

# National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2003) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT  
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN** Part I

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84TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Friday, 3 February 2006

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## *MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68 )*

### *Speaker (1)*

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S. C., M. P. - *Speaker of the National Assembly*

### **Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)**

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| The Hon. Samuel A. A. Hinds, M.P.                  | - <i>Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent - performing the functions of the Office of President)</i> |
| The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P.     | - <i>Minister of Parliamentary Affairs</i>   |
| The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P.                    | - <i>Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation</i>  |
| The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.                  | - <i>Minister of Local Government and Regional Development</i>   |
| The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.                       | - <i>Minister of Home Affairs</i>  |
| The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P.                | - <i>Minister of Education</i>   |
| The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P.                | - <i>Minister of Finance</i>   |
| The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.                    | - <i>Minister of Housing and Water</i>   |
| The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P.     | - <i>Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security</i>  |
| The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.                | - <i>Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development</i>   |
| The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.                      | - <i>Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)</i>   |
| *The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P. | - <i>Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs</i>   |
| *The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.              | - <i>Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs</i>  |

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The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.	- Minister of the Public Service (Absent)
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	- Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport
The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)
**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.	- Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P.	- Minister of Amerindian Affairs
The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.	- Minister of Health (Absent)
Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P.	- Chief Whip
Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.	
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.	- (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Aazaruni)
Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.	
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 2 - Pomerouni/Supenaam)
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne) (Absent)
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	- (Absent)
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	
Dr Moti Lall, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mr Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.	
Mr Neendkumar, M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/ Mahaica)
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne) (Absent)

\* Non-Elected Minister

\*\* Elected Member from The United Force

**Members of the Opposition (30)**  
**(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)**

Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M.P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- Deputy Speaker of the N.A (AOL)
Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- Chief Whip
Mr. Ivor Allen, M.P.	- (Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dalglish Joseph, M.D., M.P.	
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- (Region No.5-Mahaica/Berbice)
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	- (Region No.10-Upper Demerara Berbice)
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	- (AOL)
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	- (AOL)
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica) (AOL)
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P.	- (Region No.3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara)
Dr Carl Max Hanoman, M.P.	- (AOL)
Mr Joseph Hamilton	
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- (Region No.1-Barima/Waini) (Absent)
Mr Dave Danny, M.P.	
Mrs. Rajcoomarie. Bancroft, M.P.	- (Region No.8- Potaro/Siparuni)
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No.6-East Berbice/Corentyne) (AOL)
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- (Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)

**(ii) Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance Party (2)**

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- (Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

**(iii) Rise, Organise and Rebuild Party (1)**

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.	- (Absent)
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**OFFICERS**

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Ms Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

**PRAYERS**

**The Clerk** reads the Prayers

**MOTION**

**BUDGET SPEECH 2006 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2006**

Assembly resumed the debate on the Motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2006

**The Speaker:** The first speaker for today is the Honourable Member Mr Lance Carberry

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Mr Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Debate of the 2006 National Budget. But before I get into my discourse Sir, I must acknowledge the sartorial elegance of the speaker this afternoon. *[Applause]* *{Interruption: 'You dress up too.'* "Why you always get into other people's story, you do not know when to keep your mouth shut."}

Mr Speaker, the theme chosen for the 2006 Budget is *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*.

In 2005, the theme was *CONFRONTING CHALLENGES, SUSTAINING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT*.

Mr Speaker, since there was negative growth in the economy, I can only conclude that what was meant was how the government would confront the challenge of sustaining negative growth and the lack of any discernable development.

Mr Speaker, on this side of the House, we prefer to look forward to what any progressive and enlightened party especially a party in govern-

ment should be doing - anticipating the future and planning for that anticipated future. It is the future we have to confront not the past.

Unfortunately, the hierarchy of the PPP and the government seem more comfortable confronting the past. They need to be reminded that yesterday is gone; it is today and tomorrow that we have to wake up for.

Mr Speaker, I intend to spend the rest of my presentation exploring the implications and challenges, the necessary conditions spawned by the theme chosen for the 2006 Budget *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*.

Mr Speaker, I am in a fortunate position, where my colleagues who spoke before me starting with the sterling presentation of the Hon Winston Murray, a presentation which seems to have excited the worse examples of the denial mode of this Government, true to the very graphic presentation of our own inevitable Judith David. I am proud of all of our speakers, because they were able to demonstrate very convincingly that the major demons which this government has to confront is their own inefficiency, ineffectiveness, incompetence and inequity. Four is to match Amna Ally's four Fs. Fortunately, for the Guyanese people, the PNC/R will relieve them of their pain before the end of 2006. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, let me deal with the issue of transforming Guyana and let me start with the business of democracy. If you look at the reference at page 4 paragraph 1:10 of the Budget, there is a great play with this idea of democracy, but let us deal with this matter here. The Government's mouthpieces are fond of talking about the heralding of democracy. What does that really mean? A healthy functioning democracy requires the following conditions to be met:

- there should be free, fair and transparent elections which are held in an atmosphere which is free from fear;
- there should be an independent National Assembly which is autonomous from the executive and which performs and effective oversight function to ensure that among other things,

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the executive is accountable to the nation and to the National Assembly;

- there should be an independent judiciary, which is courageous and which has integrity, which upholds the role of law and protects the rights of all citizens;
- there should be an independent media, which is courageous, professional and performs its functions of informing and educating the public;
- there should be a state security apparatus which can be relied on to deliver service and protection to all citizens.

Those are necessary requirements, Mr Speaker.

Let us look at the question of *free, fair and transparent elections* to be held in an atmosphere which is free from fear. How could we have free and fair elections if there is not a clean and incontestable voters' list? Why is there resistance to the preparation of clean voters' list for the 2006 national and regional elections?

I want to turn my attention to the question of *independent National Assembly*, which is autonomous from the executive. The facts which have been exposed by the report of Sir Michael Davies and the Bradford Report is that the National Assembly has a far way to go to establish its independence.

First of all, it must be free to prepare and present its own Budget. It must be free to hire train and develop its own staff. The fact that the National Assembly or I should say the Office of the National Assembly is treated as a Budget agency under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act of 2003, is inconsistent with the existence of an independent National Assembly. I believe that we have to correct that as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, we all know and you as the Chairman of the Constitution

Reform Commission must be painfully aware that despite their claim and I want them to recognise that I read their manifesto. In their 1992 election manifesto, that they would get rid of the dictatorial 1980 Constitution. They had to be taken kicking and screaming into the constitutional reform process as they fought tenaciously to retain the same bad 1980 Constitution, which they were to get rid of as soon as they got into office.

Mr Speaker, it is a fact that all of the consensually agreed amendments to the 1980 Constitution were passed unanimously by this National Assembly by the end of the third quarter of 2001. However, it took the PNC/R protest action and the events leading up to Monday, 5 May 2003 communiqué for the National Assembly and other constitutional reforms to be partially implemented.

I refer to this matter, because I want to point out that we have form, but what we need is content. I believe that it is possible for us to have content as long as there is the will to do so. Let us take for example the sector committees; the mere existence of the sector committees is not enough. The sector committees must be fully supported by professional and experienced research and advisory staff and should have access to a modern library and documentation centre to support their work. It is only by that process that the sector committees can be effective.

Given the fact that the Public Accounts Committee is the institutional instrument that everyone refers to for the purposes of oversight, deals with matters sometimes as much as two years after the event. It means that we must have effectively functioning sector committees and I think that again if the government wants to boast about its achievements, it should ensure that these committees are adequately resourced.

Mr Speaker, let us turn to the Public Accounts Committee, as I said just now, it is seen as main instrument for the oversight of the executive, but the reality is that the work of the Public Accounts Committee, like the work of the sector committees is hampered by the lack of an independent investigative and research capability to support its work. We

have the benefit of course of advisors, but we do not have the benefit of the research capability which is common and present in many other jurisdictions. If we are as a National Assembly to establish our independence of the executive, we must have an effective oversight capability and that is not present anymore.

In fact, one of the major instruments for that oversight is the Audit Office. Incidentally, the Estimates still retain the old name of the Office of the Auditor General, but the Audit Act of 2004 names it the Audit Office. So I think that should be corrected.

According to Article 223 of the Constitution, we should have an independent Audit Office which is funded directly from the Consolidated Fund. Article 223 (8) of the Constitution explain how that process should work. The Audit Office is now in accordance with the Constitution to be supervised by the National Assembly through the Public Accounts Committee. As you know and as we all know, the process of that transformation taken so long; it has a long gestation; it is not completed and we hope that it would be complete in a manner that ensures that we have an effectively functioning Audit Office.

We, in the Public Accounts Committee have had the benefit of a presentation from the Audit Office on the question of their remuneration and I am sad to say Sir, that what was presented to us represents the kind of inequity that should not be perpetuated. Let me explain to you what I am talking about.

The Audit Office is now establishing a new structure of remuneration for its staff and therefore it has new pay scales, but what has happened is that all staff is now treated as if they are at the beginning of the pay scale. This is totally inconsistent with administrative practices. It is inequitable, it is wrong and therefore, we hope that it is corrected, because what it does, I mean if you take a member of staff of the Audit Office who has ten years of experience, he has in fact built a sweat equity over that time that happened to be represented by his embodied skills. You cannot simply ignore that, because you are changing. In fact, the reason why



the pay scales have been changed is to ensure that we can attract and retain people of the right calibre. I hope that this particular Act is not an attempt to undermine the morale of the Audit Office. I would like to give the benefit that it is not intended to undermine the morale of the Audit Office.

Mr Speaker, I just wish to draw attention to the fact that in the Estimates on Page 59 the Audit Office is still referred to in context of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, but as you are aware Part 4 of that Act has been superseded by the Audit Act of 2004. Therefore I believe that a correction is necessary.

Mr Speaker, while I am dealing with this matter, I would like to digress a little, because what I have noticed and I am disappointed that the Minister of Public Service is not here and apart from being disappointed that she is not here, I am disappointed that she did not bring this to the attention of the House, in that what has happened in the 2006 Estimates has been a change in the way the establishment has been presented. Traditionally, we have had the authorised establishment shown alongside the filled positions and the vacancies. So we have an idea of what is the state of staffing of the Public Service. What we have in the 2006 Estimates is a presentation that shown only the filled positions and therefore we of the National Assembly are not in a position to determine the level and extent to which the Public Service is understaffed. I believe that the Minister of Finance should correct this and it should be corrected before we examine the Estimates.

Mr Speaker, there is also a high incidence of acting officers within the Public Service and the Minister should inform the National Assembly when and by what mechanism, those acting positions will be confirmed, because I believe that it is bad administrative practice to have people acting for years on end without any prospect of either being confirmed or told that they are not suitable. This should be corrected. It is bad in principle and I believe that the Minister of the Public Service ought to address that as a matter of urgency.

Mr Speaker, I want to turn my mind to the economy and of course, I could never emulate my colleague Mr Murray and therefore you would not expect me to go in to any great detail. I find that what we have is an interesting phenomenon. The government and the Minister keep boasting from budget to budget, that this is the largest Budget in the history of Guyana. Now, one would expect that unless there is a massive contraction that every year the Budget will grow, even though there is negative growth. We expect the Budget will grow, so I am not sure what the intention is to boast that this is the largest Budget in the history of Guyana. What is the purpose of that boast? I really do not know.

Let me make the point, the purpose, the responsibility of government is to ensure that it takes care of the welfare and wellbeing of its citizens. Therefore, what we expect from this government is not a platitudinous presentation, which says we will do X and we will do Y. We want to see a programme, a plan of action, which more or less shows what is going on. In fact, the requirements for the Budget imply that there should be a programmatic approach. The government itself rushed the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act through the National Assembly. Sir, if you read this Act very carefully, you will find that this Act sets out in great detail what is expected not only of the Minister of Finance, but the other Ministers of the government. I find it passing strange that having rushed this Bill through, having stated how imperative it is, that its requirements have been ignored and what they have presented to us is totally inconsistent with the requirements of this Act. I just want to ensure that the Minister of Finance understands that this Act anticipates a programmatic approach to the business of government and I hope that that will be corrected.

Sir, we have been hearing talk about modernisation and development and so on. Now, as a loyal and committed Guyanese, who has spent my best years in this country working for this country, for the development of this country, I believe that we all deserve development and progress. I would like to know that my grandchildren can look forward to a prosperous Guyana, but the way this government is performing seems to me as if the main function of government is to institutionalise mendi-

cancy and poverty. I say mendicancy, because when this government came into office in 1992, there was already a functioning economic recovery programme and that economic recovery programme had as its requirement and its objective that it will transform this economy and that by 1997, we would begin to exit from structural adjustment. This government has not only shot itself in the foot by undermining the institutional and other changes including the question of modernisation of the Public Service. You may recall that when this government came into office, I think, the number of ministries was reduced to eleven. Not only were they reduced, but the restructuring of the public service and the training of public servants were well on their way. You may recall this mantra of *dollar a year* and the scuppering of the monies which were allocated to pay better salaries by pretending that what you needed to do was to sprinkle it liberally over all the public servants without a recognising the need to build a cadre of professional management in the public service.

Mr Speaker, the function of management is to solve problems. It is not to hold on to the status quo, it is to address problems. When a party enters government, it is expected to manage the system. That is what it is supposed to do and if it is going to do that, then it has to address these questions:

- What are the underlying conditions?
- What are the objective conditions?
- Where do I want to take this country?
- What do we want to do with the resources of this country?

Those are the functions of a progressive government.

I will use an example. The people of New Zealand had farmlands as their asset. They did not have a lot of natural resources - farmlands and fish. They decided that they wanted to those to transform themselves into a modern industrial State. Therefore, they progressively developed and implemented policies that were intended to achieve that. I

do not believe that anybody has any doubt that New Zealand is now a developed country. That is because the government was enlightened.

In the case of Singapore, Mr Lee Quan Yu made the decision that he wanted to transform his country - a little island - with not very many resources. It had human resources, many human resources and marine facilities. Mr Lee Quan Yu and his government progressively transformed it into what Singapore is now, one of the most modern and aggressive states in the IT business.

Now, the world of IT and the world of information are now opened to us. All you need to do is to buy a computer and go on the internet. Therefore, there is no excuse anymore to say that you do not know, you do not have access to information. What we should be doing is using information and information technology to change our horizon. There is no country that this government and anybody else can point out, which transformed itself into a vibrant dynamic State by means of debt relief. Debt relief is a short term palliative which has to be placed alongside policies for the transformation of the State. This government although it uses these terms like transforming Guyana and so on, the reality is the only transformation that has taken place is the transformation of Guyana into a full-fledged narco and criminal State. That is the transformation. Now that is what my grandchildren, your grandchildren and those of us who are old enough to have grandchildren that is what our grandchildren have to see. Now, I do not know if my colleagues on the other side feel proud of that achievement, but I believe that it is really a sad thing, that the memory of this government would be a memory which says, this is the government that transformed Guyana into a full-fledged narco and criminal state. I am not sure that they ought to be very proud of that.

Sir, Guyana is a country endowed with natural resources. It has a very wide range of very rich natural resources. Therefore, one would expect the government to recognise its responsibility to use the national patrimony and to convert it into development and progress. That is what it should be doing. Instead Sir ... [*Interruption: 'What you did?'*] I will tell you in a minute. If you keep quiet, you will learn and I

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will help you to understand ... *[Interruption; 'You cannot help creketé, you want to help me?']* No, let him heckle, I do not mind. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Let me stop the heckling by inviting you to get an extension of time Honourable Member.

**Mr Lance Carberry:** Yes thank you Sir. I know you want to help me Sir.

**The Speaker:** I have interrupted the heckling in order to enable you to get an extension of time and get rid of the hecklers.

**Mr Winston S Murray:** I respectfully move that the Honourable Member Mr Carberry be granted fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed, Honourable Member

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Sir, I heard the adviser on sport, I am no sure, you know when Guyanese say that you are making sport they mean something different and therefore I think that guy is making sport, because he is talking about the bauxite industry, something which he does not understand.

Let me say something about the bauxite industry, because I think that it is important for those who are catapulted into positions of authority to understand what it is that they are managing. I have heard suggestions that Guyana should be competing in world of metallurgical grade bauxite with others who are selling metallurgical grade bauxite for \$5 and \$15. Sir, Guyana has never been in that league. Guyana has always been a source of very rich metallurgical grade bauxite, which is used as a sweetener in the alumni industry and because of that fact we have always had a premium. When others are getting \$10 and \$15 we have been able to get \$25. And what has happened, because of a lack of understanding,

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this government has made commitments to sell our metallurgical grade bauxite for \$15 and \$10. Now, really isn't that a shame?

I have never refused to make my knowledge available to anyone. I have spent many years not only working in terms of planning - corporate planning - for the bauxite industry, but I have also been responsible for selling this bauxite internationally. I have sold chemical grade bauxite to the Basque Country in Bilboa and I consider that a major achievement if you know where Bilboa is? I am saying to these gentlemen that they should understand what is it they have to manage.

Let us take the question of refractory grade bauxite, there is no doubt about it that Guyana has one of the richest sources of refractory grade bauxite and that is why we became the largest supplier. *[Interruption: 'Who destroyed it?']* The point is, this chap who ... I am sorry, I am hearing a discordant sound coming from some place. I am not sure what it means. It sounds like a few grunts coming from some place, so I do not know why?

We have one of the richest sources of refractory grade bauxite and in this modern world the industry moved in the 1980s from the production of bricks into the production of what is called plastic refractory and I do not mean plastic in the sense of plastic products, it meant that they are very viscose and they are gunned into position. The requirement for that made Guyana refractory grade bauxite, a very, very valuable bauxite. Its mineralogy and its characteristic make it a very valuable bauxite. Some of the new product requires not a run-of-the-kiln refractory grade bauxite, but a homogenised stable product. That is what we should be investing in. In other words, we should be moving our industry along the chain of higher added value and progress. Instead of being content to talk about who run down what. I want him to explain to me what happened to \$26 million of SISMIN's money that they inherited in 1992. Tell me what happened to that? That is what I want him to tell me about.

Now, let us look at the question of the forest industry, because as I said,

it is the responsibility of the government to transform those resources into development for the people. If you look at what has happened, in 1992, a very important international instrument called the Convention on Biological Diversity was signed by most countries in Rio. That Convention helped us as a developing country to begin to define and add value and recognition to our resources. A forest is not just a source of wood, but it is a source of a multiple set of products including genetic material. In fact, in some situations, the pharmaceutical industry is more interested in the fungi on the forest floor than it is interested in the trees. The point is that the people who are responsible for managing our natural resources ought to be taking advantage of the opportunities. It is no longer acceptable for us to define the forest only in terms of the number of trees you could extract. We have to move forward.

Sir, I have travelled across Switzerland and if you go to little towns in Switzerland, you will see ... [*Interruption: 'Who is the informant?'*] Mr Rohee, as a rule I always inform myself before I speak and that is why I travelled to Switzerland so I will know what I am talking about. If you go to some of the small towns, you would see an array of wooden toys, made in Switzerland, which is of the highest quality and highest standards. In this country, we have some of the most attractive and decorative woods you could think about. You only have to go to the Rupununi and you ask them to show you something called snake wood, a wonderful wood. What I am saying Sir, is that we should be taking advantage of what nature has endowed us with to be able to transform this country from the state that this government has gotten it into, into a state of development. That is what you should be aiming for. We should not be aiming to institutionalise poverty.

Now, if you take not only the forest ... but let me briefly deal with the question of energy. Energy is the backbone requirement for development in any society and the fact is that in this country, we have a vast hydropower potential that does not just exist, but it has been studied in detail. There are rooms containing volumes where all of the hydropower facilities in this country have been studied in detail and therefore there is no excuse to be dragging your feet on the question of the development

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of Amalia, because Amalia forms part of the Potaro river basin development which would allow us to do what the Venezuelans have done at Kokoeri, to develop a cascade approach to the exploitation of our hydropower resources. Instead of that, what we have is an administration that comes to us to introduce a fuel police force. That is what we have. Instead of coming to tell us this is what I am going to do in terms of breaking out of this strangle hold of the dependence on imported fuel, we have a fuel police. In fairness to the energy agency, it seems as though the energy police are making arrests. I supposed, the only problem is that the evidence seems to somehow sail away from time to time and apart from the sailing away of the evidence, we have situations where the marker seems not to be sufficiently secure to be protected from corruption. What I want to say is the problem of energy is not something that suddenly occurred, the Guyana National Energy Authority was established in 1980 and when this government came into office, the Guyana National Energy Authority was functioning and it had not only expertise, but it had people with institutional memory. That has all been destroyed and instead and again we seem to have settled in a very backward way for energy policing. That is all.

For example, if you take GPL which we have been relying on, it is quite evident that GPL which incidentally is still owned by the people of Guyana has been imposing on the rest of us the pain of us having to carry its inefficiencies. In fact, apart from the pain of its inefficiencies, there was the establishment of a national grid which needed to be completed and strengthened. We need to strengthen the distribution system. It has not been done. Therefore, the rest of us have to suffer the agony of continuous blackouts, unstable power and high cost of energy.

What I am saying is that this government ought to recognise that the quest is not only in the business of making excuses. I have never known a government to be more *not-me* oriented it is always *not me*, it is somebody else. Anybody listening to them would believe that the PNC is still in office. I will believe that they have been in office for fourteen years and they blame the PNC for everything. I do not know, if a Minister does not wake up in the morning, perhaps it is the PNC caused



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him not to wake up, but the fact of life is that the PNC left you a legacy of ideas; left you a legacy of institutions which you have not been able to take advantage of.

When the PNC left office there was a strong Ministry of Foreign Affairs and there is a certain gentleman, who only know to use the knife in the middle of the night to prune it and now he is trying to re-establish it. In other words, I do not know why shooting themselves in the foot seem to be a pastime. I really do not understand that Sir.

Mr Speaker, today, I would like us to finish at a reasonable hour and therefore although there are many other issues that I would like to raise, I know that I have two colleagues still left to speak and given the progression that has taken place I am confident Sir, that they will deal with some of these issues to my satisfaction. *[Interruption: 'Black-out!']*

Well you know Mr Belgrave, blackout does not only refer to the lack of light, but also to the lack of understanding. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I want to raise one other issue and that is the issue of the mining industry. I think, Mr Murray made the point about the need to establish a regime of incentives and to establish an environment that is investor friendly, whether that investor is a Guyanese or non-Guyanese so I do not need to elaborate on that.

I want to deal with an issue that I believe that is very serious. Right in this room, the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Natural Resources met with the Toshaos of Region 7 - Upper Mazaruni and their presentation raised a matter which I believe should be of concern to us as a nation. The matter was that in the exploitation of the mineral resources contiguous to their areas, what is happening is that their communities are being destroyed and not only their communities are being destroyed, at the end of the day, they are left with a situation where the benefit of development bypass them. I do not believe that in this modern age that is acceptable. Therefore, we have to address our minds to the

question of how we manage development in such a way that the people who are most affected by that development benefit from that development. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

Honourable Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility of Foreign Affairs

**Hon S Rudolph Insanally:** Mr Speaker, this years Budget can best be described of one of optimism and hope. After the disastrous floods of January 2005 and again this year, it would have only been natural for our nation which suffered so much as a result to yield to a sense of frustration and despair. However, to their eternal credit, our people have resisted desperation and instead have demonstrated a remarkable resilience and determination to overcome their misfortune. Their response to tragedy reflects their confidence in their government's ability not only to provide them with immediate relief, but also to assure them of eventual recovery. They will no doubt welcome this Budget, which refuses to dwell in the past, but rather looks to the future and offers some new prospects for growth and development. I would therefore like to thank the Honourable Minister of Finance and his team for conceiving it in such terms.

Mr Speaker, in the implementation of the various policies and strategies outlined by the Honourable Minister, it is the responsibility and role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that the external environment, on which our success largely depends, is fully supportive of our objectives.

As experience has shown, an ambitious and active foreign policy can do much to mobilise the goodwill of the international community to provide the resources necessary to finance our recovery. Although generally unseen by the public, the hands of our diplomacy worked assiduously at the time of the great flood to coordinate and channel the assistance rendered by a sympathetic international community to our

suffering populace. In close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, we were able to galvanise the various functional agencies of the international system to support our communities.

As was stated by the Honourable Minister of Finance, as a small State this government intends to pursue a dynamic and pragmatic foreign policy to achieve the several political economic and social objectives, which it has set for itself as an independent and progressive nation within the international community.

Among the priorities set out in our Mission Statement are:

- the maintenance of our sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- the promotion of the nation's social and economic welfare;
- the provision of consular services to its nationals abroad and close relations with the Diaspora; and more generally
- the enhancement of Guyana's influence and prestige in the international affairs.

As a small State, we subscribe fully to the principles and purposes of the United Nations including respect for the rule of law, the sovereign equality of states cooperation based on friendship and mutual respect and adherence to multilateralism as a basis for international relations.

Mr Speaker, besieged as we are on two sides to the east and west by border problems, we must of necessity pay particular attention to our first goal the protection of our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Over the past year, we have acquired truce in our relations with Venezuela, our neighbour to the west. As is well known, there has been a public admission, in that country, that its claim to Guyana's territory has no basis in law, but now is based rather on obsolete and irrelevant political perceptions. However, we continue to be denied our rights to fully develop the Essequibo as a result of Venezuela's dissuasion of invest-

ment in that Region. Under the good Offices of the UN Secretary General, we are committed to explore the possibilities of an amicable solution of the controversy. At the same time, through patient diplomacy, we have sought to build on the support and for our cause, which we have received from CARICOM, the Commonwealth and other friendly countries that have been following our situation.

In a few months time, we expect to resuscitate the high level commission, which was created by the parties with a view of promoting a climate of confidence and trust of cooperation between them.

Mr Speaker, on the Suriname side, as the Honourable Members will know, we are now engaged in an arbitration process under Annex 7 of the International Law of the Sea Tribunal, with the aim of securing a delimitation of maritime boundaries between our two countries. With the submission now of Guyana's memorial and Suriname's counter memorial, it is expected that once a Tribunal receives the replies of the parties, it will then hear the case and deliver a judgement, all things being equal by mid 2007. This award will enable us, no doubt to explore and exploit the resources that are rightfully ours for the benefit of our economy.

Meanwhile, as neighbours and sister States of CARICOM, Guyana and Suriname will continue to cooperate despite our difficulties with one another in several functional areas such as customs, immigration and health. We also add in the context of our maritime delimitations generally that we are advancing our submission to the United Nations Commission on the Law of the Sea for the use of the continental shelf, giving us more access to resources beyond our territorial claims.

With Brazil, our southern neighbour, relations develop apace producing several agreements for cooperation in important field such as agriculture, education, health security, transport and trade.

As a result of a visit of a high level mission in last September, our two countries have now concluded further arrangements for Soya bean production in the intermediate savannahs, cashew production and

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processing and the declaration of intent to collaborate in the production of combustible fuel - ethanol.

Also in existence now with the recent ratification by the Brazilian Parliament are two other agreements:

- (i) allowing for partial visa exemption to increase tourism between our two countries; and
- (ii) an international road transport agreement to facilitate the movement of goods and services across our borders.

In this context, I would wish to inform this House that the bridge over the Takatu River is now scheduled for completion by June of this year.

To increase our outreach and to give life to the concept of Guyana as a gateway between the Caribbean and South America, we have also established honorary consulates in Rio de Janeiro, San Paulo as well as in Lima, Peru. In the months ahead, we will extend these services to other capitals and cities.

Mr Speaker, the Caribbean Community remains of course a focal point of our foreign policy and diplomatic thrust. Only a few days ago, at a ceremony in Kingston, Jamaica, we signed on to a declaration formally establishing the single market - the CSM. The way has now been paved for our businessmen and entrepreneurs to take advantage of the increased opportunities for trade and economic cooperation with sister States in the region.

As the Ministry responsible for CARICOM affairs, we have been working assiduously in cooperation with others such as:

- the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation;
- the Ministry of Tourism and Industry and Commerce;

- the Ministry of Home Affairs; and
- the Attorney General's Office,

to put the necessary machinery in place to facilitate greater contact and cooperation under the CARICOM umbrella.

A particular area of attention is the free movement of persons within the Region. In accordance with a CARICOM decision, Guyana will soon establish a committee to oversee the processing of applications for the CARICOM skills certificate to ensure greater transparency of the certification process. At a meeting of officials last September, Guyana again referred to its continuing concern with the treatment of our nationals at some points of entry. All the while, we are in contact with the respective governments to ensure that the rights of our citizens are not abused.

However, we believe that the time has come for the Ministers rather than the officials responsible for immigration matters in the region, to meet in an effort to resolve these lingering problems.

Mr Speaker, with regard to the wider Caribbean, I would like to make a special reference to our relations with Cuba. Our country and its people have undoubtedly benefited enormously from our cooperation with Cuba particularly in the medical field. *[Applause]* In fact, His Excellency the President returns today from Havana after discussions aimed at enhancing those programmes of discussion and cooperation.

Mr Speaker, to finish off the hemisphere, I would like to make a brief reference to our two important North American partners the United States and Canada, with whom we have traditionally had friendly and cooperative relations. The fields of cooperation have been many and varied, ranging from the strengthening of democratic institutions and good governance to the fight against drug trafficking and other security matters.

On the issue of deportation, I regret to say, its impact on our society still remains on our agenda following a proposal recently by CARICOM Foreign Ministers, there will be meeting next month with the US Secre-

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tary of State in the Bahamas to discuss ways and means of enhancing our relationship.

Similarly, with a new government in place in Canada, we will be seeking to further cultivate our historic association with that country and its people.

Mr Speaker, looking across the Atlantic to the countries of the European Union, we cannot help but conclude that the latter's change in Agricultural and trade policies have had negative consequences for small economies such as ours, warrant a more proactive diplomatic approach by our region to secure not only as we have been doing governmental support, but also popular support - the support of the peoples of Europe for our development priorities. Special emphasis will be placed on non-traditional partners such as Italy and the countries of Eastern Europe. We are currently looking at our attendance at the EULAC Summit in April of this year, when some of these possibilities can be explored.

Mr Speaker, obviously, the United Kingdom with whom we have had a long and friendly association remains important to our development and we shall therefore use the occasion of the UK/CARICOM Forum in April to strengthen our relations with that country.

I must also note our strong ties now with the Russian federation, which has encouraged and supported its mining giant RUSAL to make a substantial and significant investment in Bauxite industry which will now no doubt experience a very welcome renaissance.

Mr Speaker, regrettably the Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and African countries are for us still largely *terra incognita*. We therefore intend to use our membership of the Commonwealth, the Organisation of Islamic States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77 and other relevant organisations to develop meaningful South-South Cooperation.

Mr Speaker, although geographically distant from Guyana, the countries of Asia particularly China, India, Japan have proven enormously

helpful to our economic progress. One only has to look at the recently constructed CARICOM Headquarters Building, the new Convention Centre, the New Amsterdam Hospital and the rising stadium at Providence to be aware of this reality. *[Applause]* We therefore propose to intensify our cooperation with these countries and indeed with others in Asia. Only recently we reopened our High Commission in New Delhi, which has been closed for several years due to economic factors. However, as the House would realise the diplomatic representation abroad especially for small countries such as ours is a costly affair. However, in many cases, the expenditure could be imminently worthwhile, leading to significant economic returns. This year, we will therefore examine possibilities for expanding our presence in other places of importance to Guyana's economic and social progress.

Mr Speaker, as was announced in the Budget Speech, we also plan in 2006, to establish a closer relationship with our Diaspora in which reside significant resources that can be harnessed for our development effort.

As I said, during the great flood expatriate Guyanese contributed willingly and generously to the relief and recovery campaign that was mounted in the aftermath. Their remittances to families and friends in Guyana now provide a significant boost to our budgetary resources.

Additionally, the government benefits considerably from the revenue earned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for consular services that it provides to our citizens abroad. For last year alone, more than G\$200 million was secured for the National Treasury. *[Applause]* Such now is the importance of the Diaspora that we propose to host a forum this year at which representative organisations of overseas Guyanese will be brought together to share their ideas with us on how we may work together for the good of our country in a more structured relationship.

Mr Speaker, at the global level, Guyana remains committed to the pursuit of multilateralism as embodied in the United Nations as a basis for international relations. Although far from perfect, the United Nations



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still represents mankind's best hope for peace and development. We are therefore engaged currently in the process of reforming and revitalising the world organisation so that it might better serve our interests and concerns.

We have subscribed and continue to subscribe to a vast array of international treaties and convention, which reflect the common determination of mankind to cooperate for our common good. With a clear focus on development, Guyana has been elected within recent months to serve on:

- the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the highest economic body;
  - the UNDP Governing Council;
  - the Caribbean constituency representatives on the global environment facility that would help our efforts in the environment; and
  - the UN Forum for Forest which as you know is a very important asset for Guyana.

Our participation in the work of these several bodies affords us a special opportunity, not only to further raise Guyana's international profile but also to reap the economic rewards that come from a leadership role. In particular, we will be looking for additional support for the implementation of our poverty reduction national development strategies as well as for the achievement of our Millennium Development Goals.

Mr Speaker, our work at the United Nations and other agencies in international system is complemented by our active participation in the activities of many regional and sub-regional bodies. Of late, several hemispheric organisations and groupings have assumed growing importance for Guyana and we are therefore called upon to devote considerable attention and of course, some resources to their activities. Among these are:

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- the OAS, which the His Excellency the President addressed just a few months ago;
- the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;
- the Amazonian Treaty of Cooperation, which is important for the development of our forest;
- the Summit of the Americas;
- the South American Community of Nations; and
- the Rio Group.

Mr Speaker, I would like very briefly to highlight the last mentioned grouping, since Members would undoubtedly aware Guyana has been privileged as a representative of CARICOM to serve for the first time ever as the group's *pro tempore* Secretariat and to host the summit this year in Georgetown Guyana. [Applause] As I remarked, at the handing over ceremony, which took place here on January 20 last, we have been greatly honoured by the confidence, which has been placed in us and in our ability to direct the groups' activities at this crucial time. In view of the template changes which are occurring both at the international and regional levels, the Rio Group which has become a major interlocutor between the Latin America and the Caribbean and other important countries. We now have a major role to play in projecting the view of its membership to the larger international community. As such Guyana and by extension the CARICOM will have a voice of influence out of proportion of its resources and size. It is an opportunity which we intend to use wisely and well. Already, we have signalled that the special focus of our chairmanship will be on the symmetries economic social that is, that currently exist in the development of member States and therefore, we will concentrate on the ways and means to reduce those disparities. Of course, the aim is to create within this hemisphere as other regions have done a more balanced, integrated and cohesive community.

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Mr Speaker, with the process of the United Nations reform now fully underway, it will also be our intention to closely coordinate the positions of our group on the various proposals now before the international community in order to strengthen our collective negotiating position, because in ourselves, we are relatively small and weak and therefore ultimately to be able to influence policy making at the international level.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I would say that in my contribution to the general debate to the budget last year, I alluded to the fact that our Ministry would embark on the formulation of a five year strategic plan. This plan has since been completed and the Ministry will now focus on its implementation to ensure the efficient and effective performance of its policy and operational functions in furthering the interest of the government of Guyana and our people by transforming as the motto now says, our country through modernisation and partnership.

Mr Speaker, my broad presentation today, is therefore intended to demonstrate that although perceived by some as alien to our national interest and in fact by some even to be small and weak our external diplomacy remains an essential and indispensable part of our development effort. Far from being a net consumer of resources, it is to the contrary an invaluable instrument for mobilising international support for our domestic purposes. As I said, admittedly, by its very nature diplomacy is a discrete process, nevertheless it does help to win friends and influence policies that are helpful to our development. A focus on the gains secured therefore should not make us blind to the painstaking efforts by which these benefits are achieved.

As was noted earlier the resources which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs very often succeeds in mobilising are immediate, significant and tangible. Our share of the allocations for expenditure particularly our contributions to the work of the international organisations such as those I have cited is thus without any doubt a modest but worthwhile investment.

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On that note, Mr Speaker, I am pleased to give our full support to year's Budget and would urge all Members to do likewise. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mr Joseph Hamilton

**Mr Joseph Hamilton:** Mr Speaker, permit me to commence my presentation by reading from the Minister of Finance's Budget Speech, Page 53:

*This year, another important step will be taken. I speak of the holding of general elections which are constitutionally due by August 4<sup>th</sup> this year. The Government has given the assurance to an independent Guyana Elections Commission that the necessary resources will be made available for the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections.*

Of course, Mr Speaker, life has two dynamics:

- (i) fantasy; and
- (ii) reality.

Permit me to read from the Minutes of GECOM's meeting held on 23 August 2005, at paragraph 5.2.1.8. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Aren't those documents confidential under the Constitution of Guyana, Honourable Member? The business of constitutional bodies, I believe, Mr Williams or Mr Murray might wish to help me on that. The business of constitutional bodies is confidential under a provision of the Constitution. I do not recall exactly which provision it is.. If you just give me a second, I will see if I can find it. *[Pause]*

The Assembly will suspend for a five minutes to consider this matter.

**15:25H**

## THE SITTING IS SUSPENDED

15:40H

## THE SITTING IS RESUMED

You may proceed Mr Hamilton

**Mr Joseph Hamilton:** Mr Speaker, as I was saying at Page 53 of the Minister of Finance's Presentation, giving assurance that the Government will give all the necessary resources to GECOM. I was saying this here is fantasy and I will go on now to read what is reality? I refer to Page 14 of the Minutes of 23 August 2005, The Elections Commission, discussing the implementation of all the systems to commence continuous registration the 1 September stated here

*one of the commissioners referring to Task No. 2 of July 2005. Mr Parris noted that the IT Manager's document had a comment that the UPSs and surge protectors had not been procured as accessories for the computers to be installed at the registration offices. Mr Bemm, the Deputy Chief Elections Officer said that request for the purchase of these items were catered for in the 2005 Budget estimates, but they were struck out by the Ministry of Finance.*

The Chairman of the Elections Commission held a press conference on 27 September 2005 at the Hotel Tower. This is what he had to say about this issue also, Page 3 of his presentation dealt with GECOM's autonomy vis-à-vis timely approval and financing of pivotal tasks and activities. The Chairman told the nation, it is a fact that GECOM is classified as a Budget Agency - source - the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act of December 2003. As a result the Commission's Secretariat is compelled to comply with the conditionalities enshrined in the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMAS). Already the Commission has had the experience of funds not being approved and

released in a manner that allowed for the timely procurement of certain goods and services.

As I said, the Minister of Finance gave this assurance which is just what I would want to say, speaking in the wind. Because the reality is that the Elections Commission, because of this matter, had to postpone the commencement of continuous registration that should have started the 1 September, some six weeks later, that is, 17 October 2005. Because the Ministry of Finance did not understand apparently, that a computer does not stand alone. For a computer to function efficiently and effectively, it must have (what are called) accessories and peripherals.

Mr Speaker, the Minister of Finance is talking about transforming Guyana through modernisation and partnership. I must tell this Assembly that while the Government speaks of partnership, this Government entered into a partnership on 14 July 2005 with the Guyana Elections Commission and the donor community. The Government committed itself to ... as I read the MOU signed by one Honourable Dr Roger Luncheon. In the MOU there are commitments of GECOM, commitments of the donor community and commitments of the Government. The Government committed itself in this partnership at bullet (v) on Page 3:

*To respect for and promotion of the independence and efficient functioning of the Guyana Elections Commission, especially the timely provision of resources from the Government necessary to undertake the electoral process.*

So here is a government committing itself July 14 and by August 23, this Government is renegeing on its commitment by the actions of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Speaker, again you need to note that while Dr Steve Surujbally might be the Chairman of the Elections Commission, I need to make the point that the boss of the Elections Commission seems to be one Dr Roger Luncheon.

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Again, let me speak to you ... another Minute of GECOM's meeting - 11 October 2005 on Page 9, GECOM is discussing honorarium for its staff and listen to what is said here:

The Chairman reported that he had written Dr Luncheon seeking clearance for the tax-free payment for the proposed honorarium and was awaiting a response.

Secondly, Minutes of GECOM's Meeting - 24 January 2006 on Page 6. It is not just the staff, but the Commission started to discuss in December a raise of stipend for the commissioners themselves.

Page 6, at 4(2) -

Commissioners' stipend

That is the Heading.

*The Chairman reported that he had written and spoken to Mr Yousif Mahmood, UNDP Resident Representative, as advised by the Commission and that he was unable to raise the matter with Dr Roger Luncheon because of his unavailability.*

So, I am bringing this to the National Assembly and to the nation's attention that while the governing party shouts from the rooftop that they want elections to be held by the constitutional date, they are doing everything practicable, via the Office of the President, to stymie the progress and the implementation in a timely manner of the activities that GECOM must commence and conclude for us to have those elections.

Mr Speaker, I know when Honourable Member Ramotar stands up, he will be going into propaganda and rhetoric mode, but I need to forewarn him that the matters I am dealing with, Sir, your propaganda and your rhetoric cannot wish them away. GECOM must complete 170 tasks for us to have those elections, and so you can pretend and dance,

but the reality is that we have to be able to deal with those matters.

Mr Speaker, let me say that if you read many of these documents, you would see that the Guyana Elections Commission, many of instances, would seek to urgently beg donors for financing, because it is apparent that they feel more comfortable approaching the donors to get funding than interfacing with the Government via Dr Luncheon.

Mr Speaker, the Minister of Finance, in this bland statement on Page 53, failed to inform the National Assembly. He said that this is an important task, but yet he failed to tell this nation:

- how much money these elections will cost;
- how much of that sum the Government of Guyana would be investing; and
- how much of that sum the donor community will be investing?

I would want to feel that if the Minister of Finance, according to him, is saying that elections are the important exercises of this year, the question to ask is why has he failed to mention the cost of the elections? No one in this National Assembly is aware or informed as to what the elections will cost. I repeat, how much money is going to come from the Government and how much is going to come from the donors?

Mr Speaker, let me consult the Assessment No. 2 from the Joint International Technical Assessor, Mr Stephen Beal dated 13 December 2005, he was dealing with National Identification Cards and listen to this one exercise. I am trying to show the National Assembly the dilemma. This is what he had to say:

National identification card production

Delivery installation and testing of the new Midas equipment required to generate National Identification Cards is currently two months



behind schedule.

This was December, we are in February. So we have gone past three and a half months and as I speak, the installation of this system to allow for timely production of identification cards is yet to commence.

Again, if you follow the discussions at the Elections Commission, you would recognise that this equipment was caught up in who is going to fund it and as I understand it, because the Government was tardy, the Elections Commission had to lean on the donors for £160,000 to get this equipment going.

Mr Speaker, while I speak to this National Assembly, I have a list her, and for those who are not informed, the Elections Commission, as I said, must complete 170 tasks, many of them run consecutively. I heard His Excellency the President speaking on this matter without being properly advised, stating that he has asked GECOM whether they could concurrently run activities. It must be that the President is not properly advised to make that statement.

Just one month ago, I looked at the GECOM's project plan and what you would notice is that as of December, some twenty-two tasks that should have been completed long ago, they are behind time. I am talking about twenty-two of the set that should have been completed before the end of December 2005. So Mr Speaker, we need to recognise these issues and, as I said, if the Government is serious about partnership, the question to ask this Government and the General Secretary of the PPP/C ... the joint opposition parties recognising the difficulties GECOM is faced with sought to engage all the stakeholders. I must tell the National Assembly the only stakeholder that refused to engage the joint opposition parties to discuss these matters was the PPP/C. The party is yet to even respond, via courtesy, of the receipt of the letter. Instead, Mr Robert Persaud utilised the letter to make the point only that the joint opposition parties were using some letterhead with the National Coat of Arms. The Minister of Finance is saying this is an important activity and the PPP/C is yet to respond. Mr Speaker, we must be

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informed that the Elections Commission ... If you look at the document called *Analysis of Project Documents*, which was done by an IBM Specialist via Microsoft project document - 25 July 2005, you will recognise that after the analysis was done, it puts elections for 30 March 2007. On the 28 of the said month she was asked to review. Elections were put on 15 August 2006. On 9 August 2005, she was asked to review. Elections were put on 18 October and again elections were put on 7 August 2006. What happened subsequently is that the Chairman determined that let us use a date, that is 17 July and work backwards. The question still remains to be answered - if tasks that historically took sixty days to complete, you are now saying that they can be done in thirty. Tell us how we are going to do it. Nobody is able to answer those questions.

Mr Speaker, the most important ingredient in an election's process is a voters list. I need to say to you that I heard Honourable Member Ramotar, many times quoting, from the IDEA Analysis and Report. You know they say *a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing*. Failing to understand the context of statements in this report - the IDEA Report ... they did an analysis of databases in Guyana utilising the Elections Commission, the NIS database and the National Register of Births and Deaths and based on that analysis, this is what they said. They are talking about what they called a shared database

The Official List of Electors ...

And this is 2001

*... is almost certainly the most up-to-date and accurate citizens register in Guyana at present in relation ...*

And that is the context Honourable Member Ramotar failed to understand. The context was an analysis in relation *to the GRO* and anyone would know that any database would be far better than the GRO and the NIS databases.

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As regards to GRO, this is what the report said, Page 67, *Guyana Registrars Office - Births and Deaths*, for those who do not know what GRO is. Listen to what it says:

*The National Register of births and deaths has confirmed in writing that their register is not computerised and they are therefore unable ...*

Listen to this and I want the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs to pay attention.

*Therefore unable to certify whether a person is dead or not...*

Mr Minister of Home Affairs,

*... unless you can provide them with the date of death or confirmed with interested parties using the names - first names and addresses.*

This method is flawed and provided explanation for the kinds of problems.

In this same report, Mr Minister and this is what Honourable Member Mr Ramotar should have been looking at the recommendations and made it known to the Minister of Home Affairs. Page 87 of this report suggested that it might be proper for ... listen to what it says:

*We suggest that the National Register of Births and Deaths be computerised. The National Register is not computerised and this has a direct impact on the quality of the Official List of Electors.*

Many times I hear people from the government's side, who do not have the competence to discuss this matter, speak on this matter and fail to recognise that unless there are other databases that you can do validation of the National Register with, we will always have problems with the electoral list. The recommendation was made that the Births

and Deaths Office should be computerised. Further it says:

*Deaths notification use names and thus common names.  
Incorrect identification is possible.*

Mr Speaker, the fact that the Government failed to heed the recommendation of IDEA, let me show you what happened. There is a memo from the IT Manager of GECOM on 12 September 2005. He is dealing with the treatment of persons who are reported as deceased. Listen what he says:

To date, there appears to be eighty-one batches of deceased persons in the database. These contain a total of 17,118 unique MRC numbers of which 15,753 persons are marked as found in the OLE and Addendum.

What they are saying here is that the list that they were given from GRO, the batches of 17,000, even though these persons have identity numbers, had identification cards, GECOM was only able to find 15,700 of those persons listed on the Official List of Electors. And so we have an anomaly of some 1300 names of dead persons, who are not listed even though they have ID cards. Further, 12 percent of the amount of persons, even though registered and had an ID card, they are not listed presently on the OLE. Listen to what the memo from the IT Manager said on 13 September on this matter:

*Given that five years have passed since the last registration exercise, there is likely to be a significant proportion of the list that is simply out-of-date.*

The Honourable Member Mr Ramotar said it is the best list. The IT Manager is saying, five years old. This morning while putting my thoughts together to come to this Budget Debate, I picked up the *Stabroek News* on Page 5 which is speaking about the Elections Office in Jamaica and you know what they are discussing? A re-verification exercise, what does that mean? They are preparing for elections some time in Novem-

ber 2007. What they are doing is that even though all of these persons were registered at the last elections in 2002, it is not taken as a given that they are still eligible and therefore the commission is going out to verify the identity and residency of every name that is on the list. I heard many times Honourable Member Mr Ramotar, the General Secretary of the PPP/C stating that the PPP/C has great objection to the verification exercise. Many times he has said that at his press conferences and you know what? Just about three weeks ago myself and the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar we were on a programme, Spotlight on Channel 9 and I am still awaiting the arrangements for NCN 11. You told me you would do that. I am still waiting. It is three weeks and you cannot get it arranged. On that programme the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar stated that the PPP/C party has no difficulty with verification, but what his style of verification is, that the whole list of 2001 first must be merged with the new registers and then we do verification. I mean any first year student, who is doing IT Management or Computer Science would know that you cannot take data that is certified and verified and merge it with compromised data. Ask any child. I was distraught when I heard a senior functionary of the PPP/C making that argument.

Secondly, he stated that we do not have all the time to deal with 440,000 names. Time is a problem, but yet he is seeking to inject into the 440,000 another 60,000. So, more is less, more names but less time. That is one issue.

The other issue has to do with multiple registrations. I must tell this National Assembly that even though the ruling party would want to suggest that it is not a problem, already in the present registration exercise, GECOM is already faced with the issue of multiple registrations. *[Interruption: 'Tell me of one area.']* Mr Ramotar got the same letter and the same amount of persons. The issue of cross referencing of finger prints to detect and prevent multiple registration, again I heard the General Secretary of the PPP/C many times stating at his press conferences that they had a difficulty with biometrics for cross references and he went to Kosovo, Taiwan, all over the place, but while he was on the programme again, I was most amused and amazed to hear the General

Secretary agreeing with me. The Honourable Member Mr Ramotar said on the programme that they had no difficulty with the Jamaicans coming in here to implement biometric fingerprinting. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Mr Speaker, I rise to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed Honourable Member.

**Mr Joseph Hamilton:** So the PPP/C - the ruling party - must decide and make up their minds now. What you support and what you do not support. Because the fact is ... *[Interruption: 'We support free and fair elections.']* ... as I said earlier, that is why he has never learnt in school. The Honourable Member does not recognise that to just say we support free and fair elections with prerequisites and ingredients is gaffing *[Applause]* and when intelligent people hear you say that they laugh at you.

Mr Hugh Cholmondeley, a reputable UN functionary worked all over the world dealing with the issue of elections, planning and monitoring for countries. He did an analysis of our preparedness as regards elections and he indicated ... and for those members I can make this document available to the ruling party. He outlined that for elections to be free, fair and transparent and at international standards there are thirteen prerequisites, but he said when he analysed our preparedness in Guyana, this is his conclusion, Page 4 of that Report says:

*As things stand, the opposite is more likely the outcome. Elections in 2006 are likely to provide for more of the same insecurity and instability. Just as in previous elections the failure to insist on the fundamental prerequisites based on principles that contributed indirectly to uncertainty and volatility.*

Mr Speaker, this is Mr Hugh Cholmondeley. I am using these documents to make the point, because the PPP/C would want to say it is the PNC/R. So I am using what the Elections Commission is saying, what reputable people, the GITA, Mr Beal and Mr Hugh Cholmondeley. Listen what Mr Cholmondeley had to say again:

Counting from the last elections in 2001, while recognising that several important things have been done, there is no doubt that we have wasted some 1,524 days in political sloth, legislative inaction and operational contortions. Our indolence in recognising that we should have, long ago, placed some degree of urgency on attending to our election dilemma has helped us to forget that our country has long lost its culture of compromise and consensus. We are faced today with excessive levels of emigration, frightful numbers of functional illiteracy, high levels of administrative incompetence, growing levels of corruption and a continuing threat to violence and instability.

Further he says:

*And so today we plan, as always, to go a begging for financial resources.*

This is a Government who believes that it is not their responsibility to fund elections. Every time elections are to be held since the PPP/C took office, there is always the discussion about the donors, the donor community and the donor community funding. Mr Speaker, I daresay to my Honourable friends across the other side, if you did not understand before today that it is the government of the day that is responsible for the funding of elections. It is not the donors, and so you must stop depending on the donors and budget for the elections. *[Applause]* This Government could not be serious about holding elections by the constitutional date, 4 August, and the Minister of Finance comes to this National Assembly while stating that these elections are important activities, he has failed to provide information to this National Assembly as to what the cost of these elections is going to be - most fundamental. The Government again committed itself via the MOU ... Listen to what the Gov-

ernment committed itself to, Page 5 of the MOU:

*This assistance will be based on a costed action plan for the elections. The action plan will delineate those costs to be done by the Government of Guyana and those supported by the donors' assistance.*

So, if the Minister of Finance comes to the National Assembly, I would suggest that when he makes his intervention, he tells this House what the elections are going to cost. I was looking at some financial papers and I saw budgeted \$1.4 billion. The issue is, is that the cost? That is not my information. My information is that the Elections Commission budgeted for far in excess of \$1.4 billion. The Government has agreed to, based on the financial statement I was looking at and so I suspect we wait as Mr Cholmondeley says, to go a begging. But the Government committed itself in the MOU through an action plan that delineates those costs. The Minister of Finance should have been bringing that to the National Assembly, the cost to be borne by the Government of Guyana and those supported by the donor agencies. Those things are absent.

Mr Speaker, what I have attempted to do is to inform the National Assembly of the state of affairs at the Guyana Elections Commission. So that when the Members of this Assembly leave this Assembly, no one can continue to be willingly ignorant. That is important, that no one can continue to be willingly ignorant. Mr Speaker, let me say this, it was the first time on the programme myself and Honourable Member Mr Ramotar were on - Spotlight - three weeks ago, I repeat again I am still waiting for NCN. On that programme, I pointed out our dilemma and for those who want to still keep their head in the sand, you can continue to do it. Our dilemma is that we have an elections plan or timetable that already utilised the three months that the Constitution gave to us. That is how we reached to August for those who do not know. As indicated by the Speaker, the National Assembly stands dissolved on 3 May. So we have an elections timetable that already has utilised the three months wriggling room the Constitution gave to us, but yet as indicated by several of these documents, even though we have no wriggling room, we



are behind time with many of the tasks, scheduled list of activities, some of them two months behind, some of them one and a half months behind. We need to recognise those things. I was aghast, surprised that when I stated that at that programme ... I could now see why the Government is in all this mess ... it was the first time the General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party/Civic understood the dilemma. He never knew before that day. He has actually confessed, so I could now see why the other Members are dizzy and dozy, because if the General Secretary of the PPP/C did not understand up to three weeks ago that our deadline really is not August 4. Our deadline is May 3 and when May 3 arrives, we do not have to wait for the President to prorogue the Parliament, the Parliament stands dissolved. If by that time, we continue to keep our heads in the sand like ostriches and the Parliament dissolves and there are issues with the Elections Commission that cannot be reached and needs adjustment there will be no National Assembly to affect that. *[Applause]* That is the implication. So you can continue to play dizzy and dozy.

The point is Mr Speaker, I thought I should make these things known to the National Assembly and for those who are intelligent and who think and they are not like Honourable Member Mr Neendkumar, I know that they would have grasped the magnitude of the problem. Therefore I suggest to the General Secretary - Mr General Secretary, if we are to take the Budget Presentation seriously about partnership I plead with you Sir, I implore you to at least respond to the correspondence sent to you some nine months ago by the joint opposition political parties to discuss and to pay attention to these matters. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, just pause a bit. Your time is up, but if you are given an extension and you will take no more than five minutes, we can continue upon your getting the extension. If you will take more than five minutes, then I think we had better suspend at this stage.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given five minutes to conclude his presentation.

**The Speaker:** Five minutes?

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed, Honourable

**Mr Joseph Hamilton:** Mr Speaker, the issue here for us and some of my friends across there they can continue to giggle, but there comes a time when giggling time stops. So you can continue to giggle.

Mr Speaker, if the ruling party and the Government is serious about a partnership they should pay attention to the difficulties of the Elections Commission and the difficulties of us reaching the timeline of August 2006. I need to make this point that the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar, the General Secretary of the party at Freedom House, when he speaks and the nation listens, they would want to believe that the PNC/R and the PPP/C, their views on many of these matters are not similar. But the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar must know and the Members in the House must know that the joint opposition political parties met GECOM on 12 December. The PPP/C met GECOM on 13 December, the day following and the report states that the Chairman, in his intervention, stated to the PPP/C's delegation that it seems like the PPP/C and the PNC/R had a pre-meeting, because every issue that the PPP/C had on the table, all the problems are the same things that the PNC/R spoke to the day before. The point is that when you listen to the rhetoric coming out of Freedom House, I listened to the General Secretary in his presentations over the years and he gave the impression to the nation that the things that we are speaking about, apparently they have no interest in it or it is not that important. But the reality is, the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar would say that they were the same issues and so understanding that, I would urge all Members in this House to pay attention, understanding the issues and understanding our dilemma.

Mr Speaker, before I take my seat let me again point to the IDEA Report, Page 129 in its conclusion. Listen what it says at 17(3):

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*An electoral process should be efficient, free and fair in a situation where there is distrust and tension in the society. It is imperative that the election be technically efficient and its fairness beyond doubt.*

So Mr Speaker, I know that for those in the governing party who recognise the importance of the matters that I have outlined, I know they would ponder, like the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar pondered three weeks ago on these matters. We hope in the near future that we can, in the light of the partnership proposed by the Honourable Minister of Finance and the Government, in the interest of Guyana that we can together sit down and pay attention to the preparedness of the Guyana Elections Commission so that it can deal with its mandate in the constitutional timeframe that is 4 August 2006. Thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

Honourable Members, think this is a convenient time for us to take the suspension for the normal period

The Committee of Supply has received a notice for a meeting of the Business Sub-Committee which will take place now and would last only for thirty seconds I promise you. The Honourable Members are:

- Mr Reepu Daman Persaud
- Ms Gail Teixeira
- Dr Henry Jeffrey
- Mr Feroze Mohamed
- Mr Donald Ramotar
- Mr Robert Corbin
- Mrs Clarissa Riehl

- Mr Lance Carberry
- Mrs Sheila Holder

I invite you right now to my Chamber so that we can conclude this meeting. Thank you very much.

**16:30H**

**THE SITTING IS SUSPENDED**

**17:18H**

**THE SITTING IS RESUMED**

**Mr Donald R Ramotar:** Mr Speaker, I wish to begin my presentation on this Budget 2006 from the same point that the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton started his, Page 53 of the Budget Speech where the Minister of Finance said that money was available to conduct free and transparent elections, but obviously the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton did not go in the Estimates. If he had gone there he would have seen that there is a block vote for more than \$1 billion that is there for the Elections Commission. What is also clear is that the Elections Commission is guaranteed of having all the money they need to have elections.

I myself was at a meeting not so long ago and also present at that meeting was my good friend Mr Alexander ... I see this year, the roles have changed and probably even the tactics have changed, because the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton came from a different line altogether. Mr Oscar Clarke was at that meeting at the Office of the President, where the Chairman of the Elections Commission, Dr Surujbally said very clearly that he never had any problems with releases from the government to the Elections Commission. *[Applause]*

I also want to point out Sir, that the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton knows a lot of these things, but he continues to distort. For instance, he spoke about they did not have enough money for computers and acces-

sories. Let me make the point, the Elections Commission made a request to the Ministry of Finance for releases for computers in July and they got in the same month. The question of the accessories it was not held up as a result of the Ministry of Finance, but as a result of the tender process that they had to go through. So the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton exhorted enormous amount energy to distort a simple reality that was here on the ground.

Mr Speaker, I also want to state that listening to the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton I was extremely pleasantly surprised, because a few years ago who would have ever believed that we would have been sitting in a National Assembly (and I supposed the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton performed a little for the cameras as well), we would have been hearing from a PNC executive member the call for free and fair elections and that is a giant step forward coming from the People's National Congress/Reform.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member made some other points that were also complete distortions. He said that the continuous registration was held up and did not begin in time because of finances. Mr Speaker, that is very, very far from the truth. The truth is that the reason why continuous registration started late had everything, everything to do with the attitude of the People's National Congress/Reform towards elections in our country. Mr Speaker, we went through some of these things before here in the National Assembly, because continuous registration was not only a few weeks or a few months late, it was years late. The continuous registration should have started in this country since 1997. The house-to-house registration that was done in 1996/1997 was precisely with the purpose in mind for us to go to continuous registration immediately afterwards. We recall that after the elections of 1997, after PNC/R lost the elections ... *[Interruption: 'Come to 2006']*... no I must put in a context, Mr Hamilton. You have distorted so many things that you forced me now to put things into context. Mr Speaker, in 1997 after they lost the elections that were verified free and fair, they went on a rampage and even removed the whole Elections Commission, there-

fore the continuous registration could not have started then and for the 2001 elections ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members just a minute. If we go day by day, there were two speakers who spoke from the opposition. They spoke in almost absolute silence, so do the courtesies to the other side.

**Mr Donald R Ramotar:** For the 2001 elections, we had another new registration, because to go on to the 2001 elections list, each person had to go to a centre to have his photograph taken, he had to be fingerprinted and then he had to sign a document before he could have gone on to the elections list. As a result of that, we had a totally new registration. We could have gone again to continuous registration immediately after that as well, but the elections commission again went into limbo with the resignation of the Chairman of the Elections Commission and that process could not start.

From then Sir, since this new Elections Commission took its position, the PNC/R frustrated every effort to go towards continuous registration - every single effort. I am not disagreeing with a lot of what the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton is saying. He is quite right. We have a lot of similar concerns as they have and we have expressed them to the Elections Commission, which I think, he has done and continues to do. It is his right and we are also doing that. We have been writing several letters to them about several issues. What is the difference in our attitude? Sir, the difference in our attitude is that we are trying to facilitate and help the process, while the PNC/R is trying their best to discredit, to bring into disrepute the Elections Commission itself, so that when they lose the elections again, it will give them an excuse to do their wickedness as they have been accustomed to doing.

Mr Speaker, we spoke about these things in this National Assembly before and I would not go into details on them. I just want to point out that the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton made the point and it is a

correct point that the most important thing in elections is the list. There is where all of us agreed that we have to have a good list to go to the elections. We thought like all the experts who examined the database of the Elections Commission on the request of the People's National Congress/Reform and on the complaint of the People's National Congress/Reform and found it to be almost perfect, we said that that was a good base to start the continuous registration. The PNC/R objected. *[Interruption: 'Who said so?']* ... the IDEA. *[Interruption: 'They said that.']* They said that. It was a very good base to begin continuous registration. You can borrow the Honourable Member's Report and read it for yourself. That was a very good base we agreed with the expert that it is a very good base to begin continuous registration, but the PNC/R kept raising objections and kept preventing us from beginning the process of continuous registration. I want to point out that they were speaking about some type of verification for the list. They were arguing right in this House that they needed to have live in the printing. They said to us that the Jamaicans were doing it. The Elections Commission at great expense went to Jamaica to examine the system. They found that they were not doing live fingerprinting, but that they were taking the fingerprints that they had and running them to clean the list from any duplicates.

The PNC/R has been saying in public, I did not hear the Honourable Member Mr Hamilton saying it today, but they were saying in public that the list is full of non-existent people. Well, that argument is only for the gullible. How can you say that there are people who do not exist, when in the database of GECOM there is a photograph of each person, a signature, a thumbprint and information on any distinguishing mark. GECOM has all those information and yet the PNC/R continues to say that there are non-existent persons. *[Interruption: 'Where is the hard copy? Let us verify it now.']* We are not afraid of that. I am coming to that. Therefore, their whole argument has no premise, no basis to say that there are non-existent people on the database.

The other point I want to make is that they started to talk about these live fingerprints and we agreed that if they are to satisfy the PNC/

R, we in the PPP/C are convinced that any problems in the database would be minimal, because of the amount of audits and forensic audits that the database went through. Therefore, we have no problem with them going the Jamaican route and scanning these fingerprints to take off, if there were any duplicate persons on the list. We never had any problem with that, but now the PNC/R is changing their tune again Sir. As you satisfy one of their demands, they raised several other demands. As I said before right here, I would not be surprised after you satisfy all their demands that the next things they will want are retina scan and DNA test before a person can get on to the list. Mr Speaker, we would not have any problems with verification.

Now they are talking about verifying the OLE - the new cry is verification of the OLE. Mr Speaker, we are in agreement with the experts who said that the database is a good basis to begin our registration process. The Honourable Member Mr Hamilton himself in his enthusiasm and in his very energetic presentation let the cat out of the bag, when he spoke about the list being five years old. *[Interruption: 'Not five, seven and eight.']* It is five years. The new registration was in 2001 I said that already. Mr Alexander, that is why you will lose your work to Basil Williams. You are losing your position to him. Mr Speaker, he spoke about a five-year old list and that is the point that we have been making. While it is a good basis to begin continuous registration, that in five years, particularly with the massive housing development that this government has carried out, there would be changes in the list. We remember just before the 2001 elections, the PNC/R was making a big hue and cry about the same things. In fact, every time we come to elections, we have to go through the same jamboree all over again and it is a real *jumbie* jamboree.

Mr Speaker, they argued then that they wanted a test just before the 2001 elections. They found a man by the name of Earle (I do not know what his first name is) - a Mr Earle ... *[Interruption: 'TA Earle.']* - TA Earle, to say that he was going to do a test. Of course, before that in order to lay the foundation to do that, the PNC/R made wild state-



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ments about how thousands of people were missing on the list and they even produced a list with the people who were missing. Sir, in two hours we found 80 percent of the people whom the PNC/R had missing on the list. They were as incompetent as when they were in government. They even had the Chairman of the Elections Commission's brother as one of the missing people who does not exist. Mr Speaker, then they came with the Earle's test and they said that he was supposed to take one month, but he took twelve months and he produced ... that is a clear case of the mountain going into labour and producing a mouse ... he produced a result which said that the list was only eighty-five percent accurate. It was on that basis that the PNC/R demanded new photographing. Everybody had to go to a centre to be re-registered. When the re-registration process started, ninety-nine percent of the people that Mr Earle could not find turned up to have themselves registered and photographed.

It is the same con game that we are having at this point in time. What they are trying to say is that we should verify the list. Everybody was saying that the list is a good basis to start and we must verify the OLE knowing that there would be changes in the list in which they could make their demands again for house-to-house registration. *[Interruption: 'How the list dropped from 515,000 to 446,000?']* That is another issue and I will answer you immediately. Thank for asking the question.

That was another ploy by the PNC/R to knock people off the list. In fact, recently when the Elections Commission announced that they were going to give temporary ID cards to people who had lost their ID cards, that they can go and get a temporary document, thousands of people turned up at the Elections Commission and could not get ID cards, because those were the people they knocked off the list before the 2001 elections. Sir it is the same type of manoeuvre that we are having here at this point in time.

Mr Speaker, what I was saying the direction that the PNC/R wants to go will take about eighteen months to do. If the PNC/R wants that,

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we are not afraid. Maybe upon reflection, you should consider that. If you want to go back to house-to-house registration maybe you should consider giving us back the two years that you took from us 2001 and let us go for it again. *[Applause]* Do you want to consider that?

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member also talked about problems at the level of the Elections Commission, that they were behind schedule in printing and so forth. Well yes, those problems exist, but these are technical problems. Mr Hamilton himself is a good technician. He worked at the Elections Commission, so he has a lot of knowledge. He was a technician at the Elections Commission at one time. Sir, these are technical problems and I do not know if by now, as he is getting older his knowledge is getting obsolete. We have technology and I think that once these problems are technical, they can be resolved.

I want to touch on one other matter that he spoke about - Donors coming here and that the government is depending on donors. I do not think that is something for us to be ashamed of - donors contributing to free and fair elections in our country. What we find happening in the world today that wherever there are elections that are not properly conducted; wherever there are problems with elections, there are problems within regions and within this whole period of globalisation, there could also be problems internationally. Therefore, it is also in the interest of the donor community to see that we have free and fair elections in Guyana and also to reach international standards. Particularly for poor countries such as ours, it is important for us to have elections that all of us can say are free and fair.

Sir, I want to point out that I cannot help... although you can see, I still cannot help, because I think that you were a bit derogatory to the donors, that Mr Desmond Hoyte was one of the first persons who brought the donors to try to help in the elections matters. *[Interruption: 'You do not understand context.']* Many of the contexts still exist. You were rigging elections against us. This time we are beating you at fair elections, but we want to convince the whole world that you get licks, so we have to bring the donor community.

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Mr Speaker, I think it is time, the Honourable Members on the other side wake up and smell the coffee and let us move this country forward. It is not very often that I agree with the Honourable Member Mr Ravindra Dev. In 1998, he wrote a letter to the press - Stabroek News January 23, 1998 - the Headline *THE ACCORD REWARDS THE PNC/R FOR JETTISONING THE RULE OF LAW* and I would like to quote the part where he spoke about the accord:

*It rewards the PNC/R for demonstrating to the people that if you lose by a set of rules you yourself drafted, simply seize the umpire and demand new rules, which will guarantee your victory. But those days are gone my friend - Forget those days.*

Let me now turn to some other matters. I think that I dealt enough with my friend Mr Hamilton and if you want to return on the television I am here.

Mr Speaker, let me deal now with some aspects of the Budget. The Budget was drafted under very difficult circumstances but the People's National Congress /Reform keep flip-flopping on many issues. They know that last year was a very difficult year. The Honourable Member Mr Murray made big heavy weather of the fact that our economy contracted by three percent. You do not have to be a genius to understand if we live in an agricultural country, where the main GDP growth depends on agriculture and if you have the type of floods that we had last year, and like what we are having now as well, it is bound to have a negative effect on our economy.

The PNC/R at the beginning of the floods last year called it a natural disaster, but a little later we had debate in this Parliament that lasted until three o'clock in the morning when they changed their mouths and said it was the government that was responsible for it. Here in this Parliament during this debate, I have heard some speakers saying the same thing. Let me read what your leader Mr Robert Corbin said on 24 January, in his so called address to the nation. He said:

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*The record torrential rainfall which has inundated the East and West Coast of Guyana is quite obviously the worst natural disaster in our history and we need to ensure that we act in such a way that we minimise the impact of the situation.*

He recognised on 24 January, that it was the worst natural disaster in Guyana and yet as we entered later into the flood and we entered into February of that year, the accusations started on the government that the government responsible for the floods within the country. The same thing they are doing now, trying to enhance their failing political fortunes by hanging on to people's suffering in the floods.

Mr Speaker, as I said, after all we are an agricultural country. Sugar was hit; rice was hit; livestock was hit and cash crops were hit. It was obvious that we would have had an impact on our economy.

Sir, what is commendable and what is undeniable is that the impact was not as great as was predicted by experts. It was only three percent when they were predicting almost six percent decline. That must go to the credit of government for good management of the economy of our country. *[Applause]* If you look at the other sectors of the economy, you will see growth in every area. We have had growth and development in every area. Even if you follow the newspapers, when companies put their financial statements in the newspapers, you will see that every company recorded a good year last year despite the fact that we have those floods. The most recent one, I think, it was the same day that the Budget was read, Banks DIH appeared in the newspapers recording an increase in profit, which was more than what they had the year before.

Mr Speaker, apart from the natural disasters that we had, we must also recognise the other factor - the rise in the price of fuel. The fact that fuel price went up from about US\$10 per barrel to touch US\$70 per barrel and this government was able to keep inflation at eight percent was a marvellous achievement by any type of standard. *[Applause]*

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Moreover, the fact that our largest gold producer in the country closed its operations in September again shows that the development in our country has been very, very good despite the natural disaster that we had to face.

The Honourable Member Mr Murray in his presentation spoke a lot about the debt and he was saying that the debt is a horrible thing that we are putting a lot of debt on the Guyanese people and he was trying to calculate per capita what we were doing about the debt. *[Interruption: 'Was he wrong?']* Well, I do not know if he is wrong. I myself do not like debts, but I know it is not the same position that the leader of the party, Mr Corbin has. I have the Hansard here Sir, in 1996, Mr Corbin responding to government benches about how much debt the PNC had accumulated said:

*Nothing is wrong with the debt., I want to make it clear, nothing in my opinion Mr Speaker is wrong with public debt, nothing is wrong with it, if it can be serviced*

And I want to say that the PPP/C can service not only the debt it is making, but the debt that the PNC made and left us with. *[Applause]* So clearly Sir, it is good governance ... *[Interruption: 'You cannot service with write-offs.']* ... my boy that allowed us to get write offs; good ability allowed us to get write offs.

Moreover Sir, I want to respond to some of the criticisms made by the Honourable Member Mr Murray about the private sector. I believe all of us recognise that it is important for us to create conditions generally in our country for the creation of wealth. In that regard, the private sector has a big role to play. If you look at the credits in the Budget itself, it was mentioned that credit to the private sector went up by 9.1 percent. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member.

**Mr Cyril CL Belgrave:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable

Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed Honourable Member.

**Mr Donald R Ramotar:** Mr Speaker, moreover the government equalise the conditions for local and foreign investors. During the PNC's time, concessions were only given to the foreign investors. In our time, the same types of conditions that are enjoyed by foreign investors are given to the local investors. Never before did the private sector have so much access to capital as they have today.

It was the PPP government that expanded the one industrial site that was left when it was in government in 1964. Industrial estates are in different parts of our country. But more than that, I would be the last to say that every thing is perfect administratively, because I know that there are many people who complain about bureaucracy and problems they are getting with some issues. However, it has been a great change from when the PNC was in government, because even to get a part for your machinery you had to go to GUYMEDIA, you had to get a project document and you had to wait months and months to have your things processed. You had to have an import licence before you can have goods in our country. The PPP/C government removed all licences for importation and we give duty free concession to the private sector to retool and to build new factories in our country. Therefore, I think that we are in good standing as far as that is concerned.

Mr Speaker, what about the future? I have heard many speakers on the other side speaking about the need for the diversification of the economy. I think that there is an agreement that we will have diversification of the economy.

Mr Speaker, only a year ago, some of the talk show hosts and also in this House, the government was being advised to shut down the sugar industry and not to expend the monies that we are expending now

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on the Skeldon project. Fortunately, good wisdom prevailed on this side and we continued to pursue diversification of the economy both within industries and outside of industries. As I argued here one time before, I believe that sugar has a glorious future in our country. I would like to read from a Magazine called *The Sugar Worker* Volume 8, No. 1, January 2006 and it says:

On January 24, international raw sugar prices in New York reached 18.75 US cents per pound, a level not seen since 1981. Market analysts think that prices will continue climbing.

That is for the raw sugar. It went on to add that -

*several countries have gone out of sugar,*

but it went on to say,

*the International Sugar Organisation estimates that world production will be 1.5 to two million tonnes below consumption. Climatic conditions are a major factor in production, sending strong reminder...*

What they are saying is that if there are 1.5 to 2 million tonnes of sugar below the level of consumption, prices are bound to climb.

Within our society, we are not only modernising our industry to produce raw sugar, but we are organising it now to be a complex to be producing electricity, refined sugar, alcohol, other stock feed and other things in that regard.

We are trying to do the same with the bauxite industry. We hope that we will not only be exporting our bauxite in the future, but hopefully in the not-too-distant future, we will have a smelter where we could produce alumina and aluminium in our country.

Mr Speaker, I want to touch very quickly on one small point - Generally, on the political situation in our country. I think that it is very

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important for economic and social development. Of course, the opposition will cry and shout, you are always saying this, but it is true that is why we always say it, because I can remember when this government was trying to privatise GPL then GEC and was at the point of doing so, to sell it to SASH POWER; SASH POWER walked away, because you were on the streets beating and burning all over the place. So it had to do with political instability. That is important for us.

Sir, I come back to the elections, we must have free and fair elections and we must be proud of them. As I said, elections are not something that our people should be afraid of and to be frightened that there would be violence in our society. Elections should be something to be celebrated, because it is an achievement for us and I think that we have to work. That is why we are bending over backwards and embracing the donor community that you so decry in order to have free and fair elections and for our country to go on. We must have also some morality in politics and that is why I want to touch on this point.

I went yesterday to a re-launching of a book that was published in 1953 by Mr Aston Chase - *One Hundred and Thirty-three Days Towards Freedom in British Guiana*. In that book, he wrote about some of the things that the PPP was thrown out of government for in 1953. One of the points he made was the fight, you were there with us too. One of the points he made in that book that our removal was as a result of us trying to push the Recall Bill in the National Assembly ... [Interruption: 'He is not here. '] ... but I want him to hear anyhow ... to have Parliamentarians who crossed the floor and who was on their list should leave the National Assembly. I heard one man arguing that the Constitution does not put him out, but I say, the new Constitution written by all of us says that his position is unconstitutional. Article 156 (3) of the Constitution states:

A member of the National Assembly elected on a list shall be disqualified from being a member of the Assembly, if he or she, in his prescribed manner, declares that he or she will not support the list from which his or her name was extracted or, declares that he or she abstain



from supporting that list or, declares his or her support for another list.

Mr Speaker, clearly, if even the prescribed manner is not stated here; if we want to bring a new morality to our politics - morality and decency - decency should allow them to walk out of this National Assembly. That is the struggle you and I fought for when we were together in 1953. I hope that we will bring into a conclusion before the end of this National Assembly. I thank you very much for your attention Sir. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

**Hon Harripersaud Nokta:** Mr Speaker, my assessment of this Budget debate leads me believe that democracy is at work here and Members of both sides must, in an atmosphere of partnership continue to debate and discuss. The objective is to bring out ideas and views that we can agree, disagree and agree to disagree.

The late Dr Jagan, Father of the Nation, Father of Freedom and Democracy must be smiling and saying continue, talk, discuss and have dialogue. Protect democracy and let Guyana move forward in unity peace and progress.

Mr Speaker, *TRANSFORMING GUYANANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP* is appropriate for present day Guyana as described in Budget 2006 and the Minister of Finance must be congratulated as I now do for its timely presentation and moreso, protecting a course of development not only for this year, but for the future. Since 2001, the Honourable Minister of Finance and his technical staff have worked tirelessly to analyse and prepare five budgets, which brought about progress and development in every aspect of social and economic life of the Guyanese people. In fact the Honourable Minister must be given full marks - five years, five stars for a job well done in managing and controlling Guyana's financial resources through

difficult times. *[Applause]*

This year has started with great distress through flooding on the coastal belt and no doubt the challenge will be greater than last year. Again, Mr Speaker, unity, determination and with that sprit of patriotism and a government that can be counted on for good leadership, the Guyanese people will overcome and forge ahead. In the face of difficulties, we have made great strides in the past and will continue to do so this year and beyond.

With increased budgetary allocations both current and capital for each of the ten Regions, we are assured of improvements in the Regions. Education, health services will further improve, transportation and communication services will be extended to reach areas not serviced before. Infrastructure development as well as electricity and agriculture services will expand especially in the hinterland regions.

*Region 1* - The residents in Koriabo and Five Star will have two new Health Huts, Moruka hospital will be rehabilitated and construction of a new bigger and modern hospital will commence at Mabaruma and incinerators will be built at Pakera, Mabura and Kaituma hospitals. A capital allocation of \$24.5 million will realise improved medical services for the Region's residents. \$34 million is set aside for a construction of a primary school and teachers' quarters at Whitewater, Wauna, as well as a nursery school at Port Kaituma and Barima-Koriabo and Hotoquai. Yarakita primary school will be extended to cater for the increased number of children.

Road maintenance in the three Sub-regions is always a costly demand. Now that a bitumen kettle will be purchased, road repairs and construction at Mabaruma settlement will be improved.

A new agriculture nursery at Four Miles Kaituma will be established so that farmers will have access to plants for their farms thus expanding their cultivation for increased production - \$3.8 million is set aside for this project.

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Transportation facilities will be boosted with \$4.5 million to purchase one open-back canter vehicle and a 75HP outboard engine.

Residents of Mabaruma, Port Kaituma and Santa Rosa will have electricity service extended to their communities.

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to some comments made by two Honourable Members of this House Messrs Hanoman and Joseph who visited Matarkai. They went around which is good. They should go more often. As they went around, they brought photographs and they were displaying it here like when a big champion is displaying a trophy. They were saying that the road is bad we agree, we admit. The Matarkai road is bad like many other roads in this country. That is why the government set aside \$65 million to improve that road from Matthews Ridge to Port Kaituma Airstrip. The contract will be done in sections as I will outline. There are different sections:

- construction of roads from Papaya to Barimita - \$11 million;
- rehabilitation of community centre Junction to airstrip Matthews Ridge - \$5 million;
- rehabilitation of road of Eclipse Falls Junction to Jonestown - \$8 million.;
- rehabilitation of road M2 Junction to Austin's residence Port Kaituma - \$8.7 million;
- from School Road Junction Port Kaituma again - \$19.7 million

Mr Speaker, we are hoping that when the contract starts, the people will enjoy a better road communication.

Honourable Member Mr Joseph mentioned about a mortuary built at Kaituma, We did build a mortuary; the people wanted a mortuary,

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because in the past when people die in the hospital, the bodies have to stay in the ward for a long time. So we built a mortuary, but you said that the people do not want it. They wanted it and they built it, but what has happened, now that it is constructed they are complaining that flowings from the mortuary will contaminate the water. The Region, the NDC and the EPA are addressing that matter.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member again flashing photographs about a school building which the PNC built some time ago and was glorifying over it. Indeed the PNC built it, but it deteriorated to such a state that they never repaired. In 2003, this government spent \$40 million under the Ministry of Education Secondary School Reform Programme to convert that building into a secondary school. At the moment there are 239 students attending the school.

I will now turn to the Honourable Member Mr Khan. He said a lot, but there is no need for me to touch on all of them. He talked about the road. I just want to remind him that when the PNC was in government, the road was so bad that there were only five private owned vehicles. His grandfather owned one, but today we have 32 minibuses and numerous amounts of trucks. Because of the road improvement, people can communicate. So my friend we have more money again to prepare the road.

*continued in Pt II*

# National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT  
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN** Part II

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2.00 PM

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*cont'd fr. Pt 1*

*Region 7* - Mr Speaker, my colleague dealt excessively last night, what a wonderful presentation. It was a moment of enlightenment and he was telling the nation what has happened and what is going to happen for Region 7. I need not repeat them, but just to say, this government over the past five years have allocated a total of \$389 million for capital works in Region 7. In fact in:

- 2004 - \$61 million;
- 2005 - \$68 million; and
- 2006 - \$77.2 million.

It means that all the developments which my colleague spoke about are going to be realised this year.

Mr Speaker, in addition to that, we have under the Community Enhancement Programme coming up this year. Bartica hospital and construction of roads, drains and culverts, every avenue and street in Bartica will be rehabilitated this year at a cost of \$888 million. The contract has already been awarded and it is only a matter of time now. The market will be also be rehabilitated, in fact, it will be a new market.

*Region 8* - This is one of the most difficult regions to administer and that is why today we can see improvement in every aspect of social life. By now, we have built a health centre in every village provided with solar

panel and radio set. By the end of this year, we would have linked all of the villages with a road to Orinduik, to Kamana, to Waipa and to Kaibarupai. In addition to that there will be a road linking Waipa to Kamana to Kopinang to Maikwak and to Chenapowu. Mr Speaker, it then means that by the end of the year ... and I am hoping to invite all the Members to go for a ride from Georgetown to Orinduik and if you so desire, we can connect to Kopinang, take a boat and come down to Kaieteur and we can walk down to Waratuk and Amatuk and then come back to Georgetown.

*Region 8* - Mr Speaker, Region 8 has had a difficult time, but because of the intervention of this government today, we have two secondary schools. Every year, because of more and more children passing the common entrance examination, we have to continue expanding so that we can cater for the growing number of children attending secondary schools.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has put out a book showing that Amerindian population is the fastest growing - the population census showed that the fast growing population in this country is Amerindian, nearly 60,000. At the moment, the Ministry of Education knows that more than half of the total Amerindian population in this country are getting education, whether nursery, primary, secondary, technical institute, President's College, or even at the University of Guyana, Amerindian children are enjoying better education. The PPP/C government has done that. Mr Speaker, we even have Amerindian students in Cuba now and within another couple of years to come, we will have more Amerindian engineers, doctors and technicians to service the number of villages that are in the hinterland.

The Honourable Member Mrs Bancroft, when she spoke yesterday ... and I only want to correct some inaccuracies.... she said that there is no health worker at Tumatumari. I immediately called up the REO and he said that is false. There is a health worker by the name of Cornell Edwards, a PNC Regional Councillor stationed at Tumatumari and he is serving the people. She does not visit these places, so how will

she know. Mr Speaker, she talked about the secondary school at Mahdia. For the first time Mahdia is getting a secondary school, the PPP/C must be complemented. Classes have started, but we do not have the dorms properly equipped, but I am assured that by the beginning of the next term the bunks and mattresses will be in place, kitchen equipment will be purchased, staff will be employed with the passing of this Budget and it will be made operable in the next term. It means, even the children of that sub-district will enjoy secondary education in Region 8.

Mr Speaker, a hefty \$58 million is to be spent on education delivery with the construction of one primary school. I now come to Region 9.  
*[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Before you start Region 9, you need some more time, Honourable Member

**Mr Cyril CL Belgrave:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed, Honourable Member.

**Hon Harripersaud Nokta:** *Region 9* - Mr Speaker, a hefty \$58 million is to be spent on education delivery with the construction of one primary school at Kwaimatta; two teachers' quarters at Kwatata and Parishara; four nursery schools at Arapaima, Massara, Woweta and Culvert City, as well as rehabilitation of primary schools at Sand Creek, Aranaputa and Surama. This is what we mean when we talk about improving education facilities for teachers and students in Region 9.

To improve medical services this year \$11 million is budgeted for repairs for the Shulinab health centre; construction of staff quarters at Lethem and fencing of Lethem Hospital Complex where presently a modern hospital costing \$118 million is under construction and will be completed this year.

Mr Speaker, before I move on, yesterday we were told by the Honourable Member from Region 9, that the Agriculture Officer is not stationed at Lethem any longer and there is no service to the villages in Region 9. I have to correct that statement. It is a misrepresentation of the facts. The Agricultural Officer is stationed at St Ignatius. He visits the villages. It was only last week he was discussing with the REO on two occasions plans for his programme for 2006.

Mr Speaker, like coastal regions, Region 9 depends heavily on agriculture both crops and livestock, hence government's consideration in promoting food processing projects \$4.3 million is budgeted this year to purchase machines to produce by-products from cassava and also a rice huller and the food processing building at Toka. This will boost preparation of one hot meal a day at school for the children. This project has started and will be extended to other schools in the Region.

*Region 10* - Mr Speaker, my colleagues on the opposite side of House may want to say that Region 10 is left out. No! Not at all! Last year that region was allocated \$113 million for capital works. This year it is allocated \$128 million, an increase of \$15 million more.

Looking at the project profile for Region 10, there is \$14 million to rehabilitate a bridge at Katapuli Creek and Culvert at Wisroc to facilitate improved access to the areas.

Under Education, \$41 million is allocated to construct the Republic Avenue nursery school; extension of Rigma and Watooka Day primary schools and teachers' quarters at Muritaro. Also enclosure of the bottom flat of the teachers' quarters at Kalkuni. Rehabilitation of roads such as Linden, Ituni, Kwakwani Fair's Rust and Casuarina Roads also will be done. Also in Noitgedacht the main road is budgeted for the amount of \$27 million.

Under infrastructure development, roads at Wisroc, Well road and South Amelia's Ward with \$9.182 million will improve. To promote agricultural development, drainage and irrigation canals at D6 and D15



in West Watooka and Ice Creek, the culvert at Market road and Republic Avenue and drainage pipes at Amelia's Ward Hillside will be done. With a \$16 million allocation, the result will be improved irrigation to the various communities.

What about health? Improve delivery of health services will benefit from a voted provision of \$4 million to purchase a minibus to transport officers and medical personnel to do out reach programme; plus the purchasing of fogging machines, desks, suction machines, computer, filing cabinets, et cetera.

Lightening facilities will be enhanced when solar systems for Ituni, River's view and Kalkuni are purchased.

Mr Speaker, the future of residents of Region 10 is quite optimistic with RUSAL's investment in bauxite and LEAP with its multi-million dollar projects. My colleagues will deal with that in more detail.

Mr Speaker, what about the urban development programme? \$78 million is allocated to construct the Wismar Market, to put additional facilities in the Linden Town Hall and the Constabulary. Phase II of the Mackenzie Market - \$50 million dollars is earmarked and that will start this year also.

The *Coastal Regions* are battling against nature, the extensive flooding and resulting losses damages and sufferings last year and again this year, places a burden on the lives of people. The present circumstances are distressing and at times daunting.

In a life of difficulty, there is hope. In Guyana, where there is distress and sufferings there is the caring PPP/C government.

With this Budget, I can continue to say more and mention the hundreds of millions of dollars set aside for development in every sector, but what is needed now is unity, understanding, and cooperation.

Mr Speaker, my colleagues on the other side spoke about the

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debt and Honourable Member Mr Carberry spoke about the legacy of the PNC. I just want to indulge this House and to quote from a speech made by Mr HD Hoyte SC, Leader of the People's National Congress and President to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana - 20 October 1988. He referred to the debt that Guyana owed and let me read this paragraph page on 18:

*Our foreign exchange reserves became rapidly depleted as a result of the unfavourable balance of trade and balance of payments, with the contraction of our export earnings we could not meet all of our debt obligations to our overseas creditors so debt began to accumulate. We became un-creditworthy and many sources of external financing were closed to us.*

That is the debt - the legacy - which the PNC brought. Yesterday, I heard the Honourable Member talking about find money. He was saying find money to give to the farmers. Let me tell you how the PNC used to get money in those days. I am quoting from page 21:

These deficits have been financed by internal borrowing that was not supported by increased production and savings in the economy. In fact, we were merely printing money which contributed to the high rate of inflation which we have been experiencing.

So you went to the printing press and printed money and you shared it and that is how you intend ... Mr Speaker, in despair and no wonder they had a Minister of Finance called Frank Hope, he lost hope and went away, because of the state of Guyana's economy and Mr Hoyte was telling it as it was. I just want one more quotation. He said on page 22:

*We have entered into a vicious economic circle, which has remained with us today. Our foreign exchange reserves have dwindled. Our deficits have widened, debts have again accumulated and real gross domestic product has*

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*stagnated. All of these have resulted in the loss of skilled manpower, underutilised production capacity, unsatisfactory performance in the Public Sector enterprises and deteriorating physical plant, structures and services.*

Mr Speaker, this is the legacy which the PNC has left this country in. Mr Speaker, I am quoting from Mr Desmond Hoyte's Speech - 20 October 1988. Mr Speaker when I listen to all of them there glorifying of all the great things that the PNC did, but it is here and when the honourable member went to Kaituma, *[Interruption: 'I took out the picture to show you. ']* ...yes, but you have stopped short in your journey. You should have spent another day and go to Jonestown and when you would have gone there with your camera, you would have been able to show all those 914 bloated bodies. *[Applause]*

This is what the PNC did in Guyana. Go back with your camera and if you need these I can give them to you - the greatest disgrace in this country, which the PNC has brought. Mr Speaker, I do not want to go on further. We must move forward, but I must let my colleagues understand, that this question of forgetting the past, it is not easy to do. Dr Jagan said that hunger is a great teacher and once you learn while you are hungry, you do not forget. The PNC brought hunger to us and this nation and while we would not want to dwell in the past, we will not forget the past, because it is that which is causing this country to be where it is.

Mr Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister again and wish that this Budget will bring greater progress and prosperity for Guyana - onward to a successful Budget; onward to greater victories; onward to a successful PPP/C in the 2006 elections. Thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mr Corbin

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** Mr Speaker, I rise to add my contribution to this 2006 Budget Debate under the misleading, if not insulting theme *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*.

18:33H

Presiding Member

*[While Mr Corbin was speaking to the Motion, the Speaker withdrew for a short while from the Sitting and Mr Basil Williams presided during his temporary absence.]*

I do so with mixed emotions Mr Speaker, I am neither angry like the honourable Minister of Labour suggested nor am I mad. Perhaps the best words that I can find are amazed, perplexed and troubled. I am amazed and perplexed and troubled that we the highest level of decision makers in our land could spend an entire week of deliberations in this National Assembly indulging in sharp exchanges and so many instances of what I call frivolities, so oblivious to the reality that all is not well in Guyana today; that unless constructive and speedy action and not words like we have heard a few moments ago, is taken; the stability of our fragile social fabric is likely to further disintegrate.

While the Honourable Member Mrs Sahoye-Shury as in her presentation yesterday, beats her chest about the great footprints being placed upon the sands of time by the PPP and as my friend a few moments ago, shouts about these fantastic feats which are now being performed by this administration, we seem to have lost reality of what is really happening in Guyana.

Mothers are weeping over the brutal murders of their children; wives and children are mourning the loss of their husbands and fathers; qualified young people who diligently pursue their studies after years of sacrifice are contemplating a dark and uncertain future in an environment where jobs are either scarce or non-existent; young people who have failed to benefit from the glorious education system that Minister Jeffrey

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pontificated upon a few days ago, are now liming at the street corners of several villages along the Coast, gambling, smoking - and I am not speaking of cigarettes - being unjustly criminalised by police and frustrated over the fact that several of them cannot even master the art of reading and writing in a country that once boasted of having the highest literacy rates in the Caribbean and are either unemployable or are easy prey to the unscrupulous drug lords who find it easy and an easy reservoir of recruits that see no other way out of their dilemma.

18:35H

*[Speaker resumed the Chair]*

Businessmen who previously enjoyed success now ponder future actions, in the context of their continuing losses either from the flood, the unfair competition as a result of laundering activities from the narcotic trade or from the escalating cost of production especially the unbearable electricity rates.

Farmers on the Coast are with heavy hearts as they watch in dismay their rice fields, cash crops, permanent crops, covered in flood waters their livestock drowned daily and their lifelong work diminished before their very eyes.

Workers and their unions witness the blatant violation of their rights to collective bargaining despite the government paying lip service to the many ILO conventions.

Civil Servants and teachers experienced wage increases imposed that have no relationship to the rising cost of living reducing them, key players in any modernisation almost to the level of mendicants.

Citizens especially old age pensioners antagonised daily how they will make ends meet with the miserly pay and pensions.

Mr Speaker, above all, Guyanese of all walks of life irrespective of race, colour or creed, social or economic status cower in fear over

the fragile crime and security situation while wondering who would be next.

This is the reality in Guyana. Only four days ago, as this Budget debate began a 2001 PNC/R candidate for elections to this Parliament, prominent journalist, controversial talk show host, an African rights activist was gunned down in his driveway in Subryanville, a once quiet and safe neighbourhood close to where most of the senior members of the diplomatic community now reside in Guyana. Waddell was not the first, but he is the most recent in a long list of citizens of all races, who have met their death in similar fashion over the past three years with no one or group being brought to justice for these crimes.

I could produce a long list of such people:

- businessman Rambarran, driving out of his business place right in Ruimveldt - shot dead;
- young Ordeson travelling along the seawalls coming out of his car - shot dead, not a word;
- prominent baker Ramlochand West Coast Berbice in his home - shot dead;

and I could go before then and show you the production of what happened to young men in this country between 1993 and 2002, of the hundreds, who have lost their lives in similar fashion.

The Minister of Home Affairs came to this House a few days ago and tried to dress up the sad security situation and spoke about cold cases, thinking perhaps that any sophisticated explanation will suffice to ease the pain and suffering of those mourning families left behind.

Yet, we have carried on in this National Assembly, as I said earlier, with all kinds of frivolities as if nothing serious is wrong in our country or perhaps under the mistaken belief that our high sounding speeches will resolve the complex problems which our country faces at this moment.

Have we stopped to think what our employers, the people of Guyana, looking at us and all the theatrics on television during this debate must be thinking of us, their representatives of this House. The theatrics like the one we witnessed a few moments ago, telling us about Minister Hope, is it, who left the corners of government years ago, replaced by so many subsequent Ministers of Finance or delving into tragedy such as Jonestown, thinking that is some glorious political point where the lives of 900 people were lost innocently and thinking that it can be used to score cheap political points as if the PNC was running some camp in the North west district.

This is the kind of frivolity that we are having here, when we are supposed to be discussing serious business that affects the lives of people in this country. It is interesting to know what the people of Guyana are thinking of us at this moment as they look at us on television. Perhaps it would be interesting if some of the members of this House should read the views of a young Guyanese whose letter appeared in the letter columns of yesterday's newspapers as he wrote about what he observed on television, looking at us in this House.

Minister Bisnauth yesterday, in a very responsible, calm and very insightful presentation sought to bring some sanity to the issues confronting us in this country. He found it convenient to quote from a philosopher. I do not want to go that far. As I reflect on all that has transpired, I could only reflect on the verses from my Holy Book First Corinthians Verse 13:

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels  
and have no charity, I have become like sounding brass  
and tinkling cymbals,*

because that is what I thought I was hearing a few moments ago. We think, we are impressing ourselves, but we are impressing no one. Rest assured, the people of Guyana are not amused; many are angry; some are disappointed, but worse some have lost hope and faith in the established political process. Why therefore express surprise at views by the

late Waddell and many like him and the Rhyan Shaw in the media? Why therefore express surprise at the advertisement by ACDA that they will encourage the boycott of the next elections, if constitutional change guaranteeing power sharing is not introduced? These individuals and groups have examined and analysed the political process over the last few years in this country. Many are totally fed up and have lost faith in the system to deliver real economic and social justice to the citizens of this land.

Mr Speaker, it is irrelevant whether you disagree with their views as expressed in the media or in any advertisement. The Constitution of Guyana gives them the right to express them and if we are serious about taking Guyana forward, we must be prepared to listen and take account of them. Unless we do so, the expression in this Budget of *transforming Guyana through modernisation and partnership* would be nothing but a pipe dream.

Mr Speaker, I would be the first to commend the government, if the projections in this Budget could be realised. Indeed, I would be happy if we could agree on a programme that could genuinely guarantee the development of Guyana. Make no mistake about it, the PNC/R is first and foremost concerned with the improvement with the quality of life for all the people of Guyana. In this direction we would support any programme including the PPP/C programme if we are convinced that it is feasible. We are not ambiguous on this issue and I invite members of this Honourable House to read my Congress Address to our Party's Congress in 2004. Copies could be made available to them if they wish, but the document is a public document and it has been available for public scrutiny for more than two years on our website [www.guyanapnc.org](http://www.guyanapnc.org). I see Mr Sawh is very interested. These documents are available so I am not inventing a PNC/R's position for convenience in this Parliament tonight. What we say about the PNC/R working collaboratively on a programme for development of this country has been stated pellucidly by me at our congress and fully endorsed by the highest decision-making forum of our party. *[Applause]*

However, in this direction, I have a responsibility to comment and



offer constructive criticisms and suggestions in the interest of this nation. Let us hope that those who are now responsible for the affairs of this nation, until the next elections at least take serious note and hopefully consider the points I am about to make on this proposed Budget for 2006.

Mr Speaker, when one examines the pronouncements and projections in this Budget, it can truly be said that it is commendable in its stated hopes and projections, but I am afraid Sir, woefully short in its policy and programme directions to achieve the desired goals.

The presentations by various speakers on this side of the House and I daresay some on the other side especially the Honourable Members Mrs Sahoye-Shury and Mr Bisnauth have exposed the very weaknesses that could impact negatively on the achievements of its goals. However, I wish to submit that apart from its policy and programme weaknesses, there is a fundamental flaw in this Budget.

I believe, this Budget has failed to take into account all the various studies and reports written in the past about the essentials for genuine economic and social progress in this country. The Honourable Member, a few moments ago, was taking us back into history. He reminded us of what everyone knows. A nation that does not know its history is bound to make the same mistakes again and therefore we should use experiences of the past to guide us into the future. But we do not have to go very far, because in the not too distant past, there were several reports and documents, which were prepared by experts which give a lot of guidance to what could be done, what were the essentials to take this country forward. I want to submit that a great deficiency of the Budget is that it failed to take into account those many recommendations, studies and reports of experts from both sides of this House as well that were made in the not too distant past, not from Minister Hope's time, but even when this PPP/C was in office as to what could be done to advance this economy. So it lacks the philosophical underpinnings that are prerequisites for the modernisation of Guyana.

Some of these studies and reports include the National Development Strategy Policy Paper. I have a copy here and there were several other reports along with it; the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and its many progress reports that have been produced over the years - 2004/2005, commenced by those who were intimately involved in Guyana's affairs, including President Jimmy Carter and perhaps not so far back the Communiqué signed on 6 May 2003 between President Jagdeo and the Leader of the Opposition in Guyana, on matters of importance to take this country forward.

I would therefore suggest to the members of this government that if they are indeed interested in the future of Guyana, they ought to put aside this Budget, which in any event is at the moment in breach of the law and first address the serious issue of good governance without which no genuine development will ever take place in this country. Believe me Mr Speaker.

What really is good governance? We heard the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar, a few moments ago, embellishing us with all the great achievements under the category of good governance. According to him, the PPP/C government has not only excelled, but passed brilliantly under this category of good governance. So it is important to ask ourselves - not emotionally, but very objectively - what is meant by good governance? I do not want to invent a definition by myself and so I turn to this document called the National Development Strategy 2001-2010 a Policy Framework Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana. I repeat, Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana, a civil society document. This document was not prepared by the PNC/R nor by the PP/C, but by a collaborative effort of Members on both sides of this House, I believe. It was done with the involvement of technicians and scholars from various fields in this country and having examined this country and all the realities which exist as distinct from the political myths, they came up with a synthesis and said what they believe could be done to eradicate poverty and unify this divided nation.

What did they define as good governance? Let me not trust my

own definition. I will read from Page 7 Chapter 3:11 under the caption *Governance* which states:

The United Nations have defined good governance as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs. Governance comprises the complex mechanisms processes, relationships and institution, through which citizens and groups express their interest, exercise the rights and obligations and mediate the differences. Good governance is characterised by participation ...

and I hope... Oh, he is not here Mr Speaker. I was reading this especially for the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar, so that he could write it down and then review his speech, but perhaps the Honourable Member Mr Harripersaud Nokta, who also followed in the same vein, should write it down. The criteria that we are going to use: - - participation;

- transparency;
- effectiveness;
- equity; and
- strict adherence to the rule of law.

Mr Speaker, if we are to evaluate the contributions and the performance of the government, this is the measure we must use to evaluate all these matters that we have been regaled with over the last few days.

Let us therefore examine the Budget and the performance of this government from this perspective and perhaps members of this administration may be able to better understand why, despite all the donor assistance; all the loans; all the publicised legal and institutional changes; all the monies that are now available and debt that can be ably serviced by the government as the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar said a few moments ago, that there has been a downward spiral in our economic

performance over the last few years to the point of negative growth in 2005. Mr Speaker, I apologise, not Mr Ramotar. While the speaker before me - the Honourable Member, Mr Nokta boasted ... I think, it is he who read from the 1988 Speech by Mr Hoyte, about what the PNC was saying about the economy in 1988. I am happy that Mr Nokta was able to read that, because that was the situation in 1988, but I would like you to go back and see what transpired in this country, because of the vision of Hoyte and the PNC between 1989 and 1992 when you took over. *[Applause]* When that negative situation that you described, which we were frank with the people to admit, that we were able to transform that situation to a position where the country had reached in 1992 of an average of seven percent growth annually when you took over.

As I said earlier, let us indulge in frivolities and misleading the Guyanese public by misquoting statistics and speeches. The PNC's administration was characterised by frankness and honesty to the people of Guyana, that is why Mr Hoyte could have told them the truth of what was taking place in 1988. He did not go and tell them that the economy was performing well. He was following the tradition of the founder leader Mr Forbes Burnham, when he took office, he did not promise the people pie in the sky and sweets for the children. What he said was that I have nothing to offer you, but hard work. That was what he said. I have nothing to promise you but hard work. We have always been very straight forward on these issues. You may criticise as much as you want, but on those issues, I challenge you to bring the facts. So you quoted Mr Hoyte in 1988, describing the fact that the economy of Guyana was in serious trouble. Yes it was. We were facing all kinds of problems. You have to look at the performance in the context just as how you are blaming the floods today, albeit wrongfully. There were escalating oil prices just as you had last year. There were high prices to be paid for oil at that time and in addition the sugar prices - the same problems you are now experiencing which we had experienced - a great boom in the 1970s, the price had slumped. All these factors impacted on Guyana's economy and so the economy was in trouble, but the PNC did not fold its arms. It came up with a constructive Economic Recovery Programme that you are the beneficiaries of when you came into office in 1992. *[Interrup-*

tion]

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member.

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed Honourable Member.

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** Mr Speaker, when we speak of the performance of the economy, it has to be put in context. Indeed the Honourable Member Mr Harripersaud Nokta can boast about how well the PPP/C did between 1992 to 1997 - I believe 1996 going on to 1997, but that was not because of any imaginative work by your administration, that was because you floated on the tailwind of the Economic Recovery Programme introduced by Mr Hoyte and the PNC in this country and because that programme was embraced, Guyana's economy started to move.

What did you do? You started to disregard and tinker with everything that the PNC did, because of a very myopic approach to the development of this country. Everything that was done in twenty-eight years was bad, so you had to throw out everything and you threw out the baby with the bath water. So by 1997/1998, the economy began to decline. These are statistics that can be checked not by any report from Minister Kowlessar and since the Honourable Minister of Trade is going to follow me, perhaps he should produce those World Bank Reports that are now available on the net to refute what I am saying. Do not worry with the statistics that were produced from Freedom House on Robb Street. It is available on the net. All the World Bank Reports on the economic performance of Guyana will reveal to you that there has been gradual decline tailwind of the PNC and then although you were doing all these things, the economy declined.

So Mr Speaker, the problem we faced in Guyana today is what

do we do as legislators and representatives of citizens to take this country forward? It will not move forward by flowery speeches and pie in the sky documents, if the fundamentals of the Budget are not there. The philosophy on which we need to go forward is absent.

So let us look at what the National Development Strategy pointed out as the basis upon which good governance is assessed. I read it a few moments ago. It stated very clearly, participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, equity and strict adherence to the rule of law. I will repeat it, especially for the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar who had slipped out, because he was talking about good governance a few moments ago.

So let us look at participation, which this Budget seeks to suggest is integral to the modernisation of Guyana, because you are transforming Guyana through modernisation and partnership, a very lofty objective on which I commend you for. Where is the participation that is so essential if the lofty objective of modernisation and partnership is to be achieved?

Mr Speaker, the behaviour of this government in the 2005 floods and the floods being currently experienced, provide most recent examples of the commitment to participation. Sufficient has been said of this in the recent flood debate and I would not repeat all that was already said during that debate, but more particularly observed and experienced by all the citizens of this country.

The colossal mismanagement of this country's affairs is amply demonstrated by the response to the floods in 2005 and again in 2006.

The reluctance in some cases downright refusal to allow those knowledgeable volunteers to participate in the planning and decision making at a time of crisis is the best example. The government's response to offers made by the leader of the opposition - the major opposition party - the PNC/R, the Guyana's Citizens Initiative and several other voluntary groups speaks volumes about the sincerity of this admin-

istration and its call for participation.

Poor planning, visionless leadership and the absence of any evidence of technical competence were being used; resulted in untold suffering of thousands of our citizens in this land.

The President and his Ministers are supposed to have at their disposal throughout the year, teams of technical managers to advise them on implementation and execution of appropriate programmes in all areas of our country's affairs.

We know about the special high paid technocrats on contracts. Yet, what do we see? Crises after crises and the President and his merry band of Ministers running around the country like merry men, making vain attempts at damage control. That is what we are seeing in this country for management.

Yet, if truth be told, all the appropriate recommendations to prevent the suffering were available. I repeat, all the recommendations which were appropriate to prevent the suffering were available to the government.

Yesterday, the Honourable Member Mr McAllister detailed all the recommendations that were made by the various studies and experts. What did the government do? He had to repeat it, because you are not learning. You are not going back to these reports. He has to tell you, so he has to remind you, because people's lives are at stake. This is not a joke. He told you early last year, about the various reports and what the experts said about the Conservancy Dam and how to open the gates? He told you all of that and now you are saying that he told you that several times. The truth is, what did you do with the information that you had at your disposal? Nothing, except to come to this House and attempt to deceive the nation as Minister Sawh glibly said yesterday that the suffering was as a result of global warming and acts of God. That was really an act of God then. Perhaps as he called these floods and all that have transpired after then acts of God, perhaps indeed God

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is sending a serious message of what we need to do to save this nation. But are we listening? Are we learning? Or are we like the children of Israel on the banks of Jordan, waiting to cross and because of fearing to lead properly they had to wonder forty more years in the desert? So we must ask ourselves, would we allow the people of Guyana to be lost for forty years in the wilderness, because of visionless leadership? I say no. Change there must be and change must be very soon. The people of Guyana will be required to make that decision soon and I am confident in their intelligence and in their ability to make the right decisions.

We sometimes underestimate and disrespect the intelligence of the masses when we pontificate before them and believe that they are fooled. What is the result of this non-participation that we have seen over the last years? The ordinary people in the villages have assumed control of their destiny. That is the result of lack of involvement and participation and they are now telling government ministers how to do their job that they were elected to do. That is what is happening in Guyana. When a country reaches a stage where citizens believe that unless they engage in protest action, no attention would be paid to their problems, we are gradually descending in a state of anarchy. That is where we are going. Let us not fool ourselves in this House with speeches. It would not change things. We have serious problems.

Why did the people of Tain and Black Bush have to protest before any attention was paid to their flood woes? This is not a PNC/R's constituency, so I am not speaking political. I am saying that you are getting a message, but you are not listening. Why did the residents of Fyrish Village have to block the path of the Prime Minister? Why did the villages of West Coast Berbice have to block the road at Belladrum, El Dorado, Lovely Lass and Hopetown, before there was recognition that they face similar problems as farmers at Mahaicony and Abary? Mr Speaker, after that everybody ran in the area. They suddenly discovered including the General Secretary, I saw him posing in the Mirror, while for weeks the people remained neglected. So they have learnt, Mr Speaker. We are teaching them a new culture. They must protest, they must block the road and then they see the Minister including the



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General Secretary of the PPP/C now running to discover what was there for weeks and which with proper governance, there should have been a proper system of reporting all along.

Why did the people of Perth Village in Mahaicony have to block the branch road before President Jagdeo like the proverbial knight with the shining armour arrived to get a photo opportunity of bringing relief to the suffering. Why must people have to resort to these strange methods?

Why did the people of Retrieve, Kara Kara in Linden believe that they had to protest for two days? It lasted for two days before any attention was paid to the terrible conditions of their roads. *[Interruption: 'PNC/R's RDC.']* Think about PNC/R and PPP/C and do not understand what I am telling you. Tain was not PNC/R. I am trying to tell you that we are not reading the signals of what is happening in this country. Even as I speak to you this evening, there are reports that today residents of Mahaicony block the roads to receive attention and I am told, I could be wrong here, it is reported speech that they were able to succeed in getting the other knight in his shining armour from the Agriculture Sector, Minister Satyadeow Sawh running up there to pay attention. As my report told me, suddenly they were able to find a hymac and an excavator. At least the people were promised that the hymac and excavator would either be taken in this evening or have gone in to relieve the problems of Catharine, Mahaicony. *[Interruption: Who reported that? That is hearsay.]* Ask the Minister. So when I speak of these developments, I seriously think that these are dangerous developments and must not be taken lightly. The problems are therefore compounded by the on-the-spot willy-nilly decision-making that is now taking place. Funds are being doled out in an unrestrained manner with no reference to any proper plan. Then lo and behold, there is now talk about an application for a million dollar loan to buy machines to move to the situation, when only a few days before, we were regaled by the Minister of Agriculture that is how all these works had been well advanced and how prepared they were for the situation. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member Mr Corbin be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed, Honourable Member

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** Where is our nation going? Where are we going as a nation? So we can beat ourselves on the chest. We can make political mileage in this Parliament, but what I have outlined to you in this House a few moments is a serious indication that there are deep-seated problems, which need to be addressed by this government, which we offered to help since the first flood of 2005.

According to Mrs Sahoye-Shury, that never will happen. That is the approach, you can do it all. So much for this partnership that you are promoting in this Budget, when one of your presenters yesterday glibly told us shared governance is a joke, participation is nonsense, never will happen we are marching to that thing called footprints on the sands of time. Well you can go ahead marching, but I want to assure you with my own biblical style you must go and read the story of Gideon as he marched forward. It is in Judges. I noticed Minister Jeffrey is looking a little puzzled ... read Judges 6 to 8, it is a nice little story. So you can continue to march on and think that you have a mighty army; think that you will always be there and have the massive support, but there are many lessons that we can learn from history.

Mr Speaker, this brings us to other indicators of good governance. If one wants to provide perfect examples of lack of accountability, the absence of transparency, inept and visionless management so that persons learn exactly what they should not do, we need to look no further than the example of how this government has administered and managed the affairs of this country over the past thirteen years. You do not have to look far if you want to look at accountability and transparency. *[Interruption: 'What you did for twenty-eight years?']* Oh

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Lord, what would happen if you were to ever dream of reaching twenty-eight? There will be no country, but that would not happen, when bad and visionless management is added to corruption then we have disaster on our hands. That is what we are experiencing - serious disaster.

The government has practically abandoned our economy and placed it squarely in the hands of narco traffickers, money launderers and smugglers of commodities including guns. That is what is happening in this country. The money laundering business activities of the drug lords are used as examples to show the development of our economy, facilitating activities of these people, because probably there is a belief maybe in some quarters that if the drug lords and their nefarious activities are obliterated, then our struggling and fragile economy will fall apart.

I believe that some members of the PPP/C really believe this; heightened criminal activities are all around us, unfair competition for legitimate businesses, breakdown in the rule of law and moral decay in society. I am asking you, how will modernisation as proposed in this Budget ever become a reality? I say these things in seriousness and it is no point when we speak of crime and the security situation that we glibly find a political escape route saying that is the PNC/R caused that or is it political motivation. We are creating the environment for criminals to believe that if they carry out their work, they could satisfy political objectives. It is a more dangerous development. *[Interruption: 'Who said that?']* Ask your General Secretary.

Mr Speaker, this Budget Presentation could be a great farce if the government does not seriously take the points which are being made here in this Parliament today. It is a week of lengthy debates, attacks and counter attacks, great promises, lofty plans and then sadly, no accountability. I know that they will come and say that they have the Auditor General's Reports for every year and it never happened before in twenty eight years as if this is a great shield to what is happening, but the Auditor General has said that the lotto funds must be paid over into the Consolidated Fund and even though you have a report, you are not even following what the Auditor General said. So what is the point of boast-

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ing? As I have not doubt that you are trying to say, well we have Auditor General's Report now that is accountability. Defiantly, the President is still using the lotto funds as a personal slush fund in this country. The Honourable Member Mr Lumumba, who speaks in this House has mouthed-off about the President Youth Choice Initiative, but in reality it is a colossal failure. I am not speaking on my own behalf. I think, it was the Stabroek News through some journalists did an investigative report, which I had the opportunity to read a few weeks ago, where they travel around this country and did an evaluation of what was happening with some of these projects. So these are not political assessments made by me and so when we mouth-off about what is happening, we have to use the correct tools of analysis before we arrive at conclusions as to whether these programmes are succeeding or not. Why must Mr Lumumba, Presidential Adviser to the President on Empowerment be responsible for Youth Choice Initiative Projects, when there is a whole Ministry of Youth and Culture that is supposed to be formulating policies and programmes for the development young people in this country in a constructive way? *[Applause]*

If there is no policy framework for promoting youth development, how are we going to get this modernisation? I used to look at the Honourable Minister Gail Teixeira in sympathy. Thank God she has gone to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Now she looks at security, she can control the police there and if they go out of line, she can deal with these matters. Imagine she has been placed responsible for youth and there is somebody working out of the Office of the President, directing how youth projects should run in this county? Is that not micro managing? Is that how we are going to push development in this country? Is that how we are going to modernise it? What is worse, in that effort, we are violating the very principles of transparency and accountability that we boast about, when we talk about good governance? So the President Youth Choice Initiatives continue. Of course, I am told and I cannot know for sure, but it is well reported that some people have walked away with overflowing pockets as projects languish around the country with large monies spent on projects, but not adequate work shown for the monies spent and no accountability. This Parliament is not in a posi-

tion to even evaluate the individual expenditure associated with those projects and we talk about good governance and accountability. Ow, in good conscience look in the mirror again.

Therefore, a budget that is presented every year after public sermons about the planned programmes having presented the Budget, we are soon subjected to a plethora of supplementary financial provisions and papers of expenditures already incurred without any reference or scrutiny of this Parliament. Workers in the public sector have imposed upon them a paltry end of year payout, without any reference to collective bargaining. The unions are being bypassed, ignored and bullied. Tell me, where is the evidence of accountability and transparency? Where is the report on the flood expenditure of 2005, Mr Minister of Finance that you promised in this mid-year budget of 2005? What criteria did the government use to determine the levels of assistance given to victims of the flood? Who collected the names of the beneficiaries? Who collected those fat cheques? Were the people in the various areas informed about the process for identifying them? Why did some villages receive assistance and some did not and some only after they had to protest? These are some of the burning questions that require answers. As I travelled around the flooded areas during the last few weeks, I found several persons with slips issued to them to receive assistance since the last flood of 2005. As late as the date for the Budget I saw somebody wrote me up in the papers saying that I should have been here instead of being in Victoria and Golden Grove. I understand who are my employers and my employers had a problem at Victoria and Golden Grove and that was more important, than listening to this Budget that promises pie in the sky things that would not happen. So I went to Golden Grove and Victoria and after I travelled through Golden Grove, Nabaclis and Victoria - flooded areas again - by the next day, everybody discovered that they were suffering just as bad, but I should not have had to go to do that. This is what I am talking about, the way we managing the country. There were residents in that area, who brought slips to me. I have them on video. They said that they had these slips since the last flood, when they went to collect the money, they were either told to go there, come back here; their names are not on the list and all kinds of problems.

There are people still in Guyana and many villages since 2005, who collected slips to get either the \$10,000 or \$30,000 that were paid out to people in need and they did not get anything. My question, what has happened to the money that was allocated for those persons who collected slips?

Unless we have transparency and accountability, a cloud will always hang over this administration about what has happened to these monies. This is the taxpayers' money. These are resources which have been provided by friendly donors from around the world and somebody must be made to account for these funds. This is not anybody's private chest that he can determine how these resources are to be spent in this country. We sit here and we speak about transforming Guyana through modernisation and partnership. I say again and I seriously want to say to the government that unless there is genuine transparency and accountability, Guyana has no place to go. You can harp back on the past, you could speak about twenty-eight years until you are blue, it would not change the nature and content of your present contribution and the role that history will record that you have played, not in modernising this country but bringing it into permanent crisis. So we need to examine what is happening. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member.

**Mr E Lance Carberry:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed Honourable Member.

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** I move to the other heading, by which you will determine this question of governance - Adherence to the rule of law. These are the criteria I have to use, Honourable Member Mr Ramotar, not all those fancy speeches which you gave me here.

This Budget is the latest example of the total disregard shown by this

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administration for the rule of law in this country, but what else can we expect, when the worse examples are being set at the highest levels of this land by two successive Presidents and their administrations?

We have witnessed the throwing of a court order over one's shoulder and the nation looking on television and seeing a legal practitioner of some repute being heard to advise that is good, that is good. People have seen this on television in this country. I have seen it. I am not speaking it from second hand information.

As I mentioned earlier, we have witnessed total disregard by this administration, given by the Auditor General that the lotto funds are to be paid into the Consolidated Fund. We have seen ... he is not above the law and the Constitution and I, in this Parliament is a separate institution of the State and I am not violating the rules I am pointing out what is happening in our land. I am not using his name to influence any Budget. I am stating a fact that the Auditor General has stated that the money of the lotto funds should be paid into the Consolidated Fund and it is being managed by the Office of the President of which the President is head and the monies are being used or misused, because we have no accountability, in a manner which prevents this Parliament from evaluating and accessing it in accordance with the requirements with our law. We are talking about the adherence to the rule of law.

We have seen that the Integrity Commission appointed without the due regard to the constitutional requirements of consultation. I have taken this matter to the court. It has been hidden in some file, it has not yet seen the light of day - a constitutional motion and I believe that you are in authority to comment on these matters, not in the case itself. But in the fact in the judicial practice that constitutional motions should be treated with the most urgency, but I filed a motion challenging the constitutionality of the Integrity Commission appointed without consultation in accordance with the Constitution. It has neither seen the light of day in the court and those who administer the affairs of this country have not even taken the hint that the fact that this matter has reached the court let me resile a bit, let me come to grips with my responsibilities and let me see if

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I could correct this breach of the law and we talk about adherence to the rule of law and consultation and all these fancy phrases. It will not help us to progress.

The Chancellor of the Judiciary remains un-appointed notwithstanding the requirements of the Constitution and the President of this nation thinking that he could avoid the Constitution by opening a new debate on whether a Chancellor is necessary.

This is the state of Guyana and so the illegality ... *[Interruption: 'You are not going.']* ... going where? There has never been any invitation for any meeting, so get the facts straight. Propaganda will not help you. That is why I am placing it in the records of this Parliament.

Therefore, the illegality of this Budget is not surprising. I believe, Mr Murray pointed out to this House in his presentation and I would not repeat, I just want to emphasize that even this very Budget, which we have before the House - this 2006 Budget - falls foul with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act No. 20 of 2003. It stipulates what should accompany this Budget. Section 15 has been drawn to your attention. No where in the estimates before the National Assembly is the information required under that section included clearly there is a failure to comply with the law and therefore an illegality and some of you probably do not know that, that Section 15 requires a Programme Performance Report - a statement - that should be signed by the Minister. Some are signed, but we have a new Minister of government not announced, the Head of the Presidential Secretariat one Mr Roger Luncheon. Well, we are looking for this Cabinet appointment Sir and I cannot find it.

There are other stipulations Section 67 (1) obliges the Minister of that Act to supply a mid-year report on the year-to-date execution of the annual budget. While that does not impact at this time for this Budget, it has implications for your failure to present the mid-year Budget last year. It is a matter of law and we are speaking here about adherence to the rule of law.



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Mr Minister, where is then your special report on the flood? Where is the accountability for all the donations? Where are these pumps that came in from Trinidad that took so long to arrive? The people of Guyana and the donors want to know. Maybe the courts should be approached for another conservatory order on this matter to see whether we should proceed with this Budget next week, because while one is prepared to look at these matters whenever these issues are brought to the attention of the government, they are dismissed. When one looks at the reaction of the Honourable Minister of Tourism Mr Nadir, I am told, to this comment made by Mr Murray in such a dismissive manner of a legal requirement that was brought to the House's attention, maybe we should really go the court and make a test case of this next week rather than you trying to correct yourself.

We have had instances in this House and I think it was the Customs Amendment Order where we drew to our colleague's attention that certain legal requirements were not observed, but instead of taking the advice, Mr Speaker, I think you were in the Chair Sir and I am sure that your memory will serve you well. They proceeded arrogantly and brazenly to breach the law even though we brought it to their attention. What is this business about consultation? So a few months later they had to come back withdraw it; bring a new one to correct the errors which they made out of arrogance and brazenness, because they were unwilling to accept suggestions which were made in good faith in this House. The records of the Hansard will bear you out.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that unless the philosophical underpinnings of the Budget are put in place, our dreams of having this modernisation through partnership would not become a reality. So let me see what I can deduce out of this document that I have in front of me so that the Members of this House will understand what I meant by philosophical underpinnings. The basis on which this thing can work is absent. On Friday, 13 August 2004, President Jimmy Carter said of Guyana and I read it for this House, because there has been a lot of misrepresentation. This is what is said in a statement by former US President Jimmy Carter, whom you brought to rescue you in 1992, that

is why it is important to hear what he said:

*Georgetown Guyana, I would like to thank once again President Jagdeo and Chairman Corbin for inviting me to visit Guyana. I have had an opportunity to meet with a wide range of organisations and individuals who have all given generously of their time and have shared their opinions and suggestions.*

*I had productive discussions with Mr Corbin and other leaders of the People's National Congress/Reform, President Jagdeo and the Central Committee of the People's Progressive Party/Civic, Members of Parliament of both ROAR, GAP/WPA, the Chairman and the Commissioners of the Ethnic Relations Commission, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Chancellor, Chief Justice and President of the Bar Association, representatives of the private sector and trade unions, the Rights of the Child Commission, youth group, the international donor community and others...So he had wide discussions and then he goes on: Although my faith in the Guyanese people remains, it has been a sobering visit. Except among a few political party leaders, there have been almost universal expressions of concern about the present condition and future hopes of Guyana, based on a failure of political leaders to heal the incompatibility and animosity that characterise their relationship.*

This is what a stranger has to come and tell us.

When I first met Dr Cheddi Jagan more than twelve years ago, he expressed the desire to heal the political divisions and ethnic polarisation in Guyana and with the approval of President Desmond Hoyte, the Carter Centre assumed ...

You heard whom - with the approval of President Desmond Hoyte:

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*... the responsibility of monitoring the elections 1992. Since then, we have worked for several years with political leaders and private citizens to develop a national development strategy which prescribes a future for Guyana, based on a shared commitment of private citizens and political leaders working in harmony regardless of their social status, ethnic origin or political party affiliation. This plan was developed under the direction of Bharrat Jagdeo, who was then an Official in the Ministry of Finance, one of its key provisions was a call for participatory democracy within which opposition parties would share fully in shaping policies of the nation. Subsequently, there were promises of constitutional reform that would fulfil this commitment...*

And he goes on still quoting

*...Instead of achieving this crucial goal of inclusive and shared governance...*

I hope Mrs Sahoye-Shury is listening.

*... the Guyanese government remains divided with a winner-take-all concept that continues to polarise many aspects of the nations' life. Most Members of Parliament are directly independent upon and responsible to the political party that chooses them and not to the people, whom they professed to represent. There are only spasmodic meetings between political leaders and publicised agreements reached during those rare and brief sessions have not been fulfilled. The promises of constitutional reform have been frustrated.*

I continue to quote President Carter:

*Guyana is blessed with extraordinary human and natural*

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*resources which President Jagdeo and other leaders are struggling heroically to utilise. However, there is little prospect for either substantial economic or social progress unless there is a truce in the political wars. No one party should bear the blame. The traditions and culture of both major political parties are deeply entrenched and have their roots in fifty years of fierce rivalry that denies the legitimacy of the other party's concerns. This problem can only be solved with basic constitutional changes in the system of governance. Based on many years of observations and my recent conversation with Guyanese citizens and members of the international community, I have shared with President Jagdeo and Robert Corbin my thoughts on some steps that might be taken to ensure political harmony, peace and stability.*

- (i) The political leaders should consult with each other regularly beginning with the implementation of agreements already reached as described in the 6 May 2006 Communiqué and other decisions.
- (ii) Representative of the People's National Congress should return to a post in Parliament.

Well, Mr Speaker ... [*Interruption: 'You were there though?'*] No, we were in before. This statement was issued on 13 August. According to the records of the Parliament, we returned to this Parliament on March 28 on to 14 April and we had good reasons, because of the death squads to leave. We came back in this Parliament from 19 March, 2004. This is in August. We had already come back into the Parliament, but he was worried, because of what he was seeing in the country, he felt that we might have walked out again. So he was saying do not walk out, give the government a chance to fulfil their commitments made.

- (iii) All the provisions of the National Development Strategy should be debated in Parliament with many as possible im

plemented into law.

- (iv) The Standing Committee on Constitutional Review should be reactivated to implement proposals for substantive governance and election system reforms drawing heavily on civilian participation. The two-party documents on governance represent a starting point..that is the paper; you have on inclusive governance and paper we have on shared governance.
- (iv) An independent civil society forum should be created to lead a structured national discussion on a vision for governance of the country to promote reconciliation and the NDS. I hope civil society will organize itself in a non-partisan fashion for this purpose.

And he concluded:

The Carter Centre and other international organizations will be eager to assist in these official and unofficial efforts and also to help ensure the integrity of future national elections as requested by Guyanese leaders and civil society. Of all the countries that I have visited in the world, Guyana has the most unrealized potential. It is my hope and prayer that the future will be filled with peace, harmony, mutual respect and economic and social progress.

I have read this carefully into the records, because when people comment wildly about our thrust to promote a new system of governance, one believes that this is some invention of the Peoples' National Congress/Reform. When ACDA jumped out and put an advertisement in the paper that they are going to boycott the elections or encourage boycotts, because shared governance is not in place. There are those who seek political mileage as though this is something just brought out of the back door yesterday. When for years, they have been talking about this and even Mr Carter would say that. I want to say that if I were to go to the agreements that Mr Carter suggested should be implemented,

when the People's National Congress/Reform returned to Parliament, I would spend the next hour showing how all of them except a few which relate to the Parliament and some sections, but the key issues that could help to bring this nation together have been skilfully avoided. Those issues which deal with eradicating poverty and unifying Guyana, because in the very document, this Communiqué signed on 6 May between President Jagdeo and myself, you would see that the records will show careful agreements and before I take my seat, I will quote from Section 9 issues raised by the President not by me, by the President.

The President and the Leader of the Opposition agreed that the issues raised by the President, including the PPP/C's Paper on inclusive governance and the National Development Strategy will be dealt with at the subsequent meeting .

And at that subsequent meeting which was concluded by an agreement on Thursday, 12 June and Wednesday, 18 June, this is what the National Development Strategy sections said, Section 3 of the revised agreement:

The President and Leader of the Opposition agreed that the National Development Strategy Paper should be re-laid in the National Assembly and subjected to debate thereon.

I do not want to go into the other matters, but this paper spends an entire Chapter - Chapter 3 - dealing with some of the fundamental issues of governance in this country. I submit to you that we can prepare how many budgets we want and we can put high-flying phrases and use the English language, which is that our command with great alacrity, describing all that we want to do, but if we don't base that budget on a solid foundation of good governance and express a willingness to work together for the future of this country, the future of Guyana will be lost.

I hope that having said what I had to say today, we will leave this Budget Debate with some serious commitment to deal with the problems of this

country and stop frivolities and politics and seriously addressed the genuine problems which this country face, if we are to take our people out of the poverty and lack of unity which still exist in this country. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Member.

We will suspend for a few brief minutes and then resume shortly.

**19:50H**

**THE SITTING IS SUSPENDED**

**20:10H**

**THE SITTING IS RESUMED**

The Honourable Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** Mr Speaker, I rise to lend my support to the Presentation by my colleague Honourable Minister Saisnarine Kowlessar, having presented the 2006 Budget before this Honourable House.

Mr Speaker, my estimation tells me and this is just the rough calculations that the entire period for the Debate taking into consideration, the breaks that we had lasted approximately 30 - 32 hours and this is a time during which people actually participated in the debate.

Mr Speaker, the opposition benches, chose six specific areas to criticize the Budget. The areas that they focus their attention on were:

- Guyana's place at the global economy;
- the flood situation;
- the environmental challenges globally and nationally;

- the state of the economy;
- the foreign debt; and
- corruption culminating with a call for the withdrawal of the Budget.

These are the six areas of focus, which the opposition benches chose to focus their speeches on.

The Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member Mr Corbin, a few minutes ago sought to add his toppings to the Debate by introducing a few tangential and peripheral issues save and except for the usual mounting of the two hobby horses namely:

- that of governance; and
- the rule of law.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Corbin stood up and with a wide brush accused Members of this House of engaging in frivolity and being oblivious to the realities obtaining in Guyana.

He claimed, assuming that he is talking about both sides of the House that we have lost touch with the realities of Guyana and as a result of this, he is amazed and perplexed.

He then found that the theme of the Budget was misleading and insulting.

Mr Speaker, I wish to say one thing that is I think it is unfortunate. Let me put it in a more positive way. I believe it is unfortunate for the Honourable Member Mr Corbin to come to this Honourable House and regale us about frivolity and lack of seriousness. Because in the same way that he is answerable to his constituents and on the payroll of his constituents so are we on this side of the House. The same way that he professes to be serious and we also on this side of the House are equally serious. And I am sure that Mr Corbin would admit as he himself have



implied that anyone who is running a government has very serious responsibilities and each one of the speeches or the contributions that were made by members on the opposite benches, they themselves alluded to the seriousness of running an administration, because they had that experience too.

Mr Corbin also said that he is angry. I think that was said in a way that to imply that he is an angry man. We are angry and this side of the House too, but let me warn that when two angry people clash, especially in the context of a situation in which we are talking about, I think the sufferers stand to lose more than those who are engaged in the actual clashes. That is precisely what we must seek to avoid. Throughout the annals of the history of this country, we have faced situations which have led to this country suffering and I would like to believe that there people, the Honourable Members on that side of the House and in the wider Guyanese community, who would not wish to see this country revisit the days of the 1960s

The Honourable Member Mr Murray set the tone for the PNC/R's contribution to the Debate. He made the keynote speech, which set the tone for the Debate on the part of the opposition benches. Obviously and it is quite natural for the members of the opposition benches to follow the queue of Mr Murray which they did in a very disciplined way, I must say.

However, I believe that that was done under the guidance and instructions of the Leader of the Opposition, so that if the Honourable Member Mr Corbin is seeking to chastise with this wide brush of his, all members of this Honourable House were engaged in frivolity and lack of seriousness, then I believe it to be much better to take those members on his side of the House in a corner and chastise them rather than chastising everybody.

The Honourable Member Mr Corbin spoke about:

- weeping mothers;

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- farmers with heavy hearts;
- unemployed youths liming at the street corners;
- old age pensioners agonizing; and
- people living in fear.

As he spoke, I am sure that in the same way I got a sense *déjà vu*, Mr Corbin was also himself regaling in *déjà vu*, because in essence what he was speaking about there was the times and the days of the administration during which he served.

Mr Speaker, it was clear and it has now dawned upon me, that the Honourable Member Mr Murray set the tone of the Debate in the opposition benches, while the Honourable Member Mr Corbin set the tone for the debate on the elections. I understand that, he is leader of party.

Mr Speaker, I would wish during these few moments that I have to seek to (for the want of that the word) demolish the argument that were made by almost every single member on the opposition side in respect to the six areas of focus, which they themselves sought to advance with a few to criticize and then eventually rejecting the Budget.

Reference was made to us not understanding where Guyana should be in the global economy in today's modern globalized world. Mr Speaker, there are tonnes of literature as to where a country like Guyana, which is no exception from other developing countries, as to where these countries should be in today's globalized world.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Deryck Bernard sought to address this question as he did in the previous budget debate in 2005, but in his presentation he made a serious flaw, because he sought to disregard Guyana's specific location within CARICOM and the single market economy. At no point in time, in Mr Bernard's argument or in Mr Bernard's presentation did he place Guyana in the concentric con-

text meaning that our first home - our first point of situation - is the Caribbean Community. Mr Speaker we in Guyana have no other home, but CARICOM and now recent promulgation of the single market and economy. This therefore must be the springboard from which we seek to place Guyana in the global context. This was one of the factors which were missing from the Honourable Member Mr Bernard's analysis.

Mr Speaker, in a publication called the West Indian Development and Deepening and Widening the Caribbean Community written by Mr William Demas former Secretary General to the Caribbean Community, an eminent scholar, which I do agree with, he had this to say:

The development of progress needs to be indigenous or internalized irrespective of the size or natural resources of the country that is to say domestic entrepreneurs big, medium and small should be flexible, innovative and risk-taking. In addition development must come from both the top and below.

This is precisely what is happening in Guyana. Mr Speaker, apart from being an integrated member or integral part of the Caribbean Community, as the Honourable Member and colleague Foreign Minister Insanally pointed out; we are also part of a hemispheric project, an exciting one at that.

One of the most interesting and exciting part of this project is the integrated infrastructural project of South America, where Guyana, together with other South American countries are beginning to embrace each other from the infrastructural perspective, meaning that the road from Georgetown to Lethem and the bridge across the Takatu River and from thereon into Brazil will be the connection that this country to make with one of the largest emerging markets in the world. Mr Speaker, Guyana together with its other CARICOM partners will soon be engaged in negotiations with MERCOSUR. As we already negotiated with a number of Central American and South American countries in concluding trade and economic pacts with these countries.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Bernard sought to make the point that external conditions ... in a sense the rhetorical question was asked; why having regard to these favourable external factors is Guyana not benefiting? Why is Guyana not growing? Why are we not seeking to take advantage of the opportunities out there?

Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from the World Economic Situation Prospects 2006 published by the United Nations. Mr Speaker, in this publication, which was recently released just a few weeks ago, an explanation is given as to why the countries that referred to by the Honourable Member Mr Bernard, were able to come out of the economic doldrums and to some extent why countries like Guyana have not been able to do so. For example, it said that on 15 December 2005, Argentina announced its intention to make an early repayment of the entire outstanding obligations to the International Monetary Fund. The reason why Argentina was able to do this is the following and I quote:

Windfall gains from higher export commodity prices have helped a great number of countries to improve their fiscal balances allowing also for greater expenditure. Part of the oil export revenues of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have been earmarked to a special fund directed to help needy countries. Chile increased its surplus for a second consecutive year Thanks to a greater copper and tax revenues and higher growth.

Mr Speaker, [*Interruption: 'We got to find oil.'*] everybody will agree if we find oil obviously we would be able to grow quicker, but the point I am seeking to make it is easy to make these comparative analysis by not understanding the nature of the economies of these countries and to the extent to which they are able to come out of faster and effectively from crisis situations compared to a country like Guyana whose natural resources are still to large extent remained untapped. [*Interruption: 'What about Taiwan and Singapore?'*] I am coming to that.

Mr Speaker, what about us operating at the global level? I have moved from the regional level to the hemispheric level and to the global level.

We were told from time to time in different context by other speakers from that other side of the House that any first rate student who understands X or Y problems should be able to understand why X or Y phenomena is happening. We were also told that the answers to these problems are not rocket science and therefore, because of our inability to interpret these developments and take advantage of these opportunities, the country continues to lag behind. Mr Speaker, I think in the same vein I would argue that any CXC student would know that we are living - countries like Guyana are struggling to survive in a very hostile international environment. For example, this is reflected in the recent cut in the price of sugar which we have brought to this House time and time again as a matter of information. If we had a favourable international environment then how do you explain that one of the largest players in global trade and economic relations such as the European Union has chosen to cut the price of sugar of eighteen under-developing and developing countries to such an extent to bring them to their knees?

Another manifestation of this hostility was the challenge by Australia, Brazil and Thailand, countries deemed also to be developing, challenging other developing countries, thus depriving them off their share in the global marketplace particularly in Europe.

Another manifestation of the hostile environment in which we live has to do with a diversion of aid to other countries in regions, because of pressing global demands, humanitarian issues and so forth.

The increasing marginalization of small, vulnerable and commodity dependent countries is a fact which any political scientist or economist would not deny.

Mr Speaker, there is a number of other manifestations of what could be described of the hostile sea in which we are operating. So it is not correct analysis to say that the environment in which we operate whether at the CARICOM or the hemispheric or the global is so favourable that we fail to take advantage of it. It is not favourable, it is extremely unfavourable. As a matter of fact it is extremely hostile.

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Mr Speaker, we also have to bear in mind and I am sure that my friends on the opposite side of the House are very much aware of the fact that we have banded ourselves together as a community and have engaged or are now engaging in a series of very important negotiations in order to position Guyana in its rightful place within the global economy. I refer to:

- our negotiations at the World Trade Organization;
- our negotiations with the European Union with respect to economic partnership agreements,
- our negotiations within free trade area of the Americas; and
- our negotiations at the bilateral level.

Here is a group of small economies, who are working assiduously as they should to find a rightful place in this hostile world and at the same time seeking to engage with countries who at other fora are taking positions which do not help us.

Mr Speaker, Professor Arthur Lewis made the point - as a matter of fact emphasized the point - that this approach is an indispensable approach for countries such as ours.

Mr Speaker, in the course of the Debate, one of the issues that were raised by the almost every one of the speakers on the opposite side of the House had to do with the flood. The Honourable Member Mr Corbin himself made reference to this matter. It is not by chance, it is not coincidental that this environmental phenomenon found a central place in this Budget both in the Speech and the Debate. It is only natural that the flood found a central place in this Debate, because it had a serious and debilitating impact on the lives of so many people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Minister Collymore said something in his presentation that I think each and every one of us ought to put in our memory banks, when he said that the opposition seems to be gloating over the sufferings of our people as a result of this thing. If this is true, I

think it is indeed a cause for disappointment.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to some information having surfed the internet, I came across a web site called the Reflection Café - a Platform for Thought and Humanity. This is the web site that was constructed by a group of persons who followed developmental issues vis-à-vis environmental issues as well. This is what these eminent persons had to say:

*In 1970, the world recorded 78 major natural disasters, which affected about eight million people and inflicted roughly ten billion in economic damage. By 2004, the number of major disasters worldwide climbed 384 claiming 200 million victims. The economic cost jumped five-fold to 50 billion. The final numbers for 2005 willt even the worse..*

At the same web site Reflections Café, in conversation between correspondents of what is called the World Watch Institute, this is what they had to say:

*The links between climate change and weather-related catastrophes need to be addressed by decision-maker. Although no specific storm can be definitively linked climate change, scientists agree that warm water is the fuel that increases the intensity of such storms and that tropical seas have increased in temperature from zero to two degrees Fahrenheit over the past century. Katrina transformed rapidly from a category 1 to a category 5 hurricane, when it passed from the Atlantic Ocean to the much warmer Gulf of Mexico. In the next few decades, water temperatures and sea levels will continue to rise greatly increasing the vulnerability of more communities. Global warming and its anticipated effects on the hydrological system will make some areas more vulnerable as storms floods, droughts increase in frequency and intensity.*

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Now the logical question was asked, what about Guyana? Mr Speaker, that is a logical question, it is a fair question. *[Interruption: 'What are you doing about it?']* That is precisely the point I am coming to, what are we doing about it? Mr Speaker, in mid-December 2005, a two-day workshop on Natural Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Planning was held in Georgetown. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member.

**Mr S Feroze Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** Mr Speaker, at this workshop, Dr Roger Luncheon MD and Head of the Presidential Secretariat made the key-note address and this is what he said:

*We have to move beyond mere disaster response approaches and move towards active disaster prevention and mitigation.*

He added:

*National and international communities have moved beyond disaster response to disaster mitigation.*

Then he went on to point out to that -

*Guyana is going to adopt and must address the trend of Guyanese seem to have towards natural disaster that is a world where there is a feeling that it will never happen in Guyana. We must move away from that, that it will never happen in Guyana and even if it happens we will feel limited impact on short duration.*

Mr Speaker, I understand that the Honourable Member Mr



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McAllister participated in that workshop and made some very useful contributions. and so here is where we find that Guyana having understood the importance of climate change, global warming, rising sea levels and all the manifestations of ecological and environmental challenges at the global level are seeking through institutional arrangements of this type, not only to understand it, but to put the necessary arrangements in place to deal not with mitigation, but with prevention.

Mr Speaker, we have heard from the opposition benches and number of claims and allegations about this flood. We heard:

- that the drainage and irrigation infrastructure is in the poor state;
- that misinformation is being peddled by the State media;
- that the government is discriminating against rice farmers and not providing farmers and other crops with assistance;
- that the government is creating an impression that every thing is under control;
- that there are disparities between treatment one community and another;
- that the nation is not prepared to deal with disasters of a major nature;
- that the government is not dealing even-handedly with this matter;
- that the government must create a national command structure and so forth; and then
- from the Leader of the Opposition himself that the response of the government was lacklustre, irresponsible and late.

Mr Speaker, these criticisms or claims are not dissimilar from what we heard in 2005. In fact no new arguments were raised this time around, but as Honourable Minister Collymore said, since I have to sing for my supper, like Vincent has to, in defence of the government's response to the current flood situation a very important point has to be made. That is, in any natural disaster of the scale that we witnessed in 2005 and 2006, there is one and only one key factor by which governments are judged locally and internationally. That is, the pace by which that government responds in a positive and meaningful manner. Mr Speaker I want to say that beyond the shadow of a doubt, this government responded immediately and positively. *[Applause]* We have seen in cases in Pakistan, in New Orleans, in other parts of the world, in Italy ... *[Interruption: 'Talk about Guyana right now.']* ... You spoke about places that you visited when you talking about the selling bauxite. You are in Switzerland, you were in Alsace-Lorraine, you were in Balboa and all these places, so I should be given a wide berth to.

Mr Speaker, my apology for that digression, but I simply want to make the point that in the most of the cases that you see on the television when natural disasters of this magnitude takes place, the key criticism that this made by the people who are suffering and by the international community is that the government failed to respond immediately and effectively. In the case of Guyana, that was certainly not so. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, such was to response of the government that the regular critics and cynics could not find any well founded criticism save and except to engage in cheap politicking and a perennial blame game.

As recent as the contribution made by the Honourable Member Mr Corbin, what were we told, that the President and the Ministers were running around doing things that should be left to technicians. Mr Speaker, a song and dance was created or was made about the conditions of flooding in the Pomeroon and the impression was created that the government had given too little too late to the residents in the Upper and Lower Pomeroon.

Mr Speaker, it is not that I would like to go back down to the memory

lane, but for the purpose of being objective in one's analysis, it is important for us to make comparative analysis.

Mr Speaker in 1973, we had floods of the same type of magnitude that we have now and I would like to quote from the daily chronicle of Tuesday, 11 December, 1973. [*Interruption: 'The date of the ballot box day'*] You got it. Mr Speaker, do you remember those days? I want my friends to listen to this carefully. In those days, there was only one newspaper that you could have gathered information from. The writer of this article Mr Courtney Gibson had this to say:

*The Pomeroon area is once again under flood waters with farmers facing the likelihood of heavy crop losses for the second time in less than two years.*

He went on to say:

*The floods were caused ...*

If you get the right sound-byte here:

*... by unusually heavy rainfall.*

We are being told that we are blaming everything on the rain, but here Courtney Gibson whom I think the Honourable Member Mr Corbin knows very well, said that the floods were caused by unusually heavy rainfall coupled with high tides and the release of water from the Tapacuma drainage and irrigation scheme.

Mr Speaker, with due respect, our honourable friends accused us of releasing water from Maduni to save a wider dispensation, but as you did, when you released water from the Tapacuma to increase the waters in the Pomeroon, you were right.

Mr Speaker, they were talking about ministers running around, doing what they were not supposed to be doing. Listen to this; I am quoting from the Daily Chronicle of Thursday, 13 December, 1973:

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Today, Minister of State for Agriculture, Mr Mohamed Kassim and Regional Minister for West Demerara and Essequibo, Mr Mohamed Zaheerruddeen will begin an intensive investigation, in the area with a view to solving the problems of the residents as a result of the recent floods.

So your ministers were running around at that time investigating; our ministers are running around investigating, but what we are doing is wrong and what you did was right. So where do we go? *[Interruption: 'You are talking about over thirty years.']* It does not matter. The point is that the President of Guyana at the time, Mr Burnham instructed his ministers to go out and check and see what is going on. *[Interruption: 'Nothing is wrong with that.']* Well nothing is wrong with that too, from our side? So why are we making a song and dance of ministers going and doing the same thing which you were instructed to do so many years ago the. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, cool it and allow the Honourable Member to make his presentation as they allowed you to make yours. *[Interruption: 'When was that Sir?']* Mr Corbin spoke in absolute and total silence for one hour and fifteen minutes. You may proceed Mr Rohee

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** Mr Speaker, on the same date, I quote from another article from the Daily Chronicle and this is the headline:

*Floods force 22 inden families to quit homes again unusually heavy rainfall over the past two days put the Rainbow City area, Mackenzie under flood waters causing some 22 families to evacuate their homes leaving damages estimated at thousands of dollars*

But they also tell us about incompetence, mismanagement and so many other things, but listen to this:

An unofficial report claimed that the flooding resulted from an

overflow of water from a dyke built by GUYBAU just off the Highway in the vicinity of Kara Kara and area adjacent to Rainbow City. GUYBAU has ordered an investigation of the flooding.

Mr Speaker, the moral of this story is, when you had your flood days, you did what you had to do. We have our flood days, we do what we have to do. This is the nature of government and governance. I think it is only fair.

Mr Speaker one of the charges that was made against the government, we did not present what we had promised to present. How this money was to be accounted for? Mr Speaker, on 21 April 2005 - Financial Paper No. 1/2005 - in the name of the Ministry of Finance, Accountant General's Department, this paper was laid in this Honourable House, a voted provision of \$141 million to meet expenditures associated with national flood relief. It was passed on 12 May 2005 and you passed that together with us.

Again, on June 23, 2005, Financial Paper No. 2/2005 to meet expenditures associated with national flood relief efforts and post flood 2005 disaster recovery programme was laid in the National Assembly and passed on 7 July, 2005. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member

**Mr S Feroze Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, I rise to move that the Honourable Minister be given another fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed Honourable Minister.

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** Mr Speaker, on 15 December 2005, Financial Paper No. 6/2005, voting \$645 million to meet expenditure for emergency works at Leonora, Stewartville and Devonshire Castle was laid and passed on 22 December 2005 and finally Financial Paper No.

9 [Interruption]

**The Speaker:** Mr McAllister and Mr Hamilton, please allow the Honourable Member to proceed with his speech without shouting across the floor.

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** On 19 January 2006, Financial Paper No. 9 2005, voting a specific amount of \$165 million to meet expenditures associated the national flood relief efforts was laid in the National Assembly and passed on 30 January 2006. This is clear evidence that the government, consistent with its promise to bring before this Honourable House accountability of how these resources were spent and consistent with its efforts of transparency, laid before this Honourable House what resources were spent on national flood relief and disaster recovery programme. I only hope that this evidence now puts to rest this claim that the government has not sought the approval of this House and got the approval of this House of monies spent on flood relief for 2005.

We were told by the Honourable Member Miss Genevieve Allen that the nation is still awaiting a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan. I explained that. The disaster preparedness plan is now in the making as a result of the workshop that was held. Mr Speaker, a white paper as Mr McAllister knows is soon to come to Cabinet on this matter. The government is willing to recognize that existing structures are not comprehensive enough. We are willing to recognize that. I referred to the workshop held to review experiences and outcome of January 2005 floods, was precisely aimed at examining the existing structures with a view to determine where to go from there.

The government is currently working on a white paper on the establishment of a comprehensive disaster management structure with rapid response capabilities. This white paper is soon to be presented to Cabinet for consideration and eventual approval.

Mr Speaker, one of the issues that, the Honourable Member Mr Winston Murray sought to demolish as the lead speaker was this ques-

tion of the foreign debt. He said that the Budget does not inspire any type of confidence and that it is not in compliance with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003. He even called for the withdrawal of the Budget on the grounds that it is not compliant. Mr Speaker, a government cannot withdraw a budget. Mr Corbin knows that. It never happened in the history of the country and we do not intend to go down in the Guinness book of records withdrawing a budget from this House. It is quite possible that the budget might have some flaws and the Honourable Member, Mr Attorney General... you were not here. You are on a junket. The Honourable Member Mr Doodnauth Singh and the distinguished Attorney General spoke on behalf of the government, when he said that the concerns that were raised by members on that side of the House vis-à-vis compliance will be addressed. The flaws could be addressed, but the Budget cannot be withdrawn. So let us strike a deal on that. The Honourable Member Mr Murray said that the government never admitted to any of its mistakes and that it has always sought refuge in red herrings, but I want to ask a simple question, how could you admit to what you have not done? You are saying that we have made mistakes. We have no recollection of that. Incidentally, the famous Napoleon Bonaparte once said, it is not that I believe in this, but this is what he once said that *in politics never retreat, never retract and never admit a mistake*. People have called *ad nauseam* on the PNC to admit that they rigged elections from 1968 to 1985. You have never admitted that and I could understand that after reading Napoleon Bonaparte.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Murray, in describing the economy said that things are grim and we do not see or know where we are going. The Honourable Member Mr Corbin just said the same thing a few minutes ago. He echoed this feeling. Mr Speaker, I want to deal with this question of the foreign debt, because I believe it is an important matter for this nation. What the Honourable Member Mr Murray sought to do was to recast the economic and physical architecture historically of this country. He sought to deal with this matter in a way in distorting history.

Quickly, let me just say I think that Mr Corbin, probably than anyone else over there, who are new to this issue is aware of the genesis of the debt problem in this country. It goes way back to 1978 with the one year standby arrangement with the IMF, which provided an inflow of US\$ 45 million. Later, in May 1983, problems develop with the IMF, when the Guyana fell into arrears payment to the fund making it again difficult for them to reach an agreement with the IMF. Mr Speaker, Guyana's inability to meet with full obligations resulted in the country being declared ineligible for loans from the IMF, the World Bank and the CDB. Again in 1983, the record has it, that the country are built-up arrears of medium and long term payments on estimated US \$32 million, Mr Speaker at the same time having actually raided the CARICOM multilateral clearing facility, the PNC defaulted in its payments to this facility and it further failed to meet its compensation payments for the nationalization of Demba.

In the 1980s, debt and compensation payments grew fantastically, the government found itself in the debt trap. In the 1980s debt and compensation payments together with an expanded state civil and military apparatus led to a wage freeze (and Robert remembered that) and wage restraint, the removal of subsidies, et cetera.

In 1992, the total external debt was US\$ 2.1 billion; 50 percent of our foreign earnings were used to service the debt. By the time we reached 1992, with the per capita income of \$330, every Guyanese had to pay over US\$ 2,260 to service the foreign debt. At that time, the debt to GDP ratio was over 700 percent. In 2005, with a GDP per capita of US\$ 900 from \$330 in 1992 to 900 GDP per capita in 2005, every Guyanese had to pay over \$1,465 to service that debt. In other words, from \$2,260 it was reduced to \$1,465. By the middle of 2006, each Guyanese will be paying \$1,183 to service the foreign debt. The debt service ratio by 2006 will be 104 percent. In 1992, for every dollar we earn, 97 cents had to go towards servicing the debt. Now in 2005 for every dollar we receive, only 18 cents are going towards servicing the debt. *[Applause]*



Mr Speaker, I have here with me a very important document. It is called *The Guyana Economic Recovery Programme and Beyond - Report of the Commonwealth Advisory Group, 21 August 1989*. It is famously called the *McIntyre Report*. [Interruption]

**The Speaker:** Your time is up Honourable Member.

**Mr S Feroze Mohamed:** Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** You may proceed Honourable Member

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** This is what Mr McIntyre had to say:

*Guyana is among the most heavily indebted developing countries relative to its GDP ...*

Mr Hoyte brought Mr McIntyre with his team here ... [Interruption: 'In what year?'] Mr Speaker, I already said 1989

Guyana among the most heavily indebted developing countries relative to its GDP and exports,

Mr Speaker, let me go to the most salient points. It says here:

*It seems probable that Guyana foreign indebtedness now approaches 2500 for every man, woman, and child in the country.*

You just said that this is a myth, that is not true, McIntyre said this, I do not know ... Mr Allister McIntyre is one of the most distinguished economist this region ever produced. The only thing he has not got is like Professor Arthur Lewis, the Nobel Peace Prize. But everybody recognize Mr Allister McIntyre's knowledge on these matters. We were told by the Honourable Member Mr Bernard that thousands of people are

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leaving this country. This is what Mr McIntyre had to say about what was happening at that time:

*Massive immigration of the young educated and skilled population and the growth of the formal economy. Immigration at 1000 per month or about three percent of the working age population per annum.*

That was what was taking place at the time when this report was published. Mr Speaker, my good friend the Honourable Member Mr Carberry said that by 1997, we were supposed to get out of the ... According to this document here, the ERP was to be carried out in three phases:

- Phase I - between March 1989 and November 1989 - Stabilization.
- Phase II - between 1990 and 1991 - Rehabilitation.
- Phase III - 1992 and beyond - Recovery and Growth.

There is no end date. The country is still labouring.

Finally, this constant harping that we are not getting foreign investments in this country -. You must listen to what the group of economists had to say on this:

*Public discussion on investments should also steer away from certain myths that tempted to recur in the analysis of the country's prospects. One is the El Dorado vision which envisages faster economic growth depending on the undertaking of large-scale investments such as your OMAI and your Barama to exploit the country's vast mineral and agricultural resources. Such discussions do not take into account the government's limited capacity for providing additional infrastructure services in the near term.*

Listen to this:

*They also tend to downplay, the importance of small-scale investments which are less demanding on capital and infrastructure and could step-by-step build up a productive capacity. We believe that by placing Guyanese investors on the forefront of development efforts will produce the highest on the quickest response and will facilitate large-scale investments over time.*

It is as clear as crystal as the Honourable Member Mr Corbin said, pellucid. Do not always rely on large-scale investments the key to this problem for Guyana is focusing on the small-scale and national investors, which having grown up over time will lay the basis for much larger scale investments with the passage of time.

A hue and cry was also created on this question of corruption and the Honourable Member Mr Murray quoted Professor Clive Thomas on corruption. Well, I want to quote Professor Clive Thomas too. So we will get quote for quote, but I do not know where this is going to take us, because if you give a quote on corruption in relation to PPP/C and I give you a quote in relation to the PNC, where is that going to take us as a nation. Professor Clive Thomas in analyzing the McIntyre Report: It says, Clive Thomas on the McIntyre Report - this is what he had to say... [Interruption: 'What year?']... in 1990. The name of the document is Clive Thomas on the McIntyre Report. He was talking on the shortage of foreign exchange:

*While this shortage is an important bottleneck, so too a high overdose of partisan political direction of economic resources under the direct and indirect control of the State, These have led to victimization, alienation, strikes, migration of skills and tremendous loss of output. Foreign exchange waste and extraordinary levels of corruption have significantly reduced, flows of foreign exchange to official institutions, yet these are not addressed fundamen-*

*tally.*

In other words, McIntyre bypassed this, because he did not want to give a damning report to the administration. But Professor Clive Thomas made his own analysis of the report and said that extraordinary levels of corruption have significantly reduced flows of foreign exchange to official institutions in this country.

Mr Speaker, the moral of this quote here - you made your accusations of corruption, we made our accusations of corruption and you tell us in the equation, where this is going to take us as a nation. Do we want politics of tit for tat?

I am concluding now, Mr Speaker. I believe that what we need to do is to take this country forward. We have gotten mixed signals from the opposition benches out of this Debate.

First, on the one hand, we heard voices of reconciliation and accommodation and the recognition of progress in some quarters.

Second, on the other hand, we heard voices of gloom and doom that the country is so badly off, that they do want to have anything to do with the country.

Third, we also heard from the young Turks, some of whom have left, from the radicals who were very combative and who instead of focusing on the issues focused on personalities.

Mr Speaker, do you know what this tells us, we do not only have third forces outside, but we have third forces inside. *[Laughter]* The Honourable Member Mr Odinga Lumumba, notwithstanding the barrage of hostility he got from the first group or the second group of speakers from over there, and I made a note of it. He said, he did not hear from the opposition benches any positive appraisal of government's performance. Though he did hear, some lonely voices grudgingly make mention of positive vibrations. The opposition clearly is not singing from the same hymn sheet and ... the Honourable Member Mr Corbin must pay

attention to this ... the orchestra is out of sync. The conductor must take a note of this, because we cannot have a partnership with three branches of ranks within the PNC/R. We cannot have a partnership with three factors in the PNC/R. We could only have a partnership with one.

Mr Speaker, to conclude [*Interruption*]

**The Speaker:** We are in the last stage Honourable Members. Please let us do it in some order.

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** To conclude, reference was made by the Honourable Member Mr Bernard, to this question of this demeanour of people, who have been affected by the floods and so many other things. He gave his perception of the demeanour of people who have been affected. With due respect to the Honourable Member Mr Bernard, whether he was speaking on behalf of himself or the rest of his colleagues, our perception of this demeanour that we speak of in Paragraph 7.3 on Page 64, is not of the type that the Honourable Member Mr Bernard's spoke about. We speak about demeanour that is characterized by grit, by determination, by pride, by impatience of the young and impatience of the old to get on with the job and to put their shoulders to wheel and to take this country forward.

Mr Speaker, inside and outside of Guyana, we always hear that Guyanese are proud people and that we are proud nation. Let us put Guyana to work together. You cannot love your country without loving your fellow countrymen. [*Applause*]

Mr Speaker, I would like to close this Debate by congratulating all of my colleagues on this side of the House, every one of them for making positive contributions and supporting Minister Kowlessar in this Debate for the 2006 Budget. I would also like to thank your good self for your patience and understanding, the staff of the National Assembly and the Clerk of the National Assembly. I would like to express our gratitude on behalf of my colleagues for spending so much time with us to ensure that this Debate concludes on a successful and positive note.

*Friday, 3 February 2006*

We look forward to the media and notwithstanding the criticisms of GINA, to continue to reflect what took place in this Assembly to the Guyanese people in a positive and objective way. Thank you, Mr Speaker.  
*[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you honourable member. This now complete our general debate on the Budget. Before we adjourn, I need to seek your indulgence to complete some of the formalities before we can proceed to the Estimates on Monday.

We need to consider and dispose of the Report of the Business Sub Committee of the Committee of Supply and the allocation of time of consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure by the Committee of Supply. We need to go into Committee of Supply for that purpose.

#### **IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, I wish to report that the Business Subcommittee of the Committee of Supply met today, 3 February 2006 and consider the allocation of time for the consideration of the 2006 Estimates of Expenditure in the Committee of Supply. The subcommittee passed a Resolution on that matter and copies of the Subcommittee's Minutes, Resolution and Schedule have been circulated. Will the Honourable Minister of Finance move the necessary Motion?

**Hon Saisnarine Kowlessar:** Mr Chairman, I now move that the Committee of Supply agree with the Business Subcommittee in its Resolution.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion carried**

**The Chairman:** Honourable Members, the Committee of Supply has been allocated three days for the consideration of the estimates. Con-

sideration will begin on Monday, 6 February and would be in accordance with the resolution of the Subcommittee. However, I need to add that I have asked members of the Sub Committee particularly the government members. I hope that is transmitted accurately that the end of the first day or during the first day, the member responsible for some of the items on the beginning of the second day will be prepared in case we finished early and that goes for the second day as well. Members for the third day will have available some of their people.

### **ASSEMBLY RESUMED**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, before inviting the Honourable Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, to move the adjournment, I would like to express my thanks to the Members of the National Assembly. Firstly, to those Members who contributed to the debate and secondly, to all Members for their patience, consideration and their attentiveness although not 100 percent of the time, but most of the time and even when the attentiveness was not all there, I suspect that those moments that the nature of the interruptions were not in anyway malicious or hostile in intent and purpose. So I wish to thank you all for that.

I wish to join with the Honourable Minister Clement Rohee and to thank the Clerk and his staff. Although they are not always visible to the Members of the National Assembly and to the public, but they do an extremely competent and very difficult job to keep our business going - more difficult than you can imagine. So I would like to thank them also.  
*[Applause]*

And finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Press and the other members of staff operating our systems for their attendance here and for the long hours they have spent in order to bring these important matters that we have discussed to the public and I hope and look forward that they do so in a balanced manner and in an early period of the evening, Thank you very much.

The Honourable Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

*Friday, 3 February 2006*

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr Speaker, I think we have concluded a lively Debate, very constructive in terms of Guyana. I move that the National Assembly stands adjourn to Monday, 6 February 2006 at 14:00h

**The Speaker:** The Assembly is so adjourned.

**Adjourned Accordingly at 21:40h**