

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY
OFFICIAL REPORT**

[VOLUME 7]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

197th Sitting

2 p.m.

Tuesday, 23rd October, 1979

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (63)
Speaker**

Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., Speaker

Members of the Government – People’s National Congress (46)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development

Senior Ministers (12)

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Economic Development and Co-operatives

Cde. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Works and Transport

Cde. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
and Leader of the House

- Cde. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Home Affairs
- * Cde. H. Green,
Minister of Health, Housing and Labour
- * Cde. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
- * Cde. F.E. Hope
Minister of Finance
- * Cde. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,
Minister of Agriculture
- * Cde. M. Shahabuddeen, C.C.h., S.C.,
Attorney General and
Minister of Justice
- * Cde. V.R. Teekah,
Minister of Education, Social
Development and Culture
- * Cde. R.E. Jackson,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
- * Cde. J.A. Tyndall, A.A.,
Minister of Trade and
Consumer Protection

Ministers (2)

- Cde. O.E. Clarke,
Minister – Regional
(East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Cde. C.A. Nascimento,
Minister, Office of the Prime Minister

Ministers of State (10)

- Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

***Non – elected Ministers**

Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State, Ministry of
Economic Development and Co-operatives

Cde. K.B. Bancroft, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Mazaruni/Potaro)

Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P.,
Minister of State – Regional
(Essequibo Coast/West Demerara)

Cde. J.R. Thomas,
Minister of State, Office of the
Prime Minister

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin,
Minister of State for Youth and Sport,
Ministry of National Development

Cde. S. Prashad,
Minister of State – Regional
(East Demerara/West Coast Berbice)

Cde. R.C Van Sluytman,
Minister of State,
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. L.A. Durant,
Minister of State – Regional,
(North West)

* Cde. F.U.A. Campbell,
Minister of State of Information,
Ministry of National Development

Parliamentary Secretaries (5)

Cde. M.M. Ackman, C.C.H.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the
Prime Minister and Government Chief Whip

Cde. E.L. Ambrose,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

***Non – elected Ministers**

Cde. M. Corrica,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education, Social Development
and Culture

Cde. E.M. Bynoe,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade
and Consumer Protection

Cde. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Economic
Development and Co-operatives

Other Members (15)

Cde. W.G. Carrington, C.C.H.

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler

Cde. J. Gill

Cde. W. Hussain

Cde. K.M.E. Jonas

Cde. J.G. Ramson

Cde. P.A. Rayman

Cde. A. Salim

Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Cde. S.H. Sukhu, M.S.

Cde. C.A. Sukul, J.P.

Cde. H.A. Taylor

Cde. L.E. Willems

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen

Members of the Opposition (16)

(i) People's Progressive Party (14)

Leader of the Opposition (1)

Cde. C. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ram Karran,
Deputy Speaker

(Absent – on leave)

Other Members (12)

Cde. J. Jagan
Cde. Reepu. Daman Persaud, J.P., Opposition Chief Whip
Cde. Narbada Persaud
Cde. C. Collymore
Cde. S.F. Mohamed
Cde. I. Basir
Cde. C.C. Belgrave
Cde. R. Ally
Cde. Dalchand, J.P.
Cde. Dindayal
Cde. H. Nokta
Cde. P. Sukhai

(Absent)

(ii) Liberator Party (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, J.P.
Mr. M.A. Abraham

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – F.A. Narain, A.A.

Acting Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – A. Knight

23.10.79
2.05 p.m.

National Assembly

2.05 – 2.15 p.m.

PRAYERS

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS –SECOND AND THIRD READING

CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to effect an alteration to article 82 of the Constitution in accordance with article 73 thereof. [**The Attorney General and Minister of Justice on behalf of the Prime Minister**]

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice (Cde. Shahabuddeen): Cde. Speaker, on behalf of the Cde. Prime Minister I beg to move the Second Reading of the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1979 as corrected when it was laid in this House last week.

Cde. Speaker, the Bill before the House this afternoon is in essence consequential on certain decisions which this House took last year. We had a number of arguments in the course of certain proceedings concerning the Constitution which were held in this Chamber in 1978. Certain decisions were taken. It seems to me that for the present purposes they may be classified in three groups. First, there was a decision by this House that there was need in this land for a new Constitution; a Constitution which it was hoped would be more consistent with the nature and character of our society and more in keeping with the history, the aims and goals of our society. The second branch of those decisions which were taken last year was that we would be establishing a Constituent Assembly as a piece of constitutional machinery intended to create the desired new Constitution. And the third of the three decisions which we took last year – so it seems to me – necessarily implied that that new Constitution would ultimately fall for

consideration by this same Assembly and for enactment by this same Parliament and that consequentially the next elections would in fact be held under the new Constitution.

Now, giving effect to these decisions, on the 21st of July last year the National Assembly accepted that there would be need for an extension of the life of Parliament for a period which would be sufficiently long to accommodate the execution and completion of these processes and so on that date the National Assembly passed the Constitution of the life of Parliament for 15 months as from 26th July last year. There was a parallel decision also taken by the National Assembly on the same date, namely, the 21st July, 1978. By that decision which took the form of a Resolution the National Assembly converted itself into a Constituent Assembly, to be assisted by requisite advisory personnel for the purpose of holding the necessary public consultation, gathering the evidence and the thinking of our people, and ultimately framing and drafting the desired Constitution.

Now, that was the first time, as comrades and hon. Members may recall, that so serious an attempt was made to involve our people at large in the process of Constitution-making in this country. It had never been attempted before, I think. I do believe I am on safe ground in saying that. So the establishment of the Constituent Assembly was an epoch-making event in the history of our country. Its functions were equally important and we see this importance reflected in two ways, first in the composition of the Constituent Assembly and, secondly, in the range and scope of its functions.

The Constituent Assembly, as we all know, was made to consist of all members of the National Assembly, Government Members and Opposition Members, voting members and non-voting members but, more than that, it was given the power to co-opt advisory personnel who were to constitute an advisory panel. That is in relation to its composition. For the range of its activities the Constituent Assembly, we will recall, was by its constituent resolution given power to invite the submission of memoranda from individuals and organisations and from the public at large. Secondly, it was given power to take oral evidence from any person or organisation who

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might wish to do so. Then, thirdly, with a view to reaching out to the people in the country districts and in other parts of the country and not merely to listen to their views at second best here in Georgetown, the capital, it was also given the power, a very important power it was, to hold meetings in various parts of the country.

2.15 p.m.

So those are three main powers which the Constituent Assembly was given with a view to equipping it effectively to reach out to the people and gather in the national thinking on this supremely important question of the construction and establishment of a new Constitution which, as I said, it is hoped would be more in keeping with the national character than is the existing one.

Now, comrades and members will appreciate that I am seeking to be exhaustive on the various steps which were taken and I shall later seek to give reasons why it is really unnecessary to be exhaustive, but at this stage I would merely remark that anyone who has had anything to do with the establishment of a public organisation, and with the supervision and execution of its functions, would appreciate that before such a body as the Constituent Assembly could really get moving a number of administrative steps would need to be taken and a number of things would need to be done.

Now, these steps were embarked upon almost immediately after the Constituent Assembly was set up in July last year. In pursuance of its mandate, the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly was held on 6th November, 1978, and on that occasion you will recall that the Constituent Assembly attended to those preliminary matters which any organisation must address itself to, elected its Chairman in the person of your own very worthy self, Cde. Speaker, it elected a Deputy Chairman, it appointed a Secretary and addressed itself to the question of appointing additional staff for the execution of its functions and, finally, on that occasion it also established its rules of procedure.

Further meetings were held in February and March this year and these were concerned with finalising the composition and functions of the advisory panel. As members will recall, the panel as finally settled included representatives from our main religions, namely, the Christian, Hindu and Moslem religions and it also included representatives from our other main social and economic organisations, namely, the Trades Union Congress, Gala, the Guyana Co-operative Union, the Guyana Assembly of Youth and the women's organisation known as CASWIG.

Simultaneously, steps were taken by the secretariat headed by the Clerk of the Constituent Assembly to issue public notices inviting members of the public and organisations to submit memoranda and to indicate whether they would be supporting their memoranda by oral evidence or indeed whether, although they may not have submitted any memoranda, they might wish to give any oral testimony to the Constituent Assembly. Those notices indicated to members of the public a deadline of 31st January, 1979, for responding to the notices.

A number of memoranda were accordingly submitted to the secretariat. In fact, they amounted to one hundred and thirty-nine separate documents and they came from individuals as indeed they came from organisations, and they came from the trade unions, from religious groups, from co-operatives, farmers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, nurses and public officers. In geographical range, they came from the whole of Guyana: from the North-West District to the Corentyne, including the Rupununi, the Mazaruni, Kwakwani and Linden.

Now, a great deal of work had to be undertaken by the secretariat in reproducing and classifying this documentation, all of which had to be stencilled, reproduced, numbered and paginated. They came to three hundred and seventy-six pages in all. Quite a lot of papers as members who have been active in the Constituent Assembly will know.

In addition to these three hundred and seventy-six pages of memoranda, the secretariat prepared thirty-four pages of statistical tables relating to the memoranda. All of this

documentation has been circulated to members and to representatives and their alternates in the advisory panel.

Now, if it will assist comrades and hon. Members to appreciate the kind of work that fell to be done, I may mention some further statistics: that out of one hundred and thirty-nine memoranda, forty-two came from organisations, whereas ninety-seven came from individuals. Sixty individuals and sixteen organisations asked to appear and give oral evidence before the Constituent Assembly; three individuals and four organisations expressed willingness to testify in support of their memoranda if required by the Constituent Assembly.

Cde. Speaker, the Constituent Assembly, as you best of all would know, has been hearing the evidence of witnesses who have come before it to testify and has been proposing to consider all of their evidence as well as all of the written material. The Constituent Assembly has also been utilising its powers to reach out of Georgetown to the people and to hold sittings elsewhere in the country. Meetings have accordingly been held at these places: Lethem, Karasabai, Aishalton in the Rupununi; Mabaruma and Matthews Ridge in the North West District; Kamarang in the Upper Mazaruni; New Amsterdam and Corriverton in Berbice; Charity and Anna Regina on the Essequibo Coast.

So far, oral evidence from forty-four individuals and thirteen organisations has been taken. I should add that so far, the Constituent Assembly has also had thirty-four meetings. No doubt with a view to expediting its work, twelve of these meetings took place in the course of last month alone.

Cde. Speaker, despite these efforts, it happens that a great deal of work remains to be done by the Constitutional Assembly. There are other places in the country which it needs to visit, in particular Bartica and Linden, and there are twenty more individuals and organisations who are due to testify before it. Then, of course, when all of this will have been completed, the Consultant Assembly must, as it were, go into a huddle with itself, must sift the evidence, must

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classify it, must draw conclusions and must then proceed to prepare and draft the new Constitution. **[Interruption]**

2.25 p.m.

Cde. Chairman, if I may proceed to speak the way I have always spoken, that is the position as of today concerning the work of the Constituent Assembly and the amount of it which has been done and the amount which remains to be done.

Now then, Cde. Speaker, given the decisions which were taken last year on the principles upon which they rested, as I understand them, what should be the course of action to be now taken by this Assembly? When the decisions which were taken last year are analysed, they will demonstrate these things which I will submit as data and submit that given that those decisions imply that the work of the Constituent Assembly has not been completed, the only course open to the Government, consistent with those decisions, is to propose, as we now do, an extension of the life of Parliament to allow the Constituent Assembly to complete its work.

Cde. Speaker, the Constituent Assembly has been working. That, I think, is indisputable. It is also indisputable that its work is incomplete. Therefore, I submit, Cde. Speaker, that the need for a consequential extension of the life of Parliament cannot be disputed if effect is to be given to the decisions which were taken last year. I also submit that there is no need for the kind of argument which led to those decisions which were taken last year, namely, whether we needed a new Constitution, what should be the character of the new Constitution, what should be the machinery for preparing it and so on. Those arguments are behind us. I offer it as a view to be accepted by the House that the only possible area for argument concerns the length of any necessary extension. On this point, Cde. Speaker, I make the observation that in framing a new Constitution, we are not building for today. We are building for the nation and we hope that we are building lasting and enduring edifices.

From the experience gained from the working of the Constituent Assembly, the Government's best judgment is that a reasonable extension of the life of Parliament to enable the Constituent Assembly to complete its work will be a period of one year. That, Cde. Speaker, is the essence of the new Bill and I accordingly commend the Bill for the consideration of comrades and of hon. Members.

Question proposed.

Cde. Mohamed: Cde. Speaker, in listening to the presentation by the Cde. Minister, I gather that he attempted to persuade the House that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, No. 11, 1979, is both necessary and innocuous. May I say that I do not think he has succeeded in persuading me about that. Moreover, may I also point out that I have not been able to gather the consistency, or what consistency there was in his presentation with democracy and democratic practices? In fact, what I do gather was that the presentation was in keeping with the characteristic deep-seated fear of the Government to face the electorate and its historical disrespect for the rights of the Guyanese masses. This further abuse of power leaves one to interpret that it is unquestionably indicative of the growing isolation of this Government, internally.

I wish, Cde. Speaker, to look at this Bill, not in isolation but in its historical context if we are to see its proper perspective. This Bill is linked in so many obvious ways to events that took place in this country not so long ago. This Bill stems from, and I agree with the Cde. Minister on this and is a derivative of a referendum which was held last July, that referendum which ensured at times circus-like campaigns, excessively expensive and at times punctuated also by cowardly and terroristic acts. Its aim was to persuade and coerce the Guyanese masses to place authority in the hands of the Government to amend article 73 of the Constitution which formed the base eventually for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly, which was given the task of preparing a new Constitution under which elections will then be held. But that referendum was totally

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rejected by the masses. The result shows that only 10 to 15 per cent of the Guyanese masses voted at that referendum. The majority of the people responded to the united call of the opposition forces and stayed away from the Polls.

2.35 p.m.

However, as is also characteristic, in total disrespect for the wishes of the Guyanese people, the Government claimed a victory. It claimed a victory similarly as it claimed a victory in 1968 and 1973 at the National Elections which were heavily rigged, which were fraudulent, and, based on that fraud, subsequently our Constitution was amended. Some comrades or some prefer to call it subverted. A Bill after that referendum was immediately put into Parliament in that very month, days after that fraudulent, rigged referendum. That Bill sought the extension of Parliament for fifteen months, it also allowed for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly which will prepare a new Constitution under which new elections will be held at the end of those fifteen months.

That is how we understood it but the P.P.P. was not fooled by that argument because immediately we pointed out publicly that the real intention of the extension of Parliament for fifteen months was really to postpone elections in this country. We said then that the Constitution was a red herring thrown into the whole politics of our country at that time because just months away from the time when elections were due constitutionally, we began to hear that Guyana needed a new Constitution which was in keeping with the new thrust and the ethos and so forth, that Guyana was taking. We were not taken in by that argument and we ask why is it that only months away from General Elections this question of the Constitution came in? Was it not seen by the Government before that we needed a new Constitution in this country?

It is not that they did not see the need for a new Constitution before; they said so in the Sophia Declaration, in 1974. It said, “the Drafting and subsequent promulgation of a new Constitution will therefore be undertaken shortly.” That is from January, 1975. This is a project

in which the Party, the public and finally the Parliament will be fully and totally involved and it continued, “the Constitution must go and in its place a new and relevant constitution must be substituted.” Since 1974, a new Constitution was spoken about but it was only in 1978, three months before National Elections were due in this country, that we began to hear about the need for a new Constitution and that led to the referendum, to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, the postponement of elections, and the extension of this House for fifteen months. That we were correct then is again proven today by this Bill before us.

Cde. Speaker, the Bill No.11, Constitution (Amendment) Bill, now seeks a further extension of twelve months and again we say, as we said the last time, that the hidden objective is to avoid elections this year. Having postponed it last year because of a virtual fear to face the electorate, now it is worse, they are even more frightened and that is why this attempt is made in the House to postpone elections for another twelve months. The excuse we are being given is that the Constituent Assembly has not finished its work and the volume is too great but I submit, Cde. Speaker, that from the very start, from the very time the Constituent Assembly was baptised, the intention was to prolong and delay the work of the Constituent Assembly for precisely this end. We are now debating a further postponement of elections which this Bill is essentially seeking.

Let us look at and let us substantiate such a submission. When the Constituent Assembly was agreed upon by this House amidst heavy opposition, they knew well that they had fifteen months to complete that work, that was clear, all of us knew that, but what happened? The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly, I understand, took place on 6th November, 1978, three months after this Parliament had approved the setting up and establishment of the Constituent Assembly which held the future of the Guyanese people in its hands. Furthermore, we understand that certain preparatory meetings were held on 4th June, 1979, seven months after the first meeting and over ten months after this Parliament approved of a Constituent Assembly to frame a new Constitution. What can we understand by this? Three months after we agreed, then the first meeting was held; seven months later, then the other meeting was held, the inaugural

meeting for the drafting of the Constitution which meant the preparatory stage alone, spoken of, took over ten months in a fifteen-month period to draft a new Constitution which would be the basis for new elections. For that reason we say it was a studied attempt to delay the work because the Government does not want to face the electorate in this moment of crisis and in this moment when it is losing heavily its support.

Cde. Speaker, that not only has the Government failed to influence or to convince the Guyanese masses about the need for a new Constitution but the fact that we have a Bill for another extension of twelve months seems, to me, that the Government has even failed to convince itself about the urgency and the dire need for a new Constitution in this country. This Bill, in my opinion, constitutes a violation of the alienable political rights of the Guyanese people. We think it is a gross violation of the Guyana Constitution and the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Guyana is a signatory. It is not only a violation of those things but it is in opposition to and in conflict with a resolution which has passed at the T.U.C. Special Delegates' Conference on 5th June, 1978, which said, "Resolved that the T.U.C. calls upon Government to hold the next General Elections within fifteen months of Referendum Day, July 10th, 1978." Even the T.U.C. was taken in. They agreed and now we have a situation where that resolution will not be realised. Instead, Government is seeking, through this Bill, the extension of Parliament. It is also, in my opinion, an act of deception, it is an attempt to delude the Guyanese masses once more, masses who are wise to the ways of this Government which has trampled heartlessly upon their rights and which Government seems to be bent towards a course of complete totalitarianism in this country.

2.45 p.m.

I wish, Cde. Speaker, to call upon this Government to pay attention to the realities of the Latin American continent and particularly this region. We call upon the Government to take notice of the changes that are going on. Regimes of this continent which have spurred the rights of their people and resorted to dictatorial rule have had to face the wrath of the masses,

inevitably condemned by world opinion and by world history. In all the dictatorships, in this part of the world a new upsurge is taking place by the democratic and progressive forces. Many regimes, mightier than this, have had to succumb to the demands and the march of the people. Brazil, only two or three days ago, I understand, had to give in, in some way by accepting the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Carlos Pretez, back into the country, where he received by thousands of Brazilians. Several other countries are facing this same type of change. It goes to show that dictatorial regimes must give way to the forces of the people eventually. A wind of change is taking place in this continent, democracy is again being introduced but here in Guyana we seem to be swirling in another type of political wind, one which is placing Guyana on the threshold and on the verge of a dictatorial state. Again, Cde. Speaker, we warn if we take that course, that is the direction to dead ends, that is the direction to Samozaism and, accordingly, we must accept history lessons, social and historical laws, that regimes that practise Samozaism must end like Samoza ended. This Bill, Cde. Speaker, it is my contention, is but a mockery of democracy, it is juggling with the people's rights, it is intended to delude once again, as it did before. Where will it all end, we ask, how will it all end, when will it all end. These are pertinent and relevant questions expressing the anxieties of the Guyanese masses. People need to be involved in the decision making processes of this country, not to be excluded from them as this Bill is trying to do. People demand respect and guarantee of their rights, not to be denied them as this Bill is trying to do. It is necessary for them to take command of their political and economic levels in this society, not to be arbitrarily dictated to and have their rights ridden rough shod over.

Unless, Cde. Speaker, this is understood and this is grasped by those who are today at the helm of our State and our country, then I am afraid that there will be no resolution to the teeming problems, political, economic and social, which the Guyanese masses face. We call upon the Government to face these facts. We call upon the Government to halt immediately this course towards totalitarianism in this country. [**Applause**]

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud.

Cde. N. Persuad: Cde. Speaker, the House meets this afternoon to extend the life of Parliament and in so doing also to extend the life of the ruling party as a Government. The explanation given in the explanatory paragraph as outlined by Cde. Minister Shahabuddeen states that the Constituent Assembly, due to the large number of memoranda, the large number of requests for people to come here and to give evidence, has not been able to complete its work. As a result, it has become necessary that this Bill be brought to this House to extend the life of Parliament and in so doing the life of the Government just in order that the Constituent Assembly shall complete its work. I think it is an unreasonable excuse to come to this House, just for that purpose, to write a new Constitution because the Constituent Assembly has not completed its work, to extend the life of a Government whose life had already once extended, which Government cannot face the polls in this country, which Government has been rejected in the very referendum which gave it the “right” to extend the life of this Parliament then and even now.

Once again the Government is attempting to throw dust in the eyes of the Guyanese people but as the referendum clearly demonstrated, the people have come to realise that the P.N.C. Government can no longer and will no longer be able to deceive them and to fool them as it has done in the past. The real motive has been announced by my colleague who spoke before me. The Government having become so unpopular because of its misplanning, because of wrong priorities, because of the large number of people who are today unemployed, because of all the hardships including the shortages, etc., that plague the nation, this Government cannot face the polls. It attempted to do so at the referendum where it was clearly demonstrated. I would give the Government a very liberal percentage of the number of people who voted for that referendum – 15 per cent. Very liberal. It got the message then. It obviously follows that 15 per cent voted for it one year ago, with all the extra hardships and burdens that have been placed on the backs of the Guyanese people since then, this Government would not be able to get even half the percentage that it got last year. It is only obvious that because this Government got that message sent so straight to it last year, that it is now once again attempting to fool and delude the

Guyanese people by bringing this smoke screen and attempting to throw dust in the eyes of the people.

Cde. Speaker, the Government must decide its course. Maybe it has already made that decision and I want to warn that the longer the Government stays there, the longer the Government waits to hold an election in this country, the worse the situation will become and that small percentage of people who still hold onto the P.N.C. will continue progressively to dwindle and it will lose that support. Events in the past months have clearly demonstrated this.

The Government, having manipulated, having rigged, having committed a number of frauds during the 1973 elections, was able to get two-thirds of the seats in the House, by which majority it was able to do exactly what it wants to do here this afternoon. Whether we vote for or we vote against, does not matter. What matters for the Government is that in the 1973 elections, it scrambled by any means to get that two-thirds majority in order that at any time it could come to this House to do whatever it wished to do, as it is now doing, as it did last year in changing the rules of this country.

2.55 p.m.

This Government, fearful because of its wrongdoings in this country, has postponed Local Government Elections, Cde. Speaker, on four consecutive occasions. Why is it, excuse after excuse is given? In 1972, it was one excuse. In 1974, the Government brought another one. In 1976, a third excuse, in 1978, it was a fourth one. When will the excuses come to an end? Any Government which claims to have the confidence of two-thirds of the people of a country, would that Government be fearful to face the polls? No. That two-thirds majority which the Government uses, and of which the Government boasts is not there. History will not forgive them for these wrongdoings that they continue to do in the country and against the Guyanese people. Any Government which claims to have socialist orientation must perform in the interest of the masses, the great majority of the people. If this Government which claims to

be socialists-orientated was performing in the interest of the people, would this Government continue to do these things that it is doing now? No. Would it not want to have a new mandate? Yes, but it clearly shows that this Government does not and cannot act in the best interest of the people.

Cde. Speaker, conditions have been growing worse and worse in this country and if conditions to deteriorate, rule and control by terror will increase. But let me warn the P.N.C. Government, that beneath this superficial calm, if we can call it so, that exists, a seething discontent is present and the people will act as they have started to do. The Government in extending the life of the Parliament will bring further hardships to the people as it has brought in the past. The Government in extending the life of this Parliament will continue to deny the Guyanese people their democratic rights and in so doing, Cde. Speaker, the frustration of the people will continue to be there. We hear about increased production and productivity. The only thing to take this country out of the doldrums, into which the P.N.C. Government has put it, is increased production and productivity.

Year after year, we hear in this Parliament when the Budget is presented, things are going to get better; things are going to improve, but, Cde. Speaker, this has been going on for four consecutive years. We heard only recently that things are going to improve despite all the lamentations made by the Minister of Economic Development. Cde. Speaker, what were the Budget targets? I want to know. The answer is relevant to this point. While the Government calls for increased production and productivity, measures like the one that was introduced in this

House this afternoon, will not permit increased production and productivity. What did the 1979 budget hope to achieve? Growth in real terms, 6 per cent. This was however revised to 4.5 per cent. Foreign exchange was to be increased by 13 per cent over the 1978 figure. Imports were supposed to be increased by 20 per cent over the 1978 figure. The investment programme was \$290 million for the public sector which was supposed to be 22 ½ per cent of the gross national product. The whole investment programme projected that 10,000 additional persons

would be employed. Where are they? Public and private sectors together and investment of \$345 million or 27 per cent of the G.N.P.

Cde. Speaker, there was supposed to be financial surplus in the public sector of \$97 million. These were all there in the 1979 budget. It was hoped that these would have been achieved. The gross foreign assets at the Bank of Guyana were to be increased were to be from \$150 million at 1st January, 1979, to \$200 million at the ending of this year. What really did we achieve from all these targets which were outlined and set out in the 1979 Budget Speech? As the Government continues to use big stick methods, as the Government continues to harass the people, as the Government continues to use terror and to reign in this country, production instead of increasing declines. And again I warn that if the Government continues to postpone elections and denies the people that democratic right to vote, so will conditions continue to be on the decline. The production of sugar is moving from 360,000 tons to 320,000 tons, according to Cde. Hoyte, but according to Cde. Reid it will move to 300,000 tons, and according to the **Chronicle** of 7.10.79, 360,000 tons, and when the year would have come to an end, if the production reaches 290,000 tons, perhaps they will be in a good position.

We find that sugar production has been going down progressively year after year and if the call is for increased production and productivity, if the Government has come around to see that only increased production and productivity will take this country back to recovery, then the Government will have to democratize all its policies. The Government will have to hold free and fair election at all levels. The Government will have to permit free and fair elections at the industrial level and not to interfere with union elections and allow the workers to have their unions of their choice. It is only then that we are going to have free and fair elections. Certain members of a military force, top officers, were recently dismissed. The only crime they committed was to attend a W.P.A. meeting. How are we going to have production when acts like those are perpetrated against the very people whom we expect to produce?

Cde. Speaker, this has been the trend and if it goes on, it is going to continue to be the trend and the Guyanese people will continue to suffer. In the bauxite industry, all the figures, according to that paper, will have to be reorganised. New targets will have to be set. Here again the question of production is linked with the question of the people's rights and if the Government continues, because of that stolen two-thirds majority, then production and productivity will continue to be the cry but it shall never be the target. It will never be the result.

Cde. Speaker, what about the question of rice? We have the same situation whereby the target now has been revised and reviewed and from 210,000 tons we are now talking about 147,000 tons. In every productive sector one sees the same trend. We are told rice, sugar and bauxite are the three main foreign-exchange earners, yet in all three of these productive sectors, production continues to be on the decline and in every single case we can point to the lack of democracy. Thousands of scabs were thrown into the sugar industry.

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The Rice Producer's Association which represents a total number of 46,000 rice families in this country, is not recognised by this Government. Instead, a hand-picked Rice Action Committee is foisted down the throats of the people. How does the Government call for increased production and productivity when you are not prepared to give the people, who have to produce, the representation of their choice? Why does the Government not recognise the Rice Producers' Association instead of holding on to that scab Rice Action Committee? So long as the Government continues this trend, so long production and productivity will be on the decline in this country.

The export figures had to be reviewed. We were told that our merchandise exports would reach a value of \$844 million. That figure will now be reduced by \$75 million. On the import side we are told that the estimated amount of \$816 million will now have to be reduced by \$80 million.

The Government comes here and says everything possible. The Minister in his Budget Speech clearly stated that given all circumstances the targets would be achieved. Circumstances have arisen. Why is it that the targets have not been achieved? Why were these circumstances not taken into account when that paragraph and that sentence were put into the Budget Speech, that, given all the circumstances, targets would be realised. Those are the words in the Budget Speech, but the Government is good in phraseology and fooling the people but the people obviously are catching up with it.

Reduction of capital inflows from \$140 million to \$40 million, reduction by \$100 million. This is the state of the economy that the Government has brought this country to. In April of this year the members of the Government came here and spoke about \$140 million capital inflows. Six months after they come up here and are now talking of \$40 million. It is very clear that somebody is fooling somebody and if the fooling continues, then obviously, we will find ourselves in big trouble.

In the second paragraph on page 7 of this document it is stated:

“Here we have a trite truism being demonstrated. If we do not Earn foreign exchange. If we cannot earn foreign exchange, we cannot import.”

What the Minister should have started off with is this: “If we do not have democracy, we cannot produce. If we cannot produce, we do not earn foreign exchange. If we do not earn foreign exchange, we cannot import.”

If we do not have democracy, we cannot produce. It is very clear that so long as we do not have democracy in this country, we will not have the targets achieved and come next year, the Government will revise its targets downwards and those will not be achieved so long as there is no democracy in this country.

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This is what the Minister said:

“Private sector borrowing in the first half year rose steeply by \$25 million compared with \$8.1 million in the”

corresponding period of last year. It is clear that the economy has gone downhill and the Government now wishes once more to get another breathing space. That is why it has come to this House for a postponement of elections and I warn this House that, come next year, this Government will be consistent to come back here and ask for a further extension because its popularity will further continue on the decline.

It is stated:

“Total investment is likely to fall by about 17 per cent from the projected level. Public sector investment is likely to fall even greater, possibly by 20 per cent.”

Where is all the investment we were talking about? Where has it gone? I ask. In the Budget Speech we heard that mechanical workshops will be built at Coldingem and MARDS. New cargo vessels were to be put into operation on the Berbice River and North West runs towards the end of the year. A passenger launch, a barge and two pilot launches were to be purchased in 1979. The Timehri Airport terminal and apron were to be modified. A bus depot and workshop were to be constructed by Guyana Transport Services Limited. Sawmill construction: A major sawmill was to be commenced; the honey industry was to be resuscitated. Then we heard that the glass factory and textile mill were to be concluded. I would like to ask the Minister why he did not state specifically in his last review of the economy how many of these things have been begun and how many have not moved off from their feet.

It is only too clear. We have heard that the financial surplus from the public sector is expected to fall from \$97 million to \$70 million or even less. The deficit in the current account is expected to increase from \$186 million to \$195 million. Additional taxation will come upon the backs of Guyanese people. Year after year, deficit budgeting comes to this House. The International Monetary Fund demanded that the Government bridge this gap. The Government made an effort but in so doing placed all the burdens on the backs of the Guyanese people. What does the Minister say? I quote:

“The performance of the overall aggregates is far from satisfactory and falls short of the Budget targets . . . The attainment of the real growth target is now problematic. A major intensive effort is required to prevent a decline over last year’s poor performance.”

No longer will there be any positive growth from last year’s figure. Hard work has to be done to save it from going on a negative of last year’s figure.

A lot of things have been said about strikes and man-days lost but the Government must realise that it is people who, in the final analysis, have to produce and so long as people are denied their rights then obviously they must go on strike in order that they can have their just demands met. The strike weapon is the last and only effective weapon in the hands of the working class. Here again, that right is being threatened, a right that, for over a decade, Nathaniel Critchlow fought for with other colleagues in the Caribbean, a right which Guyanese people have won after a struggle covering decades.

The Speaker: Five minutes more.

Cde. N. Persaud: That right to strike is being threatened; the democratic rights of the people are coming to an end, one by one. The Government in the process could put on a mark-

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up of 300 and 400 per cent on goods and obviously this leads to heavy smuggling into the country. We know that action leads to reaction, that one action leads to another and every action has a reaction to it. Because of this, it is obvious that the high rate of smuggling is going to continue and increase.

From the speech that Cde. Hoyte made the other day, it is very clear that more taxation is coming down, and coming down very heavily, on the backs of the people.

The Minister also said in his speech something to the effect that there was a shortage of trained people. He did not say so directly but something to that effect. Unofficial information discloses that over 50,000 people have left this country over the last five years. What did COMPASS have to say about it? I quote:

“The impact of politics on the everyday existence of most people is above a tolerable level for many” –

The Speaker: May we have the data of the publication and the page?

Cde. N. Persaud: June 1979.

The Speaker: What page?

Cde. N. Persaud: Page 3, Cde. Speaker. It was not new Guyana. It continues:

“In some cases politics reaches into the workplace and disciplinary and other decisions are overturned at the whim of a ‘Godfather’ or other high status friend. This has the effect of scaring off a number of people who would otherwise have been willing to make worthwhile decisions...

Widespread allegations of electoral malpractices at the national and union levels have served only to undermine the confidence of many people in their ability to influence political change and, as a consequence, the opt-out syndrome continues...

... sometimes intolerable intrusion of politics on the everyday life of Guyanese workers, together with the feeling of increasing inability to control the course of their lives through democratic procedures, are among key reasons why some people opt for 'second-class citizenship' in other countries or, if they remain in Guyana, do just enough on the job to enable them to get by."

This political interference that goes right down to the workplace obviously interferes with the managers who cannot exercise their initiative in order to have maximum production and productivity because, when they use their skills and professionalism, political – I am sorry that the word is unparliamentary, otherwise I would have used it – people are brought to give instructions to these people and that is why they themselves form part of the COMPASS managers of the Government corporations. I do not want to name them but you know whom I am talking about.

The Speaker: Cde. Narbada Persaud, it is time now unless you get an extension.

Cde. N. Persaud: In a minute I will finish.

3.15 p.m.

The new Constitution, Cde. Speaker, as I was saying all along, will not solve the problems of this country and I want to warn the members of the Government that the referendum has clearly demonstrated what they are heading to, events of the past months have also demonstrated what they are heading to, and measures like the one brought in this House this afternoon are not going to solve the country's problems. Unless democracy is restored at every

level in this country, the country will continue seeing the problems and an extended period of fifteen months still will not solve the problems of the Government. [Applause]

Cde. Collymore: I rise here to make a contribution in this debate on this Bill dealing with a request by our friends of the opposite side to again extend the life of this Parliament. The actual thing which is being done here today is to postpone for the second time General Elections which are due and, Cde. Speaker, we feel that the Bill which is now before the House is just another perfidious step along the road to the installation of a right wing dictatorship in Guyana. It is also, Cde. Speaker, yet another nail in the coffin of democracy and human rights in this country.

We expected this since last year when they were making the preparations. We expected that they would have come to this House for a second postponement and, Cde. Speaker, without holding ourselves out to be prophets, we predict that this Government will again come to this House on a third occasion to postpone elections because, even after they have gone through the various memoranda, they will need to have further debates – debates among the Constituent Assembly members, debates in the National Assembly on the same Constitution, and they will need to have enabling legislation; they will also need to have administrative measures implemented to carve up the country in keeping with the P.N.C.'s draft Constitution. So they are going to come here again and we are saying that the Government is actually, through this device, arrogating to itself a period of office without having elections.

Cde. Speaker, our friends on the opposite side have been running this country in a dictatorial manner and the previous speakers have actually said why it is that certain things are getting worse and, therefore, we are alerting the people to expect worse to come.

There is no democracy in the country. None at all! At the trade union level, at the local government level, at the regional level, at the central government level, there is absolutely no democracy and we have tabled Motions in this House calling upon Government to take certain

measures. These Motions have been pigeon-holed somewhere in your Office – not your fault – pigeon-holed, and they have not been able to see the light of day.

Cde. Speaker, even in the highest forum of the land democracy does not prevail. Even in the highest forum because, even if the Government – and I said this already – even if the members of the Government do not agree with our proposals, at least bring them; bring them to light and vote against them. But they dare not bring them. For some reason they are afraid to hear certain things which we have to ventilate in this House.

Now, what else are they doing? Many things were said during the referendum campaign on what they are going to do: they are going to create a utopia and they will bring a paradise to Guyana. But we have found that immediately after the referendum there were certain crackdowns; the sledge-hammer was busy hammering people all over the place; a crackdown of critics. The Government has been using the police – misusing the police, in fact – and using bureaucratic measures to deal with critics. You don't need to argue with critics to exchange views and to have a consensus of opinion. But they are using the sledge-hammer and they have been doing this consistently.

Today we have found throughout the country a type of McCarthyite witch hunt has been launched. Very senior Ministers and very senior persons in the State administration are going around to various work-places and departments, corporations, etc., and there ferreting out certain people suspected of showing loyalty to the P.P.P., the W.P.A., or dissident groups and these people are being hammered, hatcheted and have been attacked just like that.

I am glad today to know that some trade unionists are here to listen to this debate and hear the opinions and the views of our friends on the opposite side where workers' rights are concerned. You just can't go into a Ministry and sack a person on the spot. This is what our good friends, our so-called democrats, are doing.

In August of this year we had a declaration of war at Sophia. On whom are they going to wage war? Cde. Speaker, they are not going to wage war on Brazil. They don't have tanks. They don't have cruisers. They don't have destroyers. They are not going to wage war on Venezuela. One very prominent person said, "not a blade of grass," but billions of blades of grass and acres have been taken. Up to this day this statement cannot be redeemed. They are not going to wage war against Suriname, which continues to maintain that the whole Corentyne River is theirs. They are going to wage war against the masses – the people – and I would venture to say that my colleague, Cde. Narbada Persaud, who predicted that there is going to be further deterioration in the economic sphere, is quite correct because as long as the Government continues to use these big stick methods, threats, saying they are going to wage war, they are not going to get the production they need.

Cde. Speaker, in September of this year I had occasion to rise in this honourable House to refer to the National Security Act which was extended and I pointed out to my hon. Friend on the opposite side, who moved the extension of the Act, that this Government has actually been in office under a state of emergency since 1964. Believe it or not! It is a shame to know that a government came into office with a state of emergency and by sleight-of-hand it maintains a state of emergency and the National Security Act.

For fifteen years our very good friends on the opposite side, our so-called popular leaders, have been running this country under a state of emergency. However, the Act is there and the Act, Cde. Speaker, is to give to the Government immediate repressive powers to deal with critics. Then they are asking the leftists and the democrats, people who profess to have socialist views, people who want democracy to be maintained.

Now, two other aspects of these heavy manners of our good friends on the opposite side will be the University of Guyana and the **Mirror**. Cde. Speaker, they have closed down the University of Guyana. Elsewhere in the world where you find such measures are taking place, they are done by a fascist regime and they send troops, beat up students, professors, etc., and use

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military power to close the university. Guyana has certain different situations, different social conditions, but the facts are the same. The University of Guyana has been closed. We are calling on the Government now to immediately re-open the University without any further delay, to let the University function properly and let the professors and students enjoy what the Government proposes to write in the Constitution: freedom of education, freedom of expression, etc.

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On the last occasion, Cde. Speaker, when he had to meet here in this honourable House, the Leader of the Opposition, a constitutional personality, had to speak about the **Mirror** and there was not a single Minister on the opposite side to respond. This is a contempt of the Parliament and I will say that you have to uphold the dignity of this House. I am not saying you are not doing it but in this case you should call upon the Minister to reply. Why wasn't the Minister of Trade here? Cde. Speaker, you have a great responsibility. It is because they are either embarrassed or it was a studied attempt by the Minister not to be here to reply.

When you are dealing with freedom of expression not a single person is here to reply and they profess to be Marxists, Communists, democrats, progressives, etc. I don't have to go into what Dr. Jagan has said. We are calling on them to immediately give the **Mirror** adequate newsprint. The Government is saying that we have and they say we have freedom, we have rights, you can walk, you can talk, etc. The mere fact of the **Mirror** not having newsprint gives a lie to that claim.

What about the Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations? Our good friends are signatories to this United Nations Charter on human rights. But what do we find? We find that although they have signed they have not been able to send a single report, and I said it already in this House, and I call upon them to honour the tradition of the U.N. by sending in a report on the Human Rights situation in Guyana. Since Independence not a single report has gone to the U.N.,

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since this Government has been in office, and it is a shame because the U.N. Secretary-General lists Guyana in **Objective Justice**, the periodical of the United Nations organisation.

Cde. Speaker, we are dealing here specifically with democracy and elections because they are actually postponing elections. Listen to what United Nations Article 21 on Human Rights has to say:

“Article 21 (1) – Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”

Cde. Speaker, I submit that my honourable friends across the Aisle were not directly or freely chosen and they have no right to be there on the opposite side and to extend their life for the second consecutive period.

“(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.”

We all know what is going on in the Public Service. There is no such thing as equal access. But let us hear what (3) says:

“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

The fact that the government has not seen it fit to put our Motions gives the lie to this. This is being honoured in the breach. They are therefore violating the United Nations Charter and this is

the reason why they are not able to send in any reports.

Cde. Speaker, I also had occasion to tell this House, that out of the thirty United Nations articles on human rights this Government has been openly violating twenty-five of them and there was no response. The Minister who got up to reply to me spoke for 90 seconds and he sat down. He couldn't reply to me. That was Minister Mingo. Cde. Speaker, the people in this country are demanding democracy. That is the number one item on the agenda in Guyana today, democracy. And even at world forums where we attend and we make contributions, the people overseas are concerned about democracy in Guyana. They want free and fair elections and they want majority rule. It is hypocrisy for us to come here and say we want free and fair elections and majority rule in Zimbabwe and right here in our own country we don't have any such thing.

Cde. Speaker, I have a copy of a declaration signed by 66 prominent persons in this country. They represent a broad spectrum in this country. They are not communists, they are not P.P.P. supporters and they are quite definitely not P.N.C. supporters, but they are precisely the same thing that I am saying, democracy and free and fair elections. This document is dated 15th August, 1979, and it says:

“We, the under-listed citizens of Guyana recognise that our country is in a State of deep political and economic crisis which has arisen partly because of the erosion of the legal --”

The Speaker: Cde. Coolmore, you just say, “This document.” What document? You must identify it.

Cde. Collymore: I say it is a document to which certain persons affixed their signatures. It has no other identification. I can read the names if you want. That would be enough identification. It is a declaration of 66 persons and I am reading it. I hope you will give me back my two minutes.

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“We the under-listed citizens of Guyana recognising that our country is in a state of deep political and economic crisis which has arisen partly because of the erosion of the legal and constitutional rights of Guyanese citizens, we hereby announce that we would be prepared to support a broad-based government of national reconstruction in which all the recognised political parties and other legitimate interest groups such as the trade unions and business and professional interests would have representatives but which no group or party or ideology would dominate.

“That Government would hold office for a specified period with an agreed minimum programme of short term measures to restore stability and democracy. There would then be free and fair elections supervised by the United Nations or by a team chosen from the Caribbean countries.”

And then there are the 66 names.

Cde. Speaker, these people are calling for elections, democracy, but they are going on to say that they don't have any confidence in the election machinery as supervised by the hon. Members on the opposite side. They want an independent commission to supervise elections. They know. They are supporting us in our objective view that there is no democracy in this country, that elections are rigged and bear no relation to the realities at the grass roots.

Cde. Speaker, our friends are claiming to be angels but they have set certain machinery into motion and I have had occasion to deal with these things but there was no reply. What are they doing? They are breaking up public meetings; beating up peaceful citizens and demonstrators; this is history, it is even in the **Chronicle**; setting fire to opposition vehicles; wrecking public address equipment; hurling formalin and acid at critics at street corners. This is lawlessness and disorder. I don't know what the Minister of Home Affairs has been doing with

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all these cases. Sending death threats to critics. People have been receiving death threats, starving strikers back to work, murdering critics in the streets, and other assorted violence, then there has been a military build-up for purposes of unleashing repression on the people. Persons who propose to have a P.N.C. card nowadays, most of them have guns – a very big military build-up. Cde. Speaker, I am dealing with evidence at Melanie Damishana.

3.35 p.m.

Now I come to some final points, and I will take these points from the guidelines. During the referendum campaign our friends on the opposite side published these things. They called them Referendum Fact Sheet No. 2, and you have the Palm Tree here, a malignant Palm Tree – P.N.C guidelines for a new Guyana Constitution. I just want to make two small quotations under Goal of Economic Development. What are my friends saying? Quote, “The supreme goal of the socialists economic system would be the achievement of the fullest possible satisfaction of the people’s growing material, cultural and intellectual requirements.” Cde. Speaker, the operative word I wish to stress is “growing” and they are intimating that we are building a socialist economy, a socialist society in Guyana.

Well, what we would like to know is, how is it that the people’s growing material, cultural and intellectual requirements could be satisfied when there is zero growth in the national economy, when there are no rights, political rights and other rights, being respected? But particularly seeing this is dealing with economics, we have to deal with the growing material needs of the people. The hon. Minister of Economic Development said that production has fallen. Other Ministers also said that production will fall and has fallen. The Minister actually said that whereas imports were supposed to rise this year by 10 per cent, we had to cut them by \$18 million. You know what it means? It means something contrary to what they are saying here, “growing material requirements” because there would be fewer spare parts, fewer consumer commodities, edibles, durables, etc. Where it concerns the cultural aspect, this cultural aspect is being stifled and where it concerns intellectual requirement, the stock control is being

instituted in Guyana today – national, nationwide stock control. This is one of the reasons why they do not want the **Mirror** to be published.

Now, what do they say at the end? Referendum fact sheet No.3. Quote, “The existing Constitution is a standard Westminster type of Constitution. It is not a constitution which is suitable for a developing country such as ours which is seeking to reconstruct its society and its economy on the basis of socialism. We need a socialist type of Constitution.” I have seen the P.N.C. document purporting to be its Draft and I would say, as I submit here now, that that is not a socialist stereotype or a socialist prototype. That is something other than that. It is something else and a person more competent than I will be dealing with it.

Cde. Speaker, the final point I wish to make concerns this House, this National Assembly. Democracy, if it is supposed to be meaningful at the grassroots, must be meaningful here and I mentioned already that we cannot get our Motions and Questions answered. You have in your Office, sixty-three Motions and Questions up to 1979, August, unanswered, untabled in this National Assembly. Cde. Speaker, we are urging that these Motions and Questions be expeditiously handled so as to enable this House to give even a semblance of being impartial or of properly functioning. Then, Cde. Speaker, we are also not satisfied with some of the Rulings which have been handed down in this honourable House, but as the situation lies, I can say nothing more about this because I would like to speak in this House. I am therefore urging you, Cde. Speaker and my hon. Members and Friends on the opposite side, to uphold the dignity of this Parliament and not to make this Parliament a laughing stock overseas. People are asking questions about how the Parliament is functioning and, Cde. Speaker, I do not have to defend you and, in fact, I don't defend you when these things crop up at international forums. I don't defend you because you must uphold the dignity of this House, with all respect to you, of course. Cde. Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me to air my piece of story.

The Speaker: Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, let me right here and now make it pellucidly clear that the United Force rejects this Bill and demands free and fair elections now. We never agreed to the previous decisions about the Constituent Assembly and, indeed, the referendum. If you remember rightly, we voted against them. I will come to that in a moment. We voted against them and I submit in opposition to my learned friend, the Attorney General, that we are not bound by the P.N.C.-motivated decisions, the P.N.C.-dominated decisions, by its two-thirds majority, and we are not bound by the results of the rigged elections. We have always said that.

The Government has already extended its life for fifteen months. Now it seeks a further extension of twelve more months. As we have always said, we regard this as a ploy to postpone elections and not to face the electorate. However, and this is the question that some of our detractors would ask: How does the United Force reconcile this position with the fact that we are taking part in the work of the Constituent Assembly? It is a good question and a question that demands an answer. Now, let me draw an interesting analogy in reverse.

Even though the People's Progressive Party is now calling, like us, for the retention of the present Constitution, the fact remains that it did boycott the 1965 Independence Constitutional Conference and it did condemn the present Constitution when it became public in 1966, but the P.P.P. had to live under it from 1965 to now and we have all had to live under it but the P.P.P. did boycott it. So let me deal with what I consider the United Force's position, let me deal with the facts, the pragmatic, the realistic and the consistent position of the United Force. In our opinion, we have always said we do not believe in boycotts, they serve no useful purpose as the People's Progressive Party itself learnt from the boycott of the 1965 Independence Conference and indeed it learnt from the boycott of Parliament from 1973 to 1976, because, as you will remember, it did go back into Parliament in 1976 after its boycott. The United Force's position is quite simply this: we see no need for a new Constitution, we find nothing wrong with the present Constitution. The P.N.C. came back and we came back from the Independence Conference in London in 1965, and said what a success we had achieved in getting more or less

exactly what we had asked for and we both said what an advanced and a wonderful Constitution it was.

3.45 p.m.

Ironically, as I said, it was the People's Progressive Party who objected to the Constitution which it is now asking to be retained. However, I think, incidentally, that it is not right; in fact I would go further and say that it is wicked to suggest that the British imposed a Constitution on us. That is what the P.N.C. lackeys have so often said, that is what they have often alleged. Mr. Speaker, this is simply not true. I have in my hand here, as I have said before, a document which was given to me by the P.N.C.'s Attorney General, Sonny Ranphal, before I left with the Guyana Delegation for the Independence Conference in 1965. It is marked Attorney General's Chambers, Georgetown, October 1965. This was given to me here in Guyana before I left. This is what we told the British Government by and large that we wanted. We told them we wanted this and this is indeed by and large what they gave us, so it is not fair to say that the British imposed a Constitution on us. That is rubbish; it is really to my mind a ploy, a reason being given merely to postpone elections.

We are told that we need a new Constitution, which will give a lot of new rights to the people, like the right to work, the right to leisure, free medical attention, education, land to the tiller, equality of women, illegitimate children succeeding to their father's property. All well and good but is there anything at all in the present Constitution which prevents the Government from giving these things now? I say no. In Britain, which does not have a written Constitution, they give so many more social welfare benefits than this Government could ever possibly hope to give, and in any case a lot of these things which we are supposed to be giving out, we do have them already. We all know what has been happening when political parties try to hold meetings within recent times. The guidelines say that private enterprise will be allowed to the extent that it satisfies social needs but we all know that private enterprise has been killed by the Government by and large. Land to the tiller, what is there to prevent the Government from giving land to the

tiller? Nothing in the present Constitution. We are supposed to be allowed personal property. Inheritance, we have that at the present moment.

The right to work merely writing in a Constitution, on a piece of paper, the right to work, what does it mean? Does it give any individual the right to be able to do any particular piece of work, would it help him? What we need is to create the jobs, let the jobs be there so that his right to work would be something realistic. He does not need it on a piece of paper, just give it to him. Leisure. Well I don't know, with this problem of having to line up for food, and to line up because of shortages of so many things, I am not sure how much leisure the average Guyanese citizen can really enjoy, but, nevertheless, there is no reason why the Government cannot just go ahead and give leisure, there is no need to write it in a Constitution. Old age and permanent disability, just go ahead and give it. Free medical services, we are supposed to have them right now. Right to housing – feed and clothe the nation, we should have had that years ago. Right to education. The hon. Minister tells me that everybody enjoys the right to free education from the cradle to the grave including adult education and the rest of it. We have it already.

Equality for women. Oh, yes, sir, equality for women, where is it? Since January, 1976, there was a State Paper on the equality of women. As a lawyer, I know that there is no need to write this in a Constitution. All that is needed is to amend the legislation. There has been equality for women, as the State Paper itself said, since 1976. What is the other one? Equality for children. Here again I have in my hand a document, confidential, Special Select Committee of the National Assembly, Matrimonial Causes, Succession, Abortion, Benefits for reputed wives. Since 1971, a Committee was appointed to go into all of this, I sat on this Committee, we were all agreed on the majority of things here. Okay, the Committee did not make its report and it was never resuscitated but this could have been dealt with since 1971. There is no need for a new Constitution to deal with that. Protection of citizens overseas. Our Embassies overseas are supposed to deal with that. The duty to defend the country – Mr. Speaker, if you have a good Government there is no need to put in a Constitution the need to defend your country. You

would be willing to give your life for the country because, this is mine. "Speak there a man with soul so dead who never to himself has said, this is my home, my native land."

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and deal with the others. There is no need to change Parliament; we have eight Senior Ministers who are non-elected and one Minister of State who is non-elected, so why does the Government want to extend the number of people in Parliament? There is no need to extend the Parliament to make it 65 instead of 53. It had been done already.

I want to quote a particular case because I feel very strongly about it and it concerns the right to work. It concerns the constitutional crisis in this country at the moment. A Stores Clerk came into my office yesterday; he had tears in his eyes, he said to me, "I have recently been dismissed from a Government company because I took part in the recent C.C.W.U. strike in sympathy with the bauxite workers." He told me that he never was involved in politics, he did not have anything to do with the politics; he had no political aspirations; he said that on the previous occasion when the C.C.W.U. came out on strike to protest shortages, he did not go on strike, he refused to, and when the strike was ended, he was ostracized, he was made the butt of all sorts of remarks, and he suffered as a result. So on this occasion, he decided that he would come out on strike with them. He was dismissed. He has no job now, he has a wife and five children, he has gone to other Government organisations, it is no point going to the private sector the Government has killed the private sector already. The private sector cannot offer the stores clerk a job because there is none; he has been dismissed, no work, so he, his wife and five children continue suffering. I think it is a very tragic state for a man who has never had anything at all to do with politics, as he rightly told me.

What good is the right to work written in a Constitution to a man like this? What good is it, what would it do him? Nothing at all. Mr. Speaker, Guyanese do not need fancy words in a Constitution. Just let the Government go ahead and give them the work, give land to the tiller, give them the leisure, give them all that is promised them. There is nothing in the present

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Constitution, as I say, to stop them doing that, and let us stop using this New Constitution as an excuse for holding back elections.

After having said all of this, Mr. Speaker, let me again make the point that our detractors, particularly the P.P.P., are asking, as I heard one ask just now: Why then are you taking part in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly? The simple answer is that the United Force is pragmatic, it is realistic; we are aware of the facts of life. The People's National Congress has the majority; it is going ahead in any case to draft a new Constitution. What should we do? Should we boycott it and leave it to the P.N.C. to put into it whatever it wants without any representation from us, and then we will have to live under it like the P.P.P. had to live under the present Constitution since 1966, even though it objected to it? Or should we not go in and register our objections, make our voices heard, and try to get as many as possible of the safeguards from the old Constitution into the new Constitution?

3.55 p.m.

I say that this is the rational, sensible and correct position to take. If as the P.P.P. argues, we could never change what the P.N.C. wants, then my humble submission is that no Opposition should ever bother to go into a Parliament anywhere because any Government normally has a majority. If any Government is specifically hell bent on doing something that it really wants to do, then that Government will do it regardless of what the Opposition says or does. Is that any good enough reason why an Opposition should not go into Parliament? Surely your duty is to go in, if only to register your objection, otherwise, the Government will have a field day, it will have it all its own way. Go in under protest, make representations, let your voice be heard. Parliament is the place where you can make your allegations of abuse of power by the Government. You can do without fear of being beaten up by Rabbi Washington's thugs. If you do it outside, you might end up like me – being beaten up. But our position has been so maligned particularly by the P.P.P., I am worried and upset about this.

We are in the Opposition together but when they write things like this in their newspaper, I must take issue. They say the United Force is anti-national. They are putting me up because I say they are dishonest in not taking part in the Constituent Assembly, so they say Feilden Singh is well aware that the Constituent Assembly will be just a rubber stamp to ram down the people's throat a P.N.C. Constitution, but hasn't the P.P.P. called this Parliament a rubber stamp? Is there anyone who feels he can stop this Bill from being passed in this House today? What kind of argument is that? Why did we come here today? We came here today to let our voices be heard. We came here today to register our objections and that is why we in the U.F. go into the Constituent Assembly and even though it may appear to be an impossible hope, to my mind, where there is life there is hope and we still hope that we may be able to get the safeguards in the old Constitution, into the new one, with which the P.N.C. is so determined to go ahead. If the P.P.P. says that this is a waste of time, it is a mere rubber stamp, why did Dr. Jagan, the Leader of the Opposition, put before the House this Motion which I received yesterday, a motion, and I agree with this Motion, that the National Assembly calls for the holding of a general election immediately. Why did he do this if it is waste of time? He must have thought some useful purpose would be served by doing this. Does he think that this is going to be merely an exercise in frustration?

I have heard two front bench members. Cde. Narbada Persaud said, whether we vote for or against this Bill does not matter. The hon. Member Mr. Collymore said, P.P.P. Motions have not been able to see the light of day. He would say nothing more because he would like to speak in this House. Okay. I would like to go into the Constituent Assembly and speak there too and register my objections and talk, I think that is what everybody who has a sense of responsibility should be doing and not maligning us and saying we had no right and we are propping up this and that and the other, and we are lending legality to the P.N.C. That's not the point of issue. The point of issue is that you must let your voice be heard and register your objections as we are all doing here today on this side of the House. Why did you come here? We all know the Bill will be passed –we came here to register our objections. Well, Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer, like the

P.P.P., I do not get paid for being in the Constituent Assembly. I get paid for being in Parliament but not in the Constituent Assembly.

Maybe, I should read what Hamaludin said as far back as 3rd August, 1975. If I am going to be maligned, let me read it. He is talking about the P.P.P. “One of its primary concerns at this point at this time has to be the question of its boycott of Parliament. Dr. Jagan admitted at the 1974 P.P.P. convention that staying out of Parliament was hurting the Party’s finances. Hamaludin must say whether this is true or not. He says there are also such other drawbacks as missing out on the use of the highest public forum. That’s all I am doing, using both of them. Mr. Speaker, I get paid for being in Parliament only. I don’t get paid for being in the Constituent Assembly. I, as a lawyer, could sit in my office and make money rather than running up and down here to attend meetings of the Constituent Assembly, but I will not be dishonest and boycott merely because I don’t get paid. **[Interruption]**

The Speaker: Comrades, it is now 4 o’clock. We will take a Suspension until 4.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

4.30 p.m.

On resumption

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, when the Suspension was taken, you were speaking. You have 10 minutes more.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, it seemed quite apparent to me during the interval that what I said here pleased some people and offended others. It is not my desire; it is not my intention, to please or to offend anyone. I merely say from my heart what I see the position to be. Attacks have been made upon me; attacks have been made upon my party, on several

occasions. I dealt with one particularly; I quoted part of a clipping. We have no newspaper in the United Force to answer these attacks and I think it is only fair that I use the one last remaining forum available to me to answer the attacks against the United Force and against me personally but I am not interested in pleasing or displeasing anybody. I am just interested in the factual position as I in my humble and honest position see it and I say in all conscience and in all humility that once we continue to sit in an extended life of Parliament which flows from a rigged referendum, then we have a duty also to sit in the Constituent Assembly. Both of them flow and get their authority from that referendum which we say was rigged, but I must reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that we do not agree with this Bill. We do not agree that there is any need for any new Constitution. We do not agree that there is any need for a new Constitution. We say that this is only being used to further postpone elections and that is why I reiterate our demand for the holding of free and fair elections now but if the P.N.C. continues to use its two-thirds majority to proceed hell-bent on a new Constitution, then we will continue to be involved in that but under protest.

All things must come to an end and in my humble opinion when the reins of power eventually come back into the hands of the people, whatever changes are made now, the necessary changes will then be made to restore fundamental rights and freedoms to the Guyanese people. Until then, the United Force will continue fighting in every available forum to achieve this.

The Leader of the Opposition (Cde. C. Jagan): Cde. Speaker, the last time the life of the Parliament was extended, the argument used was that Guyana needed a new Constitution, that the Independence Constitution was unsuitable. The House was not told in what way the Constitution was an obstruction for social change, and up to today this point has not been made.

The last speaker said that the P.P.P. stayed away from the 1965 Conference and condemned that Constitution and is now defending that same Constitution. I am sorry my friend has not looked at the situation from a dialectical point of view for, had he done so, he would

have understood and he would have seen that the product of the 1965 Conference was a product of a united team – P.N.C., U.F. and imperialism, and there were a lot of things wrong in that Constitution, to wit, the clause which spoke about prompt and adequate compensation when property, like the imperialists property, in Guyana was nationalised. In the Ramsahoye draft of 1962 that clause, which had been inserted in the 1961 Constitution by the imperialists with the help of the Opposition, was taken out but the draft approved by Shahabuddeen, supported by the Prime Minister and the Opposition, restored the prompt and adequate compensation clause in the 1965 Constitution. **[Interruption]** Ramphal. Ramphal was an agent of the Prime Minister. You know that. Shahabuddeen was an assistant of Ramphal.

The Minister will speak here but we are dealing with the way the thing operated then in the legal department, so let us get the perspective clear. The product of 1966 was a retrograde step from the Ramsahoye draft of the P.P.P. Government for the Independence of Guyana and no doubt that is why Mr. Feilden Singh can get up and say we took it from here together and we came back with it the same way. He is right, therefore, to say there was a lot of hypocrisy for the Government now to say that that Constitution is no good. Our case is not that. Our case is that changes have been made in that Constitution and just to remind the last speaker, when the P.P.P. gave support in 1971 for the nationalisation of the Demerara Bauxite Company, gave Parliamentary support so that the Government could have a two-thirds majority, when the matter was put to the vote, they voted against it. That showed that on that occasion on the United Force wanted to maintain the older order.

4.40 p.m.

Subsequent changes have been made in the Constitution. In 1975 two amendments were made and we say that with all those amendments put together in the Constitution, the Government was permitted to go ahead with its programme, at one stage, to take over, as it did, 80 per cent, as the members of the Government now say, of the economy. There is nothing in that Constitution to prevent the Government, for instance, from going ahead to nationalise the

banks, to nationalise the insurance companies, if it wanted to, which was in its programme also, after miniaturisation of the banks; there is nothing in the Constitution which prevents the Government from breaking up the big landlords' estates, from giving land to the tillers. That is our position. We are not defending a Constitution which came out of the 1965 conference.

Of course, there are other things in the Constitution: the fundamental rights section. The fundamental rights section was the section which the P.P.P. put into the 1959 – 1960 draft which was taken to London for the 1960 conference. Fundamentally what came out in the 1962, 1965 or 1966 Constitutions was in the original Constitution. The controversial clause was the “prompt” and adequate compensation.” So Mr. Feilden Singh is arguing like a lawyer and not like a dialectician and if he was arguing like a dialectician he would then understand the P.P.P.’s position and not come out with his puerility, naivete. [The Prime Minister: “Fire, fire, bun me hand!”]

It is not “fire, fire!” This is a forum to educate the masses. This is the reality of the situation. The Government says – I come back to the words – that the Constitution is unsuitable. Now, Cde. Speaker, as I said already there is nothing in the Constitution which prevents the members of the Government from taking any measure in this country to advance social change. They have two-thirds majority and they know, they are aware, that if they do anything positive, as in 1971, they will get the support of the P.P.P. to amend the Constitution, if necessary.

In fact what is happening is that they are going backwards: with the I.M.F. agreement, a reversal on the Sophia Declaration of 1974. I have spoken about that already, so that the Constitution is not a barrier, has never been – rather, I shouldn't say has never been; has not been in recent times since the amendment and, consequently, we say that it was, as my colleague said, a smoke screen, a red herring brought across the trail in order to achieve the purpose of postponing elections for the first time last year.

And what was their expectation? They were hoping that things would get better. They fooled themselves with their own propaganda: the I.M.F. deal will bring in the millions, will bring in the foreign exchange. The Prime Minister says that he spoke to the Soviet Ambassador and they do not give foreign exchange so the Government had to go to the I.M.F., so how can you blame them for going to the I.M.F. and the Americans; who else will give.

We say that is not a question. The money is right here; \$234 million out of \$4000 million which was squeezed out of the people; \$234 million, the bulk of that is going out in foreign exchange to pay debts and compensation payments. At the same time, all the banks and the foreign insurance companies are taking money out of this country in the form of profits. That is what has to be dealt with and that is not a constitutional issue. That is a political issue and instead of the Government going forward to take positive steps to deal with that question, it is retreating and bringing the red herring about the Soviet Union not giving foreign exchange.

Cde. Speaker, as I said, the hope was Hope. I remember when Mr. Hope was Finance Minister – what year was that? Before his job was taken away by this Minister over here, Cde. Hoyte – he told us that in a year or two, everything would turn round the corner and the world economy would become better and we would be doing well in Guyana. Everlasting hope, as we said then. Well, look at it, in their own newspaper **Guyana Chronicle**: “E.E.C. points gloomy picture for 1980.” Capitalism is in crisis, getting deeper and deeper in the quagmire and they are always living in everlasting hope that things are going to turn round the corner. Well, it is getting worse as it gets worse, it is like an aeroplane going downhill – tail spin – and this is where the economy is going at the moment: in a tail-spin; every year it is worse. This is not our figure. The Minister of Economic Development gave us last week and my colleague referred to it. The economy is in a mess and it is becoming worse. The question is what to do about it.

As I said already, Cde. Speaker, the I.M.F. solution is no solution. They have an extended credit. Last year they had \$48 million. This year they had \$206.5 million for three years, averaging roughly \$63-\$64 million a year. On the one hand like a sick patient getting blood

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transfusion and on the other hand, getting one pint of blood and donating three pints of blood at the same time. This is what is happening to our economy and that is no solution. Any schoolboy will tell you that if you put a patient in that position he would die.

So we come now to a solution. Here again we have to deal with dialectics. We have to deal with economics and politics and ideology and institutions. We have to see the connection – interconnection and interaction – first with a Constitution which they brought back. It is not only the Constitution they brought back which they and the imperialists got together and made in 1966, but they got together and put out politics, domestic and foreign, which are today reaping the bitter fruits for this country – the debt and the compensation payments, 58 per cent of the current budget.

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That is the reality of our economic life and so the economy got into a worse position and that had its reaction on the politics, and as the economy got worse they put on more pressures on the workers, more taxes from 1977, removal of subsidies, cut in social services, dismissal of workers; and as the workers fight back there is more repression; as the workers fight back the class struggle must advance. They fight back and there is more repression. Beat them up in the streets. Call every strike political. Dismiss the workers. Okay! But that is not going to solve the crisis. We have a vicious circle and now that kind of reaction at the political level is having its reaction on the economy. Let us not fool ourselves. These are laws of social development and people who do not understand do not look at the picture very comprehensively. Then they will not see this. They will live in hope like the Utopian socialists, the co-operative socialists, that things will get better but they will not because our relationship is tied up with the world situation. Constantly we are hearing pleas at home, Produce more. Increase production. Increase productivity. Produce or perish.” That is the new slogan.

The Prime Minister goes abroad. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has just come back from

a safari to the United Nations and what do they speak about? Is it the grandson, or great grandson of a slave who brought his forefathers here? The West India Committee. We went to London to talk to them to come back and enslave us again. Mr. Jackson also spoke about interdependence between sharks and sardines. There can be no independence between the imperialist exploiters and those whom they subjugate in the Third World and elsewhere.

Cde. Speaker, every time we hear a speech abroad, we talk about the new economic order. We talk about interdependence, but let us face facts. In this period of intense and deep economic crisis of capitalism, imperialism will not solve its own problems and contradictions by aiding the Third World countries. It cannot and will not. Let us understand that clearly. And merely going abroad to make pleas is not going to help. What is going to help, what is going to solve the problems is to deal with the question internally and externally in the way it should be dealt with, that is, advance the class struggle at home and advance the class struggle internationally? Say which side you are on.

I heard the Prime Minister's speech at the Non-Aligned Movement. I heard Mr. Manley's speech also. How is it that at one time Guyana was supposed to be ahead of Jamaica and now Jamaica is taking forthright steps against imperialism while Guyana is reversing and going back on pronouncements made in the Sophia Declaration? And let me say this. Apart from all of this hope and wishful thinking, merely feeding the people demagogic statements, talking at the street corners and in the columns of the **Chronicle** that we have a socialist thrust, that we are advancing into socialism, and that we shall write in the Constitution, the P.N.C. draft, that Guyana

Is in a stage of transition from capitalism to socialism, will not help. One of our workers intellectuals – I make a distinction between worker intellectual and petty bourgeois intellectual -- [The Prime Minister: "I am glad you are listening to my speech. I am glad you are learning something in your old age."]

At a T.U.C. meeting, one of our ordinary comrades spoke on the Education Report of the T.U.C. where the same phrase is copied and used verbatim almost, because they have Sancho and some of the other boys, back-benchers of the P.N.C., so they copy everything the master says. So, our worker intellectual got up and began telling them some of the theoretical principles. Apparently, Teekah has forgotten all of those things now, he doesn't talk about them now. So, the man was speaking, do you know what Basil Blair did? He said, "Comrade, is this fellow on the education committee?" He said, "No." "Put him on. You are a member of the education committee."

Cde. Speaker, the point I am making, as the regime gets more unpopular, as it loses footing at the street corners, it will become more and more demagogic. But writing it in the Constitution doesn't make it so. Indira did the same thing when she was revising the Constitution and when elections came, although she had won three quarters of the votes in the previous elections she only won one quarter at the following election.

I recall the day in this House in 1970, on Republic Day, when they brought forward the concept of co-operative socialism, I pointed to the Prime Minister with the book and I said, "Time was when we both read this book and believed in its contents, but now for opportunist reasons you want to forget about scientific socialism and you are talking about utopian co-operative socialism. I have the book here. If any one of them wants to read it, I can lend him. Another book. That one was Engels, one of the classics, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. What was said in 1970, nearly 10 years ago, today it has come to pass. The P.P.P. speaks from a position of theoretical prevision because we take a scientific approach to the question of politics and ideology. But, comrades, if you drift pragmatically from pillar to post, you are going to land the country and its people not only in a position where they suffer as they are today, a lot of them are opting out, running away, but moreso, you are preparing the country for a state of tension and turmoil, and Guyana will be no exception in this regard to other countries.

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So far as the institutions of the State are concerned, there is no independence at all. The P.N.C. party and the State institutions are all interlinked. Even in the Soviet Union there is no such thing as party paramountcy. State organs function as State organs outside of the party. The party is a guide not a dictator. Socialism does not come from dictatorship. They say their ideas are based – occasionally they talk about Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Recently they have been talking about Kim Il Sung, and Mao-tse-Tung, moreso.

This is from the Central Committee Report, the 20th Congress, Page 18. **[Interruption.]** P.P.P. Congress, of course. Do you expect me to quote from the P.N.C. Congress?

[Interruption.] Whoever wants to reach socialism by any other path than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and political sense.

5 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, I saw the other day you had reason to complain about it over and over in this House, I hope it is right, not true, Order Bill showing the number, showing where things were ordered from Guyana Stores to the tune of nearly \$30,000 for the P.N.C. Congress. What is this? This is not socialism, this is not socialist practice. The Prime Minister quotes that this is done in the Soviet Union. It is not done like that in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has its own Party membership and they carry on their work from party dues. They don't collect from the people, businessmen or from any other Congress. They collect from their members' annual, weekly dues, monthly dues.

We now come to this Constituent Assembly. One member –

The Speaker: Dr. Jagan you have 2 minutes more, unless you get an extension of time.

Cde. N. Persaud: Cde. Chairman, I move a Motion for Dr. Jagan to continue his speech for fifteen minutes.

Cde. Collymore seconded.

The Speaker: There is a motion for Dr. Jagan to continue his speech for fifteen minutes.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Cde. C. Jagan: Mr. Feilden Singh said that we did not attend the Constitutional Assembly because it was a question of money and so on. Cde. Speaker, that is a shallow statement which doesn't deserve to be answered but let me just say for the record, the amount of time that the P.P.P. spends at the street corners of this country is more than all the time that Feilden Singh and all of them spend in the Constituent Assembly. The P.P.P.'s politics are known in here and out of here, all the time, in the streets, with the people. One of our comrades, only this week in the North West, had to walk and push a bicycle for twenty-five miles. I can't argue with you, gasoline is \$6 per gallon and that type of thing. That is how they are developing the interior.

But let us come to this Constituent Assembly. After all our efforts to stop the Referendum, which was rigged to make it succeed, we said, all right; we came in the House, we moved a Motion that the work, the product of the Constituent Assembly must go to the people. Here is the Vote: - For, P.P.P. – fives; Against – the P.N.C.; not inclined to vote – Mr. Abraham and Mr. Singh. This is what we are talking about. This is a matter of principle. When Mr. Burnham was Leader of the Opposition, he put a Motion in the Parliament that this Legislative Assembly recommend that a Referendum be held for the purpose of deciding Guyana's electoral future, but he is not prepared to put this Constitution today to the people. This is our objection.

Not only that is our objection but we see also the farce of wasting time in this Constituent Assembly. Mr. Feilden Singh said he will help to record his protest, etc., record his position, but it also has now given the P.N.C. an excuse to now extend, ask for another extension. Because of this circus, because of this show which is now being taken all over the country -- **[Interruption]** That is what you are afraid of. So it is not just a question of whether we take part in the Constituent Assembly or not.

The fact of the matter is, in the Constituent Assembly, we know that what the P.N.C. wants will be put there. That is a fact and therefore the P.N.C. if it didn't want to have the excuse that the work is not finished, to extend the life of this Parliament for another twelve months, could have presented the Constitution long ago. That is what is going to be done eventually, but let us see what is going to come out of this Constituent Assembly. The P.N.C. has put out a Draft. What is that Draft? The elected members – sixty-five or fifty-three of them, twelve or other members – ten coming from Regional Councils and two from G.A.I.A. Cde. Speaker, I remember when Mr. Burnham and I went to England to protest the suspension of the Constitution, one of the organisations, which sent a telegram and forced the British Government to suspend, was the Village Chairman's Conference and G.A.I.A. is the successor to that body – that is what it did. So then the T.U.C. comes along as a willing tool of the P.N.C. and says, "T.U.C. must have as many as G.A.I.A. has, so many of the members." So we are going to have not only the emasculation of the Parliament and the control of it through fraudulent elections but the President will have unlimited powers, unlimited.

Nixon was not impeached. He was saved from impeachment by resigning, saved from impeachment before the bloodhounds. The President, under the P.N.C. constitution, if he was placed in a similar position as Nixon found himself, he will not have to resign, he will dissolve the Parliament. That is the kind of dictatorship that is being proposed. Tell us what is there in that Constitution which can advance the social progress, the social trend in Guyana? What is there in that Draft which is not there right now, except to put in all those dictatorial provisions which will put more power in the hands of one person?

Cde. Speaker, all this talk about a socialist Constitution for a Socialist Guyana is a lot of bunk, is a lot of nonsense to fool the gullible, to delude the people and to buy time. They know that their popularity today is nothing. It is at its lowest ebb and so they want to buy more time, as in the case of Local Government elections, perpetual postponement, and a one-party state and the façade of democracy.

5.10 p.m.

I think that the members of the Government at this time of our lives, if they are really socialist as they claim, if they really have any feeling for the people of this country, for this nation, they should stop and examine, see what the realities in the country are. They must know that people are crying out, they must know that people are suffering. Look at the prices that people have to pay in the Rupununi for gasoline, for milk, for essentials. How are you going to develop the interior, how are you going to develop agriculture? From all quarters now people are talking, the working-class is speaking. They claim that they are socialist, that they are the vanguard party. Well, if they are the vanguard party, behave like the vanguard. The role of a vanguard is to unite the people. Take steps to unite the working class and move the country forward. Fight against imperialism.

So bad has the situation become that the T.U.C. was forced, although controlled by the P.N.C., to call a special conference last year, in November, and it has called for a political solution which the P.P.P. has been calling for for donkey's years, more particularly since 1977 when the crisis first manifested itself. Nothing was done. This was after the P.P.P. proposal in 1977, in August, was rejected. At a meeting in Mexico which I attended, the Minister of Information was there. What did he tell the crowd? P.P.P. is not serious. If the P.P.P. was serious about national unity it would not have gone to the press. It would have gone to the party. Cde. Speaker, in the period of critical support, the P.P.P. had talks with the P.N.C. and it was clear that the P.N.C. was not concerned because at that time the members thought they were

rising high with sugar prices and so on. Myopia, because they cannot see far ahead. They were riding high but now the T.U.C. has come forward with that resolution. **[Interruption]**

The Speaker: Comrades, don't let us have any cross talk.

Cde. C. Jagan: At the last conference, recently concluded in October, another resolution was passed, a special resolution out of the floor of the conference and it says,

“Whereas the T.U.C. is placed in the invidious position where it cannot escape the effects of political controversy.

And whereas the economy of the country will continue to be in a precarious position unless some measure is made to bring about broad working class unity among the workers ...”.

The T.U.C. finds itself in a dilemma and it is asking itself what is its role. Soon after the special conference last year it came out on a decision and called a general strike on the N.I.S. increases and the Widows' and Orphans' Fund increases but the P.N.C. leaders, the Prime Minister, cajoled them, no doubt, threatened them. **[Interruption]** You don't threaten them? What did you do to Mr. Feilden Singh after the referendum? You said, he beat up Panday, and you are bringing the police, the same police. No doubt that is why you forced him to go to the Constituent Assembly. He is now trying to tell us he is not there because of money. Ask him how he got there. **[Interruption]**

The Speaker: Comrade, please let us have some order. **[Interruption]**

Cde. C. Jagan: All right, I will clarify the point.

The Speaker: Dr. Jagan, your time is up. How much more time do you want?
[Interruption]

Cde. C. Jagan: These people are making too much noise.

The Speaker: Who is making too much noise? Yes, comrades, we've been going pretty all right all the time. We've got 15 minutes more, let us try and finish it off.

Cde. C. Jagan: The T.U.C. finds itself in a dilemma today. It is getting a bad name. It is under pressure from the Government and pressure from the workers. It therefore passed a resolution saying another special conference should be called to see how means could be found, etc. They had other organisations. My colleague, Cde. Collymore, has referred to the signatures of sixty-six prominent people who are in commerce, in industry and in different places, some are even in Government - [Interruption.] I don't want to name them because I would steal a lot of time from you. There are some people here who work with the Government; because they see that the thing is going downhill. Therefore, the citizens have now come together and they have invited the P.N.C. and other parties, other political forces, to a meeting this Saturday.

I am not going to dictate to the P.N.C. I can't, but I would like at this zero hour to warn of these methods being used merely to perpetuate the life of this Government. If these were going to solve the problems of the people, we would say all right. The evidence is there. The situation is getting from bad to worse and will continue to do so. If there are any nationalists on that side, if there are any socialists, if there are any anti-imperialists, this is the hour that they must come out and speak out with some of their colleagues who find a time and place. The time has come to call a halt to all this nonsense. We have put the Motion in the Parliament, largely because, as I was saying, the Minister of Information went to Mexico and said we are not serious about national unity, if we were serious we would not have just gone to the press conference. In other places, they are saying the same thing. They go to other conferences, P.P.P. does not want unity. Okay. They can make propaganda abroad to this effect but all of that is not going to help

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because clearly it is showing that all over the world people are beginning to understand the realities of what is happening in Guyana and no amount of P.N.C. propaganda is going to wipe that out. No amount of fiddling is going to help to solve the economic and financial problems of the country and put this country on the course which can lead to social change and social progress.

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Cde. Speaker, everything has a time but we would hope that better senses will prevail in this country and we do not have to have the genocidal wars like in Vietnam and Nicaragua, where hundreds of thousands of people are being shot, where villages and towns are being bombarded. Imperialist troops are coming at critical times, last year and this year, to talk about training in jungle warfare. Has the Prime Minister forgotten that when they suspended our Constitution in 1953 one of the charges was that we were supporting Mau Mau terrorists in Kenya and bandits and terrorists in Malaya? The British have more experience all over the world, so far as fighting terrorists is concerned, than perhaps any other force, in jungle or whatever. The Americans are there too. They are handing out money. They are now coming back with the cold war in this area because they see progress and change and they want to turn back the clock of history.

The last Ambassador said they are so confident about this Government, they had promised \$12 million in one year and they gave \$30 million. One of their previous Under Secretaries of State said they are not concerned about the road Guyana is taking. Let us not fool the people about how anti-imperialist you are and how progressive you are. The fact of the matter is this country is now reversing course and it is not going to solve the problems of the people of Guyana. The hour is now when progressive forces in this country must come together if this country is to be saved, and from this forum, we call for, we make a plea to those people who have the interest of this country at heart not to rely mainly on force and terror. The writing there is on the wall. The imperialists know that their puppet dictators are falling like ninepins all

over the place. At times they kill their puppets to get them out of the way, like the one who was in the Dominican Republic for 30 years, Trujillo, and Chu, whom they brought from Japan as a playboy and whom they put in the Presidency in Vietnam. They had to kill him to get rid of him.

Let us understand this is the reality of today's politics. The imperialists know that we are suffering. Imperialism is also going to try to turn this country back and the progressive forces of this country have to watch. In the Caribbean today, they are afraid. Nicaragua, St. Lucia, Dominica, Grenada, since Cuba. They want to have a new axis, so they start with Trinidad, Barbados, St. Vincent, with Antigua, St. Kitts, Dominica. Because of devastation from hurricane, Dominica looks for aid and Seraphine has said that, "those who are giving us aid have questioned the ideology of the Government," and so, what happens? Senator Rosie Douglas – gone. Minister Martin – gone. So is it the way you want to go? Is it the way Guyana will go? The way that puppetry is reversing?

Cde. Speaker, we say at this time Guyana faces great dangers when imperialism is in a counter attack. It is now a time for guile to achieve its objective, not only bribing but bringing the fleet again into the Caribbean waters as in the days when the flag used to fly all over the place, and all patriots of this country must stand up and speak out against this kind of new cold-war manoeuvre and threat to the sovereignty, security and peace of the Guyanese and Caribbean people. **[Applause]**

The Prime Minister (Cde. Burnham): Cde. Speaker, assuming the sincerity of the Leader of the Opposition in calling for national unity, we still have the question before us which we will put in two parts, (1) Is it necessary to have a new Constitution? and (2) Do we need an extension of time to complete the writing of that Constitution?

It is not particularly my wish to regale this House with history and, therefore, I shall make no point of the fact that when in the 1950s I called for evidence to be taken from the public, the then Premier, or whatever he was said to be, said he had no time for people like those

nitwits. I do not think that was really germane. Cde. Speaker, I shall attempt to deal later with the allegedly dialectic analysis of the situation. At this moment, I would like to concentrate on the two parts of the question.

Do we need a Constitution? Of course, the new Constitution merely starts off with a declaration about a belief in God, it does not attempt to specify, describe or allude to the philosophy behind the Constitution or the guiding principles. A belief in God is good. This Government has always held and will always that a man is free to believe in God or not to believe in God. He is free to worship or not to worship. Can anyone construe with that consideration what are the guiding principles under which the Constitution is to be built? There was set out in a publication, Referendum Fact Sheet No.2, the P.N.C.'s Guidelines for a New Guyana Constitution, the guiding principles which the People's National Congress thought should inform and inspire any Constitution. Furthermore – and this is a significant break from our ancient jurisprudence – it is stipulated that all Government agencies, including the Courts, shall be guided by these principles.

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We who have practised law under the present jurisprudence know that there is a rule of interpretation which says you do not look outside of the legislation to find its meaning; you must find the meaning within the legislation. That, we think, is unsuitable in our circumstances. I have heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition say that a new Constitution is not necessary and any of the changes or amendments which were thought particularly important could have been carried through by this House. I am a little surprised that the one who claims to be a dialectician, one who claims to have a knowledge of what happens in the various socialist countries should make – I don't want to say "stupid" – as insane a statement as that. Does he not know that in the Soviet Union there was a Constitution of 1918? Certainly the Communist Party could have changed the Constitution without writing a new Constitution in 1923. Similarly, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union could have changed and amended that Constitution of 1923 instead of

writing a new one in 1936. And certainly the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, without producing a new Constitution for 1977, the Diamond Jubilee of the Great October Revolution, could have merely amended the Constitution of 1936.

Now, why a new Constitution? First of all, the parameters and the framework are different from the parameters and framework of the sort of Constitution which is handed out at the time of achievement of Independence by ex-British colonies. I shall deal with the question of certain provisions that appear in the Constitution later.

Secondly, which is preferable? Even assuming the framework of the 1966 Constitution is satisfactory for our present purposes, are we going to indulge in a number of patchwork exercises? For instance, when it became necessary to take over the bauxite industry in this country, we had to amend the Constitution. When it became necessary for the State to acquire, on behalf of the people, land with a certain facility, we had to amend the Constitution. We have had several amendments to the Constitution which can do little more than provide a field-day for lawyers who specialise in technicalities. I do not know whether that was the motive, the rationale or the *raison d'être* behind the several Constitutions which the Soviet Union has from time to time enacted, but certainly in the circumstances of Guyana, which is preferable, a number of amendments or a new Constitution? It seems to me that logic compels one answer: A new Constitution.

Now, have we completed that Constitution? The answer is, No. The facts are there, therefore, what is asked for is time to complete the drafting of the Constitution in a public forum. We have heard certain remarks about the draft put up by the People's National Congress being not socialist in content or objective. I shall deal with that later, but whether or not the draft put up by the People's National Congress is socialist in content and objective is not the material thing. It is that a discussion on the Constitution is public and it is a discussion in which the People's Progressive Party could have been involved.

Judge not that ye be not judged, and, therefore, I will not go as far as the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh goes to say that the People's Progressive Party remains in the Parliament, which it claims is illegal, because of the remuneration but refuses to serve in the Constituent Assembly because it is gratuitous. I would not adopt or adapt the argument of Mr. Feilden Singh. He is his own man and he is entitled to his opinion. All I would say is that it is passing strange that the People's Progressive Party, that has the answer for everything, that has claimed to have some ideas as to the type of Constitution we should have, should be absent from that forum where the Constitution can be debated in detail.

Let us look at the draft of the People's National Congress just for a while – not that I am following along the path of irrelevancy being built by the Opposition. In this Fact Sheet one sees that the guiding principles and objectives are proposed: The Goal of Political Development, The Goal of Economic Development, The Foundation of Economic Systems, Land to the Tiller and a number of things like those that do not appear in the present Constitution. These are provisions, which a schoolboy growing old, taking the time, would find in socialist Constitution but which one does not find in the 1966 Constitution. If the People's Progressive Party desires to engage in a debate as to whether the content of the proposed Constitution by the People's National Congress is socialist or not, let us seize that opportunity at some other time. I dare even the soi-disant dialectician – I am not sure that he understands what a dialectician is – to contradict my proposition that the basic provisions are provisions normally found in the Constitution of socialist countries.

If I may digress for a moment – and I really did not originally desire to do this – we are told that the People's Progressive Party is willing to support any progressive measure. We are reminded of the fact that by the stance of the People's Progressive Party vote, we were able to nationalise DEMBA in 1971. In **abstracto**, that statement is correct, but it is inaccurate in that it does not give all the details. It does not give the details of the horse trading that went on for weeks as to whether there should be a PBX for the Leader of the Opposition, whether he should

get free travelling on every form of transport, whether it was \$1,000 or \$800 that he should be given for office expenses.

I agree that the Leader of the Opposition does require certain paraphernalia. He does require certain decorations of office, but how germane were those decorations of office and paraphernalia to the question of whether or not we would recapture, so to speak, our natural resources and bauxite in this country? It is easy to speak. In Trinidad they say “Wha a’ mouth na load” and this here is an exemplification of the Trinidadian quip.

We are told that the People’s National Congress draft in 1966 was a retrograde draft as against the draft of Ramsahoye, better known as the “gasoline Constitution.” Now it is absolutely true that Ramsahoye’s draft with respect to acquisition of property was a forward step to a similar provision in 1966. It is agreed. But do you know why Jagan is there and will continue to be there? He does not understand the realities. Here was the P.P.P. qualifying to be an opening batsman for Yorkshire – Boycott. There was the United Force attached to the old older. Cde. Speaker, in the name of all that is just, how were we going to put ourselves in a position to change the Constitution later unless we got Independence? Mr. Boycott, oh no! Cde. Boycott –

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The Speaker: Cde. Prime Minister, I won’t have you making that reference to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Prime Minister: My apologies. I apologise to the House and to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Here was the United Force, on the other hand, insisting on certain things, and a so-called progressive people party isn’t there. We had to concede that and there was no point in making an argument about it from the beginning because, let me say this and perhaps my good and one-time learned friend Mr. Feilden Singh forgets it, that that conference nearly broke down

over certain issues with respect to property rights and things of that sort. **[Interruption]** I admit, Cde. Speaker, when Lenin introduced the new economic policy, the little boys – the theorists, the theoreticians – were against him. When Lenin agreed that the British should investigate the coal in the Donets basin, the theoreticians, the radicals, said he was selling out the revolution. I have always felt, for instance, Cde. Speaker, that Gronsky was a much greater ideologue and theoreticians than Lenin but you know what? Gronsky died in a little fascist goal and Lenin is a hero of the first socialist country in the world. That is the difference. There is Gronsky or a would-be Gronsky.

But one swallow doesn't make a summer. The 1966 Constitution, bad as it was, certainly aimed at greater democracy than did the "gasoline constitution," for the "gasolene constitution," in the appointment of the Judicial Service Commission, in the appointment of the Chief Justice, had no role whatsoever for anything but opposition – Leader of the Opposition. The 1966 Constitution provides for consultation which some infants have confused with orders. If you were to examine the two Constitutions, you would see that bad as the 1966 one was, the one of 1962 on most issues was worse.

Now, we hear, Cde. Speaker, a number of demagogic and plausible statements: The P.N.C. wants to establish a one-party state. Well, in the first place, Cde. Speaker, in our draft we have provided specifically for the right of people to form political parties. In the second place, what is wrong **ipso facto** with a one-party state? He has just come back from a one-party state. The People's National Congress says – and this is not dialectics; this is intellectual dishonesty or imbecility - "Well, as we see it, the atmosphere, and this being the tradition of Guyana, does not lend itself to a one-party State and therefore, in our draft we have provided for the formation of political parties."

I would have thought, Cde. Speaker, that the level of the debate would have been higher. How can those who always praise the Soviet Union, perhaps with justification even in the days of Stalin, come and make it a crime that there should be a one-party state, and secondly, why do

they accuse the People's National Congress of wanting a one-party state? There are two dishonesties there and they cannot answer them. We have never said we wanted a one-party state, Cde. Speaker. We provide in our draft for freedom to form political parties. That is one, and secondly, what is wrong with a one-party state philosophically? Is it a multi-party state that exists in the Soviet Union, or in the G.D.R., or in Cuba, or in Bulgaria, or in Poland, or in Yugoslavia, or in Romania, or in Vietnam? I don't want here to recite the catalogue.

Cde. Speaker, we are grateful certainly to hear that the miniaturised Opposition – I didn't say the "miniature," the miniaturised --You see, **soi-disant** dialecticians won't understand the distinction. Now that the miniaturised Opposition will be prepared to support the Government on certain radical measures like taking over the banking system, excellent. We are grateful. But do you know where the Leader of the Opposition and the party bank? At the Bank of Baroda. I didn't know that that was a local bank. You see Cde. Speaker, we must be consistent. And where does the People's Progressive Party keep its London account? With Barclays. Let them doubt it. Silence is consent. But, Cde. Speaker, we are told about demagoguery. I speak not of the demagogy of the Opposition but the demagogy and dishonesty, and it is dishonesty at the intellectual level. **[Interruption]**

Now, Cde. Speaker, let us deal with another accusation which is made, because this debate has drifted away from the need to extend to complete the Constitution, to discuss the contents of the Constitution. I accept that challenge because at least the Opposition has given itself an opportunity to be heard on matters important, of which opportunity it robbed itself when it refused to serve in the Constituent Assembly, according to Mr. Feilden Singh, because the Constituent Assembly carried no stipend.

"The powers of the President are excessive." What tommy rot!" The President has a right to veto under the P.N.C. draft, but that veto, if the P.N.C. draft is finally accepted, is subject to an overriding majority vote by the Parliament. The President can dissolve Parliament certainly, but that is no more power than I have now. Cde. Speaker, to borrow the plagiarism of

the Leader of the Opposition, every schoolboy knows I can, as Prime Minister, dissolve this House at any time. I don't have to become President to do that. So what nonsense! Cde. Speaker, you see the type of thing that is taken to the people? Now, the average man in the street is not aware of all these details so when the P.P.P. goes and says, "Look, the P.N.C. wants to give the President power to dissolve the House," it is a power which Burnham has already – **[Interruption]** These infants that parade as dialecticians. No wonder Benn left you and has become a capitalist. You make socialism unpopular with your ignorance.

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Cde. Speaker, one finds that the opposition is scratching for a reason to oppose. They say: You know, the People's National Congress is afraid to face the electorate. They said that when the People's National Congress asked for a referendum, when the People's National Congress went to a referendum. Now, let us look at the matter objectively and dispassionately. A referendum meant a decision by all of the voters who wanted to vote. All right, it is alleged that the People's National Congress rigged the referendum but there was no difference in the voting. You see, it is not a referendum in the context of a referendum in Britain with respect to her joining the E.E.C. where there is the first-past-the-post system. If the P.N.C. was prepared to face a referendum, why should it have been afraid to face an election? It is the same thing. So that argument falls to the ground.

Now, I really can't see why if we were willing to face the country on a referendum, it can be alleged that the People's National Congress is unwilling to face the country on an election with the same type of electorate and the same type of system. It is that the P.N.C. feels that as our tenth Republic anniversary approaches, we should go into our eleventh year not only with a new Constitution but with elections being held under the new Constitution.

Let us pass now to consider the criticism of the state of the economy because, contends the Opposition, these things are relevant to a Constitution. First of all, I would say, Cde.

Speaker, that the radical social changes that have to be carried out would better be carried out under the type of Constitution proposed by the People's National Congress. But let us also look at some of the criticisms that have been made. There is a terrible inconsistency in the arguments of various speakers from the Opposition, and terrible inconsistencies within the contributions of some of the members of the Opposition.

Says the Leader of the Opposition, that he heard the speech of the Prime of Guyana in Havana: That is good. He is learning to listen to proper things. He heard the speech of Prime Minister Manley and his remark was: "Once upon a time, Guyana was ahead." Well, that is a matter of opinion. As Prime Minister, and I will say this for the People's National Congress, we are not grandstanding; we are not seeking to be ahead of anyone. We are merely seeking to do what we think is right and good. But the same man who is to be ahead of us, he signed up with the I.M.F. and he devalued, so that today, the Guyana dollar is nearly as high as the Jamaican dollar. But he wouldn't tell the public that. The Leader of the Opposition would go to the public and say the P.N.C. Government is terrible, that it should be signing any agreement with the I.M.F. Now, obviously he has been coached recently. The P.N.C. does not consult Charge D'Affaires before making any decision. Nor does it get Bookers to write its Budget.

Cde. Speaker, as I was saying, when I first made the statement that the problem was one of availability of foreign exchange, there were two sources of foreign exchange in those circumstances, either the West or the East. I said then and I repeat now that the Ambassador Plenipotentiary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to Guyana said to me that the Soviet Union does not give that type of assistance in support of foreign exchange balances. I heard it to be said by the graying dialectician that I was inaccurate. Now, today, he says it is not a matter of that. How long will he continue?

In the 1964 or 1961 manifesto of the People's Progressive Party, which was written by the present Leader of the Opposition, he said that one of the first things he was going to do when Guyana became independent was to join the I.M.F. **[Interruption]** I do not indulge in false

interpretations of the facts nor do I indulge in inaccuracies so far as history is concerned. Do I make a red herring of the I.M.F.? Guyana must be unique because I have not travelled as much as the dialectician, I can afford neither the time nor the money. In any case, my plane trips are not paid for outside of Guyana but this I know, having travelled reasonably widely, that the economic situation both in the east and the west is tight, to put it mildly. We hear the Government being blamed for withdrawing subsidies. God knows that this Government would love to keep subsidies on but *ex nihilo nihil fit* out of nothing cometh nothing. But the price of rum in Guyana is one-tenth the price of rum in Cuba. At least you can get a cheaper drink. And I say this not to denigrate the country for which I have the highest admiration. In Cuba, clothes are rationed, food is rationed. I was there more recently than the dialectician and I spoke to the President of Cuba. To whom he spoke, I don't know.

Now, why do they have to have rationing? Because of the tightness of the situation, it is not because they are socialist or not socialist; it is not because they are pursuing the capitalist role or the non-capitalist role. It is common knowledge that the oil bill in Guyana in 1972 was \$50 million. In 1979, it will be at least \$225 million. Now what that has to do with socialism? If it had to do with socialism I would have been able to speak to one of the socialist oil producers, if I could find one, and ask them to hustle a refinery here because, you know, the refinery has to be custom built to crack the particular crude. Is it socialism or non-capitalism that has caused the price of fuel in the Soviet Union to go up? Is it socialism or non-capitalism or capitalist revision that has fuel rationed in Havana to the point where on certain nights our blackouts are accidental? They have so much eye-pass; they let the lights go off when we are debating here. But in certain parts of Havana there are scheduled blackouts to save fuel.

Now, says the Leader of the Opposition for the time being, because when he boycotts, Mr. Feilden Singh will be the Leader of the Opposition. **[Interruption]** But they are not going to boycott. You want to bet me that they are not going to boycott? Because the decision is now in the hands of a troika.

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Now, there is the debt burden which we have to face. It is only, Cde. Speaker, in the last four years that the People's National Congress Government has had to be servicing debts contracted during the lifetime of this Government. The debts that we have been servicing until the last four years have been debts contracted by the imperialists and Jagan – and let the public know that. That is number one. All of the debts we had contracted up to that time were long term debts with a ten-year moratorium. **[Cde. Dalchand]:** “How big?” You don't even understand what is moratorium, that is why you ask how big. A moratorium has nothing to do with bigness. **[Interruption]** Man, you stick to selling gasoline to Ramsahoye. **[Cde. Dalchand]:** “Go ahead, you go ahead.” Sure, I am going ahead with or without you. You know, as Isaac Hayes said, I am going to make it without you, Dalchand. Yes, you get off, when I see the cheque at Royal Bank -- **[Interruption.]** I got the photo copy but it is you and Ram—

The Speaker: Cde. Burnham, please proceed.

The Prime Minister: I am sorry. My apologies for answering Cde. Dalchand who does not answer his leader's call for a strike but has his sugar cane cut during strike period.

Now, what do we do in the circumstance? We talk about the contracting of debts. I am going to give instructions, Cde. Speaker, to the Governor of the Central Bank, to make available to all Members of this House, a monthly synopsis published by the Bank because at the back of this synopsis one finds all the loans, the important loans, in the world that have been contracted and he would see that it is not only the P.N.C. Government. The Cuban Government is contracting debts, the Japanese, the Spaniards, the Poles are contracting debts, the Soviets – over billions of dollars. Now what is wrong with debts? Paupers can't borrow, you know, or if there is no faith in your capacity to repay you can't borrow.

The fact of the matter is, as it is conceded both in the East and in the West today, that the increase in the price of oil, the inflation that has been a concomitant of that and the inflation

which in any case one saw even before the increase in the price of oil, have altogether forced a number of countries in the developing world, particularly those that are non-oil producing, to contract debts. Is the Opposition proposing, Cde. Speaker, that unilaterally this Government should renege on its debt? Is that the proposal? He speaks of \$258 million. I don't know where he got his figures from. It is true, as he said, that he has so many statistics in his head that he sometimes gets mixed up. But is he suggesting that we renege on the debts? Why doesn't he go and suggest to the Soviet Union that she renege? Why doesn't he go and suggest to Poland that she renege? Why not go to – but he can't get that high. He can't get high to speak to the relevant people to suggest. [Cde. C. Jagan: "Because he can stay here without killing poor people like you are doing. That is different."] My poor people here don't have food rationing; my poor people here can get more than one change of underwear in a year.

Now, therefore, this is a fact which has to be faced, hence the whole discussion about the New Economic International Order. Now, why does one naively talk about the new International Economic Order? Because of the features of the present International Economic Order which seemed geared in such a way as to be oppressive on small, struggling, poor nations like Guyana. Why does Fidel in his speech to the United Nations speak of the duty of the developing countries during the next decade? Why? Is it something peculiar to the People's National Congress that we have had to contract debts? Is it something peculiar to the People's National Congress that we find difficulties in these circumstances? Is it something peculiar to the People's National Congress administration that it calls on the people to increase their production and their individual productivity?

Brezhnev did that in 1977 on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of the great October Revolution, Honiker did that on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic, the French President and the French Prime Minister, Barber, called for greater production. It must be palpable that one's capacity to consume is dependent upon one's volume of production. Of course, we who champion the setting up of a New International Economic Order, further say this: that when we have produced, the cards are so

stacked at the moment that many times greater production is not a concomitant of or does not have as a function greater earnings. That is another matter, but throughout the world there is this emphasis on production.

6.10 p.m.

There is this complaint recently in places like the Soviet Union that the rate of growth is less than that which was anticipated but no one, these children, said anything about it. It is only when in Guyana the rate of growth anticipated is not achieved, it is made a crime. If perchance there had been a proposal as to how greater production may be achieved – But asking for greater production is no offence, is no crime, and I say this publicly and unapologetically. The difference, of course, between the two systems, the capitalist system and the socialist system, is what is done with the fruits of production, not whether or not it is socialist not to produce or capitalist to produce or not to produce.

These irrelevancies that have been drawn across the trail are not only irrelevant, Cde. Speaker, but are also indicative of a biased approach. If something happens in Guyana, if a few capitalists, a few people who do not accept the changes in this order, decide to leave Guyana, it is because we are chasing them. One doctor in this country now has his children in Canada. Why? Because Government has introduced this free education where his son cannot go to Queen's College where any and everybody can attend. He is going to be listed among the people we have chased. When the capitalists run from Cuba, it is because they would not face the revolution, the changes are epidemic and endemic in a revolution. Why don't we have a consistency of judgement? I am going to get an A.B.C. Card and a Yo-Yo and give them as birthday and Christmas present respectively. As I was saying, Cde. Speaker, the People's National Congress does not claim omniscience. The People's National Congress does not claim that it has the answer to every question, but what the People's National Congress and Government ask of would-be politicians and aging politicians is that their criticisms and proposals must be based on facts, and objectively put. Why is it that those who run to Canada

from Guyana are beautiful capitalists whom we should not lose but those who run to Miami from Cuba, they are best gone from Cuba?

It is in those circumstances and in other circumstances that we cannot accept the **bona fides** of this talk of a national front. First of all, national front is reminiscent of the fascist organisation in the United Kingdom whose members beat up black people, secondly, we had discussions and we could not get the discussions, Cde. Speaker, off the ground because, what was the general tone? Everything about how many people on which Commission, how many people on which Board. When I said that instead of going into all this nonsense about division of Boards, let us have an inter - party examination of the employment patterns in Guyana, oh no, they do not want that. Then you, you must abandon National Service, though when the Leader of the Opposition goes to New York he tries to tell a crowd which is favourably disposed to National Service, that he has been trying to persuade people to join the National Service -- **[Interruption.]** Now, comrade, why do you say it so softly? I do not repeat untruths. I repeat things that I can prove and establish, and if you want, I will say it outside. You can sue me for slander. I will write it and you can sue me for libel and then I shall have justification. **[Interruption]**

Cde. Speaker, how can you talk with a group claiming to be socialist whose opening gambit is all about ethnicism, Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese instead of emphasising the common struggle of the ethnic groups? How can you talk to people who want equality on the Judicial Service Commission and on the Public Service Commission and they do not even know how many members there are on those two Commissions? That is the type of discussions I was forced to carry on until they came to an end. How can you talk to people on, say, a national approach? Excellent. We agree that we need a People's Militia but the next day there appeared in the organ of their paper, "Guns before butter, guns before bread." How can you talk? Cde. Speaker, I am convinced at this stage that the so-called demands for national unity are just a question of posturing. If there is a sincere approach in the interest of Guyana, the People's National Congress is always willing to listen and to participate. Always.

Now, finally, I want to deal with the question of the boycott.

The Speaker: Cde. Prime Minister, your time is up.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Cde. Ramsaroop):
Cde. Speaker, allow me to leave to move two Motions, one, a Motion to enable the Cde. Prime Minister to continue his presentation for an additional 15 minutes, and the other one –

The Speaker: Let us take that one first and then we will take the other one.

Question put, and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may continue, but there is another Motion.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Speaker, permit me to move a Motion pursuant to Standing Order 9(2) for us to go beyond the Statutory 6.30 p.m. to enable the consideration of this measure to be finalised at this sitting, Bill No. 11 of 1979.

Question put, and agreed to.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, we come finally to this question of whether to boycott or not. I personally think that in the context of asking for a national unity, a getting together of the political parties of some importance – Not the worst possible alternative, who turned down the proposal for joint action on the evening on Wednesday, the 17th, at Gimpex House because, said the worst possible alternative, “it is inconsistent for the P.P.P. to ask us to carry out a joint protest against the extension of the life of Parliament when they are still sitting in the Parliament.” That is what happened on Wednesday night gone. However, we have the Constituent Assembly. Any group that describes itself as socialist must concede when it looks at the guidelines and the draft that obviously the Constitution which we are seeking to promulgate,

the draft which we put up to the Constituent Assembly, at least in frame [Interruption] – Cde. Speaker envisages a change in the societal and economic relationships in this country in the direction of socialism.

6.20 p.m.

Let us assume that the accusation of the Opposition is accurate, that there is no sincere desire on the part of the People's National Congress to move this country towards socialism. Now what better place than the Constituent Assembly could there have been for seeking to introduce proposals for a new Constitution which undeniably will put Guyana on the road to socialism, what better place? But there is a boycott. How sincere can their talk about unity be? As soon as they don't get their way -- And you know what, Cde. Speaker, again I speak from the records, the Leader of the Opposition said privately that had he seen the P.N.C. draft before the Bill was passed for the referendum, he would not have opposed the Bill. I am not going to withdraw that statement and if the hon. Leader of the Opposition, for the time being wants, I can tell him when, where and at what time it was said. No I don't destroy confidences like that. For instance, I trained both Snagg and the other fellow from Mahaicony. [Interruption.] Which taxpayers' money? I am the trustee for the taxpayers and until the Court changes the terms of the trust, I make the decisions.

Now, Cde. Speaker, my contention is you either have a boycott or you have abuse. I say to the Opposition once more, you cannot go around abusing a political group and then come and say, Let us make it up. At one time we are socialists, he says at one time Burnham is one of the few socialists in P.N.C., the next time he seeks to set up an anti-fascist group aimed at removing Burnham. Now it is about time the public understands that these inconsistencies don't make for any rapprochement or rapport and I say this. I, Cde. Speaker, am not that attached to office or unsure of myself, and I fear to talk even with Jagan, even with the People's Progressive Party, but I say this, speaking for the People's National Congress, there must be evidence of intellectual honesty, there must be evidence of consistency, and there must be an end to this swimming from

side to side. At one time you are progressive but another time you are fascist. What you do here is wrong. What Cuba does, when Cuba does the same thing, it is right. I will have nothing of that nonsense and for the time being, therefore, you stay out in the cold. **[Applause]**

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

The Prime Minister: Cde. Speaker, I beg to report that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1979, was considered in Committee clause by clause and was passed without Amendment. I now move that the Bill be read the Third time and passed as was previously corrected.

Question put.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Division!

/Assembly

Assembly divided: Ayes 37, Noes 13, as follows:

Ayes	Noes
Cde. Zaheeruddeen	Mr. Abraham
Cde. Willems	Mr. Singh
Cde. Taylor	Cde. Sukhai
Cde. Sukul	Cde. Nokta
Cde. Sukhu	Cde. Dindayal

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National Assembly

6.20 – 6.28 p.m.

Cde. Stoby	Cde. Dalchand	
Cde. Salim	Cde. Belgrave	
Cde. Rayman	Cde. Basir	
Cde. Ramson	Cde. Mohamed	
Cde. Jonas	Cde. Collymore	
Cde. Hussain	Cde. N. Persuad	
Cde. Gill	Cde. J. Jagan	
Cde. Fowler	Cde. C. Jagan	- 13
Cde. Field-Ridley		
Cde. Carrington		
Cde. Wrights		
Cde. Bynoe		
Cde. Corrica		
Cde. Ambrose		
Cde. Ackman		
Cde. Durant		
Cde. Van Sluytman		
Cde. Prashad		
Cde. Corbin		
Cde. Thomas		
Cde. Chowritmootoo		
Cde. Bancroft		
Cde. Duncan		
Cde. Carmichael		
Cde. Nascimento		
Cde. Clarke		
Cde. Mingo		
Cde. Ramsaroop		
Cde. Naraine		

23.10.79

National Assembly

6.20 – 6.28 p.m.

Cde. Hoyte

Cde. Reid

Cde. Burnham - 37

Agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed as corrected.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That the Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.” [**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House**]

Adjourned accordingly at 6.28 p.m.
