

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**

12th Sitting

2 p.m.

Tuesday, 6th November, 1973

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (50)

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

Dr. the Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
National Development and Agriculture

Senior Ministers (7)

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Works and Communications

*The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice

*The Hon. H Green,
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

***Non-elected Ministers**

*The Hon. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

*The Hon. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

*Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Housing

Ministers (6)

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

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

(Absent – on leave)

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

*The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education

*Dr. the Hon. O. M. R. Harper,
Minister of Health

(Absent)

*The Hon. G. A. King
Minister of Trade

Ministers of State (9)

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

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

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

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

Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Minister of State – Regional (Essequibo
Coast/West Demerara)

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

*The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of State – Regional (Mazaruni/Potaro)

(Absent – on leave)

*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 (8)

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

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

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

Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Parliamentary Secretary (Agriculture),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. K. B. Bancroft,
Parliamentary Secretary (Hinterland),
Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

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

***Non-elected Ministers**

Mr. J. P. Chowritmootoo,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. R. H. O. Corbin,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of
Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

Other Members (18)

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
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mrs. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

Liberty Party (2)

Mr. M. F. Singh, Deputy Speaker
Mrs. E. DaSilva

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. F.A. Narain
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M. B. Henry, AMBIM

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

2.25 p.m.

PRAYERS

OATHS OF OFFICE

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. George King.

The Oath of Office was administered to and made and subscribed by Mr. King.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, may I congratulate you on behalf of all other Members of Parliament and myself and wish you a most successful term.

[Applause]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

LEAVE TO MEMBERS

The Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Hon. Member, Miss Field- Ridley, from the 6th to the 16th November, 1973, and to the Hon. Member, Mr. Haynes, for today's Sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PETITION

PRIVATE BILLS

METHODIST MISSIONARY TRUST ASSOCIATION

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Aaron.

Mr. Aaron: Mr. Speaker, I beg to present a Petition on behalf of the Methodist Missionary Trust Association, seeking to have introduced in the Assembly a Private Bill to incorporate the Guyana Methodist Trust.

The Speaker: The Clerk will read the Petition.

The Clerk read the Petition as follows:

“GUYANA

PETITION

To: The Honourable Members of the National Assembly

The humble petition of the Methodist Missionary Trust Association respectfully sheweth-

1. That your Petitioner is a body corporate incorporated in England on the 31st October, 1933 under the companies Act 1929 of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
2. That by the Methodist Missionary Society (Vesting of Property) Ordinance, Chapter 229, all property in Guyana held or to be acquired by any person or by any Society, Association or other body of persons on behalf of or for the use or benefit of Methodists in Guyana vest in your Petitioner in trust for and the use of the Methodist Missionary Society and provision is made therein for the administration thereof.
3. That on the 18th day of May, 1967, a new church was formed called “the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas’ as an autonomous body of Christian believers by the people in Guyana connected in religious fellowship and known as Methodists together with similar peoples in other places in the Caribbean and Central and South America, to carry on the work formerly carried on in Guyana and such other places as aforesaid by the Methodist Missionary Society for and on behalf of the Methodist Church.
4. That your Petitioner is desirous of promoting a Bill to incorporate the Guyana Methodist Trust Corporation to hold the property in Guyana of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas and for purposes in connection therewith.

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

5. That the objects of the Bill are to incorporate the Guyana Methodist Corporation to replace your Petitioner to replace the Methodist Missionary Society by the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas and to provide for other related and incidental matters thereto which are considered desirable and expedient in the interests of the aforesaid Guyana Methodist Trust Corporation and Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas.
6. That all the persons who immediately before the formation of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas were members of the Methodist Church became members of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas.
7. That the provisions of the Bill have been approved by the Methodist Missionary Society and the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas.
8. That a copy of the Bill is hereto annexed.
9. That your Petitioner humbly requests that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly be pleased to permit the introduction of the Bill and to enact the same.

Wherefore your Petitioner as in duty bound will over pray.

Dated the 8th day of March, 1971.

THE METHODIST MISSIONARY TRUST ASSOCIATION

by its duty constituted Attorney

(sgd.) Cyril F.H. Alleyne

Revd. Cyril F.H. Alleyne”

The Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order No. 57(4), I shall now put the Question.

Question-

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

“ That the Promoter be allowed to proceed”,

put, and agreed to.

The Speaker: The Promoter may proceed accordingly.

2.35 p.m.

**GUYANA WEST EVANGELIST PILGRIM FAITH CHURCH (JORDAN
FOUNDATION**

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Corrica.

Mr. Corrica: Mr. Speaker, I beg to present on behalf of the Right Reverend Bishop Ferdinand Furry of 107 Eccles, East Bank, Demerara, seeking to have introduced in the Assembly, a Private Bill to incorporate the Guyana West Evangelist Pilgrim Faith Church (Jordan Foundation).

The Speaker: The Clerk will read the Petition.

The Clerk read the Petition as follows:

“GUYANA

County of Demerara

In the matter of:

THE GUYANA WEST EVANGELIST PILGRIM FAITH CHURCH
(JORDAN FOUNDATION) (INCORPORATION) BILL, 1973

To: HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER AND THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PETITION

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP FERDINAND FURRY OF 107 Eccles, East Bank, Demerara respectfully shewth:

1. That your Petitioner is the duly appointed Bishop of the Guyana West Evangelist Pilgrim Faith Church (Jordan Foundation) (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Church’).
2. That the said Church was established in Guyana, then British Guiana, in 1922 by Elder Nathaniel Jordan who was influenced by the work of Elder McClaren later known as Elder Lowloodas McLaren of Trinidad and begun in Trinidad in the year 1882.
3. That the said Church has a total membership of Three Thousand (3000) persons more familiarly known as the Jordanites who believe in the Bible but more particularly the doctrine of the Ten Commandments, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper and observe the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of the First Fruits and the Feast of Dedication but do not indulge in burnt offerings.
4. That there are nine (9) places of worship distributed throughout Guyana as follows:

A. County of Demerara:

(1) Cato Street,

Agricola,

Greater Georgetown.

(2) Pike Street,

Kitty,

Greater Georgetown.

(3) Meten-meerzorg,

West Coast,

Demerara.

(4) Supply,

Mahaica,

East Coast,

Demerara.

(5) Zion,

Upper Demerara River.

(6) Stanleytown,

West Bank,

Demerara.

B. County of Berbice:

(7) Stanleytown,

East Bank,

Berbice.

(8) Hopetown,

West Coast,

Berbice.

C. County of Essequibo

(9) Parika,

East Bank,

Essequibo.

5. That the Objects of the Bill are inter alia to incorporate the Guyana West Evangelist Pilgrim Faith Church (Jordan Foundation) with a right to determine its own affairs through or by a Board of Trustees, to acquire and dispose of property and to provide for other matters relevant to the administration of the said Church.
6. That it is proposed that all persons who immediately before the incorporation of the said Church were members should not be prejudiced in any way whatsoever.
7. That your Petitioner has the unanimous approval of the members of the Church to promote the install Bill a copy of which is annexed hereto.
8. That your Petitioner humbly requests that the Honourable Members of the National Assembly be pleased to permit the introduction of the Bill and to enact the same.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONER AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY.

Dated this 9th day August, 1973.

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

FERDINAND FURRY

BISHOP

The Petitioner”

The Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order 57(4), I will now put the Question.

Question-

“That the Promoter be allowed to proceed”.

Put, and agreed to.

The Speaker: The Promoter may proceed accordingly.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- 1) Reports of the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply for the years 1970 and 1971. [**The Minister of Works and Communications**]
- 2) (a) Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order 1973 (No. 97), made under the Consumption Tax Act, 1969 (No. 13), on the 14th of September, 1973, and published in the Gazette on the 14th of September, 1973.

(b) Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Offices (Emoluments) (No.2) Order 1973 (No. 125), made under the Ministries, Members of the House of Assembly and Special Offices (Emoluments) Ordinance 1965 (No.7), on the 26th of October, 1973, and published in the Gazette on the 27th of October, 1973. [**The Minister of Finance**]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTRIES**FUEL CRISIS**

The Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Nation is already aware of the grave fuel crisis facing the world as a result of the Middle East War, among other factors.

The immediate result has been a marked increase in the price of petroleum products which we in Guyana have no alternative but to meet if we are to continue to be supplied with the necessary fuel.

There is now, in addition, a real possibility that we may be subject to a serious reduction in our oil and fuel supplies if the world situation continues as at present. The Nation must prepare itself now for such a possibility.

The Government, you may rest assured, is in the process of formulating contingency plans to meet any eventuality of serious cut-backs in our fuel supplies, but all of our citizens will have to play their part in this crisis.

Essentially we are dealing with external factors over which we have no control, but it is incumbent upon us to take anticipatory steps internally, wherever, whenever and however we can.

I ask the Nation, as from today, to begin to conserve the use, directly and indirectly, of petroleum products.

Naturally the top priority is the maintenance of public services and industrial and agricultural production, but in this context, each of us as individuals can play a significant role.

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

If we are to avoid a serious economic crisis, it is crucial and essential that by all means our bauxite, our forestry, our rice, our sugar and other industries maintain production. They must have the first claim on the consumption of fuel. We cannot afford a serious disruption of our electricity, pure water supply, and drainage and irrigation works also.

As individual citizens, we each have a number of ways in which we can begin to conserve the use of oil and fuel. We must use our cars and other motor vehicles only where absolutely necessary, and exercise every possible economy in the domestic use of electricity and petroleum products. Wastage in this context, or carelessness, is criminal.

I make this Statement to alert the Nation to the possibilities and to seek its co-operation. For the moment there appears no immediate need for an official system of rationing, but I seek to have the Nation, as a precautionary measure, ration itself. The public will be kept informed from time to time of the situation.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 23 (3)

“Be it resolved that paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 23 be suspended to enable the Assembly to proceed, at its Sitting on Tuesday, the 6th of November, 1973, upon the motion, notice of which was published on the 30th of October, 1973, in Notice Paper No.8, seeking approval of the Government’s Policy adumbrated in the President’s Address.” [The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House]

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House (Mr. Ramsaroop):

Under the provisions of Standing Order 23(3):

“... a Private Member’s motion shall not be placed upon the Order Paper, for a day earlier than fourteen clear days from the day on which the notice was published in the Notice Paper.”

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

The next item on the Order Paper is a Motion by a Private Member, Mr. Stoby, which was only tabled on the 30th October. Members are aware however that this House last met on Monday and over one week has elapsed since the formal presentation of the President's Address. I therefore move the Motion standing in my name to enable the Motion that is next on the Order Paper to be taken, for the formal acceptance of the policy of the Government as adumbrated in the President's Speech. Unless there is a suspension of that Standing Order to permit this debate dehors the statutory time, that Motion cannot be legitimately entertained. I therefore commend the Motion standing in my name and ask for the endorsement of this Motion by this House.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

2. 45 p.m.

APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IN PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the Government's policy adumbrated in the President's Address for the present Session of Parliament which was made to the Assembly on Monday, the 29th of October, 1973.”

[Mr. Stoby]

Mr. Stoby: Your Honour, I wish to present the Motion standing in my name.

Mrs. Williams *seconded.*

Mr. Stoby: Mr. Speaker, the Speech that was presented by His Excellency the President sets out plans and policies of the Government. The aims, ambitions and ideology as well as the co-operative philosophy of the Government are clearly set out:

The Speech is very simple. It pertains to the development of Guyana. We can see where the Government has been trying hard to project an image whereby everybody in this country would be involved with the spirit of co-operation and self-reliance. If you go throughout the

length and breadth of this country you will see people working together in all communities, co-operating in all types of schemes so as to make Guyana a better place.

The Government has been showing examples whereby it will assist people of this country. It has expressed plans by means of which this country will make rapid progress if the people work together with assistance from Government.

There are many changes which the Government plans to put into force shortly. We have seen that our Government has a two-thirds majority and I think it is the aim of the Government now that it has the majority to make radical changes in our society so that the system which we are presently living under will be transformed.

Guyana, Sir, is a capitalist society, but we have seen that with the spirit of co-operation and, let us say, the ideology of the co-operatives, we have transformed Guyana to a socialist country, we have seen in the President's Speech where the Government has set about to project this image of transformation from capitalism to socialism.

There are some people who have said that things like sports, athletics and music should not be given priority. They have said that the high cost of living should be one of the priorities to be undertaken by Government. But, sir, not only in Guyana are we having hard- food shortages or high prices. We quite recently heard that in the Caribbean islands they are rationing essential commodities. We have read that the prices in other countries are far above the prices in Guyana.

But sport and culture, music and dancing, are very important in a society. They can project the aims and ambitions of a Government. For instance, in socialist countries sport is one of the chief methods used to project an image, both politically and economically. I feel that the Government has taken a right step in trying to foster sports activities.

It is also the plan of the Government to have five centres throughout Guyana not only in the city, but also in the rural areas so as to enhance sporting activities.

We have seen also in the Speech where the Government has made some very good decisions such as, the appointment of regional Ministers living in their respective areas so that

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.45 – 2.55 p.m.

people could meet them and discuss their problems on the spot because, when people live in remote areas they find it impossible to come to Georgetown to see their Minister. People living in the Rupununi, for instance, have to travel by plane and look at the cost to come and go! Perhaps they cannot afford to see a Minister. I must congratulate the Government for establishing these regional ministries.

It is also the plan to have the minister and the people involved. He will be on the spot to see what is going on; to see the work of the people and the several co-operative schemes. He will be there to see that the administration is functioning well. He will be able now to give his advice and perhaps sometimes bring matters that are important to the central government for approval. In this way we feel that development could be rapidly increased when the administration is functioning throughout Guyana.

2.55 p.m.

We have not seen any reference in the President's Address to the 1972-1976 Development Plan because, sir, that plan has already been discussed in all forums; it has been discussed with the trade unions and the Chamber of Commerce and has been agreed on and recommended. Therefore, there was no need to make mention of any of the plans in this Address. Also, since the Budget will be represented by year end, no references were made with respect to the financial policies of the Government.

In the address it is stated that the Government will introduce compulsory training. This is a good step because many people all over the country who are unemployed. If the Government expedites the plan of compulsory training of unemployed youth, I think our labour force could be stronger and will contribute to the development of Guyana.

We have also seen in the President's Address that reference was made to land reform which is very important in the present situation of today where many people have large areas of land under their own control. Some people have land which is beneficially occupied and the Government proposes to introduce legislation whereby land not beneficially occupied will be given to persons who would like to develop it.

This is a progressive step, because land reform in Guyana is very important; although our country has much land many people do not own lands. The Government will soon make lands available to farmers. This will be a further move of carrying out the Government's programme of feeding the nation. We have seen in other countries that people are starving; we have read that people are dying from famine because there is a shortage of food. The Government's plan to develop this country through agriculture is a priority. With lands available to the people and with the machinery that the Government has actually brought into motion like the setting up of institutions like the Agricultural Bank and the Mortgage Finance Bank, people will be able to get loans to develop their lands.

In my opinion the President's Address has tried to show that everybody can be united. In Guyana today, there are too many organizations all over the place. If the people of Guyana can be united regardless of their ethnic grouping I feel that Guyana will be a better place in which to live.

The Government has indeed projected a progressive image. It is an image whereby it could be considered a Government which is for the people. If the people could be involved and could take the advice of the leadership of this Government I think we could make some rapid progress.

Sir, I now ask that this motion standing in my name be accepted by this House.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. DaSilva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the theme, the whole accent and the tenor of the Presidential Address stress the need for co-operation and the involvement of all the citizens of Guyana. When all of us become involved, when all of us work together for the betterment of Guyana then and only then can Guyana progress and the Government of Guyana fully recognizes this. For what is the use of us being politically independent if we are still economically, culturally just to mention a few totally or almost totally dependent on others.

6.11.73

National Assembly

2.55 – 3.05 p.m.

On the other hand, we know that in this day and age with communications being a matter of hours and not a matter of months and days, the world is closer, we are all closer to each other and for survival it is fitting that we must all work together and we must all co-operate together. If the richer nations, the more developed nations of the world recognize and accept that how much more it is not necessary for a country ours, a developing country, a new nation, struggling for survival to recognize that we also are dependent upon others.

3.05 p.m.

However, it is necessary that we set our sights high. I am sure that the Hon. Members of this House must have knowledge of the sonnet by Robert Browning, a line which goes:

“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”

Robert Browning from Andrea del Sarto. I am sure that you are well aware of this. Therefore, it is right that we set our sights high. However, the Government must realize, and in this Presidential Address it says so, that we must all be involved. But unless all Guyanese are involved, the words in the Address will be worthless and the criticism levelled at this Address by many people in our community, that it is just so many words, will come to pass.

Incidentally, I note that in speaking of the results of our last July Elections on the very first page of the Address, the Government says very modestly- which is an unusual feature for the Government - and I quote:

“... my Government returned with an increased majority.”

This is very modest phrasing from a Government that does not normally understate its achievements. But I feel that this was done because the members of the Government are trying to play down what happened before, during and after the last election. **[Applause]** Members of the Government would like to push the disgraceful episode of the last elections back into a cupboard and keep it with all the other skeletons that they do not want to come out for airing. They would like it to be put there and forgotten. But I am afraid it is necessary for us from time to time to

remind the Government of why and how we sit here now in this session of the Third Parliament of Guyana.

Why do we sit here? How do we sit here? The United Force section of the Liberator Party, represented by my leader and myself, sit in Parliament because we believe that Parliament is the place where one is to be heard and one can work to the best advantage of the country. You do not help your country by writing to the Press and standing on the street corners, it is time for the Government to get around and try to add its quota, as my leader has been doing, to try to get the members of the P.P.P. to understand that Parliament is the place where they are supposed to be; that they ought to be here with us fighting for the rights of our country. That is the duty of the Government because it is the major cause why the P.P.P. are not here today.

Now, sir, to go back to the Presidential Address: Most Guyanese today, even the most ardent, the most fanatical and the most frenzied supporters of the People's National Congress, are fed up with life in Guyana. They are leaving our country to seek a way of life abroad because they have had enough of the high cost of living, of the corruption and fraud in high places, of hunger, of poor housing and of inadequate health facilities. [**Mr Nascimento:** You don't look hungry to me.] They have had enough of this, they are leaving Guyana, and we talk about a brain drain and about the best brains of the country going. They have to do this. They are not doing it in the spirit in which our ancestors came to Guyana many, many years ago. They came here to seek a new way of life and in a spirit of adventure.

The ones that are leaving now are leaving in a different spirit from those came before. They are leaving now to seek survival because they cannot see any hope here. I see in the paper, incidentally, that Dr. Wilfred David is back on the scene again and he is trying once more to get in the act. I see in great big headlines in the Chronicle:

“Call back Guyana experts to push plan’-says ex-P.M. Adviser”

Dr. Wilfred David can call them back, the P.M. has been calling them back, our Ministers on their various tours, on their safaris overseas, have been calling them back, but how many are coming back to Guyana? And we need them.

“They are coming back” and leaving it at that. Let us have the figures of how many people have returned, and how many are to return to Guyana. It would build the nation’s morale for one thing, and do the nothing but good.

But now, as I said, words alone are not enough to carry this Presidential Address, to set out the plan of what the Government wants to do in this coming session of Parliament. Great accent is laid on Agriculture, and we support this one hundred per cent. We must develop our country, our natural resources, we must make full use of the vast land we have available to us. Guyana is a blessed country. We, unlike the other smaller Caribbean countries, have much land available to us. We have it there lying and going to waste, not being developed, not being used, the timber not being pulled out, the minerals not being gone after, the land not being cultivated enough to produce enough rice, to produce enough food to feed not only our country, but also our West Indian and Caribbean neighbours.

We do need to make use of the land available to us, but this Government talks about it being done by co-operatives. We are not against the co-operative system. It is excellent, make full use of it once you are quite sure that it is in proper and capable hands and that the land to be developed is workable and payable, by all means, use co-operatives. The more you can get together, all of us, to work to develop our country, the better. But I have often heard the Prime Minister say that we are a nation in a hurry, and we are a nation in a hurry. We want to get there fast and co-operatives alone are a little bit slow.

3.15 p.m.

After all, we do not go from here to Skeldon by donkey cart, no matter how admirable it might be. You want to get there quickly, so you go by Guyana Airways.

We should do the same with our country. We want to develop and get on as quickly as possible, therefore, what we ought to do is to stop not encouraging foreign investment coming into Guyana. Over and over again the members of the United Force have said this; we will continue to say it unless and until anyone willing to develop our country is allowed to come into

Guyana and do so, we will stay longer to progress. It does not mean that we have to give away what belongs to Guyana. Guyana belongs to all of us. This is our Guyana and we are not going to give it away to foreigners. The Prime Minister has, at his disposal, many competent brains, some of them looking at me and these people ought to be in a position to advise the Government on a system that will make it more equitable and acceptable for someone to come in and invest in Guyana rather than on the system of 51 per cent that we know about.

Incidentally, I am reminded of the fact that the Hon. Prime Minister and some of the Ministers sitting here in front of me have just returned from a tour of the African countries. They went to boost our country abroad. Excellent! They were also honoured guests in many countries, and one particular country I was very pleased to see that they visited the Ivory Coast. At the time when I read about it in the newspapers, I believe the President, Mr. Houphouet Boigny, was not in the country. I am not sure whether he came before they left, but I am pretty well certain that those who were responsible for showing the honoured guests around Abidjan must have shown them all the good things, and they must have seen all that was going on because nobody visits and is shown around, and is not shown around the best of the country. **[Interruption]** Every country has its slums. And I hope the Hon. Minister and the other Ministers who were there took in all they saw and realized that this is a booming country and its unemployment rate is comparatively low because the President believes in allowing all who will come into the Ivory Coast, not to take away the country's possessions but to work on a fair basis.

I will urge the Hon. Prime Minister and the Ministers again, to review their system of trying to bring us up on slow progress by co-operatives only. As I said, you would not go to Skeldon by a donkey cart, you would choose G.A.C. It gets there faster and we are a nation in a hurry and we want to get on faster.

As I said earlier, we agree 100 per cent on the stress laid on agriculture and on the need for making full use of our land. I was talking about the policy of agriculture, and about encouraging foreign investment to come into Guyana and I would like to stress that these people who wish to invest fairly and get a fair return for their investment and not rob Guyana, these

people would be able to put down factories, sites, and so on, where ancillary production can take place. I am thinking particularly about agriculture.

If we can develop this land and make the fullest use of it, and really produce enough not only to feed ourselves but to feed the rest of the Caribbean and not only that, if, in time of plenty- because crops are seasonal- when the crop is at its highest and there is a glut on, we can see it, we can process the excess if we can have it carried or if we can freeze it, then we will be really getting somewhere. The housewives will be pleased too because when there is plenty, the price goes down, and everyone is concerned with the high cost of living. We cannot do this alone. We need the help of others and it is time for our Government to wake up and take suggestions that are given, straight to keep on being stubborn about it.

In the Presidential Address, reference is made to National Service. It is stated that there will be a State Paper on this and I should like to know more about it before I give a comment. However, I would like to say very briefly that in the aspect where National Service can make use of our people, our young people in particular- the Mayor, I think referred to them as those who belong to the faculty of *limers* - but I should like to refer to them as the free riders, if they can be absorbed into a scheme, not only will they be working for the benefit of the nation but I hope that the discipline which will come through National Service will improve their general behaviour, and raise their standards of responsibility.

I am pleased, and I bear in mind the words in the Presidential Address, that we must not confuse National Service with compulsory military service. I was talking a little while ago about free riders. We have no room in Guyana for free riders, for those who think they must just go along and benefit from the work, the sweat of the others. Therefore, when the Prime Minister introduces the agency shop system into Parliament, he can look for support from this side of the House.

There is a plan too for making use of our ex-prisoners. No longer are they to be treated as outcasts in our society. We applaud this system. We believe that if a man has had the misfortune to go to prison and he has served his time, he has paid his debt to society, he deserves another chance. This, however, does not make us forget that there are hardened criminals and just as

6.11.73

National Assembly

3.25 – 3.35 p.m.

there are some people who are accident prone, there are those who seem to be prison prone, who are always in and out of the state prison. We do not mean that they must be allowed to continue and prey on our society. We remember the old saying, about prevention being better than cure, and we urge that attention be paid to our probation services, that more personnel be given to man those services, so they can do a better job, and the after care section of our prison services be given more attention.

3.25 p.m.

It would be necessary, too, to look into the laws of our country regarding the sentence meted out for the crime. Many times you read in the newspapers of what seems to be quite unparalleled situations where you would find a sentence that seems to be trivial being given for a serious matter; something that is serious being treated very lightly. These would have to be gone into and our ex-prisoners would then be worthy to join with the rest of society.

I would like, too, to say that it is not just our ex-prisoners who ought not to be regarded any longer as outcasts. Again and again, in the Presidential Address, the fact is recognized that we must all work together, that all of us are needed and all of us must be involved. We have certain categories of citizens in our who are often subjected to the same type of treatment as the ex-prisoners. They are treated as social outcasts. I refer to the ex-patients of our T.B. sanatorium, of our Mahaica hospital, and of the Mental hospital; these three in particular, and, also, our handicapped. They, too, can make a contribution to our society and our country, no matter how small. They too can help Guyana. And I know that they are willing to help Guyana if they are given the chance.

Sometime later, during this session of Parliament, I propose to bring a Motion before this House asking to make full use of all such categories of persons and I know that when that Motion comes it should meet with the approval of the Government because after all is asking for full involvement by all of us. If the members of the Government were to vote against such a Motion they would be voting against themselves. Therefore, when that time comes I look for their support. And, I now come to talk about the Institute of Creative Arts. This will include

drama, music, dance, literature, painting and sculpture. One of the criticisms being levelled against this Presidential Address is that the Government is going to form this Institute of Creative Arts and not think about the fact that the people are hungry; that the people need work; that the people need houses; and, that the people need clothing.

We support the establishment of this Institute of Creative Arts but we wish to point out to the Government and to impress on the Government the need to establish its priorities. The members of the Government say that feeding, clothing and housing the nation must be pushed ahead, but there is no reason why this Institute of Creative Arts should not do a lot of good for our country. If all Guyanese get involved in drama, in dance, in literature, if they work together, get to know each other and, get to know from whence we came and whether we are going, they will realize that although we talk about the six races in Guyana- and there are six ethnic groups- most of us, came from the same types of beginnings. We must much in common. We share the same problems now and we have the same hopes for the future.

So this working together in this Institute of Creative Arts, can do nothing but good for Guyana, but we must all be involved, and all the six races of Guyana must take part.

And, when it comes to culture we widen our fields, we learn more about how the rest of the world live and their cultural way of life, for culture is not confined to a country and is not bounded by borders. Culture, like love, is universal and knows no boundaries and, for Guyanese to know about this could do nothing but good for us.

In talking about the Institute of Creative Arts the Presidential Address mentions the accent to be placed on sport, which again we support because playing together is part of living together and the more we play together and live together, we can work together and build Guyana. But there is one phrase that is mentioned in this Presidential Address with which I am not in total agreement. This is on page 4 where there is a reference to the imbalance which has made many of our sports an elitist exercise. This I do not think strictly correct. In sports, unlike some other aspects of life, you do not get picked for a team, you do not get chosen to represent your country by the colour of your skin or the colour of your politics. It is about the only thing left in the country where people can get into a team because they can play the game. We do have

football, hockey, rounders, whatever you like, and, when you go to a match, people think of it as a cricket match. People do not applaud a person according to the colour of his skin or according to the colour of his politics. You hear them screaming as much for Lance Gibbs and Basil Butcher as you hear them shouting for Rohan Kanhai and Alvin Kalicharran. So to talk about imbalance in our sports I do not think is necessary. Let us look to where we have the real imbalance, in the Guyana Defence Force, in the Police Force and in our government offices. Look for the imbalance there and correct them. **[Interruption]** I think sport is managing quite nicely.

This business of legalizing “obeah” will also come into our department of culture.

[Laughter]

In Guyana as soon as you mention the word “obeah” everybody wants to laugh. We are inclined to treat it with a little disrespect. I also would like somebody to tell me what “obeah” really is because I just know our Guyanese version of “obeah”. That is why I think the suggestion by His Grace the Archbishop of the West Indies and the R.C. Bishop a good one, that we have a Commission to go into the matter and have an inquiry bring someone who is more versed in “obeah” than all of us here, even including the Hon. Prime Minister who knows so much about it. We should get someone and have a Commission to go into the question of “obeah”

From what I understand, “obeah” was a God who was reverend by the ancestors of the Guyanese of African descent. It is an African cult. It is an African religion, and most of us here- all of us I hope- have been taught to have respect for other people’s religious beliefs. We respect the belief of those who believe in the “obeah” God as respect the belief of the Indians when they practice the Kalimai Puja. We respect all the different religious groups we have in our country but we want to make it quite clear and we want the Government to be fully aware that we in Guyana know “obeah” as a “bad thing”. People talk about “working obeah”. In our Guyanese context it is a “bad thing” and there are charlatans, frauds and dishonest people who prey on gullible ignorant people and deprive them of their money and deprive them too of those things

more precious, like their health, by fooling them that they can perform and do something for them which is not within their power.

Therefore, we urge the Government that in legalizing obeah there should be awareness of this position and that it should be very careful to separate and differentiate between the religious obeah, the genuine obeah and the bad obeah cult as we know it in Guyana and that the Government would deal very severely with those who are using it as an excuse for fraud.

The plans, as set out on paper in the President's Address read well; the words read well, but unless all Guyanese are involved and all Guyanese pull their weight, unless there are no free riders, this plan will not succeed. We therefore urge the Government to set the example by getting all Guyanese involved and by making sure that with their involvement this plan for the forthcoming session of Parliament, as set out in the President's Address, will be fruitful and that the development of our country will become a reality and not just so many words or so many dreams.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Chowritmootoo.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education (Mr. Chowritmootoo): Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members of this illustrious House, it is a distinct privilege to be afforded this opportunity to address this venerable House on such a historic occasion. History must record the President's Address on the formal opening of the Third Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana as corner-stone to the totality of the evolution of the Guyanese society. This Address is a glowing manifestation of the political maturity of the People's representatives through the pragmatic approach to the realities of the Guyanese situation. Secondly, it is historic because for the first time in the history of independent Guyana a Madrasi is addressing this House as an elected Member. This is indeed a tribute to the Government of the P.N.C. for its consistent policy of making Guyana an integrated society.

It is a memorable Address because it has taken full cognizance of the lessons of the past. One such lesson comes to mind I must refer to it. On 23rd February, 1763, our forefathers bounded by the physical and mental restraints of the meanest order, slavery, revolted. They had

collectively decided to free themselves and to reject for always their sub-human statue imposed upon them. They were imbued with a need to be free. They fought and there was slavery indication that they would reach their objective. In their material success they did not think of the necessity to educate the masses for a sustained co-operative effort to maintain the hard-earned gains. They failed to orient and suffered the loss of a mighty revolution, the first of its kind in the modern world.

We, on this side of the House, have learnt from the lessons of the past and will not fail. The President's Address must be seen as the mind level dimension of a tripartite thrust for the achievement of socialism in our beloved land. It is not a repetition of our Development Plan in which is found all the specific details and outlines for economic development. This Address is the mental framework which seeks to give the rationale for the myriads of activities which the Development Plan sets out.

It is one thing, a necessary prerequisite anyway, to set out precisely what is good and advisable to do in order to achieve economic development. It is yet another thing to create a conviction and dedication for their fulfilment. In this modern age, a people seldom pursue a task to ensure maximum output unless it is convinced of its inherent benefits. The Development Plan cannot be undertaken in a vacuum. This Address seeks to provide the mental aurora upon which the Development Plan must take place.

Our Government, as the servant of the masses, must first seek to give its master a programme for development. This we have done, and they have accepted this by their vote of confidence in the last General Election. Through this Address our Government is addressing its attention to total commitment of the Guyana nation- the participation and partnership in all spheres of activities for development by all Guyanese.

The philosophy of co-operatives permeates the entire Address and its ideals as manifested in the grand ideal of mobilization to bring to use the heretofore idle human resources. People make success and progress. Therefore it is the people who must be involved to ensure the successful achievement of our goals. Towards this end our Government is maximizing its effort to bring into the identified way of life of all Guyanese.

6.11.73

National Assembly

3.45 – 3.55 p.m.

3.45 p.m.

Regional development within the national boundaries is one means whereby people would be in constant contact with a Cabinet Minister. This is, indeed, a logical development of what has become a characteristic of the Government of the People's National Congress. I refer to the institution of "Meet the People Tour", a unique and most welcome practice in view of our socialist objectives. During the past years, the leadership of our Government has made a concerted effort to reach out to the Guyanese people in every niche and corner of this our dear land. Out of this, the instrument for regional development has come into being, a situation in which the masses are in constant dialogue with the highest form in the land. Already the impact of this arrangement has been felt and Guyanese are happy about the keen interest their Government has shown in them.

In regional administration, the mechanism is geared to ensure that central directions are carried out speedily, effectively and without any wastage. On this, one readily observes the wider and more purposeful involvement of the citizens and the dementalising of some of our people, that to be "in it", is to be in the capital. Participation of the masses, therefore, would be the springboard for all activities engendered to bring greater socio- economic benefits, and towards this end, and symbolic of our philosophy of co-operatives, special emphasis on the mobilization of our people for the fruition of the development plan would be operative in our minds and actions. Guyanese of every walk of life have recognized the need for a collective thrust, and co-operative efforts are undertaken daily. We are conscious that no static 19th century administrative framework would satisfy our 20th century needs in our rapidly changing Guyana, and our Government, quick to grasp at every opportunity to improve for the benefits of the Guyanese masses, is ever vigilant in this changing world.

Time and again, our Government has recognized that the people of this land are its greatest resources, and material resources cannot be utilized for the good of our nation unless the people participate actively in the programme identified by our Government. This Government is committed to the philosophy of co-operativism - the pragmatic approach for the transformation of the Guyanese society to the egalitarian ideal. What have we to show for our committal? I say,

Mr. Speaker, much. There has been a substantial increase in co-operative activities, and these activities are spread out throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. It is imperative that this most conducive trend towards development must be sustained. We have injected into the populace the ideal of working together, and we are constantly seeking to ensure that our people understand and undertake economic development, not in a mental vacuum, but with the full conviction as to the whys and the wherefores.

There are now over 1,100 co-operative societies- well over 100 per cent increase over the period ending 1964. The membership increased from 40,682 to over 100,000. Savings have accumulated in the sum of over \$8,000,000. By 1976 the fixed investment by co-operatives will amass to some 75.5 million. Co-operatives are in every field of human endeavour in Guyana- a sure sign of our political maturity- a sign of national needs preceding the individual needs.

The facts are pellucidly clear for any security. However, the intellectually blind look and yet see not. There are over 650 co-operatives with capital mobilization and credit; there are 379 agricultural productive livestock and marketing co-operative societies; there are 53 co-operative societies engaged in industrial, building labour and contracting societies. Large-scale co-operative efforts such as the Cane Farmers Co-operative continue to contribute substantially to the national purse. The near phenomenal housing development programme is undertaken to a large measure by Housing Co-operatives. The infectious “Feeding Ourselves Programme” has even caught on with those who scoffed at us not so long ago.

With the objective of the total involvement, with the aim of increased productivity, the quality of people’s performance cannot be neglected and towards this end our government has seen it fit to establish the Kuru Kuru Cooperative College. The Co-operative College will provide the means for co-operatives to be the major force in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana’s economic growth and development. Some 1,000 persons are to be trained each year. Our Government has a well set-out plan for the translation of the co-operative philosophy and way of life into practical and material schemes. With people and their involvement uppermost in our minds, we seek to involve everyone. No person is to be a parasite on this nation; everyone must understand his or her role if Guyana is to continue to move forward. No country of this

world loves us so much that it would undertake to develop our country for us. We must inculcate the essentials of nationalism whereby our nation's welfare, as a whole, comes before individual well-being.

Our Government has embarked on one of the oldest progressive practices- National Services. But, of course, our National Service will be established taking into account the Guyanese situation and the Guyanese needs. We have had the benefits of a previous exercise, even though voluntary. The tremendous psychological orientation if offered, apart from its material benefits, made it an institution of priceless service. I refer, Mr. Speaker, to the National hinterland self- help road from which exercise resulted a feeling of oneness, a feeling of togetherness, a pride of achieving together as Guyanese. Guyanese must be seen as the greatest good.

The National Service will foster the psychological environment in which the spirit of co-operativism will be ever present. The National Service is, perhaps, the greatest vehicle for the immediate realization of National Unity, whereas, our Development Plan is geared to remove the malady of unemployment from our society. Our National Service will seek to ensure that employment is not tinged with the capitalistic values in which the individual's needs are ever foremost and no consideration is given to national needs. With the orientation received through National Service, Guyanese will have cured themselves of the diseased mentality which leads to time wastage, droning selfishness, unpatriotic leanings, and will be imbued with a deep sense of nationalism, so much so, that the more attractive monetary rewards of the rich countries will not distract from their role in the development of Guyana.

National Service will provide relevant training thereby ensuring greater productivity. The unemployed will be taken away from their morass of dejection and non-productivity to become useful contributors to the Guyanese well- being. They will receive training and at the same time they will be oriented to perform and not to fall again by the wayside.

Perhaps, the greatest good of the National Service to the individual will be the provision of a situation in which untapped latent developers who have never shown any ability will be allowed to bring to light their potentials. Away from the pressures of accumulated home

6.11.73

National Assembly

3.45 – 3.55 p.m.

traditions, the youths will be given the opportunity, in many cases for the first time, to exert themselves as individuals. The process of educating the Guyanese will continue from the organized institution into the institution of National Service. The process of National Development is the concern of all. Therefore, all Guyanese must be involved in this great national cause.

3.55 p.m.

The mobilization of people, we on this side of the House contend, must be in an atmosphere of total development, the personal and collective well being must seek enrichment physically, mentally and morally. Towards this, culture and sports have become meaningful integers of total development. Sports and culture must be the vehicle to inculcate correct attitudes and values. This is a clearly defined strategy for the evolution of an identifiable national cultural identity, based on research into our culture, and the total experiences of our people from all communities and walks of life.

Our art forms now seek to reflect our national history, victories and aspirations and goals, for the father of this nation once rightly said that a country without its own history and heroes, would find it difficult to survive. Consistent efforts of the anarchists, the fascists, the racists, combined with the evils of cultural imperialism are natural obstacles to the development of a cultural pattern peculiar to the Guyanese. Despite the subjected scorn and contempt for the cultural practices of the masses, while the imported forms of the colonialists are revered and perpetuated, there must evolve that which is peculiar to Guyanese and accepted by all, being given the rightful place by the people's representatives- the Government of the People's National Congress.

For the first time in our history, the practices of the masses are given recognition and are placed in the same position of esteem as those which a tradition of subjection and economic bondage and control imposed upon our very being. The school, the home, the wider community, in field, office, factory, sports are pursued objectively to give eminence to this form of the Guyanese potential. Again, the design for national unity is inextricably woven into the national fabric by this aspect of our all-round development.

As can be seen, the process of education in the Revolution is the golden thread which runs through the entire Address of His Excellency. The educational strategy for our Nation, as per the philosophy of co-operativism, is being unfolded into a practical, relevant, and a definite course, away from the past system which had its priorities in the reverse. In the past, the educational system catered for a few of the privileged to “fit in” the then existing situation, while the lot of the majority was one in which their lives were spent producing for the imperialist overlords.

Our Nation has now asserted its own priorities with pronounced success. Towards this end our schools are now considered communities in miniature preparing their students for the wider community. Thus our socialist revolution is deepened further. With emphasis in our educational system on the merit of productive work, our revolution is becoming vested with a genius regard for the small man- the producers of the Nation’s wealth through agriculture, forestry and mining- the small man being accorded his rightful place of eminence within the economic and social structure of our society.

Our education is now geared to emphasize the position of the child in his home environment, his local cultural environment, his historical and geographical setting, his understanding of the present circumstances of his situation, the whys and the wherefores of our Government’s programme. It has set out in clearly defined terms new values, while not rejoicing altogether all the values of the past. Constant vigilance and direction of the child towards national unity is given preponderant consideration. Our Government has embarked on a systematic guidance programme which seeks to observe the child throughout his formal education period.

It is universally recognized that we cannot develop this country on ignorance, thus the massive educational thrust. The result of this can be seen in the greater efficiency and productivity.

Meaningful education, relevant to our needs and experiences, form the content for teaching in schools. Mathematics now, for instance, stress the experience of the tailor, the gardener, the farmer. Our school books production unit has made an important break- through in

the revolutionizing of our education. Supplementary readers with built-in attitudes and values are now used in the schools throughout Guyana.

The coming into being of the community high school now answers our quest for free secondary education for all children at the secondary level school age. Here our education is geared to cater for all levels of abilities. This undoubtedly would lead to new attitudes to productive work, to a healthy respect for work and workers, for self-help co-operative efforts, new attitudes towards feeding, clothing, and housing ourselves through learning by doing.

The teacher-worker is now geared to meet the revolutionizing process- educating the child to meet the needs of the Nation. There is a redirection of the students' interests- the involvement of all is now the vague of educational development- the parents, the school, the community are now in active communication with one another- another manifestation of the co-operative ideology. Herein we see our education as a continuing process, from the formal or organized, to the non-formal, in which the adults, too, are educated to accept changes in our society and to play their part in bringing about these changes.

Every Guyanese must find a place under the Golden Arrowhead, and we must not allow any human resources to go idle.

Towards this end, our Government has undertaken the task of re-educating the deviants, the delinquents, the probationers. Through our present thrust in educational development, students from their earliest days in organized schooling will become very much involved in practical service to the wider community and through development studies learn to become aware of their place and their responsibilities within their community and our Nation, to bring about a concern for others. Think how safer our roads could become if only we could succeed in getting our drivers to be concerned also the safety of other road users. The creation of social awareness and sensibilities that are expressed in the creative arts of language, music, dance, drama, will lead to a further commitment to find solutions to human problems and actions for solutions. Our programme must be seen as the instrument for the fostering of a new life style more in keeping with our aspirations for an egalitarian- the just society. Mr. Speaker, in

6.11.73

National Assembly

3.55 – 4.05 p.m.

conclusion I wish to express my congratulations to His Excellency for an excellent presentation. I thank you.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Hon. Members, is I think this is a convenient time to take the suspension.

Sitting suspended at 4.05 p.m.

4.55 p.m.

On resumption –

The Speaker: Hon. Members I apologize for the delay in the commencement of the sitting. Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, for a Government which has bandied about statistics with fanfare and flair the complete absence of facts and figures in the President's Address was a surprise and a disappointment. A lot of rhetoric about having solved many problems was substituted for substance. If the self-help programme was on its way to success, surely it can be computed by numbers rather than words. How many houses were built this year? Let us know that. What about the food situation? What about the present food shortages? The Government says "Good." What about the rising cost of living? When will the Guyanese people stop having to line up in queues waiting for cooking oil? Are imports up or down? Where are the figures? Tell us. What about revenues? The Guyanese people deserve the facts and figures, not polemics.

The road to success cannot be built – [Laughter] Apparently this Parliament thinks that the President's Speech is a joking matter, a matter to laugh about. But, Mr. Speaker, the road to success cannot be built by Government propaganda. No Government propaganda can lead us to success; otherwise every Government would be successful. The Guyanese know, from past experience, that propaganda will not build success.

And what about the high unemployment situation? Apart from an involvement in the proposed national service, it is only in the very last paragraph that the President even mentioned unemployment. This is what he said:

“As we move to feed, clothe and house ourselves, as we move to abolish unemployment,”

Nothing else is said.

“as we move to the goal of economic prosperity, my Government’s commitment is to ensure a vibrant, healthy, proud Guyanese nation whose citizens are all involved in the national tasks and who know, not only how to make a living, but also how to live together.”

He talks about moving to abolish unemployment. Where are the employment opportunities? Where are the plans to provide these employment opportunities? Where are the now new industries, the industries that will provide work for the thousands of our young people who leave school every year? National Service or sport, Yes, they will certainly keep our young people occupied. But will they, the young people, be able to earn money that is so necessary to feed, to clothe and to house a family? Will they get money from this National Service to raise a family? What are the Government’s concrete plans to abolish unemployment? The President so nobly says here: “As we move to abolish unemployment...” How do you move to abolish unemployment? What are your concrete plans? None have been told to us.

I would like next to discuss the assignment of regional ministers. This is basically a sound idea. A Government co-ordinator in each of the various regions should be of benefit if he acts along the lines outlined by the President. However, the question must be asked: Why have politicians been selected to fill what is essentially an administrative position? The co-ordination of Government services and local needs should be divorced from politics. We work under an election system which does not recognize constituencies. The appointment of politicians as regional ministers must be looked on as a political move towards constituencies. The paradox of

6.11.73

National Assembly

4.55 – 5.05 p.m.

the situation is that we do not have constituencies and yet we are moving towards constituencies by having regional ministers.

A politician's first concern if he is to remain a politician - and the Hon. Member, Mr. Neil Nascimento, knows this - he has crossed the political floor to and fro and he knows very well what I am talking about. .. **[Interruption]** I was in the Coalition Government and I resigned in 1968 in protest against the abominable 1968 elections legislation.

If I may be allowed to continue: a politician's first concern if he is to remain a politician will be to favour those who are for his Party. That goes without saying. He will not be for the orderly and efficient implementation of laws and procedures for the help of everyone. As the Hon. Prime Minister so often says, he is a "political animal"; he understands that kind of language and so do his ministers. That is why we suggest that the selection of senior public service officers to these regional posts would be most appropriate. This will ensure the population that their needs, their complaints, will be listened to without politics as the starting point.

There is no need to make regional co-ordinators- as I prefer to call them- Cabinet officers. We have enough of these already. Rather, place these regional Co-ordinators in the office of the Prime Minister. This will give prestige, it will give them power, it will give them influence. It will give them all this without submerging them in politics. And this is what the people of Guyana want. You have got a two- thirds majority. You must bend over backwards and try and placate the people after what happened on July the 16th. Do not aggravate the situation.

5. 05 p.m.

Let us turn now to National Service. There is nothing wrong with National Service **per se**. It is how it is going to be administered and this is what I am dealing with. The implication in the President's speech is that this National Service will be placed under the Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilization.

This casts immediate doubt on the purposes of the proposal. The particular Ministry is headed by the General Secretary of the People's National Congress. **[Mr. Green:** "What is

wrong with that?"] A partisan politician, however capable or sincere he may be, is not the one who can be expected to convince the public that the concept of National Service would be without taint of politics. This is a delicate matter, particularly in the context of Guyana at the present moment. **[Interruption]** I will tell you how you must administer National Service. The Guyanese people are naturally anxious to have the concept at National Service spelt out to them, and spelt out to them in the most explicit detail. They are concerned, perhaps unjustly, but they are nevertheless concerned. They are concerned that they may become tool for political indoctrination, a means to promote some and to hinder the advance of others. Their suspicions will hardly be allayed if responsibility for National Service falls under the portfolio of the ruling party's General Secretary. No matter how capable or straightforward he may be, he is still a political animal. Surely the successful introduction of such a sensitive measure calls for placing at its head a non- partisan individual, an individual who has the trust of all elements of our society.

This individual could be advised by a Board. Do not tell me that we do not have any of that type of person in the whole of Guyana. It would be an indictment upon our nation if we were to say that we do not have this type of person. I leave it to be integrity of the Hon. Prime Minister to choose such a person. I would expect that the Hon. Prime Minister could see the broad spectrum and not allow himself to be confined within the narrow limits of his ruling P.N.C. party.

I am saying that this non- partisan individual can be advised by a Board comprised of representatives from all sections of the national life including political leaders, **[Mr. Green:** "Can we select Kumar?"] Whoever you feel like putting there, but make sure that you select people who can have the confidence of this nation. This would help to ensure that all questions and regulations regarding National Service would be immediately, openly and salubriously aired. As democrats, we cannot but believe that a Government can only be effective when its critics have a strong voice. And if the Government believes in an opposition. If the Government believes in our existence over on this other side then this proposal must meet with the serious consideration of the Members of the Parliament. If they believe in an opposition, then they must consider these proposals very seriously. Let us have a look at the specifics of National Services.

6.11.73

National Assembly

5.05 – 5.15 p.m.

The President's comment that in several cases military and para- military training will be compulsory in the National Service, raises questions which demand clarification. We will wait for the legislation and see. But let me go on further. The statement that National Service will embrace all Guyanese makes one wonder if Dr. Jagan, Fr. Wong, Mr. Ric Mentus, Mr. Mohamed Insanally and even myself will be found hoeing potato patches in the Interior. [**Hon. Members:** "Yes, yes."]

I have noted the answer. But let me say this: for the young, for the unemployed, the untrained, a non-discriminatory form of National Service poses potential for much useful work. However, a National Service seeking political uniformity and able to grab out arbitrarily at all of us, that I say will further divide this country. The United Force looks forward to seeing the concept and terms of National Service clearly delineated for the Guyanese people. National Service is obviously a step which should be taken only after it has been scrutinized from every single angle and debated in every forum.

Whatever we may think of the manner and the methods by which the Government's self-help programme is being out we must admit that the basic goal, that is, to make Guyana as self-sufficient and as independent as possible, is very desirable. It is a serious goal. What can one's reaction be, then, when the President devotes to so much attention to a Government sponsored sports and culture movement as if it should be placed in a similar category with our economic and political problems? Prior to giving circuses the Romans gave bread. We think the Guyana Government should have similar priorities. When we have no unemployed, when we have no hungry, when we have an adequate medical system, when we are all equal before the law, then we can turn, if we should turn at all, to considering financing sports and culture as a major concern.

5.15 p.m.

Let us deal with this serious situation facing the country today. In no free country today are sports controlled by the Government. Name me one free country where sports are controlled by the Government. There are none. Are we going to create another first in Guyana? Sports and culture are, traditionally and logically, the natural and spontaneous outgrowth of individuals and

groups. No Emperor ordered the French Impressionists to paint, no king gave rise to a Shakespeare or a Marlowe, no general a Pele, no Party Secretary a Solzhenitgn, no Prime Minister a Naipaul, no Prime Minister a Lloyd. [Mr. Burnham: “How did he come back?”] You did not put him in the position which he occupies in cricket. He emerged as such because of his natural ability. Why, with all its overwhelming problems, is the Guyanese Government apparently hell-bent on producing a stable of athletes imbued with a Government-approved culture?

We are many people, with many cultures; we are Africans, Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, Christians, Amerindians. Let us allow Guyanese culture to develop and to flourish without the fear of being homogenized by an all-encompassing Government. Let us allow it to develop by itself, freely, without Government restrictions as seems to be envisaged in the President’s speech.

Let the Prime Minister know that, in sports, Guyana has managed to top the West Indies Cricket Team without undue Government involvement. This fact impressed the British earlier this year, even if our Government was unaware of this. If the Parliament wishes to encourage physical fitness, may I suggest that there are some waist-lines here which could be trimmed; some lungs which should be purified; and some livers in need of tender care. A lean and fit Parliament would inspire our youth, please our wives- [Laughter] - and enable us all to give more efficient services to the nation. [Laughter]

Lastly, on the subject of a Government-founded cultural and sports movement let me say this: If Dr. Jagan had proposed such a piece of legislation, we would clearly have seen its origins in the political techniques of dictatorship. Why are we allowing it to pass here at the present moment? It is a thing that is too susceptible to political shame, too susceptible to political abuse. Why should we allow something which could be abused so readily? What we should be doing is bending over backwards to gain the confidence of the people after the Prime Minister said he had “secured” the two-thirds majority.

There was one curious omission in the President’s Speech. Reference to Foreign Affairs was conspicuously absent. Over the Last year, Government has further committed the country to the Non- Aligned Movement and the Caribbean Community. A review of the benefits, the

potentials and the difficulties inherent in these policies is in order at the present moment. Such policies are, indeed, a current fashion in much of the world today. Fashion, however, is not necessarily the path to an enduring policy.

Common principles and interest, not temporary and mutual predicament, are the true basis for meaningful foreign policy. The shedding of our colonial past does not mean that we should join with the now totalitarian states or adopt their international values and schemes. It certainly does not.

I turn to another aspect of Foreign Affairs which requires a Government's explanation, and this is the status of the foreign assistance programme in this country. There are very disturbing indication that the United States- sponsored rice storage facilities programme has resulted in an American Construction Company demanding increased sums from the Guyanese Government because of failures and over-runs caused by the Company's own ineptitude. [**Mr. Burnham**" You will blame us for that?"] Huge sums of money have already been paid out; several years have passed and only three out of the six sets of storage silos have been completed. Let me say this: I know that the present relationship between the Government Agency and contractors is certainly not conducive to the satisfactory completion of the contracts. [**Mr. Nascimento**: "Nixon is your Godfather,"] You went to the United States and got your degrees and were educated there, so what are you talking about? [**Mr. Nascimento**: "So did you."] I never got anything from the United States.

Let me say this: If foreign aid programmes are to be used to fatten the already fatted calf at the expense of our dignity and our treasure, then let us be candid and expose our exploiters. How can we have the respect of the United States if we allow its minions to make fools of us? On the other side, we have the non-existent Chinese Aid Programme. With a great deal of sound and a great deal of fury, at the 1972 P.N.C. Congress, it was announced that factories and industries built by Chinese loans and experts would soon be dotting the countryside. Where are the factories? Where are the industries? Look back, I have read it. Was it just a propaganda exercise in the exaggerated verbiage of the new diplomacy? Or are the Chinese really going to help us? We want to know. The enlightening thing about it is if this were a comparison of the per

6.11.73

National Assembly

5.25 – 5.35 p.m.

capita income between China and Guyana it would point to a Guyanese assistance programme to China. **[Interruption]** its enactment would win the Government world-wide attention.

5.25 p.m.

Over the last several months there have been frequent charges- this is a very serious matter- and subsequent denials that racial imbalances exist throughout the Government Service, particularly at the management and decision- making levels. On the service, dramatic imbalances do seem to exist in the various Ministries. Any look at the Guyana Defence Force shows the nonest observer that it is almost totally African. Unless these alleged and real imbalances, if there are, are investigated and corrected, if need be, there will be a continuing lack of identification with the Government on the part of many of our people.

It is true that some of these imbalances have at their root logical and historical reasons. **[Interruption]** We are always honest on this side. Others are perhaps mired in the racial distrust and political differences that have divided us in the past. Racial prejudice fostered by politicians is an unfortunate and ugly instinct in many of our East Indians and Africans. It is a fact. This Parliament has an opportunity to purge Guyana of Guyana of racism by demonstrating is willingness to look into this manifestation of the worst aspect of our national character. An honest and open approach will win the Government the respect and the gratitude of all. Let us not suppress the problem. Let us bring it into the open. This is why the United Force proposes that an autonomous commission be appointed to investigate the racial composition of the Public Service and armed forces and to make recommendations on the procedures to be adopted and the enactment of legislation to correct the situation.

I want to make a suggestion. He talked about the foreigners coming in. Why should we go to the foreigners and ask them to come in? Right here in Guyana, Supreme Court Justice Akbar Khan is a man who has the respect of all Guyanese, and he could fill the chairmanship of this Commission with distinction. After all, the President awarded Justice Khan this nation's highest prize in 1972. Other members of the Commission could be drawn from all segments of our society. Let us have an investigation here. Let us air it out in the open and let us correct what

is wrong. If there is nothing wrong, at least we would be allaying the fears of those who say that things are wrong.

In conclusion, let us remember that the election results of 16th July were imposed on the Guyanese people. They have acquiesced for the moment, they have spurned exhortations to disrupt the country's economy, and they have turned to their daily tasks. Parliament should not mistake this either as acceptance or as approval. This Parliament has to prove itself to truly want national reconciliations and racial unity. It can be attained not by crossing the floor but only through moderation, understanding, and honesty. This is Parliament's central task. If national reconciliation and racial unity are not accomplished, if the Government misjudge the mood and temper of the people, this country will divide and chaos will be the achievement of 1976. National reconciliation and racial unity are the urgent needs of Guyana. I strongly urge the Government not to lose sight of this among its slogan and its posturing. Let us remember it is not so long ago that another Guyanese Government did just that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, during the course of his sometimes apposite and sometimes irrelevant remarks, observed that in the President's Address there was no specific mention of foreign policy, though of course you will have to admit that there was an allusion to the international reputation which Guyana in pursuing its foreign policy has achieved.

Now it was not by accident that there was not a member of paragraphs on foreign policy, for what we were seeking in this President's Address was, to attract to the attention of the House and the nation, the areas in which they are going to be introduced new measures, and to emphasize new departures. This Government's foreign policy during the ensuing year will not, and does not, differ in principle from what has been the case over the past year and years, and out of deference to my Hon. and learned Friend, I would like to say that later on there will be given to this House an opportunity to debate Government's foreign policy.

6.11.73

National Assembly

5.25 – 5.35 p.m.

The question has been asked by the Opposition as follows: “Where does one find in this, the President’s Speech, the framework, the outline, of Government’s economic programme for progress, prosperity, etc. I can forgive my Hon. Friends for asking such a question, because, obviously, they have not read the draft of the Five-Year 1972-1976 Development Programme. The President’s Address, consisting of a few pages, when printed, was never intended to be the draft Development Plan or Programme. The President’s Address was intended to emphasize the important departures, as I said before, that we will witness during the coming year.

We have been asked: Where are the factories that are to be built? We have been invited to copy from the Ivory Coast. It is not the disposition or wont of my Government to spend its time belabouring the policies of another Government with whom it has no particular quarrel. President Houphouet Boigny has chosen his tactics for the development of his country. My Government does not agree with those tactics, but my Government does not criticize President Houphouet Boigny’s Government. I would merely observe *en passant*, as one who, unlike the Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva, has visited the Ivory Coast, that there I noticed that a very high percentage of the public officials were French.

5.35 p.m.

There, a minister of the Government admitted to me that the majority of business places were owned by the French. I am not saying that that is wrong but certainly, that, I hardly think, can be a prototype for the development of Guyana. Of course, it may add to the edification and education of my Hon. Friend if I were to remind her that President Houphouet Boigny a one-party State.

It has been asked, Mr. Speaker, how long is it since the creative arts, sport, culture, should find precedence over the provision and production of food and the reduction of unemployment? My Government’s answer to that naïve question is that a country’s life is many-faceted and we do not seek, in Guyana, merely to banish unemployment; we do not seek merely to develop industries and to have an ever-flourishing economy, because we have seen in other parts of the world, where there has been this total emphasis on these material things, that there are still riots, we still have bloody summers, we still have all sorts of incidents in which persons

in high office are involved and implicated. My Government's view, sir, is, that while we pursue these material things and seek to bring about progress and advances in the economic field we must also seek to develop individuals, human beings.

For us, in the final analysis development is about people, and are we to have uncultured boors, ruthless, with no sense of their history or appreciation of the national goals in Guyana when it becomes a prosperous country? It seems to me that it is to miss the point to put in confrontation, so to speak, culture, sport, the arts on the one side, as against economic and material advance.

I have listened with great interest, sir, to the thesis that Shakespeare had no king as a patron. That is right. But in the place of kings there stood dukes and nobles and if my Hon. and learned Friend had dug a little deeper into the social history of that country which he admires so greatly- the United Kingdom- he might have heard of Lord Chesterfield who was a patron of the arts, he might have heard about the various writers and what have you, who were able to withstand the scourges of poverty and hunger because of the kindness of noble patrons. It is a historical fact, sir, that the arts have to be patronized but because this Government says that the patron must be the Government and the people of the nation, exception is taken. It is not necessary for one to declare openly that he is a reactionary. It is only necessary to hear what are the prejudices and the unspoken major premises which lie behind his utterances.

The Government has said that it proposes during the coming period to encourage the development of sport and also to remove the imbalance as a result of which some sporting activities have been elitist exercises.

I am not critical, nor is my Government critical, Mr. Speaker, of those in our country who have achieved great eminence in tennis, for instance, but, sir, I ask the Opposition that talks a lot about sport controlling itself, and depending on the individual: How many poor boys or girls have ever represented this country in tennis? We have no quarrel with those who have represented us in the tennis but tennis by its very nature and expensiveness of the equipment and the difficulties of having the opportunities for practice has been an elitist sport in Guyana. I know of my own knowledge, sir, that there are two star junior tennis players who nearly dropped

6.11.73

National Assembly

5.35 – 5.45 p.m.

out of tennis because they did not have pants, let alone racquets. And it is only because some kind person intervened that they were able to represent the country recently, a matter of weeks ago.

What the Government does say: If sport is to be encouraged, people are to be encouraged to develop their aptitudes and abilities in sport and Government will give the necessary sponsorship, the financial and material support. It will not identify the son of X or the daughter of Y to take part in a particular sporting activity but it will so organize the sporting activities of Guyana that anyone, everyone, may have the opportunity of participating in one sporting activity or another. That is all that we say.

So far, Guyana has produced a number of outstanding sportsman and athletes, but I do think that anyone who addresses his mind to the subject carefully can dare deny that “many a rose has blushed unseen and wasted its sweetness on the desert air” because of the absence of public and governmental support. That we hope to bring to an end. Sports will give an opportunity to all sections of our community and all ethnic groups to meet together, to mix together, to share experiences and enjoy a camaraderie seldom possible in other areas of activity. To speak airily and neo-philosophically about the need for national unity and then to decry the emphasis on sport is either to be foolish or knavish. I leave it to my Hon. and learned Friend to decide into which category he prefers to be put.

As far as art, cultural forms, are concerned, they are important. You cannot speak again of national unity and peace and quiet and what have you; you cannot bring a nation together unless the nation knows whence it came. You cannot inspire a nation unless the nation knows whither it goes. And it is my contention that in the circumstances we ought to emphasize cultural expressions.

5.45 p.m.

What is culture in this context? Not the ability to ape our former masters or use with confidence, if not with expertise, the implements that are put on a table when we are invited to dinner. Culture is a way of life.

Now, what has been the way of life of Guyana? Sometimes our ethnic diversity is identified as a difficulty, as a hindrance, but, as I see it, it can be an advantage. The culture of Guyana is multi-based. The various ethnic group which go to make up our population have somewhat different backgrounds though they have been exposed in this country to relatively the same experience. Out of these experiences we can get cultural expressions; out of these cultural expressions we can bring about a greater amount of understanding amongst our people and a keener appreciation of what are and should be the national goals.

There has been some argument recently about the fact that this Government proposes to remove from the Statute Book the offence for practicing obeah. There has been a great deal of misrepresentation and misunderstanding. To my mind, obeah represents a survival into this period of certain African rites. In fact, when I practiced at the Bar I once defended a Hindu who was charged for the practicing of obeah and he was merely performing rites that related to his religious beliefs.

To show how thoroughly brain-washed we have been. In a country which may have a majority of Christians but which certainly has a most significant number of non- Christians, to wit, Hindus and Muslims, the objection to Government's proposal has been couched in this form, "We are a Christian nation." We are a religious nation; we are not a Christian nation. Our Speaker is not a Christian. Our Deputy Speaker, a generation or so ago was certainly not a Christian, regardless of his fraternal relations. Our Prime Minister two or three generations ago was not a Christian. [Mr. Singh: "What is he now?"] He is a Christian now.

If the Christians are allowed in this, a secular State, to practice their mysteries why should non- Christians not be permitted to practice the rites related to their mysteries? [Applause] Why should not be an offence to pay for a requiem mass? What is unchristian about that? But no, as part of our colonial heritage any religious rites which did not conform with the beliefs and prejudices of the masters, were wrong, *ex mero motu*, automatically. [Mr. Singh: "We did not say anything about it."] You were a little more less unsensible.

So far as the practicing of obeah for monetary gain is concerned, the law otherwise has proper provision. It is true that it is nearly fourteen years since last I practiced in the criminal

courts, but I recollect that the offence of false pretences would cover adequately a practice of the rites for monetary gain. In fact, I think that those who practice obeah in such circumstances will be more within the law than others who do not practice obeah, but practice other rites. Think carefully about what I am saying. Because if you are practicing obeah for monetary gain it will be an offence; it will be the offence of false pretences. But what about the other practices where monetary gain is the objective and the reward? Further I say not.

We must get at our roots. And those who say that this is a Christian country let me remind them of the arrogance and barbarity of the Inquisition; let me remind them of the ignorance of those who had little children set out to win the holy places in Jerusalem. Let me remind them of the slaughters post-Reformation on both sides. Why? Because of the bigotry of people who felt that their beliefs were the only beliefs and that any other person's beliefs were not worth entertaining and earned divine and human ire.

As the President remarked in the course of his Address, a nation that does not emphasize its culture and its sport, which should be nationally supported, is not a nation, it will have no identity; it will have no individuality as amongst the other nations of the world. That we take this matter seriously is shown by our intention to have the National Institute set up and the various centres throughout the country. One begins to see a significant and central role that would be played by the National Cultural Centre.

One also recognizes that here, for the first time, you have a Government that encourages identification of people's cultural background and seeks to push further, through the cultural medium, the unity of the nation. Which nations worthy of its salt does not tell in song of its past and perhaps also picture on canvas the aspirations of its people? With this there can be no quarrel, but there is one about the emphasis. We make no apologies for it.

One finds also, sir, that it is clearly forecast in the President's Address that there would be a marriage, so to speak, between our educational system and facilities and our cultural activities, nationally sponsored and supported. That is as it should be and I will say, with respect, that there is no need for me to emphasize it any further.

And then we come sir, to the system of Regional Ministers, before I deal with the question of National Services. It is a little difficult to understand how one can make seriously, a proposal that instead of Regional Ministers as envisaged in what has already been established and what is alluded to in this Address, one should have regional civil servants based in the Prime Minister's Office. Obviously, what is intended by this new system is to bring the Government nearer to the people, and in the context of our society, our experiences, one coming with the full knowledge of Government's policy from the Cabinet, one having the clout that is attendant upon the fact, should be able to bring about co-ordination much more easily and readily than would a public servant.

There is still a number of details to be worked out with respect to this system. So far it has been working reasonably well, if the reports to me are to be accepted and believed, but I cannot see the reason for wanting civil servants in the Office of the Prime Minister. It is true that the Prime Minister's third name is Sampson, but Sampson did not bear the world on his shoulders. He merely was a strong man, his name is not Atlas and maybe there is some mixing up in the mythology. And even in these regional civil servants whom the Hon. "the Leader of the Opposition" would like to have were to be based in the Prime Minister's Office, then we would hear the complaint that the Prime Minister being the arch-politician in the Government, is not the one within whose office should come these responsible persons.

At some times I am inclined to think, when I listen to some of the proposals and criticisms made by my Hon. and learned Friend that he is an anarchist in its truest sense, in its technical, scientific sense; one who does not believe in Government at all and one who believes that things can run themselves- with the blessing of the Almighty, perhaps. The Prime Minister must either have all the power sometimes, or he must have no power, Of course, I forgive my good friend for thinking that he read here that the National Service will come under the Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilization. There is no mention here as to which Ministry will have the responsibility for National Service, but may I say this: objection is raised to the present Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilization being responsible for National Service, which I should point out is not intended to be the case, but because he is General Secretary of the People's National Congress. It seems to me, therefore, that one is disqualified from holding any

serious responsibility if one holds any office in the political party which is in Government. What are we afraid of? Our shadows? Or are we becoming like those on whom we poured scorn “wind-mill” politicians, tilting at wind-mills in the tradition of Don Quixote. Incidentally, sir, as at present proposed, the National Service will issue from and be within the responsibility of the Prime Minister’s Office.

It has been said by many that National Service is a good thing, and some of those many have gone on to say that they are happy at the thought that there is going to be a distinction between National Service and compulsory military services. The Government wishes to thank those who have uttered these sentiments, but I am inclined to believe that many who are in support of National Service, if I am to understand aright my good and Hon. Friend, Mrs. DaSilva, are in support of it because they believe that it will take the socially maladjusted from the streets and put them in some sort of service while their own little boys and sweet little girls escape the obligation to give service to the nation.

National Service, when introduced, will be used as a vehicle for the national orientation of large sections of our population. What do we mean by orientation? Not in doctrination, Mr. Speaker, but the orientation which comes from an understanding (a) of the history of Guyana, (b) the present position in Guyana, (c) the international milieu in which Guyana lives and operates, and furthermore, orientation by work.

The National Service, when it comes into operation, will also give an opportunity to various sections of the community, in terms of class and ethnicity to meet together on common ground and to share common experiences. It is an operation which, so far as its concept is concerned, carries in it the seed of bringing about a more cohesive nation.

I recall in the days when I was young- and that is a long time ago- and was abroad as an under-graduate, that there were some Guyanese from what would have been called “better homes” who did not know Guyana and Guyana’s people, and who swore honestly and righteously that there were no slums in Guyana, people who had not even seen Kaieteur but had read of it. Now, National Service can offer an opportunity, in addition to our cultural activities, to all sections to meet together so that we can have, in many senses, a true Guyanese nation.

6.11.73

National Assembly

5.55 – 6.05 p.m.

National Service is not intended as we see it, to be a strait-jacket into which the nation would be put. National Service will offer the opportunity of exposure and service to various sections of the community.

As was forecast in the President's Address, of course, it is proposed in the earlier stages to start with those who are unemployed, but that is not a limit of the exercise, for early priority will be given to those who, having left the formal institution of training, are about to go further. Expose them, before they go further, to the maturity which comes from serving the nation and increasing the productivity of the nation. Give them the opportunity of being properly oriented.

Why is it that so many of our professionals and our senior civil servants do not appreciate the needs and the wants of the people in the far off rural areas? They have never had the exposure. There are many people who have never gone further south of the Public Road on the East Coast than a mile or two, people who do not know what the back dam is. To them the North West or Mahdia is set somewhere in a tropical jungle. This type of being we will have no more when National Service will have been introduced.

6.05 p.m.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, this Government does not believe merely in precept. It believes also in example, and, indeed, if the Hon. "Leader of the Opposition" were to follow in the noble footsteps of his brother, of revered profession, he would have noted that this Government has been noted for its activities amongst and with the people. And every Minister of Government, so long as your humble servant is Prime Minister, will have to do a minimum of one month's national service every year until he ceases being a Minister. **[Applause]** And since the Prime Minister is a Minister, the Prime Minister also has to do it.

It will be, I think, an enlivening experience, and it will offer us the opportunity to know and develop our country better. As is usual, there have been suggestions that some persons will be grabbed as against other persons. There is no such intention. The priorities will be dictated by categories and not by individuals.

And then, apart from the National Service *per se*, on which there will be a State Paper and on which I do not propose to dilate, there will be the Special Service, because we find in our society, as we found when we were building the road from Mahdia to Annai, that there are professionals in our society who are willing, though they might have passed the age of what will be fixed as a national service age, to make a contribution. A doctor, for instance, may be willing to spend two, or three, or four weeks looking after the medical needs of a volunteer team that is working on the road. That will have to be regularized so that the doctor can know in advance when he is going to be called to do this type of work and to make his contribution to the task of nation building. That is what is envisaged in the caption "Special Service." nothing oppressive, but merely a piece of machinery for facilitating the total mobilization of all the skills which we have in our community.

Under the National Service, as the President noted, those who suffered from too little or the wrong type of education or no education, will be given an opportunity to be educated, not only in academic terms but in the wider sense, and those of us, who have had a formal education but have not really been educated as citizens of Guyana, will have the opportunity of receiving the fullest type of education.

What quarrel can there be with such a scheme? Why do I hear the howls? It has been suggested that it is a serious thing to insist that before young people go into the university, at Government's expense, that they should do National Service. A person who is about to enter our university, or who can hopefully look forward to being the recipient of an award from Government to pursue higher studies, is naturally a person on whom the taxpayers have spent a great deal of money. Is it too much to ask that before they be the recipients of further largesse, that they make their contribution? It has been found that though persons of a very young age, graduating from universities, may attract admirations in the majority of cases. It is the student who goes in at a somewhat more mature age who eventually becomes the outstanding citizen. This has been the experience not only in Guyana but in other parts of the world.

National Service will not be, and cannot be used as a form of discrimination, because it is proposed that any exemptions or any selections will be by categories rather than by individuals.

But we hear the monstrous proposal that a Government which is elected to govern must abdicate its position and have its rights abrogated, and appoint some amorphous board to superintend and operate the National Service. Why have Government at all? Why don't we then go back to the early Greek days, and gather all the people into the Amphitheatre and ask them to run the Government? Or why don't we go back to the Roman days, and change our consuls every six months and those who are changed, send them back to the plough?

It is absolute nonsense to suggest that you must get some amorphous, apolitical, neutral board **[Interruption]** Politics is about partisanship. **[Interruption]** But it is not to run an important thing like National Service. This is not a big industry. This is a State, a nation and the running of an industry or little shop must not be confused with the conduct of Government and the affairs of a nation like Guyana. Why don't you go and tell the British Government that instead of National Service, or compulsory Military Service being under the Minister of Defence, Mr. Heath, the Prime Minister, must appoint an amorphous board of apolitical, a neutral, well-thinking people? **[Interruption]** I think the people of Guyana are being offered a splendid opportunity to participate of the building of this country, and one cannot go on assuming that the nothing that the Government superintends can help being partisan. I think it was a man called Falstaff who always imagined he saw his own sins emanating from others. The only difference between Falstaff and a friend of mine is that the latter is less gross.

In this speech of the President, one sees not a great deal of wordiness about the concepts of national unity, unifying the nation. We are not members of the cloth, to deliver stirring sermons on these subjects and on these questions. One sees an attempt by practical means to well the nation of Guyana by an exposure to common experiences. One sees an attempt to get the people participating more fully in the activities of building Guyana. One does not indulge in the philosophical clichés which we have here bandied around this table this afternoon.

I have no doubt that if God helps us to pursue this programme to a finality, we will succeed in making many of the divisions in our society an experience of the past. I have no doubt that it would be apt to describe the period ahead as the period of the people, because the people will be developed in all senses, not only in terms of being better trained, being given the benefit

6.11.73

National Assembly

6.05 – 6.15 p.m.

of extra training facilities, but they will also be developed in terms of their identification of their background and the pride which flows from that.

They will be developed in the sense that they themselves will be expressing not only their history but the goals and aspirations of their nation. We may not produce a Michelangelo. We may not in the field of swimming, perhaps, produce a Spits, but certainly we can, in terms of this programme that is set out, produce a healthy, vibrant, dedicated, committed and proud people. That, Mr. Speaker, is our objective. We are prepared, in pursuit of that objective, to stand up to the slings and arrows of envious politicians but time and history, I have no doubt, will prove us right. [Applause]

Question put, and agreed to

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ramsaroop: Sir, just for the information of Members of the House, I propose to conclude the rest of the business on the Order Paper and, also, to have a Motion for the confirmation of the Consumption Tax Amendment order laid by the Hon. Minister of Finance today.

Accordingly, I wish to move the adjournment of this House to tomorrow, the 7th of November at the hour of 2 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 6.17 p.m.
