulted in the acquisition of support from the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the FAO, for setting up our milk pasteurization plant at Dantzig, Mahaica with a view to ensure that dairy farmers between Mahaica and Abary rivers would have ready market for their milk. This would also ensure that cows' milk with extended shelf life is available to Guyanese public across the counter.*

I wish to ask the Hon Minister what progress has been forthcoming since this much-touted project. I think we all have an idea what that answer is likely to be.

Mde Speaker, the very website states that:

*With the recognition of the Guyana being far from foot and mouth disease, the FMD, by the International Organisation on Epiglottis, the OIE in France, we would soon be able to export livestock products. This will certainly trigger significant investment in the livestock sector, and consequently increase job opportunities and earning capacity for livestock farmers.*



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Again good intent, I however, wonder how many exporters of livestock products are operating in Guyana, and how significant is the revenue earned from such exports.

As stated earlier, Mde Speaker, that the intention of this Bill is to establish a Development Authority for livestock, is in keeping with the desire to move this industry forward. We have no problem with setting up of the Development Authority, as the concept to improve public administration. However the proposed role of the Minister negates the concept of a semi-autonomous body and the expansion of inclusive governance of stakeholders. I wish, however, to indicate that the PNCR would only support such a Bill if the authoritarian power of the Minister is removed and there is a rationalization of the role of the Minister of Agriculture. Thank you very much, Mde Speaker.  
*[Applause]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Hon Minister of Housing and Water ...

**Hon Mohamed Irfaan Ali:** First of all, Mde Speaker, allow me to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture on defining a very vibrant role for the Office of the Minister in demonstrating ownership of a policy that is developed to improve and expand an important economic sector for this country *[Applause]*

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Mde Speaker, a lot have been spoken about the authoritative role of the Minister in this Bill. Let me read directly from the Bill, lest we distance ourselves from the truth and this is Page 8 of the Bill:

*The Board may appoint as many officers, experts, consultants, employees as it considers necessary.*

The Board!

*The officers and employees of the department, division, and programme shall be employed on the terms and condition as will be agreed upon between the Board and each person so employed. The Authority may constitute as many Committees as may be necessary for carrying out the purposes of this Act.*

*The Authority may by general or specific order in writing delegate to any of its directors, advisors, officer, experts, consultants or employees of the Committee constituted under section 12.*

Then the Honourable Member mentioned Section 16. I am going to go to Section 16. Section 16 (1) states:

*In accordance with the provision of this Act and subject to the general and*

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*directions of the Minister, the Minister may give from time to time the Authority shall take measures to carry out any of the task in the livestock or livestock product industry.*

The Authority shall take ... Now, this is an Authority that will be consisting of more than fifteen Members and if the Minister as a sole person, as a sole human being, can convince fifteen persons to move in a direction that he proposes, then all kudos to the Minister. It is fifteen - Mde Speaker, it is an Authority that consists of fifteen persons, not the Minister.

Mde Speaker, we are very proud on this side of the House, that we can celebrate this Bill today, as a part of our manifesto commitment to the people of this country. On page 23 of the PPP/Civic manifesto, it says that:

*Greater focus on livestock development - On this score, our sights must be on self-sufficiency in poultry production, export of beef and other products, now that Guyana has been certified free of foot-and-mouth disease.*

*Establishment of milk pasteurization plant, introducing value-added products like cheese, yoghurt, and other milk-based products for local and overseas market,*

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*emphasizing duck, sheep, goat and wild  
meat production.*

Mde Speaker, this Bill forms its framework through which we can proceed to achieve these laudable goals and objectives identified by the PPP Civic in its manifesto. The mere fact that we were elected based on the principles, the values and the objectives that were outlined in this manifesto by the people of this country shows the overwhelming supporting for us to bring Bills like these that will facilitate the implementation of policies and programmes, that will ensure we deliver on the promises we made in our manifesto.

Mde Speaker, this Bill is situated in what I would consider a comprehensive and well-planned strategy to diversify the agricultural sector. In 2006, when we had the Budget presentation, it was made clear that Government's commitment is to ensure the Agricultural Sector is diversified, in ensuring that it is sustainable and the economic base, the economic delivery that agriculture brings to the country is widened and enhanced, and I think that this Bill gives an excellent platform through which the livestock industry can take off.

I must at this point pause to congratulate the Ministry of Agriculture on ensuring that we have reached the laudable goal of our manifesto, in achieving self-sufficiency in livestock.

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Now, Mde Speaker, we must look at this Bill in the international context. How can we argue against a legislation that seeks to promote research and development that would enhance the welfare knowledge and skills of our people to ensure sustainable growth? How can we argue against this? While we are debating this Bill today, Mde Speaker, sister countries in CARICOM have all gone forward in enacting legislation of similar nature. We need to move forward. We need to ensure that we form the relevant body that will stimulate, that will push, that will advance research and development in the livestock sector, and this Bill seeks to create a legislative boundary, a legislative framework through which research and development in the livestock sector will be promoted.

Mde Speaker, if we are to expand our livestock industry, critical to all international protocol; critical to all trade agreements; critical to all conditions governing trade is a surveillance system that would ensure that whatever we produce meets international standard, free from all diseases, free from all pesticides, et cetera. Mde Speaker, this Bill forms the framework through which that surveillance system will be set up, managed, monitored and implemented so that we can meet these international standards in expanding our livestock sector. [*Applause*]

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Mde Speaker, the livestock trade - the international livestock trade - presents great opportunities for us. It presents an opportunity for us to enter a non-traditional market that can bring tremendous gains to our country. Mde Speaker, maybe it is now that we are bringing this Bill, but let not the Opposition speak! Let not the Opposition speak as if they did not have an opportunity to do this. They had twenty-eight years to do it. They had twenty-eight years. They must ask themselves. Mde Speaker, we are going to account for our period in government. Let the Opposition account for their twenty-eight years, and when we account for our years in government, we will be proud to say that we, this PPP/C Government have passed the Livestock Bill.

Mde Speaker, the World Livestock Trade Spotlight Report of 2002 had this to say, and I quote:

*The study looked at current trends in world trade in livestock and livestock products, and recommends ... [Noisy Interruption]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Members, could you keep it down a bit, please? Thank you

Go ahead, Hon Member ...

**Hon Mohamed Irfaan Ali:**

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*... policy responses for developing countries as they come to grips with the trade.*

Liberalization and new sanitary controls were important issues that the World Livestock Trade Spotlight Report identified for developing countries to address, and that Report also said that the countries must address it through legislation too. The country must not only make a commitment, they must go to their Parliaments and make a legislative commitment, and this is our response to that trade.

Mde Speaker, international trade in livestock accounts for about one-sixth the value of agricultural trade, and this is a very important point for us to note - one sixth of all agriculture trade, livestock accounts for that. Consumption of livestock products in the developing world is expanding rapidly, presenting new market opportunities for both exporters and domestic producers, and here is where we have an excellent opportunity, especially with South-South trade, where we know that Latin America is perhaps one of the largest blocs in terms of utilisation of livestock products, and we have very close access to that market. So I am saying that this Bill creates the framework for us to move forward in implementing policies and programmes that will ultimately lead to the increase in production to meet these new market opportunities. *[Applause]*

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Mde Speaker let us not shoot ourselves short of that goal, by not supporting this Bill, because this Bill sets a very important framework for us to move forward in implementing the policy. Mde Speaker, the changing institutional framework, in terms of livestock and livestock trade, has major implications for developing countries. Important for us is to ensure that we develop our marketing, research and development capacity that would lead to improvement in the product, that would lead to improvement in our breed in order to ensure we meet the growing demand of international trade in livestock products.

There is no doubt that we in Guyana have an advantageous position in relation to the CARICOM market. There is no doubt about it, but if we do not set the necessary policies, programmes, legislation to ensure that the livestock industry is regulated, managed, is coordinated in a way that it meets international standards, then we can lose that opportunity to get into that market. We can lose that opportunity. So let us keep our eyes on the big picture. Let us not mumble; mumbling would not get us anywhere. Let us keep our eyes on the big picture, the opportunity that lies ahead. That is what we on this side of the House are concerned about.

Mde Speaker, the Honourable Member Ms Jennifer Wade, could make a comment that this Bill is about



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duckling - a suckling Bill. If you refer to this Bill as a duckling Bill, you are insulting the many ordinary people of this country, who worked day in and day out to improve the livestock industry. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Members, please, please! The noise level is getting ...

**Hon Mohamed Irfaan Ali:** Mde Speaker, let us look at the Bill from a local perspective now. This Bill is part of Government's holistic plan to diversify the agricultural sector. So here again we have achieved another milestone, we are moving towards a greater diversification, and this is nothing new. The Minister of Agriculture has spoken on numerous occasions on creating value added.

Mde Speaker, I always say that the facts and figures would speak for themselves. This Bill will allow us to develop fiscal incentives to support new initiatives in addition to supporting the livestock industry.

This Bill gives us the opportunity to look at fiscal incentives to ensure that we motivate; to ensure that we create an environment that would stimulate investment into the livestock sector, that would create an environment through which the private sector would get involved, which would create more jobs, and more importantly, which would help in creating economic wealth and growth, that will bring more money into this

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country, so that we can do more in health, education, water and sanitation.

Is it that the Opposition wants to send a message out there that their non-support of this Bill is one that is seeking to deny Guyana the opportunity of diversifying the agricultural sector? It is one that is seeking to deny us of growing the economy, of getting more money to improve health, education and water. Is that the message the Opposition wants to send to the people out there? Well, let them make it clear to the people that their non-support of this Bill is to deny the people this.

Mde Speaker,

- How could we not support a Bill that looks at improving productivity of a sector?
- How could we not support a Bill that sets the conditions to improve productivity of a sector?
- How could we not support a Bill that looks at adopting new technologies to improve the system, to improve efficiency?
- How could we not support a Bill that includes faster technology for management?
- How could we not support a Bill that looks at designing more efficiency policies?
- How could we not support a Bill that looks at negotiation mechanism for international trade?

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- How could we not support a Bill that seeks to make information a critical tool for industry success?
- How could we not support a Bill that legalizes all these things?
- How could we not support a Bill?

Mde Speaker, I know that the AFC will be placed in a very particular position, because they would not want to be banded with the rest of the Opposition in not supporting this Bill, *[Laughter]* so it is on the grapevine that the AFC is going to support, but let us see whether they would fall prey to the wider Opposition politics or whether they would fall towards the advantageous position of looking at national development. Today is your test.

- How could we not support a Bill that looks at harmonization and standardization? We always speak about harmonization and standardization. This Bill seeks to move in this direction.
- How could you not support this Bill? Look at target marketing and analysis.
- How could the Opposition not support a Bill that looks at monitoring and evaluation?

Mde Speaker, the Opposition always speaks of monitoring and evaluation. Here is it that we are legislating to ensure that you have monitoring and

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evaluation and you are not supporting it. We are legislating to ensure that you have proper monitoring and evaluation, and you are not supporting or you are supporting on condition. There is no condition to this; you either supporting or not supporting. Rise up and let us hear your call.

Mde Speaker, there is no logical, practical, or academic reason why this Bill should not be supported and I challenge the Opposition, other than the normal rhetoric that the Minister power, the Minister power. I challenge the Opposition to show me what academic, practical, or theoretical reason why this Bill should not be supported. I challenge them to do it. I challenge them to do it.

Mde Speaker:

- This Bill is good for the livestock industry
- This Bill is good for the agricultural sector
- This Bill is good for the people of Guyana; and
- This Bill must be passed by this National Assembly!

I thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Honourable Member Mrs Sheila Holder ...

**Mrs Sheila VA Holder:** Mde Speaker, as I listened to the Hon Minister of Agriculture regaled us with how

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vibrant the livestock industry is performing; the amazing statistics he quoted to kerfuffle us about how successful he and his ministry has been, I wondered whether he will wake up from his dream before leaving these chambers.

Mde Speaker, I think it is important that we establish to the Hon Minister that his administration in all ministries has a serious problem of credibility when it comes to statistics. [*Applause*] For him to stand here and read out what would appear to the eyes of those who are uninformed, to be impressive statistics, one would have to conclude that the people of this country eat more protein, animal protein than many developed countries of the world. How ridiculous can he get?

Mde Speaker, the purpose of this piece of Bill before the House, it said to be to promote greater efficiency that is what it says. How does the Minister expect the Authority to achieve this? He has not told us. What he has done, what he has attempted to do instead, falls far short of that necessity. What efficiency targets has he identified to this National Assembly? None! In the absence of clearly articulated greater efficiency goalposts, we are not, on this side of the House, prepared to take the Minister seriously, because it is only through measures of that sort, could this Assembly perform its overall function to ascertain whether the objectives are being met.

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Mde Speaker, one is led to believe that this piece of legislation at this time is being brought to the House for no other reason, but to distract us from some of the confusion taking place among you and your ranks. That is the reason and I want to tell you that you are not going to succeed, so I do understand why you are even trying.

Mde Speaker, as a proud holder of an MBA degree, the Hon Minister knows that when one talks about greater efficiency or increased efficiency, it usually means a measurement of comparison of production, in terms of cost, in terms of time, in terms of improved output performance. None of those he has brought before the House. He has totally ignored what he has been taught before he acquired his MBA.

Mde Speaker, if, according to the calculations of greater efficiency, performance, the Guyanese consumers can expect to see return to our supermarket shelves milk - local milk? Can we expect to see the return of local cheese? These used to be on the shelves; they are no longer there, and with all the statistics he is regaling us with, he has not indicated if this is going to happen and when.

Mde Speaker, is incorporation going to mean that we will no longer see cows and other livestock roaming the streets, threatening the lives of our people, costing tremendous amounts of money to repair vehicles? Is this

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is what it means? I have not heard, but I can tell you many of our people who use our highways will hope this problem will be taken care of.

Mde Speaker, when we look at Part 3, the section of the Bill, we notice a very wide range of general powers and duties and functions that are being given to the Authority. It is obvious that the role of NARI, and indeed the livestock department of the Ministry of Agriculture, will either be subjected to duplication in their functions, or it is only reasonable to assume that there will be a significant reduction of the livestock functions traditionally associated with the Ministry.

Mde Speaker, there are questions which we would hope the Minister will honor this House with answers. Will he be laying off staff from his Ministry? He has not told us. These are administrative questions that need to be answered. The staff of the Minister of Agriculture desire to know what will happen to them after the passing of this Authority.

Mde Speaker, is there to be a redefinition of the role of NARI? It would be wholly unacceptable for the Hon Minister to continue to grandstand his way around many of these issues. Except for poultry, Guyana's livestock industry has lost significant gains made prior to the advent of the PPP in office. That is a fact and we have been unable so far to capitalize on the more recent opportunities presented for beef production. As stated

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by my Honourable Member Wade, Guyana has been declared free from foot-and-mouth disease by the International Organisation of PEPIZOROTICS in France, and that has been many years ago, yet today, the industry has been unable to benefit from this very important accreditation. Why have they not been able to benefit from it? Because, Mde Chairperson, the circumstances prevailing in our abattoirs leave a lot to be desired, and so, until this issue is to be addressed, Authority or no Authority, no benefit will flow from this achievement. *[Applause]*

All this talk has failed to address the fundamental historical issues plaguing the industry, and when I listened to the Minister, one gets the impression that his definition of livestock excludes beef ... excludes milk. Does the Minister also recognise that the real statistics issued from the CARICOM Region indicates that beef and milk are the largest item on the regional food bill, and in those circumstances, why have not the livestock industry in this country to date been able to benefit and utilise and take advantage of that reality, while he sits here and tries to tell us how well the industry is doing in this country? What absolute rubbish?

Mde Speaker, there is one other main point I believe we are obligated to make, and I believe my colleague Wade has done so quite effectively so far, but I would like to make the point that in so far as the composition of the



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Board is concerned, there is a problem with mathematics - a simple addition. They tell us in Clause 5, Section 1, that the Government will have eight directors on the board, and that the Livestock Associations and special interest groups would have seven. But then the Bill goes on to state in sections 5(2) and (3) that the Minister will appoint a director who will sit on the Board; the Minister will also appoint a secretary who will sit on the Board. Now when the Minister has those specific rights, or you add, the Minister will be controlling ten instead of the eight Members that the Bill professes that he will indeed control. That indeed is control freakism. *[Applause]*

Mde Chairperson, I would like the Hon Minister to understand that he could play as much as he likes before the cameras. *[Applause]* The fact is, that the people of this country are no longer easy to fool and those of us who sit on this side of the House need to let him know we disapprove of his shenanigans unless he is prepared to answer some of these fundamental questions. I thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Hon Minister of Labour ...

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Thank you very much, Mde Speaker. I was reminded once again by the words of our Member Mr Seeraj, when you similarly occupied the Chair last year, when he mentioned how well you look

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in the Chair, and I want to again join in complimenting you.

Mde Speaker, I listened quite attentively to the two Members from the Opposition, to hear what were going to be the fundamental objections that the Opposition may have to this particular Bill, and they have not given any fundamental opposition to the Bill. But instead, what I heard from the last speaker, it sounded like at the end of 1991 Guyana was at the pinnacle of livestock production in its history. Mde Speaker, one would have thought that in 1991 Guyana was producing not 22.5 million pounds of poultry, as the Minister said, but perhaps even more than that; the first time ever we achieved self-sufficiency in poultry production was under this PPP/C Administration. *[Applause]*

Instead, Mde Speaker, I remember the Guyana Airways Corporation, lone plane, instead of flying passengers in and out of Guyana, being commandeered and flown to Brazil to bring in a planeload of chicken, just to relieve, not a temporary shortage, but a total absence of chicken from our land.

When you listen to Mde Sheila Holder, Mde Speaker, you would feel that in 1991, Guyana was self-sufficient in cheese production. I would not even talk about milk, because normally you will use the excess milk to make cheese, but you do not take valuable milk and put all of that into cheese; yes we had some. Mde Speaker, in

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those days, we had some experiment in the making of cheese, and cheese-making is not rocket science technology, and so we had some small amounts of cheese that were manufactured, and one would have to spend three or four hours in a line at Guyana Stores to get two ounces of that cheese. That is not eggs, that is cheese, we are talking about cheese, and so Mde Speaker, what is made out by the last speaker and confirmed to some extent by the previous Opposition speaker, Mde Wade, was that livestock was doing so well at the pinnacle of production.

Mde Speaker, I tell you that the one time that we were exporting beef and we were flying beef all the way to Miami was under the PNC/United Force Government. That is when we flew out beef out of this country, and after that, in the hand of the People's National Congress government, that livestock department was decimated.

Mde Speaker, the PPP/C Government came in and in an effort to reinvigorate the livestock sector, put more policies into it. We saw not only people returning to production and we forget this, but we also saw the appointment of a special Minister of Crops and Livestock, the late Satyadeo Sawh. *[Applause]* We forget that already and tremendous strides were made, and it was under that late Minister's watch that we became self-sufficient in poultry production - under his watch.

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Mr Speaker, I cannot stand here and boast that we are doing phenomenally well in livestock development, but we are doing very well, and as one person from business school said, even if you are doing well, you look to see how you can do better, and when I saw the Minister making this fundamental change to bring in the Livestock Development Authority, I personally thought this was an excellence innovation, because Mde Speaker, we have seen how many such Authorities, over the past fifteen/sixteen years have done well to reinvigorate standards, production and efficiency in our economy. I just want to point to some of that has been established under this Government:

- the Guyana Tourism Authority is one of them
- the Guyana Energy Authority
- the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority
- the Guyana National Drainage and Irrigation Authority.

If we look at the performance of these Authorities, you would see in spite of us doing well with the advent of these authorities, with a more focused approach, and I want to emphasize, with a more focused approach to development, we have even done better in these areas.

And Mde Speaker, this is why I am so pleased, because this Authority will bring more focus to the development of livestock in our country. There are no *ifs* and *buts*

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about this. Under the Livestock Development Authority, with this new administration that is going in place, this new organisation that is going in place, these new functions that are no longer going to be policy, but enshrined in the laws of Guyana. I am confident that this Livestock Development Authority will do well.

Mde Speaker, policies are good, and as policies work better, like theories, theories that work well and you cannot dispute them become law, and we heard about Einstein. Policies that work well, you want to enshrine them in legislation so that you have the power, the power of the laws of Guyana, in continuing that good work, and this is what this Livestock Development Authority is going to do. It is going to bring more focused development to livestock in our country. Not only that, by the composition of the Board and I have no boast if the government is going to have fifteen out of twenty Members nominated on the board. What is important is that they are going to be several sectors represented on the Board, and if as we have heard, there is this domineering hand of the Minister involved, any professional worth his few ounces of salt will do the right thing.

I looked , when I heard about this domineering hand of the Minister, this authoritarian hand of the Minister enshrined in the law, and we have heard about it over and over again. The Opposition would like to say that

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the powers in the law no longer reside in any Government Minister, but resides somewhere on the Opposition benches. Well, we are going to have to change the paradigm of democracy for that; we will have to change that.

So Mde Speaker, I said let me go online, thanks to the services of the Parliament, and I Googled *Livestock Development Authorities* in different countries; and up comes the Livestock Department Authority of the Solomon Islands, and let me just read to you what the Livestock Development ... and you can Google it now; you can Google it ...

Under Clause 4(c), it says:

*... take with the approval of the Minister necessary regulatory or operational measures for the improvement of health and commercial productivity of livestock.*

*With the approval of the Minister* - The final authority has to be with the government of the State, and governments are elected, we have heard by a mandate.

I want to go Clause (f) of the Solomon Islands Livestock Development Authority and it said:

*... such other functions connected with or incidental to the foregoing function, as the Minister may deem fit...*

Mde Speaker; and Clause (g) says:

*... to make such recommendations and to tender such advice to the Minister as the Authority sees fit*

*The Authority* - and similarly we have here has the role, the function, as an advisory group to the Minister.

Mde Speaker, final authority for all the Boards, the semi-autonomous agencies, has to rest with the Government of the State. And as I said before, we do not have another paradigm. The Minister has answered, and the Minister answers and we cannot change that. We can change that when the PNC or the other Opposition parties get the majority; they can now vest that power in the Opposition.

Mde Speaker, Mde Wade mentioned that the Minister and the government are going around taking away land from cooperative societies. She referred that ancestral lands and she said that land in cooperatives have been taken away. Mde Speaker, I am still waiting for that shred of evidence for her to provide. Our records show that:

- we have one hundred and thirty-four land cooperatives
- we have forty-six livestock rearer cooperatives

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- we have thirty-six farmers' cooperatives
- we have ten dairy and cattle cooperatives; and
- ten pig rearers cooperatives

A total of 236; I challenge her, any Member anywhere, to go to each one of these 236 and we can supply the names and the addresses, and those who are in charge up to now. Let them come and say that government has taken away any ounce of land from any one of these farmer cooperatives.

If we want to talk about the functions of cooperatives, the PPP/C has said in its 2006 manifesto, it is committed towards invigorating cooperatives, so that it can play its meaningful role in national development, and that is going to be the focus, and a strong focus of this administration comes 2010.

Mde Speaker, all we heard from the two Opposition speakers was nothing against this new organisation of livestock development or putting livestock development soundly within the laws of Guyana. We also heard about them talking about how this new arrangement, and Minister Irfaan Ali did mention, one of our big challenges in terms of WTO rules is our SPS, our special and phyto-sanitary provisions, and one of the recommendations being made is exactly what Minister Persaud had said, and I have no reason to doubt him, when he said that going this route did not happen overnight. It was out of sound analyses, sound technical



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advice and a massive amount of consultations with those who are in the livestock sector.

This particular arrangement, I certainly feel, will strongly redound to the benefit of our livestock production, and I want to assure Minister Persaud that with the current growth in our country, with the increasing tourism arrivals, that the demand for livestock products right here in the next five years will certainly take off all of the production that he can put out.

Mde Speaker, I am confident... yes, we all know that beef and dairy imports in the region and we know what the figure is. It is a huge potential market. The clearing of the country from foot-and- mouth disease has seen more of our cattle being exported to Brazil. We have seen, and I know last year we exported ... Mde Speaker, they have a difference between the skeptic and the realists on this side.

We are experiencing today, as Minister Ali said, take off, and this Livestock Development Authority needs this strong focus; this strong direction; a Board that has so many different interests represented at this particular time, so that we can meet the challenges of expanded markets locally and regionally.

I will conclude by saying that the Minister of Agriculture, and while he takes a moment every now

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and then, on behalf of the farmers and the agricultural producers, to bow for the cameras, he just take a moment, on their behalf. I want to encourage him to continue to do more, because the successes you seeing under him will continue to happen, not only in this year but many more years to come. Thank you very much.  
*[Applause]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr Robert Corbin.

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** Mde Speaker, when this Bill - the Livestock Development Authority Bill 2009, was first presented to this Parliament, we on this side of the House in so far the PNCR was concerned, felt that there were only need for one speaker, one who has been practically involved in the agricultural sector, and would know that the implications of this Bill affects her constituency. I must say that having seen the list of speakers that the Government decided to identify to speak on this Bill, I assumed that there were some monumental disclosures to be made, hence I added myself to the list in the hope that there would be something to respond to. I must say, Mde Speaker, I have been sadly disappointed and at this point I must commend my colleague, Ms Jennifer Wade, for such an excellent presentation. *[Applause]* The response to which has not yet come from this House and really I

could take my seat and just adopt what Ms Jennifer Wade has said.

But having heard the Minister of Water and Housing struggled for one half an hour - struggling, quite unlike him, to find words to describe and explain what cannot really be explained, including the fact of all that he said: we should support this Bill, because it helps to what he called legislative commitment to the agricultural sector, and that alone should motivate us to support this Authority. That is all he said in the whole period and apart from going to the negatives.

If commitment alone were sufficient to take this country forward, we would have been in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

The very Minister went to Bare Root and told the people there water will be there in two weeks and they are still without. Is that progress? The very Minister on television boasted of his great commitment to provide water for the entire East Coast within two weeks. Where is the water for the people of Bare Root?

So you see, Mde Speaker, when I saw the name I tell you the relevance, the relevance is Mde Speaker is that when I saw the Hon Minister's name listed as a speaker, I thought his role was to tell us how he was going to provide water supply for the livestock of the country, not to tell us that his Bill will give commitment, as if *legislative commitment* is a substitute for genuine

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policies to promote agriculture development of this country.

The Prime Minister came to this Parliament a few weeks ago, Your Honor, told us about commitment for electricity. The next day we had a blackout. That was the 5<sup>th</sup> day of December. all blackout will stop two weeks later. Then he came back and said, we did not hear him properly, so I will ask him to consult the Hansard. So let us not try to mislead this House into believing that legislative commitment is a substitute for certain policies. I must say I was very disappointed in my young friend. I do not know why they give him that basket to fetch water this afternoon.

The framework that he sought to build, I believe was broken down by the Hon Minister of destruction even before he started to build it, and Mr Nadir, who conveniently was able to separate PNC/UF government and PNC government, yet could find no distinction between the UF manifesto and the PPP manifesto now. He seeks to suggest that the justification for this Bill is Googling. He was Googling to find out what the Solomon Island produced, and because some clauses look alike, then that means we should support this Bill.

I thought that the Hon Minister, Your Honour, was identified to speak here because the implication of this Bill may mean the complete dismissal of the workers at the Ministry of Agriculture, and therefore his presence

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in on this debate was to tell us how he were going to handle the labour problems that may arise, and I hope it is not like the way he is handling RUSAL and the exploitation of workers of the bauxite industry.  
*[Applause]*

And so let us not be distracted by the distractions that have been introduced in this House this afternoon, and indeed as I said, they have not answered the fundamental issues raised by my colleague here this afternoon. The truth is, Madame, I do not believe that this House has onto this moment, been told the truth of this Bill. Reading clearly into this Bill, it is clearly an excuse to satisfy some conditionality in some international agreement which we are still to be advised in this House. Clearly, obviously, they have funds somewhere hidden to be passed over to the Government, and as usual, when those conditionalities are imposed, we see the rough ... the legislation, just as we had legislation on the Procurement Commission that cannot become a reality, because it was a conditionality, and so the Minister knows, let him answer ... let him answer ... I am saying this is a smokescreen, and we have not been told which conditionality you are satisfying. What is in this Parliament?

Secondly, it is an excuse to establish a top-heavy bureaucracy with no explanation as to what will be the role of the Minister of Agriculture, and to move that

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top-heavy structure under acute and direct political control under the guise of an autonomous body. For, Mde Speaker, if we are to accept the explanations and reasons advanced by the Hon Minister for this Bill, and if at the same time, we are to accept his statistics ... I am going to be very optimistic, unlike my colleagues in the AFC ... I want to believe those statistics, but if indeed the Minister is correct with those statistics, you do not need any Authority at all. The Ministry has the contacts ... already accomplished all that this thing is supposed to do.

So why would you need an Authority when you are telling us at the same time you have glowing performance at every area of the agricultural sector? We are told that this will help with the Agriculture Diversification Project and it will develop clusters. The question is why can this not be done now with the present structure? We have not been told that, we have been given no reasons. We have been told that there have been great consultations. Well, having regard to the track record of consultation of this administration, I think no one is fooled by that in this country.

We are told that this Bill, Madame, is to provide better service to farmers. What is the Agriculture Ministry and the Extension Service doing at the moment? With such a presentation, I thought the only fitting place for the conclusion of the Minister's address was to tender his

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resignation and say that the Ministry of Agriculture has failed, that is because this Bill is really at the presentation is saying, look the Ministry of Agriculture has done a terrible job. At the same time, he is saying the Minister of Agriculture's livestock production is soaring and so we need an Authority to help to expand it. What contradiction? So obviously, the Minister is very confused in the manner in which he has presented this Bill to the House, obviously searching for an excuse not to tell this House what is the real reason for bringing this Bill before us.

If I am to follow, and I am not dealing with the authoritarian nature of it at this point of time, the Hon Minister Nadir spoke about Googling the website and Googling to find...you do not have to Google very far; you just have to go to the Minister of Agriculture website, Google that and I will tell you what I found there: National Dairy Development Programme, and this is what it says:

*To increase milk production by improvement in pasture availability management, dairy herd management, breeding policies and education extension services.*

It goes on...I do not want to bore the Parliament with the entire list of what they are doing:

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*... to achieve full self-sufficiency in milk and milk product in the shortest possible time and replacing present imports with domestic production, to provide an alternative and lucrative means of earning a living...*

And then it goes on to the propaganda, note well:

*Well in excess of 1,400 farmers within the NDDP network are benefiting from the above unit. The figures above do not include the thousands of acres planted by LIDCO...*

And then it goes on:

*These figures do not include the thousands of acres ...*

And then it concludes:

*We have not been able to accurately assess the multiplication effect of our pasture programme on the small farmers. However, empirical observation reveals that many hundreds of farmers have replicated the model which has been established.*



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If all of this is happening; what are they bringing in Bill for? You have already reached the pinnacle of agriculture production, so that could not be the real reason for this Bill before the House. This Bill has been established, Madame, clearly from its objectives, to faithfully duplicate what are the statutory and other functions of the Ministry of Agriculture: to set policy, to provide incentives and to stimulate and encourage production in Guyana. That agency and Ministry has been doing so for a number of years.

- That is why you have NARI
- That is why you have LIDCO
- That is why you have a number of other companies established as part of the Ministry to stimulate production.
- That is why you have a number of experimental stations, pasture research, all that has been going on.

Is the Minister saying that he has failed in these areas and so he needs someone else to help to do it? We have been told nothing about it. We are just told blandly that the Authority will do this. Is the Ministry of Agriculture going to be scrapped? Because without more, what are you duplicating? We have not been told a single word of what will be the new role of the Ministry of Agriculture, if all the functions of the Ministry of Agriculture are now being transferred into this

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Authority, and I think the Honourable Member that spoke before me from the AFC asked some very valid questions, and they should be answered.

Because let us look at what this Bill said. I want to draw your attention, Madame, to... not page 10, but the section *General Powers, Duties and Functions of the Authority*. It starts off, that is Clause 16 and that Clause 16 outlines in great details what the Ministry of Agriculture should be doing.

First of all it says:

*Preparing plans and undertaking or causing to be undertaken studies to determine the economic, technical, and other feasibility projects to be undertaken.*

*Presenting any scheme to the Minister of Agriculture for his approval ...*

Of course, everything is with the approval of the Minister:

*... implementing and executing any schemes approved by the Minister, administering on behalf of the Minister any supportive programmes...*

So things like the National Dairy Development Programme and all these things are said to be supportive

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programmes and therefore the function of this Authority really, is to take over all these supportive programmes, collecting, analyzing, storing and disseminating any data or information. These are functions which, at least while I was there, the Ministry of Agriculture normally carried out.

It goes on:

*... advising and influencing policy makers...*

I thought that was what the Minister of Agriculture was constantly engaged in doing!

And it goes on to identify some other functions now which clearly indicate that the Government is also using this Bill, this is what they have not told us about too, to exercise political and other control over what is largely a private sector driven industry. Very subtly for example, one of the functions of this Authority: operating auction yards to facility the sale of livestock and livestock products. Should not be a private sector driven initiative? It goes on and I am raising the question; would the Minister answer? That is a sector that is basically private sector driven and motivated, but you are now saying you are setting up an Authority, but seeking to circumscribe the scope with which the private sector can expand in this area, and you are telling us this is going to help production?

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**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr Corbin, and Honourable Members I think this is a convenient place to stop for a break. I do not know Mr Corbin, you were here

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** I do not know...

**16:00H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

**16:53H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Honourable Member Mr Corbin.

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** Thank you, Mde Speaker. I think at the time of the break I adequately established that no rational explanation has been properly presented to this Parliament for the presentation of this Bill. *Prima facie*, I established or pointed out that it has to be an excuse to satisfy certain conditionalities; an excuse to establish a high-paying job bureaucracy to shift formal responsibilities to the Ministry of Agriculture, to this entity, but without providing any explanations as to what the new role of the Ministry of Agriculture would be.

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And I was at the time highlighting those areas which clearly illustrate that the functions which should be carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, as presently mandated are now enshrined as the responsibility of this new entity to be established. And we have been given absolutely no explanation about this. I do not want to highlight every aspect of the duplication of function, but all one has to do is to read Section 16, and it has several sub-sections right unto letter (y), to highlight the many functions that this Authority will be carrying out. And we have not been told whether these functions will be duplicated by the Ministry of Agriculture, although we are going to be setting up a high-level bureaucracy to do exactly what the Ministry of Agriculture is supposed to be doing.

I just want to make two other examples that are of importance, and I think people should know. At 16(2)(r), we are told that this Authority

*... would be providing veterinary service to livestock farmers, establishing and maintaining civilian systems, inspecting hatcheries and processing facilities, so that ...*

And then it is going on to the next one, (s):

*... providing and having farmers' access to approved genetic materials to be used*

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*in upgrading the domestic livestock  
production.*

Now, the Minister was boasting, not so long in this Parliament, how this great importation of genetic stock from overseas that he was carrying on in the Ministry of Agriculture. At one time he told us about the new breed of sheep, I think, that was brought from overseas. It is not the first time... the way he spoke, he obviously, in his youth, he did not know that is not something new in this country, that we have been doing that for decades in Guyana, but I forgive him for his youth. We have always been importing genetic stock; at one time, we bought Black Belly from Barbados; we brought stock from as far as Ireland, so that we can replenish the breed here in Guyana.

But the point I am making here, is that these are functions which are presently being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture. He has a special unit. I saw him posing with a hat and a coat and a long boots the other day, showing off this sheep, under the Ministry of Agriculture. But these very functions are now being transferred to this Authority. So could the Minister tell us whether he is scrapping this section in the Ministry of Agriculture? Is he dismissing all the staff and transferring them over to this new body, with higher salaries? And you will understand, Madame, when I

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spoke about not needing a Minister, because everything in the Ministry of Agriculture will be moved over.

This very important issue of the foot-and-mouth disease, and if you look very carefully as to the functions that are being transferred, one has to ask who will be in charge of the foot-and-mouth control at the borders, say with Brazil, that we are speaking about? All these functions could legitimately be in the hands of the new Authority, and so, unless he has some proper explanations as to what really is his intention, which we are really not being told, I think this House is being shortchanged.

I also alluded to the fact that some of the functions of this Authority being proposed, encroached upon the area which should be exclusively private sector, and seeks to interfere in the legitimate expansion of private initiative, and I am not making any wild statement here. If one looks very carefully at what is happening in the functioning of this Authority, I hinted earlier about the operation of the auction yard, that are being set up by this body, as an initiative that really should be left to private sector initiative. But if we go further on, Madame, you will see that this Authority goes beyond just encroaching on areas that the private sector should be allowed. It seeks to invade, control, and manipulate the private sector in the expansion of trade in the livestock industry.

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If you look at Clause 17, it will tell you how and I will quote for you:

*A person who wants to engage in the trade or export of livestock or process, trade and export of livestock products, shall apply to the Authority for a licence to do so. The application per licence, however, shall be on a form determined by the Minister and accompanied by a prescribed fee. The Authority may call on the applicant to show by documentary evidence, that he is capable of engaging in the business to which he is seeking a licence.*

It sounding very much like the Legal Practitioners Act; situated in there, Attorney General, licence. So that a legitimate entrepreneur, before he can venture on what should be free enterprise; before he gets a licence to do what is his thinking, in his thinking it is a profitable operation, he has to satisfy the Minister of Agriculture that yes, I could make money, I have the capacity to do so. This is what it is saying here. Yes, it says...if he is capable in engaging in the business in which he is seeking a licence, and there are other clauses which confirm, because if you go further, he has to produce records, books, stock; in other words, a complete regulatory arrangement which will put the potential



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exporter at the mercy, not of this Authority, Madame, he will be at the mercy of the Minister, so that you are inserting a level of political control and manipulation over the exercise of what should be exclusively private sector enterprise. That is what this Bill is doing.

Now let me go a little further to explain this point. If and when the Authority refuses such a licence, the Minister, Madame, is now made a judge; the Minister becomes a judge. He is almost like the Caribbean Court of Justice, because when the Authority refuses to give him its licence, which the Minister initially has an involvement in, because he sets up the guidelines, he sets up the arrangements under which the person could get the licence, but then the Authority says, well, according to the rules that the Minister set up, you may not have a licence. But who does the man go to? Who does this business approach? It says at Clause 20:

*Any person aggrieved of an order of the Authority may appeal to the Minister;*

Hear this quote now: You have to appeal to the Minister within thirty days, and the Minister shall have thirty days to dispose of the matter of his appeal. And then it goes on to put these magical words at 20(3):

*The Minister may after considering the appeal and the report, and after affording*

*the applicant an opportunity of being heard, give his decision.*

The Minister is the first authority that sets the rules and so when one is aggrieved, you have to appeal to the Minister, and his decision shall be final. This is a businessman, Madame, who wants to export livestock, who wants to get his product out, poultry meat exported, he goes for a licence, he is ready to get his stuff out, and he is caught up with a bureaucracy that intends to harass him, and he gets a runaround when he wants his business to grow, he has to wait; he has thirty days; his stuff is locked up someplace waiting for the flight. It is refused by the Minister. Only then does he have recourse to the judicial system - only then - only then.

And therefore I am saying the manner in which the Bill or this law is being constructed, even if that is not the intention of the administration, provides the opportunity for legitimate entrepreneurs to be hindered in the exercise of their trade, because of political control and manipulation. *[Applause]*

Then it provides for a lot of intrusion in the private records of these people; look at Section 21(3):

*The authorized person may require from the person found on the premises, place or vehicle referred to in subsection 1, for the production of any books, records, or*

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*documents related to his trade, or export of any livestock, or process, trade or export of any livestock product, and may require the furnishing of copies of or extracts from the books, records, or other documents.*

This reminds me of your Medical Bill, Sir, when you are going into the offices of doctors and so on. This is what this reminds me of here. We are seeing a repetition in a different way, where there will be intrusion. If, like the Legal Practitioners Bill, Hon Prime Minister, if the Commissioner of Inland Revenue, now GRA, has a problem with any taxpayer in this country, the law already gives him the power to go do what he likes to get records, and therefore if there is problem here, you do not have to put in special laws, these draconian powers in these Authorities, but clearly these Authorities are intended to hamper and intrude in the exercise of free enterprise in this country.

Finally, in this area, Madame, this Authority will be posing a serious, additional financial burden on the producers of livestock in this country. Why? Because if you look at Clause 23(1), it states financial provision and we have not heard anything about it from any of the speakers so far this afternoon in the House. We have heard about commitment - legislative commitment; we have heard about Googling, but we have not heard

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anything about how this Authority will be financed, and it is here. It says, the fine of the Authority, and I think there some be some correction here, it look like in the mining industry, they going into mining and so ... Prime Minister, is your authority they going into now? Anyway, I think it is a typo.

*The finds of the Authority ... maybe f-i-n-e-s ... or funds,* I do not know which one it is, no wonder we have two sets of laws being passed. No wonder they were speaking so out of context, Madame. We have different documents before us, but mine says:

*The finds of the Authority shall be utilized by it to meet expenses in connection with its duties and functions under this Act, including salaries, remuneration or allowances of any Director, Chief Executive Officer, secretary, advisors, experts, consultants, officers, employees of the Authority.*

So that, while at the moment, appropriation of funds is carried out through this Parliament, through the normal allocation at Budget time, to the Ministry of Agriculture to undertake certain functions, we have a situation where those functions are being transferred to an Authority, and the cost for the upkeep of this Authority will now be the Livestock Producers of Guyana. That is

what is happening here; so additional financial burden.

*[Noisy Interruption]*

Then, we move on ... I know what I am saying. You are saying that the funds, shall be utilized, but it goes on further, Madame. At the earlier section that I think the Honourable Member was happy to read, about the independence of this Authority, this Authority that is so independent that the Minister has to approve everything that it does, but that notwithstanding, Section 11 points very clearly to the many terms and conditions, salaries, et cetera, which employees at this Authority may now obtain, separate and distinct from any conditions which are limited to the old public service regulations, and the burdens of that being passed to the livestock farmers through the fines that we are told.

The other issue here is that the Minister - that is the Prime Minister, was anxious to point me to Section 23(2), but what he is failing to understand is that this is another device to remove from Parliamentary scrutiny the way in which monies are disbursed in an area that was formerly controlled by a government ministry, and where officers were under certain known and published salary scales. *[Interruption: 'That is conspiracy.']* This is not conspiracy; this is as clear as day. It is very clear here. Yes, already, Mde Speaker, without this law being passed here today, we have had at every budget debate to point out the number of officers that have been

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removed from the public service salary conditions and scales, and who have been employed on contract, but this is a nice way of getting rid of all of that, because you do not have any estimate coming to the Parliament about terms and conditions of office.

And I want to make it clear that I do not believe it is wrong for us to pay professional officers adequately. We on this side of the House believe that if you are going to get proper service, you must pay professionals adequately if you are to get competent professionals to do your work. It is this Government, Mde Speaker, who believed, in 1992, that you could get professionals to work for \$1 a day, and so many of the competent professionals, who were there administering the system, were forced to flee elsewhere, or perhaps it was a political device to get rid of them.

So we have never been reluctant to accept this premise that you should pay proper salaries to officers. What we are concerned about is the discriminatory manner in which such discretion is being exercised, where you have public servants working, some are receiving one level of salaries, but you employ another set of persons, doing the same work, in the same category, in the same Ministry, but out of political patronage, you put them on contract, paying a lot more than persons who work next to them, and that is what we have been complaining about.

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And I am saying now with this Bill that is before us, Mde Speaker, we are placed in a situation where additional burdens will also be placed on the livestock farmers, and this Parliament will be robbed the scrutiny.

With those remarks, Mde Speaker, it is clear that this Parliament requires now the Minister to really begin his presentation, because so far, as I said, we have heard absolutely nothing that would convince us that this Authority to be established will:

- (i) Help agriculture production, unless of course he admitting that nothing is being done at agriculture, and he said to the contrary;
- (ii) It is a duplication of the functions of the Ministry of Agriculture without explanation;
- (iii) It is an additional burden on the livestock farmers of this country, and the authoritarian nature of the legislation, which my colleague spoke about this afternoon, places too much power in the Authority to manipulate and interfere with the growth of the private sector in this country.

We cannot support this Bill in this present form.  
*[Applause]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Hon Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Thank you very much, Mde Speaker. Mde Speaker, first let me commend my colleagues on this side of the House for their excellent presentations, in representing the objectives and the noble intentions of this very important piece of legislation. Certainly, it is a piece of legislation that the stakeholders and the beneficiaries, and I am speaking of our farmers and all those who are involved in the livestock sector, will find as necessary and meaningful and relevant.

Also, Mde Speaker, let me also thank the Members of the Opposition, for their observations. I welcome the questions, but sometimes I think we will have to disagree on our understanding or our analysis, or certainly, an evaluation of the direction of the sector and what are the true objectives. But we must recognise in a vibrant and functional democracy such as ours, the Opposition is entitled to differ, and they are entitled to represent their views freely, and as a responsible Government, it is also our intention to respond to clarify and to provide as much information and provide the facts as we have them, so all Members of the National Assembly, and the people of Guyana, will be able to judge. *[Applause]*



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Mde Speaker, allow me to address some of the issues that were covered; some of the concerns raised by the Honourable Member Jennifer Wade, the Honourable Member Sheila Holder. Some of those issues were addressed by my colleagues, but I just want to touch a little on the point raised by Honourable Member Wade, and it regards three issues, that is:

1. *The composition of the Board* - A very important point and I think that point too was raised by the Honourable Member Sheila Holder and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition too, the composition or the makeup of the Board. And let me say that this Bill provides for the broadest of representation of involved stakeholders. It provides for the involvement of the people who matter: the cattle people, the poultry people, the people in apiculture, and all other elements of the livestock sector, they will be represented as they are nominated by their respective organisations. And that is provided for in the Bill.

And sometimes, you know, when I started out in the presentation of this Bill, I wanted us to talk about what exists today, and where we want to take the sector. I did not spend much time harping on the past, because if you look at the past and at the track record and if you look at our history, and the way in which the livestock sector

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was treated, the way in which agriculture was treated, the manner in which farmers were treated, it is a sad, sad story, and I did not go there, because I wanted us to be productive. I wanted us to be constructive, and I thought that feeling would have been shared by the Members of the Opposition, but sadly, it was not. But the composition of the Board is clearly intended to ensure wider stakeholder participation, but more so, ensuring that we have a Board with the requisite technical skills. This is not a Board to be manipulated. Mde Speaker, this is a feature of all Boards in all entities. There has to be a pilot. There has to be a pilot that that has to take the Board to be approved. There must be a pilot. There must be that individual who is responsible and accountable to the nation, who comes to this National Assembly, and will report on behalf of that Authority. What do we want to say, that in Parliament, we do not have a representation of these different entities? And this is not a new feature. This exists in similar and such institutions and entities, in terms of how it is the Boards are derived.

But more importantly, too, because there is also the view that this was an attempt to manipulate, looking at the composition of the Board was an attempt to manipulate the Board.

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But I think, Mde Speaker, without not getting too personal, there are individuals from the Opposition who at one time or the other, served on Boards that fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, and more specifically, served on Boards that fall under this Minister of Agriculture, and those individuals will tell you, in the manner and the freedom and the independence that those Boards have to conduct their functions.

So this joke or this gaff about manipulation and interference and all sorts of other descriptions, is irrelevant. The Minister referred to into the legislation is not an individual; it is not just an office; it is a Constitutional office that has to carry out...who else would you put here - to be announced later, or to be determined by somebody? You will put a nonentity? It is taking the argument...I mean, this attempt to create impression that this Government, what the Honourable Member talked about we are control freaks. We are not control freaks. We are responsible leaders, who are very serious about carrying out our responsibilities [*Applause*] and if you tell me that if every single day, every Member of this Government would get up and focus and dedicated, and with all commitment, carry out their responsibility to the best of his or

her ability, if that is control freakism; so be it.

*[Interruption]*

2. The other issue, Mde Speaker, that the Honourable Member, my good friend Ms Jennifer Wade raised was regarding the MMA/ADA. And I want to say the functioning of the MMA/ADA today is superior to any time it has been in our history, including, and especially compared with when the PNCR was in office - the PNC was in Government. Let me give you an example, in 1991 or 1992 when the PPP/C came in office, just about forty percent of the total area was under cultivation. Today, it is just about ninety-five percent total under cultivation taken up by farmers. *[Applause]* And I can quote other things, I can go through the list of other features and other developments that have taken place, in terms of the number of leases which have been issued; in terms of the work, investments that have been made; areas that have been made available to livestock within the MMA/ADA area, in excess of 160,000 acres. The farmers who benefit right across Region 5; take for instance, the farmers at Paradise, El Dorado, Belladrum, Berbice Nos. 40, 41, 28, 29, Bushlot, Hopetown, where once were none and support was given them directly for their livestock improvement done by the MMA/ADA.

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So to create this impression that the MMA/ADA is this oppressive entity, not supporting farmers; well why is it that we have a take up of ninety-five percent; why is it that every single day, more farmers clamor for land? Why more farmers clamor for land and clamor to benefit from the services of the MMA/ADA if they were so bad? So I hope that that addresses, Mde Speaker, the issues raised regarding the MMA/ADA.

3. The other issue raised by the Honourable Member too, relates to the concerns regarding the OIE Report, and Guyana being put free of foot-and-mouth disease without vaccination, which was obtained in 2004. But Mde Speaker, we, all of us here, should be proud of that fact, and all of us should not only be proud of that achievement, but we should also be proud of the fact, that every year we have worked hard, consistently, collaborating with our international partners in maintaining that status, because it is difficult to maintain.

With the opening of the Takatu Bridge there too, and greater traffic flow between, too, it becomes a much more cumbersome task to ensure that we maintain that status. Why? Because Brazil does not enjoy that status; Venezuela does not enjoy that status. And we share large border areas, a lot of it not properly manned. And the systems that

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have been put in place have allowed us to maintain that status. But the question was asked: have we in a material way, benefitted from this status, meaning have we been able to carry out exports? And I want to respond by saying clearly, the answer is yes. But we have been able to do that in small amounts. Why? The scattered population today in Guyana is just about 300,000 heads. There is not a sufficient flock. We have moved it, it was 200,000 about 1994, when they did the last cattle census; in 2007 we carried out another cattle census - we do cattle census too; yes! We do not put it on the voters' list, we put them on a cattle census! *[Laughter]*

But Mde Speaker, we do that because we are able to track our cattle population, so that we can do proper planning, and at this present time, we do not have that critical mass to embark on large-scale export. That is the reality. And this is how, Mde Speaker, we are hoping through the Authority, and taking this approach, we can then develop that flock - that critical mass - that can make us an exporter and be able to tap into that.

You know for too long as a nation, we always like to talk about potential, and not willing to take the hard steps to realize those potentials. So yes, we recognise that there is this potential where we can export beef, and yes, we can export our livestock, and where we can full up our

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supermarket shelves with processed poultry products and processed livestock products in Guyana. But to get there, to get to that point where we can, as it were, move to the next level requires changes; requires improvement; requires modernisation, and this is what we are doing. If the Honorable Leader of the Opposition, and that can probably explain why it is that Guyana's development was stymied when his party was in Government, if they are satisfied with less or with a basic level of achievement, I want to say we are not, and whilst we have made progress, take for instance, within cattle, we are not satisfied. We believe much more can be done, and we are doing something to ensure that much more can be achieved. We are not just throwing back and saying, well, we have achieved this, and that is it.

4. So this, Mde Speaker, allow me to address the other issue raised by the Honourable Member Mrs Holder, because as I said, we are obligated to provide answers too, and I want to provide answers to the issues that were raised. I will ignore the shenanigans and the wickedness that I am trying to carry out here today - her description, her unfortunate and misplaced description, but I can understand her. But let us look in terms of her concern about the excessive

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powers of the Minister. Where is this excessive power? Where is this excessive power? Where is this excessive power? If the Honourable Members had taken time to read, and Mde Speaker, I wish to refer to the Honourable Members, to the following pieces of legislation which were passed by this National Assembly.

- First let us look at the Livestock Improvement Act.
- Let us also refer to the Animal Movement and Disease Prevention Act.
- Let us look to the Slaughter of Cattle Control Act.
- Let us look to the Veterinarians Act.

All of those pieces of legislation or those Acts, they provide, for the same things that are being consolidated within this particular legislation. So there is no new invention. They are already on the books. It is not excessive or additional policies; they are basic regulatory functions that have to be carried out by an office. And if you check the various legislations, I will refer you to New Zealand. I will refer you to one existing in Jamaica. I will refer you to why is it there are the several we looked at out of Africa, in terms of livestock development, and you will see that factor; you will see that trend.



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So it is nobody wants to control and wants to have excessive powers. Those powers are already provided for, but as I said at the outset, you have various units, various entities; you have five/six different pieces of legislation that are addressing these things. Here is an effort to consolidate. Here is an effort to bring this together, so that we can have proper coordination, so that we can plan properly, so that we can work with the different stakeholders in moving this sector forward, and it is more or less mirroring and reflecting what already exists.

So I want to assure the Honourable Members, just a cursory glance at those legislations would show that this is no invention, this is no superpower move that is being made to give the Minister less headache ... And in fact, Mde Speaker, if we look at some of the international trade agreements, if we look at the sanitary and the phyto-sanitary arrangements that we are supposed to sign onto, there is a degree, a very high degree, of political responsibility in terms of managing the different systems. There is a lot of political responsibility and accountability. How else would that be achieved and how else would that be reflected in this regard?

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5. Let me also speak to the issue in terms of mis-consumption. It is a very interesting topic, because due to the income of cow milk, I am able to be here. I am proud to say that after school and before school, I had to be taking milk out in Prashad Nagar, and what have you. So I know a bit about cattle; I know a little bit about poultry too. That is what contributed or may be responsible for my family's upkeep. So I am very much aware of that.

But Mde Speaker, this bit about mis-consumption. We have seen over time an increase, but there was a time during which there was a decline in terms of milk production. You know why? When we signed on to the various trade liberalization arrangements, and when we allow, as a nation, I do not think it is bad, but when we allow the free importation of milk, remember there was a time when powdered milk was banned, and this thing was banned, and then the other thing was banned, when those things were removed and when we entered into various bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, we saw that there was a lot of importation of milk, and some of it, these products, displaced the local milk, if fact I think it was only in 2008, when the prices on the international market went up by eight hundred percent, it gave our dairy farmers

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the incentive to produce, and that is why increasingly, we are seeing much more milk production and much more farmers that are getting back involved.

So they become a casualty of trade liberalization, and it is part of the dynamics of global trade, and we have to work, and that is why we hope through this Authority, we will be able to have the structure and the systems to better protect, to better make our farmers and those people much more resilient, a basic understanding would tell you that. But Mde Speaker, we hope that through this legislation, we can protect and provide more for these circumstances.

6. The other issue raised by the Honourable Member Mrs Holder, deals with the issue of staffing. Very good! And I am happy that that point was raised. And I must tell you that in the drafting of this legislation, the Guyana Public Service Union was afforded the opportunity to make an input, we provided much information as to what the intentions were, what the content of the Bill, and also this dialogue with the Guyana Public Service Union will continue. Again, we have always boasted, we are a pro-workers government; we respect the right of our workers; we respect the rights of our trade unions and that

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is why this approach was taken. And I want to assure you that workers' rights and employees...I met personally with all the employees who may or may not be affected by this, and we have already had some discussions with that, and the employees within the Ministry of Agriculture know this. They are eagerly looking forward to this entity, because they know that it is good for the sector, it will make them much more effective in their service, and it is good for Guyana. So there is no need for us to be creating unnecessary panic and unnecessary unease, as the Honourable Member is seeking to do.

7. The other issue, Mde Speaker, I wish to raise with regard to the presentation made by the Honourable Member, Leader of the Opposition, and as a former Minister of Agriculture, I listened very attentively to him, because I am quite sure he would have much more experience than I do, having served in the PNC Government as a Minister, so I, out of respect, and certainly out of my own education too, I listened to him very attentively, but I must say also as a farmer, I think, I am not sure if Mr Corbin is still a farmer, but as a farmer too, I am quite sure he is speaking out of some interest here. But Mde Speaker, he talked about contradiction. Well, and his point about contradiction was, if the Minister of

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Agriculture is reporting that so many things have been achieved, why they try to create an authority?

But what he is telling us is that, well, we must settle for the minimum. And we are not prepared to settle for the minimum, and for us, the achievements that we have listed within the livestock sector, we believe ... those are minimum; much more can be done. And I want to tell him, with this Authority and some of the other investments and interventions that we are making; the best days for the agriculture sector are ahead of us. They are not behind us. They are ahead of us. And this is what we are seeking to do. These best days are what we are seeking to achieve. So there is no contradiction, Honourable Member.

8. The next issue which he raised was the issue in terms of manipulation of the private sector, and the interference - the Government is seeking to interfere. But under our obligation to our national laws and our international laws, the Government has the responsibility to ensure that we have the necessary regulations; to ensure that we have our animal health system intact, that the training is conducted in a way and that we are compliant not only with national laws, but also international

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obligations, and the Government has that responsibility.

So the functions you see here described are not interference. They are not a manipulation; they are merely to ensure that regulations are there and these regulations are carried out -very simple. And this exists in other areas, and this exists in every single country that has a vibrant and competitive livestock industry. Show me a country that has a livestock sector where the government does not have the responsibility to ensure that it is in charge of regulation. Show me that one. You will not find it. You can Google it all night, all day, but you will not find it, because it does not exist. The Government has that right. So it is not about interference.

And let me turn to a recent Guyana Business Outlook Survey, and I wish to point out that it was done by Ram and McRae, no friend of this Government, .and in that survey, a survey was done of the private sector. The private sector was asked to evaluate the performance of the public sector, and a number of entities were raised, and at the top of that, Mde Speaker, was the Ministry of Agriculture with twenty-six them. *[Applause]* Why? Because we as a Government, we have deliberately, we have done that from day one since 1992, we have deliberately sought to engage and involve all stakeholders, and the private sector has the confidence

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that the policies and the programmes that we have in place are good for them. They do not see us as interfering.

But I want to go a step further. This legislation here was also as a result of representation made by the private sector itself, and the private sector representative from the livestock sector, were involved in the drafting of this legislation. And it was us who wanted to ensure that we come up with the best system, the best arrangement, to move this sector. That is why we went out to all stakeholders.

I want to make another point too, Mde Speaker, if you would allow me. The functions and the creation of a Livestock Development Board, or a Livestock Development Authority, has been taking place in Guyana for over a decade. And I just want to refer you to Dr Steve Surujbally, who was the first head of the NDDP, and he will refer you, and there are others who are involved in the livestock sector, who will tell you about the earlier efforts to create such an entity. So this is not something that was pulled out of the sky. This is not some compulsory act that the Government has to perform because someone told it to. This is because there is national consensus amongst stakeholders within the livestock sector, and we need that coordinating body to ensure that we can move the sector forward. Those are the facts.

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So you know it is very difficult that the Honourable Member would pick up actual legislation before him and read things that are not there into it, and I think the Honourable Member perhaps probably has a very fertile sense of imagination, has a very fertile imagination, and I will just, Mde Speaker, I will just urge the Honourable Member not to let his imagination get the upper hand in terms of his perspective.

But Mde Speaker, if we read the legislation carefully, we will see that all the functions; all the duties that are prescribed, are done with the sole intention of ensuring that our livestock sector is coordinated and it is better organised. There will be no encroachment of the activities of the private sector - absolutely none. There will be none. In fact, the Government is not involved in any livestock activities. Our farm at GSA is to provide livestock products for the students who go there. It is not for commercial purposes. The NARI unit that we have, it is there for genetic improvement, nothing else. The unit that we have at the GDF farm, is for the production of genetic materials and supporting the army in terms of meeting its dietary needs.

So there is no need for the Government to get involved in the livestock sector. In fact we are setting up, as my colleague Irfaan Ali pointed out; we are through this legislation creating the enabling framework for greater livestock involvement and investment within the sector.



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I know the blows are too much to take, but Mde Speaker, you know, the Honourable Member, the individual did not make a presentation, but I just want to say, talking about new investments within the agriculture sector, what livestock in particular, what new activities have there been within the livestock sector, and I just want to refer the House to IPED's Report, and in 2009, IPED provided to livestock farmers alone, 1,184 loans, meaning 1,184 farmers went in for loans, went and took loans from IPED, so they can invest within the livestock sector. Just look at those numbers alone. That is higher than the previous year, and it also speaks to the issue that whether farmers are interested, and whether there is that amount of activity that is reported, really taking place within the sector.

In conclusion, Mde Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear that the Ministry of Agriculture will continue to carry out its functions with a degree of responsibility, with consideration and in the interests of the farmers, and this, the creation of this Authority, is to reinforce the coordination and the kind of activities that are needed to support the livestock sector. This is what this legislation is seeking to do.

And I want to also make it absolutely clear that there will be no additional financial burdens on the livestock sector, so we do not need for consumers or practitioners, an attempt is being made to scare them. There will be

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no additional financial burden, and I want to encourage Members of the National Assembly, especially the colleagues of the Opposite side, to reconsider their position. This here is good for our farmers. When you go and you talk to your constituents, and you honestly tell them what in this legislation, that we will go into your constituents and tell them, they will tell you this is good for them, when you go and talk to the farmers in Buxton or the farmers at Anne's Grove, or you go to the farmers all the way in Mahaica or in West Berbice, or in East Bank, or in Linden, or in any part of Guyana, the livestock farmers, will tell you that that this is good for them and this is good for the livestock sector.

With those comments, Mde Speaker, I wish to move that the Bill be read a second time. *[Applause]*

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a Second time.**

### **IN COMMITTEE**

**The Chairperson:** Honourable Members, there are 32 sections to this Bill. We have no amendments, and with your permission, to double up all the sections at one go. Is that alright?

**Mr Robert H O Corbin:** Mde Chairperson, you said there are no amendments, but based on what the Prime Minister has said to me while I was speaking, my Bill

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reads...at least at one section, *finds*. He said it is a typo, but if it is the same document circulated, it probably gives us the impression there may be two sets of documents being circulated in the Parliament. I have not seen any amendments circulated. So if I could be guided by the Clerk, if there was any amendment circulated, at least the Gazetted copy that I have, that said f-i-n-d-s. I do not know if there has been a change. I just need to be guided.

**The Chairperson:** According to the Clerk, there are no amendments circulated, and I understand from the Clerk that it is a typographical error, and those changes are dealt with by the Clerk generally.

So shall we put Clauses or is there a call for a Division from the Government's side? I need to be guided. Hon Minister, are you asking for a Division?

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Yes, Chairperson.

**The Chairperson:** Alright. Mr Clerk, would you please take the Division?

FOR  
ABSTAIN

Rev. Gilbert  
Mrs Budhan-Punalall

AGAINST

Mr Fernandes

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Dr Mahadeo

Ms Kissoon

Mrs Sheila Holder

Mr Whittaker

Ms Wade

Mr Ramjattan

Mr Seeraj

Dr Austin

Mr Parmanand Persaud

Mr Mervyn Williams

Mr Neendkumar

Mrs David-Blair

Mr Lumumba

Mr Elliot

Mr Nandlall

Mr Aubrey Norton

Mr Nagamootoo

Mr Danny

Mr Khan

Mrs Sampson

Mrs Edwards

Ms Amna Ally

Mr Chand

Mr Scott

Mr Atkinson

Mrs Lawrence

Mr Nokta

Mr Basil Williams

Mrs Chandarpal

Mrs Backer

Miss Teixeira

Mr Carberry

Mr Ramotar

Mr Murray

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Mr Ali

Mr Corbin

Mr Prashad

Ms Webster

Dr Ramsaran

Mr Nadir

Mr Benn

Dr Anthony

Mr Lall

Dr Westford

Mr Robert Persaud

Mrs Rodrigues-Birkett

Dr Ramsammy

Mr Baksh

Mr Rohee

Mr Hinds

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32

17

3

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**The Chairperson:** Honourable Members, 32 Members voted for the Motion, 17 against the Motion and 3 declined to vote. So the Motion is carried. *[Applause]*

**Clauses 1 to 32**

Members, I need to put the clauses 1-32. Is there any objection? I will take all the clauses together. Alright.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Clauses 1-32 as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.**

**Assembly Resumed**

The Hon Minister of Agriculture

**Hon Robert M Persaud:** Thank you very much, Mde Speaker. I wish to report that the Guyana Livestock Development Bill 2009 was considered in Committee, and passed without any amendments, and I wish that the Bill be read for the third time, and passed as printed.

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**Bill reported without amendment, read the Third time and passed as printed.**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Members, this concludes our business for today.

The Hon Prime Minister

**Hon Samuel AA Hinds:** Mde Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned until Monday, 11

January 2010 at 14:00H

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Assembly now stands adjourned to Monday, 11 January 2010 at 14:00H

*Adjourned Accordingly at 17:52H*