

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2008) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN Part I of II

61st Sitting

14:00h

Thursday 7 August 2008

Speaker (1)

The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (41)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (40)

The United Force (1)

The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Prime Minister and Minister of

Public Works and Communications

The Hon Clement J Rohee MP

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP

Minister of Education

The Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP

Minister of Foreign Trade and International

Cooperation

The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Essequibo)

Minister of Foreign Affairs

*The Hon Dr Ashni Singh MP

Minister of Finance

The Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon Robert M Persaud MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Agriculture

The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP

(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Minister of the Public Service

The Hon Kellawan Lall MP

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon Doodnauth Singh SC, MP

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon B H Robeson Benn MP

Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP

Minister of Labour

The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP

Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

Minister in the Ministry of Health

*Non-elected Minister **Elected Member from TUF

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The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP

Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon Manniram Prashad MP

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

*The Hon Pauline R Sukhai MP

Minister of Amerindian Affairs

Mr Donald Ramotar MP

Ms Gail Teixeira MP

Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP, Chief Whip

Ms Bibi S Shadick MP

(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP

(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

- (AOL)

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

- (AOL)

(R# 2 - Pomerook/Supenaam

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP

- (AOL)

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

*** Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

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Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP - *(Absent)*

(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

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

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water

***Non-elected Member

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

Members of the Opposition (28)

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

Mr Robert HO Corbin

Leader of the Opposition

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr E Lance Carberry MP

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr Anthony Vieira, MP

- *(Absent)*

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP

- *(Absent)*

Mr Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP

- *(AOL)*

Mr Dave Danny MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Aubrey C Norton MP

- *(Absent)*

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

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Mr Ernest B Elliot MP - *(Absent)*

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr Mervyn Williams MP

(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Ms Africo Selman MP

Dr John Austin MP

(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms Jennifer Wade MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Mr Desmond Fernandes MP

(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

Mr James K McAllister MP

- *(Absent)*

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr Raphael G Trotman MP

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP

- *(Absent)*

Mrs Sheila VA Holder MP

- *(AOL)*

Ms Latchmin B Punalall, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr David Patterson MP

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

Mr Everall N Franklin MP

- *(AOL)*

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs

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Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Commencement of Sitting: 14:10h

PRAYERS

[The Clerk reads the Prayers]

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC:

(1) By the Speaker of the National Assembly

*Report of the Auditor General on the Public
Accounts of Guyana and on the account of
Ministries, Departments and Regions for
the fiscal year ended 31 December 2006.*

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture *[Pause]*

Is there anyone on his behalf?

(2) By the Minister of Finance on behalf of the Minister of
Agriculture

*The Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc. Annual
Report for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006
respectively*

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and First Readings

**(1) TELECOMMUNICATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL
2008 - Bill No. 18/2008**

*By the Minister of Home Affairs on behalf of Prime
Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications*

**(2) INTERCEPTION COMMUNICATIONS BILL 2008 -
Bill No. 19/2008**

By the Minister of Home Affairs

**(3) THE CRIMINAL LAW (PROCEDURE)
(AMENDMENT) BILL 2008 - Bill No. 20/2008**

By the Minister of Home Affairs

**(4) CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (PLEA BARGAINING
AND PLEA AGREEMENT) BILL 2008 - Bill No.
21/2008**

By the Minister of Home Affairs

**(5) EVIDENCE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2008 - Bill BO.
22/2008**

By the *Minister of Home Affairs*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS - Second Reading

**(1) SUMMARY JURISDICTION (OFFENCES)
(AMENDMENT) BILL 2008 - Bill No. 17/2008
published on 30 July 2008**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend the
Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act
to prohibit the playing of music in a
motor bus or hire car.*

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House addresses the burning question of music

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played in motor buses and hire cars especially in circumstances where a minibus or a hire car is plying its route or park at a public place.

Mr Speaker, I believe that this Bill is long overdue. Throughout the length and breadth of Guyana, save and except for persons who relish the sound of loud repetitive and continuous music in their ear drums. The overwhelming majority of Guyanese, travelling public and even those may not be frequent users of such modes of public transportation would find great discomfort in being affective by such loud music.

Mr Speaker, there are certain technical issues that one could argue that related to this matter. There is also a number of moral issues associated with the bill and the intent of the Bill that is before us. There is also a cultural dimension associated with the Bill and the intention of the Bill and when looked at its totality obviously the Bill is aimed at addressing loudness and, I hope that this is not an un-parliamentary word, lewdness of this music as well.

Mr Speaker, the complaints have been legal in respect of this type of nuisance and many parents from time to time and might I should say not infrequently have expressed their annoyance, their dissatisfaction and their total rejection of music being played in the means of public transportation, and the popular ones are of course the mini-bus and the hire cars to which their children are

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subjected either to school whether on leisure or on business or otherwise. So that we have to obviously take into consideration the general well-being and what is perceived as the general good of the public.

The objective of the Bill is aimed at penalising a driver of such motor vehicles, minibus or hire car, which produces sounds played in his or her motor vehicle.

There may be some who may suggest that this Bill seeks to categorise the drivers and by extension the owners of these means of transportation as villains, but certainly that is not the case, because it is generally recognised that these motor vehicles do provide a service to members of the travelling public, but while we recognise the service that they provide to the travelling public, it is equally important that we recognise that service providers and in this regard in the field of transportation must also recognise that that service must be provided with certain standards attached to it. I submit that the standard associated with that service can never be music being played in a manner that is unacceptable in society as a whole. So then I thought I should emphasize that point lest it be seen some who have a penchant for being on the contrary that we recognise that it is a service that is being provided in the transportation sector, but that this service must have standards associated to it.

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Mr Speaker, some may very well say that there is some element of draconian strength in the Bill that is before us, but if I may quickly add, we found no other way of addressing this problem precisely because the mischief that would be created if we were to do otherwise would see persons toning down the music when they see a police rank on the road and as they want to do in existing circumstances, toning it back up or turning it back up as we would say, when they are out of such a situation and it makes it extremely difficult to address those problems. Right now the law provides for the police to address noise nuisance by way of noises emanating from various types of musical instruments and other equipment creating noises, but the fact of the matter is - the reality is - that when people complain and the complain goes to the police, and the police goes to investigate, there is no noise, but there is an instrument, but there is no charge against having the instrument, there is no crime having the instrument, but when the police leaves the instrument goes back on and the musical equipment goes back on as well. That put the law enforcement officers in a very difficult situation.

In addition to that when we discussed a few weeks or days ago, the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Act to facilitate the use of the radar devices, the question was also asked about whether the police has the capacity to deal with this

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problem; were the Bill to be other wise structured, I have no doubt that the same question would have come back to haunt us about whether the police has the capacity to monitor and to police as it were persons who would have instruments in their motor-vehicles and would be playing them in a loud repetitive and a continuous manner and therefore what is the point in giving effect to such a piece of legislation? Would it mean that the police would have to be armed on this occasion rather in addition to radar in addition to the radar devices the armed with decibel devices to measure the levels of noise in these vehicles in order for some charge or ticket or whatever the case maybe.

Mr Speaker, this I very unacceptable and we do not envisage the situation where you have police ranks on the road with radar devices, with decibel devices, with so many devices attached to their hips that sometimes they pull the wrong one. I obviously would not want a situation where,

instead of pulling the decibel device they pull the radar device, and instead of pulling the radar device they pull something more lethal.

So, I think that having regard to the intent of the Bill and if we are to seriously address this problem, we obviously have to deal with it in the absoluteness sense. We have to make the legislation absolute. I recall speakers from the other side of the House - well

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I should not say on the other side of the House - we have seen letters appearing in sections of media now questioning whether two beers is too much in relation to driving under the influence of alcohol. Some people are saying that we are flexing too much; there should not even be two beers being the minimum.

Of course, Mr Speaker, there is no law that would be able to please everyone in our society, but I want to insist that with respect to this particular piece of legislation, it is not only a question of the nuisance value that is associated with the Bill; it is a question of public safety and security. It is a question of making our society - incrementally - It cannot be done at one file suite, but making our roads more accident free and I believe that there is no one that could stand up and argue in any convincing way that loud repetitive and continuous music blasting in the ears of the driver is not a distraction as we have agreed in the case of cell phones. We also have records to show that as a result of such practices there have been many accidents on the road as well. So it is a question of public safety and security. It is also a question of ensuring that our roads are made more and more accident free and ensuring above all that the passengers in the vehicles, who not only use the motor vehicles as a means of transportation to get from point A to point B, but also pay a fare to do so. I do not know whether the minibus drivers or the owners in construction

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their fare fee add in the cost of music. I do not know if they do that, but if they add in the cost of the music in the fare structure, which I doubt whether the Minister of Tourism, Industry of Commerce does, that is a double jeopardy in which they are putting the passengers of the vehicle, because how do they know that if I am going to a minibus or a hire car ... *[Interruption]*... somebody fainted behind there, I thought it was Mr Trotman, because he would not have been able to make his trip to Beijing. *[Interruption: 'No, no!']* We want to know that you are in good health to make that trip to Beijing. Mr Speaker, as I was saying, how does the driver of that minibus know that when I enter that minibus or hire car, I want to travel in peace and tranquillity? I want to enjoy the beauty of the countryside - the scenery - and I am not interested in hearing music being played, but a cost has been attached to my fare which I do not know about and I am being subjected to something that I have no interest in. So the interest of the passenger is also an overarching consideration. Now there are some who might say that it is the passenger who asked for this music to be played. Those of us who move around this city would know that it is a view that is sometimes proffered that many do not want to travel in a cork ball; they want to travel in a minibus that has all the latest sounds and I think it would be un-parliamentary language if I were to repeat in this House some

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of the lyrics which I am acquainted with. [*Interruption: 'Oh, you want to sing'*] No, not for the purpose of singing, just to quote the lyrics, because when you quote the lyrics of the music you hear in these means of transportation, I could well imagine what would be the reaction not only of the other Members of this House, but even members of the media and those sitting in the gallery. So I will refrain from doing that. The point I would like to make is that it is obnoxious; it is unacceptable.

Mr Speaker, what we want here is to ensure that all play a part in ensuring that our road are made accident free increasingly; that the passengers' interest is an overriding one and that through constant education, because we cannot leave that consideration out. Side by side with most of this Bill will have to be carried out a educational campaign so that all parties who are involved get on board in order to ensure that this Bill when passed by this Honourable House, becomes successfully enforced and generally accepted and honoured not in the breach, but honoured in the true sense of the word by all those who used these two particular modes of public transportation. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

[*Applause*]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Riehl

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Mrs Clarissa S Riehl: Mr Speaker, I rise to make a few brief remarks on this Bill.

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs to his credit has always been consistent in his criticism to noise nuisance. I recall several years ago, he took that as his personal baby and he is to be commended for taking this measure to outlaw this particular brand of nuisance on public transportation. I take the point made by the Minister that a lot of it has to do with public safety and I wondered how these mini bus drivers could cope with that volume of noise and still focus properly on driving on the roads.

It is not a fact of the music per se, but the level of which is played. All is aware of that, that makes it offensive and I agree that the Minister also, I did not think that I would stand up to agree almost one hundred percent with the sentiments he has expressed, but I think this afternoon I do. That I agree that citizens travelling in public transport, minibuses, taxis and so forth, which they have to pay increasingly higher fees these days must have their sense bombarded by this excessively loud music. I realise the difficulty in monitoring the volume and I think I understand why the Honourable Minister had to pull in Bill No. 11 and substitute it with this Bill - No. 17 that we are now debating here. There again as the Minister said, the drivers turning up and down the volume if they are approaching police stations or if they see police

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vehicles and so forth. They know about all of these tricks so that it will be increasingly difficult for the police to monitor the previous Bill if that was the one we were debating here. So I can understand the total ban that is now on music on both hire cars, minibuses and all means of public transportation.

Mr Speaker, noise nuisance is but one element of a prevailing culture of lawlessness that has invaded our society within recent times. Residents throughout the length and breadth of Guyana are played by this type of nuisance. It comes in different forms from nightclubs and bars, ad hoc bar-b-ques, push carts selling everything from CDs to peanuts and channa and playing music at intolerable decibels to the annoyance and even private citizens from their own homes playing music and very, very, loud and intolerable decibels to the annoyance and impairment of the sense of hearing no doubt of the neighbourhood.

I had a situation at one time where a client of mine was so fed up and got together and got one hundred and sixty-something signatures from residents in his area and send it to the Central Housing and Planning. I do not know why he chose that entity to send it, of a particular bar which played music up to two o'clock in the morning and they could not get no response from the police, who themselves were visitors to this bar, and so they thought that they would choose some other entity.

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There is also a new trend among these music players, Sir, to turn up the base volume on their sets giving an additional booming sound to the already loud music and I feel that there is nothing more destructive to one's ear drum when that is done. So we quite appreciate the problem as it exists overall.

I know that Section 174 (a) of the Summary Jurisdiction Offences which is suppose to deal with this noise nuisance on the making from homes, bars, et cetera. I think the whole problem stems from a lack of enforceability. I have two recent letters which I would like to read some bits which show how pervasive this situation is:

- (i) Is from the Essequibo area; and
- (ii) Is from Corentyne.

So it spans the whole length of our country and I will read the one which is Stabroek News Monday 4th: It says:

Enforce the noise nuisance law and boost the national coffers

And this is particular intelligent writer. He says:

As a means of boosting our national revenue, I believe that Section 174 (a) of the Summary Jurisdiction Offences Act, if not other legislation should be stringently enforced.

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And he goes down to say, I will hop, skip and read from the letter Sir.

Maybe there is a small scope for such revenue collection in Georgetown and Berbice, but yes, I guarantee handsome returns can be earned from the Essequibo Coast. It does not matter the day or the time noise pollution emanates not only from vehicles here, but also businesses. Sounds from the cars usually oscillate between ear splitting to cat-o-burst to haunting deep growls of amplified base ...

I think that is the same boom boom I am talking about.

There are businesses hammering away in their routine execution of their affairs slamming all varieties of hardware on abrasive surfaces. One praised diligently for the rapid passage of these disturbances, but certain mobile units peddling goods also treat the communities to a salvo of Bollywood lyrics blaring from a megaphone. So it goes on in that tenor all the time to say all the various types of noise nuisances that are occurring and are plaguing our citizenry in this country.

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There is another one in today's newspapers *Carwash Creating Major Noise Nuisance on the Corentyne* and this one is a concerned resident of Williamsburg and bringing to the attention of the police this noise nuisance that is affecting the entire community especially children and the elderly.

Over the last year a carwash business has become a regular promoter of outdoor events that includes the playing of the most vulgar of music at the loudest possible volume. It goes on to say that the music is played from 2.00 pm to 4.00 am the next morning. Our children cannot study for crucial exams. The windows of the house, the zinc sheets and the roof were virtually shaking from high volumes of distasteful music. We would like the Police Commander of Berbice to look into this situation as officers from the outpost can be seen regularly at the carwash consuming ...

I do not want to go on.

... and even during the late nights bubble sessions.

Sir, it brings me to the point of enforcement. We know the problem. The problem is pervasive. The Minister knows it and everyone in this Honourable House knows it, but how do we address it. Passing the legislation per se is not the whole of it; the

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most important part the Minister touched on it. It is educating people and enforcing the law such as you have.

Let me relate a little experience that I had just coming up everyday along Wellington Street at the junction of Wellington and Regent Street, everyday there is a push cart blaring music at the loudest decibel and two days ago, ahead of me, there was a police vehicle - a little pick-up truck - laden with policemen, they were just awaiting to cross the width of Regent Street and I was behind them, and both vehicles were parked there for a good few minutes, and this noise was going on and not one policeman even bat an eyelid in the direction and it was just at the corner. So our policemen who occurred from the very society, which gives rise to these forms of nuisances; our policemen are part and parcel ... they are cut from the very society and many of them do not see anything wrong. So the education will have to start with them. Minister, perhaps at the recruitment stage at their early first training you will have to start with them. You have to drill into them that noise nuisance is not to be tolerated. I do not want to go into those four As, but they must know that noise is even use as a form of torture and it is fast becoming that form in our society.

I would also like to say something. I am talking about education here, a former president of this country told me that when he paid a visit to Malaysia, and during the course of his stay in the capital,

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he said to his host head of State ... he remarked on how beautifully cleaned his city was and the answer was, it was not always like this; it was the opposite. We had one of the dirtiest city and we tried our level best in getting behave differently and to clean up the city, but they could not succeed, so he decided that this was a lost generation and that he would start with the generation behind the one; he will start in the schools. He said, he started there teaching the children and very soon the children were doing the monitoring the adults; they were monitoring their peers and very soon they had one of the cleanest city. He said, little children in the streets were going up to people - to men - and said, Sir, you dropped a piece of paper on the street. They were so schooled that they were doing that. I think that at this age a school boy going and tell one of our citizen, (we do not say, Sir) mister, you drop a plastic bad with a straw in it, can you please pick it up? Because we have that problem too; that is another element of the sense of lawlessness that has been prevailing in our society; the dirtiness of our streets; people littering all the time as they go along.

So we have the education to do with the children, with your recruits and sensitizing them with noise nuisance is not going to be tolerated, because on the contrary of what you are thinking that the fines are draconian. I do not find anything draconian. As a

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matter of fact \$7,500 is what a ticket is now - a police gives you a ticket for \$7,500. So I do not think that that is any form of deterrent to the noise nuisance.

Mr Speaker, I have before me and this is not from the Stabroek News, but from the Chronicle of 5 September 2007. I never knew that they had these things going and this also attest to the Minister's interest in noise nuisance. I am giving him a lot of kudos. He has been putting out these little bulletins in the papers and this lists a number of places in A Division. It is headed Placed an Offender in all the Divisions A, G, C, D, E and F and list all these offenders. I read at the bottom; I do not want to read the offender; perhaps I should hop skip:

- Jerries Snackette;
- Hotel Woodbine;
- New Court Yard,
- a whole number of residences:
 - 2 Delhi Street, Prashad Nagar;
 - 7 Delhi Street, Prashad Nagar;
 - 1136 Fraser Drive; Sophia

And so it goes on - one long list of residents. No doubt these came out from the various complaints, but it says, but it says at the bottom that the Ministry of Home Affairs has made checks at the said locations on specified days and times and has verified the

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validity and justification of these complaints. The Ministry of Home Affairs advises the Divisional Commanders of the Guyana Police Force and has been provided with the relevant details pertaining to these complaints. These Commanders have been directed to take appropriate action to ensure that no person shall and then it is quoted the Section 174 (a) -

No person shall in any roads, street, public place or land or in any building or premises by operating or causing or suffering to be operated any stereo sets, duke box, radio, wireless, loud speaker, amplifier, automatic piano or similar instrument of music or by any other means whatsoever make or cause or suffer to be made any noise which shall be so loud and so continuous or repetitive as to cause a nuisance to the occupants of any premises in the neighbourhood.

So we have the laws and we are going to have the one after today for the motor vehicles, the question is: are these laws going to be enforced. The letter that I read the police themselves were subscribing to visiting these places and the Minister did speak of police and then people turning off their music, but what about making the complainant, the police do not necessarily have to be the complainant, but he is the virtual complainant. The virtual complainant is always a person who is affected. All the police need to do is to take a statement from the person who made the

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complaint and that is the person who have to stand up in the court and testify and it is a matter whether the magistrate believes or not believe, but we have to bring more of these culprits to the courts, if we do not, then we will be passing all these legislations in vain. We give our support to this legislation, Sir and we hope that generally the situation of noise nuisance could be attacked with much more vehemence than just passing the laws in the Parliament. We hope that the Minister will continue his drive and ensure that people enjoy their homes in peace and quiet. Thank you, Sir. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member
The Honourable Member Mr Neendkumar

Mr Neendkumar: Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2008 as proposed by Minister Clement Rohee.

The Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2008 is yet another positive step on the part of the Government. Once again the Government has shown its desire to deal with the unacceptable behaviour by drivers on our roadways. The Bill seeks to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act Chapter 8:02 by the insertion of a new section - Section 174 (b). This Bill

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in effect ... *[Interruption: 'Deborah, you are close to the market and the noises in the market do not count.']* ... electronic equipment in the motor bus or hire car ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Mrs Backer, do you have something against Mr Kumar? As soon as he ..

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Sir, can I list them? *[Laughter]*

Mr Neendkumar: Mr Speaker, I know that Debbie is a noise nuisance in the House.

A driver or a motor bus or a hire car shall not play or allow anyone to play any music in a motor bus or hire car, while the motor bus in plying its route or park in a public place. No longer will the areas of commuters and the public be subjected to the scourge of this type of noise nuisance. Mr Speaker, drivers of motor buses and hire cars normally play music above the acceptable level of fifty to fifty-five decibels continuously, which becomes a nuisance that is noise like Debbie. Noise is one the most common of all occupational hazards in respect of our public transportation system and causes hearing impediment in the long and short term.

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The time to take preventative step has been long overdue as Minister Rohee said. The Government has shown its commitment to ensure a healthy environment for all of its citizens:

- The implementation of the GROW MORE FOOD Campaign to ensure food security so that our citizens would not starve during this time of global financial depression;
- The establishment of the East Demerara Regional Hospital at Diamond, East Bank Demerara to provide a more efficient access to health services to a large population of our citizens; and
- The recent passage of the Evidence and Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2008, which in effect criminalises drunken drivers through this House.

Those are just a few examples which can be cited to demonstrate the commitment of Government towards ensure a safe healthy environment for all our citizens. Mr Speaker, it is a well-known fact that there are elements within the public transportation sector that operate within the vehicles boom-boom boxes. There are even reports of individuals being verbally and physically assaulted when they ask the operators to moderate the volume at which stage the drivers play their music.

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Our travelling public consist of our young, old and persons with disabilities who are exposed to all sorts of profane and loud music. The quality of service provided to the commuting public is sometimes of a poor standard, because of the excessive music in some motor vehicles. Drivers are often unable to hear when passengers indicate their desired destinations. Passengers desirous of using their cellular phones often have to plead with drivers to turn down the volume of the music; these requests in many cases are met with disrespectful comments by drivers. Further, Mr Speaker, you will agree that the quality of music sometimes is not acceptable and the vulgar music as was alluded to by Minister Rohee is also not acceptable.

The time has come for us to send a strong message; a message which proclaims that we are no longer going to tolerate the lawlessness and vulgarity, which permeates throughout the public transportation system and has taken on an identity of its own a minibus/hire-car culture.

From reports we learnt that some school girls are in the habit of riding up and down in minibuses joy riding with the music. This music must not be allowed since the music attracting young people and often leads to them being seduced.

Mr Speaker, Section 174 (b) (ii) provides that a driver of a motor bus or hire car who contravenes Subsection (i) commits an

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offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not less than \$7,500 or more than \$15,000 and to imprisonment of six months and on a second or subsequent conviction, to a fine not less than \$10,000 or more than \$20,000 and to imprisonment of twelve months.

Mr Speaker, the Guyana Police Force as the national entity responsible for the enforcement of laws will be encouraged to proactively enforce this law without fear or favour. None is above the law. The public should also be encouraged to be acquainted with the law and ensure that they know what course of action to take when there is a breach of the law. I am therefore in full agreement with this Bill and encourage all sitting Members of this Assembly to join me in support of this Bill which seeks to amend the Summary Jurisdiction Offences Act Chapter 8:02 which was brought before the National Assembly by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs Mr Clement Rohee. I am sure that all decent-minded Guyanese are anxiously awaiting the successful passing of this Bill. It is therefore urgent and necessary that we, without hesitation ensure that the required support to this Bill is the answer given to allow for the proposed insertion of Section 174 (d) to Chapter 8:02 of the laws of Guyana.

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I call on all the Honourable Members of this House including Debbie to support this Bill. Thank you Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member
The Honourable Member Mr Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, had I not known better, I would have thought that there was a deliberate attempt to stage a filibuster this afternoon and to avoid us getting in to more weighty and important matters, but seeing that speakers coming from both sides of the House and some have been quite lengthy; I only wish to say that the Alliance For Change supports this Bill. I do have some personal misgivings, because I have been known from time to time quite incognito to take mini buses on very long routes and the entertainment as the Honourable Member Mr Rohee points out is beyond what we can describe quite entertaining. But be that as it may, I believe that the national good and the good citizens and road users outweighs my own personal pleasure sometimes and I will support this Bill and I will urge my colleagues to do so. And so in the words of Justice of Appeal Nandram Kissoon, I concur with what my brothers and sisters have said. Thank you. *[Applause]*

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The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Health

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, this is a very addition to the menu of interventions that we are taking to curb a menace that stalked Guyanese as we get on the road. It is the carnage that we must stop and of the eleven risk factors that I referred to a couple of weeks ago, which contribute to road accidents, loud music in our vehicles is one of them and all of these risk factors can be mitigated by tasking certain actions. Minister Rohee referred to the fact that some talk about the draconian nature of the Legislation before us, but I think in this House we stand as one today and I would hope that with the vast majority of Guyanese, we stand as one. We have no apologies for the draconian nature of the Legislation before us.

Loud music has contributed to the menace on our roads, not only because it distracts drivers, the evidence is quite clear and research has shown that loud music could diminish concentration by much as twenty percent. Just an example, the average driver takes about three-quarters of a second to respond; a car going sixty miles per hour that needs to brake would go another sixty-six feet before the driver respond. If indeed there is loud music and his concentration is affected so that the average response goes

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from three-quarter of a second to one second, it will take another eighty-eight feet before he responds. This is one of the examples of how loud music can affect us.

This afternoon I am asked to speak just to put on the records and to begin to spread awareness. Mr Speaker, the noise we try to curb in our vehicle is not only to curb road accidents, but noise is a polluter - an environmental health polluter. Just to give people an idea, ordinary conversation measured is about forty decibels and decibels increase the intensity and the loudness increase for every ten decibels that you add, the intensity goes up ten times. So going from twenty decibels to thirty decibels the intensity is ten times more and the loudness is twice. If you go from twenty decibels to eighty decibels, the intensity increases one million times and the loudness you feel is sixty-four times. Mr Speaker, at about eighty-five decibels, you begin to have impairment and at 110 decibels - this is stereo music - exposure for just two minutes begins to impair your hearing. In Guyana and the world, there is an increasing amount prevalence of hearing impairment and vehicles contribute to this.

This particular Legislation is not just addressing the menace on our roads and road accidents, but it also addressing an overall environmental health problem that we have in our country. Mr Speaker, there are good reasons why we must support this Bill. I

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want to add that this Bill is not just addressing public transportation, but it is a caution to all of us even in our private vehicles. Mr Speaker, just to raise awareness, it is not just the music that comes out of the stereo and so on and it is music that comes from our I-pods and all those things that we have in our ears, because people turn them up loudly; the end result is that our health is affected. Hearing losses like the ones I am referring to today, but there are other things like blood pressure; there are hormonal changes and so that can be affected by noise. So this afternoon, I want just very briefly to say that this legislation refer to one of the menace that we face in our country, but it is also addressing other issues and I hope that one day we can address in a more focus and targeted way. I want to add my congratulations to Minister Rohee for drawing attention to this very important health problem; this very important environmental pollution problem; the problem of noise. It is time that Guyanese begin to pay attention to noise as one of the factors that contribute to ill health in our country. So this afternoon, it gives me great pleasure to support this Bill and ask that all of us give full support to this Bill on behalf of all of the people of this country. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I agree with my colleague, the Honourable Member Mr Trotman that there are indeed other weighty matters to follow and we should not hold it up much further.

The consensus, I believe is overwhelming and reverberating and I think it is a forerunner of another unifying motion that is to come. I agree wholeheartedly with my colleague Member Mrs Riehl when she said that it is clearly a manifestation of lawlessness and cannot be seen in isolation from the other factors of lawlessness that manifest themselves in our society. She is also quite correct when she pointed out that the problem usually with these legislations is enforcement and the law enforcement agency and in this particular case the Guyana Police Force will again be under tremendous scrutiny in this respect. But I do recall the statement again and I hope I am not over-killing my constant references to Mr Trotman, when he said in the last debate that we have to give the law enforcement agencies the tools,. We have to provide the tools; we have to start with the legislation in order for them to act in a manner that is within the law.

Indeed, the passing of the Legislation is part and parcel of an entire situation that has to develop and in this regard education.

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The point was indeed made that education must start with the law enforcement officers and I have absolutely no quarrel with that at all. The police ranks who are the ones that enforce the law from the time they entered the Felix Officer Training School, they must be imbued with this sense of respect, courtesy, modesty, because power is something that has to be exercised with a tremendous degree of modesty and Members of the Guyana Police Force have a heavy responsibility in that respect. It is unfortunate that the Regent and Wellington Streets' incident that the Honourable Member referred to ... and this is something that I will certainly look into. I do not know if it is a permanent situation that goes on there, but if it is indeed do, we will certainly look into that.

Mr Speaker, I am also aware of the contrast that was drawn between the Malaysian experience and our experience here in this part of the world; it is indeed a tremendous contrast if you know the situations that obtain in Malaysia and our part. Clearly these are experiences that we have to look at. I agree that we have to bring more culprits before the courts and it is again true that the noise nuisance polluters are the ones who constantly escape the net of the law or the reach of the law by constantly either turning down the equipment or turning it off and when the police leave the scene, up it goes again.

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Mr Speaker, with those few words therefore, together with my other colleagues, I wish to commend this Bill and ask that it be read a Second time.

Question put and agreed to

Motion Carried

Bill read a Second time

IN COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 and 2 ...

Question proposed, put and agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

ASSEMBLY RESUMED

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

2. MONEY TRANSFER AGENCIES (LICENSING)

BILL 2008 - Bill No. 15/2008

published on 23 July 2008

A Bill intituled, an Act to provide for the licensing of persons carrying on the business of money transfer agencies to make provision for the registering of money transfer agents and for connected purposes

The Honourable Minister of Finance

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, I rise on the matter of the Money Transfer Agencies (Licensing) Bill 2008.

Mr Speaker, this Bill as is indicated in the Explanatory Memorandum seeks to establish a legislative and regulatory framework to govern the licensing, regulating and supervising of money transfer agencies. We are of the view that the Bill will benefit from detailed consideration in a Special Select Committee and I therefore wish to move that it be read a Second time and referred to a Special Select Committee.

Question put and agreed to

Bill read a Section time

Question -

That the Bill be referred to a Special Select
Committee

Put and agreed to

Motion carried

Bill is so committed

The Speaker: Honourable Members, we can now commence our
debate on the Motion before the House.

MOTION

**HONOURING LINDEN FORBES SAMPSON BURNHAM,
OE, SC IN RECOGNITION OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO
GUYANA**

The Honourable Member Mr Corbin will now move the Motion.
Mr Corbin you may now proceed?

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WHEREAS Mr Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, OE, SC was elected to the Legislative Assembly (now National Assembly), on the 18th day of May 1953, in the first General Elections held under Universal Adult Suffrage in the then British Guiana (now Guyana), and was appointed the Minister of Education in the First People's Progressive Party Government (PPP);

AND WHEREAS Mr LFS Burnham played a major role in the formation and development of both major political Parties in Guyana, in 1950, as the Chairman of the first mass political party in Guyana and, in 1957, as the Founder Leader of the People's National Congress;

AND WHEREAS Mr LFS Burnham also played a major role, with other, in the struggle for political independence from Britain, which was accomplished on the 26 May 1966;

AND WHEREAS Mr LFS Burnham also guided the smooth and peaceful transition of Guyana to Republican

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status on the 23 February 1970, while serving as the first Prime Minister of an independent Guyana;

AND WHEREAS Mr Burnham served as a distinguished Parliamentarian for thirty years until 1980, when he became ineligible to remain seated on becoming the first Executive President of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was a major architect of the Caribbean integration movement as exemplified by his role in the formation of CARIFTA in 1968, CARICOM in 1973 and the various other initiatives for the strengthening of Caribbean unity including the promotion and hosting in Guyana of the First Caribbean Festival Of Arts, CARIFESTA in 1972;

AND WHEREAS the 6th day of August 2008 will mark the 23rd Death Anniversary of the Late Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, who died while serving as Guyana's first Executive President from 1980 to 1985;

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BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly on the FIFTY FIFTH YEAR of his ENTERING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, on the occasion of his TWENTY THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY and in the year of the 35th Anniversary of CARICOM, gives the recognition to Mr.Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham for his extraordinary and outstanding career as a Guyanese leader;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly gives due recognition to the service of Mr Forbes Burnham to the National Assembly and Guyana by requesting the Government to have prepared and published a collection of his speeches spanning his tenure in the National Assembly for display in the Library of the National Assembly;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly agrees that full sized portraits of each of the Presidents of Guyana should be commissioned and displayed in the Chambers of the National Assembly;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly calls on the Government to designate a State Institution to be responsible for historical Research and Documentation to Chronicle and archive all of the works of each President of Guyana for the benefit of future generations of Guyanese.

Mr Robert H O Corbin: Mr Speaker, perhaps I should begin by reciting some words of one of Guyana's lesser known poets, Ivan Forrester:

*In painful reminiscence ...
An evening shadow lurks ...
A kaleidoscope of memories hurries
across a faded screen of life
As a weary warrior hopes vainly for
another sun to rise ...
But the bugle is sounded ...
The struggle is ended ...
A day is done
Whether he be Victor or
Vanquished ...
Tomorrow's laurels are pinned on
the mirrored diary of today.*

Mr Speaker, I feel a sense of pride and I feel somewhat privileged to move the Motion standing in my name and seconded by my colleague on the left, Mr Winston Murray,

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES 7 AUGUST 2008
HONOURING LINDEN FORBES SAMPSON BURNHAM,
OE, SC, MP, IN RECOGNITION OF HIS CONTRIBUTION
TO GUYANA.**

I am buoyed further by the reassurance that this Motion will receive the unanimous support of this Assembly. I believe that such support signals a significant development and maturity, demonstrating that we are prepared, in a non-partisan way, to give credit where it is due and ensure that future generations can dispassionately judge from the facts, make their own analyses and arrive at their own interpretations of our history.

On the 6th day of August, 1985, a personality that had dominated the academic, political, economic, social and cultural life of this Nation suddenly departed without notice or fanfare. Mr Speaker, I sat silently, in shock, with my other colleagues of the then Cabinet, when Prime Minister Desmond Hoyte, as he then was, related the sad news to a Cabinet meeting that Tuesday morning. Linden Forbes Samson Burnham, OE, SC, had died around 10.45 a.m. in the process of what we all considered was a minor operation at the Georgetown Hospital.

The sixth day of August is a significant day in history. It was this day, Monday, 6 August 1945 that the first atomic bomb, code-named *Little Boy* was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, Japan by the order of US President Harry S Truman, killing in excess of

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seventy thousand persons that day alone and sending shock waves around the world. Three days later, I think it was 9 August, 1945, in the last known use of a nuclear weapon in modern warfare, the second bomb, code-named *Fat Man* was detonated on Nagasaki also killing some forty thousand persons that day. The two bombs killed as many as 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 80,000 in Nagasaki by the end of 1945 and since then, thousands more have died from injuries or illnesses attributed to exposure to radiation released by the bombs.

As fate would have it, news of the death of President Forbes Burnham, nicknamed *ODO*, the *Old Man* and the *Kabaka*, while serving as the first Executive President of the Co-operative Republic, sent shock waves all over Guyana and wider afield. Indeed, the front page of the Guyana Chronicle of Wednesday, 7 August 1985 stated those exact words:

President Forbes Burnham, O.E., S.C., 62, died at the Georgetown Hospital at 10:45 hours yesterday sending shock waves throughout the nation and even further afield ...

Making the announcement to a grief stricken Nation later that day, President Hoyte appropriately stated:

The lamp which has lit our way for over two decades has gone out today. Our hero, guide,

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*teacher, friend, protector, leader and indeed the
Father of the Nation is no more.*

That day brought to an end the life of a man who had to his credit a distinguished academic career. He earned the accolade as a luminary in the legal profession; a leading fighter against colonialism and in the struggle for Guyana's political independence; the founder member of the two major political parties in Guyana; the first Prime Minister of independent Guyana; and the first Executive President who devoted his entire life in service to our people and Nation.

One writer described him as:

A somewhat controversial Caribbean figure either well admired or passionately despised, an undeniable visionary of great intelligence.

In similar vein, Mellissa Ifill, writing in the Stabroek News of 6 March 2003 stated:

Few individuals in Guyanese history, more so political history, have generated such controversy as Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. More-over, few individuals have had such a lasting impact on

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the structure and character of the Guyanese society. For many analysts, respect for his intellectual capacity and achievements and his ability to catapult Guyana into regional and international prominence Burnham, in both life and death aroused both admiration and scorn; he was revered and ridiculed, perceived as a deity and a demon.

We, in the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana recognize him, however, as a visionary, who was the Founding Father of an Independent Guyana. His vision was to establish an egalitarian society, where all races would enjoy social justice and political and economic emancipation. The pursuit of these objectives at the height of the Cold War was considered too dangerous by the West for the Caribbean region as his successful efforts could have empowered other leaders in Latin America and Africa to follow similar socialist policies that were opposed by the West. Consequently, he faced severe obstacles both internal and external as he introduced economic policies and programmes to lay the foundation for the psychological/cultural and economic liberation for Guyana.

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For several reasons, therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is significant that this Motion, which seeks, *inter alia*, not only to recognise the contribution of President Burnham to Guyana, but, also, to designate a State institution to be responsible for historical Research and Documentation to chronicle and archive all of the works of each of the Presidents of Guyana for the benefit of future generations of Guyanese, is being debated in the National Assembly of Guyana today.

Mr Speaker, it may be useful to reflect on some thoughts expressed in the Introduction to one of Tyrone Ferguson's major works, *To Survive Sensibly Or To Court Heroic Death: Management of Guyana's Political Economy 1965-1985*.

Ferguson's work is significant from a particular perspective and it may be appropriate to quote a few lines for the benefit of my colleagues in the House. I quote excerpts from Pages vi and vii:

The fundamental contention is that a major persisting obstacle to the attainment of such a national consensus is the interpretation of political economy events spanning the four and a half decades from 1953 to the present. More pointedly, an integral element - if not the most important factor - is the interpretation of the reality of Burnham's and his party's rule. Put another way, the basic argument is that any project aimed at

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national reconciliation and the forging of a broad-based consensus for better and more effective governance in Guyana is vitally predicated on a coming to terms with Burnham's legacy. It necessitates a frontal, frank and dispassionate assessment of that legacy, that is stripped of the partisan and deeply personal animosities that have so far governed so much of the commentary and analysis of that era and that in fact, influenced for the worse the behaviour of the respective leadership of the main ethnic groups in the society.

Later at Page vii he continues and I think this is important:

From time immemorial, myth making has been an inherent and necessary part of community identity and cohesiveness and ultimately, of the process of nation building.

But there is another side or rather approach to myth making.

This is the negative aspect of myths and it becomes especially problematic in a multi ethnic or plural society context ... these myths tend to serve purposes of divisiveness and alienation, reinforcing ethnic polarization and conflicts.

They become particularly pernicious when they attempt to reorganize historical memory.

Mr Speaker, the point being made here is that unless we are able to dispel the negative myths and come to terms with our history,

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there is very little hope for stability in this country. Whether we accept it or not, Guyana is a nation in deep crisis. Every day we move closer to the brink. We have basically two options available to us.

One option is to sit back and do nothing and witness the steady deterioration into chaos and self-destruction.

The other is to accept our responsibility, determine what is required, enlist all the professional and other support that is needed and work diligently to ensure that Guyana takes its rightful place and respected among the nations of the region and the world.

The question is whether we have the vision and the will to find permanent solutions. I believe it is a task that must of necessity involve all Guyanese. Not the PNCR-1G alone or the PPP/C in exclusion of all others; not the AFC or the GAP/ROAR acting on their own; not the religious organizations whether Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, mystical or Rastafarian, acting separately as religious organizations; not ACDA, IAC, PAC, GIHA TAMOG acting alone as cultural or ethnic organizations; and not the private sector acting separately as business organizations or in collaboration with the Guyana TUC and the Guyana Bar Association as Civil Society. Unless we work together to deal

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with our common problems we are unlikely to succeed. Our national poet Martin Carter appropriately puts it in one of his well known poems:

All are involved, all are consumed.

I shudder to think how future generations would judge all of us if we do not take the bold steps and begin this process now.

Guyana has nowhere to go and has no realistic chance of revitalization without peace and reconciliation. A peace that is based on justice and the recognition that the rights and aspirations of all Guyanese, whatever their ethnic or racial origins and whatever their social backgrounds and religious beliefs. This indeed was part of the vision of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

Mr Speaker, lest it be felt that I am now bringing to bear these thoughts for convenience of this debate, four years ago, in my first address as Leader to my Party Congress in August 2004, I stated as follows:

If Guyana is to move forward there must be a paradigm shift. We cannot continue in this vicious cycle. For cohesion to be achieved we have to close the chapter of the past. The young people of Guyana are concerned about the future and it is

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that which responsible leaders must now address. I, therefore, propose that we close the chapter on the past. Give recognition where it is due. No single person in history has only good deeds. Let us honour our past Leaders: Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, Cheddi Bharrat Jagan, Ptolemy Alexander Reid, Boysie Ramkarran (I believe your father, Sir, and not hers). Concentrating on their faults could only open old wounds. What we need is genuine reconciliation, and if persons still feel deeply aggrieved, let us have a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But for the sake of our youth and the future of Guyana, the only way forward is to close the pages of the past and work resolutely for a bright and glorious future to bequeath a rich legacy to our future generations.

I said so in 2004, not today, and I believe, Mr Speaker, the Hansard will show that I echoed similar sentiments, when I spoke in support of the Motion to honour Dr Cheddi Jagan not so long ago and I reiterate those sentiments here today. The attempts to distort and or rewrite history must not succeed or it will lead to greater polarization and alienation that will be counter productive to the development of a cohesive and progressive society. The Motion today in Parliament is, hopefully, the beginning.

Mr Speaker, in the ACDA column, *Burnham: A Vision - A Legacy*, posted on 14 October 2004 on the website, guyanacaribbeanpolitics.com, the writer states:

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Many have misunderstood Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and the nation owes him an honest appraisal. To the extent that he lies buried in cloudiness our greatness and contribution to modern Guyana will not be appreciated, for it is a weapon in the enemy's hand to dull one of the brightest lights of a people when there is no attempt to humiliate them.

To the extent that we do not articulate Burnham's legacy to this nation we betray our ancestors' struggle and contribute to our oppression.

Mr. Speaker, any evaluation of Forbes Burnham's contribution to Guyana and the conditions, which helped to shape his vision, would require an analysis of several periods in our history. I dare suggest that the first period would begin from his youth in Kitty Village and his period of academic training in British Guiana and London until he was admitted to the bar of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London in 1948. This period would also include his Presidency of the West Indian Students Union in London, a position which allowed him to participate as a delegate of the Union in the International Union of Students' Congress in Prague in 1947 and in Paris 1948

The next period I suggest would be 1949 to 1955, the period of his entry into national and local government politics; his involvement in trade unionism and the period that I would

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describe as ideological experimentation in Guyana in the context of a colonial dilemma. This is my own classification.

The next period would be 1955 to 1964, the period of the heightened independence struggle; the disintegration of a united national political movement and the political and ethnic polarization of the nation.

In Ferguson's work that I referred to earlier, as he stated in his own words in this book, he sought to provide a dispassionate description and analysis of the functioning of the political economy of Guyana during the Burnham era of Governance, 1965 to 1985. That was grounded, he said, in facts rather than impressions and emotions; that eschews the narrowly partisan political motivations of so much of the commentary on that period and devoid of what he described as the pervasive personal animosities and hatreds of the main political participants and their intellectual supporters. To facilitate his analysis, he divided the period 1965 to 1985 into three sub-periods and I adopt them:

- (i) 1965 to 1969
- (ii) 1970 to 1978 and
- (iii) 1979 to 1985

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He considered the sub-period 1965 -1969 as essentially a phase of transition involving the movement from one political administration to another, from a situation of deep-seated instability and inter-ethnic violence to one of relative stability and non-violent relations from the status of colony to independence and from the context of colonial responsibility for a country's external relations to the assumption of full control by the leadership of an independent Guyana.

He considered the next sub-period 1970 - 1978 as a phase of the radical transformation of the political economy in the context of what was inherited, the experiences of the transitional years and the comparative situation of Guyana's peer countries in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Finally, he considered the sub-period 1979 - 1985 as a phase marked by the pervasive deterioration of the political economy especially at the level of political ordering and economic performance.

It is admitted that Ferguson was a participant /observer during his period of analysis and he later served as Head of the Presidential Secretariat under President Burnham's successor, President Desmond Hoyte. Consequently, I do not also propose to use this

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forum to enter a debate or controversy on his analysis today. I leave that exercise for the scholars and future generations that will peruse the archives of the works of all Presidents of Guyana, that this Motion seeks to bring into being. It cannot be successfully contradicted, however, that Ferguson's approach and perspectives provide a useful framework to assess the Burnham era in Government, not in isolation, but in the context of the prevailing domestic and global political and economic environment.

It is obvious from the above that in the time available this afternoon, it would be unrealistic for us to expect a complete and full analysis of President Burnham's contributions. That is why the Resolved Clause to establish an institution for objective research is so important. Today, therefore, my PNCR-1G colleagues and I will only share some selected reflections on the contributions of LFS Burnham throughout these periods without attempting to fit them into any periodic framework for detailed analysis.

Mr Speaker, I accept Mellissa Ifill's contention that few individuals in Guyanese history have generated such controversy as Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. Consequently, a useful starting point is to deal with those matters that are beyond controversy. His circumstances at birth, his academic and

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professional career and some specific achievements fall into this category.

Born in Kitty, on 20 February 1923 to James Ethelbert and Rachel Abigail (nee Sampson) Burnham, LFS Burnham received his primary education at the Kitty Methodist School before moving on to Central High School and then to Queen's College in 1935. He won a Government Junior Scholarship. In 1942, he received the highest scholastic award in the country at that time, the British Guiana Scholarship, an annual award, reserved for the scholar attaining the highest grades at the Senior Cambridge Examinations held annually.

The records reveal that because of the Second World war he studied for the Bachelor of Arts Degree externally and earned it at External Examinations of the University of London in 1944. He traveled to London later and earned his Bachelor of Laws (Hons) degree at the University of London in 1947. In 1948 he was admitted to the bar of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London.

An extemporary scholar, Burnham was noted for his oratory skills. These skills, I believe, remained with him throughout his lifetime and I do not think that anyone would disagree with that.

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They were demonstrated during the thirty years he spoke in this hallowed Chamber. In 1947 he was elected President of the West Indian Students Union in London, a position which allowed him, as I stated earlier, to attend as a delegate of the Union, the International Union of Students' Congresses in Prague and Paris.

His domestic life had no controversy. In 1951, he married Sheila Bernice Lataste. They had three daughters: Roxanne, Annabelle and Francesca. In 1957, he married Viola Victorine Harper together they had two daughters, Melanie and Ulele.

Burnham now also a distinguished barrister like her father in London.

He returned home in 1949 and immediately involved himself in national and local politics. He joined the Political Affairs Committee in that year and along with Dr Cheddi Jagan and others founded the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and he was later elected as its first Chairman in 1950.

In 1952, Mr. L.F.S. Burnham was elected to the Georgetown Town Council. In 1959 he became Mayor of Georgetown and again in 1964.

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In 1953, when the PPP Government came to power after the first elections held under universal adult suffrage, Burnham was appointed Minister of Education in Guyana. It is common knowledge that despite winning eighteen out of the twenty-four seats in the Legislature that government lasted only 133 days. The circumstances of the suspension of the Constitution and the appointment of an interim Government are well documented in one of the works of a strident activist at the time, Mr. Ashton Chase, SC.

On his return home in 1949, he was admitted to the local Bar and it did not take long for his peers to acknowledge him as a legal luminary. By 1959, he was elected President of the Bar Association of British Guiana and after a relatively brief period of practice he took SILK in 1960. I am not quite clear of the authenticity of this, but I am advised that even when it was offered to him, he refused to accept it unless a certain other colleague in the profession, whom he had respected was there before him and been so granted SILK before him, but I suspect with your knowledge of your profession, you will be aware of these historical notes..

On his return to British Guiana, LFS Burnham also became pro active in the trade union movement, as did most of our political

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leaders at the time and by 1952 was elected President of the British Guiana Labour Union, where he served until 1956. He was again elected in 1963 and 1965 and subsequently became President General of that union, a position which he held until his death.

After the unfortunate split of the original PPP, in February 1955, he became Leader of the Peoples Progressive Party (Burnhamite), which party unsuccessfully contested against the PPP (Jaganite) in the 1957 general elections, after which he renamed and reorganized the Party under a new name, the People's National Congress. He became the Founder Leader of that Party, a position he also held until his death.

He returned to this House as a member of the British Guiana Legislature after the 1957 elections and was Leader of the Opposition between 1957 and 1964. He was elected Prime Minister in the coalition Government with the United Force after the first elections under the system of proportional representation in 1964 and remained a member of this Assembly after Independence on 26 May 1966 until 1980 when he assumed the Office of Executive President under the 1980 Constitution. Altogether he served in this Chamber approximately thirty years

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(and I have been advised thirty-eight years by the Honourable Member Ms Teixeira).

His hobbies included chess and horseback riding and he was an ardent cricket fan as illustrated by many efforts to ensure the West Indian team continued successes, including, of course, the special flight to ensure that Clive Lloyd was specially flown in to play with the West Indies team at Bourda a few years ago. The performance of Clive Lloyd then and thereafter vindicated his efforts and illustrated his perspicacity and vision. His love for the game, however, did not prevent him standing for principle, when it became necessary, in the interest of the African Liberation struggle, to ban the South African team from playing in Guyana or cricketers from other teams who played there, even if it meant no cricket at Bourda. His commitment to principle was also illustrated, when he ensured the boycott of the Olympics even though Guyana at that time had the first possibility of winning an Olympic Gold medal, by James Wren Gilkes, but such was the nature of the man.

Mr. Speaker, I have carefully crafted the wording of the above matters to ensure that they fall within the category of what I call incontrovertible facts. If they were to be the subject matter of a sworn Affidavit for the High Court, apart from a possible

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objection on the basis of breaching Order 34, Rules of the High Court, opposing Counsel would only be able to traverse it by treating all of them as admissions.

But, Mr. Speaker there are other matters that can be placed in this category. For example Mr. LFS Burnham was an active participant in the Constitutional Conferences in London in the 1960s aimed at securing Independence from colonial rule for Guyana. After independence he pursued a vigorous foreign policy aimed at preservation of Guyana's territorial integrity, through Guyana's membership of the Non Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and the United Nations. He actively pursued Caribbean integration and was integral in the formation of CARIFTA and later CARICOM. He was a co-signatory to both the CARIFTA Agreement and the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973. He was the initiator of and host of the first Caribbean festival of Arts, CARIFESTA. And should there be any doubts or doubting Thomas' about his role in this matter, I refer them to his speeches made since 1964 and his address to the Caribbean Writers' Conference a few years later, but I do not want to delay the House by moving to those quotations. I believe that they can be found easily by perusing A Destiny to Mould, which has a collection of his speeches.

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His international prominence was so recognized that by 1985, leaders from around the world spoke of his unquestionable greatness.

He believed in and had confidence in the potential and capacity of Guyanese Youth as evidenced by the policies and programmes he pursued while in Government:

- The initiation of National Youth Week
- The National Youth Corps at Tumatumari
- The establishment of the Guyana National Service
- The Peoples Militia
- The reorganization of our educational curriculum and
- The introduction of Free Education from Nursery to University against great criticisms of the capacity of the country to afford such a facility to Guyana's children

are but a few examples.

But his view was that education was the key to unlock the opportunities for the children of the poor and no price was too great for a nation to pay for that kind of investment.

We must also never forget that it was under his Prime Ministership that the voting age was reduced from twenty-one to

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eighteen years in 1973, a development that was responsible for my entering as a Member of this Chamber in that year and a fact that denied me the possibility of coming to this Chamber in 1968, because of age.

Mr. Burnham's commitment to the promotion and development of indigenous culture is also beyond question. His elevation of Diwali, Phagwah and Eid as holidays stand as testimonies to his commitment to building a Guyana for all. He was clear that the Amerindians were to become a part of the Guyanese society. That is why in 1969, a conference of Amerindian leaders was called for the first time in Guyana's history and held in this very Chamber. It was there that the firm decision was taken to ensure that the Amerindians were given titles to their lands.

His was a passion for social balance and equal opportunity of development for all Guyanese irrespective of gender, race, colour, creed or class. It was this passion which inspired his active promotion of equality of women in all spheres of human endeavour and ensured that the necessary legislation was passed to give legal effect to this objective. I believe, my colleagues will expand on these aspects later.

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Much controversy and analysis surrounds his economic policies and programmes and their effectiveness. I am sure, however, that in time, careful analysis in the context of the prevailing ideological, social and international situations, would lead to a re-appraisal of his contribution to Guyana. Some facts, however, cannot be denied on the economic front. Many have forgotten and certainly many young people may not even know that at independence in 1966, the entire infrastructure of Guyana was almost entirely in a state of disrepair left by the colonial period. In fact, it was difficult to find anywhere even a complete straight mile of paved road in Guyana. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Mr. Corbin, I noticed that you are now moving on to a different area. Two things have coincided at this time. One is your time is up and it is now four o'clock. I rather suspect that you have a little way to go before concluding, so I would recommend that we suspend at this time to enable you to refresh yourself so that you would come back with renewed vigour.

Mr. Robert HO Corbin: Very well.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I think that this would be a good time to take the suspension.

16:00H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

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17:10H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

Mr. Clarissa S Riehl: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that the Leader of the Opposition be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Robert HO Corbin: Much obliged, your Honour. Mr. Speaker when we took the suspension, I was agreeing that much controversy and analysis surround the economic policies and programmes of Mr. Burnham and their effectiveness, but I am sure, as I said, in time careful analysis in the context of the prevailing ideological, social and international situation may lead to a re-appraisal of his contribution in that area in time, so that the entire coastal road network was improved and paved under his leadership. That cannot be denied:

- The Canje and Demerara Harbour bridges
- The Linden Soesdyke Highway constructed

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- The Agriculture infrastructure of our country was improved by the construction of the MMA scheme and the expansion and completion of the Tapacuma and the Black Bush Polder Drainage and Irrigation schemes.

These works naturally were important for the economic foundation of the development of the nation.

I would also acknowledge that there is still controversy on the 1966/1972 development programme ably crafted with the assistance of the late Dr Kenneth King and others, who recently departed this plain. But that programme had a key component, Feeding Clothing and Housing the Nation by 1976. Many scoffed at this programme and also his programme of self-reliance by growing and eating more local foods. At that time, there was no global environmental crisis then except for the period in the late 1970s, when the oil prices skyrocketed, but some who scoffed then are today the chief advocates for the implementation of some of these policies, lock, stock and barrel.

Mr. Speaker, I am blessed, I do not think it is a negative thing; I think it is a positive thing and I am blessed to have lived to witness this conversion. My only regret is that Forbes Burnham's late widow Viola Burnham could not have been here this

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afternoon and to have witnessed also some of the developments which are taking place in Guyana now with the rush to grow more food and utilize local products.

I say so, because I recall just before her demise, Sir, I traveled all the way to Atlanta, Georgia to have some conversation with her. She was aware that her time was limited and throughout a very lengthy conversation there, just a few months before she departed, we spoke at length and her grave concern then was the legacy of her husband and what would happen. She was still concerned about the whole question of self-sufficiency and what had become of this drive. She was foreseeing some of the problems that we are experiencing globally now, and I recall saying to her that she ought not to worry, that I believe that in time history will record his contribution in Guyana at the appropriate time. It is for that reason that I really regret that she is not here or could not have lived to see this day.

It is therefore to Linden Forbes Sampson's credit that today, in the face of a global crisis, many have now recognised the importance of his policies of self-reliance and the **GROW MORE FOOD PROGRAMME**.

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Of course, it is not the first time that Burnham's programmes have received bi-partisan support from the PPP and other parties in Guyana. I do recall even though there is not time to enter into that state of nostalgia, the period of critical support when his policies to take along the road to socialism in this country was fully embraced by the major political party at that time and in our thrust to nationalize DEMBA and so on. And so it is not the first time that there have been bi-partisan approaches to dealing with national issues that affect Guyana and as I said, I am therefore greatly admiring the zeal and enthusiasm with which the GROW MORE FOOD PROGRAMME is being pushed and I commend the Minister of Agriculture and wish to say to him that there are many in the PNCR-1G, who would be willing to give support to such a programme, even to give some of the pamphlets that we still have, which helped to make that programme a reality. And I am serious, because to make it a reality then we incorporated a number of other institutions then including the Carnegie School of Home Economics so that people knew how to utilize things and give different menus and so on. So it has to be an all-embracing programme; so I am saying that we are very pleased that that is developing. If there is nothing else, we can say that there is modern consensus since the period of critical support, it is the GROW MORE FOOD CAMPAIGN.

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Mr. Speaker, as you will see, I have tried to concentrate on the areas of Forbes Burnham's life over which there can be little controversy, but again acknowledge that there are several other areas over which there will continue to be debate. These are too numerous to traverse today and even if I did, time will not permit the conclusion of that debate.

For example, the ideology that he embraced. Was he Socialist, Marxist Leninist or revisionist? I suppose if the Honourable Members Mr. Clement Rohee, Mr. Ramotar and I started that debate you yourself, Mr. Speaker, may get tired and throw us out of this National Assembly, but we could not enter into that kind of dialectical process here today.

Was Co-operative Socialism based on a solid philosophical foundation? From my exposure to him, however, I can attest to the fact that he understood and could discuss with amazing incisiveness all the ideologies and philosophies, but he determined that Guyana's circumstances demanded a pragmatic approach. Consequently, it was necessary to take from other ideologies only what was relevant to Guyana, hence his well known statement, *We shall be pawns of neither East nor West*. I can give several citations and quotations to illustrate this point, but I have a wager on my timeframe for presentation which limit

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the extent to which I can traverse on these matters and since I know the Honourable Member Mrs. Debbie Backer keeps her clock ticking to prove whether I am right or wrong, I will not seek to traverse very long, but I just use one of the quotations to illustrate the point I am making and it is found in A Destiny To Mould at Pages 155 and 156. That section was really dealing with a speech to the nation at an open-air meeting - the anniversary of Independence at National Park, Georgetown on 26 May 1969 and this is what he had to say for the benefit of my good friend Mr. Ramotar.

PNC's Ideology

Our ideology - our economic and political goal can be described as socialist because of what we seek to establish, since however, we have a different social and economic structure qualitatively from that obtaining in European countries. We cannot and must not put ourselves into the straight jackets of their dogmas and tactics. We will as a result be suspects by both sides, but who would like to continue a form of intellectual if not also economic colonialism, but that suspicion is the price we must pay if we are to fashion our own destinies and work out our own solutions. It is easy to shout for international consumption that we are Capitalist, Marxist, Socialist or Communist and attract international notice, but of what concrete value are international plaudits for us.

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I think that is one of the quotes I have identified; I would not go into others, but it helps to shed some light on the mind of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham as it relates to his ideological persuasion and how he dealt with the process of determining the ideological direction and I have no doubt that he had such an incisive mind and was so flexible that with the changing global situation, he would have been able to adapt and adjust to suite the challenges of the time.

There are also debates and there will continue to be debates surrounding the split of the PPP in 1955. Who walked out of the 1955 Congress and which faction was the authentic PPP? Was it political ambition or differences of opinion as to the correct tactics to confront the British that lay at the root of the disagreement? Now all these are areas on which we can continue to have debates and the dialectical process will have us going through these issues. And again, I choose not to really delve into these matters, but certainly when a research library is set up and scholars have time to devote to these matters and look at all the facts, there might be more dispassionate assessments of these matters in time.

We have other areas for example, what was the genesis of racial polarization in national politics in Guyana? Was it the slogan,

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Apan-jaat or was it the composition of the leadership of the major political parties and how they pursued their campaigns? These are issues that are continuously going to bedevil us as we engage in the political process.

Was Forbes Burnham a dictator or an ardent implementor of the philosophy that the PPP so resolutely espoused at the time? After all, sometimes he was accused of being not sufficiently Marxist or sufficiently scientific. For example, reviews of the various publications of the PPP THUNDER over this period would be very instructive in the kind of objective analysis that we can make of these issues. I know also that there is great controversy over elections between 1968 and 1985 and I doubt whatever the conclusion of prolonged debates on that the facts can be reversed, but I suggested in my speech since 2004 that if we are after national reconciliation and all of that and there are areas there can never be agreement, then there is need perhaps for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission so that those issues can be aired and people's concerns discussed. But I am certain that in time some of these matters will pale into insignificant if the general good of Guyana is put first and people can see genuine economic progress, cooperation and national reconciliation in this country.

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There are other issues that one can raise for controversies for example, was his dream of the massive hydro electric project in the Upper Mazaruni unrealistic?

Or was it the machinations of Western powers that frustrated an already approved World Bank project?

Or was he wrong to expend such large resources to build the Upper Mazaruni Road utilising self-help labour of many Guyanese, including students from overseas?

Or was the scrapping of the coastal railway, from Parika to Vreed-en-Hoop and Georgetown to Rosignol, a correct decision?

All these are issues that are out there for public debate.

These issues will continue to engage our attention and it is to be hoped that the designated research centre would be able to accumulate the relevant information so that an objective analysis devoid of the political biases (when these analyses are done sometimes by pure political parties and actors) an analysis could be made in determining these matters fully.

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It would be remiss of me to conclude my presentation without expressing some thoughts on LFS Burnham and national unity governance and more particularly, shared governance or power sharing.

Over the past three years, there has been an on going national discussion on how we can remove alienation, achieve national cohesion and good governance. Some of the debates assume that this discussion is of recent vintage. Unfortunately, this has been a major preoccupation of the Leaders of the two major political parties over the years and the subject of at least two serious efforts at arriving at consensus between the PNC and the PPP. On this question I can speak with authority having been personally involved in the first effort as the official note taker and having full knowledge as an officer of the party during the second initiative.

Perhaps it would be useful to introduce the subject by referring to some thoughts of Mr. Burnham that can be found in several of his speeches. But again, I am constrained for time; I do not want to spend a great deal of time on this matter. I just want to point to areas that can help us to elucidate the subject and to see that these issues are not of recent vintage. In fact, I was looking at another account and this is an attempt by Halim Majeed, who is not unknown to my friends on the other side of the House and to

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Members of the PPP. My good friend Halim Majeed who recently published another work - Forbes Burnham - NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND NATIONAL UNITY: 1984/1985. He was able in this book, having done some research, to identify that since 1964, I think it was Mr. Sydney King, later Eusi Kwayana, who had suggested an approach to this matter that there should be joint premierships of Guyana. I think both parties did not take him seriously at that time, but I use it as a reference point to say that this issue of national unity and finding an approach to development of this country is not a new subject.

On the question of racial integration being essential this is what Mr. Burnham had to say, speaking of the political struggle:

Another aspect to which we must pay careful attention is that of race. There are some of my race group, African, who expressed such sentiments as black man must be on top and a similar tendency on the part of Cde. Latchmansingh's race group ...

Of course, Cde. JP Latchmansingh at that time was the first Chairman of the PNC after 1957, so he was referring here to the Chairman of the Party at that time.

... Indian to say coolie man must be on top.

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And this was speaking to the party congress, not in any secret conversation.

... Such sentiments are inspired by enemies of our party and movements and the British Government will give anything for them to gain white currency. This is not a laughing matter if the racist feeling latent or rather patent in these sentiments is allowed to spread; it will have a most ruinous effect.

And I can go on to list, as I said, but I will leave it for the research centre to bring out these aspects of the thinking of Forbes Burnham and indeed if you look at many of the pronouncements of Dr. Cheddi Jagan, you will see that this issue of national unity christened national reconciliation was one that preoccupied the minds of these leaders for a very long time and I dare say throughout the period of their political existence. As I said, I can speak personally on this matter, because in 1976 when the first initiative was taken, there were serious talks about a power sharing government. I, of course, at that time was bound to secrecy, but that seems not to be the order of the day in most parties, because I am told that Mr. Ramotar is a central Committee reporter with the subject of a full article in the newspapers, and letters from my party seem to be getting in the newspapers even before I see them. So that this is a different era,

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but in those days, as I said, confidential matters in the parties were really and I, of course, as the note taker was mandated to document all these discussions that were taking taking place between the two parties and there is still alive in the PPP the official note taker on the PPP side, and since I am speaking and I have identified myself, there was Feroze Mohamed in 1976, a young man from the PYO at that time and I dare say that your father the late Boysie Ramkarran was one of the members of this hallowed circle of the PPP that was involved in those secret and very profound discussions in the 1970s. There was one David Westmaas, I think that is his name. I was part of that team; Janet Jagan and so forth. And on our side we had Hubert Jack and so forth. So I kept those notes very carefully, I wanted it to be part of my publication of my memoir at some time in the future. Of course, since the CIA had an embargo period that they released these documents, so I believe that I will be forgiven in time ...

[Interruption] Yes, I can now speak freely; in fact I had spoken to my good friend Feroze and suggested some time ago that perhaps we should sit together and agree on the minutes, so there is no one side seeking to claim mileage of the serious efforts that were made then. I do not want to go into all those details, but I want to say that I am using the reference point to say that those discussions have reached very far in terms of seeking to build a

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national government and how it was going to be structured and of course there was a few tickling points which eventually led to the break up of that very, very productive meeting and I dare say, at a point when I thought that everything was agreed upon. It was at that point I was mandated to never release the details of the last meeting, but as I said that could be an area of controversy and that is why I want my good friend Feroze to agree with me that we should together agree on what we should finally put down as the accounts of the official minutes.

So, I mentioned this to say that the whole question of power sharing and governance are not issues that arose a few weeks ago; they have been in the minds of the leadership of Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan for a number of years, and of course one can read the account given by Halim Majeed and I endorse what he has said here, because I know about these even though I was not a participant in this particular case, but he was and others to those initiatives made several later just prior to the death of Forbes Burnham to ensure that we put the affairs of Guyana first and try to build a national consensus that could help us to overcome those obstacles that have prevented national reconciliation, cohesion and progress. So with this background the whole issue, which has been brought to the fore of power sharing - shared governance - in the context of an initiative from civil society a few years ago,

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subject to a paper from the PPP on inclusive governance; a paper from the PNC on power sharing are all matters, which need to be put in a melting pot if indeed we are serious about putting the affairs of Guyana first. I mention them today to say that in terms of the assessment of LFS Burnham's contribution to Guyana, social cohesion, power sharing and governance if one were to really have all the works and all these documents in a proper archive, where people can objectively assess them, perhaps it may help to break down some of the taboos, free up the hands of new leaders, who do not understand the historical context of some of these matters and be able to give them a freer hand if they feel they are pinned to seriously and positively address the matters of power sharing and governance in Guyana. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member

Mr. Deborah J Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member

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Mr. Robert HO Corbin: Mr. Speaker, at the personal level, I have been proud to be associated with this man Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. He made me proud to be a Guyanese and gave me the personal inspiration and self-confidence necessary at a time in a newly emerging Nation. I can give several examples and reminiscences of the way he walked and talked with the ordinary people giving them hope and assurance, showing them indeed how the small man could have become the real man by hard work and dedication. I have seen him deal positively with the affairs of this country in some most unorthodox ways. I was explaining to the Honourable Prime Minister and Mr. Ramotar during the break about my visit to North West district when the Manganese Company then sought to immediately dismiss all the workers - terminate their services - and started to pack up every item of equipment in the houses that they built for the manganese area there, and had a pontoon at Port Kaituma loaded with refrigerators, stoves and even kitchen utensils that they were going to ship back to England and the States. Forbes Burnham flew up there and I accompanied him as a youngster to take notes; I was not yet in full time national politics; I was still a community development officer, but I was active in the youth movement of the party. Meeting with him in that room was the manager - a gentleman called Mr. Baldsover - I never forget this name.

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Before he had reached Mr. Baldsover's office, he went to Port Kaituma and saw these things and he told the workers to unload these things; these were things that belonged to Guyana now. The workers were of course a little timid, because they were still waiting on their severance package from the Company and they unloaded the pontoon with all the refrigerators, wares and everything and then when we got to Mathews Ridge at the meeting with Mr. Baldsover, he told Baldsover straight to his face, well I have to tell you that I have given some instructions to remove some equipment that you had in this pontoon and do not be too harsh on the workers for unloading them, because by now they must have been distributing them equitably for their homes at Port Kaituma. Well I could see the face of Mr. Baldsover being a Caucasian getting very red, so he looked at Mr Burnham then Prime Minister and said, I trust Mr. Prime Minister that you will be speaking to me about compensation for these items and the Prime Minister looked straight over at Mr. Baldsover and said, yes, it is compensation that I have come to speak to you about. I have come to speak about what compensation you are going to give the Government of Guyana for the immediate dismissal of all these workers and the removal of all these assets and what they will do for the next ten years. The conversation ended, Mr. Speaker. The Manganese Company left and the workers were

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able to enjoy those facilities. There was not a discussion about it. Of course there could be a debate as to whether the experiment then to transform miners into farmers was the best approach in that context, but again that is the subject matter for serious academic and sociological work. As a professional social worker then, I was sent to that area for two years when that happened to see if we can work on the transformation of the habit of miners into farmers and it was not an easy experience, because if one looks at the traditional, cultural and social patterns of behaviour of miners not only in Guyana, it is a phenomenon of mining communities all over the world. There are certain traits and attitudes which develop in those societies. The Prime Minister knows well about them ... he worked a few years in Linden, he will know that they are not unique to Kaituma. But I as a professional worker ... I worked two years there with former miners trying to see what we could do to get them to the land to farm and eventually of course some of them have very entrenched habits and eventually there was a lot of movement of people. But those are subject matters which should be part of a more objective assessment and debate in time.

Whatever may be said of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, of course, I want to recommend, rather than my own reminiscences ... I came across this Publication the Official Organ of the

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Department called Kaie I recommend for reading to my colleagues. It was the Official Publication of the Department of Culture and this is Issue No. 18, November 1985. It provides several reviews and reminiscences of the man that we are recognizing today. Not the views of Robert Corbin or a few members of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana, but in their time they will see Celeste Dolphin, Ranjit Chandisingh, Noel Sinclair, Lloyd Searwar, Jane Phillips Gay, Kit Nascimento, Ivan Forrester, Carl Blackman, Cyril Mootoo, Lynette Dolphin and Culture, the late Donald Robinson and many others who have shared reminiscences of their exposure of this man that we are recognizing today, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that none of his many critics has denied that he was richly endowed with those rare and special faculties that are reserved only for leaders of men and makers of history: prodigious intellect - keen probing, receptive to new ideas and new philosophies; he had an inexhaustible store of mental and physical energies; a phenomenal memory for dates, events, faces and names. I do not know him to have ever forgotten the name of people as he walked the streets of Guyana and he never forgot a good turn done by anyone. I believe that that was also one of his weaknesses, because he always looked favorably even when

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people did wrong, he always remembered perhaps the good gesture that someone did to him in some point of his lifetime. I speak from personal experiences on these matters.

And so we in Guyana knew of his greatness throughout the period of his life as Dr. Ptolemy Alexander Reid stated at the Place of the Seven Ponds:

*Such a Leader comes to a Nation once in an era
and not necessarily with every generation.*

We owe him a depth of gratitude for developments in several areas.

Martin Carter described him as a workhorse of the Nation and no one can deny that after a Caribbean poll taken long after his death, he was named the Caribbean person of the century

I therefore call on this Assembly to give unanimous support to this Motion today which I now firmly read in its entirety:

WHEREAS Mr Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, OE, SC was elected to the Legislative Assembly (now National Assembly), on the 18th day of May 1953, in the first General Elections held

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*under Universal Adult Suffrage in the then British
Guiana (now Guyana), and was appointed the
Minister of Education in the First People's
Progressive Party Government (PPP);*

*AND WHEREAS Mr. LFS Burnham played
a major role in the formation and development of
both major political Parties in Guyana, in 1950, as
the Chairman of the first mass political party in
Guyana and, in 1957, as the Founder Leader of the
People's National Congress;*

*AND WHEREAS Mr. LFS Burnham also
played a major role with others in the struggle for
political independence from Britain, which was
accomplished on the 26th May, 1966;*

*AND WHEREAS Mr. LFS Burnham also
guided the smooth and peaceful transition of
Guyana to Republican status on the 23rd February,
1970, while serving as the first Prime Minister of
an independent Guyana;*

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AND WHEREAS Mr. Burnham served as a distinguished Parliamentarian for thirty years until 1980, when he became ineligible to remain seated on becoming the first Executive President of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was a major architect of the Caribbean integration movement as exemplified by his role in the formation of CARIFTA in 1968, CARICOM in 1973 and the various other initiatives for the strengthening of Caribbean unity including the promotion and hosting in Guyana of the First Caribbean Festival Of Arts, CARIFESTA in 1972;

AND WHEREAS the 6th day of August 2008^l marks the 23rd Death Anniversary of the Late Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, who died while serving as Guyana's first Executive President from 1980 to 1985;

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BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly on the FIFTY FIFTH YEAR of his ENTERING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, on the occasion of his TWENTY THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY and in the year of the 35th Anniversary of CARICOM, gives the recognition to Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham for his extraordinary and outstanding career as a Guyanese leader;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly gives due recognition to the service of Mr Forbes Burnham to the National Assembly and Guyana by requesting the Government to have prepared and published a collection of his speeches spanning his tenure in the National Assembly for display in the Library of the National Assembly;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly agrees that full sized portraits of each of the Presidents of Guyana should be commissioned and displayed in the Chambers of the National Assembly;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly calls on the Government to designate a State Institution to be responsible for historical Research and Documentation to Chronicle and archive all of the works of each President of Guyana for the benefit of future generations of Guyanese [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member Mr. Corbin

The Honourable Prime Minister

Hon. Samuel AA Hinds: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise in this Debate to give support to the call for due recognition for Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham for his extraordinary and outstanding career as a Guyanese leader.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there can be no questioning of the fact that for over thirty-five years Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was a dominant figure in the politics of our country that his was an extraordinary career that stood out against all others challenged only by the no less extraordinary and outstanding career of Cheddi Jagan, whom it appeared fate required to endure and outlast.

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From Burnham's entry into the political life of our country joining with Cheddi and others and playing a major role as the PPP was being founded and unto his death in 1985, he Burnham was a dominant and dominating figure in our politics. For many years, he was striving to astride over and was striding over Guyana as a colossus.

His career was an extraordinary one; thanks mainly to the personal skills and abilities with which nature had blessed him in extraordinarily huge proportions. Burnham is still today a figure of great controversy, many things to many people, still evoking great emotions. All of us Guyanese today, are still aware of him, his life and his doings in a very emotional way, even in this the 55th year of his entry into our Legislature and the 23rd Anniversary of his death, this debate has engendered some heated emotions as many of us Guyanese see him one way, many other Guyanese see him another way and yet other Guyanese see him still differently.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that I will quote all that I planned, but just a few sentences from the opening paragraph from this book by Ashton Chase on Burnham's role ... and he said words similar to what the Honourable Robert Corbin related earlier:

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He was a failure, he was a success, he was a builder, he was a destroyer; he was a strategist, he was a schemer and so on.

I think, however, that we Guyanese are together in one thing in that at one time or another, for shorter or for longer periods, maybe at different times, we had great hopes in Forbes. But our political history in the years leading to our independence and the decades since has turned out the way it has, must be our common regret. Something that each and every one of us Guyanese regrets each day, particularly we of the PPP/C must be filled with regret when we think of that election of 18 May 1953, our first general elections held under universal adult suffrage in the then British Guiana, now Guyana, when Burnham was appointed Minister of Education in the first People's Progressive Party Government as is stated in the first WHEREAS Clause.. That was a time of great unity of our people, united in great hope for the future.

I was a youngster not yet ten years old, but I could still sense that many of our people, who had not yet freed themselves from the apron strings of a good Queen Victoria, who had freed the slaves, who are not yet brave and bold enough to vote for the new PPP, this is in 1953, were still fascinated and captivated by the youthful Cheddi and Forbes heralding revolution, heralding a new State, new relationships between peoples, promising new possibilities. I

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think of my grandparents with whom I lived then - my grandfather, an old pastor and my grandmother, an old school teacher - playing it safe voting for the long and well-known and respected local boy Eric Mc Laren Phillips, but still taking notice of the brazen young men who were daring to challenge the British lion in all itself in all its local faces, the Governor, the ruling classes and everything up to that time seemed pre-ordained.

Forbes joining Cheddi in the early 1950s had brought together as in a marriage with two broad streams of our peoples with their different historical experiences not yet in the identical place, but converging from their different origins with broadly similar aspirations, but with different styles, with different dreams, different fears, different concerns, different sensitivities and different sensibilities. There was widespread hope with us, but there were fears in some quarters locally and in particular foreign quarters.

In 1953, Cheddi and Forbes had brought together these two broad streams of Guyana as two families joined into one family in the PPP and there was fear at that time because of all of the possibilities of upsetting the way things had been. And so a number of groups set out to engineer a divorce and unfortunately there are many good reasons in my view which may not coincide

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with many other views and many other persons' views, the divorce of the two ended up in a divorce of our two main streams. I would point out that it was not one hundred percent separation on racial basis and I think in that there is a clue at least for me that there were other issues than just an issue of race.

It is understandable that the majority of Afro-Guyanese would have a special place for Forbes, that whatever he may have done, that they may not have fully agreed with, that they would still have a special place for him. Forbes arriving on our national political stage in 1949 was quickly spotted by African Guyanese as their able champion that they have been looking for, have been longing for, have been hoping for, maybe even as a messiah to restore a sense of pride and equal worth and respect, who was equal to and could better many who have been lorded innately over them.

African Guyanese needed a champion to end for them decades of discrimination, humiliation and exclusion based on their colour which is an indication of their slave ancestry.

African Guyanese needed a champion who would bring an end to their poverty and suffering.

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I think of references in the 1950s amongst my elders to the experience and the discrimination suffered by Mr. Norman Cameron, who was a county scholarship winner and a Guyanese scholar in the early 1920s, graduated among the top six mathematics students of his year at Cambridge, which at that time would have made a good case - and that his Cambridge would have made a good case - and the English would have made a good case in those latter days of the 1920s that Cambridge was at the apex of all institutions in the world then for physics and mathematics. Yet, when Norman returned home at the end of the 1920s, the best that the colonial powers in British Guiana could offer him was a third class primary school teacher appointment, because he was black without any touch of colour and he was not an Anglican. He was put in his place - in the place of his class. Such instances of injustice called for a champion who would right those wrongs and Forbes had the right pedigree, right abilities and exhibited the right inclinations.

It is beyond question that Forbes scholastic career had been outstanding and seemed ordained to be so ... the well-earned reward for one of our selfless hardworking school teacher that was his father. Burnham was a Guyana scholar as has been stated in those days when there was only one scholarship each year, the achievement of which brought commensurate great notice,

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prestige and recognition. Aston Chase wrote in this same book, a book to which this speech owes quite a lot, that many persons earlier noticed or remarked upon Burnham's almost unsurpassed ability at speech making, his ability to win friends, his supporters, and influence people and put down means with words. Someone had remarked and I think it was maybe Billy Pilgrim in the same book in the same Special Edition of Kaie that the Honourable Member Mr. Corbin referred to and remarked that at school, Burnham had the greatest skill in tantalize and so many students (boys) would come around him for two things: to avoid his words being turned on them - his great skills being applied against them, on them; and also that he would offer them protection when particularly others not so skilled, but believed they could when they would come against them.

He was a most effective speaker with his command and use of words and manipulation of language. At times most likely to constrain it we may speak lightly of this ability to speak and move people as the gift of the dark, but this gift must be considered the most prized ability for any who would be leader in any field and Forbes had it in great quantities at the national level and I would say even at the international level, this gift to speak and move people. I had it on very good reference as one of the gurus in

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management. Mr. Burnham's extraordinary career is evidence of the power of that ability to speak and move people.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I can add here that I experienced some of it on occasion, maybe in the mid 1970s when there were signs of problems in the recently nationalized bauxite company and people were leaving and Forbes went up to speak with the staff to find out what was the matter and he invited people to speak and to say who they were and they all spoke - civil engineers, mechanical engineers and electrical engineers and at the end in summing up Forbes said, I heard all of you speaking, you civil engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, but let me tell you, I am the greatest engineer here; I am an engineer of people, and I thought even then in the mid 1970s how true it was and it was too true.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it was only natural and I am ready to maintain that those who receive and lionized Forbes on his return to Guyana have no need to be ashamed for receiving him, lionizing him and making a place for him.

The large stream of our African descended people who so received him, whose historical experiences and sensitivity he shared have no need to be ashamed nor Cheddi and the others

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who were bringing the PPP to Burnham. And Forbes exhibited the right revolutionary inclination to Cheddi and others of the PPP. Again I learnt from reading Mr. Ashton Chase's book and listening earlier too to the Honourable Member Mr. Corbin about Forbes association with Marxist and Marxism and become a student leader and making visits as such to Prague and Paris. And indeed he would have gotten a good grasp of Marxism and its principles. This would have given Forbes good credentials with the PAC/PPP group.

Further, on returning to Guyana, Forbes eschewed local high-brown of that day and grounded with the low-brown sisters and brothers. The high-brown no doubt wanted him to start at the bottom of their social ladder and adopt their vision of things. Quoting directly from Chase's book at the bottom of Page 11, where he writes.

For Guyana's scholar - a lawyer - to have mixed so closely and familiarly with workers was at that time unprecedented in our country and ran counter to the prevailing social, cultural prejudices, the middle class, the red people. I think there was a play being revised recently about the last of the red men, but things changed. I did think that many of our people today got the sense and the point of at least the name of the play; her high-brown, the fair skin and the social elites of that day even the LCP,

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terms familiar in that era, did not support Forbes at that time and where practicable they actually opposed him. They did not accept him going to work with the PPP; they did not accept him grounding with the working class sisters and brothers and they did not accept him going with the PPP.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, no one should allow or we should guard against allowing hindsight and how things turned out to detract from the national fervor engendered by the PPP in the early 1950s, that fervent, passionate national spirit which Cheddi always longed to see return.

Last week at the recent PPP Congress as we sang the Party Song, *Oh, Fighting Men* written by Sydney King as he was called then later Eusi Kwayana, I thought I could give a sense of the purpose and intent; and the intent to change things which Forbes, Cheddi and all shared and to which they committed themselves; and I will read a few words:

We will break the bond of slavery.

This mighty land of Guyana,

we shall make a land of liberty.

We are building our Guyana

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free, not halfway slave and not halfway free.

Our cause is just

and win we must.

The people worked and marched as one

for every woman, every man works

for a brave progressive land -

We will keep the red flag flying

And one must imagine, maybe at the Congress there in 1951 - the first Party Congress when Forbes was made the Party Chairman. How lustily and I would want to believe earnestly and believably Cheddi, Janet and Eusi would have sung this Party's song together.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that we get this feeling of the fervor and intensity of togetherness in a common cause as reflected and engendered in singing this party song is to understand the intense trauma in the parting of the waves in 1955. I think that it is significant that both groups held on to the name PPP in the elections in 1957 - the PPP (Burnhamite) and the

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PPP(Jaganite). In a number of families, and I may see one such person, some members became PPP (Jaganite) and others members of the same family became PPP(Burnhamite). The Paradise that was aspired for was lost. Our nation was traumatized and still remains so. The door was opened later to even greater trauma and I think, we must join together to bring this trauma to an end.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is not the occasion on which to dwell on the cause of the split in the PPP, at least not for me. There were many people who were there and who have been closer to people who were there than I have ever been and they may well still speak to it later. So I will not dwell on this split, which led to the reversal of the earlier convergence between our peoples. I know the Honourable Member, Mr. Corbin has said that we should leave the analysis to the experts, trained people ... and that we should, but I think I will still step out of it and say that in my view that split was not simply a racial split; in my view it was a split and I think, I said it in our debate on honouring Dr. Jagan that it may just as much be seen as a split between different views - urban views, rural views of things, styles on the kind of manners and preferences that are associated generally with urban people and rural people.

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The views of the PPP on Forbes' behaviour leading to the split and the road he took and he took all Guyana with him, unto his death in 1985 are well known. The parting is important for this debate, because the parting was the occasion when it seems Forbes chose to go it alone; to go for independence alone; to go for creating a paradise alone by whatever means.

None of us can undo our history. However, wrong it was and we of the PPP feel that we were terribly wronged again and again. The prestige in receiving independence fell with Burnham and it was savored by him. I will note Cheddi's gracious attendance from our side and I presume they hugged up, they embraced and we would see as we said in the earlier debate that it showed and demonstrated that Cheddi always put the children, the people of Guyana before anything else. However, it was Burnham in office and in power from 1964 to his death in 1985, who had the chance to fashion our newly independent nation and how he relished and exercised that power.

Burnham in power set out to implement much of what had been talked about; much of what has been discussed and aspired to for Guyana; much of what he would have talked about with Cheddi particularly in the journeys with Cheddi to many newly independent countries after the suspension of the Constitution in

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1953. An even relatively recently in the last year's of Dr Jagan, I recall him from time to time talking about the various portions of those trips. I would hold that those trips after the suspension of the Constitution in 1953, Burnham with Cheddi that in those trips one would find the germs of Burnham's active role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), also Burnham's early recognition of revolutionary CUBA, of Russia and many Eastern block countries, of China, and he having the opportunity to do it, it earned him in those countries a great degree of gratitude and whatever support they could muster.

I recall that Burnham who got the power in the midnight in the 1950s played the role again of left leftist and redder than Jagan, that same Burnham was able in the late 1970s to have the supply of popular inexpensive Russian and Chinese literature and music diverted from Freedom House to the PNC Party shop then at Middle and Albert Streets and he was not only capable of stealing the offerings in the Michael Forde Bookshop, but he stole the Manager as well. *[Laughter]* Burnham's programme of support to the countries in Southern Africa and South Africa with their arms resistance was fundamentally the correct policies that we in the PPP could never object to.

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Closer to home, Burnham's leading role in the formation of CARIFTA and CARICOM, outing together again the pieces of a dissolved West Indian Federation is well documented and we would have been hard put to be critical of it, at least not in substance and in trust. We of the PPP/C may remain critical of the high cost of the high international profiles struck by Burnham and we continue to suspect that he pursued that profile partly to blunt and disarm many criticisms of his policies and actions within Guyana.

Nonetheless there were programmes that flowed from the united PPP of the early 1950s and Burnham well knew that the PPP could not criticize the substance of his international programmes, the timing ... the flare, the glory was all his. Many of our Guyanese brothers and sisters who supported Burnham would say that only he could have pulled off with such style. We will say, but at what cost? We have questioned as is known spending on Foreign Affairs amounting to more than what was spent on health, education and the police, at least in later year's altogether. We have questioned the spending on one ambassador's compensation and everything amounting to more than the capital programme for the GDF.

In his local programmes, we of the PPP/C could not but support in broad principle and in many of them and even in details,

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Burnham's thrust to transform the economy to establish new and different social and economic models for Guyanese masses coming out of a colonial experience.

From 1964 on to about 1970, playing well the role of the better alternative to Cheddi and the PPP and benefiting from some goodwill, which developed countries could not avoid extending to newly independent Guyana, Burnham won financial support from western countries to such an extent that Guyana was rated the country with highest per capital support.

With such foreign assistance, he had the:

- Soesdyke/Linden Road built
- Continue the re-building and surfacing of the East Coast road to Rosignol, things that the Honourable Member Corbin referred to
- Corentyne Road
- Stable enthralling Canje Bridge built
- West Coast/ West Bank Roads
- Demerara Harbour Bridge
- Various irrigation schemes carrying on and achieving many of the things that Cheddi was looking forward to
- There were Government buildings
- National Culture Centre with its controversy over the use of immigration funds

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- Umana Yana a bold choice of a traditional Amerindian meeting place
- We note also the continuation of housing south of the La Repentir
- Large area of housing that was developed in South Rumiveldt, La Penitence areas and also in Linden;
- Wisroc Housing Scheme; and
- New, large Pegasus Hotel.

All geared for feeling in those early years of Guyana on the move. Burnham's nationalisation of the foreign transnational companies DEMBA, Jessels, Bookers and Reynolds, the commanding heights of industry and commerce in our land seems but just and set the path for the nationalization of foreign banks and bringing under control the many significant local enterprises also.

In due time, State dominance brought greater political dominance, buttressing control of elections by control of the economy. That is our view. There is no doubt that at that period Burnham bestrode Guyana like a colossus.

A number of people argued that in the end, Burnham carried out a nationalist programme which Cde. Cheddi and the PPP would not have been allowed to get away with. We cannot ever know, but many people would argue that if it was Cheddi who had nationalized DEMBA and Reynolds, then the Venezuelan card

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would have been played and if it were Cheddi who was leading the Government which approved the flow of Cuban arms through Guyana to southern Africa, there would have been a direct invasion which would have forestalled the invasion of Grenada.

[Interruption]

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I wish to ask that the Honourable Prime Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue.

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: You may proceed, Honourable Member

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Burnham, no doubt (I am thinking) I would say all of the time free to initiate many new goals and brave initiatives, despite repeatedly cheating at successive elections, and secured in the knowledge that Cheddi would not, could not oppose his initiatives opportunistically, but could only criticize perhaps the manner, the style, the implementation, details ... and many ordinary people would not resist the temptation to brush aside such cautions and criticisms as nit-picking ...

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Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, although I and many people on my side would stridently detest Burnham's manipulations, which lead to him after the split in 1955, which eventually lead to him becoming Premier in 1964 and leading Guyana to independence, despite that we may have to accept what he did then, maybe is in the realm of political contest. Perhaps, but we could never accept rigged elections from 1968. Indeed, again maybe running the danger of going too far down the line, not leaving it to scholars to contemplate and cogitate on it, indeed, we would hold that once everything after the 1968 elections became unfortunately tainted by the manner of that election and I would hold that that is maybe the most significant hurdle that we have to clear, it was too much to swallow, too big a pill to swallow; for us of the PPP and supporters and well wishers of the PPP, it was too big a pill for us to swallow and from my knowledge and interaction with many Afro-Guyanese, I would argue when that time comes that it may have been even more costly on African Guyanese. It may have been even more costly, because I think there were few of us, who would not have had some guilty feeling even though some of us made a big pretence about the right thing to do and nothing was done wrong and so on. I think it undermined a sense of earnestness and it opened the door to

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thinking of making one's own arrangements and uncertainties and so on.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I have been speaking so far to the first main Resolved Clause and it is the real substance of this Motion and this debate. Giving due recognition to the achievements, positive and negative and recognizing that different people would have seen things differently of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, his extraordinary and outstanding career as a Guyanese leader.

The adversarial nature of party politics leaves perhaps too few occasions for one party to speak good of a leader of an opposing party, moreso a leader like Burnham as seen from the experiences of the PPP, but we know that this is a special debate, a special occasion and we respect the attempt that is being made here and we would want to commend again the Honourable Member, the leader of the Opposition, for his presentation today as we did, I think, on the occasion when we unveiled the portrait of Dr. Cheddi Jagan last October when we had a similar Motion to honour Dr. Cheddi Jagan on the sixtieth anniversary of his entry into our legislature.

This is the other side of that coin, the first side being the Motion on Dr. Jagan and when we think of Cheddi, we of the PPP/C who followed the lead of Cheddi, when we think of his untiring,

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unending attempts to bring Guyanese together, then we join in working to put the ghosts of 1955, 1961-64; maybe 1964-68 can pass, but certainly 1968 through 1973, 1978, 1980 and 1985 ...

We can work and we must join in working to put the ghosts of that period behind us. *[Applause]*

There is much from the 1950s that we must somehow get behind us. Our two main parties last October and now have struggled with ourselves and each other through much give and take to arrive at formulations of motions of which the other side could support. Some may see tokenism, some may see theatre in these debates, but I believe that we were earnest then and we are being earnest again today.

We, in Parliament and our media must take to our people that this is an earnest attempt to turn the page, to put our difficult past behind us. *[Applause]* Every one of us was regretful that things turned out the way they did, while there were some who had much hope engendered in 1953, but I would say all is not necessarily lost. We should keep those experiences in mind to learn from them, but we must no longer be imprisoned by them; I think we have been imprisoned by them. I think that we of the PPP/C side thinking about elections of 1968 and so on, thinking about the manoeuvres. Maybe even from 1963 onwards, when we think of that, we must not be locked into this fear of any meeting

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with the PNCR-1G of being outfoxed and out-manoeuvred again in any meeting with the PNCR-1G.

I do believe that many of the PNCR-1G members are locked up, too, differently, but locked up nevertheless in thinking that those people must want to come after us no matter what they say, no recrimination and so on that they are only human, they must react and that is how I have been seeing the various accusations or many of the accusations and allegations over the years since we have been in Government about discrimination in getting back.

It is almost a reflex and in many of the cases even though we have shown that there is no basis for it; it still lingers. We have been locked up on both sides and we need to open the doors and let ourselves out of our own prisons.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, that we would not obtain value for the effort that we have made in manoeuvring ourselves for many of us even moving our bodies to come to these debates for the unveiling we had; we would not get the value of those, what we put ourselves through to get to this point if we do not bring peace, particular addresses to the attention of each and every person in Guyana.

I am not sure if the Honourable Member, Mr Corbin could be certain that many of his supporters reading his speech, unprepared for it, would not be unhappy and perhaps the same thing for our

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side that some of our presentations today may surprise and give some of our Members a feeling that we might have deserted and so on. I think we have a task before us, what we have been doing here in this Parliament through this session from October ... I cannot recall when we had the unveiling. I think it might have been a year ago or so, but we would lose this opportunity unless we bring it to the awareness and attention of every citizen in Guyana.

Leaders must lead, but they cannot be too far from the people and this is going to be a big task to lead our people to a situation, where I think it is necessary that we can get to a position again whilst we do our darndest to make sure our party wins big time; we are not disgraced when another party wins. For people on our side, I could say that in my time, I overheard discussions said to have been lead by Dr. J about the need to get eventually to a situation where we could live with the other party being in power, because that is the only way to ensure that we ourselves of the PPP/C get out there and always do the best we could, that we exercise the self-appraisal, self-judgment, self-regulations that would ensure that we always be the A-team for every Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, it has been suggested by some of my friends that perhaps I should not speak to the remaining WHEREAS Clauses, that I should recluse myself, since I might be involved, even in a

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tiny, *kaunchy* way. We can and will support the Government preparing and publishing Burnham's speeches in the National Assembly, for display at the Library of the National Assembly. Honourable Member, Mr. Corbin has opened the door that we may not adulate everything that was said and done by Burnham, maybe some things we would see as a warning to us that maybe we too can fail or be carried away in what we conceptualised and want to do. We did pass that Motion for Cheddi, for the writings of Cheddi to be displayed in the Library and we do the same; we can support the same; we do support the same for Forbes.

We agree that full-sized portraits of each of the Presidents of Guyana should be commissioned and displayed in the Chambers of the National Assembly. We have already portraits of the late departed Presidents Chung, Burnham and Cheddi Jagan; they are all already hung and I referred already to the gracious speech of the Honourable Member, Mr. Corbin as we unveil the portrait of Cheddi. There are panels for Hoyte, Hinds, Janet Jagan and Jagdeo and who knows who after 2011. The race can be wide open and we should always believe the race at each election can be wide open, can be won by anyone, for that is how we can train ourselves to the best we can be; to act always in the best interest of Guyana and the Guyanese people.

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We must hope over time each elector in Guyana can be moved by good deeds and not only on ordinary words. We do need to have the extraordinary words which Forbes had in such great abundance. The majority of people everywhere want a set of political parties any of which they could live with, so that they can get on with their lives and do not worry about us politicians.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we can and we do support the last RESOLVED Clause that the Government designate a State institution to be responsible for historical research and documentation that chronicles and archives all the works of each of the presidents of Guyana for the benefit of the future generations.

Cheddi even on to 1993 was querying why could not old comrades be comrades again? He was not granted that wish in his life; perhaps we could grant him that wish in his death. With book shelves on Comrade Cheddi and Comrade Forbes standing side by side in Red House, then a Presidential Research Centre. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member Ms Selman.

Ms Africo Selman: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion entitled HONOURING LINDEN FORBES SAMPSON

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BURNHAM, OE, SC, MP, in recognition of his contribution to Guyana and to acknowledge that much has transpired during the thirty years Mr Forbes Burnham served as a distinguished parliamentarian.

Mr. Forbes Burnham made tremendous contributions as co-founder and Chairman of the People's Progressive Party in 1950; founder leader of People's National Congress in 1957, pioneer who appreciated that contextually determined independence envelopes political, socio economic and cultural freedoms and it was from this comprehensive understanding of independence that he vigorously pursued true independence for women as would be hi-lighted later in my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, from all that I have read both negative and positive, it is evident that Mr. Forbes Burnham must have been a great man to generate such controversy. I learnt that Mr Forbes Burnham was a man who bestrode this country like a colossus; who was named Caribbean man of the century; further described as a visionary ahead of his time and yet further seen as a leader who loved his country and pursued national interest and still further of attempting to build a truly egalitarian society.

It has been said by Ms. Yvonne Harewood Benn, former Minister of Information and Minister of the Public Service that Mr Forbes Burnham possessed the unshakable faith in our potential to be

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great. He touched every corner of Guyana and I would say that his vision for economic liberation and development transcended Guyana evidenced by diplomatic and trade relations between Guyana and our neighbours near and far.

Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean has paid tribute to Mr. Forbes Burnham, when he was posthumously named the Caribbean Person of the Century and in this vein I wish to commend the leader of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana and leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Corbin for being instrumental in recognizing that Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham undeniably made valuable contributions. He also laid the foundation for which a modern and prosperous Guyana could be developed. In the pursuit of his vision, Mr. Forbes Burnham placed great emphasis on women social and cultural development and it is useful to highlight these contributions irrespective of what critics say about him. It is imperative to acknowledge the various contributions he laid.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the assumption to office by Mr. Forbes Burnham at the gender level, women were seen as inferior in status and suffered from a plethora of legal, institutional and practical disabilities.

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At the racial level, social cultural policy was just as discriminatory and exclusionary. Mr. Tyrone Ferguson, in his book *To Survive Sensibly or Court Heroic Death* claims that -

The 1979 - 1985 years were without argument, a period of continued, measurable changes with respect to the positions of women in Guyanese society. These changes were reflected in various levels including constitutional advances, policy positions, legal modifications and institutional development that sought to strengthen the status of women and place it on a firm basis. These changes were also reflected at more practical levels of achievements especially in the crucial area of education and in the assumption increasingly by women of leadership positions of key authority levels in the society.

Ms. Hazel Woolford who compiled and edited the book *An Introductory Reader for Women's Studies in Guyana* must be lauded for her vision, dedication and professionalism for compiling and thus highlighting important social, cultural and political issues that have both influenced the lives of Guyanese women and in turn have been influenced by the actions, responsive and active participation of women.

Ms. Hazel Woolford on Page 132 in her book has been bold enough to remind us that in 1976 the State paper on the Equality for Women was presented in Parliament, thus making Guyana the

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only country in the region, up to 1983 which had produced a White Paper on the Equality of Women.

Building on the 1976 State Paper on the Equality of Women and critically the related provisions of the new 1980 Guyana Constitution, several initiatives were taken over these years to give practical effects to an improved standing for women in society. Consequently, Mr. Forbes Burnham must be credited.

Equally influential in the evolution of the status of women was the convention of the elimination of discrimination against women, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. This landmark international instrument condemns the discrimination against women and committed UN member states to the practice of equality of women. It is a convention that embodies in a legally binding form a set of internationally agreed principles on the rights of women and it enjoins Governments of State parties to take the requisite actions to ensure the full development and advancement of women.

Governments are also required to guarantee to women the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom and on equal bases as men. In this regard, member States were requested to complete several actions that the constitutional and legislative levels in fulfilment of their commitments under the convention to end discrimination against women.

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Member States were also required to adopt appropriate legislative measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibition of all discrimination against women and to take all appropriate measures including legislations to modify or abolish existing laws, customs and practices which constituted discrimination against women. The PNC Government under the watch of Mr Burnham moved this once to give effect to the international commitments of the convention of the elimination of discrimination against women. It was fortuitous that the convention was adopted at a time when Guyana was involved in the process of constitutional reform. This moment was seized on to incorporate the key provisions relating to the rights of women. Thus by Article 29 of Section 1 a governing provision enshrined The Equality of Women was inserted:

Women and men have equal rights and the same legal status in all spheres of political, economic and social life. All forms of discrimination on the basis of their sex are illegal.

Article 29(2) also delineated in a more specific manner the broad bases and more operational and practical ways in which the exercise of the rights of women should be pursued. The exercise of women's rights is ensured by according women equal access with men to academic, vocational and professional training. Equal opportunities in employment, remuneration and promotion,

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and in social, political and cultural activities by special labour and health protection measures for women by providing conditions enabling mothers to work, and by legal protections, material and moral support for mothers and children including paid leave and other benefits for mothers and expectant mothers, and as such we women owe him an abundance of gratitude. Had it not been for him, perhaps I would not have been speaking here today as a female Parliamentarian.

Equality to him was not merely lip service; he made many women realize their potentials as equal partners. He, who articulated the moral and practical relevance of equality, this is illustrated from the fact that within the PNC Government of that time, women were in the forefront of the party, for example:

- Winfred Gaskin
- Shirley Field-Ridley
- Viola Burnham
- Yvonne Haywood-Benn
- Cecilene Baird

to name a few.

Moreover would the framework of the constitutional guarantee of the right to free education for all women over the continuum of the educational process as entailed in Article 27 of the new

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Constitution, women were assured legal equality of rights in the educational sphere.

Under Mr Forbes Burnham, the government introduced changes which sought to improve the status of women, for example the 1970 amendment of the 1966 Constitution stated that -

Every person in Guyana is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the rights whatever his race, place of origin, colour, creed or sex, but subject to the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest.

It is imperative to highlight that between 1975 and 1990 several pieces of legislation were enacted to achieve gender equity. As I mentioned earlier in January 1976 the Government presented a State Paper on equality for women to the National Assembly and in 1977, married women became eligible for recruitment to permanent positions in the Public Service on the same bases as men.

In 1980, the enshrinement of the principle for women and the extension of maternity benefits also were included. In addition, to the legislation promulgated to ameliorate the condition of women, the Women's Affairs Bureau was also established under Mr. Forbes Burnham. Mr. Burnham must be given his due if not

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for his invaluable contribution to the nation as a whole for his contribution to the advancement and empowerment of women.

I now wish to turn my attention to his contribution in the areas of culture and social developments. Mr Speaker, from his early days, Mr. Forbes Burnham displayed a deep interest in culture. This is evident from the fact that he was a keen supporter of folk activities in his neighbourhood village of Kitty and it has been said that he often joined the crowd of youngsters, following the masquerade bands at Christmas time. To consolidate the fact that he was indeed interested in culture is the fact that at school he was outstanding in literary subjects and devoted much of his extracurricular time to the drama club, the debating society and to poetry reading. During his university days he maintained his interest in literature and debating and indeed he won the Best Speaker's Cup of the Faculty of Law and his skill as an orator caused him to be elected president of the West Indian Students' Union. His concern for cultural development was clearly apparent during his brief period as Minister of Education in the People's Progressive Party Government in 1953. The suspension of the Constitution and the subsequent years of political confusion did not diminish his concern for cultural progress. From his position as Councillor of the City of Georgetown and later as

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Mayor, he gave his patronage to many cultural organizations which flourished in the city at that time.

- The Police Male Voice Choirs
- The Georgetown Philharmonic Orchestras
- The Schools' Music Festivals and
- The Competitive Music Festivals

to which he regularly donated trophies.

He also became one of the founding patrons of The Theatre Guild. After declaring the National School of Dance opened in 1974, the first school in a projected institute of creative arts, Mr Forbes Burnham maintained a keen interest in the school and later on in the development in the National Dance Company. Mr Forbes Burnham had always vigorously promoted the visual arts in Guyana and ER Borrowes School of Arts founded in 1975 is the second school of arts in the English speaking Caribbean.

Scholarships were provided to train staff for the Borrowes School and to pick graduates for places in industry, commerce and fine arts at end of their courses. Quoting an article written by Ms Lynette Dolphin she said:

The Burnham Government has provided in the annual budget for the purchase of outstanding works of contemporary arts for the national collection apart from his own personal purchases of painting and sculptures which constituted a

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considerable collection of Guyanese arts, a gratifying recognition of the work of the artist.

Mr. Speaker, it could be said that Mr. Burnham appreciated that the ethnically plural context of Guyanese society, that was pervaded by racial cleavages encouraged by the colonial administration was therefore the basis for their classic strategy of divide and rule. It was evident to Mr. Forbes Burnham that social, cultural approaches from this perspective were intended to ensure a pattern of tension-filled and uneasy ethnic relations among the key important challenges that confronted Mr. LFS Burnham were those related to cultural liberation, social integration and ethnic inclusion and these Mr. Burnham undertook.

Consequently, Mr. Forbes Burnham's vision and his concomitant rule was one based on national unity and cohesiveness. Mr. Forbes Burnham further recognized that colonial society not merely repressed and stifled indigenous culture, but ratified external cultural reference as the accepted recognized standards.

The new government thus sought cultural liberation as inherent and integral part of the decolonization process. To this end, Mr. Forbes Burnham earnestly spearheaded the principles of cultural re-definition and indigenous cultural validation, once political independence had been achieved in May 1966. In this regard, Mr. Burnham pointed the way to real cultural development of

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indigenous culture. The deeply embedded practice of social exclusion could be seen in various areas at the general level of the colonized population and at more specific levels of gender and race.

Mr. Forbes Burnham saw that the broad masses of Guyanese people existed in the a context that not only narrowly restricted social mobility, but fail to provide the range of social programmes that could have served to open up equitable opportunities and access to them. In this regard, Mr. Forbes Burnham contributed significantly to building a society that was less divided on the basis of race, class and gender, in essence, a society reflecting the true tenets or features of democracy, for example, equal access to free education from nursery to university. Government's responsiveness to the needs of citizens recognizing that education was one of the major avenues of upward mobility. This legacy of Mr. Forbes Burnham must be cherished greatly and he must be acknowledged for his contributions. At the same time the ordinary people in there daily lives sought to sustain and give expression to their local and group folk ways.

Mr. Forbes Burnham identified with the ordinary man, since he felt the small man was the real man. They were the ones ultimately who kept alive and continued to enrich the indigenous flavour of Guyanese society. It could therefore be said that Mr.

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Forbes Burnham was a man for all times, who walked with kings without losing touch with the common man. The dominant cultural orientation of the State, a British Euro-centric one was equally unrecognized in towards to all other relevant cultural orientations:

- African
- Portuguese
- Chinese as well as
- East Indians

The Indigenous ethnic group - the Amerindians - was even more glaringly isolated and ignored in terms of the acknowledgement of their cultural patterns and attainments. In such a context the task of creating the conditions for socio-cultural liberation at one level and cohesion at another was necessarily a major priority of any nationalist government.

Mr. Tyrone Ferguson in his book on Page 67 alluded to the fact that Mr Forbes Burnham explicitly recognized the imperative of cultural de-colonization in the context of an independent Guyana. He addressed the issue in an extended fashion in his speech entitled: *Change Our Society, Revolutionize Our Economy* that he delivered to the Guyana Institute of De-colonization in the year preceding the achievement of Independence. Moreover, the second half of the 1960s was to witness a series of substantive

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initiatives in broad cultural realms that were intended to facilitate the defining of new national anchors of cultural value for the new nation based on the historical and indigenous constructs of the many peoples of the country.

In his 1965 speech to the Institute of De-colonization, Mr. Forbes Burnham further expressed the view that a necessary part of this process was the decolonization of behaviour and attitude, both of leaders and people. The ideological basis for embarking on cultural emancipation was further reinforced in Burnham's opening address a year later at the Caribbean Writers and Artists Conference that was held as part of the country's independence celebration. He started off from the position that it was necessary for independent Guyana, to develop a tradition of artistic independence since the nation must have its own practising artistes. Mr. Forbes Burnham was also of the view that it was important to underscore moreover that he assured his audience that the Guyana Government had no interest in seeking to control any of the artistes since he recognized the need for the artistes to have their own independence.

In conclusion, as a politician no one could deny that Mr. Forbes Burnham, not only was capacitated with immense practicality and intellectual foresight, but held views that matured into national visions. It could be further stated, without fear of successful

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contractions that Mr. Forbes Burnham had a passion for social balance and equal opportunity, which guaranteed the fundamental empowerment, advancement and development of all.

Mr. Speaker, what I have done today is highlight some of the contributions that Mr. Forbes Burnham had made. I therefore urge this National Assembly to give due recognition to the service of Mr. Forbes Burnham to this National Assembly and to Guyana. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member, Mr. Raphael Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Alliance For Change to make my contribution, my remarks as the lone speaker for our side this evening as some of our Members have already proceeded on leave abroad and I hope to do so shortly.

Mr. Speaker, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was undoubtedly an enigma. There is no escaping or denying that fact. To many, as we heard this afternoon, he was a visionary and extraordinary statesman and yet also to just as many as well, he was the villain who took Guyana to its nadir. No matter what we do or say that is the history of our country and we have to recognise and accept it.

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Mr. Burnham was undoubtedly an outstanding student, a great orator, a gifted lawyer, a visionary, a wily and wise politician that we are debating him now, some twenty-three years after his demise, is testament to the impact and influence that he has had and continues to have on Guyana. No other Guyanese has made an imprint on Guyana and on the Caribbean Region as he has. In fact, I hasten to say that no other person or president in the foreseeable future is likely to have an impact on Guyana and things Guyanese as he has.

The name Burnham has become synonymous with Guyana and all of us even now were weighed and measured by this fact. His benefits and his burdens became our benefits and our burdens. Twenty-three years have passed since his demise a still the unmistakable impression of his footprint remains whether it is to be found in towns or streets named in his honour, on the roads, housing schemes and bridges, which is still frequent or in the frequent references as well to rigged elections and his failed policies. The name Burnham remains almost hauntingly, never really having being put into a proper place of eternal rest. Can we do so this evening, I wonder?

I would not pretend to know everything about the politics of Mr. Burnham or about the inner workings of his cabinet or his policies and meetings secret or otherwise as others undoubtedly can

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justifiably boast. My introduction and knowledge of him came through my association with his former wife and former First Lady of Guyana, Mrs. Viola Burnham, through his children and grandchildren with whom I still maintain very close contact until today.

Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to say at this juncture that despite whatever may be said about the man Burnham, that in the many years that I have known the family, I have never found any evidence of extravagance, of arrogance or any hint of performance on their part. In many respects, they were just as affected and bothered as the next person was by the happening of his time and I could tell you from experience.

As I said before there were many benefits and burdens that resulted from his presence in Guyana and it is not my intention this evening to tabulate and calculate them as if on a scale of judgment, to measure right from wrong, but to say no objective assessment of the man can be complete if we attempt to airbrush away his blemishes and buff only his accomplishments. The same is true in the reverse were we to seek to diminish his many accomplishments and dredge to the fore his mistakes and blemishes as if to suggest these were the only defining characteristics of his life. We cannot escape that reality: Burnham life was inextricably linked with that of another former President

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Dr. Cheddi Jagan and if we continue to deny that reality and there are hints that it has not been denied, the reality of the impact of their individual and collective lives on the State and psyche of the people of Guyana, then we would be guilty of being false not only to ourselves but also false to the generations past and yet to come. There is, after all, a certain irony that we are having these two Motions in successive order debating the lives and honouring the lives of two men who made tremendous contributions not only to the Parliament and to the speeches and the happening within these Chambers but of course nationally, regionally and internationally. Perhaps our purposes would have been better served if we had taken them together and in that way we would have had a more objective, a more definitive, a more constructive discussion on their lives and contributions.

I have to say that I find the whole cycle of patting each other on the backs and then engaging in fights, while Guyana continues to bleed can be sometimes pathetic, self-serving and useless. Interestingly, the actions, failures and even the cooperation of these two men, Jagan and Burnham (and some of it we heard about already) have left us with many good memories and memorials, but yet still unfortunately as a divided nation, a destroyed and displaced people. Despite the meaningful and measurable contributions that were made the critical question of

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whether we are better off today is still left unanswered. We speak of legacy, but have we done anything to critically assess the legacies of those we wish to honour and thereby ensure that we move forward with the wholesome and discard the unwanted or are we just pretending to be constantly advancing the legacies of those we wish to honour.

The life of Forbes Burnham and that of (his sometimes colleague and his sometimes opponent) Cheddi Jagan must be viewed in the context of the happenings of their era, when the cold war brought its freezing grip on Guyana and determined and influenced many of the decisions taken by our leaders of the day. Guyana fell victim to that war and remains so in my opinion unto today a badly wounded casualty. We have over time experimented, we have critically supported, we have condemned, we have killed and we have defamed each other over time; sometimes not realizing that we were acting out a script handed to us by our colonial masters and the superpowers. Where are we today when reliable estimates say that there are as many as seven-hundred thousand Guyanese scattered like homeless people across the globe and making a profound and worthwhile contribution to other societies and yet unable to grasp that very opportunity by remaining home and doing the same for their motherland. Should we really be celebrating at all?

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When the AFC was alerted that there was going to be a Motion to honour the contribution of late President Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, we agreed immediately and in principle to participate in this event for the primary reason that it is time that we as Guyanese and particularly as Guyanese leaders bring both amplification and closure to a past that was many times both glorious and sordid. The story of Guyana is a story of unending contradiction of the type that not even Marx or Engels could unravel.

Our presence here today is not to indulge in hero worshiping, but to say that in our leaders both past and present we can find both good and bad.

We, in the AFC believe we cannot move forward unless we confront our ambivalent past, not by conflating it and pretending the good and bad were fused to produce a perfect State, but rather by disaggregating that past and separating the ignominious from the honourable.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that an event such as this is in my view a clumsy attempt at best to give recognition to the work of past leaders, but it nevertheless constitutes a valiant start to healing which we support. It would have been much better if this country had a committee or a commission made up of eminent citizens including those who rose to high status such as past and

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present presidents, who meet and decide on the manner in honouring our citizens and from whom time to time recommendations would be sent to this Honourable House for honours and for debates such as this to ensue. What we have is a situation that says: *Your heroes and my heroes; you exalt yours and I will exalt mine.*

Within the region, Jamaica stands out as one example, where a country has been able to put a bitter past behind it and resolve this issue of my hero, your hero. We may wish to take a look at them, for example.

We cannot bring healing and reconciliation if we do not move to the place, where we honour our heroes nationally and not in a partisan way. We are being forced and encouraged to bring individual motions to celebrate, venerate and exalt our own heroes in a kind of *one for me and one for you* syndrome. Under the current system for the want of national honours, if you are not one of the chosen few, you have nothing to get. The President of Guyana is the Chancellor of the Orders of Guyana and is advised by an advisory council, which comprises the Chancellor of the Judiciary, four persons appointed by the President after consultations with the Prime Minister.

- One member appointed after consultations with the Prime Minister;

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- One member appointed after consultations with the leader of the Opposition;
- One member appointed after consultations again with the President; and
- One member who holds an Order of Excellence.

Mr. Speaker, there is little wonder, why there has been no investiture ceremony in this country for the last six years, this for a country that calls itself a modern and inclusive democracy; this has to change.

Mr. Speaker, there used to be a time when Speakers of this House almost automatically were awarded an Order of Roraima; six years have passed ... I am not making any points about you; I do not know, but when one became Chancellor, Chief Justice, Speaker of the National Assembly there are certain honours bestowed as of right.

In this regard, The Alliance for Change recommends that the process of the honouring of the citizens of Guyana be de-politicized and that a non-partisan committee be established to craft a new and transparent criterion and to decide on the award of National Honours. This committee must not operate like the one which recently and perhaps arbitrarily awarded an Arrow of Achievement to Shivnarine Chandrpaul. I wish to say that it is

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our opinion in the Alliance For Change that he is deserving of a far greater award than an AA, because he has done far more than many of us in this Chamber have ever done or ever achieved for Guyana and the Region.. [Applause] And an AA announced in the newspapers without any ceremony of pomp is just not befitting of the kind of practice we want in this country.

In South Africa, and following I would not say their return to democracy, but their achievement of democracy, they successfully reformed their system of granting National Awards, and to quote in their own words:

... to reflect the spirit of a non-racial, non-sectarian democracy, where the culture of human rights prevails.

It is on that basis that awards are given in South Africa and no other ...

Mr. Speaker, I end by saying that not only we are hailing the exploits and accomplishments of Forbes Burnham, but we are holding out an expectation for a better Guyana after today. This Motion in itself following on the heels of one on the late President Jagan is significant. When I spoke on that motion, I spoke of my own personal involvement with the Jagan family, in as much the same way I have a personal involvement with the Burnham family. I bemoan the fact that to date there is no portrait of Mr.

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Hoyte. I find it unfortunate that a political party in this Assembly has to post a portrait. That should be something that a non-partisan committee takes care of and so I am happy that this Motion speaks for that matter.

It is significant that CARIFESTA is to be held in Guyana in a few days time; there can be no better tribute to Forbes Burnham than to have a successful and glorious event that serves not only to showcase the events and talents of the Caribbean, but moreover to fuse our cultures, our experiences and moreover our destiny. If it takes this event to bring us closer to our bitter past then I am happy and hope that this was not an exercise to feather one's ego and to score points in an unending game with no winners, but by tomorrow they will be a new epoch of co-operation and understanding and at the end to the ignorance and the prejudice which it breeds. Perhaps the symbolism of bridge that is going to go across the Berbice River and the fact that we already have one across the Demerara River, that symbolism should not be lost as we reach out not just to river banks but to each other. With those words I thank you and wish you goodnight, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member
The Honourable Minister of Labour ...

Hon. Manzoor Nadir: Mr. Speaker, as I stand someone is saying a little aside that I should not talk long.

Mr Speaker, I stand to lend my support and my Party's support to the Motion before us. I would also like to offer my commendation to the Leader of the Opposition for crafting a Motion that could get, generally on the face of it, unanimous support without much controversy. Certainly the Leader of the Opposition is developing great skills like the person today that we are paying tribute to.

Mr. Speaker, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham as some have already said has been revered by many, reviled by others. There is always a thin line between famous and infamous and what we have in our society have been two very strong leaders, whose followers greatly admire them, and the last speaker mentioned about hero worshiping, and to many of them these are two heroes, such of which our country - I speaking here about the heroes Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham - may never see again.

Mr. Speaker, to add to the debate, I would like to highlight two characteristics of the person which I have come to know about not personally, but told to me by persons who brushed shoulders, fought against and fought with the person. The first of these persons I want to refer to is no other than Justice Trotman, the

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father of the last speaker and what he said to me is that you have to admire and I am speaking of Justice Trotman speaking to me in 1986 as we were in Nicaragua touting for human rights for the people of Nicaragua - 1985. What Justice Trotman said was Mr Burnham had an immense power of persuasion. Justice Trotman reminded me that on his return from studying law in England, and he came back to Guyana in turmoil in the early 1960s, He wrote a letter in the newspapers, a letter against Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and by 8.30 am he got a call from Mr. Burnham inviting him to meet him at the Georgetown Club (Raphael, you must ask your father about this) and as he went there, there was the sober, well-articulated, well-mannered, generous Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham that welcomed Justice Trotman and offered him a seat, but there was another gentleman who came in to join the conversation, waving the newspaper, that person would also be a president of Guyana, all angry and wanting to know how Forbes Burnham could have Donald Trotman sitting next to him. After that meeting, you know what happened ... Justice Donald Trotman offered support and I think at one time, Raphael may correct me, Justice Trotman was our Ambassador to the United Nations(?), but he served in a diplomatic posting ... but for the power of persuasion ...

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The second person from personal experience that I want to refer to in terms of contributing to this power of persuasion of Burnham, to my memory, is a former Member of Parliament to us Satie Jaisheringsingh. I do not know if anyone remembers her, but some of you may really remember her for her family, who was burnt out in Linden; they had to run out of Linden to her relatives in Lot C Hogg Street, Albouystown during that time. A few months after that, a leader of the Young Socialist Movement knocked her down on Camp Street, not too far from where Congress Place was and nearly killed her. She was in an accident and not too long after, Satie Jaisheringsingh who was now really riled-up against the regime had an encounter with Forbes Burnham at Novar School in Mahaicony ... shortly after she became a candidate on the PNC list that was put up. So, no one can deny that Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was a very persuasive person. I can understand why even some members of The United Force defected after the coalition government and I want to attribute it to Burnham's power of persuasion rather than their weakness for the passion of The United Force.

Mr Speaker, on the other side many of us who would want to condemn Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham for his dogmatism in the face of what was happening around; sticking dogmatically to socialism; encouraging and mouthing that we would dig canals

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with our fingernails just to make this country move forward ... In the face of what was happening and a lot was said of the period 1979 to 1985, and what was happening around the Caribbean; the elections in November 1980 with Ronald Reagan, when America was seen to be leading a weak world - a world where the cold war was really chilling all corners of the globe. One could say at that time that the leaders of Guyana stuck dogmatically to a philosophy that said we must stay in power regardless of the ruin which we create. We would rather rule over ruin than accept what is the one way a western styled free-market, socially just economy with democracy of helping our country move forward.

At that time one can remember Morris Bishop and Forbes Burnham arguing who was the yard fowl and which backyard was which and Eugenia Charles saying get CARICOM out of Guyana and then in 1983, the Grenada invasion that saw the Caribbean and the pendulum swinging back to the right and even the mystery and musty as a few of the most conservative leaders in the Caribbean had President Hoyte for a swim in the beach in that beautiful Chinese Island of the Grenadines. And hence today, we are in a very forgiving mood and we rightfully should be.

As Mr. Corbin said about the wounds - the wounds were deep, they have healed and the scars remain, but many of us have the capacity to look at those scars and remember that those scars

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placed us in a challenging position that we can overcome and look back and forgive. Even myself running up to the 1992 elections, when a convoy for The United Force was attacked ... Burnham was not around then ... just off where the residence was, and the next morning Mr. Michael Asgill saying in court in front of Chief Magistrate Juman Yassin, after he attacked Mr Nadir and company ... he reported the next morning to Robert Corbin and Robert Williams, in court. [*Laughter*] No, this is no joke and The United Force turned back and nominated Robert Williams to be on the Elections Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. I agree with him that we are at an important junction and what has been demonstrated over the past two Motions - the one for Cheddi Jagan and the one for Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham is a turning point. I have great hope and I look on the bright side of things most of the time that we today are going to carry on the good legacies of both Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and Dr. Jagan. In fact, it reminds me during those times of the hard period when you mentioned the initials LFSB, two things reverberated in the country. The first was just after the Harbour Bridge was built, persons laughing and used to say the *longest floating socialist bridge* and then after we had the problems in the early 1980s they said when Burnham died, LFSB means *let flour stay banned* ...

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that was when Hoyte was trying to make the reforms. There was still a group digging their heels in and said remember *LFSB - let flour stay banned*.

The United Force, yes, we have a love affair with Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and if you check the list of candidates for the 2006 elections in Region 2, you will see a candidate by the name of Linden Forbes Sampson Ramnauth ... [*Laughter*] yes, Mr Ramnauth from Huist T'Dieren not too far from where Mr. Nokta was born. Mr. Nokta knows Mr. Ramnauth very well; very staunch member of The United Force named his son after Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, because we looked at all sides of the coin. As I said, there are some good; one cannot fault some of the visions:

- One cannot fault building the glass factory
- One cannot fault building a clay brick factory
- One cannot fault many of the infrastructure developments

I want to agree with the Leader of the Opposition, the period 1964 – 1968 saw perhaps per capita - wise, the greatest period of expansion in this country's history. The man who jetted out from Georgetown to Washington to secure US \$6 million for the Soesdyke/Linden Highway was the Minister of Works, the Honourable Marcellus Feilden-Singh, Leader of the United Force.

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[Laughter] I am not making a joke ... The man who overseered the construction of the Timehri Airport which was opened in 1968 was Marcellus Feilden-Singh. Mr Speaker, the start of all these massive miles of paved roads which we speak about happened during the coalition period, but some people may wish away the contribution which The United Force has made ... *[Applause]*

In fact, I heard one person talking about all the parties in the House and he mentioned every party by name, but forgot The United Force. In the speech to honour Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, we could not ignore that (water on duck's back ...) because like Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan the contributions of Peter Stanislaus D'Aguiar and Steven Campbell cannot be wished away.

In fact, when you listened to the Leader of the Opposition mentioning about what happened under Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham for independence and the rights of the Amerindians and the lands, you would want to believe that it was because of that Toshoas Conference here in the National Assembly that we had the new Amerindian Act. *[Interruption: 'Tell me.' "Tell you? Okay, let me tell you"]*

If we go to a publication by Aubrey Collins, the achievements of Steven Campbell in 1962 at the Constitutional Conference ... Steven Campbell got a Petition signed by twenty-nine Toshoas

and presented it to Mr. Sandys, [*S-a-n-d-y-s*] ... one hour discussion. [*Laughter*]

I can quote, that Petition read like this:

Queen, Most Excellent Majesty,

The humble Petition of the Chiefs of the Amerindian Villages of British Guiana respectfully showed it; your petitioners are the Chiefs of the below mentioned villages ...

And they listed them

... and represent the Amerindians who are descendants of the native inhabitants of this country. Our people numbered thirty-thousand and live in villages scattered over approximately sixty-eight thousand square miles, which is about seventy-eight percent of Guyana's total land. Our people live peacefully in their villages, in the Savannas of British Guiana and have enjoyed independence from Your Majesty's Government for over one-hundred and eighty-two years.

They were speaking about the independence to roam the lands, in which the British, the Colonials, the Dutch and the French came and met them.

Your petitioners have heard that there is possibility of independence being granted soon and they are afraid of what will happen to their lands after independence when Your Majesty's protection will be withdrawn.

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That is the genesis. They said, your petitioner especially fears that their rights can be taken away, ignored, and the lands on which the Amerindians have lived for thousands of years will be expropriated. That was followed up in the Constitutional Conference in 1963 and we know what happened thereafter.

I like the presentations made by all sides of the House today. They have been balanced, as one has said persons have given Jack his jacket and certainly this evening Mr. Burnham has been given his jacket, his shirt, his tie and his shirt-jack.

I am speaking directly from the Motion now. One cannot argue that -

- The first WHEREAS Clause - that is fact
- The second WHEREAS Clause - that is fact
- The third WHEREAS Clause - that is fact

One may have a problem with the fourth WHEREAS Clause, about the smooth, peaceful transition of Guyana to Republican status. We may have a little problem with that, but we could forgive and ignore that.

- The fifth WHEREAS Clause - that is fact
- The sixth WHEREAS Clause - that is fact
- The seventh WHEREAS Clause - that is fact

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So if you move from all the facts outlined to the resolved, you have but no reservations whatsoever to support all the RESOLVED Clauses in this particular Motion.

I want again to commend Mr Corbin and if he had help from any side of the House, those two in crafting a motion, which I feel really, and unlike the leader of the AFC, I think this Motion really sets the tone for us to put on record the contributions of our leaders and let history, the scholars and the people of Guyana to come, judge who has done what, who has built this country and we in the end will be better for it.

Mr Leader of the Opposition, my party and I give you full support on this Motion. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

Suspension of Standing Order

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

Honourable Member Mr. Basil Williams, would you like to move the appropriate Standing Order requiring us to suspend 7.30 pm be suspended in order to continue the proceedings uninterrupted? And since I notice Mr. Carberry is saying yes, I gather that he seconds that Motion.

Mr. E Lance Carberry: Thank you Mr. Speaker. We agree.

Question put and agreed

Mr. Basil Williams: As it pleases you Mr. Speaker. Sir, it is clear that there is a natural mystic blowing in the air and if you listen carefully you will hear. I am reminded of those words of the great, late Bob Marley, because I have been able to glean having listened to the presentations of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Prime Minister that a serious effort is being made on all sides to come to terms with our past and with some effort of a better resolve for making Guyana a better place for the future and if I am correct in that then I am heartened and like Mr. Nadir I would like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Corbin for bringing this Motion and also the Prime Minister on the other side for bringing that previous Motion on the part of the late President Cheddi Jagan.

I do not see these two acts being in isolation in the sense that it is tit-for-tat or this for you and this for me, because you will recall that we had already brought a Motion honouring the late, great Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, and we must recognize the efforts of our heroes.

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This is a good augury having listened to the presentations and I am bolstered by those presentations. In fact, we can make a better effort to make Guyana the ideal place and realize the potential that I have been hearing about since I was a little child that we are supposed to have.

Mr. Speaker, my remit is in relation to Mr. Burnham, the Trade Unionist and the man of the people, but if I were to preamble a bit, I can also speak about Mr. Burnham from a personal basis. But when Mr. Nadir spoke about the period 1979 to 1985, about being in Nicaragua, et cetera, it really brought back to memory, and I have never discussed this with anyone before save with Mr. Corbin ... When I was enlisted in the service of the old man as we called him, when he was about to enter in the arms of Morpheus, because I did not work with him that long, I remember one time he was saying that he was tired of being poor and then on another occasion he was saying look at Daniel Ortega, he warranted that within the next six months Ortega will have to make a decision for Nicaragua. If you recall, at that time Ortega was leading the Sandinistas and Burnham was saying look even now the imperialist are tightening the screws around Nicaragua. So he gave them six-months to make that decision. I do not know if it was a prophecy or what, but certainly within that six-month Daniel Ortega made a decision that he would not pursue the line

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of action that he was pursuing and opted to have free and fair elections in Nicaragua.

In other words, Ortega made a choice and made a decision for Nicaragua and twenty years later we see Ortega came to Nicaragua as President having won elections in that country. The point is what was the old man saying? Was he reflecting that were he to have been put in that position would he be faced with the same decisions?; would he have been inclined to change course and embark in a new direction?. What I know, is that even before he died what was manifested under President Hoyte had certainly been started under him. So we consider that he could in fact have been a legitimate prophet. So as I speak and reflect on him, I am reminded of that passage in First Corinthians Chapter 14 Verse 3: *He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort.*

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burnham was a prophet, a sage, a seer, a great visionary, whose teachings continue to edify, exhort and comfort this nation, people of the region and the world at large.

There is a saying also from the good book that no prophet is without honour except when his own country also comes to mind.

I am sure the Honourable Member Rohee would now be on a learning experience - a learning curve - because our Caribbean

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brothers had the courage to do what was right and give him the salutation as the Caribbean person of the century.

What is so hard for the Guyanese people as a whole to have done the same thing and recognized how well-meaning he was? We are not saying that mistakes might not have been made, because in the cut and thrust of politics you have to expect that especially over a protracted period of time.

As they say, he was the man who walked with kings, but did not lose the common touch. Mr. Burnham life's focus was the upliftment of the lives of the ordinary people of Guyana. Slogans such as: *Making the small man a real man* ,,small man like Mr. Rohee ... I am not sure he is real, I think he might be a big man now ... but I am not sure if he is a real man easily comes to mind. Equally ... *feed, clothes and house yourself* ... was an exhortation to the ordinary people to improve their lives by their own efforts. However, it was to the Trade Unions and the Trade Union Movement that Burnham looked to effect the organization and harnessing of the energies of the ordinary people for economic liberation.

In addressing the opening of the Fourth Caribbean Congress of Labour in 1969 as Prime Minister, Mr. Burnham had this to say and this can be found in the *Destiny to Mould*:

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The Trade Union Movement is one of the most important institutions in the Caribbean. It represents at a certain level the organization of the workers, the organization of the common man, the organization of the proletariat. These are in the majority and these are the people who more than any other group have a right to ask for a better society - a better standard of living.

The Trade Union has its duties therefore not only at the level of industrial organisations, but at the level of national planning and national economics.

Mr. Speaker, Mr Burnham could have assigned such a role to trade unions because political orientation was founded to a great extent in the Trade Union Movement and he had garnered more than passing knowledge of the potential. Burnham, at the time of emerging politicians, including the late President Cheddi Jagan sought to have their links in the trades' early movements of trade union development in Guyana, and my research tells me that the late President Jagan had also anchored himself in the first instance in the Sawmillers Union of Guyana.

When Mr. Burnham returned to Guyana in 1949, after qualifying as a lawyer, he became a member of the oldest Trade Union in the Commonwealth - The British Guiana Labour Union - now the GLU; he became a member on the 15 April 1949. By 1952, Burnham was elected President of the British Guiana Labour

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Union and then President General, an office he held until his death.

In this connection, in an earlier presentation in relation to the Motion honouring the late, great Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, in speaking in relation to this connection between the British Guiana Labour Union as it then was and the People's National Congress, I had the occasion to say this in my presentation and I am referring to the Hansard of Wednesday, 30 November 2005:

It is respectfully submitted, Mr Speaker, that the crusade is a symbiotic relationship between the party which Mr Burnham founded - the People's National Congress and the British Guiana Labour Union, wherein from thenceforth the leaders of the People's National Congress were also the heads of the British Guiana Labour Union today called the Guyana Labour Union.

Mr. Speaker, this relationship has now entered its fifty-first year; it is fifty-one years now that this relationship between the British Guiana Labour Union and the leadership of the People's National Congress has existed and we dare say will continue to exist.

According to Halim Majeed in his book Forbes Burnham; Burnham had won the respect of the following in the Trade Union Movement. This was confirmed by no less a person than the late President Jagan who in writing in the West on Trial said this:

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With Mr Burnham leading The British Guiana Labour Union increase in the Unions representing government employees came on militant progressive leadership. As a result, by 1953 British Guiana had a militant dynamic Trade Union Council working closely with us.

No less a person than Cheddi Jagan recognized the importance of the role of being head of the British Guiana Labour Union that it had for the PPP at that time.

In 1957, when Mr. Burnham founded the People's National Congress after the split that was referred to by previous speakers in 1955, Mr. Burnham continued on his path to ensure that the Trade Unions were established on a proper, acceptable, legal footing and that they had equality in the business of politics and economics in Guyana. He believed that Trade Union could not be politically apathetic and in the Destiny to Mould he said this.

It is impossible for a Trade Union Movement to have any vitality to play its proper role in the scheme of things in the context of developing nations, unless it takes an intelligent interest in politics.

Sir, you see how the emerging politicians of the time were involving the Trade Unions and the Trade Unions Movement and they use it as a very important vehicle not only in the struggle to gain independence, but in the struggle to liberate the ordinary

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man, the masses, the common man, the proletariat and also to foster the interest of their own political parties.

He continues:

A Trade Unionist must take part in politics in its wider sense. Trade Unions must assist in planning, must understand the objective which any given government has, must also realize in the final analysis, because of the structure of our system most of the remedies are going to be political.

When Mr. Burnham became Premier in 1964, he immediately set about establishing the status of Trade Unions as an equal partner in the development of Guyana and he confirmed in a speech in 1969 to the Caribbean Congress of Labour that -

The Trade Union Movement was consulted when the development programme was first drafted in 1965 ...

His government entered into power in 1964 and their first development programme, he said the Trade Union Movement was consulted and he continued:

The Trade Union Movement will again be consulted as we re-write our development programme...

So he established the trade union as a relevant force and partner in development. He continued:

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In spite of the little difference which may arise from time to time the Trade Union Movement in Guyana and the Government of Guyana will continue to operate as equals and will together create a society where the worker becomes the real man.

Mr. Speaker, throughout his tenure in office as Prime Minister and then the first Executive President of Guyana, trade unions featured prominently in his plans of his government. We recall the concept of worker participation in management, where representatives of trade unions had a place at the table in most offices, in most corporations and in most government departments. Mr. Burnham was greatly influenced by the life's work of Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow and on taking the helm of government implemented many of the aspirations of Critchlow and the ideas he fought for including:

- (i) The establishment of the Critchlow Labour Institute the forerunner of the Critchlow Labour Collage, and
- (ii) The Guyana Industrial Training Centre

Both instituting are alive and well today.

Also the Burnham government - the PNC government - repose a foundation the status of trade unions in the Constitution in the Supreme Law of the land and Article 147 it guarantees the constitutional right to form or belong to trade unions.

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Additionally, in Article 149 (C) the constitutional right of participating through trade unions in the management and decisions processes of the State was also guarantee among others. As I said, Mr Burnham spent most of his public life in Guyana as a trade unionist and whenever he got the opportunity, he tried to make right the ills that he would have encountered while being in Opposition.

If I might respectfully refer you to the publication KAIE the official organ of then Department of Culture, No 18 of November 1985 a personal tribute by Jane Phillips-Gay, she said at Page 69:

On 16 June 1950, while I was awaiting the arrival of the Guyana Industrial Workers Union sponsored pilgrimage from Enmore, Comrade Founder Leader LFS Burnham informed me that I must list him as the PPP delegate to speak at Bourda Green. It was there he heard the late Dr. Latchmansingh express the wish that a monument should be erected in the honour of the five martyrs, which would also mark the twelfth shooting in the sugar industry.

And she said:

That is why, when the Burnham government came fully on stream, comrade leader set about to erect such a monument, he unveiled the tablet in 1978 and a rally was held there annually.

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I am not sure how many people know that the Enmore Martyrs Monument was erected by Forbes Burnham. So he took the opportunity when he gained the reins of power to continue to establish the wings of the trade union and the trade union movement.

So coming back as a lawyer, a brilliant person to Guyana in 1949 and as we follow his course even in his profession as a lawyer, we cannot under-estimate the contributions that he would have made and the pervasive nature of his gifts, because it is apposite to know that when he gained his LLB with honours in 1947, the next year he was admitted as a GRAY Inns Barrister. The next year, he was admitted to practise at the local Bar where he adorned it like a jewel - the legal luminary that he was. In 1959, he was the President of the Bar Association, I dare say, a very prestigious position in that era. I do not think that they, the Legal Practitioners Committee in place at that time, but what is apposite to note is that this must be some kind of record that for Mr Burnham to be bestowed with SILK after only eleven years of practice, this is the most remarkable thing of all and in fact, it never escape the attention of any even as much a great person as he was – Dr. Mohammed Shahabbudin in his writing in the same KAIE. If I may quickly refer you to an extract of what he said:

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By 1960, he was appointed Queens Counsel; in his case the honour came after what must have been one of the shortest periods of practice in this country and yet so outstanding was he that it appeared overdue. It should not be imaged, however, that he was anything but deferential to his seniors, quite the contrary he declined to accept SILK unless it was at the same time given to a senior lawyer of acknowledged eminence.

This indicates clearly what a remarkable person and lawyer Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was and again I suspect little of us knew that he also was an Attorney General of Guyana. I do not know how many of us knew that.

Dr. Shahabbudeen also confirmed that and he said a little known, but perhaps a sufficiently interesting episode to warrant being recalled now concerns the fact that he was the first Attorney General to be appointed after the elections in December 1964. I well remember it; I was then Solicitor General. Whatever were the reasons for three months after the elections there was in fact no Attorney General. I remember referring him to a New Zealand precedent in which the Prime Minister also held office as Attorney General and so the records will show that the Premier of British Guiana was appointed as Attorney General with effect 25 March 1965. This confirms the exalted status of Mr. LFS Burnham. As I said he never stayed in his profession, but his

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skills were pervasive and treating with the trade union movements was not the only aspect of the areas in which he had ventured.

So Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burnham left a rich legacy for the trade union movement to build on. It is now up to the present and future leaders of the movement to consolidate on the gains engendered by Burnham and Critchlow. Like Burnham, they too must believe in the words of Henry Emerson Fostic and I quote:

Democracy is based on the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.

That sums up Burnham's life work with his focus on ordinary people and the need to guarantee for them a decent life in this beautiful country of ours.

I offer my overwhelming support for this Motion and I am happy that the Honourable Prime Minister has also done so and in fact has confirmed that all these RESOLVED Clauses, the Government has no problem in implementing and so once again I thank you and thank the Hon Robert Corbin for bringing this Motion to this Honourable Parliament at this time.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Ms. Venessa Kissoon ...

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Ms. Venessa Kissoon: Mr Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and privilege to speak to the Motion before this Honourable House, a Motion that highlights the many contributions of a great man Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, the father of this nation, the Caribbean man of the Century and most of all a champion of youth.

Mr. Burnham was a man of vision, who recognized that the country which sets growth and prosperity as its goals can charter its course successfully, particularly if this is inclusive of the conscious and deliberate participation and contribution of its young people.

During his long distinguished service to this nation, Mr. Burnham held the position as Minister of Education. In this capacity, he initiated the revolutionising of our educational system to attain these goals. In this regard, top priority was given to free education from nursery to university levels. Mr. Forbes Burnham further understood that education is the cornerstone of development and held the conviction that every child was entitled to equal access to education irrespective of whether the child was born in or out of wedlock.

Consequently there was equal access to education across all social boundaries. In addition, the rights of every individual to education is now considered a fundamental human right and

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accordingly enshrined in the Constitution of Guyana and this was done under Mr. Forbes Burnham, when he introduced legislation to this effect.

This policy undertaking included the prohibition of school fees, the movement away from single sex to co-educational facilities, absorption of private schools into the public education system and the provision of text books free of cost to students. These initiatives complemented the existing framework for a compulsory education and significantly improved access to it countrywide. The provision of compulsory and free education can be considered a major undertaking by any government and even more so in a small developing country. Thus, Mr. Forbes Burnham should be honoured for such an achievement.

There was the establishment of the multi-lateral schools across this country. These institutions were geared to not only address the regular academic requirements of the educational system; they also included the technical and vocational aspects of education. Multi-lateral schools were thus properly equipped with machinery and other necessary resources for the effective preparation of our nation's youth for the positive task of nation building.

Practical instructions centres were also set up to support the general education system with the same intent:

- Bladen Hall

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- Bygeval
- Anna Regina
- Port Katiuma
- North Ruimveldt and
- New Amerterdam

Multi-lateral Schools are examples of the PNC government's policy within the education network under the leadership of LFS Burnham. The initiation of fundamental institution that is essential for harnessing the cream of the crop within a developing nation was birthed and nurtured by a visionary known to us all as the benevolent Mr Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, thus,

- the President's Collage
- Cyril Potter Collage of Education and
- Guyana School of Agriculture

to name a few.

Mr. Burnham was man with an abiding interest in youth and so saw it fit to designate an entire week to youths as he himself became Minister before he was thirty years old and as such demonstrated this by including youths in the highest level of decision making that is Parliament. Mr. Speaker, just to mention a few,

- Phillip Duncan was only twenty-two years old
- Keith Thomas - twenty-three years old

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- Oscar Clarke and Eugene Gilbert - twenty-six years respectively

who all served as members of Parliament under the leadership of Mr. Forbes Burnham.

An extraordinary visionary he was indeed as several institutions were originated; one such was the National Service in 1974. National Service was a vehicle for building amity and national unity. Under the National Service those who suffered from too little or the wrong type of education or no education were afforded the opportunity to be educated, not only in academic terms but in the wider sense than those who would have had a formal education, but not really being educated as citizens of Guyana had the opportunity of receiving the fullest type of education. National Service also encouraged the physical and mental discipline necessary for the satisfactory and satisfying development.

It would be remiss of me not to remind members of this Honourable House that National Service catered for the different categories of people in Guyana and made many of the divisions disappear; categories such as:

- Guyanese within the education system

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- Guyanese who have had all the available formal training, appropriate to their ability and aptitude and those who were employed and those who were not employed
- Guyanese who were not exposed to much formal education as was available and appropriate to their ability and aptitude, who were and were not employed
- Guyanese who would have liked to go on to university or other institutions of further training
- Guyanese who would have completed university entrance requirements and wished to go on to university; and
- Guyanese who were in prison or otherwise in detention in accordance with the law.

Mr. Speaker, National Service gave young people life skills. It created a desire for youths to want to serve their country and it helped to sustain that desire by equipping those youths with important life processes. It taught one to successfully balance their academic, social, emotional and physiological skills, thus resulting in them becoming well rounded individuals. The skill of self-study and revision was imparted. Under the National Service there were several Units which included:

- The Young Brigade
- The National Cadet Corp

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- The New Opportunity Corp
- The Pioneer Corp and
- The Special Service Corp

all geared to meet and satisfy the needs of youths from as young as ten-years old. Not forgetting that National Service was heavily biased on Agriculture which was a surety of feeding, clothing and housing ourselves as a nation, which caused us not to be heavily dependent on international assistance, and which would inevitably force us to accept deals that would stifle our growth as a nation.

Mr Burnham was a great enthusiast and participant of sports throughout his life. He had a passion for chess a true sporting love of his life and became the Chairman of the Chess Federation and lifted chess out of its ivory tower to the realm of popular accessibility to the common man. In this capacity, he made a chess hall on Main Street at that time a reality.

He was also associated with cricket, his best known sporting involvement, in so much that he listened to the broadcast of a cricket match through the air-phone of his transistor radio while attending meetings.

Mr. Burnham was very influential in the lives of sports personalities in Guyana and beyond. Personalities such as Clive Hubert Lloyd, one of the world's most successful cricket captains. World rated boxers such as:

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- Lennox Blackmore
- Patrick Ford
- Kenny Bristol and
- Michael Anthony Parris, our only Olympic Medalist

Mr. Forbes Burnham was the initiator of the Guyana Games, which placed the ten-administrative Regions competing against each other in multiple sport disciplines. It was under Mr. Burnham that Guyana produced its highest number of world class athletes. To name a few:

- Marlon Dewarder
- James Wren Gilkes; and
- Aubrey 'Skinny' Wilson.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Corbin for bringing such a Motion to this House and after hearing all these facts about this great son of the soil, I know that due honour, respect and recognition will be given to the late Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham OE, SC and I encourage all Members on both sides of the House to unanimously support this Motion. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member
Honourable Member Dr. George Norton ...

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Mr. George A Norton: Mr. Speaker, as I rise to make my contribution on this Motion, I cannot help, but reflect on the work of a sixteenth/seventeenth century English-Dramatist/ Playwrite from Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare, who in one of his books, Julius Caesar, in Act 3 Scene 2 of that book one of the main characters, Marc Anthony, in the funeral speech of Julius Caesar said the following:

*Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears:
I come to bury Caesar not to praise him. The evil
that men do live after them: the good is often
interred with their bones. So let it be with Caesar.*

Mr. Speaker, I repeat those last two lines for emphasis: *the evil that men do lives after them; the good is often interred with their bones* and I changed, Mr. Speaker, and I said, so let it be with Burnham

I say this so particularly because many of us in this Assembly, probably the majority of us have many times in awe spoken so many uncomplimentary things about Mr. LFS Burnham, so many negative things. We were so gullible to believe and to listen to all rumours that we tend to think this man did nothing good. He never offered, apparently a good word of advice; he never lent a helping hand; he never lead persons in the right direction and we do this, in spite of the fact that persons have labelled him not the Caribbean Man of a year, but the Caribbean Man of the century.

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Just to demonstrate how persons were so comfortable in believing all the evil things that were said about Mr. LFS Burnham, I want to use a particular example. There was a rumour here in this country, where many of us were familiar with it; it was said in the American Magazine EBONY. There was an article which says that Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was the richest black man in the world and we in Guyana believed it, because that is what we were prepared to do. And in spite of us knowing that that was a rumour, it did not end there. It went on to say that when Mr. Burnham read about that he banned that magazine immediately. Now genuine, profound, scholarly research was done in search of the facts and none was found and that finding was made public and here is where, I am emphasizing the point that persons at times feel disappointed when rumours are proven to be false, because how did one very notable, influential person in our society respond when it was made public knowledge that that was only a rumour. He said, okay if it is not in EBONY, then it is the JET another black magazine. This is the nature of things and the way people regard the Honourable LFS Burnham.

I am here to support this Motion particularly to touch on Mr. Burnham's stress on Hinterland Development. In Hinterland development there are about two areas that I would like to concentrate on and then, like now, we could not visualise the

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development of our interior, of our hinterland area without the development of hydropower which, since the 1970s was a vision of the Hon Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. The development of the Upper Mazaruni Power Station located at the Kumarau Falls downstream of the Kamarang area would certainly have had a tremendous effect on the overall development of the economy, especially with the ready availability of electricity in sufficient amount for domestic consumption. It was the positive effect on the development of the local industries that would have impacted so much on the economic state of the nation. One of the principal objectives of this hydropower project was to provide electrical power for the smelting plant of the Demerara Bauxite Company in Linden which at that time was already owned and controlled by the people of Guyana, thanks to LFS Burnham. This scheme would have provided 3,000 megawatts of power in an underground station. That scheme which was so necessary thirty years ago is still and much more so necessary today. Truly, Mr. Speaker, one cannot fault the labelling of Mr Burnham as being a man of vision; of having a vision for this country. Let us think about the level of development we in Guyana would have been in today had it not been for the sinister opposition by multiple combined forces especially externally from neighbouring Venezuela and from international organisations like Survival

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International and this was for mere political reason, for already there was a complete environmental impact study in hand with studies of township formation and the planning at the Village of Maiqua. Today, that site still is the best site in the whole of Guyana for a large Hydro-power scheme location. Along with the Hydro-power schemes there would have been construction of necessary roads. The Itabali/Peruni/ Kurupung Road to support the upper Mazaruni Hydro-power site to link that area to the coast had already gone a far way.

In the Upper Mazaruni Road project (UMRP) Lion Mountain had already been bulldozed through along with the construction of many bridges. This would have changed the entire aspect of interior travel to that Region of Guyana. As I said before; it was really unfortunate that this project was stopped for mere political reasons.

The other area that I would like to touch on in the Hinterland development as was done before by some of our speakers is that of Mr. Burnham's vision of National Service and this was some thirty-five years ago. I can outline the vision that Mr. Burnham had for this country through National Service and just to mentioned them:

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- It was by promoting the concept of a new Guyana man and woman orientated towards their role in nation building:
 - Equipped with the appropriate skills;
 - Fired with pioneering zeal and enthusiasm;
 - Working collectable in a spirit of mutual respect with persons of all ethnicities, religion and cultural affiliation;
 - Carving out viable settlements away from the coast;
 - Developing the lines of communication and infrastructure to facilitate access;
 - Courageously defending our territory against would-be invaders;
 - Supporting our Hinterland communities with basic services; and
 - Developing centres of enlightenment that would be catalyst for broad-based national development.

Such a vision was relevant then and is still relevant now even though the late LFS Burnham had that vision thirty-five years ago, but that vision is not only applicable to Guyana, for only this year in the month of June, in Trinidad in one of its newspapers Lennox Bernard, head of the UWI School of continuing studies published in the Newsday paper of Sunday June 8, a topic entitled

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National Service a Growing Imperative. He said this in one of the Trinidad newspapers and I quote:

There is a growing need to consider a model of National Service that would ensure that all citizens regardless of gender and economic status give to society their time, skills and expertise.

This is in today's Trinidad; thirty-five years ago LFS Burnham saw that was necessary for Guyana. *[Applause]*

What were some of the activities undertaken by the Guyana National Service? To mention just a few:

- Large scale agriculture activities at Kimba in the Berbice River such as:
 - cotton;
 - peanut; and
 - blackeye production.
- Quarrying at Itabu and Tipuru in the Mazaruni River;
- Wood products at Kanawaruk ;
- Garment making and artesian skills training at Tumatumari in the Potaro River;
- Printing and publishing at the Industrial Site, Georgetown;
- Gold-mining in the Puruni and Potaro Rivers;

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- Food self-sufficient activities in all training centres including:
 - Kimbia in the Berbice River;
 - Curiri in the Canje River;
 - Papaya in Port Kaituma; and
 - Arakaka in the North West District

These were some of the activities that were actually undertaken by the Guyana National Service. I mentioned the Hydro project, the Guyana National Service, but there are some other areas that had been developed under the leadership of LFS Burnham and I just want to mention a few:

The establishing of a regional system as a more effective forum for administering the country is another move that was attributed to Mr Burnham in the development of the Hinterland Region. While there might be some need for improvement no one can doubt that the regional system is a more effective forum of governance if allowed to function effectively.

We had this idea which many of us might have thought of it as a joke; we might even have laughed at it, scoffed at it and I refer to the changing of the capital city from Georgetown to the North West District, even though that had actually happened in the neighbouring country of Brazil, today, we are seeing the wisdom of such an idea after two years of successive flooding on the

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coastland and the readiness with which the city become flooded after the slightest of rainfall and high tide. Just to think about the opening of the grounds for new farming potential along with the then existing *Grow More Food Campaign*. Food might never have been a problem to this nation as it is today. This was a true demonstration of the fact that there were some definite traits of clairvoyance in the character of Mr. Burnham. With the capital city being in the North-West District we would have closer links with the rest of the Caribbean as well as to Venezuela especially now the idea of a road linkage is in the air.

There is no doubt that in the development of the Hinterland area, this had to do with proper communication to these locations and this was a reality with the establishment of the Guyana Airways Corporation and its fleet of the:

- Hawker Sidleys
- The Cargoes
- The Dakotas
- The Grumer's and
- The Twin Otters and

I know the aircrafts which made frequent scheduled flights to different interior locations including:

- Imbaimadai
- Ekereku

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- Eteringbang
- Kurupung
- Lethem
- Matthew's Ridge
- Port Kaituma and
- Bartica.

For instance, Bartica had six flights per week, two on Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays at cost affordable to the ordinary man. Roadways were also being constructed, apart from the upper Mazaruni Road project. The road from Lethem had started and had gone some distance. This self-help road, which attracted hundreds of volunteers locally and from the Caribbean as well, was being constructed from Mahdia through Northfork and the Buruburu Mountain range to connect with the Rupununi cattle trail. These along with the upgrading of trails leading to National Service Centres facilitated easier movement and demographic shifts based on perceived economic opportunities and the reassurance of support from the National Service Centres especially medical attention, availability of fresh food supplies and radio communication facilities.

I cannot touch on the development of the Hinterland areas without mentioning the effect such development would have had and how it would have influenced the Indigenous people's of that area. In

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his effort of building a new nation, Mr Forbes Burnham was determined to build it for the benefit for all the people and at the exclusion of none. The Indigenous peoples of that time had long been excluded from any real path in or benefits from the investment process at that time. The policy of the past under the British colonial rule was to treat the Indigenous people as primitive people and to isolate them on reservations.

After the elections of 1968, Mr Burnham immediately took steps to change this policy. He gave the Indigenous people a sense of pride and ownership to their beloved Guyana by ensuring that the world at large could identify the Indigenous people as part of the Guyanese make-up. In so doing, he ensured that many prominent places were given names, which identified with our Indigenous people such as the:

- Takuba Lodge
- Umana Yana and
- Timehri International Airport

Many of us might not have understood what it meant for the Amerindians to know that Chief Ibilibing from the Amakokopai Village in the Upper Mazaruni, the priest of the Arrero religion who was brought down by Mr. Burnham (he would have been a PI man) in the inauguration of the Timehri International Airport. So that airport did mean a lot to the Indigenous peoples of this

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country. One could only understand what they might have felt when for some reason or the other it might have been perceived that changing that name would have had some effect on them.

Mr. Forbes Burnham urged a policy for rapid development for Indigenous people in order that they may take their place in the Guyanese society with equal status and enjoy equal opportunity with the rest of the Guyanese people. With this in mind, the Prime Minister for the first time in the history, and this was referred to before, called a full conference of the Amerindian Chieftains to meet with ministers and senior officials reasonable for Hinterland development. At that meeting Mr. Burnham said:

We cannot and will not permit the original peoples of this country to be bypassed in the same way as the natives and indigenous of other countries are bypassed, ignored and exploited.

In his thrust for rapid improvements for Amerindian development, the Prime Minister himself took under his control the portfolio of Amerindian development and welfare. He developed and expanded the Amerindian scholarship programme, which later became the Hinterland Scholarship Programme. This was particularly so, because Mr. Burnham was of the idea that Amerindians were part and parcel of the whole community. So instead of Amerindian development committees, there were the Hinterland development committees.

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As part of the Hinterland Scholarship Programme, Amerindians from the Rupununi and other interior locations were sent to study ranching in the USA as early as 1968, while others were winning Guyana scholarships at the same time here at the National level to do medicine, engineering and agriculture abroad.

While the first Amerindian to enter the Legislative Assembly might not have done so under the Forbes Burnham's rule, one can say that two of the youngest Members ever to enter the House of the Assembly were Amerindians and had done so under the leadership of Mr. Forbes Burnham. *[Applause]*

It was Mr. Duncan as early as 27 January 1965 at twenty-two years of age who made and subscribed the Oath in the National Assembly, and later in July of 1973 became the first Amerindian minister of government *[Applause]*

It was under Mr. Burnham's Government that efforts were made to settle the Amerindian lands claim by the establishment of the Amerindians Land Commission, which was set up in 1967 and the Amerindian Act being amended in 1976, granted that much more work had to be done to complete same to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. These are some of the efforts that were made by the late LFS Burnham and while some of his ideas might be much more developed now, or might be improved, I was once told a story of when Christopher Columbus got back to Europe after

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crossing the Atlantic Ocean and in the celebration persons were saying to him; I could do that, I could have done that and he gave them an egg and asked them to stand it up on its ends and when they could not, he took it and crack it and put it to stand up and showed them how it can be done and then said:

I am convinced now that most of you will know to do this ...

The point I am making is that many things might be done now, but their origins started way back in the time of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Ms. Gail Teixeira ...

Ms. Gail Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion of Mr. Corbin. Maybe it is a sign of the times that a number of speakers have noted the maturation of the Guyanese body politic that this National Assembly, ten years after the death of Dr. Jagan and twenty-two years after the death of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, has been able to reach consensus on two separate Motions:

- One passed in December last year and

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- One presently before us today

on these two gentlemen that really moulded Guyana and the path we have traversed over the last fifty years. Maybe this embryonic maturation can become the legacy of the Ninth Parliament and the post 2006 Elections period after all the injustices, machinations, betrayals, fear, pain, hurt, anguish, tragedy, anxiety and distrust created during the colonial and the post independence period and maybe also tentative, but rather traumatic period as an emerging democracy in more recent times.

Sir, maybe the historians of the future will peruse the records of this period and recognise that change and healing was and is in the making. But this is the nature of the evolution of man and society of periods of catharsis and healing, of the horrors and the reconciliation, of recognizing dispassionately the mistakes and foibles of human existence and being magnanimous enough to place these events and people in prospective and move on.

Cheddi Jagan in 1993 at the Enmore Martyrs Memorial Rally said:

I do not live in the past, but we must never forget the past. The past must be a guide to us, how we move in the future. We must remember the past in seeing what was good and what was bad and to have no more of the bad.

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We cannot wish away the past nor can we sanitize it, but we can put it in perspective and learn from the mistakes and do all in our power to prevent repeating those mistakes and I really believe that history if it is not recognized, we will be forced to repeat the mistakes of the past. And maybe timing is also important, that maybe time is a healer and I was sitting here thinking about if something like that was taking place in the year 1985 after Mr. Burnham passed away. If we had this Motion here, I wonder ... I was trying to play in my mind whether it would have been more difficult, probably more emotive in those days.

The Honourable Member Mr. Trotman from the AFC made some very, very important comments, but also I wish to say that all the efforts all over the world in healing and reconciliation and finding national unity has never been an even path, a lineal movement. It has been in some cases zigzagged, rocky, broken and spiral, if the young politicians of today and the young members of Parliament on both sides of the House; one thing one needs as a leader and as a politician is *stickability*. If you believe in the cause, you believe in what is going on and therefore this is something that these discussions, these Motions, I think, bring perspective onto things and hopefully that the intellectuals in our midst, the historians and political scientist in our midst will do what we as politicians do not have the time to do from time to time. I know what Mr

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Corbin is talking about of being the scribe as the woman of many of the inter-party talks from 1977 on. I ended up being the scribe as well and so there are volumes and volumes of rich material that can enlighten us, enlighten our people and enlighten the whole discourse politically of what we experienced and how we put them in perspective.

I think for the majority of the younger population and the younger generation so little is understood of the post-emancipation and pre-independence period; of what it meant to be a second class citizen in one's own country. People of colour in particular all over the world were not free, they had been freed from slavery, but they were still treated as inferior to the colonial white masters even though slavery had ended.

One was freer than but not as free as others based on the colour of one's skin. The glass ceiling which is referred to now in the twentieth century – I am referring to women and where the women have broken the glass ceiling. Fifty years ago in the 1950s the glass ceiling had to do with men and women of colour, ordinary working people, who could not go to certain places for example in Guyana there were certain clubs that you could not go to as it was only made for certain people of certain colour and you had the existence of the clubs in those days that were ethnically

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stratified and ethnically stratified in terms of class as well. So you had:

- The East Indian Association
- The Coloured Peoples Body and
- The Portuguese Club

So it is important for our younger people to understand the context within which all this was going on. The world was controlled politically, economically and socially by the colonial powers. Post World War II is marked by the struggles of people all over the world for their freedom, independence and independence in long and violent suppressed struggles and just name a few:

- India
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Congo Brazzaville

in contrast to the rest of the English speaking Caribbean Colonies:

- Jamaica
- Trinidad and
- Barbados

whose transitions to independence were peaceful and a more comfortable hand over for the British. Guyana then British Guiana

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struggled for independence, was suppressed, manipulated, it was betrayed in ways that the scars still impacted on our society.

This is the context within which Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham emerged as leaders of this country; Forbes Burnham as Chairman of the People's Progressive Party and Cheddi Jagan as the Leader.

As I said, the formation of the Political Affairs Committee in 1946, brought together new, young people of Hubbard, of Janet and Cheddi and of Ashton Chase and then in 1950, Cheddi Jagan as Leader; Janet Janet as General Secretary; Forbes Burnham as Chairman; and then a whole crew of other younger people of Eusi Kwayana, CV Nunes, Boysie Ramkarran and Ashton Chase joining.

It may be also important to know how the name of People's Progressive Party came about and it came from the organization - the party that was formed by Paul Robeson in the United States to counter the McCarthy period was called the Progressive Party. We borrowed the Constitution and the structures from the Jamaican People's National Party in which Burnham went to study. How their party was created when the PPP was being looked at.

One can actually say with some accuracy when one looks at the names of the founding members of the PPP that the PPP was the

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mother of the majority of the political parties, politicians and key trade unionist in Guyana over the last thirty-four years and we now have the next generation of those who split off from the PNC now and those who are et cetera. So that it is the mother of the political movement of this country for peace, for independence, for the end of oppression and we have no apologies as a party to make for that rich history that produces leaders: whether they disagreed with us later on, is a different issue. They came from our womb literally as a party. The struggle for the universal adult suffrage, which was victorious, led to the PPP victory at the polls in 1953 winning eighteen out of twenty-four seats. I think we should recognise world history was created in those elections in that nowhere else had an openly elected anti-colonial political party won government through the ballot box. All the other movements were doing it in force in some cases to get in some form of liberation struggle or using the gun and so on. The PPP was the only party of that era that came up, openly publicly with its positions and yet won eighteen out of twenty-four seats in a colonial environment.

The right of women to vote while not being the first in the world was way in advance of many of the developed countries at that time and no where else in the world did a woman become the Deputy Speaker of any Parliament; only in Guyana in 1953 Mrs.

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Jagan becoming the Deputy Speaker and in fact if we want to have some comparative analysis is that it is only in 2007, I believe, Mrs. Poloski become the Speaker in the United States. So this little, little, tiny country of seven-hundred thousand people and then it was three hundred-four hundred thousand people were making history in the fiftys. I think it is important that sometimes we have to go back to the 1950/1953 to really look at what was very important and what was happening.

I recommend some of you to look at this book, if you have one *Cheddi Jagan – MY FIGHT FOR GUYANA'S FREEDOM*. The photographs in it are absolutely exquisite including pictures that include Forbes Burnham and Cheddi and the whole history here and for the younger people I think it is worth looking at. It is not going to contaminate anybody, if that is what someone may be afraid of.

The electoral victory strengthened the PPP's call for self-government and independence, but the response of the British Colonial Office was one of alarm and paranoia. Britain's hands were full as throughout their Empire there was a plethora of anti-colonial movements emerging and becoming stronger. The USA's emergence on the world stage as an imperial power with declarations of continental destiny and growing interference in the

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countries of this hemisphere was also an important factor that we have to examine when we deal with Guyana's history.

It is not only the British; we have to look at the role of the American administrations. One should not forget as an earlier speaker spoke about the cold war in this period that this was also the period of mass hysteria in the United States known as the McCarthy period where persons alleged to be communist were thought to be looking in every nook and cranny and where the Rosenbergs, Paul Robeson, many actors, writers, trade unionist and hundreds of others, film-makers and so on were tried and in some cases executed. Others committed suicide and others lives were destroyed forever. This is also the period of the Cuban Revolution lead by Fidel Castro and the creation of a socialist Cuba in the US backyard and this caused the greatest consternation to the American Administration, because one must remember that the holy ship Guantanamo Bay is also emerging and would come a little later.

The fact that the blockade against Cuba is still not lifted although the majority of the countries of the world trade with Cuba and the United States stills holds on to an antiquated and an anachronistic view of Cuba.

The 1953 victory, Cheddi became the Premier, Janet as I said was the Deputy Speaker and Burnham became the Minister of

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Education. In subsequent elections in 1957, Brindley Benn became the Minister of Education and Community Development and his son Robeson Benn. who is now a Member of Parliament and also the Minister of Public Works; Boysie Ramkarran the adorable, lovable, witty Trade Unionist and member of the Peoples Progressive Party and for those as old as Corbin, who would have remembered (I thought you said that you are old, Mr Corbin; it is a comparative - a relative thing) and Boysie in this Parliament was a delight to everyone in terms of his wit even when he was attacking and criticized them, but dear Boysie Ramkarran was the Minister of Works in 1957 and so you had others coming forward who became Ministers.

I think what is important to understand the context that is why I am dwelling a bit on 1953, I not trying to get stuck in history. That government last for one-hundred and thirty-three days. The British came in a suspended the Constitution, the Government, the Cabinet and the Ministers could not get into their offices; people were arrested, people houses were raided and they were detentions. Many people were put in jail in this period - Cheddi, Janet, Hubbard, Nunes Ramkarran and Rory Westmaas who is still around today.

I think it would be useful though ... because when I speak it is not for the older generation it is for some of the younger generation.

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When Her Majesty's Government on 9 October 1953 declared that the Constitution of British Guiana must be suspended and I am quoting:

... to prevent Communist subversion of the Government and a dangerous crisis both in public order and economic affairs. The faction and power have shown in their acts and speeches that they are prepared to go to any length, including violence to turn British Guiana to a Communist State. The Governors, therefore being given emergency power have removed the portfolios of the party's Ministers, armed forces have landed to support the police and to prevent any further disorder which might be fomented.

Contrast this what Her Majesty's Government decree was in suspending the Constitution with the journalists', who were parachuted in here not literally of course in 1953 and so here is a journalist of the Daily Mirror, Ralph Champion, who says, I was the first British newspaper to arrive in this *Crisis Colony* and when I flew in yesterday, I was greeted with amazement. There seemed to be little idea that there was a crisis of alleged moves by the Government's People's Progressive Party to convert the Colony into a red Republic.

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Another British newspaper, The Daily Mail, also had a reporter here and he said the following:

Mr Whittingham, the Deputy Police Commissioner in British Guiana, sounded calm and unperturbed today as he spoke over the radio-telephone from the Colony's Capital and said:

There are no demonstrations, there is no general strike and there is nothing abnormal happening here whatsoever.

I told him about the Communist workers demonstrating around the Parliament Building in Georgetown and Mr Whittingham said there have been no demonstrations and no trouble whatsoever.

Another journalist who was asked ... and he said:

Strange crisis this is, in the mist of a big international cricket match - what is going on?

And so the machinations of the British in relation to a duly democratically elected government made up of young leaders, young Guianese of this country in 1953 is probably the first modern tragedy in Guyana's modern political history of what? Because this is where the tide begins to turn; this is where things begin to change and so coming out of this period, and I agree with

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what Mr Corbin said that the time for writing and a time for examining. It is important that we examine the writing of the Colonial office and the correspondence between the British and American Administrations from the 1950 and through to independence. Some of these have had the thirty-year embargo lifted and some have been posted by the Library of Congress and by the British Archives. Interestingly enough though, many of these records have thick black markers stretching through them and so my comment to those who feel strongly that some of these countries have better laws than ours, so much for the freedom of information.

The British sought an acceptable alternative leader in the PPP to take over from Cheddi Jagan and these machinations were revealed in the 1955 split lead by Burnham and the 1956 split lead by the ultra left lead by Rory Westmaas and others.

Mr. Corbin and members on the other side, we will have to examine the spilt of 1955, but not tonight, only to say that records are there and they need to be diagnosed and analyzed. However, it was a sad letter day for Guiana. It was ominous in what it lead to in the future and so one thing I will comment on in a modern day context is that the experience of the 1955 split and the 1956 split should be a lesson to our parties on the importance of unity internally and the ability of all our parties and we as politicians to

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be able to withstand the influence of exogenous forces, who would like to chart the course of our history instead of we charting our history. Obviously as has been pointed out in 1954/1957 there were two PPPs and the PNC was then born with Burnham as its leader.

The western powers' efforts became more desperate and around 1962, their strategy was to want to look outside the PPP for a solution to the independence dilemma. They could not hold back any longer the fact that independence was going to come to Guyana; the problem was; what kind of independence? Who would head it? Who was going to be the person, the movement, the party that was going to take this through? And this we must understand the context of the struggles in Latin America and the emergence of the Vietnamese struggle for their liberation and the growing size simultaneously of the socialist world - of the socialist countries - that countries were becoming free and choosing their own political path.

The fact that 1961/1964 was marked by violence and many attempts of Constitutional talks which I hope the constitutionalist and legal luminaries among us will really look at what was going on in those discussions at which both Jagan as Premier and Burnham as Leader of the Opposition were the two major actors. They were the two major actors with the British Government. I

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just thought that this would make Mr Corbin smile, that the Hansard of 1963 which says that Mr Burnham presented a Motion in the House that called for the system of registration to be changed and one making use of voter's identification cards be introduced in 1963. Remember what happened in the 1997 elections? So that was just a quid.

It is important to understand that the British left nothing to chance and jerrymanded the electoral boundaries and introduced proportional representation in order to remove the PPP government which had been successfully winning elections. The fact that Her Majesty the Queen again, the same Elizabeth II by decree in 1964 passed the Government to the PNC/United Force coalition at the handing over ceremony of the instruments of independence in the National Assembly at which, quoting from *Guyana - the Struggle for Liberation* by Sallahuddin and the Hansard, I would not read the whole thing, but he (Dr Jagan) points out *that the Constitution has failed*.

This is the Constitution that of 1966 and was not this House ... the person who represented the British Monarch was the Duke of Kent and the Constitution instruments were handed over in the House to Prime Minister Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and this is what Jagan had to say. It is prophetic, because it became an issue for Burnham as time went on:

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The form of the Constitution we handed down at this time is one which perpetuates the visions in our society and entrenches minority rule. The Constitution has failed to lay the foundation for national unity. The fundamental rights which the Constitution seeks to safeguard are in great measure a non-existence.

He also goes on to say:

Detention without trial has plagued the country since July 1964

When by Constitutional amendment the United Kingdom governments gave the Governor, acting without advice powers to detain without trial and so forth.

But Jagan being Jagan indomitable and indefatigable in terms of his believe in the future and faith that things always change. He said that *parliamentary democracy is an important place in this country and a heavy onus lies on all of us and more particular on the government to see that it works. And he goes on: that the PPP is convinced that it will win again but it cannot be a gift of charity.*

Despite all of this as earlier speakers have pointed out that on the night when the Union Jack came down and the Golden Arrowhead was raised these two gentlemen embraced publicly in the National Park.

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It is important that in the immediate post-independence period that a phenomena must not be overlooked. Here is a people who have not been independent and living under colonial rule, becoming independent, having their own status and a name of a country and a flag. What is important is that the pride of people, the pride of being Guyanese of having an indentify and being able to recognize themselves affects the way in which the PNC administration in particular in culture, in youth and a number of things galvanises that support. This is the period of hope of a lot of enthusiasm, of hope for the future and in a sense maybe too optimistic in terms of what could be done. There is no denial especially in the 1966 - 1970 period that Guyana received lot of funds from the British Government and from the different financial institutions and this was able to maintain a level of progress. However, by 1975 to 1985, Guyana's fortune began to change. One of Burnham's legacies as Premier and as Prime Minister was two Constitutions - the 1970 and the 1980 Constitutions which created the framework for the State of Guyana.

The 1970 Constitution passed in this National Assembly renamed Guyana as the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and created the hybrid minister republic and constitutional framework which has served throughout the 1980 Constitution and the 1999/2003

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constitutional reform period. So we have not moved from that hybrid system. But I believe that we should also look at the Themes in African Guyanese History by Winston Mc Gowan, James Rose and David Grainger and in particular an Article by Clive Thomas, which is called *State Capitalism in Guyana and an Assessment of the Burnham's Cooperative Socialist Republic*, which is actually a pretty good article in terms of putting a number of issues into context. But the tenets of the 1970 Constitution laid the basis for the following;

- The Nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy;
- The Feed, House and Clothe the nation as the national development strategy;
- The cooperative sector being the dominant sector of the null State tri-sectoral economy.

So this was where the emphasis was on the State control of the economy.

The ideologisation of the Constitution and society with State cooperative socialist ideology, so much so that the word *Comrade* which was used by all of us in the party and is still used by us became a bad word later on by the late 1980s for many people.

And of course the one thing that we cannot get away from and which is difficult and that is to deal with the issue of the

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Paramouncy of the Party and there are documents written and published on that. So that is not a fiction of Gail Teixeira's imagination.

Last but not least, the foreign policy - a progressive foreign policy framework - where Guyana's progressive posture in the global arena was well recognised and we have to recognise and to give credit that Guyana did take forthright positions in the anti-apartheid struggle; in the struggle of the Portuguese African colonies and so forth, as someone said earlier, allowed Guyana to be used as a technical stop-over point for planes going to support the liberation movement in Africa.

The Caribbean Festival of Arts - a proposal from the National History and Arts Council to the PNC government was accepted and Guyana became host and the organiser, dreamer, coordinator of the first CARIFESTA in 1972. This particular event, 1972, is the rallying point for some of the best artistes, writers, not only of Guyana and the Caribbean and it is indeed ironic and good that as we discuss this Motion that CARIFESTA has returned to the country which gave it birth after thirty-six years and in the month of August 2008.

After the 1972 elections which history has documented, film and newspapers, as has been the case with other elections, Cheddi Jagan wanted to find an avenue for national unity and to restore

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Guyana's stability, economically, socially and politically and he proposed two initiatives to Burnham and the PNC, both of which Mr Corbin indicated and referred.

The first proposal involved critical support for the progressive positions of the PNC especially in global politics and foreign policy and therefore to create an environment for the PPP and the PNC to have a more open-ended rapprochement after the 1973 period.

The second proposal had to do with a national patriotic front government which is in fact a shared government proposal.

The response regrettably was that this was an era of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks and regrettably and ultimately even though there were some discussions these initiatives broke down. By the way we were the Mensheviks. One wonders what would Guyana have looked like today if the proposal of the national patriotic front had been taken on seriously; have been the subject of a lot of negotiations obviously; what would Guyana have looked like? Would our roads have been more tortuous and difficult? Would it have been easier? *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

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Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, I beg that the Honourable Member be given another fifteen minutes to continue her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Ms. Gail Teixeira: In 1978, the National Assembly voted for a referendum to be held to postpone the elections in that year for a year and a half to allow for the new Constitution to be brought in as the 1980 Constitution and this is the 1980 Constitution which has been the subject of the incomplete 1996/1997 and the 1999/2003 Constitutional Reform Process. It is now in this area that the 1980 Constitution has come about, obviously with great controversy and great opposition and the boycott of the referendum by a large part of the society. And all of this is documented by international observers; blah, blah, blah.

But what is important is that this is the area too where there are some very serious issues taking place not only globally, but internally in the PNC, internally in the Government and in the wider society and these again are issues that will have to be analysed and studied, but in these difficult years of 1980 - 1985, the last five years of Burnham's life Walter Rodney was killed, Jonestown took place; House of Israel was very busy (remember I

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said very busy; I did not give a qualification of what they were doing). However, it is this Constitution that provides for an Executive President with absolute powers and presidential immunities and it is this Constitution that has been adopted by the National Assembly and is one of Burnham's legacies. It brings in the socialist ideology again, but it also restructured the State; a framework that in the 1999/2003 reform process has been mainly dismantled, changed, amended, thrown out and re-written. And this must be a sign; this must be an indication to all of us no matter how cynical and critical we are that there has been change on a process of constitutional reform, an *un-imaginable* for this country took place, where a lot of horse racing took place, a lot of changes were made based on gentlemen's honour and gentlemen's agreement, but by goodness sake, we did it. We did it in an era twenty-something years later, after Mr. Burnham had died; after Cheddi had died and so the cynicism of Mr. Trotman, I dismiss wholeheartedly. Certainly:

- As a Man;
- As a Lawyer;
- As a Politician;
- As a Prime Minister; and
- As a President

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The history of Guyana cannot be written without the inclusion of the determining role that Burnham played in the path that this country has traversed. And in the impact then and now on society:

- What was the impact?
- How did it affect different people?
- What did it mean for different people?
- How would one classify Burnham; a Machiavellian or a socialist; a villain or a hero?

Those we leave, for those who will hopefully be invigorated by some of the discussions here tonight, of those who would claim as the Kabaka, or the Comrade Leader, or the President, et cetera.

This Motion I believe, puts in the BE IT RESOLVED CLAUSE, some very important issues in relation to:

- (i) The portraits of all the Presidents from now and in the future and that over some time, obviously we will have to have a place to be able to store all the Presidents, but that would not be for my generation, probably for several Parliaments in the future.
- (ii) But also too, the importance of an institution being designated to be able to;
 - Start the collection
 - The chronicling and

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- The archiving of the records of the Presidents of Guyana from President Chung onwards.

We will have to work with families of the Presidents, if they are alive or deceased to be able to have access to some of the important records. So I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this evening, we have been able to sometimes say things that maybe a few years ago, if either side said it, it would have led to plenty *cuss up* and noise and a lot of hurt feelings. And maybe - just maybe - and my friend here is reminding me of Backer now. I really believe that in the whole catharsis of doing these Motions that there is the embryo of the future and it is not an easy thing and it will never be an easy thing, but we can show the Guyanese people that we have the level of maturity of political leadership in this country to be able to fashion a body-politic that will bring unity to our country. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much ...

The Honourable Member Mr. Mervyn Williams ...

Mr. Mervyn Williams: Mr. Speaker, I am asking you, where are your heroes Caribbean? I do not see any statues in your streets; something must be wrong. *Where are your heroes Caribbean show them to me?*

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The words of the famous Guyanese singer and song writer Dave Martin echo in my head, Mr Speaker, as I stand here to offer my unreserved support to this Motion entitled *HONOURING LINDEN FORBES SAMPSON BURNHAM OE, SC* in recognition of his contribution to Guyana - the Motion being in the name of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition Mr Robert Corbin.

Indeed Sir, it was Mr. Burnham himself who said a country without its own heroes, without its own legends, I contend would find it difficult to survive, there would be:

- Nothing to look to
- Nothing to admire and
- Nothing to write or to sing about.

This Motion gives us a golden opportunity to put history right. Today, we can formally recognise the architect of our Nation's independence:

- A founding father of CARIFTA in 1968 and CARICOM in 1973
- A visionary
- A leader of exceptional qualities and
- A man before his time

Today we can officially recognise Guyana's first executive President

- A Patriot

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- A National Hero, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

Mr. Speaker, when the People's National Congress-led Government assumed Office in 1964, all was not grand for a young Nation. It was left to LFS Burnham, the experienced navigator and helmsman and his team of competent and committed managers to guide Guyana's ship and to bring her back safely to port.

Heavy emphasis was placed on infrastructural development; clearly this was necessary since the focus on self reliance depended heavily on the Agricultural sector.

The MMA Project was under consideration for about thirty years, before the PNC Government caused it to materialise in the 1970s. 115,000 acres of land was targeted for efficient water control through the investment of US \$72 million in drainage and irrigation works.

The Tapacuma and Black Bush Polder water control schemes, which were started by the PPP Government, were extended at a cost of US \$32 million and US \$29 million, respectively.

In the area of road infrastructure:

- The New Amsterdam to Crabwood Creek Highway
- The Black Bush Polder Road
- The Georgetown to Linden highway and

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- The Supenaam to Charity road among others were constructed.

Roads were constructed to benefit agricultural development, leading to the opening up of the agricultural transportation network.

As the Honourable Prime Minister said in his presentation, in 1978 the Dermerara Harbour Bridge linking the East Bank of Demerara to the West Bank was constructed.

In that same year, the concrete Canje Bridge was constructed across the Canje River. It was now possible to drive from Linden to Molsen Creek or all the way to Charity, something up to then was but a dream. Much emphasis was placed on:

- Pure water supply
- Several wells were drilled
- Pipe lines laid and
- Water treatment and distribution facilities constructed, mainly in rural communities.

There was such a thing as the Rural Electrification Programme with stations being built in:

- East Canje
- No 63 Village
- Everton
- Onverwagt and

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- Wakenaam
- The Garden of Eden Project was completed
- The transmission lines between Georgetown and Linden and
- The high voltage lines between Garden of Eden and Sophia were put in place.

The Guyana Telecommunication Corporation established exchanges in:

- New Amsterdam
- Rosignol
- Whim
- New hope
- Beterverwagting
- Timehri and
- Linden

Telecommunications in Guyana was now going places and for the first time in Guyana in 1972, direct distance dialling was possible. Mr. Burnham pursued many possibilities and opportunities in his quest for self-reliance for this country. For example, there was a Tapir Assembly Plant. We put together our own vehicles at one time in this country. Today, many of our citizens do not know that the famous Tapir vehicles in which they travelled from Skeldon to Molsen Creek were products of a proud Guyana.

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Many of the refrigerators in the homes of Caribbean Nationals at one time were manufactured by the Guyana Refrigerators' Limited under the IDEAL Brand. Inspired by Mr. Burnham:

- We ate what we produced
- Built with local materials - both wood and clay
- We opened settlements
- Constructed homes and schools and
- Built communities through self help all across Guyana.

Housing Schemes were built in areas such as:

- Guyhoc
- Laing Avenue
- Festival City
- Vergenoegen
- Crane Village
- Phoenix Park
- Mabaruma
- Melanie
- Linden

and countless other areas

For the first time in Guyana's history there were housing schemes for:

- Police officers
- Soldiers and

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- Stevedores

These were housing schemes complete with each home equipped with the basic amenities, built in communities with adequate:

- Drainage
- Roads
- Portable water supply and
- Electricity

This was captured appropriately in the Catholic Standard Editorial of 1970- *Guyana Proud Of Her Achievements*. This Editorial was reproduced by Ferguson in his book- *To Survive Sensibly or to Court Heroic Death* and this is what it says:

The Prime Minister was right to stress the achievements of the Nation, since he first assumed Office in the dark days of 1964.

- *The economic revolution has indeed been spectacular in recent years.*
- *The coastal dwellers have seen fine, new highways replacing the narrow, broken down roads which hampered transportation and commerce.*
- *Our pure water system*
- *The telephone and electricity services*
- *Public transport and*

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- *A long list of other amenities has improved our overall recognition in the past few years.*
- *Men and machines are struggling to burst through into the Hinterlands, where our real wealth is said to lie.*

Mr. Speaker, the National Insurance Scheme came into being in September 1969. This scheme was essentially a support mechanism geared at ensuring that the working class in this country was provided for in the event of a loss of income, occasioned by:

- Incapacity for work
- Old age or
- Death

It was another first in the Region.

- The National Cultural Centre
- The University of Guyana and
- Scores of schools and health care facilities were constructed.

Burnham's vision for Guyana was being realised through carefully directed policy implementation and astute management of National Resources. The NIS as an institution continues to be relevant and of significant

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importance to Guyana. More than ever before, despite the glitches in the processing of old age benefits, which surface from time to time, our citizens are with each passing day receiving the benefits of their commitment to and investment in the process of nation building. Today, the National Insurance Scheme has assumed the role of mainstay to the Government and people of Guyana, not only as a social security scheme, but also as a provider of financing for projects such as the construction of the Berbice River Bridge.

Mr. Speaker, this is how Mr. Burnham saw his policy of economic liberation. And I quote what he had to say:

Psychologically and emotionally:

- *We shall be liberating ourselves*
- *We will be displaying our initiative and showing our capacity to turn to our own and our country's benefits what is found in Guyana and what can be grown and produced in Guyana.*
- *We shall be emancipating ourselves from the serfdom of consuming other people's food and copying other people's dietary habits.*
- *We shall be producing and wearing relevant Guyanese clothing.*
- *We shall be living in Guyanese houses, fabricated from processed Guyanese materials*

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- *We will have rejected irrelevant values in the most important sectors and translate into concrete terms, our Party's and Government's philosophy of self-reliance.*

Our National successes were many and significant, but then there were the challenges of the oil crisis of the 1970s to be confronted by Guyana and the rest of the world. Beginning on 17 October 1973, the oil crisis was to have a severe impact on what was happening in Guyana and the world.

Members of the organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries decided that they were no longer going to ship oil to nations that supported Israel in its conflict with:

- Syria
- Egypt and
- Iraq.

At the same time, OPEC Members used their influence to raise oil prices.

On 16 October 1973, OPEC cut production of oil and placed an embargo on shipments of crude oil to the West. A boycott of Israel and price increases was also imposed. The market price for oil rose substantially. This is what one report said:

A world financial system already under pressure from the breakdown of the Brettonwood's

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Agreement was set on a path of a series of recessions and high inflation that persisted until the early 1980s and the elevated oil prices persisted until 1986.

That report goes on to say:

The effects of the embargo were immediate, OPEC forced the oil companies payments drastically - the price of oil quadrupled by 1974.

In the United States, schools and offices were closed down to save heating oil. Factories cut production and laid off workers;

In France, the oil crisis ended thirty glorious years of high economic growth and resulted in decades of unemployment;

In the United Kingdom, oil prices combined with strike action by coal miners resulted in an energy crisis in the winter of 1973/1974;

In Japan, there was an economic shift away from oil intensive industries and towards investment in industries such as electronics;

In the US, fuel was sold on alternate days to vehicles with odd and even last digits. The three colour flag system was used at filling stations:

- The green flag meant un-rationed sale of fuel;*

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- *A yellow flag indicated rationed sale; and*
- *A red flag signalled no fuel.*

The American Congress enacted standards to downsize automobile categories.

Mr. Burnham as leader of this Nation had to have measures in place to keep this country's small, vulnerable economy on the move. In the face of these world crisis, on the one hand, Sir, and the domestic challenges on the other hand, he stayed the course, ensuring that we were forever proud to be called Guyanese. There were some policies which some felt were undesirable, but which *others supported steadfastly believing that they were the best measures in the context of the time.*

History will show that Forbes Burnham was right then and much of what is happening in Guyana today to address the current economic situation resembles what Mr. Burnham proposed for Guyana many years ago.

It was not all easy sailing on the local front. Tyrone Ferguson in his book said at Page 227:

The dramatic increase in the frequency of sugar strike action after protracted periods of positive economic performance up to 1975 makes sense to

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some extent, as part of a studied campaign to weaken the PNC's management of the economy.

On the subject of rice, this is what Mr. Ferguson had to say in quoting the United Force Leader Mr. Fielden-Singh:

Patriotic Guyanese have long since recognised that the RPA earned its removal from the Rice Board by seeking to destroy it from within and with it, the rice industry as a whole. No reasonable Government could harbour subversive among its ranks, nor place them in control of vital industries and official organisations.

Today, in Guyana citizens are called upon to grow more food, a position that was pioneered by the PNC under the leadership of Mr. Burnham many years ago. We support the Government's call to grow more food and in retrospect believe that had similar support been forthcoming back in those days, Guyana would have been further ahead of the Region's quest for food security, a position which Mr. Burnham would have surely been proud of, but even now it is not too late Mr. Speaker, the opportunity is available to the Government today to reach out to all those who have a contribution to make in the process of economic development through agriculture. Let us resolve to ensure that as a Nation we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. It would be an appropriate tribute to a fallen hero Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

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We rode the tide as a Nation, Mr. Speaker, for Mr Burnham's vision and foresight were not limited to his policies alone. These qualities manifested themselves in the careful appointment of competent and capable persons to key positions of responsibility. One such appointment was that of Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte who would later succeed Mr Burnham as Executive President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Even though the elevated oil prices persisted up to 1986, Guyana overcame, thanks to the work put in place by Mr. Burnham up to his untimely passing twenty three years ago, on 6 August 1985 and the continued efforts of his successor Mr. Hoyte from then until 1992 when he demitted office as Guyana's second Executive President.

The Economic Recovery Programme saw its rebounding with purpose and vigour. Guyana was once again a booming economy. This is what the Report for Guyana for 1991 of the Inter American Development Bank had to say:

Guyana is clearly on the road to global recovery;

There are sufficient lines of credit in the banking system;

Private sector enterprises both national and international have been appearing more and more; with important investment in the mining sector, forestry and industrial activities.

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Guyana had rebounded from the dire effects of the oil crisis of 1970; it was the astute leadership of the People's National Congress as it then was by the exceptionally brilliant Statesman, dynamic and visionary hero of Guyana, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham that saw us through.

We of the Party of Forbes Burnham can with conviction sing the words that he left us in our Party's battle song:

*Sacred is our labour brother, honourable rings or
toil,*

*In the factory, in the office winning riches from the
soil,*

*Honourable is our warfare, crush the monster
poverty,*

*Unto economic freedom in a great economy from
field and office factory,*

Rally to the PNC.

It is only fitting that:

- In this the 55th year of his entering the National Assembly;
- On the occasion of his 23rd death anniversary; and
- In this year of the 35th anniversary of CARICOM that we offer due recognition to Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham for his extraordinary and outstanding career as a Guyanese leader.

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Indeed Mr. Speaker, we will do well to be guided by the words of Steve Bico who said:

A people without a positive history, is like a vehicle without an engine. Their emotions cannot easily be controlled and channelled in a recognisable direction. They always live in the shadow of a more successful society.

Thank you Sir. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr. Aubrey Norton

Mr. Aubrey C Norton: Mr. Speaker, I stand this evening to support this Motion to honour:

- One who is indubitably a great leader;
- One who I think, no one would doubt has contributed to the development of Guyana.

But even as I say that, it must be recognised that Forbes Burnham was mere human and to be human is to err. And so I do not stand here believing that Forbes Burnham did not make mistakes, he did. All of us will; some more than some and so *[Interruption: 'Tell me what he ever did.']* ... Giving people like you an education that you cannot use. And so, I want to recall what I said on Friday, 14 December 2007, in this said Assembly, during the

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debate on a similar Motion to honour Dr. Jagan. I pointed out then that *we live in a society with a divided psyche*. I also said then and I quote:

That the challenge that faces us is to transcend this divided psyche and not only create a society, but create a political culture and approach that permit us to develop and that this is only possible if we can as a rule, make compromise and achieve consensus and have consensus and compromise interwoven into the fabric of our political processes.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to reaffirm my commitments to those sentiments and to suggest that we need to work assiduously to make compromises and achieve consensus in the interest of this Nation on the important political and economic problems that confront us. I believe that this will be a good way to honour Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, a Nationalist who led us to independence and made an indelible mark on post independence Guyana, as he did in the struggles against colonialism both at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, on that occasion as well, I suggested that we need to build the institutions that will allow us to transcend the narrow partisan politics and I recommended that we establish a national mechanism to discuss and objectively assess the contributions made by our various leaders and then to honour them

appropriately. I believe to do that is another fitting way to honour Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

Mr. Speaker, we may all differ on Forbes Burnham, but we must give him credit where it is due. I believe that Burnham manifested many attributes of a Statesman and one who can objectively analyse a situation. I wish to recall that in 1978, a journalist asked Forbes Burnham and I quote:

What are your personal feelings about Dr Jagan, having worked closely with him at one time and now facing him across the table, so to speak?

Forbes Burnham responded:

I am not interested in my personal feelings; my assessment of him is that he has made a contribution towards the political life of this country.

Mr. Speaker, that to me says a lot. It says that Forbes Burnham was prepared to assess the contribution of each and everyone and to give it its place and therefore we should reciprocate and do the same for him.

Having said that and giving an indication as to the man, I now turn to an area that I believe that Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham is unparalleled in this society, I dare say unmatched ... *[Interruption: "I note Clement smiling; I think you yourself will acquiesce"]*

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Mr. Speaker on that area is foreign policy. Foreign policy in the main is about promotion of a Nation's interest:

- Its security;
- Its economy; and
- Its social values;

Among other things, but to Forbes Burnham, foreign policy involved a little more.

- Forbes Burnham saw foreign policy as an important vehicle to be used to establish Guyana's identity as a Nation.
- He saw foreign policy as an important vehicle for promoting dignity, self-respect and the confidence of the Guyanese people.

I believe Mr. Speaker, that position of Burnham of using foreign policy to establish:

- Identity;
- Self respect; and
- Self confidence will be useful for all times, for all foreign services, including Guyana.

If only for that; again we should honour his contributions.

I remember once, I think it was my first trip overseas in politics and we went to meet Forbes Burnham, it was I and another YSM member at the time. We were looking for a

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lecture more or less and he merely said then, you are equal to anybody whether they are in Guyana or overseas. All you need to do is:

- Do the research
- Be knowledgeable
- Be confident and
- Deal with them as equals.

I believe that philosophy that he has given us and he has made it a part of our diplomatic infrastructure. And so it is in this context Forbes Burnham decided that he was going to approach Guyana's foreign policy. We can argue as some have that Forbes Burnham might have spent too much money on foreign policy.

Mr. Corbin suggested that we avoid the controversies and so we will, but even if you argue that, you will recognise that Forbes Burnham believed that Guyana had serious foreign policy constraints:

- One of them was financial
- One of them was human resources

But never the less, Forbes Burnham felt that if we took the best and the brightest among us and train them to protect Guyana's interest, then we will be efficacious and in this regard a look at the people Burnham appointed, you will see the quality,

- The Ramphals of this world

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- The Fredwills
- The Rashleigh Jacksons

just to name a few.

It was important that we have in our foreign service, these types of skills. The purpose of that as I understood it, was to ensure that as a foreign service, no matter how small you are, you will be influential. It is evident that Burnham believed that if you developed a competent and strong foreign service, you will be respected; that respect will increase your stature internationally and the constituencies in which you exercise influence.

Other States and people will seek alliances with you which will redound to Guyana's benefit, since you will use that influence to promote Guyana's security and development. I believe, that is what informed Forbes Burnham, when he was developing his foreign policy. It is here where I take issue with people who talk about spending, because if you have the required level of Foreign Service:

- *It is well equipped*
- *It is doing its work and is exercising influence*
- *It will bring both friends and money; and that will redound to the benefit of the society and economy;*

and that is why I say it is debatable.

But there was an underpinning philosophy that informed Burnham not only at the domestic level, but internationally as well. I will argue that the underpinning philosophy that informed Burnham's foreign policy was that of self-reliance. I wish to point out that Burnham believed:

- In self-reliance, that as a people, we cannot go begging and living a life of mendicancy
- We have to have self-worth and
- We have to rely on ourselves to achieve our objectives.

This is what he had to say when he addressed a Party Congress of the People's National Congress on 18 April 1971 in a speech he titled *To Own Guyana*. He said:

Now we shall own Guyana; Assistance we shall accept; Partnership we will welcome, but the show is ours.

We will dictate the priorities and the direction; and we shall rely primarily on us - that is self reliance.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that self reliance underpinned Burnham's philosophy and that it has usefulness until today. Burnham's position therefore, suggested confidence in his people, he believed that while aid has a role to play; it is the people's effort and a reliance on the Guyanese people that will be the main plank of

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development. So Burnham outlined his position in dealing with donor agencies.

Burnham in a speech to the donor agents and I want to get it for you. In a speech which was delivered on 15 September 1969 to the Aid Donors' Conference in this Parliament Chambers, Burnham had this to say:

There may be rare cases, where there is a lack of sophistication and a total absence of expertise, which factors may put the donor countries in a better position to know what the recipients want or should have, but I think Guyana over the years, at least since 1965 has shown its competence to know what is good for Guyana to adumbrate its own policies and to recognise what particular projects would be best in the fulfilment of our general goals.

Mr. Speaker, here again we see Burnham's clear position that as Guyanese, we know what is best for ourselves and we should:

- Use our expertise
- Establish our priorities and
- Make our own decisions.

For Burnham, Guyanese knew best what was good for Guyana. Again I believe this is an important attribute he has inculcated in many of us. But more so, I think it underscores the fact that Burnham was a Nationalist. In fact, a concept that became synonymous with Burnham in that era was the concept

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Guyanization, because having inherited a colonial infrastructure he felt that we had to train people and Guyanize not only the structures, but our perceptions, et cetera. Some of us will admit that elements of that Guyanization might have left or else I might have been wearing a shirt jack. That, however, does not dispense with the fact that Guyanization was fundamental.

Mr. Speaker, Burnham was clearly a Nationalist. No one will doubt that Burnham was the architect of Guyana's foreign policy and it is against this backdrop that I commend this Resolution to this National Assembly. [*Interruption: 'Thank you!' "Do you want me to say thank you?"*] Mr. Speaker, to understand Burnham's elaboration of his foreign policy, one has to understand it in context. Those before mentioned that it was the time of the cold war and not only was it the time of the cold war, but when Burnham was going to develop his foreign policy, there were other determinants.

Another one was the fact that we had a territorial controversy with Venezuela and a border and maritime problem with Suriname. So here it was, Forbes Burnham seeking to articulate Guyana's foreign policy in the context of a cold war, with territorial problems and he suggested many people called the name of Tyrone Ferguson's book, but one of the things that many people

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do not know that the name of that book came from a speech by Burnham in which he said that in this context where:

- There is the cold war;
- There is the Venezuela territorial controversy and
- The Suriname problem

Guyana has *to survive sensibly rather than court heroic death*. Burnham's foreign policy was structured in a way, to ensure that Guyana was able to survive. Mr. Speaker, it is against the backdrop of the foregoing that Burnham opted *to survive sensibly rather than court heroic death*, to use his own words. It is in this context that Burnham did a number of things.

He developed a competent diplomatic service and a frontiers policy that ensured Guyana survived and progressed, while at the same time undertaking the necessary research and preparing the necessary documentation as it relates to the claims by Venezuela and Suriname.

He also developed the required alliances to promote and protect Guyana's interest. In this regard, the alliance with Brazil as a counter-balancing force to Suriname stands out.

In addition, while in principle Burnham believed that war should be eschewed. He showed good judgment and dealt appropriately with Suriname in 1967 when some Surinamers were discovered at

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Oronoque, which is at the junction of the New River and Oronoque.

In commenting on this incident, Burnham showed foresight when he noted and I quote:

We captured a well armed and imaginatively constructed camp and let us not believe that this will be the last attempt by the Surinamers to occupy our territory by force.

And so as early as 1967, Burnham was urging that our military infrastructure should be kept at the level to be able to deal with Suriname, because he envisaged that that was not the last attempt. I believe this a lesson that should be learnt and kept in mind as we pursue our foreign policy.

So Mr. Speaker, I believe a significant contribution of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham to Guyana is the development of clear foreign policy positions that permitted us in the circumstances of the cold war to not only survive, but to prepare the ground:

- So that we could solve the Suriname problem
- So that we could deal with the Venezuela issue while at the same time developing.

I believe that that is the purpose of foreign policy to protect your interest and in large measure; our interest was protected by the foreign policy of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

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Mr Speaker, Forbes Burnham believed that the approach had to be multi-dimensional. While you were dealing with the territorial and other issues, you needed a broad strategy to promote Guyana's interest in the international arena and in this regard Burnham made it clear that in our approach to foreign policy Guyana will be a pawn of neither east nor west. This is critical, because again it was in the era of the cold war and what in fact was happening was that many States were aligning themselves one way or the other and facing the consequence, but Guyana had to develop the diplomatic skills to survive and that it did.

So I want to point to what Mr. Burnham had to say on Non-Alignment. Mr. Burnham in dealing with the question of Non-Alignment said:

Those of us who embrace non-alignment will not lose a moment sleep over deliberate attempts at misrepresentation. We are not a block unbound by paths, assuring centralised military force, refusing the dictation of eudemonic power, we are aligned with:

- *Peace*
- *Independence*
- *Equality*
- *Justice and*
- *The importance of the single human being.*

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Our solidarity is based on neither the preservation of nor the conquest for power; it is rooted in a common perception and shared ideas. The universality of the principles of Non-Alignment has long been vindicated.

Mr. Speaker, we must recall that at the time when Burnham was pursuing Non-Alignment many there were in the society who had reservations about this position. In some regard, he was described as revisionist, but a few years later, it was Dr. Jagan himself, who suggested that one of his errors was the close alliance with the Soviet Union and that he should have taken positions that were not akin to those that he took ... *[Interruption: 'Where?' "In a speech to the Congress and I can give you the details of it"]* I do not want to become involved in controversies, but merely to point out that at the time, Burnham's assessment proved to be profound and we were able to survive in a hostile world based on our position of Non-Alignment. Non Alignment for Forbes Burnham meant that:

- We will look at the facts
- We will assess the situation and
- We will make our decisions in our own interest and not allow east or west to determine our position.

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And therefore by placing us squarely within the Non-Aligned Movement, Burnham in fact had placed Guyana on the course, where it could have independently developed its foreign policy and obtained the flexibility that was necessary for it to survive as a nation. Mr. Speaker ... [*Interruption: 'At the time!' 'Obviously it is at the time, Clement. We are speaking about Burnham. I want to agree with Mr Rohee, at the time]* At the time it was correct, but Burnham did not stop there; Burnham analysed the international political economy and found that it was not propitiously disposed to Guyana's development. And while for many, no change could have been made to the system; and while for many it was useless to challenge the system, Burnham took a different view.

Forbes Burnham and the Government he led supported the need for change in the international economic system. Guyana participated actively in the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly dedicated specifically to this problem.

In a speech, *In The Cause Of Humanity*, Forbes Burnham addressed the situation and this is what he had to say:

We must embark on building a new order. It is not a task involving the repair, renovation or piecemeal reconstruction of the old order.

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So Mr. Speaker, here it was that having analysed the system Burnham was saying:

- We need to change the system
- We need to operate with other third world countries to have a new economic order.

But not only did he want the system changed, he also knew what type of system he wanted. He proceeded to argue in the said speech, *In The Cause Of Humanity*, delivered to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1975 in Jamaica:

The international economic system assigned a peripheral role to the developing countries. Therefore a move to a new economic system, which is equitable, must at the same time I repeat must at the same time seek to bring about a redistribution of economic strength.

Forbes Burnham believed not just in change, but that change must have clear objectives and clearly it must result in the redistribution of wealth and once that was to occur, he would have been contributing to creating an environment that is propitious to Guyana's development. So one has to recognise that this struggle to create an economic system that is conducive to a small country in Guyana has been on for years, its forms would have changed,

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but there are a lot of lessons to be learnt from the era in which Forbes Burnham operated.

Mr. Speaker, probably equally important, Forbes Burnham was not only concerned with talking about change to the system. He felt in the same spirit of self-reliance that the peoples of the third world had to make their contribution and time is going, so I do not want to read the details, but at the Non Aligned Summit in Havana in 1979, Forbes Burnham having sat quiet throughout the Assembly intervened fore-day morning before the summit closed and when he took the rostrum he made a seminal presentation, suggesting to the third world that:

- We cannot continue to row over whether the international world will give us .9 or 0.9 percent of GDP
- We had to begin the process of South-South Cooperation.
- We had to work towards cooperation amongst developing countries.

So again, we see Burnham using foreign policy to initiate action that will contribute to a better environment for Guyana. In fact, in that said speech, he called on the Non Aligned Movement to establish a mechanism to deal with the economic issues, especially South-South Cooperation. Mr. Speaker, we can go

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through many more, but there is only one more in the economic realm that I want to mention and it is... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Before you get there Honourable Member, you need some more time.

Mr. E Lance Carberry: Mr. Speaker, could Mr. Norton be granted ten minutes to complete his presentation?

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed Honourable Member ...

Mr. Aubrey C Norton: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, he worked assiduously to create the environment. Not only was he concerned about the international economic system, he believed that third world countries had to become involved in regional integration and probably, I want to quote something he said then that I believe is useful now on regional integration. This is what Forbes Burnham had to say:

We expect to make quite a contribution to its success ...

Referring to the integration conference ...

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... We feel that what is more important is not only merely short-term benefits for one particular unit or territory, but a long term advantage to our entire region and to the masses of our people, to whom we are committed to improve their lot and give them a proper life.

So Forbes Burnham believed that we should pursue regional integration. It is well known that he was an ardent advocate of regional integration; played a crucial role in the Dickenson Bay Agreement establishing CARIFTA. When CARIFTA showed that it was having problems because the momentum was expanding it, he contributed in a significant way to the establishment of CARICOM. It is true that when people voted Burnham as the Caribbean man of the last century, it could well be a tribute to his significant contribution to regional integration.

He took it further; probably one of the areas in foreign policy that he led and led well is in the area of liberation. Integral to the foreign policy of Guyana under Forbes Burnham was our commitment to the liberation of struggling and oppressed people the world over. Burnham made it clear that in so far as there was colonialism and oppression in any part of the world, our independence was threatened. And he committed himself to liberation, but not only in word, but in deed, even while people were criticising in 1970 he declared he was going to give the African Liberation Struggle US \$50,000 and then later increased

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it. The point that needs to be established here is that Burnham was committed to the liberation of colonial and oppressed people and he did everything within his power to ensure that those oppressed people were liberated. So Mr. Speaker, I believe that we owe a debt of gratitude to Forbes Burnham and we should recognise his significant contribution to African liberation in particular and liberation in general.

Burnham was obviously a very good diplomat; there is a world of cases where he showed his diplomacy.

I am about to conclude, but I want to just give the one that as a young man... *[Interruption: 'You like a whole half night' "Well, you know, I am like Gail in this regard"]* I believe that any young person, who wants to understand diplomatic language and how to protect a country's position, will do well to read Burnham's speech to the Sixth Summit. There is a section on Kampuchea here where the nuances of his language was exceptional, but I want to come to this last one ... *[Interruption: 'That is Nigeria' "No Sir, in Havana. I know you know Spanish and you know it well]* Let me make it clear what Burnham said, we were in a situation where Fidel Castro and Cuba were being accused of aligning the Non-Aligned Nation and there were those who wanted to see on which side Burnham will fall: will he say

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Yes to the Non-Aligned Movement or No? And Burnham in classical Forbes Burnham style said:

Incidentally Cde President, I have noted that it was said in some sections of the media recently that it is Cuba's intention to align the movement. I do not believe it; I cannot accept it. A people who have fought so valiantly for their right to be masters in their own land cannot undergo such a metamorphosis as to be the surrogates of any one on earth.

I was in Havana at the time. Those who were considered to be in support of Cuba clapped and then Burnham paused and he said:

... and if per chance the impossible metamorphosis takes place, is this movement itself so weak as to become a reed shaking in the wind?

And the other side clapped.

I brought that to your attention to establish Forbes Burnham's skill as a diplomat, who had a command of the English language that I believe was excellent. It is a good example for any young person in a diplomatic service or outside a diplomatic service to have. Mr. Speaker, I close by saying:

- I believe this Motion is timely
- I believe that the leader of the People's National Congress Reform Mr. Robert Corbin has brought it at a time when it is needed, since we have to move

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in the direction of solving many of the problems of
the past, honouring our heroes and progressing.

Therefore, without any hesitation I wish to state that my intention is to support this Motion and all of its Clauses. I thank you Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member
The Honourable Member Mr. Ramotar ...

Mr. Donald R Ramotar: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to support this Motion and to say, as has been said before that we have gone a very, very far way and tonight who knows history might probably record that probably this is part or maybe I would say, as Mr Basil Williams has said (I do not normally agree with him) that since we started to recognise our heroes beginning from Critchlow, this is probably a period that can probably well go down as a period of healing in our country.

It is very clear that we are dealing with a very complex character when we deal with Mr. Forbes Burnham and even twenty three years after his death, his name still evokes tremendous emotion among people. Therefore, I will leave for history to judge that Burnham will eventually be put in his right place in history.

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Tonight, what we want to do is to give recognition to the contribution that he has made to our country. Burnham of course was a product of his time. I believe that much of his political character formation took place after he went to London to study in 1945.

Indeed, only last night I was reading an article (I did not know this before) ... but I do not know if he had actually formally met Dr. Jagan before he left for London. The article said that he used to be visiting the Carnegie debate places where Dr. Jagan had already started to stomp in our country. When he went to London, I think it was the decisive moment in the formation of his character, because it was a period of time in our history when tremendous movement was taking place in the world. I do not believe the world has seen such changes since or probably even before that time.

To recall Sir, it was just at the period of defeat of Hitlerite fascism and the role that the Soviet Union had played then, of course, impacted heavily on third world and gave a great momentum to the anti-colonial struggles. Burnham who had already begun to develop a level of nationalism was captured by that imagination. The effect of the time is also seen by the fact that Winston Churchill, who was the war hero in the United Kingdom, who led the Conservative Government at that time was defeated at the

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elections by the labour party immediately after the war. These were things that Forbes Burnham witnessed before his very eyes.

It was a time when the Communist Party of Britain had representation in Parliament and was extremely influential in the politics at that period.

It was in London, the colonial master, where many Caribbean and other colonial countries - African and Asian countries - had a lot of students studying and it was that period of time that I think helped to shape a lot of Burnham's thinking in that period. Of course:

- We knew that he associated himself with the left
- We heard that he represented the West Indian Student movement in London, in Prague, Czechoslovakia and to get there, he obviously had to travel through Europe and must have seen the destruction that the war had caused.

I believe all of those things helped to shape his mind. He came under the tutelage of people like Bebe Stanton who was a Jamaican, but who was a fully Caribbean man, who was helping the other Caribbean territories to fight for independence and who was by then already a close friend of Dr. Jagan and it was he who brought Forbes Burnham to Dr. Jagan's attention as a person that he should work with.

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It has already been said here that when Forbes Burnham returned to Guyana, he joined the Nationalist Movement and he was part of the People's Progressive Party, becoming the Chairman of the Party and he did make a sterling contribution to our Party. As Cde. Gail Teixeira mentioned, he was very much involved in writing the first Constitution of the PPP. He was also involved together with the other leaders of the Party in preparing our Petition to the Waddington Constitution that gave us the first election under universal adult suffrage.

In the period of the 1953 elections itself, after that election, he became the Minister of Education. And one of the things that he wanted to focus on was the whole question of ending dual control of schools. After the period of the suspension of the Constitution and the repression that took place after the jailing of the leaders of our Party, he was the lead lawyer that defended the PPP leaders that were being sent to jail every single day; notably, he himself was not touched. But apart from the fact that he developed these early foundations in his thinking, he was a consummate politician. I believe if you sum up what Forbes Burnham was, more than anything else it was the fact that he was a consummate politician, a man who could have tackled and turned; a man who could have manoeuvred and was never afraid to change his position if he thought that it brought him political benefits. Many times we saw

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that in his career; in fact just to give you an example; he was the man in the PPP Government in 1953 who laid the Recall Legislation for the first time in this Parliament that was not allowed to be passed, but when he moved out of the Party, he forgot about it. When he was the Prime Minister of the country and he was garnering support, he completely forgot about it. It was left to my friend, the Honourable Robert Corbin to bring that to an end in this Parliament.

It was interesting also to see the similar way he treated with what we now know as the Trade Union Recognition Bill. In fact, Dr. Jagan was absent from the country at the time when it was laid in this National Assembly for the first time and the Speaker refused to have it debated. It was Forbes Burnham who led the walk out of the PPP from the National Assembly to protest the fact that they did not want to debate that Bill. Burnham argued then that this was not only for sugar workers, but there were problems in the water front; there were problems every where in labour and they refused to debate the Bill.

When Mr. Burnham was in the opposition after the split, he opposed it in the 1960s. It took a lot of struggles to force his hand, he did not bring it about as a law, but he conceded it to the sugar workers in 1975. So it showed that he was fundamentally ... I would say that while he made a contribution to diplomacy and he

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made a contribution as a Statesman, fundamentally he was a politician of very high capacity, but he not only displayed that manoeuvrability in local politics. When he became the Head of State, he manoeuvred internationally as well with the same dexterity and ease as he did with the local politics.

I believe in many ways, he was fortunate and I think the Honourable Member Norton was right ... he could have analysed and he could have weighed the balance of forces very, very well. And what was fortunate for him was that his opposition came from the PPP, a Party who supported and encouraged some of the movements that he made.

In fact, sometimes he came slowly to the position, but whenever he did step to the plate, he had the support of the People's Progressive Party. One example of this, I remember myself, starting my own political career as a youngster in the PYO that some of the earliest things that I did was to picket in front of this very Parliament calling on Mr Burnham to support the seating of the People's Republic of China as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people in the United Nations; at that time it was actually to support the Albanian Resolution:

- First instance, Mr. Burnham opposed it
- Second instance, he abstained and

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- It was only after Richard Nixon made his famous trips to Peking that he voted for the seating of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations.

We were ready at all times to support these moves that he made. I think also that many of the things he tried to do were:

- Obviously done with good intention and
- Obviously done to try to make life better for some people.

I believe where it fundamentally went wrong was where in fact he did not seek at all times to carry everyone with him. And the questionable elections that we spoke about were some of the issues that I believe affected many of what he did.

We spoke tonight about grow more food and it was a beautiful slogan - *Feed, Clothe and House the Nation*. It is a very fantastic slogan when you think about it, but of course we did not achieve that much, although we never had any real starvation in this country at no point in time, whether there were droughts or whether there were floods. Much more could have been done:

- If he himself was not suspicious of many of the forces within the society
- If he had worked with the farmers whole-heartedly like the RPA instead of wanting to set up parallel organisations to function.

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So I think because of the fact that he was not taking everyone along with him that is where at some of the times he made some of the mistakes.

Our free education, who could say that that was done with bad intention, but he was probably over-reaching sometimes, although some things were achieved in that regard.

Another example of him being able to change his position was his position of the University of Guyana; when it started he denigrated it, he called it Jagan's night school. Probably because it was started at Queens College, but when he became the Head of Government, he actually expanded it and put it in the campus where it is today.

So Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a very complex man that we have been dealing with. A man who had his political formation on the politics of the left, but a man who had political ambitions; he never made any secret about his desire for power. As far back as 1962, and I am not quoting him directly here, but he said, any politician's business is that they want power and any politician who tells you that they do not want power is either a fool or a rascal. Those I think were his exact words *fool and rascal* and he never made any secret about that.

I think that he was a strong Nationalist as Mr. Norton pointed out; he was a strong Regionalist from his early times, too. This was

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not something new and you could see it from the time he was in Britain, in the United Kingdom; there were some expressions of that.

I found in the Hansard, too, on the 21 November 1957, he was speaking on a Motion that was brought by Gajraj, who was a nominated Member to the Parliament to congratulate Barbados and Jamaica for attaining self Government and here again he was putting forward ... you could see his political mind at work, when he was already arguing again that we should go into the Federation and I quote what he said here:

In congratulating Barbados and Jamaica upon their achievements and upon what has been often thought in other times, in other persons as impossible, I think we in this Legislature, we in this country, should take stock and instead of indulging in wishful thinking of attaining dominion status as British Guiana, see how quickly we can join our Caribbean sisters in their progress forward and be part of a wider dominion of the Caribbean.

So clearly from a very early period he had visions; like the other leaders of our Party because even in the formation of the Party of the PPP, we had that position of being united with the rest of the Caribbean.

Of course, too, that was seen later in his life. Just a few years before he died, in 1979, when the Grenada revolution took place,

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Guyana under his leadership distinguished itself as supporting that country's efforts of trying to determine their own destiny, but of course we mentioned already about his assistance internationally. Although throughout his career, I believe that he had the good fortune of a political party that supported many of the positive things that he did and the record would show that we supported many of the things that he attempted, but what of course bedevilled us and affected our most onward movement was the building of truly national unity in our country or finding a modus operandi in which we can work together and move our country forward in different kinds of position.

He resisted very much that kind of unity call and comrade Gail mentioned just now that even when we made the call for a national patriotic front, the first response to that was the Bolshevik and Menshevik response. And what was most interesting in January of the year that he died, it was the first time coming from the PNC, a proposal to talk to find a political solution to the situation in our country. Before that they were talks and the Honourable Opposition Leader was a witness to those and many of the talks did not see fruit, but this time, it was the first time since the split in 1955 that he had proposed talks with the PPP. Those talks had started and it is very clear to me with the benefit of hindsight, when you look at the kind of options

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that he had, he did not have a great amount of options then and he was probably at that point in time, beginning to seriously look for some form of solution, when he died and unfortunately the talks broke down with his death.

Mr Speaker, there are some other aspects of his life that I think were very noteworthy. I myself of course heard many of his speeches right in this National Assembly and it was always a treat to come to this Parliament to listen to the closing of a Budget Debate, when he and Dr. Jagan will clash across the table. Those were tremendous debates at that time ... but he also had a personality that I understand from many people. As I said, I never spoke with him one to one although we were in the same company on several occasions, but I know some of my colleagues Mr. Komal Chand and Hon. Harry Narine Nawbatt, who had several conversations with him and they related some of those types of conversation. I know another friend who told me that whether you liked his politics or not, you could not help liking the man that he was, a charmer, that he had, the popular word that they use is charisma, but as I understand he was very much a likable man. He did make a tremendous contribution into this Parliament. If you go through the archives, of course it is different from seeing it yourself, the excitement and his own peculiar, his

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own unique way of speaking, and we heard what a great orator he was and indeed he was.

It was very clear that he took his Parliamentary work very seriously; the amount of Standing Orders that he raised from time to time; it is very clear that he knew his business in the National Assembly.

I think what we have to do as many people said before me is to go beyond these things now because life goes on and we have to try to take the position to recognise the good, as I have said, none of us can really put Burnham in his rightful place at this time; it is still too early and that will be done by history itself. But we have got to try to work; we have heard tonight repeated quotes about unity. We have heard tonight many of the things we have in common; of course we heard some things that were not absolutely true. Just one of them I want to correct: he did not build the Agricultural School, that Agricultural School was opened by the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Brindley Benn, when he was the Minister of Agriculture at that time. He did as I said, make a big contribution and when we speak here tonight, we can see our shared history and in some way our shared roots that we have and there are so many things that we can speak together in common about the things that we have, but most of the time we seem to have concentrated on the differences. I believe we need more

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occasions like these for us to see that we have a lot more in common than we have differences. As I said if we can find a modus operandi to work together to give this country a breather, to give it a chance, I am sure it will be developed, not only for ourselves, but for those who come after us, our children and grandchildren and that will be the best way to mark the contribution that those who came before us made. I thank you Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member
The Honourable Member Mr. Corbin ...

Mr. Robert HO Corbin: Let me begin by expressing my gratitude and that of the Members of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana for the unanimous support which we have received for this Motion from all sides of the House.

I believe it is a step in the right direction as I stated earlier and I who have been in the cut and thrust of party politics must know that they had to be serious soul searching and long discussions, convincing those who are not convinced and persuading others to get these matters ahead, because we are all involved in the same kind of operation. Therefore I want to express my appreciation to the People's Progressive Party for acknowledging and giving due

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recognition to a man who started his national political life within in the original PPP. *[Applause]*

I want to apologise to the Honourable Member Mr. Nadir, for not specifically mentioning the United Force in my analysis and to assure him that the principle is what was more important. That is; that we believe that if Guyana is to heal itself, then no one force, no one body can achieve that unilaterally. It requires a process of reconciliation that involves all parties in Guyana. You will note that I did not only refer to political parties, but to interest groups which exist in this country and which can also make it very difficult even for political parties to implement programmes.

It is late in the evening Sir and I do not want to traverse the many points that have been made, I think by and large, there has been some differences of opinion, but as I pointed out in my initial presentation:

- That is why we need an archive;
- That is why we need to have the professionals put the material together so that we can arrive at some objective analysis.

I agree with Mr. Ramotar that for example Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was a consummate politician, but I also believe that most politicians know who good politicians are. So too was Dr. Cheddi Jagan and the same parallels one can draw

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about Burnham, one can draw with Dr. Jagan. But I did not see anything wrong with it, because I recognise that politicians have to take some strategic steps and sometimes demand pro-quo in order to heal and that is the nature of politics that we are in. We have the whole question of our whole Caribbean thrust, when at one time we were moving in that direction, we were told we should be moving towards the South American direction. Ms Teixeira again, we can probably put into the melting pot the whole question of the gerrymandering of boundaries, because if you look at all the facts surrounding that period, you will recognise that after that conference in London nobody got what they really wanted, neither the PNC nor the PPP and in fact it was after the 1957 elections that if one looked at the analysis of the results of the elections, one could see why it is Forbes Burnham and the PNC chose to move in the direction they wanted to move, because from a mere strategic point of view one could not see the PNC benefiting from the Constituency boundaries at the time; in fact it benefitted the PPP all the time. So the gerrymandering could not really be a situation that would have benefitted Burnham and the PNC. That is why Burnham and the PNC wanted to have proportional representation.

- In 1961 for example the PPP got 42.6 percent of the votes, but got twenty seats.

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- The PNC got 41 percent of the votes, but got eleven seats; and
- The United Force got 16.3 percent of the vote and got four seats.

So one only had to look at that and to see that from a political strategic point of view the system of the boundaries at the time did not provide an opportunity in which those boundaries could benefit the People's National Congress, but as I said, these are matters which when we get into a room we can look at the statistics to see why the British made the decision. And indeed some of the propaganda one heard could not really fit into the context of the factual situation that existed at the time.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for recognising that the period of the occupation of National Office by Mr. Burnham ensured that Guyana was spared a great deal of tragedy. Because according to him, if Cheddi had done some of those things, the British or the Americans would have come down very hard on him. I think that is a reflection on the kind of politician that Forbes Burnham was and we heard some of it spoken by Mr. Norton earlier this evening. So I do not want to use this opportunity to get into an argument with the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks whether we move one step forward or two steps backward. I do not want to get into at this late stage, the question of whether it was most politically strategic to enter into

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diplomatic relations with China or when we agreed to influence the entire Caribbean Community to formally recognise Cuba and establish diplomatic relations with that country.

And so what I want to do is to use the opportunity to say that the debate this evening illustrated the point that if we can find a forum to air these ideas and issues, I believe it will have some kind of therapeutic effect. That is why councillors and psychiatrists sit a long time, listening to patients talk to express themselves because during that process:

- One understands the way they are thinking
- One is able to sometimes correct any misunderstandings

I am suggesting that the process which we have embarked upon, is one in which I am confident would benefit Guyana as a whole.

I would like to conclude therefore by quoting from Mr Burnham's successor, Mr. Hoyte who immediately after the death of Mr. Burnham said the following:

- *He brought with us the blessing of peace, which we have enjoyed for over twenty years;*
- *He won us our political independence;*
- *He preserved that independence and our territorial integrity in the face of great difficulties;*

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- *He brought the strategic sectors of the Guyanese economy into the ownership and control of the Guyanese people;*
- *He transformed us from a mortally collection of people into a truly Guyanese Nation with clear objectives, a firm purpose and common destiny;*
- *He developed in us, a sense of self-reliance;*
- *He taught us to assert and defend our dignity; and*
- *Inculcated in us, respect for our fellow citizens, for our culture and for our heritage.*

I trust Mr. Speaker, that after this evening we will find a modus vivendi that it can help us to advance the cause of good governance in Guyana, which is my main theme; to remove those obstacles which ensure that alienation continues to exist and to ensure that we can really advance on the road of national reconciliation and progress, and hopefully in the very near future, advance on the road of good governance which in my opinion will have to include the issue of shared governance or power sharing, which as was discussed in this debate, is a subject matter that has been long on the table of discussion between the parties for more than two decades. Having said so Mr. Speaker, I ask that we put the Motion to the vote. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

(iii)

COMMITTEES BUSINESS

MOTION

**THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONSIDERATION OF THE
2004 REPORT OF THE DISCIPLINED FORCES
COMMISSION**

[Speaker's consent obtained in accordance with Standing Order No. 28(2) for the following Motion to be proceeded with at this sitting]

Honourable Members, we have one small matter to conclude our business for today. Honourable Prime Minister, do you require some more time on this Disciplined Services Motion? *[Pause]*
Honourable Prime Minister, there is a Motion standing in your name on the Supplementary Order Paper.

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WHEREAS by Resolution No. 33 dated 26th July, 2007 the National Assembly appointed a Special Select Committee to conclude the examination of the Report and recommendations of the Disciplined Forces Commission and report to the National Assembly six months from its establishment;

AND WHEREAS the National Assembly stipulated that the Special Select Committee of the Ninth Parliament take cognisance of the work done by the Special Select Committee of the Eighth Parliament that considered the Report and its recommendations;

AND WHEREAS the Special Select Committee was required to present its Final Report to the National Assembly six months from the date of establishment;

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AND WHEREAS the Special Select Committee was unable to complete its work by the deadline stipulated;

AND WHEREAS the Special Select Committee has requested an extension of the deadline for the submission of its final Report to 15th December, 2008;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves an extension of the deadline for the submission of its Report to 15th December, 2008

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Honourble Members, I want to propose the Motion standing in my name.

It is a very simple situation. The Assembly passed the Resolution on the 26 July last year. The Committee of Selection nominated the Members of the Committee on the 29 November 2007. The

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first Meeting was held on the 15 January 2008. We have had only nine meetings since; some weeks we met every Monday, but there were many holidays and so on and different people being away at different times. So we are asking leave to continue until 15 December 2008.

The Speaker: Thank you Prime Minister.

Honourable Members the Motion is that the National Assembly approves an extension of deadline for the submission of the report of the Discipline Forces Commission until 15 December 2008.

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

The Speaker: That concludes our business for today.

The Honourable Prime Minister

Hon. Samuel AA Hinds: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that this Session be adjourned until next Thursday, 14 August 2008.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, the House is adjourned until the 14 August 2008. Thank you very much.

Adjourned Accordingly At 23:05H