

Ministers (13)

- Cde. J.P. Chowritmootoo, J.P., M.P.,
Minister, Environment and Water Supply, in the
Ministry of Public Welfare
- Cde. U.E. Johnson, M.P.,
Minister of Co-operatives
- Cde. J.N. Maitland-Singh
Minister, Consumer Protection, in the
Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection
- Cde. S. Prashad, M.P.,
Minister, Crops and Livestock, in the
Ministry of Agriculture
- Cde. Sallahuddin, M.P.,
Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of
Economic Planning and Finance
- Cde. R.E. Williams, M.P.,
Minister, Fisheries, in the Ministry
of Agriculture
- *Cde. C.A. Nascimento, M.P.,
Minister, Mechanical Equipment, in the
Ministry of Works and Transport (Absent)
- *Cde. F.U.A. Campbell, M.P.,
Minister of Information (Absent)
- *Cde. F.U.A. Carmichael, M.P.,
Minister, Forestry, in the Ministry of Agriculture
- *Cde. Y.V. Harewood-Benn, M.P.,
Minister of Public Service (Absent-on-Leave)
- *Cde. H. Rashid, M.P.,
Minister Office of the President
- *Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman, M.P.,
Minister, Drainage and Irrigation, in the
Ministry of Agriculture
- *Cde. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P.,
Minister, Health, in the Ministry of
Public Welfare

Ministers of State (3)

- Cde. M. Corrica, M.P.,
Minister of State for Culture, in the
Ministry of Education, Development and Culture
- Cde. R.C. Fredericks, A.A., M.P.,
Minister of State for Youth and Sport, in the
Ministry of National Development
- *Cde. C.E. Wright, M.P.,
Minister of State for Construction, in the
Ministry of Works and Transport

Parliamentary Secretaries (3)

- Cde. A.W. Bend-Kirton, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Women's Affairs and Housing
- Cde. P.A. Rayman, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
- *Cde. E.M. Bynoe, M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
- *Non-elected Member

Other Members (23)

Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P.

Cde. M. Ally, M.P.

Cde. M. Armogan, M.P.

Cde. B. Beniprashad, M.P.

Cde. B. Bhaggan, M.P.

Cde. J.B. Caldeira, M.P.

Cde. A.A. Chin, M.P.

Cde. E.B. Davidson, M.P.

Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.

Cde. A.B. Felix, M.P.

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.

Cde. P. Fredericks, M.P.

Cde. E.F. Gilbert, M.P.

Cde. J. Gill, M.P.

Cde. A. McRae, M.P.

Cde. J.M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.

Cde. R.N. Primo, M.P.

Cde. C.G. Sharma, J.P., M.P.

Cde. H.L.B. Singh, M.P.

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

Cde. B. Tiwari, M.P.

Cde. C. Vandenburg, M.P.

Cde. H.B. Walcott, J.P., M.P.,

Government Chief Whip

Members from the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (2)

Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P.

Cde. B. Latchminarayan, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. K.N. Jones, M.P., (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Cde. K.V. Jairam, M.P., (Region No. 2 – Pomereroon/Supenaam)

Cde. C.A. Singh, M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Cde. W. Bipat, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Cde. H.I. London, M.S., M.P., (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)

Cde. I. Chowritmootoo, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Cde. N.R. Charles, M.P., (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Cde. D. Abraham, M.P., (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni)

Cde. A. Dorrick, M.P., (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

Cde. D. Hinds, M.P., (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Members of the Minority (12)

(i) People's Progressive Party (10)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P.,

Minority Leader

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. Ramkarran, M.P.,

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Other Members (8)

Cde. J. Jagan, M.P.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P., M.P.,

Minority Chief Whip.

Cde. N. Persaud, M.P.

Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.

Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P.

Cde. I. Basir, M.P.

Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P. (Absent)

Cde. Dalchand, J.P., M.P.

(ii) United Force (2)

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

Mr. M.A. Abraham, M.P.

OFFICERS

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

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Cde. M.B. Henry

PRAYERS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

2.00 p.m.

OATHS

The Oath of Office was administered to and made and subscribed by
Cde. S.F. Mohammed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

(i) LEAVE TO MEMBERS

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to Cde. Tyndall up to the 20th February and to Cde. Harewood-Benn to the 21st February, 1981.

(ii) BROADCAST OF SPEECHES

The Speaker: Under Standing Order No. 81 the Speaker is empowered by the National Assembly to grant permission to representatives of journals, newspapers or other medium of public information to attend Sittings of the National Assembly under such Rules as the Speaker may make from time to time. If these Rules are contravened the permission may be revoked.

Following a request for the broadcasting of speeches during the debate on the President's Address which commences today, I invited and had discussions on the matter with representatives of the Government and the Minority Party. I have decided to give permission for proceedings to be broadcast. Whether broadcasts are live or subsequent, the condition on which I have given permission for such broadcast to be made is that the period of broadcasting time given must be in proportion to the representation in the National Assembly, that is, for every hour of broadcasting time, the PNC must be given forty-eight minutes and the Minority must be given twelve minutes. This permission with the condition attached is also given for and must apply to future broadcasts such as the broadcast dealing with the Budget.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Reports were laid:

- (1) (a) Annual Report and Accounts of the Guyana National Co-operative Bank for the year 1979.
- (b) Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Offices (Emoluments) Order 1981 (No. 6), made under section 8 of the Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Offices (Emoluments) Act, Chapter 1:07, on the 28th January, 1981, and published in the Gazette on the 3rd February, 1981. /The Vice-President, Economic Planning and Finance./
- (2) Report of the East Demerara Water Conservancy Board for the year ended 31st December, 1979. /The Minister of Drainage and Irrigation./

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Energy Bill 1981 – Bill No. 1/1981. /The Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations, on behalf of the Minister of Energy and Mines./

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IN PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the Government’s policy adumbrated in the President’s Address which was made to the Assembly on Monday, 9th February, 1981.” /Cde. Hinds./

The Speaker: Cde. Hinds.

Cde. Hinds: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

Cde. Speaker, in our hands lies the destiny of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for through Article 1 of our Constitution, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana is an indivisible secular democratic sovereign State in the course of transition from capitalism to socialism. The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is not only the geographic territory of an area of 83,000 square miles but also every person who is a citizen of Guyana and whose right and duty it is to exercise the indivisible secular and democratic sovereignty of the State through his representatives and the democratic organs established by and under the Constitution.

What do I mean by “Our Hands”? Certainly, not merely those people who placed their “X” for the People’s National Congress last December 15. Certainly, not only those People’s National Congress members sitting in this Assembly or in the ten Regional Democratic Councils, or in the National Council of Local Democratic Organs or those who would, in due course, be elected for the various Councils from the People’s Co-operatives to the sub-regional level, but all, all the people of Guyana regardless of their political and religious persuasions and cultural, social and other differences, be those differences race, place of origin, colour, sex, age or what have you.

2.10 p.m.

Though our multi-racial population is estimated to be over 800,000 people, we are, in fact, one people – Guyanese; one nation – Guyana. And as one people and one nation, our destiny must be one also. That destiny is socialism.

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It is no secret – there is no doubt, Cde. Speaker, that our People’s National Congress party, the party in Government, is committed to the achievement of our people’s own national socialist ideal, for adumbrated in the President’s address to the historic first Sitting of the First Parliament under the people’s new Constitution is the practice of co-operative socialism. This is the principle underlying the Government’s policy. One such policy is that through which many Guyanese would be involved in the decision-making and planning forums of this country. The participation of a greater number of people in this National Assembly and the re-organised system of local government administration in this country are indicative of the Government’s intention of making the small man, the grass-root man, the real man by placing power directly in his or her hands.

Another policy which the People’s National Congress Party in Government has adopted for the development of this country by co-operative socialism is the identification of full rights and duties of all citizens of Guyana and these rights and duties are to be concretely recognised by the party and by all as provided for in Chapter II, Articles 9 to 39, in the Constitution – the right to form political parties and the guarantee of freedom of action of those political parties so formed, the right of inheritance, especially among those who are born to parents out of wedlock; the right to work and to be rewarded according to the nature, quality and quantity of work done; the right to rest, recreation and leisure; the right to free medical attention and social care in case of old age and disability; the right to own proper housing.

Article 40(1) says in part:

“Every person in Guyana is entitled to the basic right to a happy, creative and productive life, free from hunger, disease, ignorance and want”,

and this Government for which I speak is committed and prepared to see these rights positively and firmly entrenched. Towards this end, the Government has expanded its activities providing a wider range of public services in education, health, housing and in culture, leisure and recreation.

The third policy of this Government is that of planning throughout the economy and at all levels as the means of making the best and most economical use of all of our resources. The establishment of a State Planning Commission and Board to mesh and co-operate with other agencies to ensure the realistic conceptualisation and efficient execution of national and regional plans in the economic, social and political sectors is of great significance, for the economy of the country cannot continue to be heavily dependent on the production of only three commodities, namely, sugar, rice and bauxite.

The absence of productive agriculture and an inability to generate surpluses will not raise the total production and productivity nor generate surpluses for reinvestment regionally or internationally. This Government, therefore, places great emphasis on agriculture, fisheries and co-operatives as well as on trade and manufacturing industry with the establishment of a new Ministry of Trade in the form of manufacturing industry, which is to facilitate planned development of manufacturing, whether the investment be local or foreign, public or private.

Still, the party in office has undertaken, through its principle of co-operative socialism, to further help the growth of the economy of this nation through the declaration of 1981 as the Year of Energy, energy which is to be found not only in the resources of our country, not only in the hidden and unexplored and unexploited resources of our country, which can provide this energy, but also in our hands the human energy.

For this purpose, Commissions and Boards are to be set up to explore and to investigate the feasibility of the establishment of various energy units. These units are to be an integral part of our

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country's policy toward the development economically, and as part of this programme it is further envisaged that industries which have not before been identified and explored will be brought into the lime light. For example, land which now lies idle will have to be economically exploited in order to make the economy of our country grow. For this reason, there has been the formation of regional development units which units themselves are expected to closely relate with the hinterland development.

2.20 p.m.

No longer will only the small areas under 55 Local Government Authorities be responsible for the development of the coastland but all Democratic Councils, wherever they are will also be involved in the economic development of our country. Ministries of manufacturing industry, Ministries within the public sector and agencies within the Government, whether they be public or para-statal, will also be required to throw in their lot within the context of the national development plan.

Cde. Speaker, in our hands lies the destiny of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to open this first Debate within this National Assembly newly constituted and I now commend the Motion, that this National Assembly approves of the Government's policy adumbrated in the...

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President's address which was made to this Assembly on Monday, 9th February, 1981, to this Assembly.

[Applause]

Cde. Armogan: seconded.

The Speaker: Cde. Sallahuddin.

The Minister, Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance (Cde. Sallahuddin):

Cde. Speaker, I wish to take opportunity this afternoon to say that the joy I feel in making my first presentation to the People's Parliament is all the more keen and pervasive because I make this first speech on, and arising out of, the first State of the Nation Address by the first Executive President of this nation before the First Session of the Fourth Parliament of Guyana and in the first year of the People's New Constitution. [Applause.]

I take opportunity also by way of introduction to say that I stand in this People's Parliament today as living testimony to the fact that no single Guyanese, irrespective of his origin or his station in life is proscribed or debarred by any law or statute from seeking opportunity to find place and position in the highest forum of the land – this Parliament. I submit that this is no accidental process. I submit that this is so because of the vision and the perspicacity of the party which today forms the Government and which party believes that standing at the centre of all its actions and activities are the people of this nation – every child; every woman and every man.

We refer to the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana as the People's New Constitution for several reasons. Foremost among them is the fact that the Constitution which today forms the supreme law of the land is the collective effort, wisdom and experience of the people of this nation themselves. We say the People's New Constitution also because we realise and we recognise that standing at the centre of all our political and economic activities are the people. We recognise that by right the people stand at the centre because the people, by the application of their collective labour to the resources of this nation are the producers of the wealth of this nation. Therefore it follows that since we, the people, are the producers of the wealth of this nation, it becomes our right to share and to share equitably in the wealth of this nation in proportion to the labour input we make towards the creation of the wealth of this nation.

But, Cde. Speaker, to produce wealth it becomes necessary for certain conditions and factors to be set up and established. And while I need not ask my colleagues to recall that it is some years now since we have had the good fortune to win political independence for this nation through the efforts, of course, of the People's National Congress, it is not enough to win political independence and stop. Political independence is simply the first stage towards winning economic independence which makes political independence meaningful to and for the people of this nation.

I want to take occasion, Cde. Speaker, to quote from the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Article 15, paragraph (1). It states:

“In order to achieve economic independence as the imperative concomitant of its political independence, the State will revolutionise the national economy.”

It is common knowledge that the process of revolution is already in train and several massive gains have already been achieved. But when we talk about economic independence what goals do we have before us? What objective do we have before us? Simply put, the economic objective has to be with processes and procedures for the collective application of the labour resources of the people of this nation to transform the natural resources of this nation to create material, cultural, spiritual and intellectual wealth.

2.30 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, there is a general tendency to regard only material substances as wealth. But I submit that it is also necessary in understanding our economic objectives that we work to satisfy not only the material welfare of our people but also their cultural, their spiritual and their intellectual welfare.

It therefore follows, Cde. Speaker, that while we set the goal before us, that is the goal of marshalling the national energy, the goal of applying the national energy to the natural resources of this country for the satisfaction of the needs of the people of this country, it also becomes necessary for us to address our minds to the management of the economy so that we could maximise and optimise the benefit accruing from the expenditure of the national energy. And because we recognise in the People's National Congress that it is equally important to manage the economy and to plan for healthy economic management, we have set up various and varying systems in this country. But before I go on to discuss the systems, Cde. Speaker, I want to take occasion again to quote from the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana Article 15, paragraph (4) which reads:...

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“National economic planning shall be the basic principle of the development and management of the economy. It shall provide for the widest possible participation of the people and their socio-economic organs at enterprise, community, regional and national levels, and shall also provide continuous opportunity for the working people to exercise initiative and to develop a spirit of creativity and innovation.”

I quote this article to emphasise the fact that when the People’s National Congress talks about economic planning, it does so in fulfillment of the provisions of the Constitution.

Perhaps, Cde. Speaker, you will also allow me occasion to make reference to and to quote from the first State of the Nation Address delivered by Cde. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, O.E., S.C., President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, at the Ceremonial Opening of the First Session of the Fourth Parliament of Guyana, page 7, paragraph 3:

“In this context, my Government places great emphasis on planning throughout the economy, and at all levels...”

Cde. Speaker, I simply want to take occasion to point out that when we talk about planning at all levels, today in this country we place great emphasis on planning at the regional level also, because we recognise that the people of this nation, irrespective of where they live, are imaginative, are full of energy and can contribute to the welfare of the nation. In planning, Cde. Speaker, it is also necessary for us to recognise that while we need to maximise on the returns we receive from our resources, it becomes necessary for us to conserve and to protect the environment, hence the recent creation of a Ministry charged with responsibility for environment and water supply.

I want to point out also that in the whole process of planning one cannot help but take cognisance of the internal forces in this country which militates against healthy and harmonious development. Internally we must watch out for inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Internally, we must watch out for lethargy. Internally we must watch out for, and root out, those who are bent on sabotage while others are bent on planning for the development and growth of the economy.

But external forces are also to be taken into consideration because we recognise that we live in an international community from which we import inflation, from which we import at very high prices and all these factors have to be taken into consideration when we get down to the fine task of economic planning. We have to think of the energy crisis which faces most of the world. We have to take cognisance of the crises which do not originate with energy and which are of a military or some other origin.

Cde. Speaker, I want to go on briefly to discuss some of the institutional means at our disposal in this country for the management of the economy and for planning. Reference has already been made to the role of the State Planning Commission, and the State Planning Board. That organ, we know, has the all embracing task and role of persisting to conceptualise, to co-ordinate and to set in motion the economic plans and programme of this Government. That agency is also expected to be supportive of the efforts of all other agencies and departments of this Government.

2.40 p.m.

Then there are the Ministries, the Public Corporations, the public departments and agencies. They too, Cde. Speaker, have an important role to play in the whole search for the realisation of economic objectives. We know that today in this country, the State controls approximately 85 per cent of the economy and this is no accidental process. Some of the public agencies have been created from scratch, some have been nationalised and transformed into agencies for the people. It is necessary for our public

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agencies to define their mission, to define their goals and objectives. It is necessary for the public agencies to conduct the public affairs with a certain degree of discipline, with a certain degree of industrial and operational efficiency and it is the responsibility of this Government to see to it that all agencies charged with the responsibility for the realisation of effective goals and objectives operate within the context of its mission properly defined and set down in terms of strict discipline, in terms of industrial and operational efficiency.

Perhaps we might go on to explain also that while we engage ourselves in this process we shall constantly be on the alert to evaluate the system. Having set the system into motion it becomes necessary for us from time to time to assess and evaluate and to make recommendations for the improvement and refurbishment of the system.

In terms of economic objectives, economic management and economic growth, we cannot but take occasion to remind ourselves that in this country there is a private sector and that private sector has of necessity to form part of the national objectives and that private sector has of necessity to so conduct...

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its industrial affairs that those affairs are in concord with and are supportive of, the central national efforts.

I want to take occasion again to quote from the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Article 17, which refers to private enterprises:

“The existence of privately owned economic enterprises is recognised. Such enterprises must satisfy social needs and operate within the regulatory framework of national policy and the law.”

Part of the mechanism for the realisation of economic objectives and for national economic planning is the Public Service. We recognise that there is need for re-examination and for the restructuring of the Public Service and the public sector. Serious note has to be taken of the fact that there is created a separate ministerial position which has responsibility for the Public Service. To effectively introduce what we want to introduce, it therefore becomes necessary for us to embark upon exercises not only to train as an on-going process in the Public Service and public sector but also to retrain and to reorient because we recognise that we are what we are because of what has been bequeathed to us because of what we have inherited, and we have to transform that inheritance by the process of on-going training, retraining and re-orientation. There has to be this kind of on-going and systematic exercise in the public sector because after all those of us who give service at the centre, like those who give service in their regions, must understand that in order to give service that is deserving one must be able to conceptualise the objectives we set before us. One must be able to understand the means, mechanisms and procedures by which we shall effect those objectives and therefore it becomes necessary to re-orient and to retrain in the Public Service as an on-going and systematic exercise and perhaps I ought to take occasion for us all to remind ourselves that as members of the central legislature, or whether we speak for or on behalf of those managers and deputy managers and corporations, we must always keep before our mind's eye this very important fact that the higher the office in which we serve the greater we become the people's servants. *[Applause.]* I take occasion to emphasise the point, lest it be felt sometimes that because we hold high offices we are the people's masters. We are not. We are the people's servants.

In the Public Service we ought to plan for operational efficiency and industrial effectiveness. We can no longer tolerate the idle, the disoriented or the lackadaisical. Ours has to be a regime of discipline in the Public Service and we cannot in the Public Service or in the public sector expect rewards to flow as we expect them to flow except we create the resources from which those rewards can and will flow.

The President of the Co-operative Republic has made it very clear in his Address that rewards will flow and I take occasion to quote from page 8, paragraph 4:

“It is palpable that the Public Service and Public sector will have to be restructured in several respects. At the same time, there will be intensive in-service training and an improvement of remuneration and other benefits, based on performance and agreed incentive schemes. There will be no place for dead weight and the idler, there, however, will be rewards for action and the imaginative.”

The Speaker: Five minutes more.

Cde. Sallahuddin: In terms of remuneration, it is only natural that our people expect increases. In terms of incentives, it is only natural that we spare no effort to place them all in train but I want to take occasion while I come to the end of my first presentation to make the point that we who have the responsibility to make economic growth and self-reliance a reality in this nation must convince this nation that our destiny is really in safe hands.

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2.50 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Leader of the Minority, Cde. Jagan.

The Leader of the Minority (Cde. Dr. Jagan): Mr. Speaker, the Presidential Address delivered a few days ago was remarkable, not so much about what was said but really what was omitted. Listening to it, one was left with the impression that one was at the hustings listening to an electioneering speech. But the elections – sorry, the selections – are long over and what one would have expected at this time was a proper blueprint, a programme, even if in broad outline which would have given us a sense of direction, what is going to be done to tackle the economic crisis, which is deep and getting deeper and deeper every day, the social-ills of the society and the political sickness in which this country is presently engulfed. Devoid of any real content, the only thing I can say about the speech is that it was well printed, a very good technical job – wonderful. Devoid of any real content, we would like to say...

that the Address draws attention to new Ministries, new committees, new enquiries, new structures under the new Constitution, new threats even, and in the end a new version of the old hackneyed “produce or perish.”

The nation has been told again and again, ad nauseam, that “our ability to steer an independent course rests on our ability to build and strengthen the economy and without the highest possible levels of production and productivity and the development of our economy the various new rights to be found in the Constitution will not be realised”. Every school boy knows. It is a truism that without production you cannot have anything. Without productivity you cannot have. That is not the question. The question we must ask today, and seriously, is why are we in the crisis of stagnation. Why are we going backwards instead of going forward? They have the statistics. Year after year, zero growth, below zero. What we want to know is not what is stated in the Constitution about the rights of the people. We all know that was a gimmick, a gimmick to get through one phase of their difficulties. That is, when they were faced with an election they had to find some excuse to postpone the election and so had to talk about new rights. The so-called socialist Constitution has set them out. But what are we now told? Now we are told, having got the elections postponed and rigged and got this whole cabal in here, that if you do not produce, if you do not have production and productivity, you will not have the freedoms or rights which were enshrined in the Constitution. Cde. Speaker that was a fraud perpetrated on the people of Guyana. The Constitution was a fraud and the putting of these rights in the Constitution was a fraud and now it is being established in the President’s Address that it was a fraud. In other words, you are back at square one; you have nothing now and you are being told now if you do not produce you cannot get.

People want to know about subsidies, about the cost of living, about housing. You talk about socialism. In socialist countries there is a programme of building houses and subsidising rentals for the working people, for whom houses are not being built, especially in countries like this, by the private sector. Where is the programme? There is not even an outline of this. The rights set out in the Constitution – I think the best we can do is not to mention those at all because they are only paper rights. The less said about it, the better.

Cde. Speaker, I want to suggest that the regime should take a serious look at what must be seen as the root of our problem and, that is, the interconnection and interaction between the economic base and the political, ideological, cultural and institutional superstructure. We have to see this link. If we do not see this link then we will be only looking at the situation in a sort of chicken and egg kind of way. Which is first? From the Government side there is a simplistic approach. It goes something like this. If you do not produce you would not get and if you agitate and struggle you will be punished. As the new Vice-President for Public Welfare has put it, if you bring out your guns we will bring our out cannon. Are the cannon going to solve the problems of low morals in the country today?

One of the best blue-eyed boys of this regime has now packed up his bags and left. I refer to Pat Thompson, one-time Ambassador to the UN and then later head of Guymines. What did he tell us at the beginning of last year? He said the problem was one of morale. That was the root to the stagnation in our society as he saw it. He said: the key factor to break out of the tangled web – those were his words. That is what I mean by interconnection between the economic base and the political, ideological, institutional and cultural superstructure. He put it in simple language, “tangled web”. The key factor to break out of the tangled web and to increase production and productivity was morale. Workers must feel that their performance was being objectively assessed and managers must be given the necessary functional authority to accomplish tasks assigned them “within defined overall policy criteria and without frequent trivial nit-picking, irrelevant and unhelpful interference”.

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3.00 p.m.

One would have thought that such an observation from a key person important in the whole structure of the regime would have been given serious consideration in view of the economic calamity in which this country has found itself and that something concrete would have come here. But no, nothing. Vagueness, generalities.

The President and his army of advisers did not pay any serious attention to this question of low morale and political interference and bungling. The rhetoric is there but that is all. Are the Public Service Commission, the Police Service Commission, Teaching Service Commission, working as envisaged in the Constitution, whether the new one or the ones which were there since 1961 or 1964, or after 1966? They are not working.

What is the use of telling us all about the glorious Constitution when the Constitution is subverted on those fundamental questions? And if you have...

interference as Pat Thompson talks about then you are going to have the bungling and the inefficiencies that we heard so much about from the Luckhoo Commission as regards the Electricity Corporation. Where is the change?

So far as the rights which are laid down in the Constitution are concerned, the only rights which I see that are conferred are those to the PNC elite. This Assembly is a clear reflection of the way the national cake is being distributed. It is a clear description. Let us look at the picture over the last sixteen years. After the 1964 elections the PNC had 22 members from whom their Ministerial team was drawn. After Independence, the Constitution came, they had three technocrats making a total then of only 25. What is the position today? Today, under the 1980 Constitution, the numbers have grown to 69 including the technocrats, and this number excludes the eight advisers to the President and to the Prime Minister. No doubt, most of those are also drawing salaries at Ministerial level.

I do not want to speak in the other realms in which the money is being squandered, about the huge army which has grown, the para-military apparatus which has grown the cost of which has mounted from \$5 million for the police, military and para-military in 1970 to nearly \$15 million last year.

Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was Minister of Finance around 1970, he spoke in this Assembly about redistributive justice, meaning that this Government had, as a matter of policy, to redistribute income so the masses would get. But what has happened over the years? The slice of the cake going to the working people has become narrower and narrower. This regime has worked up a symbiotic relationship with vested interests outside to whom nearly two-thirds of the money is distributed in the form of debt and compensation payments and the rest is going for a huge bureaucratic apparatus including this one inside here, Government ministerial apparatus.

How then can we improve the morale of the country? Talk to the farmers at Moruka. I was talking to one of them today. Four cents for a pound of lemons. How much does the GMC pay for a pound of peanuts? One dollar, until hucksters began to pay more than that and then they raised the price. Cde. Speaker, we read the other day where the past GMC Manager said subsidies were reduced from the GMC. But at whose expense? He was trying to show what a good job he had done. But at whose expense?

I was speaking to someone when I was in the United States recently and he should know. He was in the guts of the thing as an auditor. He talked about the corruption and the waste which went on in there. That is taken out of the hides of the poor farmers. Why don't they set up an inquiry? Why doesn't the Minister of Agriculture – the last one has gone, he is now adviser. A new one is put in his place. How many new ones? Why don't they set up an inquiry? In fact, this Parliament should probably set up an inquiry to examine the report of the RPA which was presented to the past Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister, then Mr. Burnham. Mr. Burnham told them, the last time he saw them, that he is going to Canada. As soon as he comes back they will hear from him. Up to now they have not heard from him. That was a long time ago.

Mr. Speaker, this is what is causing low morale. Workers cannot live. What do we have? We have a regime dispensing patronage far and wide. Look at it, it is there to see right here in this Assembly. Of course, one understands it. One understands the basis of this politically. If the masses do not show up to vote for you, you have to bribe and corrupt more people at the top. And so is this the way we are going to get out of the mess? I say it is disgraceful to build up a corrupt system of political patronage and embellish it and present it as a wonderful new era of democracy where it is said they are linking central and local government and establishing real power to the people. As usual, form is misinterpreted as

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content. How can they, in the face of the verdict of the Observer Team that the elections were fraudulent in every possible way, speak of democracy? Fraudulent in every possible way, “blatant fraud,” they said. Because they call it democracy. No decent-minded Guyanese would be fooled by such bald-faced – to use the State Department’s verbiage – hypocrisy.

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What is now established is certainly not a political system – and I quote the President’s words – “which is to bring democracy to the remotest corners of Guyana ...” Rather it is to establish a bigger band of nit-pickers and a more extensive and extravagant patronage. What Guyana needs is democracy, not just in form but in content. It has been made abundantly clear by the fathers of scientific socialism that socialism cannot be built without democracy and I mean fundamental, grass-roots democracy, not something super-imposed upon the people.

We have been saying repeatedly since the 1973 elections, after the army...

seized the ballot boxes, that democracy is fundamental to the development of the growth of the economy and construction of socialism. In 1974 when the economic crisis first manifested itself, the PPP at its Congress issued a 16-point policy statement outlining what should be done in the various sectors dealing with the economy and politics and institutions. Unfortunately that was not heeded. The sugar price brought them in a position where they felt – I refer to the world high price for sugar at that time – that would go on forever. But when the crisis began to appear we again pointed out at Enmore in the presence of the then Prime Minister – those 16 points were repeated but emphasis was placed on another point and that is that bureaucratic, administrative and police military methods must give way to normal democratic constitutional methods of struggle in this country.

The Speaker: Five minutes more.

Cde. Dr. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, those things have not been done. What is the end result? The end result is that the regime has embarked on a course of national betrayal. We have seen this with the IMF Agreement followed by the New Investment Code. There is a lot of talk about the Planning Commission etc. etc. Where is the plan? We are talking about industry, another ministry for industries way back in 1966/1972 in the Development Plan. Over 16 industries were set out in the Appendix to that Report, the 1966-1972 Plan. Where are they? The time is long past for a policy of drift and mere hope for the future. That is not going to bring an end to retrogression, bankruptcy and deals, which are undermining our national sovereignty and independence.

The Guyanese people want tangible results in this zero hour. Compare the attitude of the new US President in his State of the Union message to the US Congress with that of the President of Guyana. President Reagan admitted the terrible mess his country was in and proposed some positive action. Whether the steps proposed will be a solution is another matter, but at least something is being done. Here, everything is being looked at with rose-tinted spectacles by the Administration. There is no self-critical admission of mistakes even when the mess is literally flowing in the streets. And pomp and ceremony and the usual clichés are all we get. We will not be any part in the delusion of the people. The regime must either produce a concrete blue-print of programmes to grapple with the ills of our sick society or it must get out! *[Applause. (Minority)]*

The Speaker: Cde. Jones.

Cde. Jones: Cde. Speaker, the Leader and President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana stated clearly in his Address entitled “In Our Hands” on Monday, 9th February, 1981 and I quote:

“In the past, Local Government was a subordinate and inferior system to that of Central Government. Now, under the provisions of the People’s New Constitution the two systems are part of a whole, the object of which is to bring democracy to the remotest corners of Guyana and to establish real power to the people.”

This new system is a vital aspect of socialist democracy because it seeks to involve as many people as possible in the various regions who will manage their own affairs.

This is only but one of the tasks set by the vanguard party, the People’s National Congress, the only party capable of covering the length and breadth of this land of ours, Guyana. *[Applause.]*

Article 9 of Chapter II of the people’s new Constitution states that:

“Sovereignty belongs to the people, who exercise it through their representatives and the democratic organs established by or under this Constitution.”

Power to the people will ensure that there is total involvement of the people ranging from the people’s co-operatives to this forum, the National Assembly. The people will be given an opportunity to mould for themselves their own destiny. As enshrined in the Constitution, Article 74(1), it is stated:

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“It shall be the primary duty of local democratic organs to ensure in accordance with law the efficient management and development of their areas and to provide leadership by example.”

The link between the Local Government and the Central Government will be more effective. Every little community's voice will be heard in the National Assembly via the effective channel of communication. Experience has shown that the old system could not have effectively managed the entire Guyana because it was not geared so to do. Because of this, many of our rural areas are under-developed. In the new system every region has an opportunity to plan for itself its own development programme which will be integrated into the national development plan and will be financed by the Central Government as is stated in Article 77 of the People's New Constitution.

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The people themselves through their own efforts will be self-reliant...

and their communities will be more productive and prosperous. The people will be their own bosses, they will raise and dispose of their own revenue as is spelt out in Article 76 of the People's New Constitution, and I quote:

“Parliament may provide for regional democratic councils to raise their own revenues and to dispose of them for the benefit and welfare of their areas.”

This article is further elaborated in Clause 5(4) of the Local Democratic Organs Act 1980 which states that the Minister may by order provide for the financing of any Local Democratic Organ including the raising of revenue by the imposition of rates, taxes and other means.

The Leader stated that the whole framework is aimed at unifying Guyanese by ensuring their maximum participation at all levels, directly and indirectly, in community and national development. This new system seeks to have the involvement of people in a meaningful way at all levels and here Article 74(3) of the people's new Constitution states:

“It shall be the duty of local democratic organs to maintain and protect public property, improve working and living conditions, promote the social and cultural life of the people, raise the level of civic consciousness, preserve law and order, consolidate socialist legality and safeguard the rights of citizens.”

I did say that this system is a new one but to the People's National Congress it is only a reminder because the objectives of the party which were written since 1974 emphasise “to provide every Guyanese the opportunity to work for and share in the economic well-being of the country and to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in the political, economic and social life of the country.” This new system will enable the people to become more involved at all levels. They will be given an opportunity to use their own initiative for the further development of their communities.

As the Leader said, we have chosen our course and will not be lectured to by big or medium-sized brothers. Our first and last loyalty is to Guyana and its interests. It is the people themselves who will have to ensure that the course chosen will be followed by all Guyanese because Guyana belongs to its people and only the Guyanese people can develop Guyana. The Leader did say that elections for the various Councils, from those of the People's Co-operatives to those of the sub-regions, will take place shortly. Some 16,000 people will be involved in this new arrangement. Each region will be divided into no less than five tiers namely, sub-region, the district, the community, the neighbourhood and the people's co-operative. These 16,000 people will be nominated and be elected to serve on the various committees. Socialist democracy must prevail at all levels so that the people could assume greater responsibilities and duties for the management and development of the communities in which they live.

Cde. Speaker, the ball is now in our court and we will have to play it. Let us all be good players. Let us with our own safe hands, mould our own destiny.

3.30 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Moore.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Cde. Moore): Cde. Speaker, I almost said “May it please Your Honour”, it is impossible for me as a Member of this Assembly while also being a member of the legal profession, not to feel a glow of pride and a thrill in making my maiden speech in this Assembly on a Motion to approve the Government's policy as adumbrated in the particular address which Cde. President delivered here three days ago. There is good reason for the pride and the thrill. They arise because in my contribution to this debate I will have the gladdening opportunity to correlate the gist of certain indications of policy enunciated by the President, with certain provisions of the Constitution of the Co-

operative Republic of Guyana, more popularly called the people's new Constitution. Let none of us lose sight of the significance of the policy trends disclosed by the President when he spoke last Monday on the occasion of the opening of the very first Session of this Fourth Parliament of Guyana.

Every Member of Parliament, new or old, is acutely conscious that this Assembly never before so numerous in membership, is the first National Assembly to meet as established and constituted under the People's New Constitution which itself is the very first constitutional document fashioned in Guyana by the People of Guyana for itself. Unlike some other Constitutions, Cde. Speaker, even our previous ones, the people's new Constitution does not repose itself in arid, legal formalisms of interest only to the constitutional lawyer or the academician. Not only does the Constitution create as a Constitution is supposed to do, the overall framework for the governance of our dear land of Guyana, but it addresses...

itself with an immediacy hitherto unknown to the intimate concerns of the Guyanese people across the entire spectrum of their human welfare and development.

I intend to speak rather broadly and briefly on some social, economic, cultural and political aspects of the new Constitution and invite this Assembly to discern the manifest linkages between the statements of policy which appear in the President's address and the matching provisions of the new Constitution.

Cde. Speaker, it is most fitting indeed for us to remind ourselves of the preamble of the Constitution which brings into sharp mental focus the proud historic emergence of our nation from colonial bondage, salutes our innate national qualities of heroism, revolutionary endeavour and zeal for independence and the liberty to mould our destiny according to our own judgments and preferences rather than those prescribed for us by foreign powers abroad. The preamble commits the nation to the establishment of a socialist State on foundations of social and economic justice based on an open society and the solemn resolve to govern ourselves by popular consensus with full, free and open discussions and debate, the participation of all and the exclusion of none. In the light of this noble, national objective the question before this Assembly is, Cde. Speaker, just how does Government plan to perform.

Cde. Speaker, my particular contribution to this debate is not to speak exhaustively on the admirable and inspiring charge which underlay the President's Address to this Assembly. I would merely attempt, humbly, to touch on certain aspects of the Constitution which deal with the social, economic, cultural and political perspectives of the Guyanese people as depicted in the Constitution and, by doing so, attempt to show how the Government, through the President's Address, has seriously, sincerely and in a thoroughly human way, set itself on a progressive course of implementation of the provisions of the Constitution in these respects.

Perhaps from the small man's point of view, no less than the lawyer's Chapter II of part I of the Constitution entitled "Principles and Bases of the Political, Economic and Social System" embracing Articles 9 to 39, is the most eloquent and gratifying code of principles ever to find their way into a Constitution. This Assembly will not have overlooked the way in which certain passages of the President's Address impinged on a number of Articles in the very Chapter II and designedly so. When the President gave the charge, "In our hands lies the destiny of the Co-operative Republic", he could not have had far from his mind the provisions of Article 22 of the Constitution which confers on every citizen the right to work and imposes upon him the corresponding duty to work. In how many other countries does one find the right to work enshrined in their Constitution?

Our Constitution reinforces the right to work with the right to its free selection in accordance with social requirements and personal qualifications, the right to be rewarded according to the nature, quality and quantity of one's work, and establishes equality of pay between men and women for equal work. The Constitution guarantees the right to work in certain specific ways which we need to keep before us as ever present objectives namely, by the social ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, by socialist planning, development and management of the economy by planned and progressive growth of the socialist productive forces, and labour productivity, by consistent implementation of scientific and new and appropriate techniques by continuous education and training; by socialist labour laws and by sustained efforts on the part of the State, co-operatives, trade unions and other socio-economic organisations, and the people working together to develop the economy in accordance with the foregoing principles in order to increase continuously the country's material wealth; expand employment opportunities; improve working conditions and productively, increase amenities and benefits.

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It is against the background of all these profoundly conceived means of a socialist end that the President, in his Address linked intensive, inservice training and improvement of remuneration and other benefits with performance in terms of work. He said and this Assembly will unanimously agree – in a socialist Guyana:

“There will be no place for dead weight and the idler, there will be rewards for action and the imaginative.”

Put in my own words, I understand the President to mean that under our new constitutional arrangements there is every incentive for initiative and for hard work and there will be guarantees that hard work and...

industry and sweat will be rewarded, and indolence and idleness will find no place or encouragement within our system.

Let me here and now dispel any notion that the right to work enshrined in the Constitution puts the State as a matter of law under a compulsion to find work for every citizen. The creative genius of the Guyanese people, to which homage is paid in the preamble of the Constitution, has been fully liberated by Independence and the advent of the Republic, by the on-going social and economic revolution which is inevitably part of the process of transition from colonial capitalism to socialism.

I am reminded that it is but fitting that in this year, which is designated the Year of Energy, the creative energies of our people should be released in order to put to constructive use the physical energy which we are seeking to produce in this nation. The Constitution gives free rein to the citizen to employ to the fullest extent all his natural instinct and initiative to devise, if he so chooses, avenues of self-employment as well as employment by him of others.

Let me reiterate that it is part of this Government's philosophy that self-employment, the creation of self-employment, is something which is sacred to my Government's conception. Indeed, Article 17 of the Constitution expressly recognised the existence of privately-owned economic enterprises directed to satisfy social needs. The only constraint, as I understand it, which exists to the use or the development of private enterprise is that private enterprise may not develop and deploy in an exploitative way. Once it is a good employer, once it pays fair wages, once it creates proper working conditions, as I understand it, the Constitution and the Government are anxious that private enterprise should develop and, indeed, flourish. Exploded for all time is any false idea that socialism in Guyana would assume some monolithic, heavy-handed bureaucratic structure in which a soulless State machine wholly substitutes itself for private thought, initiative and enterprise in each and every sphere of human activity, economic and otherwise.

So, then, the right to work and the correlated duty of work are very much at the bottom of the President's call for action to build and strengthen the economy and the State of Guyana on a base of self-reliance. The citizen must be willing to work and not regard the constitutional right to work as an open invitation to the lazy to sit inert awaiting work to fall into their laps from one Government source or another. Let me repeat: the Government is not the sole provider of employment in this nation. Private enterprises also provide employment and, indeed, we have before us many examples of young people with initiative, with an idea, with a plan and energy to work that plan, putting that plan to constructive effect, generating his own employment and, indeed, creating employment for others.

The right to work must be read and understood in conjunction with the other rights I earlier referred to, namely, the right to engage in privately-owned economic enterprises. If the citizen is willing to be self-employed and to be the employer of others rather than to work in the public sector, the way is clear for him to make his personal contribution to his own and the nation's economic development within the framework of national policy and of the law.

Article 35 of the Constitution entrenches the State's respect for the diverse cultural strains which enrich our society. There is a commitment in that article which this Government has honoured in a significant way. That commitment is to seek consistently to promote national appreciation of those very strains and develop out of them a national socialist culture for all Guyana and all Guyanese. This explains why in the Ministry of Education there is now appointed a Minister of State exclusively for culture. Thus in matters pertaining to culture a fresh step has been taken to carve out of our ministerial arrangements a special need wherein attention could be concentrated on the constitutional objective of

encouraging the development of cultural patterns and welding them, over time into a culture identifiable as being uniquely and particularly and peculiarly Guyanese. *[Applause.]*

Almost every system of Government on the face of the earth is wont to proclaim itself as being democratic. We in Guyana are by no means abandoning our socialist ideology when we agree with Abraham Lincoln's concept of democracy – Government of the people, by the people and for the people. The words of Lincoln, uttered long before the dawn of scientific socialism, are quite apt to describe the socialist concept of democracy as we understand it today. Any form of Government calling itself democratic must pass that fundamental test. Our Constitution does not leave it to chance. It devotes a whole Chapter to an elemental structure or construction to what I submit is true democracy in a nation. Chapter VII comprising eleven lucidly worded provisions has provided the machinery for the establishment of a system of local democratic organs.

The difference between the system of local government envisaged by Chapter VII and its predecessor is that under the system being replaced there was a perceptible detachment of local government from the centre. There seems to have been no governing philosophy that the two levels of government formed one complementary system of democracy. Now, however, the Constitution has made possible the creation of ten regional democratic councils and a National Congress of Local Democratic Organs which are both directly represented in this Assembly through an elective process for the very first time in our history.

Local Government has taken on a more meaningful image and role and what we have created in Guyana under the new Constitution is a system of people involvement in a rational, co-ordinated system of central and local government at all levels throughout the length and breadth of the country. From the coastland to the furthest regions of the hinterland, people at the very grass-roots of society, are now able to participate in the decision-making process in a closely inter-related system of government of the people by the people and for the people. This, Cde. Speaker, is true democracy and it is at this exciting juncture of our constitutional history that it is my honour to enter this Chamber and pursue my commitment to the people's new Constitution and its implementation by my party's policies such as those outlined in the President's Address.

3.50 p.m.

It has been the unique experience of a small nation such as Guyana that both in the Caribbean and elsewhere we have embarked upon experiments which have been pioneering in their character. I understand that after the initial and usual wonder as to what we were attempting in our new Constitution, those abroad who have taken the trouble to study it have now come to the conclusion that our constitutional arrangements in relation to Local Government are so unique and so useful that in-depth studies are already going on into those provisions with a view to their emulation and implementation elsewhere. *[Applause.]*

Cde. Speaker, the right of every citizen to free education from nursery to university, now entrenched in the Constitution, was actually enforced by the Government long before the promulgation of the People's New Constitution. The policy of the Government in education is couched in the words "free education from nursery to university" which has been rolling off the tongues of every man, woman and child in this country for years so that they are now a virtual cliché, but they represent a reality as well.

I do not drag into my speech reference to free education merely because it is a magnificent achievement for the Government to point to, but because its materialisation long before it found expression in the Constitution gives credibility to the Government's statement of its education policy. The hundreds of students who have passed through the University of Guyana and are presently at universities and other institutions of higher learning overseas, all at Government's expense, corroborate the declaration by the Government from time to time of its seriousness in implementing its socialist policies. This seriousness found expression and continuity in the President's placing among the priorities for 1981, rehabilitation, improvement and expansion of the physical facilities for education, particularly primary education; better buildings, new curricula and programmes. The people nationwide should be encouraged to lend some of their energies under the leadership of their Local Democratic Organs and other agencies in self-help exercises to restore many of the dilapidated buildings inherited from a past regime.

As a resident, nay, a citizen of Kitty from which it is common knowledge that the President comes, it is my pleasure to declare and announce in this Assembly that the St. James-the-Less Anglican School which is now sadly in a dilapidated condition, will be reconstructed this year and brought up to the fine example and standard of the J.E. Burnham School. *[Applause.]*

As with education, so with another entrenched right in Article 26, the right of the citizen to proper housing accommodation. The Government, through the address by the President, recognises that too many of our people are homeless and ill-housed. I have heard criticism that there has not been as rapid a housing development as we would wish, but it is common knowledge that constraints of one kind or another have always imposed a line between our aspirations and our achievements. That notwithstanding, the record of this Government in the provision of houses stands as a proud monument to its commitment in this regard. *[Applause.]*

During the last decade, the thrust of the Government in the field of housing has been one of the more visible and dynamic areas of governmental activity. Government's policy to house the nation maintains its consistency when the President in his address signaled the private and public sectors to be fully involved under the co-ordination at national level of all the relevant activities, funds, facilities, resources and so forth, so that slums will be forever banished from any part of socialist Guyana, rural or urban. Let the people have confidence in the good intentions of the Government for the full realisation, in our time, of our inspiring national motto "One People, One Nation, One Destiny". With a Government adhering so literally to the principles, political, economic and social, set out in the Constitution, it is for us all, Government and Minority, each playing its own role in this Assembly, but acting complementarily to one another, to set an example to the nation looking on from outside the walls of this hallowed Chamber, to co-operate to the end that we, each of us, may be able to say, like the Guyana National Service, "I want to build this land which belongs to me". And as Cde. President has said, our destiny lies in our own hands, let us prove that they are safe hands. *[Applause.]*

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, Guyana has a small population, approximately 800,000 and what the people of this country want is a just and fair society in which there is equal opportunity for all. I do not think the people have any interest in sloganeering and catchy phrases. They want to be able to live in this country happily and peacefully. There could be no doubt of our resources and potential. But despite our riches in so many fields we have been found on umpteen occasions and even at the current time to be inefficient and indeed inadequate. The migration rate must be one for concern, if not alarm. We have lost many of our best brains in this country. There is fall in production

and we are slipping every single day closer and closer to literal bankruptcy. The reluctance to produce, migration of the people, the state of depression that prevails in this country, are all testimony of the people's disgust in Guyana. To speak of democracy is one thing, to uphold it is another. Democracy in Guyana is conspicuous by its absence. The entire speech of the President is based on the erroneous premise that the people will support the Government's policies and programmes, if not the Government as a whole, and that is a grave error by the Government.

4. p.m.

The President said these words in the first paragraph of page 2:

“In the past, Local Government was a subordinate and inferior system to that of Central Government. Now, under the provisions of the People's New Constitution the two systems are part of a whole, the object of which is to bring democracy to the remotest corners of Guyana and to establish real power to the people.”

This is the statement that we question and we must question it with all the strength at our command because there is an abundance of evidence, evidence accumulated not only by people who are directly involved in the electoral processes in Guyana but people who are impartial and people who have carried...

out similar exercises in other parts of the world.

The Speaker: We will take the Suspension. The Sitting of the Assembly is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 4.00 p.m.

4.25 p.m.

On resumption –

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, when the Adjournment was taken I was questioning a portion of this Speech, that portion which I have already quoted "...democracy to the remotest corners of Guyana and to establish real power to the people." Not only our experience, but the truth is that power has been literally seized from the Guyanese nation. A perusal of the Constitution will show that. I want to refer to one aspect without any fear of contradiction that in the 1966 Constitution, Parliament did not have the power to postpone elections, if I may cite one example. That power was vested, that was an enshrined provision in the Constitution which gave the power to the people, hence, Parliament itself was controllable by the electorate, the voters and the people.

The People's Progressive Party does not believe in paramountcy of the Parliament, it believes in paramountcy of the people and if I am to ask the question and answer it myself, where ultimate power should rest, the answer is, in the hands of the people. That situation no longer exists in the new Constitution. And thus, it will not be true to say, Mr. Speaker, that the new Constitution or the present constitutional arrangement involving the Local Democratic Organs, has given greater power to the people of this country, or has taken democracy to every corner of the country.

I want also, Mr. Speaker, to refer to another portion and I think these are the two portions I am dealing with. I quote from paragraph 2, page 7:

"In this national task, the Local Democratic Organs are pivotal and their members and leaders carry a heavy burden."

I would interpret that burden as a burden of conscience, conscience as to how they got into the regions, how they got into the Councils, by fraud, and that is a heavy burden to carry. That would have been my interpretation of the burden that they have to carry. The burden of conscience can be a serious burden. But then it goes on:

"Their power and positions spring from the people whose immediate representatives they are."

Mr. Speaker, so long as the Government persists in delusions that their powers and positions spring from the people, so long they will remain isolated from the people because they are isolated from the people. What is my evidence to make that statement? The 1968 elections, 1973 elections, 1980 elections, not forgetting the Referendum. These four exercises have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that the PNC has been rejected by the people of this country and is no longer, if it ever was, a mass party in Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, if at the conclusion of the polls on December 15, the provisions both of the Constitution and the Statutes that deal with elections were complied with and not honoured in the breach, what would have been the position today in this Parliament? The People's Progressive Party would have been sitting over there and a few of them here.

Mr. Speaker, what we had when the official election results were announced was a reverse of the results. Hence, there can be no doubt that the people's will has been thwarted. There is no doubt that the people did not succeed in having their aspirations realised. Undoubtedly, the people of this country have been treated shabbily, with scorn, if not with contempt by the People's National Congress when at the close of the polls, and subsequent to the close of the polls, several hours after, the Army intervened and hijacked the ballot boxes from the various polling places. What we had on December 15, Cde. Speaker, is a literal coup before the elected Government took over, and that is the People's Progressive Party.

I do not think that any person in this country, no matter how capable he is, can be successful with a brief to defend the People's National Congress on what took place on the 15th and 16th December, and what they were doing subsequent to the 16th to announce some kind of result.

It is high time, Mr. Speaker, that the PNC recognises that it is not a mass Party, having been stripped naked of popular support. I want to pose these questions and could they deny them when I direct the questions. Why polling agents were disallowed in so many stations? Why were they threatened and in many cases assaulted and driven out of polling places? I don't want to go into any details. I know. On the day of elections I had to call on the returning officer. Without naming the public servant, I think he was a man of some conscience; he was a prisoner; he was a victim; he was incapable of looking at me when I was directing his attention to the relevant provisions that deal with elections. I had to get him out to get many polling agents in the places of poll. Cde. Speaker, I took one to a polling place in Lamaha Gardens and I left the young man there; half an hour after a man went in and threatened him and told him "you still staying here?" Poor chap had to run away in fear. That is what happened on December 15.

4.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, why were they not allowed to accompany the ballot boxes at the close of poll despite the fact that the Elections Commission gave directions for accompanying the ballot boxes? I recall one senior member of the People's National Congress questioning the Commission as to its jurisdiction when that decision was reached because I was present at the meeting. I know, sir, and you are aware that many provisions in our Constitution were borrowed from the Indian Constitution. The current Attorney General and his predecessor were always eloquent in alluding to the fact that these provisions do exist in the Indian Constitution.

I have in my possession a copy of *The Parliamentarian*. This is a journal produced by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, of which every member of the Parliament ought to be a member. The wording is more or less the same. I will not deal with it but it is an article I would ask members to read and they will see the kind of democracy that is inbuilt, not only in the constitutional provisions of statutes but do exist as a reality in the electoral process in India. Because of that fact, we saw the fall of Mr. Gandhi and we saw rise of Mrs. Gandhi.

What we need in Guyana is a return to democracy because we do not have it. Let me quote from page 207 of *The Parliamentarian*, October, 1980:

“The powers of the Election Commission cannot be better explained than through the following observations of the Supreme Court of India on the powers of superintendence, direction, and control vested in the Election Commission of India:

Since the conduct of all elections to various legislative bodies and to the office of President and Vice-President is vested under Article 324(1) in the Election Commission, the framers of the Constitution took care leaving scope for exercise of residuary powers by the Commission in its own right, as a creature of the Constitution, in the infinite variety of situations that may emerge from time to time in such a large democracy as ours.”

And that is only one aspect. The power of the Election Commission is referred to in this article as “infinite”. In fact, if at all they are creatures of anything, they are creatures of the Constitution and they are not subjected to any type of political manipulation and direction. They are totally and truly independent in the truest sense of the word.

The number of people who voted in India – 360 million, 5,000 candidates, 542 constituencies. The International Observer Team described our Elections Commission as a toothless poodle. What an apt description. I do not want to add or delete from that description. In fact, if you are living in a country where the Elections Commission has attributed to it that kind of description by men impartial, esteemed and renowned in every sense of the word in these kinds of exercises, drawn from various parts of the world, how can the Guyanese nation be inspired or motivated to produce and, indeed, to lift this country out of the doldrums of economic morass. There can be no doubt that the people will not move, the people will not produce, the people will not until they are satisfied that in this country we have prevailing democracy and that is what we do not have.

As we go on and ask questions about what took place on December 15, I am sure it is unbelievable. If you were to talk to people outside of Guyana about what takes place here they cannot imagine that it is possible. It is inconceivable to so many of them because I ask: why counting agents, candidates –

The Speaker: Cde. Persaud, I don't want to stop you but I want to make it clear that this exhaustive manner of dealing with elections I will not permit it at a later stage so you may go on as long as you like until your time is up.

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Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: Why counting agents, candidates and even a member of the Elections Commission were not permitted entry? And were ejected from the places of count although they had all credentials for them to gain entry? Why no final list was given to parties contesting the elections and only one preliminary list made available three days before the closure of the date for claims?

We are compelled at this very early stage – dealing with democracy one sees that the root of democracy is at the bottom when the people are permitted freely to exercise the franchise choosing a government of their choice. If that does not exist, if that fails, if that is subverted, if the people's will is not prevailing at the conclusion of elections, if the boxes are tampered with and removed, is it conceivable that counting agents of the political parties, specifically the PPP, have not until this moment I am speaking to you, seen back the ballot boxes since December 15. It is in inconceivable. We have not seen them up to now. We had to wait for the announcement of the results from upstairs of the GPO building.

Let me say that there were many irregularities, fraud, the worst kind of rigging, which resulted in the People's National Congress sitting as the Government of the day. It was not only a question of rigging. The intervention of the Army crowned it all and if I may quote one little piece and move away from the elections. The International Observers Team said these words: Having itemised, chronicled many areas of irregularities and fraud which they found themselves, they had this to say:

“Based on the above findings and on the research we conducted on the process leading up to elections we conclude that the worst fears expressed by the Guyanese people regarding the violation of the electoral process have been confirmed.”

The result is that Guyana is now isolated. We must note the slow pace with which congratulatory messages came into Guyana and we were compelled, as keen observers, to read also the language in which those messages were couched. If members of the House read them – I hope they did – they will undoubtedly agree with the statement I make.

Our call this afternoon from this side of the House is: Let the Government make a positive decision and let us all go back to the people. We must go back to the people quickly, within the shortest possible time with the kind of electoral machinery in which the people will have confidence so that we can have in this Parliament the true reflection of the will and aspirations of the Guyanese nation. Until such time there will be no progress and, indeed, no development in Guyana.

The burden, if not the gravamen of the President's speech, was to rationalise bureaucracy. He cited some of the Ministries but I noticed that one which has become a joke if not a national scandal has been omitted – the Ministry of Mechanical Equipment. I have never heard about that. That is Guyana's first. I understand that the incumbent might be on the migration list very shortly.

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Talking about Local Government, it is our view that the Local Government system is cumbersome and an imposition on the people of this country. It is undoubtedly an extension of the bureaucracy because when one reads, without referring you to all the relevant sections, the Local Democratic Organs Act No. 12 of 1980, one finds that there is provision to pay all the Chairmen and all Deputy Chairmen and, indeed, all the Councillors. There is talk about having the other bodies to complete the whole process of Local Government elected. But the People's Progressive Party is compelled to ask this afternoon whether we will have the same kind of election like on December 15. If the PNC is going to come back with that kind of thing, let me say very frankly, very clearly and very fearlessly that there is no hope for this country at all. They are going to be further isolated from the people and their current under 20 per cent which probably they have – and I am being very kind and liberal to them – will be reduced substantially after the new Local Government elections are held.

Our charge is that real power has been taken away from the people. Paramourncy of the party means power is vested in a single entity or personality and I think I already said that what we believe in –

The Speaker: Five minutes more.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud:-- is not paramourncy of an individual or entity but paramourncy of the people.

Let me utilise the remaining five minutes to simply make a passing reference to what was being said about the Constitution and guarantees. All these rights, if they are rights, under the principles and basis of the political, economic and social system are not enforceable by law, there is no cause of action. If any citizen fails to get any of these rights, for instance the right to work, what does it mean? It is a joke. The right to work under this Constitution does not mean that the man is compelled to get a job and the Minister of Home Affairs made that statement that it did not mean that the Government would have to find jobs. Then what is the big story? What was there before this Constitution to stop a man from finding a job whether from the private or public sector if the public sector was being fair to everybody seeking employment. I make the point that the same is applicable to free education they talk so eloquently about from kindergarten to university. If a man is not allowed that education, could he move the court? I would ask the question, what would be his cause of action? Therefore, there is no sanction of Chapter II of the Constitution.

They were talking about land to the tiller for a long time. I recall one judge asking the question what it meant – privately, of course. I recall talking to the Minister of Agriculture about a few areas where farmers are being badly treated. He said, all right the new Constitution is coming and we will handle the matter. Now that the new Constitution has come, instead of handling the matter, a Committee is appointed and we have got enough experience in this Assembly and in this country about Committees.

This afternoon, in concluding my speech, I wish to state on behalf of the People's Progressive Party that this Parliament is not a reflection of the will of the people, that there is an absence of democracy in Guyana, that people lack motivation, that people will not produce and people will not move forward. Hence, the country will remain stagnated for a long time. Unless and until a political solution is found in Guyana, so long the people will continue to suffer because we unfortunately have inherited a Government that has no respect for public opinion nor any respect for the people's feeling and will and so long as it continues to tread that road, so long the country will be held back and will plunge and slip even deeper and deeper into the economic crisis and ultimately to bankruptcy.

The Minister, Health, in the Ministry of Public Welfare (Cde. Van West-Charles):

Cde. Speaker, I, like other speakers, feel proud to make my maiden speech in this People's Parliament which has come out of a Constitution so aptly termed the People's New Constitution. More particularly am I proud to be speaking on this side of the Assembly which is representative of the vanguard party, the People's National Congress. [Applause.]

As stated in our new Constitution, the right to free medical service is enshrined. But prior to making intervention, I think it is obvious that the Vice-President responsible for Parliamentary Affairs has been preview to information which I have not had, for having programmed me to speak after the last speaker and being Minister of Health in this year of the disabled persons, I think we in this Assembly with this enshrined right in our new Constitution should see a better performance in the months to come. [Applause.]

The employment of our energies working for the establishment of socialism is well known. My intervention is merely to let this distinguished Assembly and the nation know of some of the plans which

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my Government has for ensuring the right to free medical service. As you know, we in Guyana are committed to the declaration of Alma Ata and like other countries which have pledged their support for this declaration, my Government is committed to provide an acceptable level of health for all by the year 2000. This means that the Ministry will continue to improve and expand the health care delivery services for all the inhabitants of the country. Further, we will support and fully incorporate the concept of primary health care as an important component for the delivery of health care and particularly in the use of Community Health Workers as a means of providing this care.

We have already implemented this latter objective, that is, the introduction of Community Health Workers in many areas of the country, and we intend to train over forty more this year so as to be able to provide health care facilities for communities not so provided at present.

As you are aware, the system of Local Government has been reorganised in order to provide more meaningful involvement of the people. It is our intention to confer on the Regional and sub-Regional Councils some of the responsibilities and authority now exercised by the Ministry of Health. This would bring about a true involvement of the people at grass root level rather than pursuing the old system of direction and control at the centre. This was succinctly put forward by the President in his address to the ceremonial opening of the First Session of this Parliament, I quote:

“In the past, Local Government was a subordinate and inferior system to that of Central Government. Now, under the provisions of the People’s New Constitution the two systems are part of a whole, the object of which is to bring democracy to the remotest corners of Guyana and to establish real power to the people.”

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For those who have perused the Constitution, they should peruse again, for in our Constitution it is clearly stated that Guyana is in a stage of transition from capitalism to socialism. This year, we all know, has been designated the International year of the disabled person. There are some projects which the Ministry hopes to implement in this field for 1981 as an indication of how seriously it views the problem.

I wish to emphasise that the Ministry is also at the moment taking a long term view of improving the rehabilitation services for our less fortunate brothers and sisters. We would like those who come in contact with disabled persons to realise that they can play a meaningful role in the development of our society. With this in mind we have designed projects which will provide parents of handicapped children with basic information about their condition. This would enable parents to understand the problem and not run away from it by hiding their wards.

Again, programmes geared for educating parents shall be mounted. We hope that by doing this the parents will be equipped with the basic tools which will serve to enlighten the lives of disabled persons when dealing with them. Cde. Speaker, it is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme planned by the Ministry. At the present moment we are bereft of information concerning the handicapped. For example, we have to know how many handicapped there are in the country as a whole, their state of disability, the cause of their disability. To do this, the Ministry intends to mount a survey in all regions which would form the basis of our programme for handicapped.

A Commission has already been established to deal with the handicapped not only for 1981, but to take a long-term view at the physical and mental disability and it is hoped that these measures would bring a new hope to those and at the same time enlighten the more fortunate on the realities of disability.

Cde. Speaker, I wish to reiterate our commitment by re-echoing the words of the President in his address to the Assembly at the First Session of the Ceremonial Opening:

“In addition, in this the International Year of the Disabled, steps must be taken to recognise concretely the full citizenship of the physically handicapped and their right to personal fulfillment and to contribute to national development.”

It is the aim of the Ministry that there should be an adequate number of trained personnel in all fields whether in physiotherapy, environmental health, health education, X-Ray technology, pharmacy, etc. The provision of drugs and equipment is necessary to maintain a good health care system to the satisfaction of all. In this regard the Ministry has put in place a supply system which has ensured that adequate drugs and equipment are available in all Regions as seen in Regions 2 and 6.

For this year, a maintenance unit will be established and this would ensure that hospital and laboratory equipment would always be serviced, maintained and repaired quickly so as to have them fully functional at all times. The Ministry has taken drastic steps to reduce the mortality and morbidity caused by some diseases such as gastro-enteritis in children under the age of three years by the oral rehydration solution. The Ministry has started training programmes for health personnel in this technology so that by the end of the year the use of oral rehydration solution in the treatment of gastro-enteritis will be established in most health centres and health posts throughout the country.

Hand in hand with this programme, the Ministry of Health will collaborate with the Ministry of Environment and Water Supply to improve the water supply and sanitation facilities in the country. It is an old adage that “prevention is better than cure” and it is the intention of the Ministry to fully immunise more than 90 percent of the children of this country of one year of age and under, against Tuberculosis, Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Diphtheria, Polio-mellitus and measles. We are ensuring that children born within hospital institutions would within the first week of their lives have their anti-tuberculosis shots, as our statistics show that 80 per cent of births take place in Government Hospitals, as only seen since the accession to office of the People’s National Congress.

Preventive dental care is another aspect of our attention and we hope in time to discard completely the old and out-dated method of extractions at the first pang of pain. We intend, wherever possible, to protect and save the teeth of our children. Our trained Dentists and Dental Nurses will soon be deployed in all areas of the country. Their main aim would be the prevention of dental caries, rehabilitation of teeth and reduction, if not elimination, of extraction of teeth which is taking place.

It is also our intention to remove many of the myths about health which are now widespread in the country. A vigorous health education programme both in the press and the radio will be launched in order to educate the population about many of the common diseases which most of us know, for example, hypertension, diabetes, etc.

Cde. Speaker, I have said much about our health plan, but also positive steps are being taken to improve the facilities in which our doctors and nurses work and in which our patients are cared. Rehabilitation of certain areas of the Georgetown Hospital has already begun. During this year, a new hospital will be opened at Aishalton in the Rupununi. The Best Hospital in West Demerara, formerly used exclusively for the treatment of tuberculosis, is being converted into a general hospital and would be opened to serve the residents of that area by the middle of this year. Another six new health centres and health stations will also be opened. Rehabilitation work will take place in the Suddie and New Amsterdam Hospitals. Rehabilitation of the Fort Canje Hospital would be completed and this would provide a healthier atmosphere conducive to mental stability and recovery. This Cde. Speaker, is just a

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small aspect of what we intend to do in health this year. No doubt, the Hon. Members of this Assembly would recognise the magnitude of the task but it is hoped that in the long run a stable and healthy population would be achieved.

The Ministry has a special obligation to the nation to ensure that proper and wholesome foods are exposed for sale in our markets. We cannot allow slipshod and unhealthy practice to be indulged in this area. The Food and Drugs Act which was enacted over the past few years will be rigidly enforced. The Analyst Department will be strengthened to carry out this task. Specific areas of attention will be the manufacturing of foods to ensure that they comply with the provisions of the Act, and that they are not adulterated by extraneous and foreign matters.

Moreover, the premises on which food manufacture is carried on must scrupulously comply with hygienic provisions of the Public Health Department. It is also the desire of the Ministry to give the necessary help and encouragement in manufacturing techniques and their general manufacturing preservation standards. Food is important, and I must reiterate we cannot and must not allow slipshod production.

The Anti-malaria and Aedes Aegypti campaign will be intensified. From henceforth residents in and around Georgetown will be visited by officers of the Aedes Aegypti programme.

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I have already alluded to the role of the Regional Democratic Council and the National Council of Local Democratic Organs in the health strategy and it is my desire to see complete co-operation between us in order to eradicate this problem. In our hinterland vigorous efforts will be made in order to control and reduce the incidence of malaria. This is quite a herioc task because of the vastness of our hinterland, and the migratory practices of our indigenous people. Notwithstanding these, the Ministry of Health has drawn up and has already embarked on the implementation of these plans to make Guyana a malaria free country. [Applause.]

Lastly, the Ministry of Health does not exist in a vacuum. Health is every body's business and to this and we are collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture in order to ensure that mini zoos which are being established conform to all health standards.

Time does not permit me to say more but what I have said in a nutshell is but a miniscule of what we intend to implement to make Guyana a healthier place in which to live. [Applause.]

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Abraham: Mr. Speaker, in analysing the President's speech, I, like the President, observe the increased size of this honourable Assembly. I hasten to say that truthfully it has become bloated and we on this side of the Assembly groan to think about what the consequences will be on the already heavily-burdened taxpayers of the country.

The President reiterates his commitment to, and his belief in, the co-operative. One of the lessons that co-operatives teach is that of thrift and one would have thought that this idea of thrift would have been reflected in the size of this Assembly. Anyway, to make a cursory analysis of the President's Address to the nation: on page 7 we read – and I quote from the first paragraph where the President is at pains to quote Article 38 of the New Constitution:

“It is the duty of the State ... to achieve the highest possible levels of production and productivity ...”

I want to believe that this article is a rather subtle way of saying that in the year ahead the State will tolerate no strikes, that the State will use all the powers at its command to break strikes. I trust that I will be proven wrong.

One cannot but observe that to achieve the highest possible level of production and productivity in this country a pre-requisite would be that the people of this country must first and foremost be happy and contented. If that condition is not there no amount of adumbration and exhortation to greater production and productivity will bring results.

In the fourth paragraph on page 10 of the President's Speech we read that slums will become a thing of the past. We sincerely hope so. In the last paragraph on the same page the President speaks about our physical environment being such as will make us proud. Certainly we share that sentiment with the President.

In the first paragraph on page 11 he speaks about those stagnant canals and trenches in the capital and elsewhere becoming "clean running streams" by 1982. We note with some relief that the President has become as ardent an environmentalist as I am. Excellent. I give him full marks for that. I think he deserves the whole-hearted support of all of us in this endeavour especially considering what a mess some of our drains and trenches in the capital city are.

The President, in the second paragraph on page 11, says that in 1981 the Government will work towards providing adequate land, water and air transport. That is fine. Sir, will you permit me a brief comment on air transport. Two days after the Elections on December 15 I was witness to what was nearly an accident in Lethem. The airplane touched down from Aishalton and the next thing we saw was a cloud of smoke under the plane. What happened? One of the tyres of the wheels had punctured. Also, a week before the commencement of the new school term, teachers began coming in, landing at Lethem and again one of the tyres on the airplane got punctured.

I remember that some time ago, two years to be exact, as an airplane was lifting off Sand Creek airstrip one of the front wheels fell off and it was only on the second trip that the captain was told that one of the wheels of the airplane was off.

About one week after the incident when the tyre of the wheel was punctured, as the airplane was circling over Brazil the engine on the right side suddenly cut out and the people began to experience a very eery trip. The airplane began to veer from left to right and to shake but, thankfully, the aircraft landed safely.

I think that our aircraft are really in the care of very good pilots but shortly after that, as we all know, there was that tragedy of the Sky van. I am not saying that the Civil Aviation Chief was careless. We have all heard that the accident was due to bad weather and the weather is still bad in the Rupununi at this time. But what I would really like the President to do is to make sure that the engineers in the Guyana Airways and the Civil Aviation Department do make a thorough check of all of our aircraft in the future. They must look to the servicing and maintenance thoroughly of all our aircraft.

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In the third paragraph on page 11 we note that our old schools in the country will be repaired and rehabilitated and expanded. That is all right. We support that wholeheartedly. But I ask that some more attention be paid to our interior schools, especially our schools in the Rupununi. At one point the President does admit, if not directly, indirectly, that all is not well with Guyana, with the economy of our country. I quote from page 7, the last paragraph, which reads:

"In 1980 our economic growth amounted to a mere two percent in real terms."

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And one notes that he immediately seeks to find scapegoats. But we all know who are ultimately responsible for this sad state of affairs. It is heartening to know, however, and I again quote the President; page 9. It states:

“Second, the efficiency of our national generating agency at managerial and non-managerial levels will have to be raised to the maximum and optimum. The consumer must not be asked to pay for inefficiency ...”

We are glad that the President recognises this and that he would spare no pains in effecting efficiency at all levels of administration. It is clear to all that if the President’s hopes and aspirations are to be realised the maximum co-operation of all the people of this country has to be mobilised. This nationwide effort has to be harnessed from the Corentyne to the Waini and down to the savannah land. One asks, will the Local Democratic Organs be capable of such a task? One does appreciate what a transformation would come over the face of this land if all and sundry heeded the call and rose to the challenge of greater production and productivity.

Is the PNC capable of mobilising the efforts of all in this country? There will certainly have to be a drastic change in policies and attitudes of the PNC in order to bring this about. The President says that the power of the Local Democratic Organs springs from the people. What the PNC has to come to terms with is the fact that the people of this country are comprised of disparate shades...

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of political persuasions, opinions and loyalties. People of this country, it must be recognised, are supporters of the United Force, the PPP, the WPA, PDM, the PNC, and other splinter political groups. These various political groupings will have to be led by a PNC controlled Local Democratic Organ. Again I ask, will they be able to mobilise these differing bands into a united front for national total effort?

I think that this brings up the question of love. Have the political groupings in this country a great love for the PNC? If they have, it is obvious that the Guyana economic situation and problems are solved; it would mean 100 per cent production and productivity. The stark fact of the matter is that these sundry political groupings have little or no love at all for the PNC, judging from the response at the recent election campaign. The popular opinion is that the United Force got more votes than the PNC. The masses have had sixteen years of the PNC and its socialism and they have found socialism very bitter, especially with its concomitant of long lines and chronic shortages. How then will the PNC be able to mobilise the people of this country in its plans to improve the overall picture of the economy? The only solution to the ill of this country, I would say, is to restore democracy at all levels and at the grassroots. I would begin by holding free and fair elections tomorrow. I would open the doors wide for the international observers. I would not evict the Opposition polling agents or prevent them from following the ballot boxes. I would see that good is done and not seem to be done. Since we are realists, we recognise that the PNC will not hold free and fair elections. We recognise that it will continue in power for another five years. What do we do then as loyal and patriotic Guyanese anxious for your country to come out of this mess? We will actively support whatever we consider is being done for the good and for the benefit of our country.

I agree with the President that the destiny of this country lies in our hands. But my humble appeal now is that we, particularly so the P.N.C., should all cleanse our hands, put our shoulders to the wheel and our noses to the grindstone and work for the good of our beloved country.

The Minister, Consumer Protection, in the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Protection (Cde. Maitland-Singh): Cde. Speaker, permit me please to say how honoured I feel to be given the opportunity to stand here among some of Guyana's greatest decision-makers. A humble citizen though I am, a woman of no wealthy family, I stand here a living representative of that group of people who support the only true and genuine political party - the People's National Congress. Many great nations in history have risen from small beginners but it is high goals which lead to great achievements. We, the people of Guyana through our choice once again of the People's National Congress Party at the General Elections on 15th December, 1980, have set ourselves the highest goal of all, the construction of a socialist society in which the development of all the people, and I say all the people, is the primary and ultimate objective. Cde. Speaker, this objective can only be achieved by Guyanese who are committed to development, with people who are obligated to the masses, with people who are prepared to put the collective good before individual gain.

5.25 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, His Excellency the Cde. President of Guyana on Monday, 9th February, 1981 at the Ceremonial Opening of the Fourth Parliament said:

“Our country's material wealth has to be continuously increased, and our economy expanded to provide the amenities and benefits, which we declared as rights in the People's New Constitution. This, Comrade Speaker, is a task for all Guyana, all Guyanese and Guyanese primarily.”

The only means of developing the resources of Guyana is by Guyanese, and therefore maximum national development is necessary. To develop we must produce, and our production must lead to surpluses – surplus goods and services for all the people. These have already shown themselves to a great

degree in the free education system, the free medical care, the care and concern for our older citizens. A nation's human and natural resources are its greatest and most important assets. In this context Guyana has the good fortune to find itself well endowed.

More than half of Guyana which was virgin hinterland with untold resources is now being tapped and used to improve the economy and the foreign exchange. The National Service has been the driving force behind the opening up, and the development of the rich lands available in the hinterland. The rapidly growing population on the narrow coastal belt needs to divert its attention and energies to becoming involved in hinterland development.

With our forestry and mineral resources we can produce commodities for our own consumption and for export abroad, not forgetting the need for more housing, such building material of which we have in abundance and which we have been using at the fullest. One only have to travel along the well surfaced roads and highways made by the People's National Congress Government, to realise the use made of our building material, and thus conclude without a doubt that the housing drive has been a great success.

At the heart of all of our plans to transform Guyana into a modern viable State is of course the Upper Mazaruni Hydro Electric and Smelter Project and /or alternative sources of energy. Much of our foreign exchange is being used up with this important commodity. All of our industries depend heavily on a regular and cheap supply of energy. The development of heavy industries in particular, depends upon the availability of a cheap and abundant supply of energy. With the completion of the Upper Mazaruni Project, industries would speed up and create employment opportunities for our growing population and a build-up of our exports.

The secret of our survival and total self-reliance is to be found in our human capacity – our capacity to produce much more – to produce with pride a high quality and a reputable level of production; to eliminate waste and to consume, as far as possible, these goods which we produce ourselves.

In fact, no long do we have imported foods and fruits on our tables, and regardless of what the detractors may scream, we are a well-fed people, better fed than most developing countries in the world. Our people are fully aware that the foods we produce, when properly prepared, give us all the basic requirements for a healthy body. Some Guyanese who have had the opportunity of using Guyana's hard earned foreign exchange to travel abroad, have done what they ought not to have done, soiled the name of our beloved country, spreading rumours and giving wrong impressions – as we heard earlier in this very Assembly, "if people abroad were to be told of what is really happening, they would not imagine it possible." We can surely see where the damage is being done and where the damage is done to the good name of this country. But, as I was saying Cde. Speaker those who have been abroad know only too well of our capacity to feed our people, and feed them well too.

The Manufacturing Industry under the Ministry of Trade has a pivotal role in the economy of our country. High standards must be the watchwords in order for us to compete with foreign markets. Already we have been producing at a level comparable to that of other part of the world. Already we have consumed and exported tinned and preserved foods, for instance, pineapple juice and pineapple chunks, candied carambola, vinegar and yeast from molasses, and several wines from our tasty tropical fruits. Are we not heading in the field of self-reliance?

In the past our over-dependence on non-essential goods which are foreign manufactured sent much needed foreign exchange flowing out of Guyana. Today we have been producing much of our basic requirements and with the Manufacturing Ministry established, the situation promises to be much improved, thus saving some of this much needed foreign exchange.

The training of industrial skills with the attendant discipline has not been overlooked. Skills have been utilised and given scope for improvement, thus paving the way for industrial development, and also providing employment for our people.

More technical services have to be increased and expanded in order to cope with developments currently taking place in every sphere of the Guyanese life. One of our chief aims therefore, must be to remove unemployment, banish whatever poverty and want there still exist and create an environment and atmosphere where human beings can achieve happiness. Only then can we say we have achieved true socialism, which is characterised by the following:

- (i) Social ownership of the means of production which we have already got to a fairly good extent.
- (ii) Absence of exploitation of man by man and by that I mean man by woman and woman by woman and woman by man.
- (iii) Planned proportionate development of all branches of the national economy.

The Feed, Cloth and Housing Programme has accomplished a great deal which can be seen through the length and breadth of our country. This programme has motivated and will continue to motivate citizens, to utilise their energies profitably and productively, equipping them both with the knowledge and experience for future development, and it will continue to transform them into self-reliant and productive nationals. What we produce therefore is of vital importance. It is to Guyana's advantage to produce items that are in demand locally as well as in foreign markets and, at the same time, import less than is presently being done, in fact to the bare necessities, and rather, increase our exports to the maximum.

Guyanese must at this point in time, when the world over is beginning to cry about food shortages, invest in and encourage large and small-scale production of local foods, utilise to the fullest our local produce whether it be agricultural or manufactured.

Cde. Speaker, an important stage of development which can cause us to move with quicker pace in order to achieve our objective of becoming a self-reliant nation is co-operativism and self-help. The plans, the foundation and the infrastructure will be of little avail unless we make up our minds to work together to build in unity, and achieve together, as one people of one nation with one destiny. Thousands of dollars and man-hours have been saved through self-help activities in various parts of the country. Schools, health clinics, roads and bridges have already been built much to the convenience of citizens in the particular areas but much more needs to be done, and this Government will save no pains in seeing that more effort is put into self-help activities. The National Council of Local Democratic Organs surely must see this as a meaningful role in which they have to play.

Our people deserve proper services, a high standard of living, but surely they must realise that today, unlike the days of colonialism, unlike what capitalism stands for, surpluses accrued are ploughed back for the benefit of all Guyanese. It is with this in mind that citizens must use their minds and their energies to work together for better living conditions and work for an improved standard of life in their various communities.

Cde. Speaker, let me hasten to assure this honourable Assembly that self-reliant Guyana will become in the not too distant future, for we have seen the determination, the enthusiasm and the unparalleled zeal of our dedicated Guyanese people, and coupled with our thrust into agricultural, mining, forestry, fishing and manufacturing industries and the Upper Mazaruni hydro and smelter projects, we have no doubt that the achievements of our Government's objectives are nigh at hand. Let all of us who call ourselves loyal Guyanese use our human energies, talents and our skills, to exploit and utilise our natural resources for the upliftment of this great nation of ours.

It therefore befits every Guyanese to see life as a challenge, a challenge to become part of the revolution in attitudes that will make us a truly self-sufficient nation, a challenge that Guyana must achieve and maintain a position of strength whereby the economy will never again be at the mercy of outside economic forces over which we have no control, a challenge that if we survive the economic problems we now face, we will be a much more vibrant and united people with a stable and powerful economy.

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We must therefore charter our course in a manner fashioned for construction and not destruction, for peace and progress, and not for confusion, for hard work and action and not malaising, be it in office, field or factory, be it as administrators, decision-makers or Members of the National Assembly, for in the final analysis it is our people who stand to lose or benefit. All Guyanese have a duty to this dear land of ours – a duty to make this nation a truly self-reliant one, not only for our happiness, not only for us to say we had moulded...

our destiny, but for our children and our children's children to say they have truly moulded our destiny.

[Applause.]

The Speaker: Cde. Bend-Kirton.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Women's Affairs and Housing (Cde. Bend-Kirton):

Cde. Speaker, it is with pleasure and pride that I stand here this afternoon as a woman, as a worker and a trade unionist having been elected through this honourable party, the People's National Congress, to serve in the interest of our people.

As I stand here this afternoon I wish to quote, first of all, our President when he addressed this august body on the 9th February, 1981. I want to quote from his speech, page 13, paragraph 2, in which he said and I quote:

“It is in this context that the Trades Union Congress holds membership on the Guystac Board and the State Planning Commission. It is hoped, however, that participation will be more widespread at other levels and that the Trade Unions in this new era will be very active partners in national progress and development.”

It is apposite to note the important role being played by the trade union movement in Guyana, for the trade union movement cannot stand idly by. It will have to be involved as equal partners in the planning and administration of the State and therefore we see its role as changing according to our policies. It must be involved in the national progress and development of our country. It cannot remain as it was previously, involved in the old system of confrontation but, indeed, it will have to be involved in progress by having consultation.

In this respect we would hope that through our new Constitution there will be among us trade unionists with an urge, with a feeling and with a commitment to working-class people, who will see their role as a progressive one, as one being involved in management, materialise. And, Cde. Speaker, management does not permit them to be idly standing by and only uniting as some would expect and some do in our present era to propose strikes and unnecessary strikes. When there can be consultation in this new development process that must take place. [Applause.]

The role had changed. We are equal partners. I read somewhere that the role of the trade union movement will be one of administration, and administration at the highest level. I also note that somewhere I read that the role of the trade union movement will have to be, in a socialist-oriented society, one of guiding the principles of progress among the working class of Guyana because it is fruitless, I am told, for us to hope to achieve socialism without the support of the trade union movement and their people's involvement. I would like to state to this august body that when we hear our detractors talking about the policies governing the Government and labour, we should note what we see as we look back on the statistics governing labour over 1979 to 1980. What have we seen? Because of the concerted effort of this Government through the Ministry of Labour we have seen a great reduction in the number of useless strikes within our society, thus lending to progress and development.

I can note that we have started in the Ministry of Labour an Enforcement Bill as a result of which we have been looking at working hours and conditions of employment even for household workers, whom we normally call “domestics” and coming out of that committee we will see much benefit accruing to our less fortunate women within our society who may not have been able to gain that high level of qualification that would assist them to positions of prominence in our community.

Another area in which the Labour Department has been involved is administration, administration at the level where the officers are engaged in going out to industries and institutions, ensuring that the welfare of workers is protected in those industries. I want to mention a few categories, like the

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agricultural field into which officers have been going, the public corporations, and ensuring that our workers, both men and women, are assured their equal rights.

Another area in which the Ministry of Labour has been involved and will continue to be involved in the interest of our working class is workers' education because you cannot mould a nation, you cannot have production and productivity unless the workers are educated. I would hope that the trade union movement would understand that they have to get out there and assist in this process of education so that our workers can understand why their performance is necessary and where they can put it to effective use.

The grievance procedure within the Ministry of Labour has been upgraded and today we see much benefit accruing to our working-class people. As a consequence we have seen over 46 per cent decrease in the number of disputes in industry and we must state that the conciliatory board is in active pursuance of all consolation matters that come before the Ministry of Labour.

Again I want to make mention of minimum wage and I want to state that an advisory committee on wages has been set up by the Ministry of Labour under the Labour Act, Chapter 98:01. This Committee is hoping in the not too distant future that we will be able to come up with some concrete benefits for workers in whatever field of endeavour they may have to perform, whether it be the cinema, dry goods store, hardware, grocery and drug store employees.

5.45 p.m.

I would like to deal with the housing project as I see it. Someone mentioned that he wondered if the PNC has a programme. But I want to assure this august body that the People's National Congress has always had a programme. [Applause.] As a result of our planned programmes and strategies, using our strategies instead of having them run around the world complaining and asking for aid or sympathy our planners and strategists got together and as a result of getting together we see on this side of this Assembly, this august body, a resounding victory for the People's National Congress. [Applause.] In respect of the housing project I want to assure this Assembly that indeed we do have a plan and indeed we have started to put that plan into action.

On Monday, 9th February, 1981 the Vice-President for Public Welfare invited a governmental agency, the private sector and the credit unions, to participate at a meeting which was held in his office. In relation to those plans, we asked them the level of financial contribution which each organisation will be making towards the housing sector development for the years not only of 1981 but to 1983. We also asked the terms and conditions which prospective beneficiaries will have to fulfill before finance is made available. We also asked the problems and solutions as seen by the respective organisations. May I state that this Government does not want to run away from any involvement of any sector of our community because we are all part and parcel of this development that has to take place. Therefore, institutions like the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, the Mortgage Finance Bank, the Dependants' Pension Fund, the Public Service Credit Union, Clerical and Commercial Workers' Union were invited to this meeting to participate. I am saying here that as a result of our plans these institutions were invited.

We recognise that good housing has an essential place in development. Good housing is essential for human dignity and self-fulfillment. It provides the physical framework in which man's human, social, economic and cultural resources are released, enriched and integrated. Good housing creates a social climate necessary for orderly development of our society. This is necessary for economic goals and aspirations.

In Guyana, under the Government of the People's National Congress, the construction of houses is in itself an important and essential economic activity providing the substantial and direct employment opportunities which are easier to create and for which it is easier to provide training than most other areas of employment in our economy. This Government also realises that coming out of our President's speech mention was made about the ill-housed and homeless. Therefore, our meetings at the Ministry of Housing and Planning will be to formulate and execute national housing policies in such a manner as to be consistent with the achievement of our socialist goal; to co-ordinate the housing sector development within the context of national development and planning; to maximise the use of local material in both house construction and infrastructure; to make a contribution to development planning by providing a basis of rational decision-making through inputs in a wider plan-making process; to co-ordinate special development by meeting and harmonising strategies with the urban and rural areas through the integration of sectoral plans and policies so as to ensure that optimum use of resources for the benefit not of others but of the Guyanese people themselves; to promote the development and to mediate among land use activities by acting as a positive and creative source of ideas and providing sites in development plans, or planning schemes for the promotion of economical values as well as physical and social help in the community.

All this deals with the progress and efficiency of which our President spoke. Therefore, it is necessary for us to know that those who are involved, whether it be the trade union, the administrator or

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else, will have to understand that this Government is serious about housing the nation and we will do it as our President stated. “Those who cannot perform will have to bow out and bow out gracefully.” Over the past years we have been able to build a total of 3,088 houses for workers of this country. We are endeavouring that over this year we will continue to build houses to house our nation in areas like Linden, Kwakwani, Bartica, Wismar/Rockstone, Corriverton, New Amsterdam, Cane Grove, Melanie Damishana and in Georgetown itself. It was only on Sunday, 8th February, 1981 that 58 aided self-help houses were handed over in the Berbice area. *[Applause.]*

I want to put in a brief work about squatting. I want to state that this Government is conscious of the squatting and its results and we are prepared to upgrade those slum areas such as Yarrow Dam and Tiger Bay. We are prepared to give land and help to those areas and those people who really and truly need those houses and those lands. We are prepared to upgrade those areas by giving land to those people and cutting those lands into house lots. The others who cannot fit within those demarcated areas we will certainly help them to find housing in other places.

I want at this point to close. But in closing I want to say that this Government is not a Government of partisanship. This Government looks into the welfare of all the people of Guyana because we have been given a mandate to work in the people’s interest. Be it those who supported the People’s National Congress and those who did not, we are not looking at that as an area of constraint to development, for we are certainly looking into the interest of all the people of Guyana whether they be on the West Bank, the West Coast, East Coast or wherever they may be, and we will continue to work on policies that will promote the development of people within our society, in labour, and particularly in the housing areas. I want to thank this august body for permitting me to say those few words. Thank you, Cde. Speaker.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY5.55 p.m.

The Speaker: Cde. Williams.

The Minister, Fisheries, in the Ministry of Agriculture (Cde. Williams): Cde. Speaker, hon. Members of the National Assembly, let me associate myself with the good, and that is, those of us who have been fortunate to have been associated with the vanguard political movement in this country, the People's National Congress.

The establishment of the Ministry of Fisheries within the Ministry of Agriculture is yet another earnest effort by my Government to harvest economically for the benefit of the people, the vast resources in our country. We are committed to the establishment of a firm broad-based fishing industry capable of substantial foreign exchange earnings and also providing the nation with adequate supplies of reasonably priced protein.

It is an accepted fact in the history of our country, that Guyana possesses one of the largest fishing grounds in the world. However, it took the People's National Congress Party and Government to discover and pursue the development of fishing in this country. Our programme for such development is a carefully orchestrated one, consistent with the ability and capacity of a Government such as ours to perform in the interest of people. We have done so for sixteen years and this is manifested in the massive support and return to power of the People's National Congress at the last elections.

The difference between the supporters of the People's National Congress and the remaining elements of opposition in our country is the inability of those elements to perceive the brilliance, foresight and initiative of our President, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. Such inability at perception will always cause them to criticise the good work of the People's National Congress Government.

Cde. Speaker, because of its proven capacity to lead the nation, the Government has been able to successfully conclude negotiations with a number of local and international agencies for the expansion of the fishing industry. On the local scene, Cde. Speaker, the Guyana Industrial and Agricultural Development Bank, for example, has approved between 1973 and 1980 over 436 loans to the tune of \$7.9 million for the fishing industry. That industry is geared to make a substantial contribution towards the fishing industry in the years ahead. Also the Fisheries Co-operative societies in the country have been strengthened through the initiative of the People's National Congress Government which by now the entire world has come to accept as the only political organisation in the country to correctly charter the course of development and give meaning to the concept of the co-operative.

Expansion of the inland fish culture at various locations, some directly under the Ministry of Fisheries and others under Guysuco – and Cde. Speaker, I can draw attention to the booklet being distributed in this Assembly page 20 to the fact that Guysuco in 1979 produced 45,000 pounds of fish, in 1980, 72,000 and in 1981, 90,000 pounds consistent with the increase in the support that the people gave to the People's National Congress at the last elections.

Cde. Speaker, on the international scene, if we have been carefully reading the press we would know that a number of agencies having representatives sent to our country, holding discussions with representatives from our Government, have successfully concluded negotiations for implementation of a number of projects for the development of the fishing industry in Guyana. Perhaps it is important to mention that shortly, we will commence work on the third phase of the Demerara fish port project. That includes substantial contribution to the development of the fishing industry in this country and according to the arrangements, our Party and Government are prepared with the people of this country to make that development project a reality. We hope to achieve as a result of that agreement, additional equipment in

the fishing industry, the construction of a wharf, the building of workshops for slipway operations, cold storage facilities, and equipment for warehousing among other parts of the agreement.

Cde. Speaker, we have been able through the same kind of agreement to have from the Inter-American Development Bank assistance that would provide for us in Guyana and the fishing industry in our country, a number of development projects such as the acquisition of twenty trawlers, acquisition of refrigerated vehicles, strengthening of institutional arrangements involving advisers and specialists in the fleet's management. Between 1981 and 1983 we will witness in this country, with the co-operation of the people, under the guidance and leadership of the People's National Congress, a number of development projects. We expect that by 1983 we will have the completion of training programmes of technical specialists.

It is because of the stability in this part of the world, it is because of the faith in the People's National Congress Party in Government, the confidence held in the PNC Government that a special seminar will be hosted here in Guyana by the Food and Agricultural Organisation. I am not saying this because the People's National Congress Party wants to gain mileage but these are the words of Cde. Da Costa of the FAO who came down here. He is convinced that the Seminar to be held in Guyana in June 1981 will be highly successful and beneficial as far as the Food and Agriculture Organisation is concerned.

Mention was made about the slowness with which congratulations were coming into this country but it is not strange that mention was not made of the rate at which the Cuban Mixed Commission arrived in this country and the fact that they have acknowledged that there is need for discussions to be held, there is need for developmental projects to be pursued, is indicative of the fact that that country is understanding in its perception of the road on which Guyana is proceeding. Cde. Speaker, they have not left. They are here and they are going to continue their negotiations because they too believe that the People's National Congress Party in Government is the only political organisation in this country that can correctly charter the course of development.

Cde. Speaker, when the history of this country is read by future generations it will be observed that this Government, the People's National Congress Government sold the best form of protein in fish at 45 cents per pound from 1977, in 1978, 1979, 1980 and will continue in 1981 despite inflation at the international level.

6.05 p.m.

The People's National Congress Government is consistent with its programme of activities in the development of this country and so the PNC Government will continue to give support to the people of this country, to make a forum available for the people of this country, to make contributions for the development of our country. And it is in the light of this that we should see the representation in this Assembly. Perhaps if one were to examine the representation in this Assembly today and the representation in it during the last Parliament one would note that the PNC has for a long time had stalwarts waiting to make their contribution here. [Applause.] And not only from Georgetown. If you examine carefully you will note that they have come from every corner of this country. Contrary to the views outlined earlier, the PNC does not have to make promises and compromises to have representatives in this Assembly. You go out to the people in Guyana and you will witness that it...

is the People's National Congress party that has been associated with development in this country.

[Applause.]

The Ministry of Fisheries is a newly-established Ministry. It is set up so that not only fisheries development in the form of off-shore fishing will take place but certainly fisheries development inland. We have heard time and time again in this Assembly about the MMA Scheme. This party in Government, because of its initiative, its ability to plan, is prepared to utilise the canals in the MMA project so that we can develop the fishing industry in our country and we are programming to pursue that course of development.

In addition, we hope to re-organise the distribution system of fish in our country and in doing so we will ensure the majority of people in Guyana continue to benefit from the distribution of cheap fresh fish. We acknowledge that there has been exploitation by some unscrupulous vendors and may I mention that it is the intention of the Ministry of Fisheries to wipe out from this Guyana all unscrupulous dealers in the Fishing industry. We believe that fish must reach the people at the correct price and in the best possible form.

We do not only propose to concentrate on the fish industry and related to fish. There are several other type of development in the fishing industry. We have under serious consideration the construction of a fish meal plant and here again we propose, with assistance from an international agency. The EEC, to set up a fish meal plant here in Guyana and from all projections under the People's National Congress Government that fish meal plant will become a reality by December 1981. By so doing we will be able to make use of fish waste in the form of fish gut, so to speak, in so doing we will be hoping to make a contribution towards less importation of stockfeed and the development of our own alternative for the pig industry and other types of industry utilising stockfeed.

Therefore, I will invite this honourable Assembly to accept the establishment and the introduction of the Ministry of Fisheries as an earnest attempt, as I mentioned before, towards the development of the fishing industry in this country. I would ask the support and co-operation necessary be given by all Guyanese so that we can maintain the price of fish at a low level. It is the cheapest price in the world and Guyana is know to have many firsts. We ask of the nation to support the fishing industry and so support the People's National Congress in its effort toward development of our economy. [Applause.]

The Speaker: Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, you had indicated to me that one of your members wanted to speak. You see, when you show discourtesy, then you are not recognised. I am speaking to you. Please stand up.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: I understand that she was not permitted at that stage but she has not indicated that –

The Speaker: You had asked. If she is not allowed don't be blaming me. I just thought of letting you know. Discourtesy breeds discourtesy.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: She wanted to speak at an earlier stage.

The Speaker: She can't want to speak at an earlier stage. She cannot be jumping up whenever she pleases. She does not dictate to the Chair. She made a request through you and I said I would give it consideration. Now the time is there – 20 minutes.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud: There was no indication that she would be permitted this afternoon.

The Speaker: Whenever she is permitted she is permitted. Cde. Johnson.

The Minister of Co-operatives (Cde. Johnson): Cde. Speaker, may I first of all say what an honour and privilege it is for me to make my maiden presentation in this Assembly. I pledge myself to uphold all the noble traditions by which this Assembly is characterised.

His Excellency the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, in his address to this Assembly at the ceremonial opening of Parliament on Monday, February 9, 1981, underlined –

“that the Co-operative can, will and must be the mechanism for ensuring maximum people involvement in economic decision-making, and moving the society towards socialism...”

This was an underscoring of what he himself has in this National Assembly said on previous occasions. The commitment of the People’s National Congress to the building of a socialist society using the vehicle of the co-operative has been identified since the early sixties when the leader of this country in an opportunity provided through a political broadcast on March 27, 1961, indicated the importance that his party intended to place on co-operativism for the political, social and economic liberation of Guyanese.

The People’s National Congress in the restructuring of its party in 1974 again clearly adumbrated, through several objects of the Constitution, its intention to secure and maintain, through the practice of co-operative socialism, the interest, well-being and prosperity of all the people of Guyana and that through a policy of national self-reliance all Guyanese will have an opportunity to work for and share in the economic well-being of the country.

[Cde. Johnson continues]

If economic independence was to be achieved in its truest sense, our country had to achieve real political independence. Thus, in 1966, we achieved formal independence, and, in the words of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, in 1970, the conditions for economic independence in which the Co-operative will have a leading role were created. It is because the Government is serious about the direction and role that the co-operative should and must play that a separate Ministry has been created to initiate and undertake such activities as are necessary to put co-operatives in a position of paramountcy that was intended. No longer is the co-operative part of a number of other responsibilities in a larger Ministry. It has been given its rightful place as a Ministry to concentrate exclusively on pushing the sector, and giving it the boost it needs at this stage of our development. In the words of the President in his address, he said that this Ministry will be responsible for co-ordinating the relevant activities of all other agencies involved in the development of co-operativism and assisting, expanding and strengthening the co-operative sector in every community and region, throughout the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

One could trace with consistency the role identified for the co-operative in the Constitution of the People's National Congress and that of the People's New Constitution. In the latter document, Chapter II, Principles and Bases of the Political, Economic and Social System, Article II identifies the important role the co-operative will play in the management and decision-making process of the State and particularly in the political, economic, social and cultural sectors of national life. Article 16, Chapter II states:

“Co-operativism in practice shall be the dynamic principle of socialist transformation and shall pervade and inform all interrelationships in the society. Co-operativism is rooted in the historical experience of the people, is based on self-reliance, is capable of releasing the productive energies of the people, and is an unifying principle in the total development of the nation.”

In varying articles of the Constitution, those which guarantee the right and duty to work, to rest and recreation, the raising of production and productivity and the development of the economy, there is a clearly-defined role that the co-operative must play. Thus, this Ministry will promote, secure and strengthened the co-operative sector which is destined to be the dominant one in our economy. The co-operative, however, must not be looked at rigidly and in a compartmentalised sense to mean only the formal and legally-constituted economic activities. The co-operative has a much more expansive role in the whole process of managing the entire country, wherever people are, at centres of production in their respective communities, in fact, wherever people work to promote economic and social development. That is why the Ministry of Co-operatives will work closely with the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, with the Ministries of Regional and National Development, and will have a fundamental link with the Local Democratic Organs, at all sectors in the promotion of community participation through co-operativism especially at the sector of the people's co-operative. This link with the Ministry of Higher Education in this direction is also obvious for as we all know the Ministry of Higher Education is charged with responsibility for co-operative education.

The co-operative, like any institution working towards a sound footing has achieved success and has encountered bad experiences. But this must be seen in the context of the lack of managerial and technical skills, the irrelevant education imposed on us in the past and many other factors which have plagued so many of our productive institutions. As a further demonstration of its faith in the co-operatives, the Government over the past few years has established institutions such as the Guyana National Co-operative Bank, the Guyana Co-operative Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank, and the Guyana Mortgage Finance Bank, to assist in the financing of co-operatives at the various levels of economic and social activities.

With the creation of this new Ministry, with the intelligent exploitation of our resources, with the hard work of Guyanese – and it was Cde. President himself who said that concomitant with development is hard work – the stage is set for the small man to become a real man through the mechanism of the co-operative. *[Applause.]*

This debate on the presentation by His Excellency the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana would have been incomplete if mention was not made of the significant strides made by the women of Guyana under the People's National Congress Government. *[Applause.]*

Today all Guyanese feel a sense of pride that women coming from different social, cultural, ethnic and professional backgrounds have been elevated to the offices of Parliamentarians, Chief Whip, Deputy Chief Whip, Parliamentary Secretaries and Ministers of Government. In the words of our Cde. Prime Minister, they adorn this Assembly. This is an achievement for a small developing country and it is of significance that a senior diplomat of a country which has traversed the socialist path for centuries remarked to me that the Cabinet of Guyana consisted of more women than the Cabinet of his country. *[Applause.]* This, Cde. Speaker, is a further demonstration of the socialist democracy we speak about in the People's New Constitution. *[Applause.]*

It was the President of this country, His Excellency Cde. L.F.S. Burnham who himself presented on January 16, 1976 in this National Assembly the State Paper on the equality of women. This was not as a result of the International Women's Year in 1975. The Guyana woman has been a victim of discrimination inherent in the capitalist system in which men and women alike suffer. The woman suffered a double burden because of her sex. She was militated against because of psychological, social and cultural barriers which stifled her abilities, potential and energies which could have been released for the national good. The commitment of the People's National Congress to the construction of socialism and the creation of an egalitarian society in which unjust privileges and inequalities are eradicated, saw the emergence of a deliberate, planned and gradual policy geared to secure the full emancipation of Guyanese women and released the energies of over 50 per cent of our population. As the country's financial resources increased, the Government of the People's National Congress, in expanding opportunities for all its citizens, made sure that the female component was built into all its programmes. Thus Cde. Speaker, we see since the early 1970s significant strides to advance our women in all spheres of national life.

[Cde. Johnson continues]

6.25 p.m.

The achievements too numerous to mention under the present and no other Government stand out. Women's participation in the labour force has increased significantly within the last decade. In 1970 women's participation in the labour force was 19.6 per cent. In 1979 it was 28.7 per cent and in 1980 it was expected to rise to 30 per cent. Their participation in decision making at all levels is guarantee by their representation on all Government Boards, Commissions and Committees.

Later this year, Cde. Speaker, the Government will establish the Women's Bureau under the direction of the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Public Welfare. This Bureau will co-ordinate women's work nationally and will be a further impetus for the advancement of women. These and other actions of our Government are in consonance with the words of the leader of this nation who said at the International Women's Year Conference held in Guyana in 1975:

“If as I am I think one is a socialist particularly in the context of an under developed part of the world like the Caribbean, one would immediately recognise that to fail to grant equality of opportunity to women is to fail, first of all, to establish your belief in the human being in people as objects of development for whom we are seeking to develop our country.”

Cde. Speaker, it is because of the confidence in Guyana's Development Programme for women that agencies such as united agencies like UNICEF and the Economic Commission for Latin America have given grants to women's organisations to promote projects for women in the fields of appropriate technology and to enhance their participation in direct production. A fundamental measurement of women's equality and progress is the kind of legal rights which the Government has made in her favour. We in Guyana could boast of achievements to enhance women's legal status to the kind of legal rights we have given her by virtue of her right to equal pay for equal work; her eligibility to contribute to pension schemes and benefit from them; her eligibility to seek employment in any field.

The Committee which has been established by this Government under the leadership of Cde. Desiree Bernard will ensure that women's rights in certain aspects of the new Constitution are adhered to. No longer will our women having been divorced have to go a begging to ensure that division of property is an inherent right. No longer will children who due to not fault of their own, having been born out of wedlock be deprived of the right of obtaining division of property from their parents. The new Constitution guarantees the right of a woman's husband to acquire citizenship through her. Women in Guyana now have access to training at all education institutions. This is a pre-condition for her to be able to take advantage of economic opportunities.

Article 29 of the People's New Constitution enshrines the legal, political, economic and social status of women and gives recognition to her role as producer in society while, at the same time, ensuring her protection due to her role as a child bearer. It makes discrimination on the basis of sex illegal. This enshrinement, Cde. Speaker, is a culmination of the consciousness-raising and emancipation process which began under the People's National Congress since its birth in the late forties.

Our women folk will continue to show their worth in Guyana, in Mexico, in Copenhagen nationally, regionally and internationally. For women of Guyana are confident that under the People's National Congress and with agencies like the Council on the Affairs and Status of Women in Guyana and the Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement to show them the life and to direct them, that progress for them as it is for all Guyanese is certain in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. Thank you.

/Applause./

The Speaker: The Sitting of the National Assembly is suspended until 8.00 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 6.30 p.m.

8 p.m.

On resumption --

The Speaker: Comrades and hon. Members, I wish to make it abundantly clear that I will not be dictated to by anybody in this Parliament. Cde. Seeram Prashad.

The Minister, Crops, and Livestock, in the Ministry of Agriculture (Cde. Prashad):

Cde. Speaker, as the President so appropriately reminded this Assembly in his Address on Monday, 9th February, 1981, the national investment in agriculture over recent years has been considerable but this investment has already begun to pay dividends. As is generally recognised, agriculture will for a very long time continue to play a most important role in the economy of our country and the steps taken by this Government in pursuance of this role are governed by certain economic and what I would call efficient principles which involve feeding not only ourselves but also others in what has elsewhere been referred to as “the Hungry ‘80s.” It has been the declared policy of this Government that we as a nation must leave no stone unturned in our endeavours to adequately feed ourselves from what we produce here in Guyana in terms of quality, quantity, variety and price.

It is also the policy of Government that Guyana should make the contribution towards alleviating world hunger through the production of surplus food for use by other nations.

The economic principle to which I referred embraces measures aimed at expanding and diversifying agriculture and fishery production and processing in order to improve the nation’s foreign exchange balance through increased exports and reduced imports of non-essential food items by gearing domestic production to replace some of the imported commodities or produce acceptable alternatives where feasible; to generate increased economic surplus to provide the means of additional investment in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of our economy; to promote development generally and rural development in particular, by increasing employment, consumption, real incomes, and by improving the already high standard of education.

To improve and increase the variety of agricultural commodities produced, towards achieving the goals of the food and agriculture policy, the nation has set itself a number of tasks to be performed in the short and medium term, most of which are under implementation. These include increased production of legumes, fluid milk, vegetable oils, cassava, some vegetables, cotton and maize for food; improvement in national nutritional levels and variety in consumption; increased production of sugar and rice for export through acreage expansion and improved yields; production for export of beef, pork, poultry meat, table eggs, fish, shrimp, pineapple, plantains, yams, citrus and cashew, vegetables, livestock and fishery products – achievement of an average income per farm household of not less than \$600 per annum, creation of over 20,000 new jobs in agriculture, fisheries and related industries; continuation of the programme of education for farmers.

The measures for implementing the agricultural programme involve encouragement of farmers to organise themselves in production groups and agriculture co-operatives. This programme has been fairly successful especially in the case of the less formal production group although there have been some setbacks. Supplementary private effort through additional public sector involvement in the production of certain crops and livestock especially those requiring large capital investment and heavy machinery, in this respect a number of state institutions have either become involved in or have diversified agricultural production.

8.10 p.m.

The Livestock Development Company has been created to engage in milk production, marketing and processing, as well as in beef production.

[Cde. S. Prashad continues]

The Guyana Sugar Corporation has expanded its operations to include the production of legumes, oil palm, maize, cassava flour and fish. The Guyana Rice Board is now also cultivating maize and green legumes. The Guyana Defence Force, The Guyana National Service, the Guyana Police Force and the Guyana Mining Enterprise have also embarked on crop and livestock production at a significant level. Farmers have over the past years benefited from a package of direct incentives such as duty-free concessions on the purchase of farm inputs, soft collateral, free loans, guaranteed remunerative prices, and subsidies on inputs. The effect of these incentives on production has been satisfactory.

Improvement of water control for crop production in the coastal area – the country has embarked on major water control projects to protect, expand and increase the productivity of agricultural land on the sea coast. These geographically-dispersed projects include the sea and river defence project embracing about 150 miles of coastline. Some 400,000 acres of agricultural land will benefit from this project.

Tapacuma Irrigation Project. This project will provide drainage and irrigation for approximately 37,000 acres of land for production of rice, tree crops, vegetables and pasture. The Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Water Control Project, phase I will benefit an estimated 150,000 acres. The Black Bush Polder front lands – this project will provide drainage and irrigation for over 55,000 acres of agricultural land. Construction and improvement of Farm Access and Feeder Roads – these roads serve to facilitate transportation of agricultural inputs and produce, and induce settlement on land with good agricultural potential.

Distribution of State land at low rental for farming. This is in line with the Government's stated philosophy of land to the tiller. Between 1964 and 1979 over 450,000 acres of State Land were distributed to farmers. The programme involves not only the distribution of unoccupied State Land but also the transferring of good agricultural land not beneficially used, to people who are in need of land and who are prepared to put it to productive use.

Improvement of agricultural marketing services. Over the past five years a thorough examination of the marketing of agricultural produce was conducted. Following this scrutiny, sizable investment projects have been designed and implemented with the objective of improving the handling, packing, grading, storage, transportation and distribution of agricultural produce. The effect of those investments is expected to be the stimulation of production generally, the reduction of post-harvest losses, the reduction or at least the maintenance of the present level of consumer prices and a wider and more equitable distribution of food commodities. Other measures include a closer monitoring and control of public sector enterprises to ensure that the most rational approach to production is used and that production targets are met.

Over 300,000 acres of land are to be put under cultivation of rice each year. The target set for 1981 is 317,000 acres and this will be increased to 350,000 acres by 1983. The production is expected to reach 217,000 tons in 1981 and 265,000 tons by 1983. It should be noted here that rice exports, even at the present level, more than off set wheat imports which average 40,000 tons per annum and which are still being made to add variety to diet. Over the years the industry has advanced rapidly in terms of improved technology. Land preparation and harvesting are almost totally mechanised. The use of improved seed variety and husbandry practices such as the use of fertilizers and pesticides is widespread, while mill and marketing facilities are being modernised. These improvements have been brought about as a result of the Government's concern for the small farmers who comprise the bulk of the producers in the rice industry.

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8.10 – 8.20 p.m.

In addition to the provision of incentives and concessions such as duty-free prices, soft credit and premium prices, the Government has been asking massive investment on projects which will primarily benefit the rice industry. For example, the Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Water Control Project will cost \$117 million. The Black Bush Polder Front Land Project will cost \$125 million. The Tapakuma Irrigation Project is estimated to cost \$117 million,...

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(Cde. S. Prashad continues)

while the Onverwagt irrigation project and the MARDS repair workshop will cost \$4 million and \$9 million respectively. Rice farmers are already reaping the benefits through improved yields. The statistics show that between 1970 and 1980 the national average yield of paddy per acre has increased from twelve bags to over eighteen bags. In hundreds of cases farmers have obtained thirty bags and more per acre. The continued interest in the rice industry is justified by Government's desire to improve the lot of rice farmers and, at the same time, boost rice exports in order to maintain the supply of this important food item to the country's long standing neighbours, supply new markets and increase foreign exchange earnings.

8.20 p.m.

As in the case of rice the Government continues to place interest on the development of the sugar industry. This, however, should not be seen as being in conflict with the objective of diversifying Guyana's agriculture. Both of these industries are among the principal earners of foreign exchange, and sources of capital accumulation. The strategy underlining the promotion is that they are to contribute towards providing the means for further economic development including agricultural diversification.

In the case of sugar, the expansion will be on an intensive basis, that is essentially through increased productivity as against expansion of land area. Sugar production which currently averages around 300,000 tons per annum is expected to increase to 300,032 tons by year end and to 360,000 tons by 1983. This is to be achieved through improved pest and disease control and better management and husbandry practices. Although most of the sugar is still produced by State-owned estates the share of cane farmers has been increasing appreciably, moving over a ten year period from 32,000 tons to over 44,000 tons in 1979, an increase of about 15 per cent.

Assistance is being given in the form of credit, comprising development, rehabilitation and crop cultivation loans, advance payments and crops, training of cane farmers and other incentives. The Government will make every effort to improve the standard of cane farming.

Starchy roots, tubers and fruits. This group comprises cassava, yam, eddoe, dasheen, sweet-potato, tannia, plantain and breadfruit. Total production of this commodity group is estimated at over sixty million pounds.

Beef production at present is estimated at over 4 million pounds per annum. This is about 50 per cent of the level recorded just 4 years ago. This decline in production lies in the Government's intention to protect and expand the beef industry by restricting the slaughtering of female stock. Resulting from these measures there is no doubt that a production upturn will be realised in the near future. In addition, substantial investments have been made to improve ranch development.

The Speaker: Five minutes more.

Cde. Prashad: including disease control and breeding. Guyana's annual milk requirement is estimated at 12 million gallons. Of this amount approximately three million gallons are consumed as fresh raw milk while the equivalent of nine million gallons is imported each year mostly in the form of skim milk powder. Government is doing everything possible with a view to replacing this high proportion of milk imports by increasing our output of fresh milk with consequential savings in foreign exchange.

Cde. Speaker, I am sure that what I have said, very brief though it is, is significant to convince this Assembly that Government's commitment to agriculture is real and its efforts towards its improvement and development are effective and rewarding to those involved in industry. In 1981 and in the years

ahead the Ministry of Agriculture will play an even greater role in promoting agricultural development in our country.

I feel, therefore, Cde. Speaker, that this Assembly will have no hesitation or reservation whatsoever in endorsing the statement on agriculture as expressed by Cde. Leader in his Address. Thank you. *[Applause.]*

The Speaker: Cde. Collymore.

Cde. Collymore: Cde. Speaker, I rise here to speak on two of the problems facing the nation, housing and energy. Those are two of the areas which plague us and which have been touched on by the President. We have seen the Address and we have read it carefully but we are at a loss to know exactly where the thrust is going to be because the Address merely set out certain platitudes but we do not see the mechanism to realise what has to be realised.

Just to mention the matter of housing, quoting from the President's Address page 10, he said:

“The people of Guyana, rural and urban, are still not all properly housed. There are still too many homeless and ill-housed comrades. Housing is a service we owe to our people. That is the political conviction of many of us, and that is dictated by our Constitution under Article 26. Housing is not a mere social service. It is as economic an undertaking as the building of factories. First, a well-housed citizen is likely to be more productive than an ill-housed or unhoused one. Second, the production, procurement and deployment of building materials and inputs provide employment and give a fillip to our economic development in the circumstances of Guyana. Housing has a strong ripple effect on the economy.”

8.30 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, these are very good words. We have no quarrel with them. We are only saying that the Government does not seem to be serious where coming to grips with the housing crisis is concerned. We have statistics to prove that they are not serious. We feel that the Ministry of Housing is the Cinderella Ministry in Government's entire ramification. Very little attention is being shown to housing. I will prove it to you.

In 1974 you can recall that the housing corporation was set up. They scrapped it. In 1978 it was scrapped, demolished. In 1974, the Rent Control Act was passed. That was scrapped, demolished this year. In 1978 the Maintenance –

The Speaker: In 1974 the Rent Control Act was passed?

Cde. Collymore: It was passed in 1974 and it is going to be scrapped this year. The maintenance section for the Ministry of Housing was scrapped last year and hundred of workers lost their jobs. We feel that if this Government says it is socialist it must prove its credentials and it should not depend on private landlords and people like these to house the nation of...

Guyana.

We also note that in the Government's new investment code not a single word is mentioned about housing. It is very remarkable when you read this document. There are 30 pages to it but if you peruse it from cover to cover, in all thirty pages there is not a single word mentioned about housing. The word "housing" or "home" is not mentioned once in that document which shows what extent our friends on the opposite side are serious. There was a person who used to advise the Government in the old days whose name was Professor Arthur Lewis and in the 1972-76 Development Plan he said that this country suffered from a deficit of 44,000 housing units. So we have to note that figure, what the Professor said: 44,000 housing units were in deficit in Guyana before 1972.

The Government promulgated a D-Plan 1972 – 1976 claiming that it was going to construct 55,000 housing units. We note that the period 1972 – 1976, when you take into consideration the population increase and the number of people who will need housing, you come to the conclusion that 38,750 housing units would be needed in this period 1972 – 1976. When you add this figure, the deficit before 1972 you come to the conclusion that in 1980, 82,750 units were needed. The Government, realising this, made an effort to achieve it. They said they are going to construct 65,000 houses. Do you know how many they constructed? They constructed approximately 7,391 units. This is only 11.3 per cent of the 65,000 units target.

But there is more to this. If you are really serious about housing you will spend money on housing but how have they been spending money? How have they been disbursing the Budget? We note that in the plan period, 1972 to 1976, what has happened? From 1972 the Government expended .7 per cent of the Budget on the Ministry of Housing. In 1973, .5 per cent. In 1974, .5 per cent. In 1975, 1.6 per cent. In 1976, 1.7 per cent of the Budget. You go on in 1977, they expended .7 per cent. In 1978, .6 per cent. In 1979, .5 per cent. In 1980, .7 per cent. When you compare these statistics with how much has been expended on the Security Forces you will see where its interest lies. We note that in 1972 the Government expended 7.5 per cent on the Security Forces. In 1973, 7.8 per cent. In 1974, 10.5 per cent. In 1975, 13.7 per cent. In 1976, 16.1 per cent. In 1977, 13 per cent. In 1978, 14.3 per cent. In 1979, 11 per cent. In 1980, last year, 10.1 per cent. You will notice that there are two key figures. In 1975 they expended 1.6 per cent on housing in the Budget. There are actual figures. In 1976 they expended 1.7 per cent but when you compare it with 1975, 13.7 per cent on Security Forces and 1976, 16.1 per cent you will see there was quite a distortion.

How do we translate these figures into actual money? In 1972 they spent \$1.5 million, believe it or not. These people, my good friends who say they are concerned about housing. They are talking about housing. They spent \$1 ½ million on housing in 1972 when they were constructing, they were suppose to start building 65,000 housing units. And at the same time they spend \$16.9 million on the Security Forces. In 1973 they spend \$1.7 million. On Security Forces they spent \$22.9 million. In 1974 they spent \$1.9 million: on Security they spend \$38 million. In 1975 they spent \$9.3 million, on Security they spent \$79.6 million. In 1976 they spent \$13.3 million on housing. On Security they spent \$120.8 million. Just imagine. In 1977 they spent \$4.3 million on housing. They spent \$73.9 million on Security. In 1978 they spent \$3.2 million on housing. They spent \$76.2 million on Security. In 1979 the spent \$4.6 million on housing; they spent \$86.7 million on Security. In 1980, \$7.7 million on housing; they spent little more than \$103 million on Security.

In 1972 to 1976 the figures show that the Government spent \$617 million on Security and in this same period they only spent \$47.5 million on housing, which shows how serious they were in the FCH

Plan. And why they have failed. Because not enough effort and resources were mobilised for this great drive.

The next I come to a very sore point dealing with housing, the lifting of Rent Control. We note that the proposed lifting of this Rent Control is going to be a serious blow to tenants, poor tenants in the urban and rural areas. If you look at the Act – I have a copy of the Act which was passed in 1974. It deals with farmers also, not only workers in urban areas paying rent but farmers who are paying rent to landlords, particularly rice farmers.

Rent Control (Special Provisions) Act 1974 Section 2(2) of this Act says:

“In respect of a holding (within the meaning of the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure Act) which becomes the subject matter of a tenancy for the first time after 31st December, 1973, for the purpose of ascertaining, assessing and fixing the maximum rent of that holding there shall not be considered an amount greater than that which would have been considered by virtue of section 23 of the said Act in the determination of the maximum rent by an assessment committee in respect of the year ending 31st December, 1973, if that holding had then been let and the maximum rent had been ascertained, assessed and fixed during that year.”

It means to say that this Act fixed land rents, froze land rent at the 1973 level. Now they are proposing to remove it. It means that the flood gates are going to be opened for the increased, intensified exploitation of the rice farmers. And my good friend the Minister was just saying how they are concerned about the rice farmers. How can they produce more when they have the landlords on their backs exploiting them? We are urging that this Rent Control Act be kept on the Statute Book and the no effort be made to take it off the Statute Book.

The Speaker: Cde. Collymore, I do not know where you got your information but if we both got it from the Newspapers my recollection is that they said only where there are improvements to buildings increases will be permitted. If we are speaking from the same source, they said the rent will remain as it is and they will only permit increases where there are improvements as distinct from repairs.

Cde. Collymore: I, for the time being, will bow to that ruling. I know how this Government works. The Rent Control Act was to control urban rents; it controls land rents. I want to see how they will operate. I reserve the right to speak again on this matter if we go against it. We feel that lifting of rent control will tend to maximise profits by exploiting tenants. The Government is also planning to benefit by increased revenues and is clearing the way for landlords to exploit.

It is also clearing the way for the Government to raise rents in its own housing estates.

8.40 p.m.

We know that the IMF has removed subsidies whether direct or indirect. The IMF is opposed to subsidies and the Government has been trying to cut these subsidies for many years. This is one of the reasons why it phased out the maintenance section of the Ministry of Housing. So that we see in order to deal with this pressure it will either cut the subsidy on State housing or retrench more persons in that Ministry. We are opposed to both categories of solution.

The Government has a big problem to house the people of this country and it must not seek to abandon this responsibility to private landlords. We are saying this is what is going to happen and we see it is going to happen. Today we know that building material is expensive and the ordinary worker cannot afford to build his own house. Many Co-op Societies which are set up specifically to look into housing are collapsing. Almost every issue of the Gazette mentions some difficulty facing a co-operative society and many of them are housing co-ops. It means that something basically and structurally is wrong and they cannot afford to build houses. The State is supposed to house the low income people who cannot afford to build houses on their own. To ask a worker earning \$11.55 a day to build his own house is absurd. He cannot do it. The State is supposed to provide house lots and adequate loans and is supposed to give property to squatters.

Much ado was made here a while ago about squatters and how they will be looked after. I have here a publication where one of the Vice-Presidents when he was Minister of Housing actually threatened squatters. I have here Guyana Information Bulletin No. 11/76 where the Minister Steve Naraine says Government will not tolerate squatting. On the programme "Face the Nation" the Minister said that at Meter-Meer-Zorg and Tuschen where squatters have been warned to remove their shacks, they will be warned again and if they still do not comply they will be no alternative but to send in the authorities to remove them. In the case of Patentia, the authorities were sent in. In the case of Bath they were also sent in- the police and the army – and they beat up a lot of people who suffered injuries. That is how they intend to solve the housing crisis.

The squatters should be given priority. If it is that certain people among the squatters are not genuine, they must be ruled out. But give the genuine people priority. You know and I know, as you have traveled throughout the length and breadth of this country, that there are many squatting areas. These are not genuine people? For sixteen years they are not genuine? Our friends on the opposite side are doing nothing. We are supposed to re-house slum dwellers and subsidise rents for low-income families.

I did not want to mention this, but I think I have to just illustrate my point of how unfeeling our colleagues on the opposite side are. They are getting fat allowances to pay rents or they are getting free houses. Do you know that the Prime Minister is getting \$1,000 a month or a free house, and the Senior Ministers are getting either \$350 per month or a free house? And do you know, Cde. Speaker, that you yourself are getting \$250 a month? But what allowance is the small man getting, the man who is getting \$11.55 a day? Nothing. And many workers today are sleeping and living on the pavements. Some are living in the cemetery, not because they want to live there but they have no place to go. This is one of the reasons why we are very concerned about this situation.

We are making a lot of noise about socialism. One Member on the other side said he is a Marxist. In the USSR which is the model of socialism, Cde. Speaker, do you know that the State built 60 per cent of new housing, 60 per cent at subsidised rates? In the USSR 33 per cent of the housing built is built by

collective firms and individuals with State credits. The State is involved in 60 plus 33 per cent, 93 per cent of housing in the model socialist community of the world. Seventy per cent is built by housing co-ops. So we see the ratio and the priority and the impact in the last five years and rents are only 4 to 5 per cent of the family income in the Soviet Union. Here in Guyana the workers pay 30 to 40 percent of their wages for rent. A person who is earning \$11.55 a day cannot afford an \$80 per month house. What will he eat, what will he wear?

Our friends on the other side do not seem to appreciate these dramatic problems facing the low-income group. What about the energy crisis? They are shedding tears about what is going on about energy, but we have been doing nothing for many years. Now they are saying that something is wrong, there is a flaw in the Preece, Cardew and Rider Report on the Tiger Hill Hydro Project. If something is wrong, why they did not rectify the flaw. They did nothing and the energy crisis overtook them. They even scrapped the railway to intensify the situation despite the congestion on the East Coast and the coastal areas. They went against advice. We have several ways and means of getting energy. We have hydro, nuclear, wind and solar.

Cde. Speaker, I am saying we must intensify hydro power. We have water. We must exploit these water resources. They are doing nothing. We looked in the newspapers some days ago and it stated that they have signed some contract with a Canadian firm for a hydro project. These contracts have been signed fifteen years late because Preece, Cardew and Rider recommended a hydro project and they identified one up the Demerara River at Tiger Hill. Why they had to wait for the World Bank mission to tell them to proceed to create small hydro projects? We have been saying consistently here all the time, but they have not listened, they listen to the imperialists who give them orders. So now they have to go and sign a contract and proceed along the same way because hydro power is the only salvation for this country. We cannot engage in nuclear energy because that is expensive. They were trying to get a big project on the Mazaruni. We advised them against it. It is economically impossible to achieve. A former Minister of Economic Development, J. Henry Thomas said that never in his lifetime will Guyana get a hydro project and a smelter. He was dismissed for saying so. Anyway he is not here because he spoke the truth. They will never get a hydro project and a smelter because if the Americans give them that, it is going to elevate Guyana into the realm of a formidable competitor on the world scene where aluminum and aluminum products are concerned. America will not want that. So that project, coupled to the smelter, is high finance and it is a strategic thing and the Americans will not give them a rope to hang themselves.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY8.50 p.m.

We have been telling them it is economically sound to get it and they must proceed with Tiger Hill, and we see that the IMF and the World Bank have advised them to proceed. Now we are suggesting that in order to solve the energy crisis we must develop many hydro-power sites and not to wait. We must treat the issue as a national emergency; we must seek out, in the interim, cheaper overseas fuel markets; create a truly national grid; we must phase out the gas turbines at the GEC. They are the things that are jacking up energy costs and they must go. We must slash the electricity bill for the low-income consumer by 50 per cent. Instead we note that they are going to jack it up by 55 per cent. We are suggesting in this honourable Assembly that if the Government is really concerned about the small man, Rate 1 and Rate 2 consumers must have their electricity charges cut by 50 per cent. This is a people's Government.

We are also saying the GEC workers must have a big share in management and that managers must be allowed to manage. They must not be interfered with the political purposes. A manager must know how to run the business and no PNC hack must tell him what to do or what not to do: whom he must dismiss and whom he must not fire.

Cde. Speaker, the President also mentioned inefficiency and he is actually asking Guyanese not to pay for inefficiency and there must be improvement in inefficiency. Speaking about the energy crisis he says:

"We shall have to pay for the power we use. Though, the tariffs will be structured in such a manner that the small man with four house lights, a radio and an electric iron in use on an average of five hours, eight hours and one hour per day, respectively, will not be called upon to pay a higher bill than at present.

Second, the efficiency of our national generating agency at managerial and non-managerial levels will have to be raised to the maximum and optimum. The consumer must not be asked to pay for inefficiency, especially, in this the Year of Energy."

So many consumers of electricity have been paying for inefficiency and not for increased fuel cost and we are expressing the hope that matters will be taken firmly in hand at the GEC so as to reduce the onerous burdens on the people who are paying bills.

Cde. Speaker, we note that fuel charges are becoming increasingly large in comparison with energy charge. Let us take one case, the case of a Rate 1 consumer whose energy charge for one month was \$15.55. He has to pay a fuel charge of \$10.05. This is equivalent to 64.6 per cent of the energy charge. This means that the fuel charge is rising out of proportion to the energy charge and may very well overtake the energy charge. It also lends credence to our plea on this side of the National Assembly that the Government must create a national emergency of the energy crisis and try its best to ensure that as many hydro-power sites are put on stream as early as possible because this thing is getting out of hand. We cannot control fuel price increases which amounted to \$400 million last year and we must therefore take steps to avoid the increases. No sense going about and begging people like Eric Williams for loans and concessions. You are demeaning this nation by begging people. Williams does not have hydro power, he has natural gas and oil. We have hydro power and we must develop it. Our friends on the opposite side are 16 years late. They are like Rip Van Winkle. They have now awakened.

Cde. Speaker, in order to close, the President's Address indeed shed a lot of tears over what is happening to the workers, over what is happening in housing, over the energy crisis. We are urging our friends on the opposite side to take positive steps now to ensure that these crocodile tears are not going to be repeated some time in the future.

The Speaker: Cde. Jack.

The Minister of Energy and Mines (Cde. Jack): Cde. Speaker, the kindest thing that I could do with respect to the last offering would be to remain silent but because of one particular misleading statement that was made, I am forced to make a comment. The comment I wish to make, first of all, is in relation to what has been termed, the lifting of rent control. This Parliament is, among other things, a place where people may get education and it is free, therefore, so that the debates in future may be informed and not ill informed, I will explain what the position is.

Before 1974, we have had on the Statute Books a Rent Control Act. That Rent Control Act sets out certain specific conditions under which the rent could be increased. That Act has never been abolished. What happened was that around 1974 another Act was passed which created a rent freeze. Now there is a difference between a rent freeze and rent control. The rent freeze provided that there would be no increase of rent at all whereas under the Rent Restriction Act there were certain limited increases which could take place but for which one had to apply to the Court. Now, what the hon. Member was confusing was the rent freeze with the rent control.

Cde. Chairman, I do not know why some people believe that the cultivation of ignorance is in some way laudable. I am taking some pains to explain because of the misleading impression that might be given that there is a free...

for all. It is not so. As a matter of fact, it has been clearly stated that even with regard to the rent control, allowances for increases will only be available in certain specific cases.

9.00 p.m.

Now that I have given this explanation I trust that since there are no lawyers on the other side except for the Leader of the Minority that the others will avail themselves of some legal advice so that when they come to this National Assembly again, since I know that they do not wish deliberately to mislead this Assembly, they will make a different presentation. *[Applause.]*

Having said that with the greatest of reluctance, I proceed to what I propose to discuss this evening. This year has been termed the Year of Energy. It indicates that we are paying particular attention to energy in 1981. The President listed a number of aspects of this energy intensification and one of the first things that he mentioned was the necessity for the rehabilitation of the G.E.C. and he made it quite clear that inefficiencies in the G.E.C. must be weeded out. Let us be quite frank. The state of G.E.C. is a result of poor equipment, of lack of proper financing, deficiencies in management and also inefficiencies in some of the operations. We do not come here to minimise this state of affairs. What I can say, however, is this- as is evident to all of us in this Assembly the situation with regard to the supply of electricity has improved and I can give this Assembly an assurance that it will continue to improve. *[Applause.]*

I believe that we have got over the worst of our difficulties at G.E.C. but we still have a considerable way to go. There has been a restructuring of the management. We have a new Manager and he has been taking some very positive steps in the re-organisation of the management structure. We have also employed some experts from overseas but one of the crucial things facing G.E.C. is the question of financing and we are in discussion with certain international organisations with a view to getting the necessary financing to provide the equipment which we need to rehabilitate G.E.C.

One of the things which has been mentioned by commentators recently is that the oil crisis manifests itself not only in the increase in the price of fuel but in the increase in the price of all the things that we buy from the developed world and, since in many cases we have to depend upon loan funds from international organisations – the time which it takes to negotiate those loans; and the conditions under which those loans are disbursed, negotiating conditions, which include the nature of tendering for equipment and for work to be done, takes up so much time, and the inflation rate being what it is – an inordinate amount of money is spent in acquiring equipment. If, for instance, we did have all the money immediately we would be able to carry out that rehabilitation on a much cheaper scale. But we do not and in this regard we are not different from many countries in the Third World. As a matter of fact we are not very different from many countries in the industrial world. While it is true to say that we have suffered from the number of outages, let me say at this stage that anyone who has spent any time in reading the international Press will know that we are not singular in this regard. We are not singular as regards outages in the Caribbean, and we are not singular in regard to outages in the Third World. We are not singular with regard to outages in the industrial world. That is not to say that we must be satisfied with outages or that we should not understand the discomfort and embarrassment which such outages cause from time to time.

We have embarked on a rehabilitation programme apart from which we will be carrying out during this year the construction of the 69KV transmission line which will be a transmission line of 110 miles and which will go from Georgetown to Onverwagt, from Canefield to Corentyne. We expect that to be finished in 1982.

One of the things which the Cde. President mentioned was the necessity not only to conserve energy but to pay for the energy. It is easy for people to talk about subsidising. I remember once that a certain politician, not on this side of the Assembly, who promised at an election to reduce taxes and increase wages. He did not win a seat and he is no longer in active politics.

The intention or the expectation that at this time of national and international economic crisis one will subsidise all of the things which people use is really fanciful. We have to pay for the energy that we use and we have to have it brought home to ourselves that we need to conserve and be sparing with that energy.

Cde. President made it absolutely clear that in structuring the new tariffs care was taken to see that the small man would bear the least of the burdens and he said on page 9: “Though, the tariffs will be structured in such a manner that the small man with four house lights, a radio and an electric iron in use on an average of five hours, eight hours, and one hour per day, respectively, will not be called upon to pay a higher bill than at present.” He must know because he has helped to pass the decision which makes for an increase in the tariffs. He is in a better position to know than those who do not have the burden of office and who merely speculate.

Now, in keeping with the determination of this Government, Cde. President stated on the 9th of this month that an energy authority would be established and that the necessary legislation would be placed before this Assembly for consideration within three weeks. During my absence today my colleague, Cde. Ramsaroop placed the Bill, which is the Bill that would create the Guyana National Energy Authority, before this Assembly. That is not three weeks but three days. [Applause.]

I would like to spend a few moments in explaining to this Assembly what the National Energy Authority will do. It will, among other things, prepare a national energy budget. This would mean that for the first time on our history we will have a comprehensive budget dealing with energy, with the importation of hydro carbons, with all uses of energy within this country. The National Energy Authority will also give directions to supervise and monitor a conservation policy and a conservation exercise as regards energy.

[Cde. Jack continues]

I may point out that since our national energy bill was something in the region of \$400 million last year, if we saved as a result of conservation even one per cent, we would have had a saving of \$100 million. And we hope this year to do much better and to have a saving of one per cent.

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The Authority would also prepare what is known as an energy balance. Today throughout the world countries who never thought of it before are preparing total energy balance, that is, they prepare a picture showing the total utilisation of energy in the various sectors where the energy comes from, how it is utilised, what is the cost of it and so forth. This would be one of the tasks of the National Energy Authority. Apart from this we will change the system which is obtained up to now whereby anyone bought any kind of energy-generating equipment whether it was compatible or not. The Energy Authority will see to it that all energy equipment being brought into the country is compatible and forms part of a total plan for energy generation in this country. It will also assist in the saving of energy and in foreign exchange which is used for the production of energy. It will also assist and supervise the promotion of alternative sources of energy.

I wish to say a few words about the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-Smelter Project because there are some Jeremiahs who are so weak in their thoughts and their desires that they do not believe that we in Guyana can tackle and achieve a project of this magnitude. And it is for that reason I believe that providence has placed us on this side of this Assembly and providence has placed some others on the other side of the Assembly. Here we hear that the Hydro Smelter Project cannot come into being because the Americans will not give us the rope to hand them or themselves. We have spent about eight years in prosecution of this project. It is a large and imaginative project and it requires a certain degree of spiritual courage, not only to contemplate a project of this size but to contemplate the difficulties and to resolve to overcome the difficulties which a project of this magnitude must inevitably entail. I am happy to say on this side of the Assembly that we have the courage to proceed with this project.

The study which has been done started as early as 1972, that is, before the escalation of oil prices. We made application, as I said once before in this Assembly, to the IDB, the World Bank and the IFC and I am happy to report that we have received an endorsement of their support from all of these international organisations. Discussions have taken place and are taking place with a number of interested companies one of whom we hope to choose as a technological partner in the establishment of the smelter. When the smelter and hydro are being built we expect to employ something in the region of 6,000 persons and during the time of their operation we would have direct employment of over 2,000 persons. But one must not see this project merely in terms of its immediate direct employment effect. One must see it in the total impact that it will have on the economy of this country, the amount of ancillary industries which will spring up, the amount of services which would be required, the amount of businesses which would either expand or be created in order to satisfy the needs of this smelter and hydro.

But more than that, one would see that with the development of this project we would have added our fourth and very significant dimension to our economic base and we would have increased significantly the foreign exchange earning and the per capita income of the people of this country. We have taken pains to re-establish the Resettlement Committee since there are certain hostile elements abroad, including Survival International who, more confident that some of the members of the Opposition that we could succeed, have set out to attempt to put some stones in our way, and all manner of scurrilous articles have appeared in certain sections of the overseas press to the effect that we are going to do great damage to the American population. There are some people who are so unmindful of their own interest

that they would join forces with those expatriate hostile elements in spreading doubt and dissolution among our countrymen as to whether we could achieve this great goal that we have set ourselves. But I wish to assure this Assembly from the discussions which have taken place and in which I myself have been personally involved, I hope that later on this year I will be able to announce in this Assembly that we have signed at least a preliminary agreement which would allow for the escalation of the development of the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-electric project.

I would like to turn now to some of the alternative sources of energy which are available to us. Again, as far back as 1972, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, as it was then, organised with UNDP assistance a study of the total hydro-electric power potential of this country. And using very restricted parameters, that is looking at sites of only 20 megawatts and over and which could at that time be constructed at a cost of \$1500 (US) per kilowatt hour of power, the UNDP study revealed that we have potential for 7,500 megawatts of firm power. When one considers that we are using in this country or that we have an installed capacity of just about 150 megawatts, one can see that by the utilisation of our hydro power we cannot only solve our energy problems in this century but well into the next century as well. Apart from the Upper Mazaruni Hydro-electric Station, we have been looking at what one calls mini hydro-stations.

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Let me explain what that means. The contracts which I signed last week are contracts which refer to small hydro stations at Wamukaru in the Rupununi and that is expected to give about 500 kilowatt hours of power, Eclipse Falls in the North West District, between 3 megawatts and 5 megawatts, and Tumatumari between 20 megawatts and 45 megawatts. These small schemes are not, and I repeat, are not intended as a substitution for the Upper Mazaruni hydro-electric station. They are in remote areas and particularly with regard to Wamukaru and Eclipse they are expected to serve the populations in those areas and those populations only.

The Speaker: Two minutes more.

Cde. Jack: They will not be included in the national grid for a very long time to come. One would not take 500 kilowatts and transport it to Georgetown some 300 miles away on transmission lines unless one did not know anything at all about the transmission of hydro electricity or of electricity at all.

Those are the three stations that we have looked at. They will not therefore, in any way, affect the Upper Mazaruni hydro-electric station or our prosecution of that project.

Apart from that we have been developing alternate energy using wood waste.

The Speaker: Time.

Cde. Ramsaroop: Cde. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minister be given another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

The Speaker: Cde. Minister.

Cde. Jack: Cde. Chairman, on the 18th February next, there will be a demonstration at Mabura Hill, that is the site of the Upper Demerara Forestry Project and the Company is known as Demerara Woods. There will be demonstration of a wood waste plant, a plant which will produce 150 kilowatts and which will serve about 30 houses. That plant is a further development on the traditional wood waste plant and we have invited all interested parties including saw millers to go to Mabura Hill and see the plant in operation so that if they were satisfied that it was suitable to their own businesses they may, with our assistance, acquire some of these plants. We expect later this year to install five plants of 940 kilowatts each at the same site. That is what we have been doing so far with wood waste. Apart from that, there is a study going on now which would indicate the feasibility of using the wood waste of G.T.L. to produce something of the order of 3 megawatts.

With regards to bio-gas, we are at the moment in process of installing nine plants with assistance from OLADE/ OLADE is the organisation of Latin American States for the development of energy. We expect also, during the course of this year, also with the assistance of OLADE, to start on the implementation of some projects for the development of wind power. Apart from that, a study is already underway and we expect to have the report of that study by June of our peat resources. We expect to be able to use peat in the development of our alternate energy resources.

Last but by no means least, I must mention solar power, studies for which are continuing but which in the first instance will be used primarily for drying of our agricultural products and for producing hot water.

Cde. Chairman, I left charcoal for the last because it is at once the simplest and also the most traditional. We have had developing charcoal once again in this country. The technology is well known and we have started on an export drive. We hope during the course of this year to increase our export of charcoal. Those are the things that we are doing for alternative energy.

Apart from that, however, I think I should mention our oil resources and situation with regard to oil. We have in the Takutu region, in the southern part of Guyana, a company called Home Oil which is carrying out seismic work and which expects, during the course of this year to drill the first well. The indications from all that I have been told by the Company are extremely favourable. All of the structure which one needs to find in order to have oil have been found. It is only that we have not yet drilled. But I am quite confident that when we drill we will succeed. We are also in negotiation with other companies for concessions for exploration of oil and gas with regard to our off-shore areas. Apart from this, of course, we will, during the course of this year, establish a national petroleum corporation and that petroleum corporation will be charged with the responsibility of overseeing our oil exploration, entering into contracts with foreign concerns and in general supervising the development of oil and gas in this country.

The President mentioned our uranium resources. As you know, the French firm, Cogema, is carrying out exploration at the moment and once again, as he said, the prospects are encouraging. However, I must explain to this assembly that the development of uranium unlike the development of oil is a long process. It could be as long as eight years from the date when sufficient reserves of uranium have been discovered and quantified to the time when a factory will be in process. And I can explain that the intention is that if uranium is to be developed in this country, the processing up to the stage of what is called yellow cake will be done in this country. In other words, the raw ore will not be shipped out. In order that that processing take place here, a factory will have to be established and the total capital which will be required for the mine and the factory I am told will be in the region of not less than \$200 million US dollars.

Cde. Speaker, apart from the oil, apart from the uranium and the alternate sources of energy, I want to stress the need for conservation. Every country in the world is now conscious of the necessity of conserving energy and we have not been as conscious as we could have been with regard to the conservation of energy.

We will be looking, as I said, for oil. We do not have all of the facilities, for doing that ourselves. In January, 1980, a team of World Bank experts came here, studies the situation in Guyana and they are in the process of delivering their report. We expect to get from them assistance not only in the review of our geological and geophysical data but also assistance from them in doing geological surveys and in training people, Guyanese, as geologists with particular emphasis on petroleum geology. We are also conscious of the fact that our legislation needs a lot of updating. As a matter of fact, we have had, because of the nature of the legislation, to make agreements which, in some cases, were outside of the legislation and when I say outside I mean better than what the legislation called for.

I would like to spend a few minutes of my remaining time to speak about our foreign affairs. Cde. Leader in his Address on the 9th February mentioned Guyana's position in Caricom. We have been a founder member of the regional community and we have played a very significant part in its growth and development. We intend to do whatever we can to see that the region retains its cohesiveness and that, despite the various tensions which have developed within the Association in recent times, it continues in good health and is strengthened in time to come.

With regard to our priorities in our exercise of foreign affairs, I think I must stress the necessity of preserving our territorial integrity. As is well know, there are a number of claims which have been made upon our borders. The duty of this Government – and I would go so far as to say the duty of all the people of this country, whether they are in the Government or outside of the Government – is to hold one head as regard our national and territorial integrity and anyone, who through jealousy or chagrin or for

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any other cause, seeks to have foreign countries interfere in our domestic relations is nothing more than a traitor. Not only a traitor to the State, but a traitor to all the people of this country.

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Our position in the Non-Aligned Movement has been well established. We have taken progressive steps in keeping with other progressive countries in the fight against colonialism, in the fight against racism and apartheid. Only a few days ago in Delhi our Foreign Minister made a most stirring address setting out the policies and principles of this Government. It is significant that those who...

attempt to criticise us are significantly vacant when it comes to our foreign policy. That is a good sign. At least it shows there is some restraint somewhere in their hearts.

We, as Cde. President has said, will take dictation from no one but we are prepared to work with friendly countries in international organisations for the promotion of peace and for the settlement of disputes. We must strengthen not only our defence but we must strengthen the internal cohesiveness of our country. Our position is one of ideological independence. [Interruption.] It is not the answer that reveals the ignorance but the question. I believe that all of us on this side of the Assembly know what ideological independence is. We will not take lessons from anyone in how to run our affairs and if it became possible internally for all the parties in this country to seek to fashion a position which takes into account the true interest of this country and to promote, as other countries do, the national interest of this country, to seek to fashion a position which takes into account the true interest of this country and to promote, as other countries do, the national interest of this country, perhaps the time may come when we would have a Parliamentary Committee on foreign affairs. I look forward very much to that day.

Cde. Chairman, it is in fact a strange logic which attributes to the Government responsibility for blame for all the difficulties which beset the country and the society on the ground that since the Government has the charge of the country it must bear responsibility for the country's ills, yet assigns credit to the Opposition and to those not in the Government for all the positive features which develops in the society. It is on the basis of this tangled logic that the obvious growing cohesiveness in our society and the growing development of national unity, which is recognised by all in the country, is claimed as the achievement of those who are not in the Government. Suffice it to say that we have before our eyes, in this Parliament, tangible testimony to the principles and policies and programmes of the People's National Congress Government which has led to this happy state of affairs.

The Speaker: Three minutes more.

Cde. Jack: But, Cde. Speaker, whatever the claims may be, and wherever they may come from, the desire of so many to claim credit for our growing national unity attests that this is a positive development and that it is a fact, and the representations in this Assembly for which the governing party provides the overwhelming input, as I said, bear testimony to that. Herein lies the strength of this Government and the hope for independence and integrity of our country.

We have listened to the President as he has set out both the internal guidelines for this country and the external guidelines which we will be pursuing during the next five years. We would hope that all in this country would carefully consider the path that has been laid out and would recognise that if we move as a team together we can achieve the goals which the PNC Government has set out, as has happened in the past, from 1973 to 1975, even without the support, critical or otherwise, we shall still achieve these goals though, of course, we would prefer to have all of those in this Assembly share in the sense of success and not feel that perhaps they are mere bystanders.

In order to share in that success they need to co-operate. The President in his Address threw out both an offer and a challenge for all in this Assembly to co-operate but I think that some may not have got the full drift of what that offer and what that challenge really meant. It meant that we are willing to co-operate but that we are going to go ahead nevertheless and if there continues to be a refusal to face simple facts the fault will lie upon the heads of those who want to bury their heads in the sand.

9.40 p.m.

Cde. Ramsaroop: May I move that my colleague be given another fifteen minutes to complete his presentation.

The Speaker: Is it agreeable to the Assembly?

/Comrades and Hon. Ministers indicated in the affirmative./

Cde. Jack: Cde. Speaker, implicit in this document which represents the speech of the President is in fact a blueprint, if only people will look for it. It is a blueprint for the future. Those speakers from the Government side who have spoken have embellished and enlarged upon the ideas which are contained in this document, and the further speeches will continue to do so. What I wish to say is this, we have gone through a difficult period, economically, in this country. But with the taking of the steps which we have outlined here this afternoon, first of all we are going to go a long way to solving our energy problems. Not only will we solve our energy problems, but we have recognised that Guyana has something to sell. In times past people did not think of energy as a commodity for export but with the great resources at our disposal we will have a commodity for export and that commodity is energy. When I speak of energy I am not depending only upon the finding of oil or the development of uranium. Energy that can be exported in the form of electricity as well. Throughout the world today people are looking for sources of stable energy for the establishment of industries. We have been engaged in a number of discussions aimed primarily at protecting the national interest of this country.

A lot of comment has been made on some study done, I think, twenty years ago by a company called Preece, Cardew and Rider. What the commentators probably do not know is that we also engaged the same company and that they were here last year and that they had an opportunity of looking at hydro-electric sites and selecting one of them.

It would surprise some people to know that they have not selected Tiger Hill, and it would surprise them to know that they themselves confessed that Tiger Hill would be one of the most expensive hydro-electric stations as regards the cost of the generation of power. If I believe that the members who commented on the Preece, Cardew and Rider study would read the study if they got it, I would consider it my duty to have copies of that study made and distributed freely to them. I would be prepared to give them both reports if they would read them. I would not even ask them to understand the reports, only to read them.

The fact is – and we should put this thing to an end – I have said it before and it was considered a very grave admission on my part, that had we all been able to see the price of oil in 1980, despite the fact that Tiger Hill was not economic in comparison with oil in 1961, of course we would have built Tiger Hill. That is only if we could have been in the future what the price of oil would be in 1981. But the fact is that Tiger Hill is one of the least attractive sites as regards the development of hydro-electric power. The study that was done by the UNDP team which selected Montreal Engineering Company to do a survey, that study put Tiger Hill right down at the bottom of the ladder and that study is also available if anyone wanted to read it.

What we have done and the path we have chosen is in our opinion, and now in the opinion of international experts as well, the best course that we should take. It is surprising that the Hon. Member Collymore would come so near to the brink of truth and revelation and then pull back in dismay. The fact is that his very utterances which show some gleaming of an understanding of the significance of Upper Mazaruni should really compel him not only to want it but to support it wholeheartedly for what he is saying, these revolutionaries, these independent people, is that because the Americans would not want us to have it we should abandon it. Now imagine that coming from there. Because the Americans do not want it we should abandon it. I never thought that I would have lived to see such a confession of fright in an open forum like this. The fact is that we are pursuing our interest and the thing which must be decided is this, if we develop the hydro with a smelter would it be to our advantage. I cannot take him any further into the light. I know that he would apologise, a lot of people would apologise. And I would accept your apology, too.

9.50 p.m.

Cde. Speaker, the reason I went back to this subject is this: I had occasion while speaking to the TUC last year, to point to the extremely bright future that awaits us in this country if we have the courage to grab it. We knew of the...

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difficulties; we know of the opposition and the opposition does not come from where some people think it comes from. It comes from places very much closer to us but we are not deterred because of this opposition. Our resolve is strengthened because of it and we would hope that in the national interest some of them may even get jobs on the project. I would hope that in the national interest they would support the scheme and leave their fears behind. We will take care of that aspect. I take it though that what I am hearing in the Assembly is really not an objection to the project but a believe that it is too good to be true.

The People's National Congress has done so many things before which the Opposition had thought too good to be true that by now they should be accustomed to the type of success that awaits our efforts.

What I wish to say finally is that at the beginning of this Parliament we have had an inspiring Address by the Leader of our Party and President of this country, an Address which has touched upon all the salient aspects of the economy and the society where we expect development and change. With the plans which we have now, with the enthusiasm which is evident on the Government's side of this Assembly, I am confident that we will succeed not only in the hydro project but in oil, in alternative energy, bio-gas, in solar energy, in peat, that when the five-year term has come to an end we will have transformed the energy situation in this country and by doing that we will have transformed the economy of this country.

The Speaker: Cde. Vice-President.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Friday, 13th February, 1981, at 2.00 p.m.
/The Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party/State Relations./