

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORTS

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION (1992)
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

1st Sitting

2 p.m. Thursday, 17th December, 1992

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (72)

Speaker (1)

Hon. Derek C. Jagan, S.C., J.P., M.P. – Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (42)

The Hon. Samuel A. Hinds, M.P.

– Prime Minister

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P. – Senior Minister of Agriculture (Leader of the House)

The Hon. S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P. – Senior Minister of Home Affairs (Government Chief Whip)

The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P. – Senior Minister in the Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Regional Development

*The Hon. Asgar Ally, M.P. – Senior Minister of Finance

*The Hon. Rev. Dr Ramnauth Bisnauth, M.P. – Senior Minister of Education and Cultural Development

*The Hon. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P. – Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

*The Hon. Dr Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P. – Senior Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Moses V. Nagamootoo, M.P. – Senior Minister in the Office of the President

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P. – Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P. – Senior Minister of Health

The Hon. M. Shree Chan, M.P. – Senior Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry

Ms Janet Jagan, M.P.

- The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P. – Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture
 The Hon. Indranic Chandarpal, M.P. – Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security
 *The Hon. F. Vibert De Souza, M.P. – Minister in the Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Regional Development\
- *The Hon. George E. Fung-On, M.P. – Minister in the Office of the President
- Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, M.P.
 Mr Brindley H. Benn, M.P.
 Mr Fazil M. Ali, M.P.
 Mr Husman Alii, M.P.
 Mr Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.
 Mr Komal Chand, M.P.
 Ms Shirley V. Edwards, M.P.
 Mr Randolph Evans, M.P.
 Dr Hughley H. Hanoman, M.P.
 Ms Una James, M.P.
 Mr Alston A. Kissoon, M.P.
 Dr Moti Lall, M.P.
 Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.
 Mr Donald Ramotar, M.P.
 Mr Lawrence E. Rodney, M.P.
 Ms Pauline Sukhai, M.P.
 Mr Winslow M. Zephyr, M.P.
 Mr Khadim Bacchus, M.P. – (National Congress of Local Democratic Organs)
 Mr Samad A. Baksh, M.P. – (Region No.2 – Pomeroun/Supenaam)
 Mr Harrinarine Baldeo, M.P. – (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)
 Mr Joseph M. DeSouza, M.P. – (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)
 Mr Eugene La Cruz, M.P. – (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)
 Mr Bagot Paul, M.P. – (Region No. 9 – Potaro/Siparuni)
 Mr Kum Karan Ramdass, M.P. – (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)
 Mr Ramrattan, M.P., a/k Balkarran – (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Members of the Minority (29)

(i) People's National Congress (26)

- Mr H. Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P. – Minority Leader
 Mr Sase Narain, O.R., S.C., J.P., M.P.
 Mr Robert H.O. Corbin, M.P.
 Mr Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.
 Dr Patrick L. McKenzie, A.A., M.P.
 Ms Clarissa Riehl, M.P.
 Dr Kenneth F.S. King, M.P.
 Mr Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.
 Dr Faith A. Harding, M.P.
 Ms Anna Ally, M.P.
 Ms Jean M.G. Persico, A.A., M.P.
 Mr Arthur A. Alexander, M.P. – Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

17th December, 1992

Mr Simon H. Ng-See-Quan, M.P.
Mr Dunstan Barrow, M.P.
Mr David Subnauth, M.P.
Mr Reynold David, M.P. – (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Ms Jennifer A. Ferreira, M.P.
Mr Aftabuddin Ahamad, M.P.
Mr Kenrick Tyndall, M.P.
Mr Phillip Bynoe, M.P. – (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Berbice)
Mr Andy Gouveia, M.P.
Mr Hukumchand, M.P. a/k Parag
Ms Joan Richards, M.P.
Ms Gwenneth A Brouet, M.P.
Mr John Fredericks, M.P.
Mr Ivan Peters, M.P. – (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

(ii) Working People's Alliance (2)

Dr Clive Y. Thomas, M.P.
Mr Matheson Williams, M.P. – (National Congress of Local Democratic Organs)

(iii) The United Force (1)

Mr Manzoor Nadir, M.P.

Officers

Mr Frank A. Narain, A.A., Clerk of the National Assembly
Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PROCLAMATION SUMMONING THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

The Clerk: Hon. Members, it is now time for the first Session of the Sixth Parliament to commence in accordance with the Proclamation made by the President, which Proclamation I shall now read:

Proclamation No. 9 of 1992 by the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana under Seal No. 183 of 1992.

(Signed) Cheddi Jagan
President

WHEREAS by Proclamation dated 29th August, 1992, under article 70(2) of the Constitution, the Fifth Parliament of Guyana was dissolved on 29th August, 1992:

AND WHEREAS it is provided by article 69(1) of the Constitution that each session of Parliament shall be held at such place within Guyana and shall begin at such time, not being later than four months from the end of the preceding session, if Parliament has been dissolved, as the President shall appoint by proclamation.

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of article 69(1) of the Constitution

I do hereby appoint the Parliament Chamber, Public Buildings, Georgetown, Guyana, as the place where a session of the Sixth Parliament shall be held as aforesaid and 2 o'clock in the afternoon on 17th December, 1992, as the time when such session shall begin.

Given under my hand and the Seal of Guyana, at the Office of the President, Georgetown, Guyana, this 12th day of December, 1992 and in the twenty-third year of the Republic.

By the President's Command

(Signed) R. LUNCHEON

Head of the Presidential Secretariat"

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

The Clerk: I shall now call the names of those persons who have become Members of the National Assembly following the elections. Will Members kindly answer as their names are called.

Persons (53) who, following the general elections on 5th October, 1992, were declared on 24th November, 1992, by the Elections Commission, to have become Members of the National Assembly.

(i) From the People's Progressive Party/Civic (28)

Fazil M. Ali
 Husman Alli
 Shaik K. Z. Baksh
 Cyril C. L. Belgrave
 Brindley H. Benn
 Michael S. Chan
 Komal Chand
 Indranie Chandarpal
 Clinton C. Collymore
 Shirley V. Edwards
 Randolph Evans
 Hughley H. Hanoman
 Samuel A. Hinds
 Janet Jagan
 Una James

Alston A. Kissoon
 Moti Lal
 Sheik Feroze Mohamed
 Moses V. Nagamootoo
 Harripersaud Nokta
 Reepu Daman Persaud
 Khemraj Ramjattan
 Donald Ramotar
 Lawrence E. Rodney
 Clement J. Rohee
 Pauline Sukhai
 Gail Teixeira
 Winston M. Zephyr

(ii) From the People's National Congress (23)

Aftabuddin Ahamed
 Arthur A. Alexander
 Amna Ally
 Dunstan Barrow
 Deryck Bernard
 Gwenneth A. Brouet
 Robert H.O. Corbin
 Jennifer Ferreira
 John Fredericks
 Andy Gouveia
 Faith A. Harding
 Hugh Desmond Hoyte
 Hukumchand a/k Parag

Kenneth King
 Patrick McKenzie
 Winston Murray
 Sase Narain
 Simon H. Ng-See Quan
 Jean Persico
 Joan Richards
 Clarissa Riehl
 David Subnauth
 Kenrick Tyndall

(iii) From the Working People's Alliance (1)

Clive Y. Thomas

(iv) From The United Force (1)

Manzoor Nadir

Persons (10) who were elected by the Regional Democratic Councils on 7th December, 1992:

Region 1 – Joseph M. DeSouza
 Region 2 – Samad Baksh
 Region 3 – Ramrattan a/k Balkarran
 Region 4 – Ivan Peters
 Region 5 – Harrinarine Baldeo
 Region 6 – Kum Karan Ramdass
 Region 7 – Reynold David
 Region 8 – Bagot Paul
 Region 9 – Eugene La Cruz
 Region 10 – Phillip Bynoe

Persons (2) who were elected by the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs on 10th December, 1992:

Khadim Bacchus
 Matheson Williams

Persons (6) who were not elected Members of the National Assembly but who have been appointed Ministers and have become Members of the National Assembly:

Asgar Ally
 Ramnauth Bisnauth
 Bernard C. DeSantos
 Henry B. Jeffrey
 Vibert DeSouza
 George E. Fung-On

All Members were present and answered as their names were called.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

The Clerk: Hon. Members, your first duty is to elect a person to be the Speaker of the National Assembly, and I accordingly invite nominations.

The Senior Minister of Agriculture (Leader of the House) (Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud): Mr Clerk, I wish to nominate Mr Derek Jagan as Speaker of the National Assembly.

Mr Ng-See-Quan: Mr Clerk, I beg to second the nomination.

The Clerk: It seems that there are no further nominations. The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud has nominated Mr Derek Jagan to be Speaker of the National Assembly and the nomination has been seconded by the Hon. Member, Mr Ng-See-Quan. There being no further nominations, I declare Mr Derek Jagan duly elected to be the Speaker of the National Assembly. *[Applause]*

I will now invite the proposer and seconder to escort the Speaker to the Chair.

The Speaker was escorted to the Chair

[The Speaker in the Chair]

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

The Speaker: Hon. Members, I now ask for nominations for Deputy Speaker.

Dr McKenzie: Mr Speaker, I wish to nominate Mr Arthur A. Alexander as Deputy Speaker of this Assembly.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Government Chief Whip) (Hon. Sheik Feroze Mohamed): Mr Speaker, I wish to second that nomination.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member Mr Alexander has been nominated by the Hon. Member Dr McKenzie and seconded by the Hon. Feroze Mohamed. There being no other nominations, I declare Mr Arthur A. Alexander Deputy Speaker.

OATHS

The Speaker: The Oath will now be administered by the Clerk of the National Assembly.

The oath was made and subscribed by all members, as follows:

“I do hereby solemnly declare that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the people of Guyana, that I will faithfully execute the office of Member of the National Assembly without fear or favour, affection or ill-will, and that in the execution of that office I will honour, uphold and preserve the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.”

The Speaker, the Hon. Derek C. Jagan, S.C., J.P., M.P.

The Deputy Speaker, Mr Arthur A. Alexander, M.P.

The Hon. Samuel A. Hinds, M.P., Prime Minister

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P., Senior Minister of Agriculture (Leader of the House)

The Hon. S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P., Senior Minister of Home Affairs (Government Chief Whip)

The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P., Senior Minister in the Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Regional Development

The Hon. Asgar Ally, M.P., Senior Minister of Finance

The Hon. Rev. Dr Ramnauth Bisnauth, M.P., Senior Minister of Education and Cultural Development

The Hon. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P., Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon. Dr Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P., Senior Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Moses V. Nagamootoo, M.P., Senior Minister in the Office of the President

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P., Senior Minister of Health

The Hon. M. Shree Chan, M.P., Senior Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry

Ms Janet Jagan, M.P.

The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture

The Hon. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Labour,

Human Services & Social Security
The Hon. F. Vibert De Souza, M.P.,
Minister in the Ministry of Public
Works, Communications and Re-
gional Development
The Hon. George E. Fung-On, M.P.,
Minister in the Office of the Presi-
dent

Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, M.P.
Mr Brindley H. Benn, M.P.
Mr Fazil M. Ali, M.P.
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.
Mr Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.
Mr Komal Chand, M.P.
Ms Shirley V. Edwards, M.P.
Mr Randolph Evans, M.P.
Dr Hughley H. Hanoman, M.P.
Ms Una James, M.P.
Mr Alston A. Kissoon, M.P.
Dr Moti Lall, M.P.
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.
Mr Donald Ramotar, M.P.
Mr Lawrence E. Rodney, M.P.
Ms Pauline Sukhai, M.P.
Mr Winslow M. Zephyr, M.P.
Mr Khadim Bacchus, M.P.
Mr Samad A. Baksh, M.P.
Mr Harrinarine Baldeo, M.P.
Mr Joseph M. DeSouza, M.P.
Mr Eugene La Cruz, M.P.
Mr Bagot Paul, M.
Mr Kum Karan Ramdass, M.P.
Mr Ramrattan, M.P., a/k Balkarran

Mr H. Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P.,
Minority Leader
Mr Sase Narain, O.R., S.C., J.P., M.P.
Mr Robert H.O. Corbin, M.P.
Mr Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.
Dr Patrick L. McKenzie, A.A., M.P.
Ms Clarissa Riehl, M.P.
Dr Kenneth F.S. King, M.P.
Mr Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.

Dr Faith A. Harding, M.P.
Ms Amna Ally, M.P.
Ms Jean M.G. Persico, A.A., M.P.
Mr Simon H. Ng-See-Quan, M.P.
Mr Dunstan Barrow, M.P.
Mr David Subnauth, M.P.
Mr Reynold David, M.P.
Ms Jennifer A. Ferreira, M.P.
Mr Aftabuddin Ahamad, M.P.
Mr Kenrick Tyndall, M.P.
Mr Phillip Bynoe, M.P.
Mr Andy Gouveia, M.P.
Mr Hukumchand, M.P. a/k Parag
Ms Joan Richards, M.P.
Ms Gwenneth A Brouet, M.P.
Mr John Fredericks, M.P.
Mr Ivan Peters, M.P.

Dr Clive Y. Thomas, M.P.
Mr Matheson Williams, M.P.

Mr Manzoor Nadir, M.P.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read the following Prayer:

“Almighty God, we, who are here gathered together, do most humbly beseech Thee to guide us in all our consultations, so that we may together build a land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high, and where words come from the depth of truth.

Grant us, O God, Thine aid and guidance, so that we may deal justly with the several causes that come before us, laying aside all private interests, prejudices and personal preferences, so that the result of our counsels may be to the glory of Thy Blessed Name, the maintenance of true religion,

the preservation of justice, the safety, honour and happiness of the President, and the peace and prosperity of Guyana.

Grant us, O God, the vision so to lead, that all the people of this fair land may enter into that state of brotherhood and unity, where the mind is led forward by Thee into everwidening thought and action."

REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to thank you for electing me as Speaker of this Assembly. I am aware of the great responsibility that one has as Speaker and I hope that I will carry out the duties faithfully. I undertake to uphold the high tradition of Speakers of Parliament. I intend to carry out those duties to the best of my ability and also to be at all times impartial whilst I am Speaker of this Assembly.

I wish also to congratulate Members of this Assembly on becoming Members and I extend my best wishes to all of you here. I thank you very much. *[Applause]*

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKER

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I crave your indulgence on behalf of those of us who sit on this side of the Assembly to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, you bring to that office a wealth of experience and knowledge, because of the fact that you have served this National Chamber for a number of years, beginning from the year 1961 as an elected Member of the National As-

sembly. Because of your astuteness and particular commitment to the norms of parliamentary procedures, you emerged as someone who showed tremendous knowledge in the Standing Orders and relating those Standing Orders to some of the best expositions, in particular the well known Erskine May's. I feel confident that you will execute the office of Speaker impartially, with dignity and with honour.

This Parliament will be deliberative and the Government intends to consult at all times with Hon. Members who sit on the opposite side of the House and, particularly, with the Minority Leader. Today's exercise was visible evidence of the commencement of a new era and a new chapter when clear testimony showed that the process of consultation has already begun.

You occupy that esteemed Chair of Speaker with the unanimity of all Members of the House, an honour which I think you truly deserve. We feel that the Speaker's role should be in conformity with the highest norms of the dignity which goes with the Office and I feel sure that you will, in the execution of that function, observe those norms to which you have shown such commitment when you were serving as a Member of this Assembly.

I recall that you were elected to the high office of Deputy Speaker and on that occasion you presided at the First Session. I don't recall your being given the opportunity to preside at any time again during that five-year term. History is a great lesson and as history will record it, you are now the Speaker of the National Assembly. I am sure that you will perform to the satisfaction of all.

Like you, Sir, I was Deputy Speaker for a term. I had a few opportunities to preside — not many — [*laughter*] and on one occasion when I had all the exuberance to come and preside, the police held me at Albion and told me they were checking my car. Be that as it may, this is a new era and I am sure we will be able to conduct the affairs of Parliament in a very dignified way, with a high standard of debate, dealing with issues which are so pertinent for the development of this country and, in the fulfilment of that perception, that all Members will endeavour to do their utmost to make that perception a reality. Once again, congratulations!

I want, also, to congratulate your Deputy, Mr Arthur Alexander, the Hon. Member. I am sure that he, too, when the opportunity presents itself will conduct the business in an honourable and impartial manner. I wish him well as I wish you well. This has been a great beginning. There is a great future for Guyana and I think the people out there can look forward to a better life and a better country.

Congratulations and thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

[*Applause*]

Mr Murray: Mr Speaker, Hon. Members of the Sixth Parliament of Guyana, I rise on behalf of the Minority Leader and the Party we represent here in Parliament to offer our sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the high and noble office of Speaker of this Parliament.

We on our part pledge to give you our full and at all times unstinting cooperation as you proceed with the discharge of your duties. I trust, and in-

deed I believe, that God will give you the necessary patience, wisdom and understanding to guide us successfully and indeed with the minimum of rancour through whatever business needs to be conducted in this Hon. Assembly.

As I have to close, Sir, I wish also to extend our heartiest congratulations to Mr Arthur Alexander on his unanimous election to the office of Deputy Speaker and I wish that, unlike my colleague who spoke before me, you will have many opportunities to perform. Thank you very much.

[*Applause*]

Dr Thomas: Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Working People's Alliance, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your Deputy on being elected to such high offices. We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome your declaration that you intend to handle the office that you now hold in the the most impartial manner and to seize this occasion to remind you that there are more than two sides to this Assembly. Thank you very much, Sir.

[*Applause*]

Mr Nadir: Mr Speaker, on behalf of the members of the Party I represent, and on my own behalf, I extend sincere congratulations to you on your election.

In the far corner of this Assembly, I am the proverbial lone voice in the wilderness. I trust that if no one else hears me you will do. I take this opportunity to also congratulate your Deputy, the Hon. Member, Mr Arthur Alexander, and look forward to working with both of you. Thank you very much.

[*Applause*]

**ANNOUNCEMENTS
BY THE SPEAKER**

Appointments

The Speaker: Hon. Members, as this is the first Sitting of the National Assembly, I wish for the records of Parliament to state the ministerial and other appointments which have been made.

The Hon. Samuel A. Hinds was appointed Prime Minister, with effect from 10th October, 1992. As Prime Minister, Mr Hinds is, in accordance with article 101(2) of the Constitution, Leader of Government business in the National Assembly.

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Agriculture, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Sheik Feroze Mohamed was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Home Affairs, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister in the Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Regional Development, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Asgar Ally was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Finance, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Rev. Dr Ramnauth Bisnauth was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Education and Cultural Development, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., was appointed Attorney General and

designated Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Dr Henry B. Jeffrey was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Moses V. Nagamootoo was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister in the Office of the President, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Clément J. Rohee was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister in the Office of the President, with effect from 13th October, 1992, and subsequently Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Hon. Gail Teixeira was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Health, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Michael Shree Chan was appointed a Senior Minister and designated Senior Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry, with effect from 20th November, 1992.

The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore was appointed a Minister and designated Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Indranie Chandarpal was appointed a Minister and designated Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, with effect from 13th October, 1992.

The Hon. Francis Vibert De Souza was appointed a Minister and designated Minister in the Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Regional Development, with effect from 20th November, 1992.

The Hon. George Edwin Fung-On was appointed a Minister and designated Minister in the Office of the President, with effect from 20th November, 1992.

I have also been informed that the Hon. Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., was appointed Minority Leader with effect from 10th December, 1992.

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, Senior Minister of Agriculture, was appointed to perform the Parliamentary functions of Leader of the House.

The Hon. Sheik Feroze Mohamed, Senior Minister of Home Affairs, has been appointed Government Chief Whip.

Public Buildings for Parliament's Use

The Speaker: Honourable members, I also wish to inform you that the Clerk of the National Assembly has received, from His Excellency the President, a letter dated the 16th December, 1992 informing him that the Government of Guyana has decided and agreed that the Public Buildings are to be used for Parliamentary matters and that the Clerk of the National Assembly shall have administrative control in this respect.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

The Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now, as required by Standing Order No. 71, nominate members to comprise the Committee of Selection. I invite nominations accordingly.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon B. C. DeSantos):

Mr Speaker, with your leave, I wish to nominate the following Hon. Members to serve on the Committee of Selection of this Assembly:

*From the People's Progressive Party/
Civic (6)*

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud
The Hon. Sheik Feroze Mohamed
The Hon. HARRIPERSAUD NOKTA
Mr Brindley Benn
Mr Donald Ramotar
Mrs Pauline Sukhai

*From the People's National Congress
(4)*

Mr Sase Narain
Miss Jean Persico
Mr Simon Ng-See-Quan
Mr Andy Gouveia

Ms Amna Ally: Cde. Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

The Speaker: Is there any other nomination? There being no other nomination, I declare the ten Hon. Members as members of the Committee of Selection.

Hon. Members, this completes the first part of our business for today. We will take the suspension at this stage to await the arrival of His Excellency the President. When His Excellency arrives he will inspect the Guard of Honour in the compound and will thereafter be escorted upstairs. Members of the Assembly, special invitees and guests who wish to go on the corridors may do so while the Guard of Honour is being inspected. We

expect the Members and invited guests to be back in the Chamber before His Excellency the President arrives in the Chamber.

The Assembly will now be suspended.

Sitting suspended at 3.26p.m.

Sitting resumed at 3.58 p.m.

ARRIVAL OF THE PRESIDENT

*His Excellency, the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Dr Cheddi Bharat Jagan was announced. His Excellency entered the Chamber.
[Fanfare]*

The Speaker: Mr President, on behalf of the Hon. Members of this Assembly and on behalf of myself I welcome you here this afternoon to the first Sitting of the first Session of the Sixth Parliament of Guyana. I know you must have been looking forward to this moment. Hon. Members and Guyanese as a whole, and people abroad, are looking forward to your presentation here this afternoon in order to judge and to have an indication of the Government's programme. I call on you to address the Assembly.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

His Excellency the President: Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, this is indeed an historic occasion for me. It was forty-five years ago, on the 18th of December, 1947, when I took my seat for the first time in the Legislative Council.

That was one of the most exciting, enjoyable and productive periods of my life. I read almost every available report, and put in a lot of energy and seriousness

in my legislative work. The battles were truly pitched: I had to face some of the most entrenched personalities, representing the plantocracy and vested interests. My experience was that it needed more than mere logic and enthusiasm to convince the powers-that-be of the day. The only way I could succeed, I told myself, was to keep close to the people, who had voted for me, to champion their cause. It paid off—the PPP was formed in 1950, and in 1953, we won a decisive victory of 18 out of 24 seats.

This is also an historic moment for our nation and people. After my 1947 victory I had said, and I now say again: "We the people have won." The new government has been mandated to carry out its work, by dint of the collective voice of an electorate which expressed its wishes in the most unfettered of forms—a free and fair election, which was so certified by international observers and the electors themselves.

October 5 has ushered in a new era: a time for democratic renewal; a time for the rule of law; a time for peace and tranquillity; a time for change and a time to rebuild.

Today, the world can proclaim that for the first time since independence, we have a Parliament which is truly representative of the people.

Mr Speaker, I want to put on record two relevant sections of the PPP/Civic Manifesto which will guide my administration. I quote from page 4: "The new state will be a Republic founded on universally acclaimed principles of freedom, equality and solidarity where the only paramount institution will be the Parliament, guided by a new constitution fashioned by the Guyanese people."

I now quote from page 5: "The PPP/Civic government will recognise the existence of a multi-party system and ensure that all laws directly or indirectly related to political activities are observed and enforced. Opposition parties will not be treated with the arrogant disdain of the past. There will be no harassment of political parties in their search for political support. The attainment of political power by democratic means will be recognised as a legitimate objective which is the right of every political party and not the preserve of any ruling party."

The current Parliament is one which has a fresh breath of democratic air blown through its hallowed walls. In its reconstituted state it must remain sacrosanct, and it must guarantee the protection of the interests and wishes of the general populace with which it has been entrusted. The public gallery of this parliament chamber must be utilised to its capacity. And deliberations of Parliament must be fully ventilated. Its current configuration allows for the full and frank exchange of views on matters on the Order Paper. Thus, while ensuring that decisions are taken only after adequate ventilation of ideas, this Parliament has the capacity to preserve the ideals which a Parliament in a true democracy is duty bound to respect. The populace must consider Parliament as the most accessible forum at which its collective wishes may be carried out.

It is true that a fundamental characteristic of democracy is that the will of the majority prevails over that of the minority. But the minority must be able to rest assured that decisions have been taken only after opposing views have been expressed. That alone must be cause for

comfort. And that alone must assure the electorate that parliamentary democracy is being practised for the collective good of the nation as a whole.

Mr Speaker, it is in this context that I take great pleasure in congratulating you, the new Speaker and Deputy Speaker and all members of the House. You now have a mandate from the people and to a great degree the future of Guyana lies in your hands. Among the most important responsibilities, I humbly suggest, would be the restoration of pride in all things Guyanese — our multi-party democracy and its institutions, including this House; and, of course, our beautiful multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation.

And while I congratulate you, let me applaud in our midst today the former Minister, E.M.G. Wilson, Senator Christina Ramjattan and Mrs. Annelise Kelshall, widow of the late Jack Kelshall, all of whom played such a magnificent role in our struggle for national and social liberation.

Let me add that our national democratic state will soon complete the process of representative democracy. Within a few months, after the revision of the voters' list, we shall hold elections, free and fair and free from fear, in all municipal, village and Amerindian districts.

And our democracy will also be participatory. We have begun the process of involving the working people through their democratically-run organisations in management and decision-making. Our nation must be rid forever of bureaucratic/command type government and bureaucratic/command type management.

The tasks ahead to enable Guyana to enter the 21st century as an equal among

nations in the international community are challenging. The immediate past has been characterised not only by the collapse of the socialist east, but by the continued recession and stagnation in the industrialised OECD western states, with 34 million unemployed and a high average, 8.3 per cent, unemployment rate.

Germany, which was the main engine of growth in Europe, has a stalled economy. The high interest rate in this economic anchor in Europe is seen as a destabiliser of growth. President-elect Bill Clinton is grappling with the ailing U.S. economy. Meanwhile, in the face of growing poverty and misery in the underdeveloped countries, there are tendencies towards protectionism and mega-trade blocs.

In this disorder and politically unstable world situation, our very survival depends on a widened and deepened Integration movement. The PPP/Civic government will strive to attain this objective.

As regards the proposal which emanated from the Head of Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister Manning, I wish to place on record before this august Parliament that at the present time, the "Manning Initiative" is obviously an idea of great import, which must now "do the rounds", so to speak, among writers, politicians, academics, policy makers and our Ministers for Caricom Affairs, as it evolves into a policy to be implemented within the broader theme of regional integration.

In this fourth electoral victory and third period in power, the government hopes to build national and working class unity and racial/ethnic cohesiveness simi-

lar to the 1950-53 period, then under the leadership of a single party, the PPP, now under the alliance, the PPP/Civic.

The government also hopes to achieve human development of the second period (1957-1964) with high economic growth rates, the satisfaction of basic needs and the fullest enjoyment of freedom, under a partnership of foreign capital, local entrepreneurs and the working people.

Public discourse and consensus will be the key elements in finding lasting solutions. Given the enormous problems which have accumulated over the years, it will demand herculean efforts to revive the economy and give our people a modern standard of living.

The government is presently engaged in a real battle to deal with the present foreign debt which is now around US\$2 billion. This is our most pressing problem which, given the tremendous goodwill shown to the new government, we can resolve and so clear the decks for the economic take-off. But first we have to deal with the following scenario which we found after the elections: debt payments absorb nearly 92 per cent of central government revenues, and foreign debt absorbs 68 per cent of merchandise exports. It is evident from this that very little is left for development.

New and innovative ways are being conceptualised and implemented to deal with our predicament. During my recent visit to the United States of America, several private sector organisations and governments have pledged support to Guyana's development. In this respect, I want to emphasise the goodwill shown towards Guyana also by the United Nations. I want to thank the UN system and

say we intend to take full advantage of all the opportunities offered to us. As you know, President Carter has remained true to his promise made after the elections to help Guyana to strengthen its democracy through economic, social and cultural development. I want to thank him and the Carter Center and hope that our joint efforts will bear fruit. May I add that these developments belie the dire propagandistic predictions and fears that a PPP/Civic victory would have meant no recognition, no investment, no aid.

Some of our major thrusts will be:

- * Relief from the huge foreign debt burden;

- * Increase in development assistance to rehabilitate the physical and social infrastructure;

- * Introduction of structural adjustment with a human face, and alleviation of poverty through a basic needs strategy;

- * Increase in foreign and local investment, increase in production and exports and protection of the environment;

- * Ensuring good governance, a clean and lean government, efficient management, strict accountability and respect for the rights of citizens;

- * An end to all forms of racial/ethnic discrimination and an accelerated programme for the indigenous Amerindian people.

We have already embarked on a policy of involving the people at all levels. The new government has started to work in a new spirit of having discussions with all those concerned before taking decisions. The way forward will be through public discourse and consensus. Soon we intend to deepen the democratic system and the people's involvement by estab-

lishing Citizens' Committees in all communities. These will be broad-based, drawn from all political parties and social, cultural, religious, scientific, environmental and recreational organisations. They will be involved in grass-roots development -- community cleaning and policing, physical and social infrastructure, mutual aid and self-help projects.

In all our endeavours, Parliament, I repeat, will be central as the highest legislative authority in the land. At all times what must be uppermost on our agenda is the national interest. This is not the place for selfishness, petty games and vindictiveness.

To carry out effectively its functions, Parliament must be a truly deliberative body and with a strong Committee System. All major legislation coming before the Assembly must be thoroughly examined and there must be prior consultation with those whose interests are directly involved and affected. And while issues are being debated in Parliament, they must be fully ventilated and discussed at the street corners, the University of Guyana and in the media.

I have noticed that this building, which is a famous landmark in Guyana, is undergoing renovation. This is laudable. It is time for consideration to be given for the proper use of the space available. I think that Parliament will best be served if this building is used entirely for matters related to proceedings of the Assembly.

The preparation of Hansard has been a problem in the past. I wish to thank the British government not only for resuming aid, but also for providing equipment which will facilitate the printing of your deliberations. This is a matter of ur-

gency, since I think your work here will not be complete without the speedy preparation of Hansard.

The first time I entered the Legislative Council, I spoke on the issue of pension. It grieves me to know that there are so many Guyanese who as senior citizens get so small a pension. I think they deserve more for the contributions they have made to the society. I was glad to hear that the IDB has agreed to provide a supplement of \$500 per month to pensioners next year.

We will also strive to improve the basic conditions of service, salaries and conditions of work and the morale of public servants. This is essential to strengthen administrative capacity.

Mr Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to make a special announcement which I am sure will find favour with all of you and all of Guyana. First I want to say this: we have a lot of difficulties at the moment. I am aware that with the co-operation of all Guyanese we will be able to build a better Guyana. In our striving for a better Guyana we can draw inspiration from the men and women of integ-

rity who have come forward to assist. We also draw inspiration from many of those who made valuable contributions but who are not here with us today. One of them, a dear friend of mine, is the brilliant son of Guyana, Dr Walter Rodney.

By now Walter would have been 50 years old. His life was snuffed out at a time when he was poised to make even greater academic, political, cultural and social contributions to this country. In his honour, I have decided to initiate measures to have a Walter Rodney Chair at the University of Guyana. *[Applause]*

I extend to each and every one of you my heartiest congratulations and season's greetings.

THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT

The Speaker: Your Excellency, on behalf of the Hon. Members of this Assembly and on behalf of myself, I wish to thank you for your informative address and I hope that the forthcoming debate by Members of this Assembly will be both constructive and meaningful. Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by the Senior Minister of Agriculture (Leader of the House) the Assembly was adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly at 4.24 p.m.