

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE RE-
PUBLIC OF GUYANA**

Part I

8TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Tuesday 26th June, 2001

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 Culture, Youth and Sport</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> |
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| The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Housing and Water</i> |
|
 | |
| The Hon. Navindranauth O. Chandarpal, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Agriculture (Region No.4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)</i> |
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 | |
| The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Home Affairs (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)</i> |
|
 | |
| The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security</i> |
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The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.	- Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
*The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P.	- Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs
*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	- Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.	- Minister of the Public Service
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	- Minister of Transport and Hydraulics
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/Mazaruni)
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) (Absent)
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, M.P.	- (Region No. 2 - Pomeroun/ Supenaam)
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne)
Mr Kumkaran Ramdas, M.P.	
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne)
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	- (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

* Non-Elected Minister

** Elected Member from The United Force

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Members of the Opposition (30)

(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)

Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P.	- <i>Leader of the Opposition</i>
Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- <i>Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly</i>
Mr E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip</i>
Mr Ivor Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supenaam) (Absent - on Leave)</i>
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.	
Mr Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. Andy Goveia, M.P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dagleish Joseph, M.D.,M.P.	
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.5-Mahaica (Berbice)</i>
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/ Berbice)</i>
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P	- <i>(Region No.3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara</i>
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4-Demerara/ Mahaica)</i>
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/ Berbice)</i>
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.1 - Barima/Waini)</i>
Mrs. R. Bancroft, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.8 - Potaro/Siparuni)</i>
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)</i>
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)</i>
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i>

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

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on Leave)</i>
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- <i>(Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)</i>

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr Frank A. Narain, C.C.H., Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

The Clerk read the Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave

Hon. Members leave has been granted to:

The Hon. Prime Minister until he ceases performing functions of President.

The Hon. Member Ms. Shirley Melville up to the 29th June, 2001.

Functions of Prime Minister

I have been advised that the Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud is performing the functions of the Prime Minister.

Thanks to Deputy Speaker

I should also like to thank the Hon. Member Mrs Clarissa Riehl for presiding over the National Assembly during my absence for part of yesterday's session.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2001 (2001 BUDGET)

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial year 2001.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate on the Budget for 2001 . The first speaker for today is the Hon. Member, Mr. Deryck Bernard. You may proceed Hon. Member.

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Mr Deryck M. A. Bernard: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer congratulations to my friend and colleague the Hon Minister of Finance for several reasons, partly because we are both associated with the very distinguished Guyanese institution, and if you look carefully, and you start at the Minister of Education and proceed down the line to the Hon. Minister of Labour, you would find that there is a line of distinguished University Professors, who are gracing the Government's front bench. The only exception is the Minister of Home Affairs but we don't hold that against him. Whether the number of Professors in Cabinet . . .
[Interruption]

The Speaker: The Hon Minister of Home Affairs did attend the University of Guyana as a student.

Mr Deryck M.A. Bernard: I am talking about professional staff, Sir. He may some day aspire to this service. It is not beyond the realms of possibility. Whether this is to the credit of the Government or the discredit of the University I would refuse to speculate.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer some minor words of caution to the Hon Minister of Finance. You would notice, Mr Speaker, that on the back cover of all the copies of the Estimates, is a map of Guyana which is wrong, distorted in shape and awards a disproportional amount of territory to our neighbors. And I wish to suggest that if we're going to put the map of Guyana on official documents, we should not give the impression that we have conceded territory. I would suggested to the Minister of Finance that he seeks advice from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as soon as he discovers which is the appropriate one to speak to for advice, so that we would not give the impression that we want to reduce the size of our country.

I also want to offer a word of caution to my Ministerial friend, because I believe that it is quite true that several speakers on behalf of the opposition benches have pointed to the fact that they deplore

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the absence of a truly coherent development strategy in this Budget, and, in fact, in previous Budgets presented to the House by the PPP/Civic Government. This is not an academic quibble or professional hair splitting. The absence of a coherent development strategy has several disadvantages for a country.

First of all it sends unclear signal to donors and investors .

Secondly, it generates confusion in your implementing agencies, particularly your public service.

Thirdly, in a country with as complex development problems as ours, it means that the measures which you implement, even when you implement them genuinely meaning to alleviate our development problems, will fail to work because the maps of developing strategy with which you work do not support each other. There is no interlinking between various parts of the Government, very often various part of the same Ministry can be carrying out competing and conflicting policies and programs.

I heard a speech by someone on behalf of the Government a week ago. I speak from memory therefore, if, Mr Speaker, my paraphrase is not completely accurate, I apologize. The theme of that particular paragraph was, "I will now outline our development strategy" and then what were listed as a development strategy were five areas of expenditure. Mr Speaker, with the best will in the world, the fact that a government chooses five areas of expenditure is not a functional and viable development strategy. Where the Government's policies on education and human resources development is concerned, this lack of a coherent strategy is particularly noticeable, is particularly painful and it is one which we as a country will regret. People who have been in this House a long time will recall that in 1990 we debated education strategy and the then Government outlined the development strategy, which unashamedly and directly placed emphasis on education strategy and planning within the context of economic change and reform. In

fact, the actual words used were:

The requirements of the economy are therefore of paramount importance in determining the objectives and policy framework within which the educational system must operate.

And in that context we talked about links between education change and economic change which at the time were innovative, and which at the time were at the front line.

The new Government in 1993 changed that policy and adopted two pillars for an education policy, which in all genuineness, I repeat, meant well. And the two pillows were these:-

(1) A retreat from the attempt to link education directly to economic change.

(2) A return to the naive and outmoded belief that the more money you spend on education the more likely you're going to produce change in human resource development.

Mr. Speaker, people who have been in this House a long time will know that this matter has been debated in and outside of this House and my good friend, the Minister of Labour, made it a punch line in his speech to mock my assertion that an investment, financial outlay in education, which concentrated on spending money in education without regard to its link to the economy, its link to human resource development and most importantly the investment in human resource change for economic change was bound to fail. You can build buildings, you can replace buildings, you can repair buildings, you can build furniture, put them in schools, but the fact of economic life in the third world is that those countries who have modernized their human development situation and linked it to their economic policies are the ones that have succeeded.

During yesterday's debate we heard exchanges that were very important, exchanges about why some Third World Countries were

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able to make use of growth in the world economy and some other Third World Countries did not.

Mr. Speaker, all of the evidence, in all of the institutions and in all of the research places qualified to speak, will say that those countries that have changed their education system so that the education system becomes the engine of change, of making the country more competitive, of increasing labor productivity and increasing the productivity of institutions, are the ones that have developed. Those countries that have continued to naively invest in schools and buildings have missed the boat.

It will continue to be true, Mr Speaker, that the model is very, very, very, clear, if you look at those countries or those sectors in countries in Asia or in Latin America and in the Caribbean. There are countries in the Caribbean, who have followed models that Guyana has abandoned, who are now in a position to generate competitiveness in their economy because they have linked economic change to changes in human resource development .

I said it before and I'm sorry that the Minister of Labour is not here to laugh again. Even if you teach under a tree and the teacher is motivated and qualified, you are better off than an empty school.

What is worse, Mr Speaker, is that the emphasis on spending money on infrastructure in education came at a time, when all the numbers told is that the number of children passing through the system was in fact declining. So we are investing in infrastructure, creating capacity at a time when we were already having over capacity. We have neglected the software of the system. We have neglected the knots and bolts of the system. We have neglected the Quality Assurance of the system and we sit waiting for this great change to come.

Mr Speaker, the evidence is, in all Third World Countries, that the only way, the only option for accelerating development is through

enhancing human capacity.

The facts are, Mr Speaker, that the traditional Sectors in Agriculture and Industry are not growing in terms of quantity, in terms of value added and, in terms of the rate of change of these sectors compared with those Sectors which depend on Human Development. Therefore if we sit down waiting for rice, sugar and bauxite to take us up, we are going to be frustrated.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, it is not only the production in the new sectors which creates development. It is the change that that productivity brings in the old sectors.

Mr. Speaker, we have a country in which, basically every single sector including the Administrative Sector is inefficient, compared to world standards and therefore we are an uncompetitive society. To change that, we have to once again re-examine the issue of linking our educational investment, and our education system directly to the requirements of economic change.

Education is not just welfare. Education is not just a moral good. Education is not just buildings. Education is not just a target to social infrastructure growth. The concept of the society almost as a school, with a capacity for adapting new information is one which, at first, sounds difficult to understand. But when you think about it, it is probably the easy way to transform a society, in particular one as small as ours. If you look at the way the education system has been managing change and development, you can find many examples of this misunderstanding.

I noticed in the budget, a claim that, for the first time information technology would be introduced in schools and I would advise my friend, the Minister of Finance to put an erratum. First of all it is not the first time, it is not even the first time under the PPP/Civic that has happened, never mind the first time. I would not mind him trying to deny the PNC/Reform of its achievements but please don't deny the

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previous Minister of Education of the work that he has done.

Mr Speaker, information technology is not dumping a few computers in a few schools. If you do not have an integrated system, in which computer-assisted learning is a part of the warp and woof of the system, so that the teacher training at the University and the Training College, the teacher training outside of the formal training institution's so that the hardware and software are widely applied, so that the actual curriculum is restructured to make use of the information technology, all you are going to do is just put a few computers in schools and when you go back again, the transformation would not have taken place. We have places where, the computers are put in the schools and apparently they don't even have electricity to plug them in. But, nevertheless, we boast that we have information technology in our education system.

The kind of change we are talking about, then, is not merely a matter of spending money on hardware.

And then Mr. Speaker; there is the matter of technical and vocational education.

Mr. Speaker, Guyana is a weird country. We must be the only Third World Country that is changing the balance of our emphasis towards academic, away from investment in technical fields, whereas, developed countries in Europe are changing the balance the other way. All the information tells you that the thing that makes a country most attractive to investors is, the range, debt and quality of technical and vocational skills in your economy. *[Applause]*

The massive investment in many sectors in education are mis-spent when one considers the poor and backward state of the equipment in all of the technical and vocational institutions. If we intend the students to use the technology that exist in some of those Institutes, then we are deliberately planning an economy for backwardness. We have lathes that were rehabilitated from the 1930s

in some places.

Mr Speaker, if we want to have genuine economic change, technical and vocational education in every sector of the education system is going to be of importance. I looked in the budget and I see that no mention at all is made of re-capitalization and reinvestment in the Government Technical Institute. And in fact since the IDB global manpower project, no major spending has been done in that sector.

I see in the budget a very interesting statement about reviving the curriculum to make it relevant. If we have waited for eight years, to revise the curriculum to make it relevant to what is your vision of education, that is either neglect or incompetence. But, Mr Speaker, we are in trouble as far as our curriculum is concerned. There are many issues which are a function of our poverty, which are a function of our difficult situation, and which are a function of the difficult standard, which is a function of changing requirements of the economy and the world outside. But we cannot afford to park as a minor side issue, making what we teach relevant.

Then, Mr Speaker, there is the issue of the inspectorate. If we look in the documents establishing the inspectorate they're supposed to be a professional mechanism which was equipped with people who could test and evaluate performance standards in schools. It is the fact that the PPP/Civic Government was very inconsistent in its attitude towards the inspectorate and therefore it was on again, off again. We had suggested that the inspectorate should produce a consolidated report which should be published and made available to the country so all of us would know what the standards were. Instead of that the inspectorate dwindled, then it was rekindled, and to this date, it had never performed the function that it should. Therefore although we invest a large proportion of our national product in education, we still do not have a fully equipped professional inspectorate, which can tell us with accuracy, whether we are producing the kind of changes that we want. And I want to

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repeat for the ninth time my proposal that a consolidated report by the inspectorate should be made public, perhaps, even tabled in Parliament by the Ministry of Education, so that we can understand what is going on in our education system.

One of the painful issues in human resource development in this country is to hear teachers talk about the secondary reform project. I confess to you, Mr Speaker, that in my random sample of teachers in secondary schools and of people who work from the University as consultants in the system, I have not met a single educator outside of the Ministry of Education who thinks that the SSRP makes sense. The only people who know what the SSRP is really supposed to do, are the people who function from the Ministry of Education. And they have not yet succeeded in convincing the people who are supposed to implement the system. There is a basic flaw Mr Speaker, in the SSRP. It is based on the assumption that what people are deprived of in the education system is access to a truly good academic education and therefore people who missed out on a good academic education need a second chance, and therefore we have universal access to an education in which technical and vocational education is diminished. The fact is that modern development understands that first of all the large proportion of people do not want, do not need or are not geared for certain kinds of education. But most important, even those people who have the attitude are better off, both in terms of their own personal development and the development of the country, in various types of education.

But more importantly, Mr Speaker, the SSRP completely ignores what we have failed to do in the Primary education. The facts of Primary education in this country is that between 25 to 35 percent of students in this country produce scripts that are so hopeless that we have to assume that they are functionally illiterate. If we ever choose in this country to publish the actual score as opposed a transformed score, what happens at the end of primary, all of us would be shocked. But this is not a political issue, it is no individual government, it is a fact that Guyana pushes out thirty to thirty-five percent of students

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from primary who basically know nothing. The average out of sixty in English hovers between 11 and 12, and the best in Social Studies is between 15 or 16 out of sixty, but that isn't reflected in the Common Entrance scores. The fact is Mr. Speaker, that we have continuously in this country large numbers of children, thousands of children, who come to the end of primary with an incomplete primary education. No amount of secondary school reform will help them. What we have to do, is to fix the primary education system first. *[Applause]*

Converting Community High schools and tops of Primary schools into Secondary schools is window dressing. It is putting on face powder to cover skin disease. Until we use the resources for Primary Education to reform instruction and to carry out the social reforms in Primary education we are wasting resources, we are wasting time, and we are frustrating our professionals.

Mr Speaker, I cannot help but refer to the University of Guyana because I work there, and because the Minister of Finance used to work there, and sometime soon he would be working there again, as will be the Minister of Education. So it is of their interests as well as my own, I must refer to the dilemmas that faces that Institution. I want to be very dogmatic, Mr Speaker, if Guyana is to become a competitive small Third World economy, and to have any chance whatsoever in reforming our productive systems of making our country competitive the University has got to be supported, and the University has got to be transformed. It is interesting Mr Speaker, that you put computers in schools but you don't put computers in the Faculty of Education. That is an exercise of utility, frustrating the schools and teachers and children. It is interesting that, talk about being a competitive economy and inviting investors, when our Faculty of Technology is using outdated, not working, and non-existing equipment. Even now the University does not have the capacity to teach computers to all the students who need it.

Mr Speaker, we cannot fool ourselves, there is no way to become a modern economy, there is no way to grow. Even the sectors that

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we are depending on will depend on the human resource changes that comes from the University. All of the research, all of the comparisons, all of the work of the ILO and UNESCO and UNDP tells us that transfer of technology and access to knowledge and a knowledge economy is the way to grow . There are only two growth sectors that are dependable, one is Tourism and the other one is information technology. You sit down and wait on rice, sugar, bauxite and timber -t is not going to happen. And I want to repeat something I said earlier, even in those traditional sectors, for them to become competitive in any sense, the changes have got to take place in higher education.

So what did the government do? They built the campus in Berbice. A strange institution is the Berbice Campus. Those of us who work at the University, who are supposed to run the Berbice Campus would hear rumors from those of our friends in Freedom House about this Berbice Campus. Secret meetings and secret deals about a Campus that we are supposed to implement, we are supposed to run and we are supposed to teach in. But, of course, they didn't need the boys at Turkeyen because apparently there are too many PNC voters and supporters in Turkeyen. And all the noble PPP processors were going to come in from Canada and New York to teach in the Berbice campus. So we found resources, again, to build a building. You have a lovely new building, about four or five classrooms in Berbice. No laboratories or anything. You have a lovely new building and all of the teacher's have to trek from Georgetown every week by mini bus to teach on this Campus. I repeat, you can't build a University with a building, you are frustrating yourself, and wasting resources. So whilst the University cannot get resources to repair what it already has, the government could find 156 million more for investment in the Berbice Campus. Mr Speaker, I have no political problem with a Campus in Berbice, but I have a problem with taking the resources and scattering it about like bird seeds. Instead of investing it in the place where it is really needed and that is, in Turkeyen campus. *[Applause]*

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One of the issues that we need to deal with is the way we manage an institution. And Mr Speaker, I made a comment earlier on/about lack of policy and the way it diverts energy from where it's supposed to go. One of the interesting things about the Ministry of Education and the system that it manages is that it has never been able to decide what is the appropriate place to devolve certain kinds of authority and how much autonomy to give professionals in the system. So that certain professional responsibilities are being taken away from the professional officers to go to the Teaching Service Commission. And certain professional responsibilities are being taken away from Heads of School and given to the professional officers. For example, if you want to make Head Teachers of this country happy, you abolish meetings of Heads so that officers from the Ministry would stop interfering so much with the management for schools.

We actually paid, I think it was US\$0.5M, for someone to come from outside to tell the Minister what I can tell him for free, that is, you need to reform the administrative structure and functions of the regional district offices. You need to give more autonomy and professional clout to teachers. They don't only leave because they are not well paid. They also leave because they are professionally frustrated. One teacher said to me she was acting Head of a school and decided on a particular day to hold internal school tests. The Officer from the Ministry came and said that the Ministry said test must not be held on 27th, it must be on 29th. So she decided that if she couldn't decide to run her own school, she would leave and go somewhere else.

And so Mr Speaker, the structure of the way the Ministry is going to be managed, the reform, the actual operation of the system and the continual interference in professional matters of the Teaching Service Commission must be addressed. We are talking about what is in fact, the largest professional body in the national system, and if it doesn't function you are not going to deliver the changes, no matter how many new schools you have built.

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I did say Mr. Speaker, that the absence of policy, leads to incoherence between the various sectors. If you look at the way, for example, in which we try to manage youth affairs and education, the way we try to manage education affairs and culture, there is not enough interlinking and reinforcing of what goes on. So that, for example, we have never had a stage in this country since independence in which our infrastructure and human resources in cultural performance has been so thin.

And if I might make a pained remark, I went to see the preview of Guyana's Carifesta team, and I cringed with embarrassment. The performance was poor, the skit was poor, the costumes were poor. We obviously do not understand that no matter who is the government, when you are selling Guyana's image abroad, when you are trying to find ways of interlinking young people from urban and rural and so on it is important that the cultural structure, both in the schools and in the youth organizations and in the country as a whole, should be strong. There is no benefit to anyone from the current poor standards and the current disorganization that we are enjoying.

When I come to talk about sports, Mr Speaker, that comment is probably even more appropriate. Of course, there is an interesting thing about culture and sports. Just as how we don't recognize the economic importance of training in certain kind of things, we don't recognize the economic importance of sports and culture, and that part of the tourism growth in the Caribbean, for example, which is very, very profitable, is linked to the investment in those two things. So that spending on sports and culture is not a frivolous or an extra that you do when you would have had some change from building new schools. It is an important part of developing the whole human development resource establishment. And therefore, the links that develop between these two things are important.

It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that over the last twenty years, we have not developed the kind of strength in our infrastructure as far as these areas are concerned. But it is made worst by the fact that it is

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very difficult at the moment due to the way these things are managed, and in the absence of clear policy for them to deal together.

Mr Speaker, one other area in which I would wish to comment.

The Speaker: Before you go on to that area, Hon Member, your time is up.

Mr Lance Carberry: Mr. Speaker, I ask for 15 minutes for the speaker to conclude his presentation.

Mr Deryck MA Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I might refer to one other area, and that is the area of hinterland development and the kinds of educational needs that are required. Again we need to ensure that our policies are stable, that our policies are coherent and that regional and central government understands what needs is to be done. We are storing up for ourselves serious trouble where hinterland education is concerned. In many places we are unable to achieve the kind of model that we set ourselves. And as I am talking about hinterland education, I noticed that one of the professional officers of the Ministry of Education, instead of doing its professional office is often being a politician, and in being a politician, claims that it was the PPP/Civic that started hinterland teacher training. I would ask the Minister to please call him and correct him and say that it is true, that it was expanded under the PPP/Civic Government. But at least conceived that it was started with Canadian funds during PNC time. *[Interruption]*

Mr Speaker, Bhough Tiwari, who was a Minister in Trinidad about ten years ago, made an interesting comment. He said:

If the Caribbean Region, (and for a that we can say Guyana) is seriously concerned about being competitive in the world and not being left behind again, the way forward, the only way forward is strengthening and developing our human, intellectual, social and institutional capital.

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I want to quote another educator, Vickus Nauth who was responsible for a lot of the transformation in the relationship between education and technology in India. *[Interruption . . .*

'That is true, but he is also an educator. So it is not inclusive, I think he is a friend of yours.]

Vickus Nauth from India said:

Comparative advantages of nations are not expressed as the ability of the country to acquire, organise and disseminate information through communication, information technologies and complex network supporting the development process.

As far as the PNC/Reform is concerned, there is only one strategy for development that makes sense for Guyana. And that is to first of all invest in those aspects of the education system that equip our people to be more competitive, and secondly, to ensure that competitiveness, that higher level of training permeates the entire economy.

If we think about it seriously, Mr Speaker, we would recognize, for example, that our financial sector is outdated, our banks and our insurance companies operate on outdated, repetitive and complex systems that are not competitive in the way the rest of the world works.

Our Public Service, so often we hear the sad story that we didn't get a particular topic because the document wasn't finished on time. Our project planning capacity and project manning capacity are diminished. Our education system has diminished because we have not learned to use the technology to make individual teachers more productive and more efficient. All of our industrial sectors, all of our retailing sectors are backward and inefficient. Therefore, Mr Speaker, as far as we are concerned there is no model of development that we can devise which is going to work, unless we make a much

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more coordinated and serious effort in developing our people. I would go further Mr Speaker and say this, no amount of death relief negotiations, no amount of anti-poverty programmes, no amount of begging and scraping to the international donor community, is a substitute for making our people more productive. *[Applause]* I believe that I can't commit the PNC/Reform to say that any programme that is brought to this House or is developed in this country which is genuinely designed to transform this country and to making it more competitive, will have our support. *[Applause]*

But, Mr Speaker, at the same time, I want to issue a warning, if we do not recognize the signs of the time, if we do not recognize that globalization, global standards, global markets, global standards of marketing, and global standards of information are not going to go away, we're not going to be able to opt out and say that we in Guyana will come out and find our own little idyllic corner in the world and the rest of the world economy could go on without us. We either become competitive in that world environment or we become marginalised. I don't know about you, Mr Speaker, but we in the PNC/ Reform are serious and anxious about competing in that new economy.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Before I call on the next speaker, I would like to extend my apologies to Mrs Shirley Melville. The person to whom leave was granted is Mrs Melville's colleague, Mrs Sheila Holder. We misinterpreted the information we had. Once again my apologies to Mrs Melville.

Hon Member Dr Jeffrey.

Hon Dr Henry Jeffrey: Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I stand in support of Budget 2001. Notwithstanding

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the economic difficulties of 2000 it is good to see that the financial resources going to the Ministry of Education continue to increase. I suspect that this is because we all understand that in our time only an adequately educated people will be assured individual and collective prosperity. Mr Speaker, I am aware of the usual contention that there is not necessary proportionality between allocations and outcomes. However, what is normally overlooked in this discourse is that there is an active relationship between resource availability and outcomes. The latter should be made quite explicit if such discourses are to have meaning. We understand quite clearly that what is necessary in the process is for one to define, quite clearly, what is expected from education at any level of input, then we can have a proper discourse. But that deserves more evidence than just a statement that the PPP/C does not recognise it. Of course, education again is not simply about schools. The poverty which stalks this land is a serious obstacle to our collective desire to improve the lives of our people. This poverty, I believe, and here let me digress a little bit, will only be overcome if we are able to provide answers to our political problems. That is why I was initially puzzled by the presentation yesterday by the Hon Winston Murray. Since the relationship between environment and development is well known we must ask ourselves why was he so abstract when talking about growth rate and so positive and certain in his prediction that the growth rate predicted in the budget will not come true? Is it because he realises that the Budget is predicated on a stable environment and thus must be affected by the current instabilities? As I have often said in this House, including on a similar occasion in 1994, I am wedded to the fundamentals of the Westminster system. With goodwill on all sides I believe that its extended application provides a useful way forward.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Members Allen, last night, and Bernard, today, said much that was true and useful [*Applause*] even if their presentation were somewhat one sided and the emphases misplaced. For practical purposes my intention here is to make a succinct and focused presentation which I hope will provide the kind of operational framework that will allow all of us, without undue effort, to

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immediately contribute to improving the education process and outcome in our country. Yet, Hon Members, to provide this perspective and balance, and in order to respond very briefly to some of the issues by the Members on the other side, we need some kind of a backdrop of what has already been achieved. Further, Mr Speaker, so as not to make my final recommendation too procrustean I will give an indication, but, again, only a mere indication of the wider tapestry that is our concern.

Mr Speaker, although yesterday the Hon Member, Mr Jerome Khan, suggested that we should eschew historical analysis, I will take my chances because I believe that this form best suits the current purpose. Indeed, notwithstanding his strictures to us, the Hon Member proceeded to make an essential historical presentation. GOINVEST, right, going back, GOINVEST history etc. In the process he also proceeded to misuse the historical perspective. How else can we possibly explain his almost total dependence upon a testimony of possible investment that did not materialise to prove Government's incompetence? Notwithstanding there is some merit in the contention that we should not be harping back to 1992. After all, his Party's present behaviour will help to keep us in Office for another decade or two. In 2020 we will have no legitimacy at all. It will not be right for us to be seeking comparisons with 1992. Therefore, I suggest it is time we break and compare our achievements with our own goals. Mr Speaker, we have heard the Hon Member, Bernard, talk about there being no coherent strategy in the Budget. I am not aware that the Budget is supposed to be a queer strategy. It is a yearly program that is supposed to explicate a strategy for a period. He also went on to say that the Ministry of Education also does not have any coherent strategy. Well, in March, 2001 an independent assessment for the period 1995 to 2000 which was completed with the help of an international organisation had this to say about strategies:

Whereas the 1990 education development plan presented a clear policy framework for the years 1990 to 1995, the 1995 education development plan went further by

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complementing the policy framework with goals and strategies for achieving those goals.

Yet we are told that the education . . . [Interruption . . . 'that was the policy framework for 1995 to 2000'.] The very report accepted that there has been many shortfalls but it also quoted and identified numerous achievements. I shall relate some of these, and as I am doing so I will attempt to respond to some of the questions raised by the Hon Members.

For example, it says about early childhood education:

Enrollment increased by 29% to 36,200 children. The Gross Enrollment Rate increased to 94%.

Today, Guyana has universal childhood education. [Applause] Let me point out here from this document that was completed in March of this year by an independent assessor referring to the question by both Mr Bernard and Ms Allen in connection with schools being not buildings. I do not think that any of us in here believes that. Some of the best schools that we have gone to are on the Essequibo Coast [Interruption]. . . St Margaret's only got a new school recently, yet they are called great schools, good schools. They make resolves and they get results. Everyone of us agree that that is so. But the question you must ask yourself is if it is true that some of the best schools in the country do not even have the building or the teachers, what is it that makes them do it? Nobody give them more than a normal school so what is it? That is the project I have for myself this evening and will not be distracted from it. Of course, I will attempt to answer a few more questions.

The report also stated:

An integrated curriculum was developed including teachers guides (this is for early childhood education). Permanent pupil records were introduced. Nursery and Primary Field Officers were trained in transition issues

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(he is talking here between 1995 and 2000).

This alone gives lie to the notion that all we are concerned about is buildings. Everyone knows that a school is not a building.

At the primary level it says:

Access to primary education for all but a few children was achieved.

Universal access to primary education was achieved.

Teacher number rose to 3,900 keeping pace with enrollment of 105,000 pupils maintaining a staff/student ratio of 1 to 7.

Where did you get that sixty from last night? I would not deny that there are certain institutions that may have that sort of situation existing. But you cannot use odd situations to develop general conclusions about the system. It is unacceptable, most unacceptable. High priority was given to pre-and-in service teacher education. The report states quite clearly:

Although about 1,400 teachers were trained during the period only about 250 remain.

Now there is no doubt that we have a problem in terms of teacher retention. It is true that we cannot compete in terms of salary, but certainly there are other things we can do. As I stand here there are other things we are doing. We have spoken to the unions and created a strategic alliance with them and we are going on to do other things. The Cabinet has decided to increased allowances for teachers with added qualifications. They have decided to increase hinterland allowance. They have decided to deal with the Weekly Council Leave and there are other issues that will come on the table. I must warn our comrades, the union knows, Ms Allen knows. I do not know why she did not tell you. The point is that we cannot and we must not, it is

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wrong for us to be anti-historical in dealing with historical processes. That is why this report is good because it does not say what is happening today. I have not tried to compare with the PNC era or else that might have been a disaster. But I am comparing with ourselves and that is what is good.

The Hon Member Bernard said that the SSRP is essentially an academic based programme. I don't understand it as that. I understand that here there is a programme that is trying to develop universal secondary education for everyone, be it a pilot in 12 schools or whatever (and hopefully we will replicate), that will turn all our primary schools into proper secondary schools with two streams. Tecvoc streams and academia streams. I do not see it based on any bias toward academia in any way whatsoever. In secondary education I will read this interesting statement:

Seven hundred (700) secondary school teachers were trained in the period and about that number were retained.

There is something there that needs analysis. Retained - the fact there were vacancies does not mean that the people you trained have not stayed. Some analysis is necessary there because if we can put our finger on what makes these people stay, maybe we can translate it to the society as a whole.

Secondary enrollment rose to 62,000. There was sufficient Form 1 places for all Standard 4 leavers.

Of course, that talks of tops and community high schools and so on. In terms of the CXC, we hear about education standards and so on, but the report says:

In terms of overall subject pass rates there has been measurable improvement at the General Proficiency Level despite a steadily increasing number of students taking the exam.

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Therefore we have been developing. The issue must be that everything cannot happen overnight. But progress has been made. The notion that for one reason or another . . . Let me tell you a story when I first became the Minister of Education I got a call from some of my colleagues at the university and they said, Jeff, let us congratulate you on this appointment. I said thank you. But they said we are not congratulating you because somebody made you Minister of Education. When Bernard was there he did nothing, when Bisnauth was there he did nothing, for the University that is, and we not are expecting that you will do anything either. *[Laughter]* So it is good that he is now belatedly taking up the cause of the University so strongly. Let me say that there is no doubt, and all of us agree . . . *[Interruption . . . 'Why are you quarrelling so, I am just telling you what your friend said'.]* The University right now is in discussions with the CDB and hopefully they will get their loan of \$25M. It would provide a good platform from which to take off.

Mr Speaker, you can't refer to spending on the Berbice Campus as scattering bird seed. I have nothing against a Campus in Berbice. Obviously you have something against it, you are saying it was a bad investment. Do not hide behind the notion, you have nothing against it, but it is wrong. What I am saying to you is that the people of Berbice deserve a right to have a University education. We have decided that they should have it. *[Applause]* at some level of convenience to them. We have gone to Essequibo. I heard talk that there was no money in the Budget for GTI but there is \$135M there for GTI. I do not want to press on with this too much, it would distract me from my major project.

Let me say something about teacher training. We have invested in teacher training, opening teacher training colleges and institutions around this country, so much so that this year you have the highest number of teachers being trained in the history of Guyana - six hundred (600). *[Applause]* We have also introduced distance training.

I want to touch on this thing about technical and vocational

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education. Again we agree that technical and vocational education is of major importance to our development. I will read what the report says:

TECVOC curriculum were reviewed at all levels, primary, secondary and post secondary and new courses introduced throughout the system.

How is that we are hearing that we do not care and are doing nothing? This is not the Ministry of Education's report. It is an independent assessor of the process. Mr Speaker, those things occurred in that period and the problem with education, as you know, maybe it is not a problem at all, is that concrete results take significant time to get there. Although I would be the last to say that there are not many things that need to be done, many problems to be solved, this Government has a proud record in education. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, for some months now the Ministry has been involved in nationwide consultations which will result in the third five-year strategic plan by the end of this year. The plan identifies about fifteen (15) strategic issues. I would read them for you to give you an indication of the scope of the education development plan.

1. Improvement of the Managerial Capacity of the Ministry (Decentralisation, involving all Stakeholders all over the Country)
2. Increasing the Level of Participation and Commitment of Stakeholders
3. Better Standards for Inputs, Processes and Outcomes
4. Improvement of Infrastructure and Equipment
5. Improvement of the Quality of Education in the Hinterland
6. Accelerating the Inclusion of Persons with special Needs in the Education System

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Hon Ronald Gajraj: Thank you, Hon Member, Reepu Daman Persaud and thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I haven't prepared an elaborate address for this Assembly because I think the Hon Members on the other side have seen and recognised the efforts of the Government in order to improve the security situation in this country. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, what is more than passing strange to me, after I assumed the office of Minister of Home Affairs, I sought to enquire whether there was any security strategy by which the country is guided and I was advised surprisingly that never in the history of this country was there a national security strategy. I think, Mr Speaker, that it is notorious now that efforts are being made to have such a strategy mapped out. While we have the national development strategy I think all and sundry will appreciate the importance of having a national security strategy which will be an integral part of the national development strategy. Many of us within this August Chamber, Mr Speaker, are involved in that process which, hopefully, will be brought to fruition before long. Mr Speaker, we have a governmental policy on the involvement of the people in what we do as a Government. In that regard, this has been brought out very clear in the report to which the Hon Member Ms Backer referred. The importance that is placed on community policing, the importance that is placed on public representation, the PR aspect of the Police Force, the intelligence aspect of the Police Force, and paramount among those factors, the training aspect of the Police Force. I would say that consultants have already been decided upon through the instrumentality of the British High Commissioner, Her Majesty's Government, to assist us in the study and implementation of some of the recommendations in this reform. So we are moving ahead. I wish to say also, Mr Speaker, that by the aegis of the Caribbean Development Bank a grant has been made available for a study to be done with respect to the computerisation of the Ministry of Home Affairs. That takes in every aspect, the Police Force, the Fire Service,

unless this matter is tackled urgently we might be creating a disproportionate, dysfunctional burden on society. The important task, as I see it, simultaneously with ceasing the production of such person is to urgently deal with the existing situation. The Ministry of Education has been making some efforts in this direction. It has been working on academic and non-academic norms for primary schools. Even the secondary school norms are in draft. This will provide a basis upon which to continuously assess achievement. Reading has been introduced into the secondary curriculum. NCERD has distributed reading material to teachers and students.

The Ministry is also committed to on-going curriculum renewal in the prioritised areas of English and Mathematics. For those outside the education system, Adult Education Association and the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education are relevant. The IDCE registered 3,000 new students in 1998-1999 and with IDB support currently has a programme which will help to address this issue of functional illiteracy. NGO participation such as Words on Wheels must also be commended. However, in my opinion, bolstered by the visits I have made to the various regions, and by discussions with various stakeholders, significant progress can be made in education delivery. Generally on this issue of functional illiteracy if we can establish a proper operational vision and successfully encourage stakeholders, particularly managers of the education system, to shoulder their established responsibilities. What I am saying is that we need in the education system today to go back to basics so far as management is concerned.

Mr Speaker, we now know that although for convenience sake we place in classes and groups to teach them, each child is a bundle of potential that with our help can develop appropriate aspirations. Our role must be to develop their talent and nurture congruent aspirations. As parents, educators, all of us must acknowledge that each child is an enterprise destined, depending upon our actions, for success or failure, to privation or the good life. Experience has shown that success has gone to those schools and pupils with strong

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stakeholder management, and with parents taking particular interest in their children and where the school administration does what it already knows it should do. Therefore, the success of each child depends largely upon our capacity to implement good educational management, good judgment, adequate assessment, discipline and record keeping throughout school life.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member spoke about the autonomy of individual schools, or school masters. I am talking about the autonomy of the individual school under the management structure of a PTA. I do not believe that to just leave individual school heads to do as they feel will solve our problems. I believe that you need strong stakeholder management. School boards should be there to overlook the system. That is what is important in our situation.

The Speaker: Time Hon Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I would like to move, as I am entitled to move, that the Hon Member be given an additional fifteen (15) minutes to conclude his speech.

Hon Dr Henry Jeffrey: Mr Speaker, based upon the vision that each child is an enterprise and without going into too much detail, the Ministry is hereby seeking to encourage greater stakeholder participation - encourage all of us on both sides of the House to encourage others to have greater participation in school management. We are making arrangements for such involvement at the national, regional and institutional level. We are establishing a national Advisory Commission on Education. We are acting to strengthen Regional Education Committees. Furthermore, we insist that Boards armed with school improvement plans be established.

The Ministry is also upgrading and restructuring the inspectorate. Here I must agree that at present the inspectorate do not have proper norms. Now we are putting in place norms that will allow them to make proper inspection. But we are also going to introduce another

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type of inspection - inspection of essentially the managerial system to see that people do what they are supposed to do. Mr Speaker, here we insist that teachers and head teachers rigorously follow certain basic principles. We insist that they have good attendance themselves. Be punctual and teach to time-table, prepare scheme of work and lesson plans as required by the regulations, conduct continuous assessment of pupil performance, maintain prescribed school records, prepare and implement a programme of continuous staff development. This is most important in a system where you have so many people that are untrained.

Foster stakeholder participation. Of course, parents also have an important role to play in the education of their children. They should ensure that their children attend school regularly, be supportive of school policy, attend meetings connected with their children and be generally supportive of the development of the school.

Mr Speaker, I have outlined our strategic direction which indicates that we are aware of the multifarious kinds of educational theories, our deficiencies and the need for other input such as managerial and professional training for our staff, the establishment of proper norms and better staffing at the managerial level. However, we believe that significantly more can be achieved with the existing level of resources if we can simply get stakeholders, particularly our education managers to return to basics, to shoulder their responsibilities. Hon Members as the Hon Deryck Bernard said, and I concur, our future largely depends upon our success in the field of education. Our Ministry is open to all suggestions and therefore we expect, no, I daresay, Mr Speaker, we are demanding national cooperation on this issue.

Thank you Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

The Hon Member, Mrs Backer.

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Mrs Debra Backer: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, as the Hon Minister of Education was speaking about the 600 teachers and the training that we are doing with them, the song *Fly away sky line pigeon* came to mind. *[Laughter]* I think it was by Sir Elton John.

Mr Speaker, I rise, like the speakers before me to make my contribution to the 2001 Budget. I firmly believe the very simple adage that one should start at the beginning. As such I would like to start with the Introduction of the Budget where the Hon Minister of Finance on page 1 said:

We have to work with the political Opposition and other groups in the society to create a lasting environment of peace, trust and enduring stability. Without a doubt, these are vitally important prerequisites for attracting investment that is so necessary for the continuation of economic progress and social development in our country.

Again on page 34, 4.33 the Hon Minister said:

We are striving to put in place the kind of climate that is conducive to attracting massive investment, so thousands of jobs can be created.

Mr Speaker, we on this side of the National assembly agree completely with the Hon Minister of Finance that there is a direct link between national security and development. We are also of the view that there is an absolute necessity for a peaceful and well ordered society if Guyana is to develop to its true potential. We also believe that there is a direct link between little or no economic development and an increase in crime. We are completely convinced that until social services, opportunities and wealth are equitably distributed there will be no lasting peace in Guyana. I repeat, until social services opportunities and wealth are equitably distributed there will be no lasting peace in our dear country. *[Applause]* Sir, I

am driven to paraphrase the legendary Bob Marley's song and say:

Until whom a person votes for is of no more significance

than the clothes he/she wears

this great country will not know peace.

Whether we like it or not, Sir, that is the stark reality of the country that we live in. Mr Speaker, the **Stabroek News** of Monday, 25th June, a very nice headline, *Xavier defends BK Contract*, and a very nice picture of the Hon Mr Xavier, (actually he looks nicer, real life. There is so much more of him, if I may say so). [Laughter] Getting back to reality, Mr Xavier said while responding to a question about BK:

We are not happy that one contractor is getting all the business but the others have to put their act together.

He went on to speak about someone wanting a contract, that had one front end loader and one truck. Another Member of the House said, not in the press, what is this big fuss that the PNC/Reform is making, Yes it is true that BK International gets a lot of contracts, but Courtney Benn also gets a lot of contracts, so what is the problem? Sir, if we want to believe that we will have peace and equality, (and parity means BK getting contracts and Courtney Benn getting contracts) we have to wake up and smell the roses.

Malaysia, if I may briefly speak about it, is a country which is quite similar to ours. Quoting on the disparity between power and resources, wealth and poverty:

These disparities spawn resentment on all sides and in 1969 the animosities burst into open rioting that shocked the nation.

As a result of this what did the Malaysian Government do?

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They had a new economic policy, they call it NEP. It is an affirmative action plan, designed by the Government to help the native Malaysians to gain economic equality and it sets strict quotas limiting Chinese and Indians access to universities, public jobs and public money, to make way for all citizens of Malaysia. That is what I would expect the Hon Mr Xavier to say and not *what is wrong with BK getting all the contracts*. We have to set the conditions where there will be parity in this country [*Applause*] because as the Hon Minister of Finance rightly said unless we have an environment of peace, trust and enduring stability we will not have real progress. Mr Speaker, this is peace, not piece.

The Ministry that has responsibility for the maintenance of peace and stability is the Ministry of Home Affairs that is presently led by the Hon Mr Ronald Gajraj, who we know has some athletic capacity. [*Laughter*] Mr Speaker, the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Home Affairs states very simply:

To formulate policies with respect to public order and safety and to evaluate the implementation of such policies while assisting in protecting and maintaining the social fabric of Guyana.

What does the objective of the Guyana Police Force, the main arm of maintaining order and safety say?

To provide service and protection (this may surprise some people) by preventing and detecting crime, maintaining law and order, controlling traffic, safeguarding property and preserving the peace through the provision of the highest standards of professional police service with integrity and dedication, (and this part I am not too sure what it means) using our unique law enforcement power.

[*Interruption . . . 'Black clothes.'*]

Mr Speaker, the question that all of us (not a political question) have to ask ourselves is: Is our Police Force faithful to its objectives?

Is our Police Force preventing and detecting crime? In the 2000 Budget, on April 4, this is what the Hon Mr Gajraj said, and I wish to God, Sir, that he was correct, that this would hold true.

For the whole presentation, Mr Speaker, not one single sentence has been made with respect to the Budget or even the crime situation in this country. It propels one to almost an inevitable conclusion that the crime situation has reduced so much that it is not worthy of mention.

In 2000 the Hon Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the crime situation has reduced so much that it is not worthy of mention. Mr Speaker, my answer to that is, even if it was true in 2000, then we have a situation that is spiraling downwards at a rapid pace. All we need to do is to ask the people at Albion, (peaceful people, not like the ones at Buxton) who were driven by the incompetence of the police in detecting and preventing crime to go there nicely and ask the Police if they can throw things at the building. These are peaceful people. They asked if they can throw fire at the Station. Sir, pick any paper randomly and you read about violence and crime. Today's paper, *Success Family Brutalised, Robbed by Three Gunmen*. On page 3, *Police to Step Up Patrols*:

Patrols will be stepped up in an effort to arrest the rampage by bandits, the Police said yesterday. Police express concern over recent problems etc.

So, Sir, we have a situation where they are not carrying out the objectives of preventing and detecting crime.

We go then to **Maintaining Law and Order**. You can ask any Guyanese at random whether the Police are maintaining law and order?

Then we go to Controlling Traffic. The mothers in black can answer this question. Are they safeguarding property? Are they preserving the peace?

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Mr Speaker, Member of this National Assembly, if we want to be fair we will have to answer all those questions in the negative. What we have, Sir, is a crime situation that is frightening. A rapidly escalating number of extra judicial killings which is frightening. The Hon Member, Ramotar, may not agree with me but we feel that it is frightening. The traffic situation is frightening. A high percentage of unsolved crimes is frightening. And a person, Sir, who unlawfully clutches to the Office of the Commissioner of Police with the active support of Government and that is frightening. *[Interruption . . . "Shame, shame."]*

Mr Speaker, the PNC/Reform is often misquoted and misunderstood deliberately, I say, by some sections of Guyana. Let me say very clearly, Mr Speaker, we accept, we agree and we believe that there must be balance in this society. We have always condemned, and will continue to condemn the brutal murders of any Guyanese *[Applause]* whether those Guyanese have been killed by their family members (which is often the case), people they know or by criminal elements. However, Sir, we condemn equally extra judicial killings by the Police. For the benefit of the Hon Member Ramotar there is no magic in the phrase extra judicial killings. It means what it says: Any killing not done under the jurisdiction of the Court is an extra judicial killing. What you may have is an extra judicial killing that is justifiable, like if someone comes up to you with a gun and you are armed, you can shoot them, that is an extra judicial killing but it is lawful, in the circumstances. But we are talking about unlawful extra judicial killings. There are some in our society led by the Hon Mr Ramotar, who seems to see nothing wrong, who seems indeed to be happy when the Police kills someone, when there is an unlawful extra judicial killing. They are happy when the police take on the role of judge, jury and executioner. I will quote briefly from a letter that Mr Ramotar wrote in the Stabroek News of 23rd June (I wouldn't say that the letter is tasteless) which reveals his cloven hoof. But not content with revealing his cloven hoof he is also barking up the wrong tree. All people who feel that extra judicial killing will lead to a reduction in crime are all barking up the wrong tree. The only

thing that has proven to reduce crime, and research clearly shows it, is a high rate of apprehending and convicting criminals. That is the only thing that will bring down crime in this country. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, the traffic situation is a non-contentious matter, if I may say so. We all know that non-contentious matters you can agree on it. I think I speak for the entire house, Sir, when I say that none of us can be happy with the traffic situation in this country. When it becomes necessary for the Hon Chief Justice, Justice Carl Singh to stand, (as I saw him yesterday, and I had conversation with him after) to direct police to try to control the traffic, (the mini buses have no regard for anybody and anything) the Hon Chief Justice who should be dispensing justice and doing so much more important things is caught up with instructing junior ranks, arrest this one, take down their number and let us get this thing under control. The judges cannot function, they cannot work. That is the level of disrespect we have on the roads. I think also the corruption that is involved is not levelled against the PPP/C, it is levelled against the people who issue licences. There are people out there who cannot read and write but who have licences. We all know that, Sir. All of us who practice in the courts, who have friends and families who practice, we know. So, Sir, we are in a crisis when it comes to the Police.

I am very pleased that I have here before me the Guyana Police Reform Programme which was commissioned and completed during October-November of last year. I will give praise where praise is due. Page 1 reads:

The consultants recognise the brave decision of the Government of Guyana in calling for a detailed and comprehensive study of the performance of the Guyana Police Force and all its functions.

So it commended the brave decision of the Government of Guyana, and we join, Sir, in that commendation. But what does the study reveal? Please permit me, Sir, to go to page 24 of that Report.

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It fits in with what the Hon Minister of Finance said, and we agree with completely, about peace and stability being tied directly to development.

The future of Guyana relies on several essential ingredients, economic and political stability, low incidence of crime, high degree of safety, high level of public confidence.

The thread that runs through all of these is the need for the presence of an effective Police Service working with the community and for the community.

That is what the Report says on page 24. On page 1 speaking about the present state of the Police it says:

It has been identified across all disciplines across the Guyana Police Force, as detailed later in the Report that the methods employed to deal with policing problems of the 21st century are firmly rooted in the early to mid 20th century.

So as we are in the 21st century our policing are firmly rooted in the early and mid 20th century.

The Report goes on to say on page 4:

Many stakeholders in the community spoke openly of corrupt and criminal behaviour, police brutality and abuse of authority. Some of the people we spoke to spoke from personal experience and some from hearsay. The accuracy of the statements can always be questioned ... What matters is the perception of the community of the police force. We have little doubt that the overall perception of the community is of a Force in need of improvement with serious shortcomings in service delivery, accountability and overall performance.

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So, Sir, we know where we are. Lest we be misunderstood, we on this side of the House want to place on record our appreciation of the sterling contribution of many members of the Guyana Police Force who worked under the most basic of conditions and are still able to do something. When you think of their salaries, their conditions of service, the physical conditions, the fact that they are solving some crimes and in some way helping to make Guyana a liveable place we have to compliment them and we so do.

The more important question is, Sir: Where do we want to carry the Guyana Police Force? It is our respectful submission that we want to carry it to the stage where the Guyana Police Force is citizen-friendly, where the emoluments are at a level that will reduce, (you will not eliminate) bribes, top-ups or whatever they are called. We want a Guyana Police Force, Sir, that as a result of training and modern equipment has the capacity to solve difficult crimes. We want a Guyana Police Force that has the capacity to lead with the re-education of all road users, not only mini-bus drivers. We want a Guyana Police Force that is accountable to Guyana. In short., Sir, we want a Police Force that will truly carry out our motto, *Serve and Protect*.

How do we get there? Mr Speaker, we of the PNC/Reform and I think the Human Rights Association also have long called for a broad-based commission to be set up to examine in the widest possible way the functions of the Guyana Police Force.

Sir, as you know and Members of the House would know Bill No. 8/2000 was recently passed in this House. Clause 5 of that amendment reads:

Disciplined Forces Commissions may be constituted by the National Assembly from time to time as may be necessary with power to examine the structure and composition of the disciplined forces and make recommendations generally with a view of promoting their

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greater efficiency.

It then goes on to the composition taking into account the ethnic constituency of the population. So Mr Speaker, Members of the National Assembly, we have the machinery that we can impartially without laying blame anywhere . . . (I hope the Minister of Home Affairs is not disappointed. He thought I was coming to attack him today. Women change their strategy, Sir. I am going to try to woo the Hon Minister) *[Laughter]* (You can see, Sir, I have preference for a certain weight category) *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, before I move off from the Guyana Police Force a very important recommendation from the British group is that the name of the Guyana Police Force be changed. They said that modern policing is more about service than about force. They are recommending that the new name should be the Guyana Police Service which will bring it into line with the Guyana Prison Service and the Guyana Fire Service. It is a service that we are asking our Police Force to carry out. *[Applause]*

Sir, the **Guyana Prison Service** is also of great concern to us. The objective of this important agency reads:

To provide for the custody and re-training of persons committed to prisons and to engage in economic and other social programmes supportive of national objectives.

So the two main pillars are to provide for the custody and retraining of prisoners. Mr Speaker, we all know about our prisons, the overcrowding, the appalling lack of sanitary conditions which are multiplied by the overcrowding, the tardy judicial system which leads to people who are presumed innocent spending an inordinately lengthy time in some of those dungeons. If I could just quote from the report, (I would get to that if I can find it later). As I was saying custody and training are the two main arms of the prison service. This is only sensible. Indeed, modern prisons are spending more

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and more time and resources on retraining of prisoners. It is not just a matter of keeping them, you have to retrain them. Unless they are on death row and they will be executed somewhere along the line they will at some stage re-enter society. We want them to re-enter society with the capacity to go into the mainstream of our human society. But, if we de-humanise them in prison, treat them like animals in prison, when they come out, because come out they must, they will behave like criminals.

The Speaker: Time Hon Member.

Mr Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, may I ask for fifteen (15) minutes for the Member to complete her presentation.

Ms Debra Backer: Thank you very much, Sir. As I was saying, we have to retrain them so that we can re-integrate them as smoothly as possible into mainstream life. To not do so would have a negative effect on the peace and security that this country so desperately needs. Sir, we also have a payroll system that is there in the books and we need to make more use of it. We are aware that there are efforts for years to have prisoners take CXC and play steel band and so on. They are commendable. But what we are saying is that the retraining should be sped up, more money should be spent on retraining. When prisoners come out and they are not retrained and not rehabilitated they will affect us all.

Sir, the **Guyana Fire Service**, particularly its capacity to investigate the causes of crimes is of serious concern to us. The Guyana Fire Service, we admit have satisfactorily performed their duty given their limited resources, both human and material. Unfortunately, there is no space, as it is now configured, for any Minister to aspire to the office of Chief Fire Officer. *[Laughter]* However, Sir, like the Guyana Police Force and the Guyana Prison Service, the time has long past, we need to inject money into these service entities. Sir, Members of this Assembly, they are what they say they are. They are service entities. They do not generate money.

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We have to inject money into them so that they can provide a service so we can have a climate where investors will feel free to come in and we can get on with the business of living and bettering our standard of living.

Mr Speaker, I do not need to go into the lack of capacity of the Fire Service. We have had several fires. And apart from the mouthings of members of the public, which includes some Members of the National Assembly, we have had no official statement from the Fire Department. As the Stabroek News said firstly, the Government must make a detailed and definitive statement on what it intends to do to equip the Fire Service and the Police Force to investigate fires. We need Sir, we need Hon-Minister Gajraj, to beef up the investigative capacity, so you will not have little people running around saying what caused which fire. *[Laughter]*

Sir, the only comment that we on this side of the House want to make on the **Police Complaints Authority** is that the less said about that Authority the better. This is our only contribution about that toothless Authority.

Mr Speaker, Members of the National Assembly, all of us here, perhaps with the exception of those who are coming to the House for the first time have at some time or the other been guilty of not riding the tide of opportunity when it presents itself. If I can quote from Shakespear's Julius Caesar:

There is a tide in the affairs of men (I would want to add, Sir, there is a tide in the affairs of men and women) which taken at the flood leads on to fortune omitted all the voyage of their lives is bound in shadows and in misery. On such a full sea are we now afloat (and this is the part I want to emphasise to all Members of this National Assembly) and we must take the current when it surfs or lose our ventures.

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Mr Speaker, the Members of the PNC/Reform are committed to helping in any way that we could in decreasing the level of crime in this situation. We are committed to sit on this Commission that we have the authority now to set up. We call on the Government to set up such a commission, a Disciplined Forces Commission, to look into the Police Force, the Prison Service and the Fire Service. Let us not waste another golden opportunity; it is here in our hands, let us not drop the ball.

I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Hon Member, Mr Ronald Gajraj.

Mr Ronald Gajraj: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, like my colleagues before me on this side of the House as well as my comrades on the others side of the House I wish to pay tribute to the excellent project which has been crafted in difficult circumstances, and very ably presented by the Hon Minister of Finance.

In that Budget, Mr Speaker, as it says clearly at Line 9 of page 2:

We must devote more resources to improving policing methods, reducing crime, defending our borders and external interests, and protecting our national patrimony.

It is a clear acknowledgment on the part of the Government that there is need for resources to be made available and to be utilised with respect to our national security situation. The Government clearly recognises that the stability of the country depends on the security of the country.

Before I go further, Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Hon

Member Mrs Backer for seeing the wisdom in the Government's recognising the inadequacies of the Police Force. While most of these inadequacies are not of recent vintage we have not been able to come to the position whereby we are taking steps to make good those deficiencies. I was somewhat concerned, Mr Speaker, in light of the presentation of the Hon Member whether I should address this Hon House. I think the recognition has been bared in the presentation by the Hon Member that there are certain areas within the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs that are being addressed. I recall in last year's Budget Debate, Mr Speaker, that the Hon Member made much about a phrase I had used, when I said that we recognised that there are certain areas in the country where there are no fire service facilities and *in the not too distant future* we hope to have fire service equipment and facilities available there. That was in 1999. I am happy to report to this Hon House that there is provision for the construction of a Fire Station at Anna Regina on the Essequibo Coast. *[Applause]* In addition, the Government has made available \$130M for the acquisition of at least two fire tenders to supplement the ailing fleet of the Guyana Fire Service.

We, therefore, Mr Speaker, would be able to have a Fire Service established on the Essequibo Coast, and I would not say within the the not too distant future but within the financial year. Apart from the Fire Service, Mr Speaker, there was much noise made as well with respect to some of the changes within the Police Force that I had spoken about in my previous Budget Speech, especially in 1999, which carried over. Mr Speaker, I am again happy to report to this Hon House that the training in Essequibo is near completion. It would have been completed before now had it not been for the abscondment of one of the contractors. We had to go over the entire process and get a new contractor. From every indication training will start in Essequibo, at least, by September of this year. *[Applause]*

There are several other areas where we have taken steps with respect to improving the lot of the policeman - the conditions of service and the areas where they are required to serve. In this regard

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we have a virtually new Police Station at Cane Grove occupied by the members of the Police Force in the year 2000 where there are more within the hub of the society at Cane Grove. We have had new Police Stations built at Mora Point in the Mahaicony River and at Karasabai. We have had new a police outpost built at Enmore on the East Coast of Demerara. All these, Mr Speaker, are in keeping with the undertakings or promises that had been given in this Hon House. Apart from the physical infrastructure and the capital expenditure we have ensured that the conditions within the stations have been improved so that the rank and file within the Guyana Police Force will be more comfortable to serve in their respective offices and spend more time in their barrack rooms. All these, Mr Speaker, involve substantial sums of money which the Government, despite the economic constraints has been able to make available for the improvement of security in this country.

Like the Hon Member does acknowledge, Mr Speaker, while the majority of members of the Force have been giving yeoman service in the interest of security and in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities we do have some miscreants. I wish to assure this Hon House that as fast as those miscreants are found and there is credible evidence against them we take action that we consider appropriate. In the year 2000, Mr Speaker, we charged not less than 45 ranks of the Police Force and placed them before the courts because of allegations of misconduct in one form or another. That is not to say, however, that that is a comprehensive position with respect to all the miscreants. Like I said before, and with your leave I wish to repeat, where we have credible evidence. Too often we hear allegations. Too often there is speculation and too often the wrongdoer gets away with his wrongdoing only to do it again. I would wish that members of the public and, indeed all of us on both sides of this Hon House take a concerted position to bring to justice all those who have committed infractions of the law, whether in the office as a police or in their civilian life. This, Mr Speaker, also tells what is our position with respect to the alleged police brutality. The Government does not in any way condone police brutality. And while

there are allegations of police brutality, unless I be accused of supporting any of those allegations that have been leveled against the police or any section(s) of the police, called by whatever name, we are concerned about the number of policemen who have been killed in the execution of their duties - Corporal Fiedkou on the Essequibo Coast, Constable Williams right in Georgetown, Constable Higgins in Berbice and more recently Constable Aldridge at Sparendam Police Station, gunned down in the sanctity of the Police Station at the hands of a criminal. Similarly, Mr Speaker, while we do not condone police brutality or extra judicial killing, as they may be called, whether justified or otherwise, we are concerned as well about all those who have been gunned down in the darkness of the night, in the stillness of the night, in the sanctuary of their homes, or in pursuit of their legitimate business. We do not condone police brutality, we do not support extra judicial killings save and except those that may be considered justifiable homicide. We have seen with pain in our heart the many families that have disintegrated because of criminal activities, crimes and criminals. What is sickening, what is bothersome, is that some of these criminals seem to have a perception that they can be sheltered by politicians and political institutions. They have said so openly. *[Applause]* I am concerned, Mr Speaker, as the Minister of Home Affairs, that when you have people like the infamous Lindon London who chose, having whatever arsenal that he did, to hold the security forces at bay, and when the security forces employed resources at their disposal that they considered minimally necessary to achieve their objective, the politicians took a certain view. It is not outside our knowledge, Mr Speaker, that politicians will mount platforms and by innuendo try to invoke ethnicity on the part of the police especially in the execution of their duties, and talk about kit and kin. The inference is clear, Mr Speaker. Likewise, when they have parties in commemoration of certain officers from the security forces and call them the comrade-in-arms party, Mr Speaker, it sends a message that can be misinterpreted and lead to certain situations that are most undesirable in this country and that will naturally affect and impact adversely on

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the national security of this country. [*Applause*] Those very policemen who were comrades in arms, Mr Speaker, those very policemen who were kit and kin, were mavericks, psychopath and murderers in the eyes of those very people when they brought down Lindon London. That is the kind of situation that we have to contend with in this country. It is a situation that all of us must frown upon. It is a situation that must be nipped in the bud. It is a situation that can lead to deleterious consequences. Mr Speaker, one criminal being holed-out in a particular building might be a coincidence. Another criminal, and of a certain reputation, being holed-out in that same building, to my mind is not just a mere coincidence. Beyond that I would not say at this stage.

Notwithstanding the accusations which have been levelled against the police, and in some cases justifiably so, I must say that the police, or the majority of the members of the Police Force, the Security Forces or the Disciplined Forces, which is constitutionally defined to include the Army, the Police, the Fire Service and the Prisons have stood their ground. One does not have to look far back to see that our Firemen in their gallant efforts to save lives and property in this country have been the victims of missiles hurled by whom and encouraged by whom? It is clear for all of us to see where the encouragement came from. Some people feel that they can commit infractions of the law with impunity because there are those who feel that for the slightest thing they can go out and protest. It is not, again, outside our knowledge, Mr Speaker, that the protest with which the Government has no problem, providing it is peaceful and in accordance with law, is used as a platform for the committing of crimes. Surely those who are responsible for generating those protest must know that they are also providing the opportunity for those who are criminally minded to commit crimes. We know what has been our position with respect to those situations. We know the infractions of the law. It is one thing to stand in this Hon House and castigate the police for not enforcing the law, while we know fully well that we are engaged in illegal activities on the road, and we dare the police to take a certain course of action. When they do they are castigated

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in one way or another. Policemen like anybody else are human beings. They have a mandate. Those who are honest, hardworking and professional in the approach to their office and the discharge of their responsibilities and their duties must be commended. [*Applause*] I would not go much further into the Police Force now.

I am happy that the Hon Member has a copy of the report. In that report it is quite clearly stated that the Minister of Home Affairs was involved, in and the areas which have been identified . . . We have been harping on the state of the Force in every aspect as a service organisation and I am happy to hear that the recommendation of the name change seems to find support among my friends on the other side of the House. It would be interesting to find out with whom that suggestion originated.

Mr Speaker, the report is testimony to the fact that we appreciate that there are certain changes which are necessary within the Police force. The fact that we have commissioned that report and it is being currently studied by the officers within the Guyana Police Force among other stakeholders, should be sufficient evidence that the reformation is afoot. This is not singular to Guyana. Trinidad has started to reform their Police Force. Barbados has started to reform their Police Force and so has Jamaica among other states in the Caribbean. We are moving along with the reformation in the interest of the Guyana Police Force or Service or whatever we may call it and it must be inure to the benefit of the communities across the board.

Similarly, Mr Speaker, with the Prison situation there are a host of things I can go into about what the prison has achieved over the years. Suffice it to say that for this year we have had no escape. In the year 2000 we had no more than there had been in 1999. This is because we put certain measures in place to deal with the security aspect.

As the Hon Member pointed out there is a double-barrel

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responsibility of the Prison. One is the custodial aspect and the other is the reformation aspect. While the custodial aspect is being addressed continuously we are now paying much more attention to the reformation aspect. I think all of us would acknowledge the difficulty in having a prisoner reintegrated into society. Apart from the cultural engagement, we have engaged them in plumbing, masonry, carpentry, printing, brick making and other fields of endeavour that would serve them in good stead upon being released from prison.

The payroll system is very much alive and functioning. Even outside of the payroll system, Mr Speaker, I would report to this Hon House that several prisoners who were first time offenders, and for petty offences, and the meanest quantity of narcotics have been allowed the opportunity to go out there and reform themselves by being released early. There is a committee comprising Prison and Police Administration and the Ministry of Home Affairs that looks into these cases with a view to giving these offenders, having had a taste of prison and what the prison environment and life is like, an opportunity to go and reform themselves, to stay away from narcotics or offences relating to narcotics. I am happy to also report to this Hon House, Mr Speaker, that there are several reputable, developed business people out there who have expressed their willingness to make a contribution towards the repatriation of the prisoners by giving guidance, providing employment and keeping an eye on them, so to speak. I wish to commend those people for their community-mindedness and their selfless service. *[Applause]* I will be very brief just skimming the tip of the iceberg. We have acquired tractors for the agriculture production aspect, and as I am on that, Mr Speaker, I might as well say that for the year 2000 the Prison has been able to produce crops and livestock to the value of over \$14M *[Applause]* We have a system where prisoners that are incarcerated but have certain skills, like carpenters, masons, plumbers and so on, while they are used to teach others there, their services and their skills are gainfully employed in that they do work outside at a contract fee, one third of which goes to their benefit upon being released

from prison. The two thirds is being used for prison administration and to meet other expenses. I am happy to say again, Mr Speaker, that for the year 2000 we have been able to generate over \$7M through that system. *[Applause]* We have, Mr Speaker for the use of the prison been able to acquire a brick making machine and to generate substantial sums of money through the commercial activities of inmates in the prison. I am advised, Mr Speaker, that a contract for in excess of \$3M worth of bricks is to be produced for a certain entity right in Georgetown. So we try with the limited resources to make available to the prisoners there every opportunity. . . And I wish to tell you this, Mr Speaker, that while the Hon Member spoke about the prisoners and CXC, I have before me now an application for a prisoner to go to the University to complete a degree education programme. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, with respect to the Fire Service, I touched on that earlier, we are hoping that the site that has been identified at Leonora to have within another year or two steps taken for a training school to be established there. The Ministry of Home Affairs is currently in negotiations with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to execute a memorandum of understanding whereby prisoners from Guyana can benefit from training programmes conducted in Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere in the Caribbean. We are in the process of settling that MOU, and that naturally will accrue to the benefit of the fire service officers. The training they will have will improve their capacity to do analysis on fire sites and at the same time we are hoping to be able to make available to the fire service certain technical facilities that will enable them to arrive at conclusions within a relatively short time as to what might have been the cause of a fire.

The Speaker: You will need some more time to continue.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I move that the Hon Minister of Home Affairs be given fifteen (15) minutes to conclude his speech.

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the Prison Service and the General Registrar's Office. I would like to say that though short staffed the General Registrar's Office has produced a significant volume of work for the year 2000 which includes thousands of birth, death and marriage certificates which have been issued, adoption matters that have been dealt with, grant of marriage licences and the conduct of marriages, and they are continuing. Mr Speaker, to clear the backlog of work that has banked up there over the years, in that regard the Hon Member referred to the prison and birth certificate, two prison officers, two fire officers and two members of the Police Forces have been taken to give assistance there to supplement the strength at the General Registrar's Office.

Now in closing we do not deny that in some aspects of criminal activities there has been an increase. But in major crimes, in particular murder, there has been a significant decrease in 2000 as against 1999. However, I do not deny that there is a changing face of crime and firearms have been involved in the crimes. We are dealing with those aspects in Guyana for this year. I am really concerned as to what the figures will be particularly running up to and after the National Elections. In 2000 there were no National Elections and that may be one of the reasons why the figures may be so low. We are not singular in that respect. While it is no justification, Mr Speaker, perhaps, I will end on this note by quoting this paragraph taken from 2nd March, 2001 Economist, page 57, paragraph 2, dealing with Britain and the British position. I make no comments that those are the consultants who have been looking at our situation and are making recommendations. I cite this paragraph merely for what it says:

Over the past forty (40) years property crime has increased by six (6) times and violent crime has increased by eleven (11) times. In the first couple of years after Labour came to power there was a small fall in overall crime. But violent crime, which has been rising for more than a decade continues to increase sharply. In the year of March, 2000 it rose by 8%. As crime goes on going up

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7. Achievement of Universal Access to Secondary Education
8. Increasing the Level of Respect and Tolerance of Diversity
9. The Production of Competent Teachers for the System and Means to Remain Them
10. The Reduction of the Loss of Valuable Human Resources
11. Ensuring the Relevance of the Curriculum at all Levels
12. Widespread Introduction of Information Technology to Make it Possible for All Guyanese to Live More Productive Lives
13. Improvement of Early Childhood Education
14. Ensuring That Tertiary Education is Responsive to the Needs of Society and the Individual
15. Providing Significantly Better Levels of Literacy and Numeracy among Students and the General Population

Mr Speaker, these are important areas which we will continue with in the general scheme of things.

However, since I have no intention of being too lengthy I will now attempt to outline the major project. Members we live in the era of perennial competition, as the Hon Bernard said, where lifelong learning is the only certain path to the good life. Lifelong employability has swapped places with lifelong employment as the central theme of our lives. Employability depends upon our capacity to add value and that itself depends upon our ability to sensibly manipulate our environment. A study published in 1998, indicated that 75% of our young adults, 14-25 years are functionally illiterate. Whether or not this number is correct, you would not deny that a substantial number of citizens are leaving the education system not geared to create the good life for themselves or for society. Indeed

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so the effectiveness of the Police in catching criminals appears to have fallen. Clear up rates of all crimes have dropped by nearly 50% since 1972.

That is very much so, Mr Speaker, because the criminals have become much more sensible. They are capitalising on technological advances. As a matter of fact we have intercepted vehicles on the East Coast, the West Coast, and Linden. Almost everybody in that car while armed with unlicensed firearm also had cellular telephones, so the communication is easy for them. These are the technological advances which they exploit.

So, Mr Speaker, all in all I will say that Government recognises that there is need for work to be done in the security sector and we have embarked on that course. I will pray and aid the support of my friends on the other side of the House as much as I know I can rely on the support of my colleagues on this side of the House.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

Hon Member Dr George Norton.

Dr George Norton: Mr Speaker, I do honour this opportunity to be part of this Budget Debate of the year 2001. The theme Moving Guyana Forward Together will never be anything other than a mere shallow political rhetoric. We certainly have to be realistic and not only optimistic.

I will try to be effective in my endeavour to remind the Hon Members of this Assembly of the situation of the Amerindian people of Guyana, a situation that is often taken for granted. I hope that my contributions will have the same effect on the Members of the Government side of this Hon House as that of my colleague, Mr Jerome Khan, since most of the other presenters after him from the opposite side spent a great part of their intervention trying to counter

what he had to say, even if it was only to mention that he was only the son of a rice farmer and nothing more. That situation continued on to today. It seems as though this is Jerome's budget.

Mr Speaker, I do wish to be as critical so the Hon Minister shall describe me as trying to dance within the raindrops. If I wanted to support, if I wanted to praise, I would not have chosen to be on this side of the House. Likewise, Mr Speaker, I await my criticisms from learned colleagues with patient expectation. I wish to inform you that I have been an advocate of indigenous rights practically all of my life, both at home and abroad. Even though I am a new kid on this block I am certainly not a Johnny-come-lately, fly-by-night Amerindian representative.

Some of you in this House, Mr Speaker, might remember my livelihood being threatened for protesting against the most dishonouring act against the Amerindians by the authorities when they changed the name of the Timehri International Airport. *[Applause]* I am proud to be among the few Amerindian nationals of this country who have been elected to this House. We follow the pioneer, the late honourable Stephen Campbell who was the first indigenous Guyanese to be elected to National Legislative Council in 1957. He is remembered in the 1959 Budget Debate on 5th March as fighting for water supply for the people in the Hosororo Hill area, Region No. 1. Incidentally that project was prevented from being completed by the then Minister of Labour, Health and Housing. That individual is well known to you all who are versed in our local Guyanese history. Following the footsteps of Mr Campbell, many of my fellow Amerindians were Hon Members of this House. I will mention a few of the most recent and only those that represented Amerindian interest. For as one Amerindian elder who is known to us as Uncle Fred will say, 'not all Amerindians are Amerindians.' They were Mr Anthony Abraham, Mr Matheson Williams, Mr Albertino Peters, Mr Kelly Andres and Matthew Charlie. These honourable gentlemen in their struggle for Amerindian rights were almost unanimous in their presentation of arguments, goals and

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objectives even though they were from different political persuasions. Year after year, Mr Speaker, we clamour for the rights of the Amerindian peoples of Guyana. Probably it is this clamour that is becoming louder and louder so that the past Hon Minister of Amerindian Affairs spoke about in his last presentation of the Budget Debate on 7th April, 2000. He said:

The voice of the Amerindian is louder than thunder, almost deafening.

No wonder, Mr Speaker, the cry of their voices fell on deaf ears of this Government because they were deaf.

Mr Speaker, we will continue to struggle for what we are convinced is genuinely ours. Year after year, I know some might be tired of hearing the same cry, but I will continue to be that voice of the Amerindian crying in the wilderness of this country. This voice says that you might be guilty of violation of human right and therefore it behooves you to listen, not with careless attention but with all your heart and senses.

Mr Speaker, international law requires Government to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, particularly land rights on the basis of historical occupation and use. The Government is also required to adopt measures to safeguard, protect and preserve the environment of indigenous and tribal people, to safeguard the rights of the people to their natural resources pertaining to their land which includes the use, management and conservation of these resources. That is in accordance with the ILO Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. It is a convention which we urge this Government to ratify immediately.

A central feature of these rights is related to the concept of control and consent. Consent refers to the degree to which Amerindians have a say in matters that affect them, while control refers to the extent to which Amerindians can effectively control

their lives and affairs. These include the right to participate in all decisions which may affect Amerindian rights and affairs particularly strong and effective control over lands, territories and resources, and self-control by communities over the development process.

Mr Speaker, since 1962, the Amerindian community under Mr Campbell petitioned the British Government, the Queen, for the rights to their land. This petition was signed by 25 Amerindian Chiefs of the Amerindian Villages in British Guyana, and the last paragraph reads:

Your petitioners especially fear for the rights of the Amerindians will be abrogated and ignored and lands on which Amerindians have lived for thousands of years will be expropriated.

Forty years later, Mr Speaker, this is coming to past. Today Amerindian land title issues are given cursory attention while timber and mining concessions are being granted at an accelerated pace. No policy exists with respect to Amerindian land issues. The most pressing issue with respect to land title is boundary demarcation. Titles which have been distributed contain descriptions of the land allocated to the community. These descriptions in many cases bear little relationship to the reality of the terrain. Descriptions refer to boundaries determined by rivers which do not exist at the point described, or run in different directions than stated in the title. In some titles the watershed renders the description nonsensical. It is for this reason, Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister of Amerindian Affairs in his Budget Debate on 7th April, 2000, thought it was funny to mention that in the demarcation villages like Aishalton would have more surface area than the country of Barbados. That Minister, Mr Speaker, most likely was not familiar with the nature of the terrain being either infertile grasslands or stony mountains. That was the Minister, Mr Speaker, who questioned what Amerindians need with land.(He probably lived too long in Georgetown). In some descriptions the territories always considered community lands have

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been omitted. Most communities have rejected the demarcation exercise.

The situation in which mining and timber concessions are being handed out with reckless haste is a recipe for serious conflict. Most disturbing than the errors in the written title is the hostility of the present Government to the communities taking steps to demarcate their lands. An ongoing attempt by the Upper Mazaruni communities to demarcate their lands is dubbed by bureaucratic obstacles from the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Department of Lands and Mines. Permission to enter the interior was refused an imminent expert contracted by the communities to assist in the demarcation. The initial work was made a national security issue with allegations that the exercise was altering maps in the area. As a smoke screen to cover this repressive activity, this Government then established its own demarcation committee with much fanfare and a feeble terms of reference. It was granted a derisory official Budget of US\$400,000 in the 1997 Estimates. It must be noted that funds were not available in 1998 or in 1999 but appeared once again in 2000. Incidentally, Mr Speaker, 1997 and 2000 were election years. The amount of funds budgeted, needless to say, was never sufficient. Discouraging Amerindians from demarcating their own lands stands in stark contrast with the policy of encouraging miners and loggers to even carry out their own Environmental Impact Assessment on concessions assigned to them. This frustration, Mr Speaker, has led the communities of the Upper Mazaruni to file a lawsuit against this Government which is pending in the law courts of Guyana. Mr Speaker, demarcation is only one issue related to land rights. This committee that was set up should have as its mandate also to consider the issues of communities without titles, the extension of existing titles and compensation for environmental destruction caused by mining, particularly missile dredging in Amerindian territories.

The Government of Guyana was persuaded in 1993 by donor agencies to suspend the granting of large forestry concessions until the capacity of the Guyana Forestry Commission to monitor and

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control the forest industry was strengthened. The Government was not happy with the suspension of the granting of concessions and started to circumvent this agreement by granting exploratory licences even in areas over which it has no jurisdiction, that is, outside the state forest. These exploratory licences were granted to Potaro Investment, a Malaysian/Guyanese venture which falls entirely in the area which was the subject of a territorial claim submitted by the Macushi people to the Amerindian Land Commission in 1966. An official of the Berdria, a second Malaysian company granted a licence was asked to leave the Solomon Islands for attempting to bribe a senior Government official there. These matters appear not to have carried any weight in the decision of the Government of Guyana to grant them an exploratory licence.

The Speaker: Hon Member I think we have to take the adjournment at this time.

Hon Members I have to remind Members of the Committee of Selection that there is a meeting which is to be held immediately after the adjournment.

We are suspending for half an hour.

SUSPENSION AT 17:00 H

RESUMPTION AT 17:40 H

Cellular Phones in Chamber

The Speaker: Before we continue with the presentations I would just like to ask Hon Members who have cellular telephones in their possession to turn them off. The first time I heard one I thought it was a mistake but since then at every single session we are having cellular telephones going off in the Assembly at least more than once. I think it is disrespectful, not to me, but to other Members of the House to have your cellular telephones switched on and going off while other members are speaking. So I will ask you please to observe that rule.

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Dr Norton.

Dr George Norton: Mr Speaker, I want to continue by referring to foreign mining companies encroaching without consultation in the Amerindian Villages. I mentioned the homestead of the residents of Great Falls in Region No. 4, for instance, which was encroached upon by non- Amerindian miners who held legal mining claims distributed without any steps being taken to assess their impact on the residents.

The Santa Rosa Village also received a letter from Golden Star Resources dated 2nd September, 1996 stating that:

The company has permission to work in your area. This letter seeks to inform you of this situation and also to seek your approval for our crews to engage in such activities.

The activity was to be carried out in the village itself and not simply on the community lands.

We have a similar situation where the Zamutavia Mining Company of Brazil is creating problems in the Pakaraima Mountains. The Canadian Mining Company of Coast Mountain built an airstrip and carried out exploration in titled areas along the Parima Village in the Upper Mazaruni in 1996 without consulting the community.

In Baramita the Amerindians in the North West District, which have no title to the land, and have experienced similar problems with Canark, a Canadian Mining Company which is exploring a concession on the lands the community claims.

We also have the incursion of foreign miners. Mr Speaker, the reports on the incursions of foreign miners, mainly Brazilians, have been received from all over the interior. Roads have been built by Brazilian miners using Guyanese labour, linking communities in Brazil to the Monkey Mountain in the Pakaraimas and moving towards

Mahdia where over three hundred (300) Brazilians are working. It is now possible to access areas of Guyana from Brazil by road which are not accessible from the Guyana side. Incursions of Brazilian miners into Amerindian farms in the Rupununi have occurred in the past three (3) years. At present, Mr Speaker, the control of illegal mining may be possible if effective action is taken immediately. This possibility is rapidly diminishing partly because of lack of resources to police large areas and partly due to the lack of effective capacity to monitor the mining industry. Moreover, Brazilian miners are entering agreements with local miners to give them legal ownership and to mislead them as to the benefits of their activities. Little or nothing of economic benefit remains in Guyana. The long term legacy is environmental upheaval. Mr Speaker, within a short period the Brazilianisation, if there is such a term, of the interior will reach proportions that the Government of Guyana has no capacity to reverse. This also brings with it the social effect. Mr Speaker, we know what the situation is with respect to the aids epidemic. With the situation in Georgetown not being in any way comfortable, one with the stretch of imagination, could tell what the difference will be in the Amerindian villages.

We have a situation, Mr Speaker, of our protected area system. Since the Paramakatoi Conference there has been no movement to develop the protected area legislation. The official in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Environment stated, over a year ago, that twenty (20) percent of the south of this country would be placed under protected areas. To date this has not occurred. At the same time extensive areas of the south are being allocated to Malaysian companies which have very bad environmental records.

Mr Speaker, I go on to mention the situation where we have been calling for some time for the revision of the Amerindian Act. However, from the Estimates of the Public Sector, Volume II, listed as one of the key responsibilities of the Amerindian Development Programme is to ensure all claims as clauses of the Amerindian Act are observed. A Select Parliamentary Committee was established in

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1993 to review the Amerindian Act. This piece of colonial legislation, Mr Speaker, governs every facet of Amerindian life. It is in need of urgent replacement. The rapid changes taking place and envisaged to take place in the interior areas in the coming years make modern legislation to protect and regulate Amerindian rights an even greater priority. Revision of the act should incorporate all international standards relevant to the rights of Amerindians. Despite the urgency of such legislation, the Select Parliamentary Committee is virtually defunct. In this respect, the Select Parliamentary Committee follows a pattern of meaningless official gestures.

Mr Speaker, we have a situation in the health sector where we have major challenges. We have to be dealing primarily with the malaria situation which seems to be certainly out of control. With the increase of the extraction operations in the mining sector in the interior villages portable water supply is becoming a problem. Unless some effort is made to deliver a safe supply of potable water villages would be forced to move from where they are located.

We have a situation of reducing the nutritional deficiencies experienced in many Amerindian Communities. In other words we have Amerindians in their villages malnourished. This is very much so, I can tell you, Mr Speaker, for as we sit here in Georgetown it is difficult for us to even imagine what is taking place. The Hon Minister in his presentation last year invited every one of the Members of this House to visit Orinduik. I am saying, Mr Speaker, that it is not Orinduik that we need to visit. There are villages like Yaramparo, Tipuru, Rocomotak. The people in the villages that the Minister himself claims to have been the first to take a vehicle into, are definitely suffering from malnutrition. *[Interruption: 'Shame'.]* Mr Speaker, when the Minister with some amount of joy and credit claimed he was the first to have driven a vehicle into those villages somehow it made me feel that there is some possibility of this red bead syndrome to the Amerindian. When you can boast about a person taking a jolly ride as against a trek of twenty (20) miles back to their village it touches one and tells us that our priorities are not

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placed in the right place. I agree, Mr Speaker, that those villages needed roads, but that is not all; we need to do much more than that.

Mr Speaker, I choose this opportunity to close my presentation by quoting this which I read to you now.

To be absolutely practical we in Guyana will build a prosperous nation the sooner we cease the waste of human resources represented by poor and powerless Amerindians.

I do believe that.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

The Hon Member, Mr Rudy Insanally.

Mr Rudy Insanally: Mr Speaker, Hon Members, although a novice in matters both financial and budgetary, I believe that it is fair to say that the 2001 Budget, presented by the Minister of Finance, represents a significant step forward toward achieving greater economic and social progress for the Guyanese people. I would, therefore, like to complement him on a very sound and serious presentation.

I had hoped, Mr Speaker, that following what I understood to be the practice of this House, that the preceding speaker would have given me some gist for my presentation. I must say that has not been forthcoming and I must, therefore, return to some of the points that emerged in the earlier discussions. The contentions and the questions as to whether, for example, poverty reduction was inadequate, whether economic growth was not paramount. The second issue as to whether domestic factors were more accountable for lack of growth than international factors and finally the role of the local state in terms of the international community. I think, Mr Speaker, having listened to everyone, we have to recognise that it is not either/or for

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any one of these categories. There must be balance and also a policy that is based, not only on the realities of the domestic situation, but, indeed, the realities outside of Guyana. I think, it was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr Anthony Eden, who said:

There is nothing more dangerous than a policy based on unreality.

Let me therefore deal with, Mr Speaker, the first apparent source of tension. That is, should we concentrate on poverty reduction or should we emphasise economic growth. I say apparent, advisedly, since the argument as to which of these is more important has, in my view, already been settled in the eyes of the international community. All countries now accept that economic growth is a sine qua non for development and that trade, in fact, is the engine of growth. But having conceded, Mr Speaker, the importance of economic growth to the development of all countries, including Guyana we must accept the reality that for many poor developing countries, including our own, poverty eradication has become an absolute necessity if we are to reach the threshold of development and be able to integrate ourselves in a rapidly globalising world economy. Some are in fact more equal than others despite the asseveration of the developed countries that we are working towards a level playing field. I am reminded by a saying of the late President of Tanzania,

As far as the developing countries are concerned it is like putting up a light weight to fight Mohamed Ali while it is true that we have Lennox Lewis.

In the political and economic spheres we cannot hope to contend with the environment that is predominantly set in favour of the developed countries. So, Mr Speaker, while we have to accept the fact that developed countries are now seeing external assistance both as wasted and as wasteful, and are encouraging us to stand on our own, that does not gain say the fact, in my view, that poverty reduction and international cooperation to this end are essential to the

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development in Guyana. I think we must be pleased to hear the Finance Minister say that we were able to mobilise from HIPIC the sum of \$590M. But even HIPIC is not sufficiently wide and covering to allow developing countries, as a whole, to progress. I think, we have to, at this stage, accept the fact that we have to rely in large measure on external assistance if we are to reach that point of departure where we can enter the international economy and participate with some meaningfulness. And I think it would be rather erroneous for us, Mr Speaker, not to acknowledge the importance of assistance that would be a way of letting the developed countries off the hook. There is now in existence, in the international community, a commitment to reaching the target of 0.7%. While it is only the Nordic countries that have satisfied that target, we cannot afford to say that development assistance must be relegated to the background.

Now, as to the other issue of debate, Mr Speaker, that is to say whether internal factors are the greater determinants of our progress or lack thereof or the international situation. I think, again, we have to realise that it is a combination of both. In fact, the plight of many developing countries like ours, the reality, is that many of us suffer from disasters, both natural and man made and bad weather. We cannot attract investment flows because contrary to what the developed world says investment is very selective. It goes to the developed countries where you have safe havens for investments, not to developing countries. I think this is another argument for some acceptance of the need for continuing assistance. The international climate out there, as the Minister pointed in his presentation, is extremely hostile. We are yet in the international environment to find a consensus on development. While we must accept the argument that we must become more self reliant, I agree with those who advocate it. I think it would be going down the wrong road to be accepting without question, because, that would mean that you would perhaps disband things like special and preferential treatment. When you are so weak under normal circumstances one can admit of ready competition. We are faced with high oil prices at the moment. We are losing these preferential markets and our prices for commodities,

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unless we go into services, are going to be diminishing. I was just talking to our colleague and learned that they have to invest so much more in terms of their receipts from the sale of rice on the international market. They cannot survive. So this is an indication of our basic need, our basic weakness, which in our interest should be remedied before we aspire to that next stage of development. If you have a negative growth rate it is lamentable. But I think, in the circumstances we have, it is fairly easily understood. It is hoped certainly that the measures provided in the Budget can lead in that direction.

Now I turn to the final dialectic or the final contention, Mr Speaker, that is whether we as a state can deal with those circumstances out there. Or whether it is the international community that has the onus for our development. Certainly again we have to accept the argument that we as a state, we as a country have the primary responsibility to develop ourselves. No one will help us if we do not help ourselves. We have helped ourselves, I think. It is fair to say, from what the Minister has said that we now have an expanded economic base. We have had a diversification success in the Public Sector Programme of 91% in all the important sectors of education, health, housing, agriculture, transportation and human development. Also, I believe we have initiated a policy of inclusiveness through consultations with the other actors in society, the private sector and non-governmental organisations. So I think we are on our way in that direction. The truth is, Mr Speaker, that in this globalised world, developing countries do not have as much autonomy or sovereignty as they had when they first became independent. Globalisation has, by the admission of all political sciences, gradually eroded that capability of developing countries to fully and uniquely determine their own faith. We, therefore, have to accept, willy nilly, the rules of the game and try on our own to devise a policy that will help us to reach that other level of progress. In this context, Mr Speaker, it would not be surprising to my colleagues if I advert to the role that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, can play in the implementation of the kind of policy that will take us towards development. I am glad to see that. The Hon

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Minister of Finance has made special mention of the need to have a policy that seeks to minimize, if not to completely eradicate all threats to our sovereignty, which do divert our scarce resources from development. We welcome his announced intention of re-capitalising our Budget, not only to deal with some of our territorial controversies, but also with the new threats that face most developing countries today, including drug trafficking, trans-national crime and threats to the rule of law. These are all part of the wider threat to international security. No longer can international security be seen as ending at your borders. These threats know no boundaries and I think, unless we have some form of international cooperation we will not be able to adequately address them and to overcome them. So we must, Mr Speaker, I submit, try to enhance our international cooperation while trying to pull ourselves by our boots. I am happy, as I said, to see the debate leading towards a policy of inclusion in foreign policy. To paraphrase the saying, I think today, foreign policy is too important a subject to be left to Foreign Ministries much less to Foreign Ministers. We must widen the debate. It is interesting to note that while small countries are losing their autonomy to some degree, Parliaments, the legislature, are on the upswing. Today, according to UN statistics 90% of countries have democratic legislature, who are capable as custodians, as I said, of the political will of the people to be able to defend their cause in this wider international environment. So if I make a plea for Foreign Affairs, Mr Speaker, I would only refer to what the Hon Prime Minister said yesterday, that we must not underestimate our capacity to deal with all of these threats whether they are political, economic or otherwise. As he pointed out we have exercised a role in international affairs that is out of proportion to our size. I remember when we brought our G77 delegation here from New York many of them were surprised to find that we were a country of only 750,000 people. This, I think bodes well for the future and what we can do as a nation, providing that we pull together and work together for the future.

So all that I have said, Mr Speaker, and I do not want to take

full advantage of the time, is to conclude that the vision and strategy outlined in the presentation of the Hon Minister of Finance are not only clear and correct but they are, in my view, likely to produce the desired result which seeks to enhance the development of Guyana and the Guyanese people. That strategy is, in my view, right in being two-pronged. To answer the argument it has, first of all, to seek to mobilise our own resources, both human and financial service to development and secondly, to strengthen and intensify international cooperation to augment these small resources to satisfy the multiplicity of needs which our nation faces today. So I make an appeal, Mr Speaker, to all in the House, if I have dwelt on some of political issues outside, it is not to score debating points, but, rather, to call for a unified approach for us to have a common purpose towards finding solutions to our problems. If we fail to do that, vis-a-vis the international society out there which is stacked against small countries like ours, then the saying will truly come to past,

If we don't hang together we will certainly hang separately.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member, Mr Insanally.

Hon Member Ms Carolyn Rodrigues.

Hon Carolyn Rodrigues: Mr Speaker, I rise like my colleagues before me to extend congratulations to the Minister of Finance for a Budget well done. The Budget clearly includes all Guyanese. I would like to quote from the **Introduction:**

We are single-minded in our resolve to establish a society in which none feels excluded from the mainstream of development - a society in which the rich diversity of our people is used to strengthen the bonds that bind us, rather than accentuate those that divide us.

Mr Speaker, Amerindians are not exempted from the sentence I just read. I would like to say Mr Speaker, that our diversity makes us rich and unique. We should try to promote this. All our ancestors contributed in one way or another to this country so that we can benefit today. We would like those that would be coming after us to say the same things about us and we have to make provisions now.

Mr Speaker, the Budget Speech did not include any specific section to deal with Amerindians and this is because this Government sees Amerindians like anyone else in this country, equal and important.

Mr Speaker, I have to, although this might not be the Hon Member's wish, answer some of the questions or counter some of the remarks made by the Hon Member, Mr Norton. There is a word that many of us claiming to represent Amerindians like to use. That word is land. I would like to mention Mr Norton's words [*Interruption: 'Sorry, Hon Dr Norton.'*] when he said that some of the descriptions mentioned in the Amerindian Act are nonsensical, this is concerning the land. Mr Speaker, I would like to inform the Hon Dr Norton that these descriptions were not done by this Government but by the then PNC Government which he now is a part of. He should recognise this. This Government would like to correct the situation. I would like to give you an example, Mr Speaker. There is a community in the Rupununi, the name is Toka, which falls outside the legal description. They were always living there, Mr Speaker, so in the first instance it was done wrong, the description did not cater, or probably it was close to election time and they had need to make sure that something was made law. Mr Speaker, this Government would like to have the land issue settled and I invite all who are interested in having this issue settled, maybe we can talk because, this word is usually used in this House, *meaningful consultation*, so we can get to some kind of agreement to have this issue settled. For now what we have proposed is that the 75 communities which have been given descriptive titles in the Amerindian Act would be demarcated because only then we would

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know where the boundaries really fall. In that way we would be able to address the extensions because, of course, many of the communities' requests for extensions are fully justified. This Government is committed to having those communities given their extensions. But like anything else, Mr Speaker, we have a process to follow. We also have communities, the Hon Member, Dr Norton mentioned Great Falls, but we have so many more, Campbell Town, Katoka and so on, that live on State Lands. They need their lands also. This Government wants to ensure that these communities are given their land. If we do not have the first stage of the process completed, how can we move to the second stage which would cater for these communities? Of course, there have been instances where concessions were granted and Amerindian Communities were affected. Mr Speaker, I visited a number of communities, not only in my ministerial position but before, and most of them have been misled. I could give you another example but I will just talk about Toka. They were told that if their lands were demarcated they would have to move out and go into that specific area according to the laws of Guyana. We had to clear that up with them and encourage them to continue to farm where they are, to continue to live where they are because this Government has no intention of taking away the lands of Amerindian people.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member spoke about Hosororo water supply. I am not sure when last he made a visit to that area, but I am pleased to report to this Hon House that water is now available and that was done under this Government. *[Applause]* More than that, this Government has extended that water supply to cover Wauna, a community further in than Hosororo. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I noticed that some members on the other side have a problem with doing their homework. I will advise you if you do not do your homework it will be a problem.

Mr Speaker, Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9 are the Regions that are primarily populated with Amerindians. The Budget for those Regions

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will therefore primarily benefit the Amerindian peoples. In addition to that the Ministry of Education, Public Works, Housing and Water all have provisions for work to be done in Amerindian Communities. For example, in the Public Works Budget there is provision for the design for a bridge over the Rupununi River. Mr Speaker, this is testimony that the Government is interested in making proper roadways so that we can enter the interior at less cost and for those who live there also. I am sure that the Lethem road has majority support in this House. We all recognise the many benefits we can have from that road. Not only the trading down south but our internal trading with the communities of Region No. 9. Mr Speaker, I would like to say that sometimes my Amerindian brothers and sisters are seriously misled. In this case one of them went to Brussels and said that we do not need this road. I would like to say to those people that those who peddle such nonsense should stop so that we can have progress in this country. Progress in this country is not just progress for Amerindians but for all of us in Guyana.

Mr Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about education. I listened to the Hon Deryck Bernard. He was going to say something about problems in the hinterland about education and I was waiting for more but he did not provide me with it, he did not elaborate. He was saying that there is a problem and if there is a problem we would like to hear about it. Let me inform the Hon House that since this Government came into office a lot was done for education. The Amerindian communities benefitted equally.

Mr Speaker, poverty can be measured by a number of factors, access to education, access to jobs and finance. If we are going to use education as part of this then we can clearly see that these communities have moved one step forward. We have constructed and rehabilitated schools, huge schools, at St. Ignatius, Kabakaburi, Paramakatoi, St. Cuthberts, Waramuri, Moco Moco, Kurupung and so many more. The list is endless. In fact, just last week end a contract was signed for the extension of the Santa Rosa Secondary School for the sum of \$16.8M. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I have to say that it is a pity that this Government came to office so late, not by choice but by denial. I say so because I was not afforded the luxury of attending secondary school in that community called Santa Rosa, the largest Amerindian community in this country. It is a shame that only after 1992 that a secondary school was placed there. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, this Government does not consider secondary education as a luxury anymore, it is an essential. Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that since that school was established in 1993-1994 we have students at the University of Guyana pursuing studies in Communications, Engineering (I am speaking of that specific community and graduates from that specific school). I am happy to say here today that the very contract that was signed last week, the engineer who would be supervising the project is a graduate from the University who attended that Secondary School. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, if we are speaking of human development that is where it begins. I recognise that there are so many things to be done for the Amerindians of this country. We live in a world where there will always be scarcity, if there wasn't there would not be all these debates and probably it would have been a boring world. But, Mr Speaker, we have to take things one at a time. We have to do things one at a time. We recognise, this Government recognises that a revision of the Amerindian Act is important and definitely this would be addressed sooner than later. I am happy to invite all who are interested in the development of Amerindian communities to be a part of this process.

Mr Speaker, part of the Budget for 2001 will go toward assisting communities in controlling acuhshi ants by providing chemicals and equipment.

You would have read in the newspapers recently that food shortage is being experienced in some communities. I was just reading in the Stabroek News that in the early days the Amerindians actually taught the Europeans to plant and to be self-sufficient. Mr Speaker, we would like them to return to being self sufficient. To

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this end they would be given the necessary technical assistance, chemicals and equipment to assist in this process.

Mr Speaker, the Amerindian Village Councils today are very important bodies. Recently there have been numerous organisations interested, all with different agenda one way or the other, in Amerindian development. This Government would start a process whereby all of these communities will be provided with Village Offices so that the Council can operate from some place central. I can foresee a problem with Dr Norton. I might have to build that office in Georgetown. *[Laughter]* But we will be ensuring that the process is started.

Mr Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about the Institute of Private Enterprise Development. The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme started a credit scheme in the North Rupununi. Prior to this scheme Amerindians were seen as people that were not very credit worthy. I am happy to report that the payback rates of these communities are even better than some of the commercial banks here. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, part of this Budget will go toward continuing that programme. It is intended that the North Rupununi District Board, which is the local organisation there will be the persons to take over from IPED. This scheme, we are hoping, can be repeated in other parts of this country.

Mr Speaker, we also have a section in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs that assists with patients coming from Amerindian communities and also assists if anyone dies in the process, with the burial. To this end we will be continuing and expanding this service as the Ministry would now have separate departments to deal with education and culture, health and welfare, issues of land and special projects. Very shortly there will be advertisements for social workers and other skilled persons so that we can better service the Amerindian communities.

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Mr Speaker, I would like to mention some of the other things that are happening in these communities because the Amerindians are not taken for granted. We cannot afford to do that especially at this time when the Amerindians and Indigenous peoples of the world are very much in focus. We recognise this and will support it at every cost. The Government of this country three (3) years ago negotiated a loan with the IDB for \$2.7M specifically for work in Amerindian communities. Mr Speaker, I would like to say that we have done over ninety (90) projects in communities all over this country, from health centres to schools, to farming projects. We have done a lot. Mr speaker, we even ventured onto a solar electrification pilot project in the St Cuthberts Mission. It was just commissioned. Mr Speaker, the Health Centre, school and well are all functioning with solar energy. These are things we hope to repeat in other communities. In fact we have already identified the communities of Wakapau and Bethany to be benefitting from this.

Mr Speaker, the Amerindian communities number over one hundred and twenty (120). A lot of the time we have many agencies working there but we have to be a little bit more organised and coordinated. To this end the United Nations Development Fund has agreed to fund a needs assessment where we can clearly see what the priorities are and plan programmes to address the needs of those communities. This assessment would also seek to provide strategies for programmes that we can implement to further reduce poverty. Mr Speaker, I can go on and on to speak about the work that has been done in these communities, but as I said there is so much more to be done. We have to take things in stages because it is not how much you do but it is what you do that would help these communities. We can start so much and leave it unfinished, but it is the intention of the Government, as the Hon Member Shadick said, not to put our hats where we cannot reach. We would be taking things one step at a time.

Mr Speaker, I close by saying that we all as Guyanese have a commitment to this country to ensure that we progress whether we

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are Amerindians or not. We have to start now, we cannot wait. We must have a Guyanese culture, a culture that speaks of togetherness and love, not burning and those things. Mr Speaker, I close by saying that that we can very well do. This Government is open to constructive criticism and some were surely detected from the other side of the House.

Mr Speaker, once more I call for us to work together so that we can move this country forward.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Hon Member, Dr Joseph.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Mr Speaker, I rise on behalf of the People's National Congress/Reform to make my contribution to this the 2001 Budget Debate. But before I commence my presentation I wish first of all to commend Minister of Finance Mr Kowlessar for his presentation of the 2001 Budget. I also take this opportunity to commend in absentia the Hon Minister of Health, Dr Leslie Ramsammy for his bold initiatives in campaigning within the Ministry and Public Health facilities thereby ensuring that they all become smoke-free zones. But I challenge him in his absence if he can do the same for the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports. *[Laughter]* That indeed, Mr Speaker, is a real challenge.

Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that having listened just a few minutes ago to the maiden presentation of the Hon Minister for Amerindian Affairs that I concluded that she is in fact suffering from newness, because even in this House there has been a problem with research. We have done it right on this side of the House. *[Applause]* It is the People's National Congress that has put the Amerindians on the Guyanese map in this country. *[Applause]* It is the People's National Congress that is responsible for the Amerindian Land Commission etc. It is the People's National Congress in collaboration

with Amerindian Leaders that sat together to discuss and find ways in which Amerindians would like to have their land issues dealt with. And the Amerindian people's know it. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, it is the same PPP/C administration *[Interruption: "Mr Speaker, I would ask for protection."]*

The Speaker: Hon Members, kindly allow Dr Joseph to continue his presentation uninterrupted please, including Mr Murray. *[Laughter]*

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Mr Speaker, it is the PPP/C administration that ensured that the Regions that are heavily populated by Amerindians have only one parliamentary representative. *[Applause]*. I am surprised this afternoon to see the Hon Member Manzoor Nadir sitting over there, a champion of Amerindian causes so many years ago, and endorsing that the PPP/C treats Amerindians as common Guyanese. You said in your Poverty Paper that the Amerindians are the ones who are experiencing the most poverty in this country. Yet you sit there and you endorse that the Amerindian people in this country ought to be treated like every other Guyanese. Come on! *[Interruption: "Shame."]*

Mr Speaker, it is clear to me that politics is characterised by strange bedfellows and I am sure that we are just seeing the beginnings of surprises as you cross the floor in this Hon House.

The Speaker: Hon Members, once again, could you allow Dr Joseph to continue his presentation uninterrupted, please.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Mr Speaker, Nicodemus asked the Lord, Jesus Christ, a very important question one day. *[Interruption: "Donald, diarrhea is from the bottom not from the top."]* He asked, *Lord what shall I do to be saved?* He received a clear and concise response, *Ye must be born again.* The people of this country, Guyanese from all walks of life, have since 1992 been asking the PPP/C administration, *what shall we do to be saved?* The response they

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have received shows clearly that the people of this country will continue to experience a period of portentous danger. Never in the history of this country, Mr Speaker, and during my lifetime in this country have I witnessed such moral decay, social decay and poverty. *[Applause]* At the genesis of this, Mr Speaker, one can only identify that these are as a result of poor governance under the PPP/C administration. *[Applause]* In every single community of this country Guyanese are experiencing periods of sorrow. The education system in this country lacks ideas to effectively move this country forward. And while our qualified teachers are leaving in droves the PPP/C seems incapable in terms of providing tangible ways and means of redressing the situation. Mr Speaker, it is clear, you do not need to be a rocket scientist to understand that if your qualified or experienced teachers exodus on a daily basis your education system is in jeopardy. From Nursery to University it is in jeopardy.

Mr Speaker, if you look at every sector of our economy in this country during the last eight (8) or nine (9) years you will see that crisis is hitting you loud and clear. If you look at the Rice Industry it is in crisis. If you look at the Sugar Industry it is in crisis. If you look at the Bauxite Industry it is in crisis. If you look at the Health Care Sector it is in crisis. If you look all around there is a crisis. It is important for us to understand that this is symptomatic of the quality of governance the people of this country have been exposed to over the last eight (8) or nine (9) years under the PPP/C Administration. It is important also for us to note, Mr Speaker, that the PPP is notorious for talking the talk, but when it comes to walking the walk you find them wanting. It is easy to come into this House and talk about policies and programmes but where are the effects of these policies and programmes? Are they trickling down to the population at large? That is yet to be told. Yet, the Budget is replete with large sums of money allocated to different sectors of the economy. This is perennial, every time we come here (and I have been here for the short tenure of the last Parliament) what do we get? Large figures attached to programmes. When you go into the field (I need to emphasize this

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many times: Election campaigns are very important because they give you an opportunity to touch base with the common mass throughout the ten administrative regions of this country. So when the Hon Member for regional affairs speaks about programmes and places being built etc.) you can dispel the lies and you can identify the truth.

Mr Speaker, during the month of March, 2001, on the Internet it was clearly published that a secondary school was built in Annai by the PPP/C administration. We were very enthusiastic to see this secondary school. We toured Annai. The people asked us *why you all touring looking for secondary school?* We said we were told in this Hon House that a secondary school was built in Annai. They said *Mr Hoyte and your delegation, they got no secondary school that was built in Annai. That is a hoax.* I was astonished. Mr Speaker, it is important for you to understand that Annai did not benefit from a secondary schools. In the fields we were able to identify that.

Mr Speaker, it is important for us to understand that Guyana is going nowhere unless in this House where representatives of the people meet and engage we ensure that at the end of our constructive (or destructive) engagement it must benefit the people. It is no use speaking about inclusiveness, it is no use speaking about putting Guyana first, if in this House we sit down and deliberate on a Budget and Budget proposals, like the one before this House today and we do not find and see the evidence of benefits accruing to the population at large.

Continued in Part II
A

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUY-
ANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUB-
LIC OF GUYANA**

Part II

8TH SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued from Part I

Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that the subject Minister of Health is not here. I hope the one holding his brief pays specific attention to what is going on in the Health Sector.

The crime situation in this country is notorious. Those Guyanese who travel in and out of Guyana they should be aware by now that Guyana's name has been mentioned in tourists' provisos for tourists who are coming to the Caribbean on their annual summer trips. It is important for us to understand as the sociologists say that crime is a product of unemployment. But I say this, if the PPP/C Government fails to secure major foreign investment it obviously means that the crime situation will not get any better. That has been the misfortune of the PPP/C Government in administration. There has been no major job creations in this country as a result of major foreign investment. It is unfortunate, but true, that while we make efforts to secure loans from international lending agencies Guyana fares very poorly in the world market that the Hon Member Mr Clement Rohee often speaks about - the world of globalisation and trade liberalisation. I am not an economist, but I believe even for the sector for which I speak, the Health Sector, if the Government does not actively pursue its trade surplus there is no way that we can be in a position to guarantee that our plans and programmes for this nation, in terms of development will be achieved. You must deliberately seek to establish a trade

surplus.

Mr Speaker, while I speak today a conference in the United States of America is deliberating on the 21st Century's most dreadful plague, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. While in Guyana many tomfooleries fail to acknowledge that the situation in Guyana has reached disastrous proportions, the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Guyana has been increasing unabated. It is no secret, Mr Speaker, that there has been over the last decade an unholy marriage between poverty and the incidence of HIV/AIDS. Guyana is no exception in terms of the impact of this pandemic within the society. It is important, Mr Speaker, that when one looks at the Strategy Paper for Poverty Alleviation that one must look at it within a certain specific context. It is no use developing policies and programmes to tackle poverty unless you have time bound achievements. It is not important if you say that you are going to do X or Y to reduce the impact of poverty in the society if your policies and programmes are not coupled by specific deadlines of achievements. That has been a problem with the PPP/C in terms of policies and programmes. They lack time bound deadlines. It is easy to come in this Hon House and identify constraints, that is what you get here. When programmes fail you get excuses, you hear all kinds of constraints playing an important role in their lack of completion.

Mr Speaker, the Health Sector over the last eight (8) or (9) years has seen the changing of two health Ministers. We have seen, in less than a decade, the appointment of three health ministers. Many of my colleagues in the Health Care Sector have concluded that this is symptomatic of the confidence that they have generated during their stewardship in this very important Sector of the economy. None of them have been allowed to continue. If they say they have made progress they have not been allowed to continue the programme. It is important for us to understand that they have not known the sterling contributions of the two previous Health Ministers at the helm of such an important Ministry. I know for sure that we are living in

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very trying and serious times and the current Health Minister has a whole lot on which to chew. The Health Care Sector, at the moment, is plagued by an exodus of qualified health care professionals. The Health Care Sector is overwhelmed by morbid mortality of HIV and STDs. In terms of the ten (10) most frequent disease conditions in our ten (10) administrative regions, statistics show that they are all on the increase in every single administrative region in this country. While it is good to say that the Health Care Budget in 2001 shows an increase, in comparison to the previous year, of monies allocated, it is difficult to identify what has been the impact of all of this spending.

In last year's Budget Debate, Mr Speaker, I did alluded to a CARBC Report that identified a number of shortcomings in both public and private laboratories throughout this country. For a health care professional like myself we understand how important it is for laboratory support for diagnosis and treatment of ailments. That Report apart from the fact that it was critical of both public and private laboratories, also provided a number of recommendations in an effort to ensure that laboratories in both the public and private sector reach a standard that will guarantee them certification. I made it my duty, in preparation for the Budget presentation, to find out how many laboratories have done the things necessary as recommended in the report so that they could access certification. No known laboratory has succeeded so far, except one, of course, and that I am subject to correction.

It is important for us to understand that Health Care has a very important component - quality assurance. If we cannot guarantee basic quality assurance in the provision of health care delivery then we are in serious problems in this country. Therefore, I urge the Hon Minister of Health in his absence to ensure that as early as possible an effort is made to implement the recommendations of that CARBC Report so that the quality and technical standards of our laboratory services in Guyana can be improved to the level where we as healthcare providers are confident that the quality assurance is guaranteed so that we can move this country forward in health care

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delivery.

Mr Speaker, it is fair to say that the national HIV/AIDS situation is a disaster. Approximately two years ago, I think in 1999, the Ministry of Health organised a national HIV/AIDS Consultation. It was welcome by all and sundry because it gave an opportunity for us to garner all the help we can get in ensuring that we charter a proper course to deal with the local issue of HIV/AIDS morbid mortality. A number of recommendations have come out of that proposal and we are yet to see those recommendations implemented. It is important to note too, Mr Speaker, and I hope that the Hon Minister of Health in the Budget Debate does come saying how much money has been spent on the national HIV/AIDS Programme because the question that ought to be answered is: What has been the impact of these spendings on the rising incidence of HIV/AIDS in Guyana? Definitely the impact has been negative. In a situation where one's responsiveness has been overwhelmed, in medical circles, we consider that to be a disaster. Therefore, I urge, the Hon Minister of Health to ensure that this is the time to put Guyanese first.

This is no time to get involved in politics. A situation of a disastrous proportion is now affecting our nation and we need to consider it as such and garner all the help necessary so that we can seriously tackle this problem.

In this direction, Mr Speaker, the PNC/Reform proposes that as part of the administration strategy to positively impact on the rising incidence of HIV/AIDS in Guyana we establish strategic links with countries that already have experience in dealing with this problem. Putting the local situation in its right perspective, as a disaster, opens a number of avenues for us to get the necessary funding and other assistance in our fight to positively impact on the reduction of the local incidence of HIV/AIDS.

Mr Speaker, I tried to avoid cheap political points so far in this presentation because I believe that as a Health Care professional my

obligation is first to the people of Guyana. I have always shared this belief with my colleagues in the profession that as long as we work in this profession in this country we will ensure that we do our best to ensure that the people of Guyana have an opportunity of easy access to quality health care. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, it is important also for us to understand. . .

The Speaker: Hon Member, if you are going to move on to another point, it would be better to get an extension of time now.

Mr Robert Corbin: Mr Speaker, may I ask that the Hon Member be given three (3) minutes to conclude his presentation.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Mr Speaker, I have already elaborated on one of the most trying areas in our Health Sector, the Georgetown Public Hospital. If you recall last year, the Hospital Inspectorate Committee did present a report to the Hon Minister of Health outlining the deficiencies at the Georgetown Hospital. Inherent in that report is a list of recommendations for the improvement of the quality of service that is offered to Guyanese there. I have not heard of any formal endorsement by the Minister of Health of that Report. I would hope in the interest of the people of Guyana, and in the interest of the health care of the people of Guyana, that that report and its recommendations be endorsed by the Minister of Health so that the recommendations therein will be given the attention necessary to guarantee the people of this country adequate health care.

Mr Speaker, any country, or government can speak of proud achievements in many fronts, but when any government does that they must ensure that its population does not endure lives of hunger, malnutrition, denial of the right to decent education, adequate and affordable housing, portable water supply, adequate sanitation and protection from harm and police brutality. It is population does not endure lives of hunger, malnutrition, denial of the right to decent education, adequate and affordable housing, portable water supply, adequate sanitation and protection from harm and police brutality. It

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is important, Mr Speaker, that we understand that if good governance ought to prevail in this country then it starts with electoral justice and thereafter it hinges on all the democratic pillars that move a country forward under the principles of democracy.

Mr Speaker, I am not a proud health care professional, because the fate of health care professionals in this country is far from acceptable. Health care professional continue to exodus this country and there is no policy or programme to retain [*Interruption*].

The Speaker: I assume that you are concluding now Hon Member?

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Yes, Mr Speaker. There is no policy or programme to retain and attract keen and critical staff of the Health Care Sector. If this is not done urgently, Mr Speaker, the Health Sector will continue its down slide.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Member.

Hon Member Dr Ramsaran:

Dr Bheri Ramsaran: Mr Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to express my endorsement of the Budget presentation by the Hon Minister. In the same breath I hasten to add my deep appreciation for the candid manner in which he presented to this House a reality check. There were no flowery speeches or any attempt to cover the constraints or difficulties with which he and the Government have had to contend while nurturing the economy through the past year. It is adequately reflected in his presentation and it forewarns us as to some of the difficulties that we will face and why we will be having to face them. In other words, it honestly prepares the nation for the real situation as will be presented later on in the discussions concerning the Budget.

Mr Speaker, I am also proud that the Budget carries on a certain

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tendency that we have observed with similar PPP/C Budgets. That is, while expressing the reality that things were difficult we noticed a continuous trend in the social sector, increases from year to year to year, despite the difficulties we would have faced in the previous year. I will get into that a little later as I compare what we have recently achieved - I am not going to go back into twenty-eight (28) years or even into the Hoyte period - and how we are building on that.

However, Mr Speaker, before I go into details of that analysis and at the same time attempt to address the legitimate concerns of my colleagues across the aisles, let me say how proud I am, how buoyed I feel today to be on this side of the House. I am buoyed by the presentations I just witnessed from the persons who made their interventions. Both sides made good presentations but I am particularly proud of the women members of the PPP/C on this side. *[Applause]* If earlier in the proceedings there were a lot of entreaties that the PPP/C should have given gender representation better thought, I have no doubt that gender is well represented in this House. *[Applause]* I even had a quick thought when I was listening to the speeches from our presenters and reflected on the Hon Amna Ally's presentation that probably for our ladies over here one is equal to two over there. *[Applause]* I feel in very good company. I must add my congratulations for the articulate manner in which Minister of Amerindian Affairs presented the caring manner in which the PPP/C Government has been empowering Amerindians.

Friends before we go on I think we should put a few other things in right perspective. Before I get into my attempt of an analysis of why we should support this Budget, I think we should get a few things right. The Hon Dr Joseph said in his opening remarks that the PNC/R usually gets their research correct on that side of the House. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker and Hon Members of this House, the goodly gentleman when he was on his once every five years visit to his constituency (remember he told us how nice it was to visit them once every five years when on the campaign trail) apparently when

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he landed at Annai he either did not leave the plane or he simply went to the Rock View for relaxation. I would like to make this correction and to help the goodly gentleman with his research. (As colleagues working together at the Hospital, I would like us to get these things right.) If he had not done his research correctly I am certain that probably the other doctor on his left might not have been able to help him. I am of the suspicion that Miss Melville will know better.

In Region No. 9, the Minister had every right last year to refer to the school because the school is located in the Paranapanema Compound. Had you visited there that would have been obvious. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, this brings a point out, and this is why, probably, constitution reform was necessary. Members of the Assembly will have to visit their constituents more regularly. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker and colleagues I would like to point out to you that not only did the Minister have a right to refer to that secondary school, this is what happened when Paranapanema removed themselves from the project they handed over the administration of the compound with its appointed buildings. This Government completed last year an entirely new building for the secondary school and added to that (this is where the confusion came in), in last year's documents the Minister referred to monies that were being *additionally* added for the construction of a dormitory, a kitchen at Annai for the servicing of that Compound. Mr Speaker, do you know what will be the fate of that compound? It is going to become a beacon in Region No. 9. It is going to become an educational facility. The dormitory like dormitories in other places in Amerindian areas like Mabaruma and Waramadong, will cater for the youngsters in that area. They will be trained by qualified teachers in their area.

Let me further hasten to point out since we are on that correction of the Hon Doctor's mistake, that in the same detail the Minister then pointed out that there was going to be the construction of a nursery

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school at Karasabai, Yupukarri, Yarakita and Shulinab. I think that is the mistake of the goodly gentleman's research. Not only is the school there, it had already been built in the same year that the Minister spoke but he was adding to that a dormitory. So we do understand that this exercise is ongoing and that facility is being exploited. Here again it emphasizes one of the aspects of good governance of the PPP/C Government. I will illustrate that when I get into my substantive examples this evening. The PPP/C is carrying goods and services where it is needed, within the constraints that the Minister described last year and in this Budget. *[Interruption: "SIMAP is government's money, it is just an agency, the goodly Minister of Amerindian Affairs will give you a lesson on that."]*

Now Mr Speaker, before we get into analysing why we should support this Budget let me make another correction or observation on Dr Joseph's short presentation. He referred to the nexus between poverty and crime. Indeed this is so, but I will like again to underline that if research had been done well and if the goodly gentleman had made full use of the document that he was waving around, a document that is becoming nationally famous and that is being studied by many sectors of the population, he would have noted that there are significant reductions in the poverty level. Let me walk you through it.

From the Ramprakash Report, the UNDP head count survey.

Poverty has been rising. For some time until a check was put to it

For example, in 1971 about 38% of the population was below the poverty line. By 1988 that figure had soared to 65%. In 1992 it was down to 43%. In 2000 we have been able to bring it down to 35%. If we were to follow trends and take a simplistic view of this you would see that if the PPP/C were to continue in Government for the next few years we would probably be a crime less society. That, of course, would be wishful thinking.

With those two corrections, about the gentleman missing Annai and probably landing at Annai or some other place and at the same time putting a little information on the poverty reduction that has been achieved, I would like to point out that the Budget presentation has done against the back ground of some 91% achievement in the public sector investment programme. We have done particularly well if you consider that 91% of envisioned or budgeted projects were achieved if you were to reflect that this was done in trying times. Trying times of course that the opposition benches would know about too. We were able to achieve significant gains in the social sector.

I will try to hold a little bit for Dr Ramsammy and put my emphasis on health. I crave your indulgence if from time to time I slip into the spheres of education, water and related social areas. Mr Speaker, this year's Budget allocates some \$5.3B. This is a small but steady increase over what was allocated last year when some \$4.7B was allocated. We see a similar trend in the sphere of Education. In other words the percentage of the budgetary allocations or of the revenue that the Government is allocating for the social, health, education and water sector is gradually increasing. This is to be commended and is again featured in this year's budget presentation. What I would like to note, Mr Speaker, is that not only we are having absolute increases, but in some cases there is re-focusing of how these monies are spent. Someone mentioned the concept of partnership. The Government definitely is reaching out, the PPP/C Alliance and the Party, to those communities that need help. If you were to take a quick perusal of how the monies would be spread you would see an encouraging trend. Monies allocated, for example the \$46M, allocated for one project will be touching on the rehabilitation of dental centres. These are not central or urban dental facilities. We touch on places like Moruka, Matthews Ridge, Lethem, Kato and Pekay. Ladies and gentlemen, the PPP/C has, to quote some one on the other side, done handsomely only in some of these areas. In some of these areas the PPP//C did simply favourably. *[Interruption . . . 'Exactly we did poorly at elections in some of these areas.']* However, you see the widespread over which these monies will be

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spent. That is one of the features of the recent budgets, and more particularly of this year's budget that should commend to us these efforts to bring benefits to the poor and the powerless.

If we were to move a little bit on, we will notice that significant sums are also spent in strengthening the communication systems in the Health Sector in Region Nos. 1, 4, 7, 8 and 9. Take out Region No. 4 and you would recognise that Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9 have significant Amerindian population and persons of a not very affluent status. I am underlining here, Mr Speaker, that in other areas, for example, other programmes envision that the Ministry would be spending almost \$5 M for the purchase of equipment for riverain transportation. If you were to check, or have checked already you will see that two boats are for Region No. 1. If you were to appreciate the significance of this you would realise that this is a direct response to an appeal from the grass roots. This is possible, Mr Speaker, because Ministers of this Government do not only visit their constituents once every five years. Dr Ramsammy, the newly appointed Minister of Health has already visited several Regions more than one time and has had a senior representative and party officials visit those far off locations. This is a result that you are seeing, a spread of the monies, a spread of the benefits to those persons.

Now, Mr Speaker, I would like to point out too that of this significant amount that is going to be spent this year, over \$5B, significant capital works are going to be done at such locations as the Linden Hospital Complex. This is significant because if we were doing our research and if we were following in documents that were recently presented to this House we would note that this is not a one off shot because in documents that have been recently presented we find, for example, in 2000 and 1999 that significant works were also done at the Linden Hospital Complex. It is only a continuation here and I am certain that our colleagues representing Linden would be able to point that out. *[Interruption . . . 'Yes, it will have to go incrementally, you can't do everything one time.']* The point I am

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bringing out is that significant sums are being spent in areas that do not necessarily bring the PPP/C significant votes. Why I am emphasizing this is because I had cause to listen to the only disturbing speech yesterday and that is the speech from the young man Mr Mc Allister. Of all the speeches I listened to that one disturbed me. The little bit of racist bigotry peeped out. Here was a young man claiming to represent all the people of his Region [*Interruption . . .*]

The Speaker: Thank you Mr Trotman.

Hon Member, I would like you to withdraw that allegation.

Dr Bheri Ramsaran: Sorry, I will definitely. I got a bit worked up there. That is just to emphasize that that speech did not go well with the other presentations from both sides. There was this continuous ring of we and them. And the goodly Minister of Human Services rightly put that in place. That is why in my presentation, Mr Speaker, I am trying to point out that the Minister of Finance in representing the Health Sector has made it clear in his presentation that all sectors of our country are going to be taken care of. I was somewhat saddened by that speech which seemed to miss these vital points and seemed to emphasize that roads were not built while at the same time forgetting to tell us that sea defences were done. I would like to use this opportunity to point out that in significant places, densely populated areas, which do not traditionally support the PPP/C administration, benefits are to be brought. As a matter of fact, I would like to point out to you that there is one such significant example. It is an example I always like to give. Ithaca, on the bank of the Berbice River, is not known to support this Party and this Government. But, over the past few years the infrastructure that has been brought to that little community is significant, roads, water and electricity. Still we do not receive a single vote. My task today, Mr Speaker, is to underline to you that the spread of funds are indeed wide. The Hon Dr Norton made specific mention of malaria. This indeed Hon Members is of concern and as is noted in the documentation presented by the Minister of Health, malaria, unfortunately still is significant

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in Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9 and to a lesser extent in Region Nos. 2, 6 and 10. The program definitely needs strengthening here. And we can announce and remind you of the effort to train microscopist, particularly people indigenous to these areas. This has brought some success. Resistance to the drugs and none compliance sometimes cause some problems. We on this side of the House can assure Dr Norton that we do share those concerns and that if he was to peruse the other aspects of the Budget presentation he would note that in several hinterland areas health huts and other facilities will be provided.

Mr Speaker, we on this side of the House will rely on the expertise of anybody including Mr Nadir who will be able to guide us as to how things can be done in some areas. Even Dr Norton will be welcome to give his suggestions on how we can go about solving some of these problems.

I hear a voice in the wilderness saying that I am rambling. I was giving it time to sink in that the PPP/Civic is indeed spreading the wealth and resources. I want to emphasize to our Amerindian representatives to the poor and powerless people in the hinterland.

Mr Speaker, I would like to point out that in certain significant areas of dense population for the first time health facilities would be introduced. The aim of this, when we spoke of re-focusing, is to take some of the pressure of the over worked staff, for example, of the Georgetown Public Hospital. We note that on the East Coast of Demerara, Enmore for the first time is going to have significant health facility in the form of the Health Centre and this will go a long way from relieving pressure from the central or capital institution. This again is a step forward and it will definitely cover large gaps of territory in that densely populated area.

Mr Speaker, similarly the Public Hospital, Georgetown, which is the flagship of the Ministry of Health and which continues to consume significant portions of the Budget will continue to be

improved. As you would have noted from previous Budget presentations and from this one that institution has been in receipt of colossal sums. The re-focusing now is to bring better results out of those investments. Investment in training and improvement in the quality of personnel. Let me emphasize that it is planned for this year to have some of the old buildings removed and in-patients structures replacing them. In other words, the dilapidated, ugly and unsightly buildings that sometimes embarrass us when we go to visit the institution are billed to be replaced and this will be to the tune of almost \$65M. Some of that money, of course, will go to provide ancillary support for those structures, such as development of an ambulance service. So far, Mr Speaker, you would realise that Guyanese have not had the benefit of a professional ambulance service as is present even in some of the smaller islands of the Caribbean. This is going to be tackled under the same heading where some \$65M will be spent for the removal of the present unsightly buildings and the construction of another.

Mr Speaker, I can remind you, probably you might have taken it for granted, that if you were to drive around or visit the institution many sparkling modern buildings have been constructed under this Government. We still have, of course, the dilapidated medical and psychiatric wards that will be tackled here.

Mr Speaker, I hear another voice in the wilderness. So let me try to address some other concerns of his. I was trying to point out that these allocations that were presented tend to underline one aspect of our Government. Whereas in the past we tended to concentrate only on our central facilities, the benefits will now be reaching wider cross sections. In other words, Mr Speaker, this is what I would like to refer to as one aspect of good governance of the country. This is not only reflected in the Health Sector for which I attempted to speak in the absence of Dr Ramsammy, but also in other social sectors, for example in the sector of education. I remember yesterday one of the speakers over there, I think one of the teachers, loudly acclaimed in the affirmative that she did visit New Amsterdam. Now, Mr Speaker,

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the Hon Miss Allen indicated that she had visited New Amsterdam. Before you get to New Amsterdam, you have to cross the river, and before you cross the River you have to use the boat facility there. I want to remind you of the changes that have been brought Budget after Budget presented in this House. As Hon Members on that side would recall, now you have three well functioning vessels moving passenger and cargo from one shore to the other. *[Applause]* Let me tell you why so. Two boats were built in the 60s by the late Hon Dr Cheddi Jagan, I think at Sprostans, and the third a self propelled pontoon built by the Hon Harry Persaud Nokta a few years ago. *[Applause]* Before I actually get to New Amsterdam to illustrate some of the points I want to bring out in this Budget, let me remind you that a few short years ago you had only one boat and it was not uncommon for it to float away sometimes and you took thee whole day to cross the River. There are three boats now. *[Interruption]*

What I would like to point out, Mr Speaker, is that in the far off county, the ancient county progress too is being made. For the past few years and more so for last year Albion has only been an aberration. Region No. 6 has achieved as much as 94% of its capital works. *[Applause]* That we on this side of the House must be proud of. Region No. 6, in spite of Albion, which is just a storm in a teacup is set for even greater things.

Now, Mr Speaker, there was talk about education. There was talk about the fact that a school without teachers and equipment is just a shell. That is so indeed, but Mr Speaker, while agreeing with that this Government has made adequate provision for the population of those schools with adequately trained teachers. And I am going to Berbice because I want to point out to you that it is this administration that re-introduced the teacher training programme at the local level and it is being further strengthened by this Budget. Let me remind you that under the previous PPP Government in the 60s beside the centrally located Cyril Potter School of Education we had eleven satellite training centres. They were closed down and we have over the past few years re-invented that. I mentioned New Amsterdam

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and Berbice because two such facilities are located, one in New Amsterdam and one in Rose Hall. Here is the continuing efforts of the PPP/C to bring benefits, not only to the urban areas but to areas of the rural geographic locations.

Mr Speaker, I had spoken about good governance and before my good colleagues on the other side loose tract of the discussion I would like to once again look at good governance as the effort is being made to strengthen it in the present Budget [*Interruption . . . 'We will come to that my good friend Mr Alexander.'*] I would like to point, Sir, how thankful I am to Mr Ramdass, our representative from Region No. 6, for jolting my memory about a certain issue, incident, example that we can use.

The Speaker: Before you proceed with that incident Hon Member you will need some more time.

Dr Bheri Ramsarran: I will be finished in about five minutes, Sir.

The Speaker: You will need a motion to get that five minutes.

Mr Feroze Mohamed: I wish to move Mr Speaker, that the Hon Member be given fifteen (15) to conclude his presentation.

The Speaker: You can proceed Hon Member.

Dr Bheri Ramsaran: Thank you Hon Members of the House. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I was thanking Mr Ramdas who so eloquently presented a small but significant example of how over the years the PPP/C has brought good governance and accountability to this nation. I am going to attempt to point out to you how good governance and accountability will impact positively on the social sphere. Mr Speaker, let me quote from the Auditor General's Report of 1993 which was, of course, reporting on 1992. Prior to that there was a paucity, a lack, a scarcity, an absence of any Auditor General's Report. I will quote from the

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Section which refers to the Rural Marketing Centre located in Black Bush. That centre now operates successfully and profitably under new administration. *[Interruption . . . 'Who built the centre.']* Who run it down?

The Speaker: Mr Alexander please restrain yourself. *[Laughter]*

Dr Bheri Ramsaran:

An examination of the rural marketing centre in black Bush Polder revealed that during 1972 seven payments totalling \$1.1M were made to a private bank account. An examination of the vouchers relating to these payments revealed that payments were made for developmental works. However, there was no evidence of developmental works being undertaken. The officer in charge admitted that these payments were totally unrelated to the operations of the Marketing Centre. The matter was referred to the Commissioner of Police.

To answer Mr Alexander's question - the Rural Marketing Centre commenced operations in 1983 as an economic venture. Referring to the 1993 Report:

To date, no financial statements have been prepared and submitted for audit and examination to account for its operations. In addition, internal controls were extremely weak and there was a total absence of record keeping.

Mr Speaker what is the situation now under the PPP/C administration.?

Mr Vincent Alexander: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, the Hon Member is misleading this House. The matter to which he is referring was a matter which went to the court and the court found the person to whom he is referring not guilty of any offence under the laws of Guyana. *[Interruption]*

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The Speaker: Would you proceed with that information in mind Hon Member?

Dr Bheri Ramsaran: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I know of the essence of that intervention. Nevertheless I will go on. The point I am making is this, under a changed administration that centre is now viable and it is returning a profit on a yearly basis. Not only that . . . *[Interruption . . . 'Don't burn it down'.]* the funds are being ploughed back into other aspects of the social structure in Berbice that is why I mentioned the education programme just now. One of the training centres for teachers for Berbice is located at Rose Hall. Recently, last year, profits from this differently run Marketing Centre have used to buy a stand-by plant for that centre. *[Applause]* Here is a Government run entity being profitable. Good governance comes to the fore.

Mr Speaker, I would like in pursuing the aspect of good governance which I am sure is again reflected in the sentiments expressed during the presentation of the Budget Speech, to point out that that Centre too is able to be self-sufficient and even provide equipment for machinery to farmers on credit. It is all based on the fact that the administration has changed. That accountability has returned to that Marketing Centre. That profitability is being ploughed back in for the benefit of the social sector. That, Mr Speaker, is good governance.

Incidentally, I would like to close by pointing to the fact that the change can be brought about, that the PPP/C has the capacity to turn around ill managed entities, make them accountable and bring good governance.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

Hon Member Mr Nasir Ally.

Mr Nasir Ally: Mr Speaker, Hon Members of this House, it is indeed

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a pleasure to be associated with this Budget Debate. As a layman I do not see that this Budget will solve the numerous problems of our communities. I want to deal specifically with Region No. 6 since I hail from Region No. 6.

Mr Speaker, I want to believe that my grandparents and great grandparents who came from India and brought rice with them, looking at the decline of the rice industry at this time, are probably turning in their graves. *[Applause]* Therefore it is my duty to do my best to uphold the rice industry in this country. I am not saying this because I want to say it. You go to all the rice farming areas and you will see that people are virtual beggars with the exception of the affluent ones who have very large machinery. This is a shame and disgrace because it occurred after 1992. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the other day I was in Black Bush Polder, and I met a certain gentleman who is a rice farmer. I asked the gentleman who is life? He said why are you asking me how is live, you should ask me how is death. *[Laughter]* Here you can see what the position is with the people of Black Bush Polder. We were hoping that Black Bush Polder would have been the bread basket to the nation but it has turned out to be the opposite.

Mr Speaker, look around you in the field of agriculture and you will see there is total decay. In the past we had Agriculture Officers, Agriculture Field Assistants and other workers, today I am not seeing any of those. The Budget is saying something about giving technical assistance. I wonder to what degree, if any, the technical assistance will be offered to the farmers?

The Upper Corentyne Crop Farmers Association every day have complaining to me that they have no technical assistance whatsoever from this Government. They are experiencing great difficulty. What a shame and disgrace. What are we going through, Mr Speaker? It is time that we realise that basing our arguments, our talks on lies should not be done anymore.

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I heard something about elevating the rice industry. This I cannot see in the near future. The other night I was looking at a television programme and one exporter and rice miller was saying that the rice industry is in shambles. The world market price is falling. It will be something in the vicinity of \$1 000 or less per bag in a short while when it costs the farmers between \$1 100 to \$1 300 to produce a bag. What is going to happen to those poor farmers? Do you know what is going on in those communities? There has been an increase in social tension. People have been committing suicide. There are fights in homes everyday because they can't find money to feed their wife and children. I do not know where we are going. And not only me, before I came to this House I went around Region No. 6 and consulted many other persons throughout the Region and they told me that this Budget is only going through a motion again. It has no intention of elevating the depressed communities in Region No. 6.

Mr Speaker, I just want to deal very briefly with the bauxite industry. I am wondering if we do not have the potential, the initiative, trained and experienced people in this country to save the Bermine Bauxite Company at Everton? Why is it we want to close it down? Is it the best solution? I think this is going to send people all over the place, dislocating them, to search for work. Already there is great unemployment in this country. We can see a lot of youths roaming the streets doing nothing, some of them are qualified, some are not, but they are there in the streets. We, ourselves are telling our young people in this country to go out there and do your own thing. That is what we are telling them. We will have to face a battle of social tension in this country. Believe me it will happen soon because of unemployment.

Mr Speaker, to close the Everton Plant is not the solution. I think we have people with the capacity, the capability to sit and think what should be done. I want to propose a few things. The people have been telling me if you close the Bermine Plant you should also close the rice industry, sugar industry, the saw milling and logging companies and the business community because they are all declining

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at the moment. There are serious problems in every sector of the economy and there is a decline. Region No. 6 is worse. You are claiming that you got 72% of the votes from the people of Region No. 6 and yet you allow this to happen. The people are really suffering, there are great hardships in the various communities.

Mr friend, the Hon Member said that Region No. 6 achieved 94% in the works programme. Well I will agree with him that Region No. 6 achieved this but only on paper. Only the other day I saw in the newspapers that the Corriverton Town Council achieved 96%. When I questioned it they said it was a mistake. I hope that one is not a mistake too.

I think the bauxite industry rather than closing it, it needs proper management and expansion. In the near future one should think about looking at the small waterfalls so that we can get enough power and turn the bauxite into aluminum. From aluminum you can make a number of things. This would be better rather than giving up the bauxite company just like that. It is a traditionally industry and we should preserve it. If we care for those people we are not going to do such a thing.

Today, a lot of farmers and businessmen are leaving this country, going overseas seeking ordinary joys to help pay off their debts. I do not see this Budget as addressing those problems. If it is so then positive explanation are required. If you are a caring Government why don't you find the solution to help these people? But I am certain that you lack the capacity, initiative and knowledge as to what to do.
[Applause]

It is not accurate to say that there is a reduction in poverty. Comrades, I do not know, some of us should go to the backyards and see how people live. You are saying that there has been a reduction in poverty but I am telling you there is certainly an increase in poverty. One Sociologist wrote recently in the Chronicle Newspapers, which is referred to as the Government Newspapers, that insurance is failing

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in this country because there is an increase in poverty. Look at what is going on, those who are attached to the social assistance boards will know how many young people are now applying for social assistance to feed the family because of the increase of poverty. They are looking for that meager sum of \$1 200 to survive today even though that can't do. Comrades this is a shame and disgrace for Guyana and the Guyanese people.

Mr Speaker, I just want to refer to a quotation in the Bible which says as follows:

Cast out the moth of your own eyes first before you cast out the beam of other people's eyes.

[Applause]

I am referring to this quotation simply because of what was said yesterday afternoon by one Hon Member. The Member was referring, and another Member today was trying to expand on it, to a certain person involved in certain corrupt practices. Maybe that Member borrowed the same book and did not return it for his own personal reason. I want to ask who organised the dredging of a Canal between Crabwood Creek and Jackson Creek? Millions of dollars were spent there. Millions! I had the opportunity to visit there myself and all they did was to scoop out the vegetation from that canal. *[Interruption . . . 'I don't want to call names, please.']* That person was involved in the whole exercise. They were telling the farmers at Crabwood Creek, 'look we are doing some work for you, we are going to bring water into your rice fields and into your farm lands. If you go back only a few weeks after you see the vegetation getting up again. And then we come here to talk about corruptive practices? Comrades that is a shame and disgrace because millions of dollars was spent their.

Who organised the grading of a dam with a D4 Bulldozer when at that time a D4 Bulldozer was used to charge \$3 800 per hour and

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\$6 000 was paid for that work. We are talking about corruption here comrades. Who caused the Launch that was so useful to Amerindian communities especially to bring out their produce from Orealla, by the name of Marisa, that went down the drain because of corruptive practices.

The other day I visited Fyrish and a street by the name of Queen Street was pointed out to me. I was told that the street was supposed to be built six (6) inches high but it was only built 2½ inches high. Go and see the condition of that street. Beside that, I want to refer to the discrimination that is taking place in that area as well. If you go to the other village nearby or the other section, you will see how properly they have done the streets for them. Because a certain category of people live over the other side, they just give them a message because they believe they are just like dogs living there *[Interruption]*

Comrades, let us not open our mouth to say you are doing well for the people because apparently this Budget does not give an indication to help those depressed people.

Look at the coconut industry in this country, it is falling apart. Who plants coconuts in this country? I was taken to No. 35 Village, Tarlogie, Eversham and No. 53 to be shown the thousands of coconuts under the trees left to rot. The people were trying to do the copra and they couldn't get market for it. What will happen to those people? They were dependent. Their whole living, their whole life depended upon that. Mr Speaker, I really want to know what is going on in this country and that is why I am saying a lot of things are put on paper but nothing tangible is done. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, Guyana is now seen as a sinking ship all because of mismanagement, corruption, lack of vision and insight and care for people. The rice industry is going, the coconut industry has gone already, the sugar industry too. If I am to refer to the sugar industry, in the Budget Speech it says that a new factory will be put down at

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Skeldon. I just can't understand there was a former plan, then that plan was changed and all kinds of things. Just for plans I understand that millions of dollars were spent and nothing tangible has been done. *[Applause]* You tell me what is going on. And then we say we have love and the people of this country at heart.

I forgot to mention that this country could save a lot in foreign exchange because of the fact that we are buying oil from Trinidad and neglecting our own coconut farmers here. You have the oil just here, the base just here but then you go to the next door neighbour, Trinidad, because of a certain reason and you buy oil from them. If you are talking about the development of a country you just do not do that.

In this Budget Presentation mention was made about several other aspects. I want to cut my speech short so I will just deal a little with Local Government. Local Government is to its lowest ebb at this time. I am wondering whether some of these NDCs and Town Councils in Region No. 6 have monies to pay their workers for the next month. What I am saying you go and find out if that is true. It is the truth. Besides that a lot of people were put there without proper education - make him a Mayor, make him a Chairman of an NDC - no dedication, no concern no commitment for any NDC and for the people of the land. You put them there to serve the people and they are destroying everything that you have. I want to tell you tonight, Mr Speaker, and Hon Members that if something is not done to Local Government in the very near future there will be chaos and confusion in those areas. Already you have seen a lot of councillors leaving in disgust and in dismay at this time because maybe they feel that that is not the right place for them. Maybe they are honest minded people and they want to see progress for the people but that is not taking place. I can refer you to some of them. In 1997 was given \$21M while you gave New Amsterdam only \$10M. Out of the \$21M I have been asking over and over for a proper report but to date I have not received it. All I saw that they did was to buy a cheap 4 X 4 for themselves to drive about, sprinkle some bricks on the streets and

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dig some drains with the Backhoe which the PNC had put in there. This is what is going on. You are giving them money and not even monitoring what is going on in these councils? You would just leave the money to go down the drain? It is time that somebody get sense and start doing something.

Mr Speaker, I just want to refer to some discriminatory practices in that Region. I would just probably deal with just one or two because I do not have the time. I want to ask the question why poles were put up in Sandvoort and no electrical wires were run on those poles. Later we found that the electricity was diverted to Gangaram. Why is that? You already put up poles there for the people to receive electricity. To date they have not received any electricity. Somebody should answer me.

Why is it, Mr Speaker, that plans were made to build a secondary school at No. 51 Village and all of a sudden the plans were changed and the school is to be built at No. 45 Village? What happened to the people at No. 51? If you say that is not discrimination, then tell me what it is? I am waiting for the answer. I have seen a lot of new primary schools built all over the place but at Leeds Village the old one is still there probably leaking and what not, while you build a University in Port Mourant, a Resource Centre in No. 47 Village and now contemplating putting up a recreational facility.

The Speaker: Hon Members I know it is getting late and we are all getting tired. unless you allow Mr Ally to complete his speech we will be here very late this evening.

Mr Nasir Ally: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

When is it you are going to build a new school at Leeds Village while you are doing these things for other areas? There is a well at No. 57 Village and the water has to run all the way down to Leeds and even further and the pressure is so low. Why is it that wells are being dug in other areas and Leeds or No. 51 Village have not gotten

one. I want you to analyse this situation.

Why is it the Chairman for the Fyrish NDC was not changed after one (1) year as per agreement? There was an agreement made. They all had equal votes, the same number of seats and they decided that they will change the chairmanship every year. This has not been done for several years. Why is it? Who is controlling this? I want to know if all these things are not discrimination then what is?

I just want to say briefly that the Government will have to be careful and look over and examine land distribution because there is no fair play where land distribution is concerned. *[Applause]* The other day I had to do something for a certain gentleman and I did not see him back until after two (2) months. When he came to me I asked him what happened to him? He said to me I am sorry I did not come to pick up the thing from you but I was in the lockup in the Suriname jail for two months. What is going on at our border there? Can't we do something? We allow the Dutch people to traverse so easily in Guyana but when you go there it is something else. Look at the hassle the fishermen are going through. It is time we do something, especially for those fishermen, Mr Speaker.

Quickly I want to refer to the streets in New Amsterdam.

The Speaker: Before you refer to the streets, Hon Member, you will need some more time.

Mr Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, could you give the Member five more minutes to conclude, please.

The Speaker: Sure.

Mr Nasir Ally: Than you, Mr Speaker. Let us look at New Amsterdam. All of us would have to travel from Georgetown to go to Corriverton or somewhere. If you see the conditions of the streets there. It is a total disgrace. A lot of foreigners use those streets. Moreso since the pipelines were put down they were left in that

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state. I personally am looking forward for something to be done for the people of New Amsterdam.

Mr Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that the engine of growth and development lies in our own hands, all of us, and in the encouragement of local and private investment. But all must be involved in the decision making process. It must not be seen as a few people doing it only. And there must be no underhand business. We call on the other side to ensure that this happens.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Member.

Hon Member Mrs Sahoye-Shury.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I am indeed pleased to be given this opportunity to stand here in support of the 2001 Budget as presented by the Hon Minister, Mr Kowlessar and to congratulate him and his team for their long and hard work in producing such a magnificent document. *[Applause]*

My Hon Colleague, Mr Ally was telling us of persons he spoke to. The two persons he spoke to are dead and maybe the others are committing suicide. *[Laughter] [Pause]*

Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from the introduction, the first page where the Hon Minister said:

We have achieved much over the years, including improved growth rates; modernisation of the economic infrastructure; reduction in the foreign debt that has facilitated higher expenditure in health, education, housing and pure water, among other areas, and a significant reduction in poverty.

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Mr Speaker, what is the PPP/Civic's intention in meeting those hopes and aspirations.

(I) We will have an equitable distribution of the wealth of this country.

(II) We will work in collaboration with anyone and everyone who has those ideals.

(III) We will harness not only our vast natural resources but also our people's capabilities etc.

My learned friend was speaking about the NDCs throughout the country. But how well we can remember that for over half of a century we did not have elected local government in Guyana. *[Applause] [Interruption: "Shame". Quarter of a century".]* For over quarter of a century, twenty five years! Many of the NDCs, we must submit, are not functioning properly. If we are a nation to help in development not only of the NDCs within the Regions of this country, then we need to understand that in many of the NDCs they fail to collect the amount of taxes they are supposed to so as to have money to expend on sanitation, roads, garbage disposal etc. Local government was really at that time in 1994 a learning experience which took time. We admit that they are not functioning properly, but in our haste to judge instead of help we continue to castigate. What is ironic and spells of hypocrisy is that instead of criticising them we fail to look within ourselves. For too long Members of the main Opposition Party have engaged in destructive criticism and not constructive criticism. I am certain that Members of this House know that you cannot spend money you do not have.

Many Members in this House, Mr Speaker, keep harping, keep regurgitating, about corruption. I just want to mention one. All the NDCs in this country when they collect taxes have to send it into the RDC. In many instances, the NDCs would like to function but when they go to uplift money from the RDC they are getting a hard time.

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One case in point with corruption is BV/Triumph where presently the Chairman of the NDC is in the court because he withdrew more than the allocation. Is the NDC only to be blamed there? The RDC encouraged this.

The Speaker: Hon Member, unless the person you are talking about is convicted, that is not corruption, and if the person is still in court you cannot refer to it in this House.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Alleged, Sir. *[Pause][Interruption: "Speaker did not ask you to withdraw, he said don't speak about it, carry on."]* In a Budget, Mr Speaker, which is really an estimate of expended income or expenditure for a given period, a plan of operation, an itemised allotment of funds. Any Minister has to be very careful in crafting his projection for as we all know he or she will be castigated later. We have seen it in this House. So irrespective of the complaints being made about the Budget, I agree with the Minister to craft the budget in the way that it has been crafted. We in Guyana could never hope to have a Budget answering the wishes and aspirations of all the citizens when consistently the Opposition speaks of:

(1) Implementing a strategy of making the Government ungovernable.

(2) Subtly conveying to investors to fade away.

(3) Creating mayhem in the streets over a period after every general elections in this country, and worst,

(4) Slow-fire and more-fire.

Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from the Stabroek News Editorial of June 18th, 2001.

It must also be said that the unthinking and bizarre slow-fire, more-fire campaign of the People's National

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Congress Reform is an added complication in this combustible environment. At the first hint of flames one can hear these chants from those gathered. It is not impossible that this insane and dangerous slogan has inspired some of the fiery mayhem that the country has witnessed since March 19. The PNC/R, as it should have done long ago, should publicly and forcibly repudiate this irresponsible slogan..The devising of this catch phrase was not the finest hour for the Party's propagandist.

Mr Speaker all that I am hearing, not only during this Budget Debate but previous Budget Debates, is doom again and over again. I say that when the Opposition had occupied this side of the House, the people of Guyana said unequivocally you failed convincingly that is why the PPP/Civic won the 1992, 1997 and 2001 Elections and we will continue to win Elections in this country. [Applause]

We heard here Mr Speaker, of all sorts of things pertaining to the Budget. But what did the people say of the PNC when they were in office? There was no elected local government, roads in Guyana were impassable, there was no housing drive, no drainage or irrigation, the collapsing schools, (children had to sit on the floor and the roofs used to leak) poor health facilities, no potable water and a wrecked economy, just to name a few. In the New York times we read that Guyana was bankrupt. The time has come in Guyana that we must admit that, life is far easier. [Applause] No government could claim that it has solved all the problems. But it can say, given a climate of decency and constructive engagement, that it could accomplish this task.

We hear of many Guyanese teachers leaving the country and going to Botswana. But we know of three Guyanese who have returned from Botswana and said that the many things they were offered when the people came here to recruit is not what they find there. So they have come back and they are urging Guyanese teachers not to go to these countries because conditions are bad. [Applause]

Housing

Mr Speaker, before the 1997 and 2001 Elections, residents in the various squatting areas were told not to pay for the lands they occupy, now there is a big hue and cry about persons who paid but do not have land. I am asking the PNC to 'mek up yuh mind.' Nothing in this world is achieved free, everything has got a price. I submit that what the PPP/C has done, is doing, and continues to do the PNC could have done the same when they were in office. Why didn't they do it? Therefore, I must ask the question, didn't the PNC see the need to shelter the thousands of poor people yearning for a permanent place of shelter? Or is that they did not care and believe in the theory to keep them in a cocoon relying on handouts?

Mr Speaker, I will just raise one matter pertaining to water. One of the Hon Members said that there are about three pumps in De Kinderen. I am a Co-Chairperson of the Depressed Community Needs Committee. We met with Mr Karran Singh and I think he was quite clear when he spoke to us at that meeting. He said that even if pipes were put down in De Kinderen, because the pump at Met-en-Meerzorg is not efficient, you cannot get the flow of water. Mr Karran Singh also explained to us that this potable water device was in the hands of Guysuco and so very soon arrangements were being made for GUYWA to take over this whole distribution of water. Mr Karran Singh also explained that the pump that is presently in Met-en-Meerzorg will have to be changed because it does not have the capacity to push the water and in a month to two months time, when GUYWA takes over the whole operation then the people in Met-en-Meerzorg and De Kinderen, not only will get potable water, but they will get more stand pipes in De Kinderen. We must learn to speak the truth and get it right.

Discrimination

Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with discrimination. There has been a lot of bantering about discrimination. If we are to go back

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then we will uproot a lot of the dirt that transpired in this country years and years ago. Where is the discrimination? We are talking about BK but Members of the Opposition fail to name Mr Courtney Benn, Mr Andrew Howard, Mr Ambrose and Cummings Electrical. All of these people have been given a piece of the action. But specifically I want to deal with Mr Ambrose. This Government has got to be very careful because when contractors do not have the capability, when contractors do not have the financial resources, when contractors cannot be trusted then I see no reason why when they go to Tender Board these contractors should get jobs in this Government. Mr Ambrose through the Tender Board was given three contracts, Mr Speaker, one at Supply, one at Eccles and one at Buxton. Now, Mr Speaker, *[Interruption: "He was awarded".]* two of the contracts have already been taken away from him and the one in Buxton will be taken away from him. I am going to tell you why. In Buxton the contract was awarded to Mr Ambrose in June, 2000 to build the primary school. To date, Mr Ambrose has not gone quarter of the way in completing the school and this is June, 2001. Instead what has to happened is a disgrace, a miserable disgrace to the mothers of this country when our children, the children of Buxton had to be housed in the Market. *[Interruption: "Shame."]*

[Mr Raphael GC Trotman, presiding Member in the Chair]

Mr Winston Murray: Mr Speaker, on a point of order. Is it in order for the Hon Member to raise allegations here about a private person who has no opportunity in this Parliament to defend himself against the allegations? She could make the point on the principle she wants to make but cannot refer to the person by name.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon Member Murray the Standing Order refers to matters which are subjudicite. We are not told whether there are any legal matters pending or are likely to be pending against the member of the public. However, Members of the House during debates are expected to be able to support with evidence any

allegations made especially of impropriety against a member of the public who is not here. I will allow the Hon Member to continue and I trust that she will in principle make here contribution and I would ask her in the interest of advancing the debate this evening not to level too many personal accusations against persons who, unfortunately, have not been elected to this House and are in no position to answer given the fact that Members have a privilege when they make statements and therefore that privilege ought not to be abused.

Go ahead please, Hon Member.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would supply to this House minutes of a document supplied to the Committee on the Depressed Communities Needs. This matter was brought to the attention of the President and this matter was also brought to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition. I rest my case.

Mr Speaker, according to what our budget document is saying, Moving Guyana Forward Together, a Budget of \$64.7B, its thrust is of diversifying Guyana's economic base, its human development initiatives, its poverty and employment creation and investing more in the development of neighbourhood democratic councils. Irrespective of what might be said I read the Sunday Chronicle of 24th June quoting what one gentleman had to say about the Budget:

The Budget reflects a serious and determined approach by the Government to lift this country out of its economic woes.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from Martin Luther King:

But there is something I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to

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satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Hon Member Mr Ricky Khan.

Mr Ricky Khan: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to congratulate the Hon Minister of Finance for a Budget and thank him for not leaving out Region No. 1.

I would like to stress on the Agriculture Department in Region No. 1. While we think that he has made an effort with his budgetary considerations for this Department we feel that we have been left out somewhat. The Department is short of staff and also needs a lot of technical staff. There is still a tremendous amount of vacancies throughout the Region. The Department itself has not got the type of equipment it needs to handle the Agriculture Sector throughout the Region. A programme should be developed throughout the Region to battle this problem.

While I listened to the Hon Minister of Livestock making comments about agriculture throughout the Region or the country as a whole Region No. 1 is left behind. There is still a lot of work to be done in terms of educating farmers about pesticides, fertilizers, the changing world of technology. In fact today our farmers are left with labour intensive farms and do not truly understand that there is competition and mechanisation taking place throughout the world. I will give you an example on many of our farms in the rivers, namely the Waini, Barima, Aruka etc. the irrigation and small canals are dug by hand. Today we have to educate the farmers so that they can become a little more mechanised and educated to compete with the real world. In Wauna where peanuts were once grown they had a few tractors plowing and so on. Also in Moruka there were a few

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tractors plowing. In fact, markets were available a long time ago, but today we see the tractors are out, the peanut crop is dead and basically farmers cannot turn to any other crop because they are not educated about what is happening in the world. Farmers are lost about the different types of organic and inorganic methods of farming and marketing today. I remember we had in Council 1993, Mr Fedna Stull, who spent a few minutes with us, (in those days it was pretty new to all to us) and we learnt that the market in the first world countries for organic foods pays a higher price than the market for the inorganic foods (meaning having fertilizers and so on). Our farmers today still do not understand how to go around growing these crops. I will refer to the Minister of Livestock once again who was trying to say that our cocoa produce in the Hosororo area is making great strides. The truth about it is there are sets of old cocoa plants that they are trying to resuscitate and they do not know whether it was fertilized or not. I am part and parcel to that. We had tried with it many, many years ago from the Agriculture Station in Hosororo and it did not bear fruit. So today trying with it again there are a number of problems. The cocoa plant itself needs a lot of shade and there is no guarantee that it would come into maturity. So there is a lot of problems in the Agriculture Sector with technical people not understanding what it is all about.

[The Presiding Member withdrew and the Speaker resumed the Chair]

There are few cattle farmers, those who have a few pigs, chickens and so on in the Region. There again the Agriculture Department needs to be beefed up in terms of educating them and showing them basically what are the types of drugs, diseases and problems that are acquired by these animals.

Now as you would know Region No. 4 has access to doctors, almost everything in terms of all types of Internet Services etc. We in the Regions have little or no access except to the Agriculture

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Department. And when you go to them and they are not well staffed you find yourself with a lot of problems. Now while we hear nationally that agriculture is on the move and things are happening we are still in the dark in Region No. 1. The Department itself sounds good nationally but if you look at it, it still has a lot more work to do. I am sure Members who visited the Region would know that every single part of the Region, whether in the River, on the Hill, the farmers are still left out. Years ago you would know that GAIBANK provided a number of loans to farmers which were very important. There was also the GMC, a storage facility which was very important. Why was it important? When you come out of the rivers and you have to spend a few days for the Transport and Harbour boat to pick up your produce you basically need a place to store. It is also important to know that in those days that the Agriculture Department was much more vibrant, there were boats, jeeps and so on visiting farms and there were educational programmes going. Today we need to look back a little bit to the past to know what we are going to do in the future. While we have condemned GAIBANK, (I have heard many critics on GAIBANK,) it did help many small farmers in Region No. 1 to get up. While farmers enjoyed a good living years ago, we can understand this is a changing world and a changing economy.

The importation of Irish potatoes does not do well for our Region, it has killed our ground provision market. When you look at it our farmers cannot compete with the imported item. These are things that the Agriculture Department and the Minister would have to take into account. Today the farmers are at the mercy of huskers who just go in on the boat and pay them any price. Is this any way to treat our farmers? We have to sit down and put a device in place to protect our farmers.

Region No. 1, the Moruka sub-region and the Mabaruma sub-region is basically a farming community. We cannot get away from that. So in terms of agriculture, I would say that the Budget did not cover as much as I would have thought in terms of revamping the whole Agriculture Department to get the Region going. Today in

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terms of production in the Region, Amcar, which produces the heart of the palm, the manicole, is the only thing we have in the Region to say we are proud of (of course, it is privately owned). How does it work? It is very labour intensive. People go out, they cut the manicole, the boats pick it up, and take it up to the factory. It is canned, shipped to Georgetown then exported. Basically they have got their act together privately because they are organic and when they market they market at a high price. I was told by a good friend of mine who works there that there are other countries, namely Costa Rica which use fertilisers and when you look at it the only reason why Amcar is making money is because of their marketing strategy. The Government can take a little bit from the private man in terms of marketing strategy and put it to the farmers. We will be a little better off.

Health

This particular Department within our Region has lately been given a number of health huts and a number of other additives to the Health Department. But I would criticise the department for not having enough doctors within the Region. In fact, the doctors within the Region were replaced by a few medexes and a few other people who do not have the necessary qualifications to run the necessary hospitals and health huts. We have a doctor in Mabaruma at present who is a Cuban and speaks very good English. But he does not do the job that we would expect in terms of communication. I have been noticing in the Budget that a number of health huts are being built around the Region. I say definitely it is a good idea. It is great. First of all it can help people. But who is going to man them? Have we trained enough people? Do we have enough drugs? Have we given these health huts the type of transportation that they need to bring people to the main hospitals, whether Mabaruma, or Santa Rosa etc. It is no sense I give you a lot of money to build health huts it is the necessary equipment that you need to carry on the process and complete it from A to Z.

Malaria

Hon Members, please bear with me, it has been rampant in Region No. 1 for the longest while and we have not been able to control it. The reason for that is the lack of education. People as soon as they feel well take the balance of medication and just put it in a corner. This is a common occurrence. We need a follow-up programme from the Malaria Department itself to make sure that you stick with the patients and give them a little more, giving them some form of education to ensure that it does not re-occur. There are times when the cases are very, very low. I know spraying with DDT time and time again, as we read in the papers, is hazardous. But it is the only means of control during the rainy weather and so on. We have no other kind of pesticide to control mosquitoes.

AIDS Awareness

Well, this is one of the biggest questions. We have had very little seminars to make people aware throughout the Region. We really need medical teams to come in and educate us. People are aware that it is a disease and they know how they get it but they do not know how it is transmitted, what it does to them. In such a small area once it becomes rampant Region No. 1 will be very much endangered. So AIDS awareness is definitely one of the areas we need help. Those are my critical points for the health sector.

Tender Board

I come to a very critical one here called the Tender Board. I have been on the Tender Board from 1992 to 1997 as a Member of the RDC. We have never had so many problems as we have had for the last three years. This is due to the lack of proper procedure and lack of supervision. I can tell you what has happened during the last three years. There are three families basically who have been given most contracts and they have had contracts which devastated the whole Region. These people have even been given contracts to build

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schools in places like Moruka, Baramita, the rivers etc. In fact, the other contractor has been given contracts to build health huts throughout the Region. This money is concentrated basically among three families. We have to put this Tender Board Committee back in place to get good people.

Today the contractors publicly say they do not care who says what, they know who is who's boy. They say they come to Georgetown, nobody can't 'dis' them. They know whose office to go into. Now things are out of control. It is a sad thing. I'll tell you why. The real contractors today are sub-contractors because they work with those same contractors and if we do not look at it and we do not understand it we are going to fall into bigger problems. Many Amerindian Captains came to my office not so long ago complaining that even contracts for the chicken pen they were not given to build in their own communities. Today we know that not every single contract can be equally divided but we have to see what we can do. In fact, the contractual system has affected businesses in every single part of the Region. Most of the people as you know who used to be employed as labourers, contractors and so on have lost faith in the system. And what have they done? Jump on a boat and travel to Georgetown. If you look at the back of Sophia there is a little North West Community. If you go in the Linden/Soesdyke Highway there are a number of North West people. We can call it little North West. Can you imagine the other communities and settlements that we do not even know about? I would say the Tender Board process because it was not done on a broader scale like 1992 to 1997 we are going to find ourselves in a lot more problems. People are not prepared to stay in the Region and do absolutely nothing. They are going to leave.

I would like to comment a little bit about the administration. While I would have thought that for communication equipment, the Government lobbying with GT&T would have been of utmost importance to bring the Region together, I have seen radio sets for this particular Ministry and a computer and so on. Without proper communication throughout the whole Region you cannot run it. I am

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saying right now that there are telephones in Mabaruma and Port Kaituma and they do not work efficiently. Ever so often in contacting Georgetown they cut off and so on. Nevertheless we need to establish telecommunications in Moruka, Matthews Ridge and many of these other smaller areas that make up the Region. You cannot run an administration without proper communication. This, funny enough is no big-heart thing to do. It is just a matter of going down there and negotiating. I am very critical about communications because there are times when the telephones are down and there is absolutely nothing you can do.

A lot of people do not know that you cannot drive to Region No. 1. If you take the Transport and Harbours Boat it takes twenty-four (24) hours. If you go overland it takes six (6) to eight (8) hours. It is a very difficult Region with terrain, way out.

The Matarkai Garrison was dissolved almost seven years ago and it was only about two years ago an AREO was appointed to the sub-region. I make special reference to this because basically this sub-region has been neglected and I would say why. The AREO has a very limited amount of staff. If I remember quite correctly she told me she had three. This particular sub-region is where Barama has its headquarters at the moment, at Port Kaituma. The Barama Company provides free transportation on the barge from Georgetown to Port Kaituma. All the roads are maintained and I would say, owned by the Barama Company. If anyone has a private vehicle they need a pass issued by the Barama Company. The power generation, lights and every thing is managed by the Barama Company. The Hospital has only been given back to the Region probably about two years ago. Looking at this I would say that Government has neglected their responsibility in this sub-region. This sub-region basically needs a lot more staff and a lot more inputs. This sub-region, I would put, it is like Buxton, one of these areas that is deprived. I visited Matthews Ridge not so long ago, the Pekera Guest House and other Government buildings that were there are locked up. They probably have a watchman now and again. The whole area is totally shut

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down. A few miners go and come now and again but the Government has very little presence there. Arakaka is in a similar situation.
[Interruption]

In fact, Mr Speaker, I would answer the Hon Member and tell him that many, many years ago before the Matarkai Garrison was dissolved it was very much a traversed area and much brighter than it is right now. What I went there to see was not exactly very nice. It has become a rasta town with a couple of rastas walking there in the night and I don't need to say what else happens there. It is very, very much a deprived sub-region. I can make a suggestion, give Barama Company a contract to do the administration on behalf of the Government. This might probably work.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister is not well informed. The lighting plant and the Power Generator were handed back with \$3M. I was at the last council meeting and we still cannot hear, even from Central Government what decision will be taken and when and what we are going to do about acquiring back our own plant from the Barama Company. We refuse to take back our own assets. In fact, right now they are paying us \$3M to run it and take it back. We are having some serious problems in this sub-region.

I am sorry the Hon Minister for Youth and Sports is not here. This department we found out, not now, is always not budgeted for, and always comes under the Ministry of Education Budget. For many years anytime we have regional games, school games, no matter what, there is a lot of people left out from many sub-regions because of lack of money. Every time you look at it *the finance is not there; I am sorry we could not do it; we can only bring part of the people from a couple sub-regions* and so on. The point is we are talking about youth and sports and not unless you can finance it, not unless you can get the people together, would you have a regional games. In most areas of the region that I visited you have teenage pregnancy. Young men turn to alcohol and drugs even in a region that is not so populated and then you talk about youths being the leaders of

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tomorrow. The only thing we are saying is that the Youth and Sports Ministry is not doing its job. It is taking money, or what is left over from the education Budget and just put up a placard saying Youth and Sports Ministry. As far as I am concerned they should take Youth and Sports back and probably just leave it under Education and that might be the answer to this. It is only on a piece of paper.

My favourite subject with my favourite friend, **Education**. I would like to pay complement to the Minister of Education for visiting us and for informing us about his plans. *[Applause]* In fact we had a very good RDC meeting where he explained. *[Pause]* and I did see with him on the financial allocations for his Ministry. What I do not understand, and he does not understand, is that the Ministry itself is still short of staff (plenty, not little bit). If you go in those rivers today you will see. Sometimes the teacher that you put to teach is not there to supervise so the school closes for the day early. You will find out that we need a good library, something you have here and you take for granted. We in the Region really need a good library and a few computers (we do have one in the high school). If you really want to help us you know what you really have to do. Bring in the computers, the right teachers, the right people and have a proper computer programme set up basically.

I promised you I would have made a few suggestions to you. To get your Department going a little improvement in wages (not a little, plenty) would stop them from going away, at least from the Region.

Proper incentives. Some of us might like a few duty free allowances and so on. That might be good or some other kind of incentive.

A more hospitable working environment. People get into arguments with someone and the next day they loose their jobs. We should put an end to that. That is what is happening.

If you remember the schools which are to educate our children,

if at every elections we take them out for that long period of time, not only the children suffer. But I will go with your plan for the while. These are my suggestions and I hope that when you visit the Region the next time you have some improvements within your department.

Mr Speaker, the largest amount of money has been spent on **Works**. I welcome this. One road grader, one excavator, one D6 bulldozer. Sometime ago you started a road programme. In 1993 we had requested these heavy duty equipment to start our road programme. We only have on average five or six miles of tar road. There is no proper road from the Mabaruma area into the Yarakita itself. I see a tractor there, probably it was broken up before the roads were completed. Hon Minister I would say you have a very fancy 4X4 but for people who do not have that kind of transportation when the rain falls it is impassible.

I noticed in the Budget that there is a foot bridge that is going to be constructed from a foot path bridge into a vehicular bridge. This is good; I welcome it within the Region. In fact, for the amount of money I am very happy for the contractor. But I can tell you there are two miles of road within the same areas the bridge connects. The ironic part that I am seeing is that there is only one Ministry of Health vehicle within that particular sub-division. So you built a two-mile road extending to the airstrip then you build a bridge for ten (10) for one vehicle. Where is the economics. I agree with you Hon Minister, build the bridge first and so on. I am not seeing it that way - make the contractor rich first.

Mr Speaker, under **Agriculture Development** I see cleaning of the Moruka River, construction of revetment at Barima and Barbina. I am a little baffled here. Desilting drains at Morawhanna. Morawhanna is tidal, every time the tide comes up the villages literally disappear. Which drains are you cleaning? There is no dry land there. Who ever submitted this and whatever they are cleaning, I would really like to see where the money is going to go?

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Construction of the revetment at Barima and Barbina. We know that the road is in use from time to time. But the basic idea of the revetment and the cost and what happened [Pause] I remember the last time this came under the Tender Board. Not so long ago the contractor just picked up a couple fine pieces of boards pushed them down in a corner and drew down a lot of money and it was not investigated. We are having a lot of problems here if we do not have supervision. [Interruption: "No Sir, you did not allow me that privilege, I am here."]

Mr Speaker, I would like to close off by saying I was hoping I was not too critical. I lent support constructively and we are showing you the way forward. We are here to work together with you. Mr Speaker, I thank you. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Hon Member Mr Rajkumar.

Mr Ramesh C Rajkumar: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker I am indeed privileged to join with my colleagues on this side of the House to complement and to support the Hon Minister of Finance on the presentation of this Budget 2001. Before I go on I must say also that I listened to the full day's debates today and many thoughts came to my mind. I wondered whether the Hon Members on the opposing side were living in this country during the period immediately prior to 1992. Therefore, I find it very necessary to put the Budget 2001 and this Debate back in the perspective in which I think it ought to be, that is, I would like to draw, Mr Speaker and Hon Members, our attention to page 11 of the document, the *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, which was being flashed around earlier today. I would like to quote from the *Causes of Poverty*:

The evidence in Guyana suggests that low and/or negative economic growth, particularly between 1982 and 1991

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accounted for pervasive and persistent levels of poverty in Guyana.

Secondly, I would also like us to read, (so that we at least not forget when we make our critical statements) under the heading, **Poor Economic Policies**, on the same page 11:

The key elements of the stated policies adapted by the Government from the mid 1970s to 1989 included the nationalisation of private companies in mining, agriculture, banking and the distributive services and the indirect control of economic activities through the introduction of price credit and foreign exchange controls. As a result, between 1982 and 1992 GDP fell by 3.3% per annum and per capita income plummeted from \$US600 TO \$US350 in the same period.

This I am sure would bring back memories, Hon Members, to you on the opposing side. I would also like you to look at this other part on page 3:

The contraction of the economy also led to the extensive migration of talented Guyanese to jobs abroad.

In the final line:

As a result schools, health and water services, sanitation, roads, sea defences, drainage and irrigation facilities fell into a state of disrepair.

Mr Speaker, Hon Members, this is the state of the economy that existed until 1991 according to this document that the Members of the opposing side have been flashing around. It is in this context that the Hon Minister of Finance has crafted a Budget which covers comprehensively all the areas for the economy. This is what the Hon Minister said at page 2, 1.4:

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Considering the extent of the physical, economic and social decay which enveloped our country not so long ago, many would be satisfied with the progress that has been made to date.

Therefore I am sure, Mr Speaker, that cognisance has been placed in this Budget Presentation having found acceptance from the interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and to my mind there is a special trust in the Budget. I would take two(2) parts of the Budget Presentation, one on Poverty Reduction and Employment Creation. The Hon Minister stated at page 34:

The Government intends to build on the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy paper, for which country-wide consultations will be launched next week. We maintain that an attack on poverty must focus on creating opportunities for all Guyanese. We are striving to put in place the kind of climate that is conducive to attracting massive investment, so thousands of jobs can be created.

This, of course, is complemented by programmes such as the Social Impact Amelioration Programme which targets distressed communities; The Poor Rural Communities Programme; Basic Needs Trust Fund and the Youth Initiative. So there we have on one limb the poverty reduction employment creation.

Second, the Hon Minister spoke of infrastructure development at page 28:

We recognise that investment of the magnitude we seek will not occur without the necessary infrastructure. In this regard, therefore we forecast to spend \$18.7 B on the Public Sector Investment Programme, in 2001.

Mr Speaker, it is within these two thrusts that reference is also made to agriculture and transportation to name a few. This focus of the Budget therefore draws with it a most appropriate theme and that

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is, Moving Guyana Forward Together. We must therefore look positively with togetherness for a Guyana that each and everyone can be proud of and have the nationalism and patriotism of being a Guyanese. Our Hon Minister stated in paragraph 23:

A place where fairness and justice dwell and from which fear, prejudice and discrimination are banished.

This vision that has been elucidated there has been put also in paragraph 4.2 of the said page 23 of the Budget Speech:

Domestically, we will have to eschew ethnic division, confrontational politics, and other negatives that serve to decrease the attractiveness of our country as a haven for foreign investment.

Mr Speaker, this augurs well for the future of our country where the vision within the Budget so speaks of itself. Also it augurs well in combination with the interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Before I venture into some of the highlights of the development with particular reference to Region No. 6, I would like to quickly answer some of the statements made by the Hon Member Nasir Ally in connection with the rice industry. I had intended to deal with them a little later but at this stage it might be appropriate to remind him that in 1991 there were only twelve (12) thousand acres of land in Region No. 6 under rice cultivation but by the year 2000 there were fifty six thousand (56,000) acres of rice lands under cultivation. *[Applause]* It is an increase of over four-fold. The rice industry acceptably has some difficulties at the moment but they are factors which affect rice industry which sometimes no government has control over. We know of the collapse of the rice price overseas and some of our market, especially the Jamaican market where the PL 480 has intervened. Notwithstanding that we could recall in our National Development Strategy Document whereby under Chapter 10, page 108 it states:

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Paddy production has increased from 150,000 tonnes equivalent to 93,444 tons of milled rice in 1990 to 568,186 tonnes equivalent to 340,911 tonnes of milled rice in 1997.

A magnificent increase of rice production nationally. *[Applause]*

The question of the rice farmers bankruptcy is based on two factors and those were addressed by the Hon Minister in his presentation. Special committees are being set up to look at assistance through intervention from some financing from overseas. Because of the collapse of the rice price overseas it means therefore the thrust of the rice industry will definitely have to be diversified. Also in diversification there must also be efficiency in cultivation of acreage, irrigation and drainage. Therefore, Mr Speaker, what the Hon Member, Nasir Ally failed to point out is that in this Budget there is the provision for two brand new irrigation pumps within the Mibikuri area so as to assist in irrigation works. It is contained in reference 47.

Two diesel pumps at Mibikuri along with rehabilitation of channel, out falls in Nos. 52 and 57 villages and revetment works.

Here we see that the rice industry difficulties are being addressed especially in Region No. 6

The second point is that the Hon Member Nasir Ally failed to tell us that he was a Member of the Mayor and Town Council of Corriverton during these years and I think until recently. He is in a better position to produce the financial statement of that Council during the year 1997 and tell us about the \$21M as he is alleging was received. I call on the Hon Member Nasir Ally to produce that document so as to clarify it with the House rather than come here and make spurious speculations and invite critical comments. *[Applause]*

I do not see him here. But I would have happier if he were

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present in this Hon House because I do not know if he understands where Leeds Village is? I know we both come from Region No. 6. I have traversed the length and breadth of Region No. 6. We know that the Leeds Village never had a well and up to today there is no well there, but it is being fed through an inter connected system from No. 47 Village to No. 57 Village. Had he done his homework properly, as was mentioned earlier, he would have known that. Right now works are going on to enhance that interconnection system to increase pressure flow by putting in further road crossing lines. He ought to have known that.

Where the Fyrish NDC Agreement is concerned that he spoke about this is where the PNC and PPP Councillors are equal in the Council. There was an agreement to revolve the Chairmanship of the Council after the end of the term of the PPP Chairmanship the PNC Councillor refused to take up the Chairmanship, so he should have also done some homework. They have therefore abdicated their responsibility by refusing to take up that seat.

Now, the streets in New Amsterdam, agreeably they are in a state of disrepair but we all know that you do not build roads and then dig holes to put in pipe lines. You have heard it, it has been in the press that these roads were dug to put in pipelines. Right now Phase III of the water programmes in New Amsterdam is 96% completed. Thirty million dollars from that programme is going to rebuild the road network and fix the roads there. Mr Speaker, on the opposing side would have seen in the newspapers the advertisement for the qualification of the consultancy for Phase II of the Urban Development Programme. That is where the road network is going to come on stream in all six municipalities.

Mr Speaker, I think this ought to bring some clarification to those statements made by the Hon Member Nasir Ally who hales from the same Region that I am from. If there is any other need for clarification I would certainly be of assistance by whatever means I can.

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I would like to go on in telling us a little more about Region No. 6 and that is we must understand, and I think the Hon Minister understands that Region No. 6 economy is based on agriculture which includes sugar, rice and other crops. In the year 2000 emphasis was placed on rehabilitation and upgrading of farm to market roads. In the Black Bush Polder Scheme villages between Nos. 52 and 74, Nurney, Whim and Mara to Sisters Village on the East Bank of Berbice works will continue to upgrade these roadways because these roadways effectively cover the major agriculture areas in the Region. I can tell you, this has brought significant relief to farmers in their transportation of their produce to market *[Applause]* as far as Georgetown.

In the year 2001 the Budget is continuing its drive in strengthening the agro base of Region No. 6. By so doing there will be the continuing of these farm to market roads, construction of bridges between the Black Bush Polder Schemes namely, for those Hon Members from the opposing side who have not travelled these distances, Yakusari, Mibikuri, Joanna and Lesbeholden, the agriculture hub of Region No. 6. In our expansion *[Interruption . . . 'Hon Members I did say Joanna, Zambia is part of Joanna, you may not know that.]* The four schemes in Black Bush Polder which forms the hub of the agriculture base in region No. 6 there will be an expansion to include areas between No. 52 to No. 74 Villages in its road network with rehabilitation of waterways buy the instillation of pumps and excavations further carrying agriculture throughout the length and breadth of Region No. 6 from Crabwood Creek, Letter Kenny, Whim, Light Town and Macaw on the East Bank of Berbice. These water ways we know are important in its functions for drainage and irrigation therefore we will see the enhancing of production of rice and other crops in areas such as such as Putuca on the Left Bank of the Canje River, in the Black Bush Polder, Manarabisi Scheme and the Jackson/Molsen Creek area. With the expansion and further upgrading of these access roads and drainage and irrigation we would see a deviation from the dependence and or interference of rainy or dry seasons and placing this particular agro based economy within

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the context of the Budget 2001, re-engineering the economy, diversifying the economy. That is also outlined in our National Development Strategy. Region No. 6 welcomes the building of a new sugar factory at Skeldon along with the modernisation of the Albion and Rose Hall Estates. *[Applause]* This brings on stream modern technology in the sugar industry where more acreage would be under cultivation, more employment for the people in the Region from the highly technically trained to the less skilled. The overall impact of these projects will therefore see the requirements of the expansion of various sectors of the economy and this is where we complement our Minister of Finance in recognising that Region No. 6 is really a hub for agriculture and therefore expansion of the agriculture within the framework of its expanded acreage, accessibility, drainage and irrigation and scientific planting would therefore require other sectors of the economy to be improved. Therefore one of the major improvements which would be demanded for is that of education. There you would see the rapid expansion of the Berbice Campus of the University of Guyana. *[Applause]* I would like to turn to this point. I vehemently oppose the statement made by the Hon Member Deryck Bernard and any criticisms levelled against Berbice Campus, University of Guyana. I have been travelling from Region No. 6 to attend the University of Guyana and those who have had to travel to attend the University of Guyana at Turkeyen would understand what it entails. So if the Hon Member does not understand that I would make it bold to say Hon Member Alexander that the Berbice Campus, University of Guyana would become 'the University of Guyana' within the next five (5) years. *[Applause]* *[Interruption. . . 'We know duh'.]* Mr Speaker, we will not only see the expansion of the Berbice Campus but we will see under the Budget that is presented here the establishment of a new Technical Institute on the Corentyne. This would definitely a demand for a unit of the Guyana School of Agriculture to be set up in Region No. 6. The Government Agriculture Policy for Region No. 6 therefore through this Budget is removing the seasonal agro dependent status to an industrial and scientific one, therefore sustaining the agro economy throughout the

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year. This will, in fact, impact positively on the economic life of the people of Region No. 6. Along with this will demand the setting up of industrial parks because the focus will mean going into agro processing. In that area industrial parks would be set up at New Amsterdam and at Belvedere on the Corentyne.

Throughout the year 2000 education made a tremendous impact whereby schools stretching as far as from Siparuta, Orealla, Skeldon, Line Path and coming right down to New Amsterdam at Vryman's Erven were rehabilitated, nursery and primary. In Vryman's Erven the Secondary school was rehabilitated and put under a pilot project. The Tagore Memorial School was completed. These expansions in the education sector carries with it also teachers training, institutional strengthening and upgrading of total educational system within Region No. 6.

Mr Speaker, I will now just quickly deal with Health. There will be the rehabilitation of the New Amsterdam Hospital. We have already built the X-Ray facility at Port Mourant Hospital and one will be installed shortly at the Skeldon Hospital. Both laboratory facilities at New Amsterdam and Port Mourant will be upgraded.

Mr Speaker, Region No. 6 had suffered prior to 1992 and that is why great emphasis in this new millennium will be placed on Region No. 6, if not through direct inputs from the Ministry, certainly with my representation here, my insistence is that something ought to be done in Region No. 6.

The potable water programme which began earlier will continue. In the year 2000 the Rose Hall water project commenced with building of a state of the art water treatment plant in conjunction with the laying of water main rings and installation of distribution lines. This project is also near completion. As I mentioned before Phase III is 96% completed in New Amsterdam. We therefore saw an immediate improvement in potable water and a reduction of water borne diseases.

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The Speaker: Time Hon Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon Member be given fifteen Minutes to conclude his speech.

Mr Ramesh C Rajkumar: Mr Speaker, I am very happy that the Hon Members on the opposing side are requesting certainly to hear more about Region No. 6 because many of them seem so strange to Region No. 6 (even the Member Nasir Ally, I see he is here now). *[Interruption : "Certainly one day we may see that but our stress is on the Berbice Campus which was opposed when it was started years ago and the University of Guyana was dubbed the Jagan night school. Today we have the Berbice Campus and I would repeat boldly that it will be 'the University of Guyana' in this country."]*

We must remember that even with our water project in New Amsterdam commenced under the PNC in 1991. That project took ten years to complete because it was conceived poorly with bad technical advice. When we make the comparison today between the Rose Hall Water Project and the New Amsterdam Water Project which is funded under similar programmes and which contained similar networking and state of the art facility for water treatment we see the difference of Rose Hall setting up the water treatment plant simultaneously with the laying of the main rings and instillation of distribution network. While under their programme, which they may want to say that they had some say in the water treatment plant, ten years after we are still suffering for water in New Amsterdam mainly because the programmes was badly conceived, the treatment plant was built and there was no distribution system for the water. The plant was built and water had to be trucked to people in New Amsterdam. Therefore under the PNC New Amsterdam became a glorified village because it was under the Chairmanship of a PNC Mayor that New Amsterdam has been resorted to a glorified village from a wonderful township.

We have therefore seen today with the projects of the water

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systems immediate reduction of water borne diseases therefore our children are healthier children today. They do not suffer from the risks of ill health. We can see in our Guywa Report, as I have stated we have had projects not only in New Amsterdam, or at Rose Hall but throughout the country from Epson, Bengal, Ulverston, Whim, Edinburg, Kortberaad, Sandvoort, Gibraltar, Chesney, to name a few. I can pass this around to the Hon Members on the opposing side so that they can have a look and see what the what the Guyana Water Authority has been doing in Region No. 6 in every village. Mr Speaker, these are the rural areas and under our present Budget for 2001 areas such as Yakusari, Williamsburg, Joanna which includes Zambia, and Lesbeholden will be also rehabilitated with water distribution systems.

Mr Speaker, with these developments in Region No. 6 there will be the need for institutional reforms and strengthening. These institutional reforms and strengthening I am speaking of are within the sectors of the executive and the judiciary. In the year 2000 the judiciary has seen tremendous improvements in Region No. 6. We have had a brand new court building built at Whim to House the Whim Magistrate's Court. We were in a dilapidated house before. There was also the beginning of sittings in Berbice of the Highest Court in this country, the Court of Appeal which brought less hardship to persons who were in litigation and had taken their matters there. There was also the improving of the Deeds Registry System efficiency and organisation. Thus augured well for our land distribution and transports over the past two years. There is also the project under the 2001 Budget to continue with the completion of an expanded vault facility to house more documents which we regard as very historical and dear to us. The necessity arose because we expanded and opened more schemes and gave out more transports and titles to lands.

Within the executive the Hon Minister of Home Affairs has dealt comprehensively with those issues but I will just like to mention that there is also contained in the Budget what Hon Member Deborah

Backer failed to see, that is, the increasing of laboratory facilities and equipment and efficiency in operations and it is contained in the Budget. This is about the Police Force Hon Member that you said was not contained in the Budget. It is here.

There will also be improvements in transportation with vehicles and boats especially in the riverain area. Also the strengthening of community policing groups.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, Region No. 6 has experienced tremendous boost and improvement in the post 1992 period. For the year 2000, I already outlined the developments. In this 2001 Budget there is defined importance of Region no. 6 for its own development and also for its contribution to the national development of Guyana. The Budget has certainly identified the hub of Region No. 6s activity and justifiably crafted this Budget for our development to continue.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

Hon Member Ms Judith David

Ms Judith David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to address this House tonight about the Budget and issues relating to Region No. 7.

Mr Speaker, I must first say that this Budget is very vague and shows no development for Guyana. As I read the Budget I thought I would have seen major investment as the top priority for a developing country. Instead I see marginalisation for all the Regions controlled by the PNC/Reform. Mr Speaker, I can see more projects for Region Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, to a lesser extent Nos 4 and 10, and to the least Nos 7, 8 and 9.

This Budget shows lack of good governance, increased poverty,

and priorities not only mixed up but all misplaced. *[Applause]*

Before I go in into issues of Region No. 7, I want to recap some issues that the Hon Minister of Amerindian Affairs mentioned earlier today. The Hon Minister quoted from the Budget Speech that Amerindians are not being prioritised or given special attention at the Budget but is being looked at inclusively with all Guyanese. Mr Speaker, I here say tonight that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs should be redundant and the Minister should be sent home if we are speaking about unity. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, there are some burning issues in Region No. 7 that we have faced for the past eight (8) years and that the Government of Guyana failed to address for the people. Mr Speaker, the Bartica Hospital is supposed to be the regional Hospital for Region No. 7. It was built by a project of four friends at Bartica funded by Basic Needs and as I speak to this House tonight the promises that were given to us by the Government has never been fulfilled. I want to remind this House that when Bartica had its old hospital under the governance of the PNC we were well equipped with a theatre and a functioning X-Ray unit. I can remember as a little girl Dr Leslie Mootoo came to Bartica to perform surgery. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, as I speak to this House patients are being discharged from the Bartica Hospital given a referral letter to Georgetown under their own expenses. Many are called but few are chosen to inherit the funds provided by the Government to the Ministry of Health in Region No. 7. Even the pregnant mothers have to traverse the rough waters to be given further medical attention or a simple caesarean section which was done under the PNC Government many years ago at the Bartica Hospital.

Mr Speaker, we have a new building for a Hospital. Recently I visited the Hospital and I found children mixed up with the female patient in the female ward. Our hospital is just a shell, no equipment, no proper beds for our patients. Our mortuary is just a building with a not working refrigerator. I would like to ask the opposite side of

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the House if this is a principle of a caring government and good governance. To my mind and knowledge, and to the peoples knowledge of Region No. 7, this is total discrimination. *[Applause]* We have been promised for the past five (5) years that an X-Ray unit in Georgetown will be given to Bartica shortly. Mr Speaker, I would like to know from the Minister of Health when we will be having our X-Ray Unit and our functioning Theatre at Bartica for our people living. The Bartica Hospital not only furnishes Region No. 7 with health facilities. It furnishes Region Nos. 2 and 3 belonging to the PPP/C, Region Nos. 10 and 8, not forgetting all the miners who traverse Region No. 7 back and forth to gain their living. Mr Speaker, I want to remind the PPP/C Government that under the PNC Government patients were air dashed to Georgetown by helicopters and airplanes when necessary. We are longing for this kind of development once again in Region No. 7. As I look at the Budget Speech I see in recognition we intent to spend \$2.1B in the agriculture sector for this year. We will implement the poor rural communities project which provides for institutional, support the creation of farmers bodies in the form of water users associations and revolving credit schemes and a civil work. Mr Speaker, this word is the word that really troubles me, 'in selected areas of Region Nos 2 and 3.' It seems as though this Budget is a selected Budget for a selected Region in a selected part of Guyana. *[Applause]* Further, the speech says plans are in train and funds have been budgeted to up grade the Albion Airstrip into an aerodrome to facilitate flights from Timehri, Ogle and Suriname. This is where we have priority given to an airport that is not a necessity or an emergency to the country, in front of a hospital being equipped to save the lives of Guyanese. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in the Budget we paid specific emphasis on the Amerindians. I think in Guyana the time has come for us to have a Ministry of Indo-Guyanese Affairs, a Ministry of Afro-Guyanese Affairs, a Ministry for Chinese Affairs, because we find that we have some Chinese who are Guyanese, and a Ministry for every race in this country.

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Mr Speaker, the health programme and infrastructure need to be extended over the Region. All our CHW needs to be trained as Medex so that they can not only provide the services of a microscopist dealing with malaria and minor health problems but they can advance equally with technology and be compared to a medex in Georgetown. *[Applause]*

Water supply has been a sore point for a number of years. Mr Speaker, the PPP/C Government is speaking about communities that are depressed and I want to remind this House that Region No. 7 is depressed not only after the 2001 Election but the post election of 1992. We are depressed for the past eight (8) years and at the back door of the PPP/C Government. Mr Speaker, if I do not speak about water it means I am not representing my people fully. I want to remind this House that even though the Omai contract was won initially by the PNC Government, Omai was declared open by using one pit instead of three pits that were in the original contract thus causing the big spill of 1995. Thus our people are still depressed because the PPP/C Government has failed to look into the interest of the people of the Essequibo River. *[Applause]*

I want to go back to the Speech of my colleague from Region No.7, the Hon Mr Husman Ali who said in the April 2000 Budget Debate, I quote:

Pollution - due to our urge to develop and produce we have to look at the pollution of our rivers and creeks. In time to come it may be impossible to use those waters (and he was quite right) and here I see in the Budget that the Minister mentioned water supply in areas, drilling of wells will be done in those areas. That is also to show, Mr Speaker, as I mentioned development in the interior.

What is wrong with this is that wells were being drilled along the Essequibo River. Even at Bartica, with lack of vision, the PPP/C Civic choose to drill a well and when they went down to the earth all they found was rocks. Mr Speaker, this is a promise that has been

made in the 2000 Budget. Now we are in 2001. I can assure you come 2006 when we have another Budget after a next election we will not have our well. The Government has turned their backs on the people because they are suffering from a conflict of interest with the Omai Gold Mines Ltd. and the people in the Essequibo River. We need to have water in our Region. Guyana is a land of many waters. We need to be taken care of. For too long the people in Region Nos. 2, 3, 7 and 10 are complaining about poor water supply. A team of doctors came from Canada under the sponsorship of the Lions Club. At the end of their tour in their report it was clearly stated that Region No. 7 is suffering from a high percentage of pollution from mercury and other chemicals including cyanide in the water. Mr Speaker, I cannot understand why concentration and vision is only for Region No.6 when No. 7 is so close to No. 6. It seems as though the PPP/C Government cannot reach to No.7.

I would want to say thanks to the PNC for the help they have given to the people of the Essequibo River during the spill. And I would want to continue to thank the foreign NGOs who have poured so much into those communities helping our people. I want to remind the Minister for Amerindian Affairs that most of these villages are your Amerindian brothers and sisters.

Mr Speaker, I want to touch on education. The drop-out rate is increasing in Region No. 7. I am quite certain that the Hon Minister of Education on his visit on 20th June, 2001 to Bartica had recognised that. *[Interruption . . . 'I want to wake him up.'] [Laughter]* The rate of unemployment is growing rapidly for the unqualified and qualified. Some 75% of qualified students are jobless at the end of every school year. There is need for the extension of the secondary school in our Region, both in Kamarang and in Bartica. I was reliably informed that Region No. 7 had made proposals for \$12M, \$6M each for Kamarang and the Bartica Secondary Schools for extension to house the students and none was given. Mr Speaker, again I want to let this House know that the Education Department does not cater for Region No. 7. This is a strain on our educational system. There

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is need for a sixth for and an equivalent of the Guyana Technical Institute because we are taking care of more children than Region No. 6 is taking care of. The high cost of living is preventing parents from sending their children off to Georgetown to further their education.

In the Budget, Mr Speaker, money was allocated for all the Regions except Region No. 7 for schools. And I want to remind you that the Bartica Government Secondary School, the Community High School, the St Anthony's Primary School, the St John the Baptist Primary School, the Two Miles Secondary School were all schools built under the PNC Government. We are asking for a two flat building for the secondary school at Bartica and Kamarang.

Mr Speaker, on the 4th March, 1998, there was a decision by Cabinet for all hinterland teachers to be paid their salaries while in college, but as I speak to you this is only happening in some Regions like Region Nos 1, 6 and 9, Nos 7 and 8 are left out of this category. Mr Speaker, as you know most of our teachers coming out of our hinterland are bread winners for their families, if not, single parents. This will create more unemployment.

Mr Speaker, our youths in Region No. 7 because of the lack of sporting facilities, because of the lack of extra social activities that will be of benefit to the youths our youths have no alternative but to turn to the hinterland to be gold diggers or diamond seekers. Our women, young girls are left to become teenage mothers and single parents. These are the issues that the PPP/C Government should take in hand almost yesterday.

I want to touch on Youth and Sports. Mr speaker, it is not surprising to the Region to know that in the 2001 Budget no money has been allocated for Youth and Sports. This has been a trend for the past eight years. The Director for Youth and Sports had a personal problem with a Senior Administrator in the Region and because of that they were very vindictive to our youths. No money was allocated

for Youth and Sports.

Mr Speaker, I would like to look at Tourism. Tourism is a very big issue in Region No. 7 and cannot be of high standard if the water system, the roads, the health facilities and business are not at its feet. Sawmills are closing. Small businesses are closing. Bartica is the gateway to the interior and has significant tourist resorts that not only Guyanese enjoy but foreigners too. There is need for investment in Region No. 7 because it is the richest Region in Guyana. But, because of neglect by the Government to the people of Region No. 7 no development can take place.

Mr Speaker, Region No. 7 has a high populace of Amerindians who live as a neglected society. These people are skilled and have their culture that is highly respected. The illegal Brazilian immigrants are overcrowding their villages taking advantage of them, their land and their riches. These people are forced to live a life that is full of needs and wants. Under the PNC Government there was air transportation to these villages. Now to get into these villages you have to pay a price that can take you to Barbados or St Lucia. I am not surprised, Mr Speaker, because if GA 2000 cannot function I do not think the interior can have a flight going their. But I want to remind the House that having a flight to the hinterland is not only a need or a want, it is more an urgency than moving in a Rav 4 or a Prado in Georgetown. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, our gold and diamond is being taken from Guyana with little or no royalty left in Guyana. The sanitary standards in the Kurupung Upper and Middle Mazaruni areas is deplorable. The PPP/Civic Government Officers need to get up from their seats in their offices and visit these rural areas and see the cries of the people, the needs of the people and the health risks of the people by our illegal immigrants from Brazil and Venezuela. There is need, Mr Speaker, for chartered flights and boats by the Government to provide food for the people at a price suitable to the average man's pocket. Under the PNC Government the Amerindians sold produce from their

agricultural lands and they had ready market for trading in their villages. But because of the present Government and the misuse of SIMAP products for political reasons our Amerindian brothers and sisters have fallen prey to being dependent. I am surprised that the Hon Minister of Amerindian Affairs has said, coming out of the newscast of last evening, that starvation is not taking place in the Amerindian villages. I want to remind the Hon Minister that the children in the Upper and Middle Mazaruni are eating young cassava for tea, breakfast, lunch, supper, dinner - every meal, every day. *[Interruption . . . 'Shame.']* Starvation is at its highest because of El Nino, La Nina and the acushi ants in these villages. Agriculture has certainly America, Canada and the United Kingdom to what it is today. Guyana has been blessed with lots of rain forest lands and people to work the land. We can develop this country through agriculture. The people in the all the interior and hinterland regions are not furnished as they once used to be under the PNC with tools, insecticide, seeds and things required to do farming. Today I heard another promise that the things will be given to the Amerindians. I can tell you tonight, Mr Speaker, the Amerindians in the hinterland are no longer holding on to promise s from the PPP/C Government.

I want to touch a little on the speech that the Hon Minister of Home Affairs has given us today. It was nice to hear the Minister say that police stations are built here and there and community policing groups are getting this and that. But I want to tell this House tonight that as I speak the Officer in charge of the Bartica Police Station is either sleeping in a Hotel or in the Barrack Room of the Guyana Police Force. This is being done since 1993. No changes. I am living obliquely opposite the house for the officer-in-charge and I can tell you it needs pulling down, it is not fit. If we are going to look at our officers to perform their duties in the most accurate and competent way we need to make them comfortable. Every year, Mr Speaker, people are coming to Bartica measuring these houses, taking back the measurements, going back and forth, and up to today I have not seen one contractor with one piece of wood, a nail and a hammer to

give our officers the right way to live in Region No.7. [*Interruption.*
.. 'Shame. ']

The Speaker: Time Hon Member.

Mr Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, can I ask for five (5) minutes for the Hon Member to wind up.

Ms Judith David: Thank you, Mr Speaker, thank you Hon Carberry.

Mr Speaker, I was saying that the Government needs to put into action all the promises on paperwork that they are giving to us.

Before I close I want to give an overview of the forest industry. Over the years the forestry sector has increased its contribution to GDP. However, this increase is mainly based on the investment of the foreign companies while the contributions by the local companies were constant or in some instances declined. In recent years even the foreign companies seemed to suffer similar problems as the local companies and it was foretold about four years ago that if not assisted the industry would suffer seriously and many local companies would be forced to cease operations. This is what is now coming to past. The smaller companies have either closed their operations or are producing at a minimum and selling far below the production and thus are unable to meet their financial obligations. The same can be said for the medium sized companies who have scaled down production and closed down some of their concessions. It is sad to imagine local companies who have been in operation for more than fifty years having to cease production. That is like Nagasar Saw Ltd. The social impact of this on neighbouring communities would be devastating. Mr Speaker, some of the problems currently being experienced by the Industry is high production cost due to high cost of satisfying regulatory conditions set by GFC such as, payment of fees made in US dollars although scales in local dollars, uncertainty over forest policy, local and export price obtain, poor market for lumber (rough, sawn and dressed) and international prices, high

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interest rates, lack of investment incentive law and depreciation, lack of compensation for repairs to roads, inability to service debts, flooding, cash flow problems due to outstanding balances of customers mainly local, problems using the Corentyne River. Mr Speaker, like any other Member in this House I can speak on and on because speaking is one of my hobbies. *[Laughter]*

The Speaker: Not at this hour, Hon Member.

Ms Judith David: Mr Speaker, in concluding I want to encourage the PPP/C Government, as they promised the Guyanese populace inclusivity and working for a better Guyana, to stop putting their plans on paper and get active so that we can once again be the bread basket, not only for the Caribbean, but for most of the world at large.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Hon Member Mr Husman Alli.

Mr Husman Alli: Mr. Speaker, thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak on the 2001 Budget, presented by the Hon Minister of Finance Cde Kowlessar.

Mr Speaker, before I go into the Budget, I want to go into accusations and remarks made by the Hon. Member on the other side.

[Interruption]

Yes I did in 2000 speak about the water situation, it is a fact, I am not denying that, right. But, Mr Speaker, when the spill was on, water containers were given by the Ministry of Works and by Omai, to the people of the riverain area. Water containers was given to them during the spill and when the spill finish, all the tanks disappeared in various individual homes and so forth.

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Mr Speaker, GUYWA and the Water Supply, that is true. The GUYWA Supply is about 30 years old, the present water supply that we got there is about 30 years old. The Minister publicize time after time that all the works, all the assessment is finished and they are awaiting a loan from IDB to put in a new system and that is on stream.

Mr Speaker, I want to go on to the Hospital. The Member mentioned the Hospital and she did say that during the PNC there was an old hospital, the dilapidated hospital and it was un-repairable. The PPP give a new-brand hospital, fully equipped, with everything. *[Applause]* So I don't know where this question, come about but no beds, no this and no that.

Mr Speaker, I want to say also on the question of youth and sports. The PNC Mr Kelly, M. P. Kelly, he is the sports organiser for Region No. 7. Where is he today? He is gone, he disappeared. Mr Speaker, I don't want to go into details on all these things, just to clear up a few.

The Hon Member mention that Bartica is a depressed area, but I want to remind that Hon Member that she was a Member of the RDC in 1992, *[Interruption . . . 'Oh my God. Shame. Shame. Shame. ']* in the year 2000. And in the year 1999 the Region sent back to Central Government \$29M. *[Applause]* And she got the idosity to come here at the house and say that Bartica is a depressed area when you got \$29M to spend. But the Region then, Mr Speaker, didn't have the initiative to the spend \$29M so they had to send it back. They call themselves a depressed area. How can you understand this Mr Speaker? How can you understand this.

Mr Speaker, I want to say also she mention about the sawmills and the timber grants. The sawmill and the timber grants are privately owned, it is not the Government concern. They have a right to market, they have a right to sell. *[Interruption: "She is a dunce, she ent know duh?"]*

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The Speaker: Hon Members, please. A certain amount of noise is permissible but, please don't get rowdy.

Mr. Husman Alli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, like everybody else I would have to seek your protection.

Mr Speaker, another area which the Hon Member mentioned about is Nagasar. That is a private man's business and if one should examine it thoroughly . . . (I don't want to go much into it, because Nagasar Company is a family Company and had managerial problems and that is why Nagasar is down.) Mr Speaker, managerial problems.

Mr Speaker, I want to also mention the gold and diamond, the Brazilians, the Venezuelans and the Amerindians. I want to say this - Middle Mazaruni - I ply that area frequently, even before the elections and during the elections. And let me tell you, Amerindians are deriving benefits from those people by way of employment. You withdraw the Brazilians and Venezuelans and the Amerindians will come on your back. They will come on your back. *[Interruption]*

Mr Speaker, one should visit the Amerindian areas, to see the improvement which this Government, the PPP Government, has given them from 1992 to the year 2000. Mr Speaker, let them visit the Middle Mazaruni, Isseneru, Tasareen, health centers, schools. Waramadan, Kako, Philippi, Jawala, Imbaimaidai, Parima. Mr. Speaker, it is good to mention, but visit these areas and you will see the great improvement in all these Amerindian areas.

In this Budget, Mr Speaker, there is more improvement for health and education. Let me just recap a little. Construction of a teaching block at Waramadan where the secondary school is. Mr Speaker, construction of a dormitory at Bartica, construction of a teachers head quarter in Kaikan. I wonder how many people visit Kaikan? I don't even think the Hon Member of the other side ever visited Kaikan. I went there several times, Mr Speaker. I am happy to go there. Mr Speaker, construction of a primary school at Jawala. These are all

Amerindian areas. *[Interruption]*

Mr Speaker, rehabilitation of the Kamarang Hospital and that will take care of the whole of the Middle Mazaruni. *[Interruption]* Upper Mazaruni, thank you.

Mr Speaker, construction of a health post at Itaballi. The Hon Member didn't mention that. That is just a stone throw away from there. Why you didn't say so? Itaballi is just a stone throw. A health post will be there.

Batavia, Mr Speaker, health post and schools. These are all Amerindian areas. Mr Speaker, I don't think I should go more into that because that Hon Member didn't mention what the PNC gave for the 28 years. She oversighted that. What the PNC gave? Everything was broken down, everything was totally in disrepair. *[Applause]* The PPP Government in 1992 had to rebuild and had to reconstruct and rehabilitate up to this date. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the 2001 Budget presented by the Hon Minister is a Budget where something is there for every sector of this country. It is there for everyone in this country. But what is needed is for the Guyanese people to put their shoulders and help turn the wheel, so that this Budget can be of benefit to all.

Mr Speaker, at this time what is happening? Attack and counter attack. And this will go on for the next two to three days. But, Mr Speaker, who like it or who don't like it, it will eventually pass. It will pass. It will pass because it is a good Budget. It is a good Budget for the Guyanese people *[Applause]* who will inherit benefits from this Budget. But for the few, it is no good. For the few Mr Speaker. And so in that sense, Mr Speaker, I am encouraging Members of the other side to work with this Budget, let us all work together and help this Guyana.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

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The Speaker: Whichever side of the House you are on, Hon Members, I think you can say that we ended this evening on a spirited note.

Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today.

Hon Minister of Parliamentary Affairs:

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Let the spirit continue tomorrow, Wednesday June 27th at 14:00 hours (2:00 p.m.) I move that the House be adjourned.

Adjourned accordingly at 22:32 h