

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
VOLUME 7**

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

**66th Sitting**

**2:05 p.m.**

**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1975**

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Speaker**

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Narain, J.P.

**MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT – PEOPLE’S NATIONAL CONGRESS (50)**

**Prime Minister (1)**

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

**(Absent)**

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development

**(Absent)**

**Senior Ministers (8)**

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,  
Minister of Economic Development

\*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice (Absent)

\*The Hon. H. Green,  
Minister of Cooperatives and National Mobilisation (Absent)

\*The Hon. H.O. Jack,  
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources (Absent)

\*The Hon. F.E. Hope,  
Minister of Finance (Absent)

\*The Hon S.S. Naraine, A.A.,  
Minister of Works and Housing

\*The Hon. G.A. King,  
Minister of Trade and Consumer Protection

\*The Hon. G.B. Kennard, C.C.H.,  
Minister of Agriculture (Absent)

#### **Ministers (6)**

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,  
Minister of Labour (Absent)

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,  
Minister of Information and Culture

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

\*The Hon. Miss. C.L. Baird,  
Minister of Education and Social Development (Absent)

\*Dr. the Hon O.M.R. Harper,  
Minister of Health (Absent)

\*The Hon. C.V. Mingo,  
Minister of Home Affairs

#### **Ministers of State (9)**

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,  
Minister of State for Agriculture (Absent – on leave)

#### **\*Non-elected Ministers**

The Hon. O.E. Clarke  
Minister of State – Regional (East Berbice/Corentyne)

The Hon. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional (Rupununi)

**(Absent – on leave)**

The Hon. C.A. Nascimento,  
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister

The Hon. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,  
Minister of State – Regional (Essequibo coast/West Demerara)

**(Absent)**

The Hon. K.B. Bancroft,  
Minister of State – Regional (Mazaruni/Potaro)

\*The Hon. W. Haynes,  
Minister of State for Consumer Protection

**(Absent)**

\*The Hon. A. Salim,  
Minister of State – Regional  
East Demerara/West Coast Berbice

\*The Hon. F.U.A. Carmichael  
Minister of State – Regional (North West)

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (7)**

Mr. J.R. Thomas,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Works and Housing

**(Absent)**

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Ministry of Works and Housing

Miss M.M. Ackman  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Office of the Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip

### **\*Non-elected Ministers**

Mr. E. L. Ambrose  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Ministry of Agriculture

Mr. S. Prashad  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

Mr. J.P. Chowritmootoo  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Ministry of Education and Social Development

Mr. R.H.O Corbin  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Office of the Prime Minister

**(Absent)**

### **Deputy Speaker (1)**

Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman, Deputy Speaker

### **Other Members (17)**

Mr. J.N. Aaron

Mrs. L.M. Branco

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E.H.A. Fowler

Miss J. Gill

Mr. W. Hussain

Miss S. Jaiserrisingh

Mr. K.M.E. Jonas

Mr. M. Nissar

Dr. L.E. Ramsahoye

Mr. J.G. Ramson

Mrs. P.A. Rayman

Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Mr. S.H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.

Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.

Mr. H.A. Taylor

Mrs. L.E. Willems

**(Absent – on leave)**

**(Absent – on leave)**

**(Absent – on leave)**

**(Absent)**

**(Absent)**

**Members of the Opposition – Liberator Party (2)**

Mr. M.F. Singh, Leader of the Opposition

Mrs. E. DaSilva

**OFFICERS**

Acting Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M.B. Henry, AMBIM

**PRAYERS****ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER****Leave to Members**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave has been granted to the hon. Member Mr. Carrington from 31<sup>st</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> June, and to the hon. Member Mrs. Rayman for today's Sitting.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Papers were laid:

- (i) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, 1971 (No. 16 of 1971) for quarter ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1971.
- (ii) Financial Paper No. 1/1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital Estimates totaling \$17,426,800 for the period ending 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1975.

**[The Minister of Finance]**

**The Minister of Economic Development on behalf of the Minister of Finance** (Mr. Hoyte) announced that at the appropriate time, during the course of the sitting, a motion to suspend standing Order No. 68(1) would be moved to enable the Assembly to consider the Financial Paper that day.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS – FIRST READING**

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Police (Amendment) Bill, 1975

**[The Minister of Home Affairs]**

**PUBLIC BUSINESS****MOTIONS****SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 68(1)**

**The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House** (Mr. Ramsaroop):  
Your Honour, it is with some feeling of trepidation that I normally seek the suspension of the Standing Orders of this House. Today, however, there are certain mitigating circumstances that cause that feeling not to exist.

I seek the suspension of Standing Order 68(1) in terms of the Motion in my name to proceed at this Sitting with the consideration of the Financial Paper No. 1 of 1975 which has just been presented by the hon. Minister of Finance.

As hon. Members know, in Standing Order 68(1) it is stated:

“...after a Paper shall be ordered to be printed and shall stand referred to the Committee of Supply without question put and shall be appointed to be considered on a day to be named by the Minister presenting the Paper but not earlier than one clear day after that on which the Paper was presented.”

It is stated here that at least one clear day must elapse after the presentation before a Paper can be considered in accordance with the rules of this House.

Fortunately for us on this side of the House, oral notice of our intention to proceed with this Order Paper was given to the hon. Member of the Opposition Mrs. DaSilva last Monday 26<sup>th</sup>, and one clear day has elapsed, yesterday, but technically we are not in compliance with the rules of the House.

I feel, however, that although the letter of the Standing Order has been breached, the spirit of the Standing Order has been observed, because one clear day's notice has been given. I may add, too, in extenuating of the conduct we have taken in this matter, that last Saturday the

Deputy Clerk of the House indicated to the Opposition our intention to proceed with the Financial Paper.

It was not possible on the date to get the particulars of the Financial Paper that are necessary to enable her to get more details on the Financial Paper.

In sum therefore, technically, this Motion is a breach of the standing Orders but there are enough facts to make that breach pardonable. I have indicated the sequence of events since last Saturday with a view to apprising this House of the fact that there has been close consultation between the Opposition and the Government on this matter and I feel those circumstances sufficiently extenuating to render pardonable the Motion which is before this House this afternoon.

I, therefore, move the Motion in terms of the notice of the motion which has been submitted to this House under my name that paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 68 be suspended to enable the Assembly to proceed at its Sitting on Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1975, with consideration of Financial Paper 1/1975

*Motion proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Sir, I am indeed sorry that I cannot support this Motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders in spite of what the hon. Leader of the House describes as mitigating circumstances. I do admit that I was told last Saturday by the Acting Clerk of the Assembly that the hon. Leader of the House did have the intention of asking for the suspension of the Standing Orders.

**2:15 – 2:25p.m.**

It is also true that I have had one clear day – I suppose one can call it two clear days if one likes – since I received the Financial Paper on Monday, the 26<sup>th</sup>. But, sir, we cannot go on flouting the Standing Orders of this House. We cannot go on doing this for the simplest and most trivial reasons although I do admit that \$17 million will not be trivial when we come to deal with

it. The point is – as I have had occasion to speak about only last week – that in this House, the highest forum in the land, we have Standing Orders and as far as I am concerned there are no mitigating circumstances for asking for the suspension of the Standing Orders today. I received the Financial Paper in time but it has not been laid in Parliament as it ought to have been for one clear day. Therefore, sir, I cannot support this Motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

#### APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 1/1975

“Be it resolved that the Committee of Supply approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital Estimates totaling \$17, 426,800 for the period ending 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1975.

**[The Minister of Economic Development on behalf of the Minister of Finance]**

**The Minister of Economic Development (Mr. Hoyte):** Your Honour, in accordance with paragraph (2) of article 80 of the Constitution, I certify that Cabinet has recommended the Motion on the Order Paper for consideration by the National Assembly.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**The Chairman:** We will consider page by page, the Schedule to the Financial Paper. Page 1, hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Sir, how many pages have we? One page; Page 1, item 1. This now is really time for some very serious discussions because we are being asked to vote \$17,426,800 for National Service.

Last week during the debate on the Vesting of Property (Acquisition by Purchase) Bill, I made the statement in this House that our hon. Prime Minister has a great sense of the dramatic and a great sense of timing. We brought that vesting Bill in time so that on Monday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of

May, the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our becoming independent, the Prime Minister was able to announce to the nation that we had acquired – the People's National Congress Government had acquired – one more stake in our country. It has been able to nationalise and control Jessels. (Applause) That is now history; it is not a fact.

Well, once again, sir, he has used his sense of the dramatic and his sense of timing with all the rush that the hon. Leader of the House has just caused by not leaving this Paper on the Table, as ought to have been done, for one day according to our Standing Orders. It could have stayed here until tomorrow and we could have met on Friday. I am sure the National Service's credit is going and nobody would have dunned it for the one day to pay its bills amounting to all this money. We had, with all haste, to proceed with this because this is Youth Week and it is very appropriate that a Bill such as this should be introduced in Youth Week. Friday would still have been Youth Week so that the timing and the drama would still have been there. Here we are with this huge amount before us for approval.

In the Estimates for 1974 that was presented at the end of 1973, when a White paper was laid in Parliament, \$1 million was requested to start off National Service which was coming into effect in 1974. At that time, sir, we were told that there were going to be six National Service Centres. And I commented during the course of the debate that to ask for \$1 million would not be enough and that very soon Government would have to come back to this House for a further allocation. Well, sir, I got no explanation as to how much the Government thought it would need. I even suggested that there must have been some planning and I asked what was the estimate of expenditure to establish these six centres. As is usual, we got no answer; no information was forth-coming.

During 1974 – I think it was about half-way through the year, around June – the House was approached with a Financial Supplementary Paper asking us to approve an additional sum of money for National Service and at the end of 1974. The Revised Estimates for 1974 showed that we had spent \$6,150,000 for National Service. I well remember, sir, when that paper was being debated the hon. Prime Minister was here and, as is his wont, he chided me for my immature mathematics and my rather strange way of counting, as he put it, because I said it seemed very

simple to me: \$6 million for one centre; six centres must be \$36 million. He said that was very wrong because with that \$6 million work could be done only at Kimbia but also at Papaya and the others. By the time we finished, although he did not commit himself by stating any specific amount of money, for one to say that we would have spent \$36 million on National Service would have been ridiculous; that was far too high a sum of money.

Well, sir, time went by and we came to the end of last year, 1974, with the Estimates of Expenditure for 1975 to be approved. We were asked then, at the end of last year, to approve \$11 million for 1975. Eleven million (\$11,000,000) plus the \$6,150,000 spent to the end of last year made a total of \$17,150,000 that was passed for the National Service as capital expenditure. We are talking of capital expenditure all the time; nobody has said anything about the recurrent expenditure. Today, we are asked, six months later, to vote \$17,462,800. That, sir, makes a grant total to date of \$34,567,800.

**2:25 – 2:35p.m.**

And what have we? Two centres – Kimbia and Papaya. [**Mr. Hoyte:** That is not right.]

Here we have the hon. Minister saying what the hon. Prime Minister said last year: My maths are wrong again. And this time, I am sure he is going to come back with some of this money starting off on the other four centres. But we still cannot get the total amount of money that the National Service is costing the nation. Up to now, with two established centres and four to go, we do not know how far advanced in the four we are. Maybe the hon. Minister will tell us. That would be very interesting information.

It would appear to me that my estimate last year of \$36 million is a pretty conservative estimate because by the time we have our six centres established and completed, I am sure we are going to need many millions more. We will see in the not too distance future. It may well be that the foundations, as I said earlier on, are laid for the other four. But how much? Maybe the hon. Minister ought to be able to tell us how far they have gone with the other four. He has a very capable man next to him who ought to be able to give him the advice on how the National

Service is going, so I am sure he will provide this House with some very interesting information, and through this House provide the nation with information.

As I was saying, if there is some work done on the other four centres, let us know and let us know how much more it is estimated that we shall have to spend.

Incidentally – and I have this on very reliable authority, it is not idle rumour or anything like gossip, and it is even further boosted by a more authoritative source; I do not wish to embarrass the people concerned by calling their names, but the National Service parrot-green uniform is shortly to be changed. There will be a change in the uniform and they have had the present one for only a year and a half. Have they worn them out and now have to have another set? Has somebody decided he does not like that particular shade of green and so they are going to get another shade green? I understand it will have more grey blue in it. It will be more toned down.

We cannot afford to cater for the whims and fancies of the dress designers of the National Service who, every eighteen months, may decide they want to have a different colour. That will cost money. We are told that the National Service is such an overwhelming success, not only in the centres but also in the schools, and to have to outfit these thousands, we presume – we do not have the figures – it might be costing the nation a lot of money. It is an absolute waste of money that this uniform should be changed.

These are the things we have to bring to this House because it seems to be that the Government does not plan carefully enough before it goes off on its projects. What kind of planning is there in regard to this National Service? In any undertaking, before anyone enters it, there must be proper and careful planning to know how and what will be required, and, most important of all, what it will cost. We have on several occasions said that our Estimates of Expenditure are not estimates; they are guesstimates.

We are often told, when we comment on the inefficient way in which the Government runs its business, that what we are saying is not correct. The hon. Minister who is dealing with this Bill this week, told me last week *a propos* the Jessel nationalisation, that I was libeling the

workers when I said that business run by government is not as efficiently run as private enterprise. He was not happy when I said this and I could not support his amendment. But aren't people at managerial level workers too? Or are they a special category of people? And why should they not be entitled to certain benefits just as the Ministers of the Government have certain entitlements that we humble parliamentarians do not have?

There is no quarrel about it; the Ministers are entitled to them as Ministers of the Government, but to say that people must not have certain benefits that they expect because of their position is being unrealistic. This is the sort of reason why the Government cannot get people at managerial level. It is no secret. Look at the Members of Parliament. If it has not been for the Ministers, and the technocrats in particular, how would the Government run this House? We have not got the people of the required level of education; we have to build; we have to educate the people to be able to take on responsibilities. I know that the National Service is suffering from the same problem.

Surely, the people who are there, no matter how few, must have gone into the cost and the plan of work for the year ahead. That is basic. That is elementary. They should plan ahead and they should know in advance approximately what it will cost the nation in 1975 for the work in connection with National Service for the projects that they have planned. The basic establishment of the centre must be seen as a whole, the various units for dwelling, cooking, teaching, stores, equipment, etc., must also be known in advance, the proposed intake of personnel and the staff required, and, most important of all, what the approximate overall cost would be for 1975.

Today, we are met to ask for \$17,462,800 a sum in excess of 150 per cent of what we voted at the end of last year, \$11 million. This is very poor planning. The estimate may be out a couple of hundreds or thousands of dollars but to be 150 percent out in the estimation for a year reflects very badly on those concerned. It is no credit to the planners if that is what the National Service is teaching the nation. They cannot even plan their own expenditure. How can they teach the youths to organise and plan for themselves?

**28.5.75**

**National Assembly**

**2:25 – 2:35 p.m.**

There is an old saying. You must cut your coat to suit your cloth. I know the Members of the Government do not particularly like clichés and they laugh at them as being corny, but sometimes they express very clearly and simply, and in terms understood by everyone, what would otherwise take a long sentence to explain. You must cut your coat to suit your cloth. In other words, government must establish its priorities and it must place first things first. The vast amount of money we have been asked to spend on National Service should not be spent on National Service. It is not a number one priority.

From the estimates debated at the end of last year, I took out a few figures of what everyone knows should be at the top of the priority list for government expenditure.

**2:35 – 2:45 p.m.**

This Government says, and the hon. Minister of Economic Development told me last week, that people come first. We could not agree with him more. People do come first. But how is it that people come first and yet we are spending \$34 million on National Service? The capital expenditure for the Ministry of Health is \$4,722,000. The capital expenditure for this year on the Ministry of Education and Social Development, a vitally necessary Ministry, the most important one after Health – as a matter of fact it is on par with Health – is \$12,032,000. We are spending \$16,500,000 on this Ministry of Labour and Social Security. In a little while the hon. Minister of Home Affairs is going to bring the Prisons Bill before the House. The Ministry of Home Affairs which includes the Prisons, the Police, the Fire Service, National Registration and, of course, Miscellaneous, is \$2,718,900. The total for those three very important Ministries, which concern people, on whom the hon. Minister of Economic Development places such stress – and I support him in that – amounts to \$38,173,000 for this year's capital expenditure. Here we have, at mid-year, National Service asking for \$17,426,800. I am sure there is going to be an additional request before this year is through.

We have been told and we will continue to be told, I am sure, of the wonderful value to the nation of the National Service because of the mingling together of the young people of our

nation, because of the education provided, both academic and technical, because of the skills both in the workshop and in the field. We will hear that we are putting money into an investment that is bound to pay off in the long run. We are told that this is a number one priority. The problems that arise are quickly glossed over and only the alleged and supposed benefit stressed.

Supposing – and note I stress the word “supposing” – the alleged benefits are accepted and we are accepted and we also describe the problems that arise as teething problems, the fantastic expenditure to the detriment of other vital needs in our nation is still not justified.

I mentioned four particular Ministries and will expand upon that a bit, the Ministry of Health, for example. The condition at the Public Hospital Georgetown continues much the same as it always was. The walls have been brightened up, they have been a fresh coat of paint on them, but there are still two patients, or sometimes three, to a bed. The hospital is still understaffed. We still have our nurses and our doctors leaving, and even those who come from time to time from India and the Philippines and other countries to work here on contract go back when their time is up because our hospital does not have the facilities to attract them to remain. Yet, nothing is done to improve the conditions and to get on with the hospital. What has happened to the plans for the new hospital? If I remember rightly we voted \$250,000 for the plans for this hospital. We do not hear anything more. We have the National Lottery, we have Radio Bingo money being collected for the hospital. What is happening? There is no report to the nation. We are not being told what progress is being made with the building of a new hospital. It appears that it is still a dream and it appears as if this dream is fast descending into the limbo of oblivion.

We come next to the Ministry of Education. Maybe, the National Service could run a special course for certain Members of Parliament who need to have their education completed. I will put our education system on par with Health. *[Interruption]* I am sorry, sir. As for education, I place education as a priority for the nation. In spite of the multilateral schools that have been opened – I think a few are functioning and some are being built – our schools are still woefully short of school places. Government now has control of all our schools, denominational and non-denominational. **[Miss Field-Ridley: Not yet.]** It has come before the House and the Bill has

been passed. Apparently, the hon. Minister is telling us that the President has not assented to it as yet. I am not aware of this. However, I am sure it is only a matter of formality to be complied with.

From September, our schools will become co-educational. Surely, we have the existing schools. Use this money to expand the schools, the services of the schools, the accommodation for the children, the staffing of the schools. Use this money that you are going to spend on National Service on education. A greater number of children will benefit because education is compulsory in Guyana for every child over the age of six. Every child up to now has to go to school. We do not know how much longer this rule will be applied. National service is not compulsory, so that the number of children who would benefit from money spent on education during National Service would be less. I admit that every cent being spent on education of our young people should be, and must be, found and voted for. A greater number of children would benefit from increasing the size of the school. There are schools that can be enlarged. Most schools have enough room for that and can get more places. Thus, children in general would benefit from it. But to give it to a certain selected few at the expense of others, just does not make sense.

The nation is being taxed more and more. It will be interesting at the end of this year to find out where the money is coming from. By further taxation? We have given additional money for National Service and only six months of the year has gone. The vote for the Freedom fighters has been doubled; we have put \$50,000 aside for Mozambique. All this money has to be found somewhere.

I do not know whether the married women who are members of parliament were hoping, as I was hoping, for separate taxation when the Women's International Year rally was organised at the National Park not so long ago. One of the proposals was the one I often bring to this House, to assess separately, for income tax purposes, the amounts earned by working wives and not to put a wife's earned income with that of her husband's. That pushes the family up into a higher income bracket and more tax has to be paid. I felt heartened. I felt that there was some future when that was one of the official Resolutions put at the National Park on that day. The

**28.5.75**

**National Assembly**

**2:35 – 2:45 p.m.**

Prime Minister expressed his concern to do all he could for women and to abolish discrimination. We do not have many discriminatory acts against women in Guyana but this aspect of income tax is certainly discriminatory.

I am a little concerned about this. At the time of the Budget presentation that was one of the points I made and I felt that really this year we were going to break through and have this concession granted to married women. But now, sir, I feel very disheartened because I do not think it is going to come to pass. We have got to find the money for this additional requirement for National Service. So we are going to burden the taxpayers more and more. The relief for which working wives were hoping will not come to pass. I cannot see it coming.

**2:45 – 2:55 p.m.**

Labour and Social Security is another Ministry I mentioned. It was allocated \$16,500,000 for Capital Expenditure. One of the areas of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in which I am particularly interested and which I support as much as I can is that of the Social Security Division. This department deals with the pensions given to our senior citizens. We euphemistically describe it as an old age pension. These people have worked slavishly for Guyana so that most of us sitting here could take advantage of the education facilities that were offered and so enjoy a better way of life. Those who live in the urban areas get \$15 a month and those who live in the rural areas receive \$13 a month.

Some people spend more than \$13 and \$15 a month to feed their dogs. They do this because dogs are necessary for protection in these days when the crime rate is increasing but I will come to that in a few minutes. These old people are human beings and they are the people that this Government is so concerned about. They receive \$13 and \$15 a month to feed, clothe, and house themselves. I wonder how many of us could live on \$15 a month, in keeping with our egalitarian society. I was under the impression that it had been done already. Checking on it I found out that this is not so. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister concerned is not here. But there are many Ministers here who could pass on the information. I myself will tell him when he comes back that it is time for him to implement what the Prime Minister has promised to do for these elderly people.

We also have social assistance being \$7.50 to \$15 a month. These are matters that should be of concern to this Government, for people are involved. The Social Assistance rates should be increased especially in these days with ever-escalating cost of living.

I deal now with the ministry of Home Affairs, which has to battle with the ever-increasing crime rate. And what is allocated for its capital expenditure? The sum of \$2,718,900: I do not think that would go very far. I am not sure of the figures. One never gets answers in this House.

We talked a long while ago of introducing the breathalyzer for those who drink and drive. I hope, sir, that when the time comes the test will be carried out equally in our egalitarian society, that is, on those at the top and on those lower down. But how can the hon. Minister get any new thing going to help him combat drivers who drink and combat the crime rate when he has a capital expenditure of only \$2,718,900 and he is expected to make improvements in his department?

We know only too well the havoc that can be rendered by fire in a city of wooden buildings. We cannot improve our fire facilities; we cannot add additional equipment; we cannot extend it to the rural areas because we are told we do not have the money. Yet we have money for National Service. That money could be channeled in support of the entire population rather than for the benefit of just a few selected persons.

This we hear is done in the interest of the people; the people who come first. That is the propaganda that is preached on the street corners, at the National Park and in this honourable House. What is said is one thing and what is actually done is another. The treatment meted out to the people under the guise of getting our youths off to a good start is very shabby. The money could be better channeled to achieve the same end that National Service is expected to achieve. It could be done with a little careful thought and planning.

Of the various Ministries I mentioned, Health and Education should be first on our list of priorities and if carefully run will take care of the others, National Service included. A health

nation starts with the very young. Pre-natal care for mothers, child-welfare and maternity clinics, an adequate amount of district nurses, hospitalization, treatment and drugs.

I am reminded, sir, that on Monday one of our old midwives, Miss Melbourne, was honoured. It is a well deserved honour. I live in the district where Nurse Melbourne operates. That old lady in here declining years should be able to retire and enjoy the benefits from all the work she has done in delivering thousands of babies. She has to go out in rain and sunshine. She does a wonderful job in the area in which she lives. People like her deserve some benefits in retirement. That dear old lady gets a miserable pension. And if she gets a pension from another source she obviously would not qualify for the even more miserable old age pension. Therefore, she is forced to work. Should that be the action of a government who says that it caress for people. Careful planning and organisation are needed.

What the Government says the National Service sets out to achieve can be accomplished in the schools equally as effectively as at Kimbia or Papaya. I will show you how logical I am being. This Government says National Service is, first of all, an exercise in learning by living together, which I am told is the best way to make one people, one nation and one destiny. It may be the best way, sir, but is it the only way? Can we afford it? That is the point.

As far as I can remember it, Britain had National Service and had to scrap it because it was too costly to them. They are a developed country and they had to scrap it because they could not afford it. We in poor developing Guyana promptly put our money down without carefully planning it.

We talk about the National Service; the children have to be exposed to each other, to come in contact with each other, to learn each other's point of view; to learn how the other man lives as is said. The position with these children is quite unnecessary. We are told that they have to be there so that they can understand what it means to live together as one people, one nation and thus achieve one destiny.

If there is a flame on a gas cooker in front of you, you know that if you put your hand in that flame it is going to burn you. You know that perfectly well; you do not have to put your hand in it to experience the feel of the pain. You know that if you go to the end of Fort Groyne, where the rough waters knock against the edge of our sea defences, and you jump off you stand a very good chance of losing your life. You do not have to jump to prove that it is so. By this same token you do not have to go to Kimbia, or to Papaya, to know what it is for us all to work together, to play together. Our children are doing it every day in school; they are learning to be loyal citizens of Guyana in the school programme. Our children are taught physical education, they are taught academic subjects. We have industrial arts. Use the money to increase the grants to the schools, give the Education department the tools to do the job, and we will achieve the same goal at far less cost to the nation. The money could be spent on opening up industries to supply employment for children leaving school build roads and provide amenities for the formation of new communities away from the cities, not by establishing them at far away, inaccessible places like Kimbia and Papaya. And then build the roads to come backwards – there are roads already existing – extend the townships, improve the villages, improve the communication links we already have, and open up our country and you will get people gradually going out to settle to live there. Not so very long ago people who lived about 12 miles out of Georgetown, if they lived on the east Coast or on the East bank – those who had to live across the River were worse off because of the ferry – were considered pioneers living in the wilds of the East bank, the East Coast and in the wilds of the West Bank.

It is the accepted fact that many of our people live in rural areas some 9, 10, 12 miles away and they commute daily to work in Georgetown. We do not want them to commute; we do not want them to crowd Georgetown because there is no work in Georgetown for them. We want to establish, as is the object of the National Service, new communities, but to do this by improving and expanding the existing communities. Spend the money on that!

Also there are industries to be established. For example, we are going to have at Victoria shortly the opening of the new radio factory. That is the sort of way in which the money should be spent so that the people who are living around Victoria will be employed. Money should not be

spent on National Service. It is quite unnecessary to have it on such a scale. The same thing can be achieved as I said, in the schools.

These are the points I wish to place before the Government to show, in the interest of this nation, why we cannot support this Financial Paper for \$17,426,000. It is money that need not be spent and, therefore, I wish to state that we will not be able to support this Paper.

**The Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Economic Development.

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, it is impossible to debate any issue concerning National Service intelligently unless one takes account of the nature of National Service and, indeed, the philosophy behind the establishment of the institution of National Service in Guyana.

May I begin by reminding the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva that on 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1973, the hon. Prime Minister laid in this House Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1973, being a State on National Service. I do not propose any profound discourse upon the nature of National Service because I would have thought that by now every Guyanese would have read and studied this matter deeply, and would have been well informed on these matters. But I would, by way of refreshing the memory of the hon. Member, draw here attention to what is stated in the State Paper on page 5 about the nature of National Service. I quote:

“...National Service will prepare citizens to utilise their energies profitably and productively, equipping them both with the knowledge and experience for opening up, developing and living on the rich lands available in the hinterland.”

And again:

“National Service will provide an opportunity for all people, for whatever background they may come, to get to know each other in the course of training together in work and sport. Its aim will be to produce a truly productive Guyanese citizen equipped with both the skills and attitudes needed to contribute positively to the economic, social, cultural and political revolution that has already been embarked upon – a citizen who places nation above self.”

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**2:55 – 3:05 p.m.**

In December, 1974, at a Special Delegates Congress of the People's National Congress, the Leader of the People's National Congress made a very important, and indeed, a seminal pronouncement which has come to be known as the "Declaration of Sophia". That Declaration has been published in booklet form and is available for study by every Guyanese citizen and, in particular, by those of us who labour in the field of politics. Leader of the People's National Congress, who also happens to be the Prime Minister of this country, touched again upon this very important matter of National Service because it is fundamental to the kind of social and economic revolution upon which we have embarked in this country. It is fundamental to the social and economic changes which we are proposing for our society. I quote from page 26 and 28 of the booklet entitled *Declaration of Sophia*:

"As we husband and seek to develop and exploit our material resources for the benefit of our people, we must at the same time develop and in many cases, reorient, our human resources I the service o the nation.

The Party, thorough Government, has already begun the process of revolutionizing the formal education system, a process aimed at eradicating the old colonial and capitalist values and introducing and emphasizing new and relevant ones.

And on page 28 it is stated:

"National Service, which has got off to an excellent start, is part of our total education system."

**3:05 – 3:15 p.m.**

It is irrelevant to debate an issue on National Service unless it is debated against a background of t hose pronouncements to which I have just referred, unless the debate takes place within the context of the philosophy which informs the institution of National Service. And it is because the hon. Member failed to observe this elementary point of discussion and debate, that she was led into error when she referred to what she alleged to be the relatively small allocations made to Health and Education.

Had the hon. Member understood the nature of National Service, had she understood the philosophy of the People's National Congress? Had she understood what we are trying to do in changing the Guyanese society she would have realised that it is really naïve – not to say simplistic – merely to look at the allocation for formal education under the Ministry of Education and come to the conclusion that that is the total allocation for Education in Guyana.

We see education as a broad-based and many-faceted thing which runs right through everything we are doing, which runs right through every Government Department and every government activity. Millions of dollars have been allocated for the kind of education which we consider to be relevant today. Millions of dollars will be found in the ministry of co-operatives and National Mobilisation for the promotion of co-operative and community development work and education; in the Ministry of Agriculture for the promotion of agricultural skills, knowledge and techniques; in the Ministry of Information and Culture, for the promotion of the education of citizens and for the promotion of education through the arts, for example, through the National History and Arts Council and through the National School of Dance; in the Ministry of Works and Housing for the training and retraining of government drivers and Government mechanics and technicians; in the Ministry of Economic Development, for the training of people in the skills relevant to planning, for example; in the Ministry of Regional Development, for the mobilisation of people in the various regional and sub-regional development councils so that they can be understand the process of development and play their part in the national development; in the office of the Prime Minister which has responsibility and which has an allocation for the training of public officers; and, of course, in National Service which, I wish to say, this Government – notwithstanding the opinion of my hon. Friend – holds to be a matter of highest priority.

The fact of the matter is that when the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Director-General of National Service and his staff presented the capital estimates for 1975, they actually presented a programme calling for an expenditure of \$31 million. That programme, on the face of it, seemed to be ambitious. It was felt by my Ministry – and I take responsibility for this – that we ought to give the National Service people an

opportunity to show that they had the capability to spend this kind of money which they had asked for, that they had the drive and the enthusiasm to carry out a programme of this magnitude.

The undertaking given to the National Service was that initially a sum of \$11 million was going to be provided, but with an understanding that if, in fact, this programme which had been put up seemed to be feasible, if they were able to show by the middle of the year that they could spend this money and they could implement this very ambitious programme, the additional money would be provided. I say that this undertaking was well within the parameters of the allocation of moneys for the capital programme for 1975.

It will be recalled that when we were debating the Estimates for 1975, I said that in 1975 we would be putting the bulk of our capital resources in the productive sector and, if I recall rightly, I demonstrated that we have put something like 60 percent of our capital resources in the productive sector. Once we understand the nature of National Service, once we understand what national Service sets out to do, we will understand why, in the judgement of this Ministry of Economic Development and in the judgement of the Government and of the party, National Service is one of our most important productive sectors. It is an investment in young people; it is an investment in their training; it is an investment in their skills. We believe that this investment is only a long-term investment, it is not only a question of turning out people in the long run who have the necessary skills and the necessary attitudes, but it is also an investment in the short run because, as these young people work and learn, they are in the process of being productive. They are in fact turning our economic goods, the value of which can be quantified, the value of which is very, very high indeed, as I will seek to illustrate in a moment.

For this year, National Service had a number of large infrastructural undertakings. For example, they had to develop and complete the facilities at Kimbia; they had to develop and establish a new National Service centre at papaya; they had to develop Tumatumari into a National Service centre. (That is why I said that there were more than two centres. There are, in fact, three National Service centres in Guyana today, the third one being at Tumatumari.) They had to set up a settlement for the first hundred graduates from the National Service Centre at Kimbia; they had to do all this infrastructural work together with the work of training the rapidly

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**3:05 – 3:15 p.m.**

increasing numbers of militants in the National Service and to get on with the productive work in agriculture and other field of training.

Today, there are some 2,000 militants in National Service and 6,000 members of the Young Brigade. But the end of this year, the 2,000 militants will increase to 3,000 and membership of the Young Brigade will increase to 10,000 members. It will be seen, therefore, that the increase in the numbers of people who are seeking this important and relevant education through the National Service is very rapid indeed. Indeed, at present, there are more applicants for membership of National Service than the service is able to cope with at the moment.

**3:15 – 3:25 p.m.**

That is all the more reason why we must proceed as rapidly as possible to expand the facilities so that within a foreseeable time, we can absorb into National Service each and every Guyanese boy and girl, to enable our citizens to obtain the best and most relevant education in the context of the revolution upon which we have embarked.

But what have these people been doing? The hon. Member referred to their uniform, popularly called “parrot green”; but that parrot green uniform is now a badge of pride. One only has to look at the young people as they walk in their uniforms to see how proud they are of it, to see how they walk tall, to see how confident they are, to see how they understand and appreciate what the Party and the Government are doing for the young people of Guyana to help them to enjoy the heritage which is their in this great country of ours.

But what have they been doing? National service militants already have at this moment 3,500 acres of land under cotton and, by the end of this year, will have 5,000 acres of land under cotton. They have already ordered a cotton gin which will be delivered in a matter of months to enable them to process the cotton into lint, and separate the seed for the making of oil and stock feed.

They have today 100 acres under corn and intend to expand that acreage to 200 by the end of the year. They have 80,000 pineapples on the ground; and by the end of this year will increase that number to 100,000 pineapples. They have 3,500 acres of land under black-eye peas.

They have 10 acres under greens; they are self sufficient in greens; and they have 50 acres under ground provision.

They are already in the fishing industry. They own a trawler. They go out fishing and their average capture of fish is 8,000 pounds per week. They have 25,000 chickens and intend to increase that number to 100,000 by the end of this year. They are gathering 1,400 eggs per day. All of this produce is being used to feed the members of the National Service and they are also selling to people in the riverine areas and to the Guyana Marketing Corporation. But their endeavours do not stop there because they are now making the necessary preparations to raise cattle, and they have already started a piggery.

The point I seek to make is that these young people, who perhaps two years ago would have been written off as being idle and shiftless, are showing to all of us, indeed to the world, what they can do in terms of developing themselves and their country once they are given the opportunity.

I have referred so far to agriculture, but the training for National Service militants does not stop there. There is a very carefully worked out programme of training in the mechanical and technical fields and in other areas of skills. The National Service owns and operates a publishing centre at the industrial site, the Guyana National Service Publishing centre, that is doing not only commercial work but is training National Service militants. The work there is, of course, printing, silk screen processing, and producing those cinema posters which used to be brought in from overseas.

National Service also has at Tumatumari a garment factory which is already being set up to be used for training and for producing these parrot-green uniforms of which we are so very proud. They also have at Tumatumari a sheet metal factory and a tile factory, all to be used for training and for contributing to the economic needs of this country.

May I remind the hon. Member what was said in the State Paper, that National Service was to equip our young people with the knowledge and experience for opening up, developing, and living on the rich lands available in the hinterland. This is the kind of education we are

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**3:15 – 3:25 p.m.**

giving them. To that end, the Service has already acquired sawmilling equipment to enable the young militants not only to acquire sawmilling skills but also to contribute to our housing programme.

This, then, is where the money has gone and is going. I myself did not believe that the National Service militants could make a reality of this very impressive and ambitious programme they had presented towards the end of last year; but I failed to reckon with the drive, the dedication, the ingenuity, the patriotism of the Director-General and the young men and women who are on his staff, and the members of the National Service. They have shown that once there is a commitment, the task, no matter how difficult, can be achieved. And there is that commitment; there is that dedication, that patriotism, in National Service. That is what National Service is all about. These are the qualities we are trying to bring out in the Guyanese young men and women.

We have had recommendations, unsolicited, from people who have had no axe to grind, from people who went and saw and came back satisfied beyond the shadow of a doubt as to the usefulness, the value, and indeed, the necessity of National Service.

**3:25 – 3:35 p.m.**

We have had overseas Heads of State and Government. We have also had our own Guyanese parents, religious leaders, Members of the Judiciary, foreign journalists, people of all kinds, who have gone to our National Service centres and who have come away convinced that we are on the right course.

We have seen many demonstrations of what I may call the National Service quality. We have had the Great March from Kimbia to Georgetown and we have seen how, along the way, these young boys and girls spent their time in the villages helping to improve the conditions in those villages, giving of their energy and knowledge in improving the conditions in those villages.

Even today, hundreds of young National Service militants are in our markets throughout the country helping to clean them, helping to improve their appearances, helping to show people that they have got it within themselves in little ways to improve the quality of their lives.

We are satisfied, on the Government side, that this investment is worthwhile and I, for myself, am sorry that instead of the \$30 million about which the hon. Member quibbles we did not have \$300 million to invest in our young people. This investment, for us, is a priority. We will continue to invest large sums of money in the training of our young people, through National Service, so that we can bring out their undoubted ability, we can bring out their talents, we can bring out their talents, we can bring out their love of country, we can bring out their love of their fellow citizens and harness all of these qualities in the service of their country.

**The Chairman:** This completes consideration of all the items.

*Question*

That the Committee of Supply approve the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1/1975 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ending 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1975, totaling 17,426,800.

*Put, and agreed to.*

*Assembly resumed*

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in financial paper no. 1/1975 and I now move that the assembly doth agree with the committee in the said Resolution.

*Question put, and agreed to*

*Motion carried.*

**WIDOWS AND ORPHANS PENSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1975**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Widows and Orphans Pension Act.”

**[The Minister of Economic Development on behalf of the Minister of Finance]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, this People’s National congress Government is dedicated to the Welfare of people. Its whole programme of activities is centred around people because we believe that the welfare of people is paramount. Among our most worthy people are our pensioners, our citizens who have laboured in the service of this country and of their fellow Guyanese, sometimes quietly, without public recognition and often beyond the call of duty. Government is always anxious that this particular category of citizens, that is the pensioners, do not find their pensions swept away by the declining purchasing power of money. That is why every time there is an increase in the salaries of Public Servants the Government also, at the same time, increase the pension which are paid to Government pensioners.

Bearing this principle in mind the Government was anxious that those pensioners who enjoyed pensions under the Widows and Orphans Fund should enjoy an increase in the pensions which they had been getting. To this end, therefore, the Government employed a firm of actuaries to examine the assets of the Fund to see whether the Fund could bear an increase in the pensions which were being paid and, if so, in what amount and from what date.

The firm of actuaries examined the assets and made certain recommendations to the Government. As a result of those recommendations, which have been accepted by the Government, this Bill is brought before this honourable House. The purpose of the Bill is to increase pensions payable to persons who are eligible for pensions under the Widows and Orphans fund by 15 percent and to make that increase retroactive to the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1973. This provision will apply to all persons who were registered a pensioners under the fund as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1968.

I believe that this Bill will find unanimous support in this House and I commend it to hon. Members. I wish to reiterate that here again we have tangible and positive evidence of the

continuing, indeed, the abiding interest of this People's National Congress Government in every category of citizens in this country.

**3:35 – 3:45 p.m.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Sir, the Minister is perfectly correct when he said this Bill will have the unanimous support of the House, but I am sure he must have said those closing phrases about the People's National Congress Government being concerned for every category of citizen with his tongue in his cheeks. He treated us to nice flowery talk about the concern of the People's National Congress for its people and those who have given their services beyond the call of duty in the interest of the nation and so on.

Sir, those are beautiful sounding phrases, but the people want, not beautiful sounding phrases but positive relief. Whilst we give our unstinted support to this Widows and Orphans Pensions (Amendment) Bill 1975 and our support to this 15 percent increase which will be retroactive to the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1973, we urge the hon. Minister and the Government not only to talk about concern for the people who are getting old, state pensioners, but to do something positive about it.

I spoke earlier about the need for an increase in the amount paid as pensions to our old people – and I make no apology to do so again – who have to wait until they are 65 years of age before they can get a miserable \$13 if they live in the rural areas and \$15 if they live in the urban areas. They have to wait until they are 65 while we can retire from this House at 40 and get a more substantial pension. A member of Parliament who has been here the minimum number of years to qualify will get more than \$15 a month. The Government talks about it, says it is in sympathy, but does nothing.

We support this Bill and urge the hon. Minister not just to utter words but to do something in the interest of the citizens of Guyana especially the old age and deserving.

**Mr. Hoyte** (Replying): Mr. Speaker, I would assure the hon. Member that when I say that this People's National Congress Government is concerned with the interests of all the people of Guyana, I am not merely mouthing nice and flowery words. I would read for her benefit the first object of the People's National Congress which is contained in Rule 2 of the Constitution of the Party:

“To secure and maintain through the practice of Co-operative Socialism the interests, well-being and prosperity of all the people of Guyana.”

It is a bit astonishing that the hon. Member should have said that this Government is doing nothing for pensioners, when we are considering a Bill right now to improve the pensions which are payable to one category of pensioners. But, sir, it is equally erroneous to say that we are doing nothing. Everything we are doing is an effort to revolutionise this society, is in the interest of people, to wipe out ignorance, disease and poverty. But we are only going to do it when we re-organise the society on a socialist basis. The hon. Member could help if she could only understand that and if she would stop blindly opposing progressive legislation and progressive action to restructure the social and economic bases in this country.

We are moving methodically, maybe for some people too slowly, towards the kind of society in which we will not have to talk about old age pension and whether those pensions should be increased, because the whole structure, the whole organisation, will be such that all of our people will be taken care of.

I would invite the hon. Member to join us in the vanguard of this revolution by, first of all, reading the Declaration of Sophia; by getting a copy of the Party's constitution, reading and understanding it. I believe, Mr. Speaker, once she has understood, she will fill in that application form for membership of the People's National Congress. **(Applause)**

We have already had wonderful success with the hon. Member and her Party because we have lived to hear her say in this honourable House that her Party supports the “nationalizing of the commanding heights of the economy”. That is wonderful advance indeed, and I believe there is hope for her. I wish to tell her that when the scales fall from her eyes we will be ready to

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receive her into the Party not as a full member initially, but as a probationary member. It will give her an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to show her sincerity and to give her an opportunity to work for the achievement of a socialist revolution in this country.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read a Second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly Resumed.*

*Bill reported without Amendment, read a Third time and passed.*

### **PRISON (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1975**

A Bill intituled:

“ An Act to amend the Prison Act.”

**(The Minister of Home Affairs)**

**The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Mingo):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second reading of the Prison (Amendment) Bill, 1975. This is another attempt on the part of the People's National Congress to show its concern for the interest of every category of person in Guyana.

In moving the Second reading of this Bill, sir, I wish to point out that this very, very simple measure is really aimed at giving the authority to allow any person undergoing imprisonment who gives definite indication of his intention to reform, to be released from prison on licence before the completion of his sentence.

When a prisoner is released under licence there are certain conditions which he must satisfy. For example, it would be stipulated that he should not commit any criminal offence within a prescribed period. If he does not comply, then he will be recalled to prison.

The Prison Act as it now stands provides that only those prisoners who are serving imprisonment for life can be released from imprisonment under licence. The Amendment that is being sought is intended to empower the release under licence of any prisoner before the expiration of the term of imprisonment or of his release under the present system of remission subject to certain conditions.

Clause 2 of the Bill, therefore, seeks to amend section 33 of the Act for the purpose of allowing all prisoners to be released under licence.

Clause 3 provides for the amendment of section 34 of the Prisons Act to make it consequential on the amendment of section 33 and also to permit for the coming into operation of Section 34.

The measure is very essential if we are to improve our penal system. I commend it to the honourable House and ask that it be read a Second time.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Mr. Speaker, we have had an afternoon of People's National Congress propaganda, even extended to the Prisons Bill. This Bill seeks to extend the privilege of being let out on parole not only to prisoners serving life sentence but to all categories of prisoners at the discretion of the minister of Home Affairs. Section 2(3) makes provision that should the prisoner so released on licence in any way breach the trust placed in him he will be immediately imprisoned and I quote:

“...serve the unexpired period of his sentence calculated as at the date of his release under licence without remission previously earned or granted.”

The Minister did not state in his introduction of this Bill, nor does the Bill state, what was the rationale used to arrive at the decision for this Bill. Why was it necessary? The law provides for prisoners on life imprisonment to be released under licence. What is the reason now suddenly to release on licence prisoners who are serving sentences, not life sentences?

We are all aware that in the present thinking on the question of treatment of person who are paying their debt to society for the wrong they have done it is being accepted that, in the best interest of both the prisoner and of the community it is desirable to release a prisoner on licence before he has finished servicing his sentence.

It is felt that it gives the man a better change of rehabilitating himself, for rehabilitation depends upon the manner and the attitude of the man. No amount of talks or seminars in the Prisons can be as effective as a chance to go back into society, to start afresh again as been done in this Bill. The safeguard, which should also act as a deterrent of being re-imprisoned without any privilege is entrenched in this Bill. We accept this principle and if this is the rationale used for this Bill we will support the Bill.

We know that prisoners on parole are constantly checked on; they have to report to the authorities; tabs are kept on their movements and their achievements, and it gives a man a chance who wishes to turn over a new leaf and to go straight. On the strength of that reasoning we will support this Bill. However, there are other aspects and approaches to this matter of parole which we feel it is only right we should draw to the attention of this House and, indeed, if those are the reasons used, that will throw a completely different light on the matter altogether.

In this House, not so very long ago, when we were dealing with that iniquitous Bill on the taking away of a licence of a person guilty of black-marketing after the second offence, the hon. Minister of Trade gave as his reason why the jail sentence could not be increased; that jail holds no terror for our Guyanese citizens; it is no deterrent; they do not mind going to jail. If this is the cause, we are letting these people out of prison. They do not mind going back so it would be just a matter of giving them a good opportunity to catch up on their evil doings. If they are sentenced to imprisonment for three years we let them out at eighteen months and this give them a good opportunity to catch up on the eighteen months lost. Are not the citizens of Guyana entitled to

protection, to know at least that they can feel safe in their beds at night, that they can walk the streets without fear of being choked and robbed? The few who were caught would be kept behind bars and there would be less need to worry. If these people are given the opportunity to catch up and if that is the rationale for the introduction of this Bill we do not see how we can support it.

Thirdly, and lastly, if the reason for granting licences to prisoners is that the jail at 12 Camp Street is overcrowded that room has to be made for more by letting out those who are there already, we cannot support this. We cannot just let prisoners out of jail on licence to accommodate the Government of Guyana. Many of them there are strong supporters of the P.N.C. If this Bill is brought because the jail is overcrowded, then we cannot support it. We know the jail is overcrowded; that is no secret. People know that there are two and three men sharing a cell at 12 Camp Street. We will not go into the moral side of that. We cannot support the Bill to make it easy for the Government of Guyana. We cannot help the Government to avoid once again doing its duty by the rest of the citizens of Guyana.

What has happened with the plans for the re-siting of 12 Camp Street at D'Endragt? Maybe the hon. Minister could tell us about it. This is the situation we are faced with. If it is a question of rehabilitation, we can support this Bill. The thinking of this Party moves with the times. As a Party we appreciate the new concepts in the society. We appreciate the reasoning that moves people to say, "Give the prisoner a chance of rehabilitation."

**3:55 – 4:05 p.m.**

But, sir, if we are asked to vote for this Bill to accommodate this Government, to give it an opportunity to get away from doing its duty to the citizens of Guyana by providing them with adequate space in their goals so that those who have to pay their debt to society can be accommodated, if this is the reason behind it, we cannot support this Bill. As there is nothing in this Bill to let us know what is the reasoning behind it. I await the explanation that the hon. Minister will give this House before I make a decision.

**Mr. Mingo (replying):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member seems to anticipate that one of the reasons why this measure has been brought to the House is to assist and ease the overcrowding in our prisons. I would like to tell her in the first place that this measure is very important in our programme of rehabilitation. The Act as it stands now only makes provision for a person who perhaps has been charged for murder and has been sentenced to life imprisonment to be released under these conditions, and anyone who is interested in modern penal reform would agree that it ought to be wider than this. We, therefore, seek to introduce this measure so as to make our system more modern and also to cater for rehabilitation.

I want to cross swords with the hon. Member on the question of overcrowding. Anywhere in the world, the overcrowding of a prison can lead to serious dangers. There are tremendous social dangers and there is also the question of control. For instance, I know that the other day in Trinidad there were disturbances in the prison and the reason which was given the fact that there was tremendous overcrowding in that prison.

Now the visiting committee for the Georgetown Prison complained that they were concerned about the population of the Georgetown Prison. The Chancellor of the Judiciary approached the Prime Minister and he said he too was concerned about the overcrowding and we thought of the measures that could be introduced to help to relieve the situation. One of the measures which was recommended by the Chancellor himself was that we should try to ease the position so far as release on licence was concerned. It was thought that we should introduce this measure to make it easy for any type of prisoner to be released on licence. I must say that we do not release a prisoner willy-nilly. There are certain conditions which the prisoner must satisfy before he is released on licence. For instance, the prisoner first of all must show an aptitude for reform, that he is willing to reform. He has to show that he wants to become a law-abiding citizen; and then he must show that he is a good prospect for being able to be granted early release instead of remaining in prison. In other words, we look at his performance, his work performance; we look at his conduct generally before it is decided that he will be released on licence. It is not a question of just releasing a prisoner because he has been in for so many years and giving him a chance to come out. It is a question of looking at his performance during the time that he has been incarcerated.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish to remind hon. Members that there was a conference on crime in Guyana in August/September last year and one of the recommendations of this conference as far as the prison situation is concerned is, may I read it?

“Since the parole system is another way in which the prison population could be reduced, the feasibility of introducing such a system should be given serious consideration.”

I take it that the system “release on licence” is comparable to the parole system.

Overcrowding is an important factor when we think in terms of prison improvement and penal reform. So I do not agree with the hon. Member that the question of overcrowding is a question to be pushed aside quite lightly; it is important. This measure has had to be introduced.

The hon. Member spoke about the situation in prison. We did introduce at the anniversary of Republic this year a system of amnesty to certain prisoners. Because of this, about 230 prisoners were granted amnesty. The hon. Member is concerned about people getting into trouble when they leave prison. I can tell her that the prison records show that over the last three or four months, there are very few, if any, cases of persons who have returned to prison since they have been released.

Before we introduced that amnesty, the population of Georgetown prison was 695 in a situation where there was an accommodation for 300. I think the House should be told that we have since re-opened the Remand Centre at Timehri which means that that centre now has 144 young offenders in a situation in which accommodation has been presented for 140. At Mazaruni, there are 335 prisoners with an accommodation for 318; in New Amsterdam there are 179 in a situation where there is accommodation for 150, while in Georgetown we have gone down to 455 in a situation where we have accommodation for 300. There is still a slight overcrowding but the situation is much better than it was four months ago when Georgetown had 695. Hon. Members will, therefore, see that the measure is very important and I hope everyone will support it.

Apart from this, we also have in our capital development estimates for this year the improvement of dormitory facilities at New Amsterdam and at Mazaruni Prisons so it will be

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seen that we are making every effort to ensure that the prison accommodation remains in a way that there would be very little, if any, overcrowding.

The hon. Member mentioned the question of the Georgetown Prison being removed to a position on the East Coast and I wish to tell her that there is some new thinking on the whole question of the siting of this prison. That idea now seems to be charged and we are thinking of removing the Georgetown prison to another area. I guess later on hon. Members will hear more details.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read a Second time.*

*Assembly in Committee.*

**4:05 p.m.**

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly resumed.*

*Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Resolved:

“That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.”

**(The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House)**

**Adjourned accordingly at 4:05 p.m.**

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