

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

136TH Sitting

Thursday, 2ND December, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.12 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

For Oral Reply

1. CHIEF JUSTICE PENSION ORDER No. 16/2010

Mrs. Holder: I assume even though the Minister of Finance is not here he has asked somebody to answer. He is not here.

Mr. Speaker: Is there anyone to answer the question on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respectfully request that in view of the fact that Dr Singh is unavoidably absent that we would not be in a position to answer this afternoon.

(Question 1 Deferred)

For Written Reply

PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT HYDRO POWER FACILITIES IN GUYANA

Mr. Franklin:

- (i) Could the Hon. Prime Minister inform the Assembly if any proposal was presented to the Government of Guyana between 2006 and 2009, by any company or group companies, to construct hydro power facilities in Guyana at their own expense other than the one presented by synergy.
- (ii) If the answer is in the affirmative, can the prime Minister state why these proposal were actively considered by Government.

Mr. Hinds:

- (i) During the period 2006-2009, the Government received two proposals for hydro power development in Guyana:
 - (i) Bauxite and Alumina Mining venture Ltd. (RUSAL). Company was granted three years exclusivity to conduct study for a hydropower plant on the Upper Mazaruni River (2007)
 - (ii) Dynamic Engineering Inc. (Developer). Company was granted one year exclusivity to conduct feasibility study for the development of two 0.75MW hydropower station at Tumatumari on the Potaro River (2010).

However, in 2008, the Government also granted the fifth extension of the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) between GOG and ENMAN Services Ltd. Dated 31st July, 2001, which gave ENMAN the exclusive right to complete feasibility studies with respect to a hydropower project on the Turtruba Rapids on the Mazaruni River. The said MoU expired 31st July, 2010.

Prior to 2006, the GOG also entered into MoUs with the following persons for the development of hydropower projects in Guyana. The said MoUs have all expired.

- (i) Dynamic engineering Inc. (2002)
 - (ii) Guyana Poverty Alleviation Group Inc.
- (ii) These proposals were all actively considered by the Government.

**MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY AND
MOVED BY A MINISTER**

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 28(3)

BE IT RESOLVED:

That Standing Order No. 28(3) be suspended to enable the Assembly to proceed at its sitting on Thursday, 2nd December, 2010, with the consideration of the motion on the Sympathy on the Death of Mr. Winston Shripal Murray, C.C.H., M.P.

[Minister of Home Affairs]

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

PRIVATE MEMBERS BUSINESS

MOTION

SMYPATHY ON THE DEATH OF MR. WINSTON SHRIPAL MURRAY, C.C.H., M.P.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That, we the Members of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana –

- place on record our shock and profound grief at the great loss to the Parliament and people of Guyana by the tragic death of Mr. Winston Shripal Murray, C.C.H., M.P., on Monday 22nd November, 2010.
- pay tribute to the committed and distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly directs that an expression of our heartfelt sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow, children and relatives.

[Deputy Speaker of the national Assembly]

Mrs. Riehl: Mr Speaker, I stand to move the motion in sympathy on the death of Mr. Winston Shripal Murray C.C.H., M.P. on behalf of Mr. Robert Corbin, M.P., Leader of the Opposition. The Motion reads thus:

“That we the Members of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana –

- place on record our shock and profound grief at the great loss to the Parliament and people of Guyana by the tragic death of Mr. Winston Shripal Murray, C.C.H., M.P., on Monday 22nd November, 2010.
- pay tribute to the committed and distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament.

Be It Further Resolved:

That the National Assembly directs that an expression of our heartfelt sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow, children and relatives.”

Mr. Speaker, as you may understand it has taken me by surprise that this is the first motion on the Order Paper. It has taken me by surprise that this course has been adopted.

So much has been said and written and delivered within the last two weeks by way of editorials, columns, letters, tributes –of the late Winston Shripal Murray that one would think that our senses would be saturated, but not so. For the depth, breadth, life and times of our colleague has even more to be explored, as I learnt on the Island of Leguan on Tuesday last when we travelled there to inter his mortal remains in the St. Peter’s Churchyard. We therefore, in this August Assembly, cannot be silent. We must record for posterity what a fine member of the human race we had in our midst for many, many years. And to think, that he was right here under our noses, so to speak, and until his demise we did not fully appreciate all that he represented to this country and to this Parliament. Oh, yes, he was acclaimed by all as the best debater in this Assembly in this Ninth Parliament and going backwards into the Eight, Seventh and, I dare say,

Sixth Parliament. Meticulous in his preparation, articulate and incisive in his delivery, none amongst us could match the skilful analysis and articulation of Winston Murray when he rose to his feet to speak in this National Assembly.

This was especially obvious at the Budget Debate. I could recall year after year him getting the full front page coverage of the Stabroek News and other newspapers with headlines such as “Murray Roasts the Government on Budget”, “Murray Blasts the Government on Budget”. We in the PNC/R will surely miss the annual overview of the Budget he gave to us at our Party’s headquarters immediately after the presentation of the Budget by the Minister of Finance. This would then set the pace for each of us to prepare to debate in our own areas.

But though ferocious in his criticism of Government at times, his debates were always interwoven with advice to Government on how they could better execute this or that programme or project, or why money should be spent here and not there as the Government was preparing to do. Like the good school teacher he was - this was his first calling - he was a trained school teacher, he would both criticise and advise at once.

From the year 1992 to 2006 Winston Murray was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament, and thereafter a Member of that Committee until his death. There he spent no opportunity to take the Government to task on matters of accountability and the integrity of the public purse. Even to his last days in this Assembly one of his main concerns was the misuse of the Lottery Funds which never found their way into the Consolidated Fund. And he told me he was seriously contemplating challenging in the law courts the constitutionality of the Government’s approach to this matter.

Mr. Murray was also a Member of the Parliamentary Management Committee from its inception, and he brought to bear great wisdom and intellect on the numerous select committees of which he was always a valued member. Some of these readily come to mind: the select committee to redraft the Standing Orders of this National Assembly, the Money Laundering Bill, the Maritime Zones Bill. These are just a small sample of the numerous Select Committees for Bills on which Mr. Murray participated.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main attributes of our colleague Winston Murray was his humility. He was not given to affectation, but possessed of a gentility of spirit which made him approachable

and accessible to all. In the courts of law, which was his other sphere of work, he was equally liked by his peers, colleagues, as well as by clerks and the support staff of the courts.

During the eleven days he was in a coma and his life hung in the balance many would approach me and other members of the PNC/R inquiring of how he was and telling us they were praying for his recovery. Indeed we are told that citizens all across the country were holding vigils, hoping and praying for his recovery. The outpourings at his death on the 22nd November, 2010 were a sure testament to the life he lived and the contributions he made in the national arena. By the time he died the nation was sensitised to the fact that not only the PNC/R but the nation as a whole had lost a good man, a great son.

Mr. Speaker, the seventeenth century poet John Donne in his famous 1624 poem “For Whom The Bell Tolls” wrote thus:

No man is an island entire of itself,

Each is a piece of the continent,

A part of the main.

And he goes on:

Each man’s death diminishes me,

For I am involved in mankind,

Therefore send not to know,

For whom the bells tolls,

It tolls for thee.

The bell has tolled for Winston Murray, our colleague, our brother, our friend. He is no more amongst us. To that extent we are all diminished by his death. All the experience, the expertise, the talent, he was possessed of are no more within our reach, and the nation is poorer for his passing.

Mr. Speaker, prior to his entree into the Parliament as Minister of Trade in 1985, Winston Shripal Murray was a dedicated public servant who served with distinction as an Economist in the Ministry of Trade in 1970, Secretary to Guyana's Embassy in Brussels and then back home in 1974 as Senior Economist and Deputy Secretary to the Treasury, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Trade in 1979, Head of the Department of international Economic Cooperation in 1983. For these distinguished services he was awarded Guyana's third highest honour, The Cacique Crown of Honour, in the year 1984.

Because of his essential simplicity you are lulled into a sense of thinking that Winston Murray was an ordinary man. But everything about him bespeaks the extraordinary. His father died leaving him at the tender age of two years. He was brought up by grandparents. Maybe this explains the acknowledged courtesy with which he treated with all with whom he came into contact with.

Winston Murray never attended high school although he passed the government county scholarship, a feat in its own right, and was entitled to attend Queen's College. At that time each county was only allowed three passes every year. So that was a feat that a little boy from Leguan was able to get a county scholarship. But he was unable to attend Queen's College. He did not leave his home because he had nowhere to stay in Georgetown. He remained in Leguan as a pupil teacher until he became a trained teacher in 1962. He was self taught when he passed G.C.E. O'Levels. In 1963 he proceeded to the United Kingdom where he acquired the Advanced Level G.C.E. and gained entry into the London School of Economics from whence he graduated in 1970 with a Bachelor of Science, an Honour's degree.

On a lighter note I am told that when he was leaving Leguan in 1963 for London half of the island came out to the Stelling to bid him farewell and they brought a juke box and played farewell songs to their dear teacher/lawyer as she was fondly remembered on the island of Leguan. No one knew him as Winston Murray; he was always called "Lloyd" in his growing-up days. He is fondly remembered as Teacher Lloyd even at his funeral service.

Mr. Speaker, Winston Murray's remarkable passion for education and scholarship did not end in London. After the PNC/R lost the elections in 1992 he turned his sights to the discipline and study of law. He graduated from the University of Guyana in 1996 with an LLB Degree, Credit.

Such was the measure of the man. And so great the loyalty to the Party, which he served for nigh unto thirty years, he held himself back from going straight onto law school for two years to assist in the preparation for the 1997 election bid. He eventually attended the Hugh Wooding Law School in 1998 and promptly in his first year won the Phelps Company Prize Award for Best Performance in Civil Practice and Procedure. He graduated from this institution with his legal education certificate in the year 2000.

What a remarkable man. When lesser mortals would have been content with one career he held three distinct careers: Teacher, Economist and Attorney-at-law. Notwithstanding all these skills at his fingertips he remained steadfast in his loyalty to this country. As the years progressed he became increasingly worried at the plight of the nation's youth: their lack of opportunities and the distractions that nibbled away at their lives, and he badly wanted the opportunity to fix or to assist in fixing these things. Though Winston Murray never managed to reach the zenith of his political career, some of us were hoping this would have been achieved in the not too distant future. The Winston Murray that I know would have handled it with a plomp graciousness, dignity and magnanimity that he displayed in every position he held in his lifetime.

Finally, in tribute to him I would like to read part of the poem called "The Prophet" by Khalil Gibran.

“For what it is to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun.

And what it is to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides that it may rise and expand and seek god unencumbered.

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing,

And when you would have reached the mountain top then you shall begin to climb

And when the earth shall claim your limbs then shall you truly dance.”

Dance on Dear Winston, we will miss you; you are irreplaceable in this Parliament. (*Applause*)

I hereby move the motion, Sir.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, unlike a few days ago when I spoke at the St George's Cathedral on behalf of my Party I do not have a prepared text this afternoon. I have some notes from which I will speak as an M.P. in respect of the motion that has been proposed by Hon. Member Mrs. Riehl on behalf of Mr. Corbin.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at where I sit and you recall where Mr. Murray sat, you will obviously remember that we sat facing each other, face to face as it were. From that vantage point I could consider very carefully the way in which Mr. Murray conducted himself while he sat in the National Assembly listening to someone speaking, preparing or putting the finishing touches to his speaking notes as he was preparing to respond, or just sitting engaging in banter with either his colleagues or we on this side of the House. One could observe the way in which Mr. Murray conducted himself in the National Assembly in what I would describe as a high degree of aplomb, statesmanship and respect for the rules of the National Assembly.

That very fatal day, while others were having their snack, I invited Mr. Murray to sit in the Prime Minister's chair. I don't know if that was a sign of things to come, but I invited him to sit in the Prime Minister's chair to engage in what I would consider confidential discussions with him. He was a man that took things in stride. From the exchange of views we had I could discern that he was a fighter, and that he was a very principled man, based on the objective which he had set himself. I was therefore astonished, and I believe many of my colleagues on this side of the House were surprised, when we received the news a few hours after the National Assembly had risen that our colleague M.P. had been afflicted by a fatal illness.

Mr. Speaker, I would not want to touch on the side of Mr. Murray that I would describe as the teaching side of him because few of us knew him as a teacher save and except, I think, for my colleague from Leguan, M.P. Shadick. But I would like to engage in a tour d' horizon of Mr. Murray as the politician, the lawyer and the M.P.

The first time I met Mr. Murray was just before the postponement of the 1990 elections. I was a Member of the Elections Commission, the then Chairman was Mr. Rudy Collins. We were faced with the responsibility in the Commission to inform the then President Mr. Hoyte that the Elections Commission was not in a position to hold the elections. We proceeded to the Office of the President –Mr. Collins and myself. In the room we met with three persons: Mr. Hoyte, the

President, Mr. Kenneth King who was then an Adviser to the President and Mr. Winston Murray who I believe at that time was a Deputy Prime Minister and a Minister of Government. The Chairman of the Elections Commission, Mr Collins, informed the then President that the Elections Commission was not in a position of readiness for the holding of elections and therefore it was recommended that the elections be postponed. Mr. Hoyte listened to what we had to say and said thank you very much and we then got up and left. When I left I asked Mr. Collins who was the other person sitting with Mr. Hoyte. I never knew Winston Murray. I only knew about him by hearing about him and seeing him in the newspapers. At that time the television was not as prominent as it is now. Mr. Collins informed me that that was the Winston Murray.

2.42 p.m.

Ever since that time Winston Murray's prominence in politics figured quite a lot because elections campaign eventually took place and he was one of the main speakers at several of the rallies of the People's National Congress (P.N.C). We did not have the Reform component added to the P.NC. Winston Murray was clearly a consummate politician and from the way he spoke at public meetings it was clear that he knew what the party he belonged to was all about and he was able to articulate the policies of that party quite well to the public.

The next engagement that I had with Mr. Murray was when the People's Progressive Party/ Civic (P.P.P/C) assumed Government in 1992. As Minister of Foreign Affairs I attended my first United Nations General Assembly meeting. When I got to the hotel to which I was assigned, usually you would have a guest book to sign because computers were not as prominent as they are now in those days. When, I looked at the names of the guest the year before I saw Mr. Murray's name. It was a very modest hotel and that created some impression in my mind about the Winston Murray that we are speaking about this afternoon.

The other experience, that this Government had with Mr. Murray and the Ministry that he led at that time, was when the then President Dr. Cheddi Jagan was preparing for his first trip overseas, as President of this country. There were some serious matters engaging Guyana's attention that had to be addressed at a meeting of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Jagan called upon the then Ministry of Trade Industry and Commerce to provide

him with a brief in respect to the issues to be discussed in Trinidad and Tobago. This was a new Government coming into office; there had to be continuity of the issues, especially the technical issues in respect of trade. The political context of those discussions was left to the head of the delegation to pursue.

I mention these matters because it is important for us to recognise the individual from the P.P.P/C's perspective and the early role that his influence played within the new Government that had taken office. Soon after the P.N.C lost power, Mr. Murray, after serving in the National Assembly for some time, decided to pursue a career as an Attorney at law. I believe he did so at the same time that Mr. Robert Corbin took leave from the National Assembly. I always wondered why it was that this individual with a career or path already ahead of him as a Member of Parliament and as someone, who headed a Ministry, for some years of his life, would want to pursue a legal career. The question was what made him arrive at that decision? I think there are others in this House who are in a better position to answer that question. Was it an economic issue? Was it political? Or was it both? We have someone on our side of the House who also decided to pursue a Legal Practitioner's career path and who had returned to the National Assembly. I believe only they can answer the question of why they decided to do so. It appears that Mr. Murray was not satisfied with his role as a Member of Parliament, or with his curriculum Vitae being as it were. So he left to pursue a career as an Attorney at law. This brings into question his professional life. Apart from being an economist, from all appearances he was not satisfied with his academic and professional standing and thus emerged, subsequently, Mr. Murray the attorney at law returning to the National Assembly.

I have no doubt, and I believe that many in this country and this very Parliament would have very little doubt, that in the same way that Mr. Murray excelled as a Politician that he probably would have done so as an attorney at law. As an M.P, I think a lot has been said about Mr. Murray's work and life as an M.P but now we, as M.P's, duly constituted since the passing of our colleague are here to speak more openly about his work and life as an MP. The Hon. Member Mrs. Clarissa Riehl referred to what she described as his excellent work as an MP, whenever we had debates on the National Budget; I recall those debates well, I think we all recall those debates. One of the mantras of Mr. Murray was always where is the project profile? Where is the project profile? I could still hear him asking that question and he is still probably asking

that question. And we will continue hearing it in the same manner he always asks. It was not a question that was taken lightly by this side of the House. As time went on we would see greater and greater improvements in the three voluminous documents that we receive from the Ministry of Finance containing more and more reflections of project profiles.

Apart from his elegance, the way in which he dressed was neat and all of his colours matched, I believe Mrs. Murray had something to do with that. She agrees. He was always, what we called in the old days, spick and span. His attire always matched his delivery. We on this side of the House always sat and listened. We did not always agree with what he had to say but he was not bashful nor did he shy away from making his political points in respect to one matter of the other. Yes, MP Riehl is correct when she said that he was critical at times of Government policies and the criticism could at times be very incisive but I think equally when our MPs responded he was able to take the responses with, what we would call a thick skin. Not all MPs on that side of the House have a thick skin. Some can be very thin skinned but Mr. Murray had a thick skin and he could take the responses from us sometimes without batting an eye lid or making some joke or the other.

I agree that the Hon. Member Mr. Murray was a very meticulous person in preparing his interventions. That could be seen. He also had an analytical mind but his presentations because they had to be political of Government's policies. That was to be expected because Mr. Murray, as I said, was a consummate politician. Therefore whatever he said on behalf of his party was tailored to send political messages to his constituents and his party's constituents so that they will obviously feel that they were being effectively represented in the National Assembly. A rhetorical question is constantly being asked, as to who will fill his shoes. I think that is a non question because we have heard also that there is no one size that fits all. I do not think that we need to engage in any discussion on that matter.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion that is before us is whole heartedly supported by we who sit on the benches on this side of the House. We have a track record of being consistent of positions we adopt on one issue or the other. I was very pleased to see at the interment in Leguan where our colleague Ms. Bibi Shadick was present and spoke, and followed a similar that was taken by the party in respect to Mr. Murray's life and work. We therefore, consistent with the public position and utterances that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (P.P.P/C) has uttered in relation with

Mr. Murray would be in great pains not to be consistent with our sympathy to the family, wife, children, very close colleagues of Mr. Murray, we know them well, in his passing. I believe we will miss his presentations especially at Budget time. I do not know who on that side will fill his place or if they will bring in someone new. We will wait to see but I can say candidly that apart from the country being poor the opposition benches are poorer in terms of someone replacing Mr. Murray to speak effectively on Budgetary and financial matters. We sympathise with you we empathise with you in this loss we also from time to time will suffer losses as well and we know what it is to lose an effective speaker in this particular House.

Mr. Speaker, we support the Motion wholeheartedly. We reiterate our sympathy with the family, friends and relatives of Mr. Murray and we share the collective loss with the Opposition Party and all those others who sit on the Opposition benches. Thank you.

Mr. Trotman: On behalf of the Alliance For Change, I rise to offer our contribution and to say that at the outset we support this Motion in its entirety. Like my colleague who spoke before I did not come prepared to give a very long presentation but I did make some notes. I did not, as well, come to engage in a debate but I believe that Mr. Murray himself would not have allowed some of what was said just prior to my rising to go unanswered. So if you would bear with me, I crave your indulgence to let me respond to a few things.

One - Why would Winston Murray CCH, a renowned economist and a Parliamentarian of much repute, go off to read Law, something, I dare say, the Hon. Rohee would never be able to understand. I will say why. I remember when I first joined the world of politics there was on the list of candidates' one person who signed as their profession, Politician. In other words Winston Murray, never though he had made a name for himself in politics never saw his profession as being that of a politician and, likewise, never saw politics as a profession to be pursued for gain. That is something that some in this House would never understand. I thought I would make that point.

The other thing is, I believe that, they are, and I could remember them, many instances that Mr. Murray praised his colleagues on the Government side. And so to say that whenever he rose to speak his contributions were always critical because he was a consummate politician, that he was yes, but I can tell you that on many occasions, much to his regret I can tell you as well, he gave

praise where it was due. I heard, in fact the Hon. Prime Minister this week singling out Mr. Murray, at his last intervention in this House on the Thursday when he collapsed for the Prime Minister's honesty, if I can put it in that way, in acknowledging some errors in the fund that should have been coming under the Amerindian Act were concerned. But then going on to, of course, criticise why it had not been done. The Winston Murray that I remember and the presentations he made never spared the opportunity to congratulate Government whenever it was possible, and I remember especially when the extant Minister of Finance made his maiden speech in this House it was Mr. Winston Murray who welcomed him, praised him and gave him, I believe, wise words of advice and wisdom.

That said I wish to just say a few words on behalf of the AFC, proper. The first is that unlike my colleague Mrs. Riehl I believe, and this is for me personally, that this Motion may have come a bit too soon to this House. I say this with all due respect to its mover and to the relatives and friends. I believe that Motions like this should come after time has settled and proper perspectives and situations are put into place. We have had a long week of two services, a long period of illness followed by a period of grief and mourning. In a way this afternoon's event will put to rest and perhaps, for me, too quickly so the memory of Winston Murray. I would have preferred, perhaps, as I said for some time for the matter to cure a bit longer rather than for us to box the memory in so quickly and try to shut it away but here we are.

The second point that I believe has been quite rightly made by Hon. Member Mr. Rohee is that we are here to speak to Mr. Murray's prowess as a Parliamentarian not so much as the person. Many tributes have already been made and words spoken in that regard.

The third point I wish to make is that Mr. Murray belonged to the profession of lawyers; unfortunately I will now say that the practice of holding full court sittings for our fallen brethren seems to have just disappeared. This is likely to be the last occasion at which there will be speeches made, tributes offered and any kind of public statements made on his behalf and so it is something that we should bear in mind. Those of us who happen to enjoy both the privilege of the Bar and this House should, perhaps, take this matter up at the appropriate office.

Mr. Murray was arguably the best debater this House had. I know that some may wish to quietly disagree with me but I am saying that, for me, from the time I came in late 1997 Mr. Winston

Murray impressed me. That impression which entered my mind was lasting and will be lasting. I dare say as Mr. Rohee has already pointed out, it will be very difficult and we should not attempt to fill his shoes. He did not arrive here as we heard in a carriage of wealth or with great pomp and ceremony but came from very humble beginnings. I was surprised to hear a few minutes ago that he did not even receive a formal secondary education. It was because of his abilities, his manner of approaching his work, his humility, I dare say, that former Presidents of Guyana including President Dr. Cheddi Jagan saw value in him and former president Hoyte , in particular, recognised Mr. Murray's abilities not only as a senior public servant but elevated him to the office of Minister of Trade and later he became a Member of Parliament within the Opposition. I often asked him, how is it Winston that you could have been going at it for so long, a transition from Minister to Opposition Member. I have asked him and he would just quietly smile. It must have been difficult to go through all those years.

Winston Murray, in my view, offered himself, because as I said he did not come with a name, he did not come with wealth, he did not come with high recommendations other than those he had acquired on his own. He could be given to say that I have nothing to offer and offered nothing but his bold, sweat and tears. We, therefore, in that regard can be privilege to say that we in this House got the best of Winston Murray. We got the best of him.

Words such as erudite, illustrious, well prepared, surgical, precise, respectful, decent and fair, and I wish to emphasise fairness, are those which I would use to describe Mr. Murray's parliamentary presence, especially in this chamber. Only this year I had the pleasure of working with him in two Special Select Committees, which Mrs. Riehl had referred to, the Maritimes Zones Committee and the Anti-Money Laundering Committee. In both Committees, Mr. Speaker, it was quite remarkable, as you would have found out in your dealings and relationships with him in the Parliamentary Management Committee and elsewhere that he took off his jacket; he was quite the ordinary man; he came well prepared and all of his Bills would have little yellow posted it sticking out at the end of them telling you that he approached his work in a very serious and comprehensive manner. I remember not only his manner of presentation here but the manner in which he conducted his business without the prying eyes looking on.

I can tell you that he was no different behind closed doors and he was I the open. He did all of this, and I wish to quote President Obama as he referred to a man who could be likened unto Mr.

Murray himself, -the man who was the president that we never had- when he eulogised the life and work of Senator Ted Kennedy last year in the United States. President Obama saying of Senator Kennedy these words which, I believe, are quite applicable to Mr. Murray; “he did it by hewing to principle, but also by seeking compromise to common cause.- not through deal making and horse-trading, but through friendship and kindness and through humour.” Those words as applicable as they are to Ted Kennedy’s life as a Senator in the United States, I believe, sum up our own Ted Kennedy in Guyana. A man who gave long service to this House in a very humble way and a man who many thought could, and should have been the Head of State of this country but circumstance robbed him of that opportunity.

3.12 p.m.

On Mr. Murray’s debating prowess, while he had the gift of oratorical skills, I will say that his preparation and *stick-to-itiveness* gave him that confidence to speak with such passion and sincerity. He never spoke unless he was certain and convinced about what he was saying and it was interesting to see the faces of many on the other side - some squirmed, some reacted in anger, some with great embarrassment and few with admiration.

Prior to, Mr. Speaker – I will add - the coming to this Chamber of the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, few dared to refute or challenge anything that Mr. Murray stated. It was only within the last three to four years, I would say, during the budget presentations, that I saw the new Minister of Finance finding his feet and attempting, with some degree of success, to rebut Mr. Murray’s budget speeches. Before that, I can say, few dared and only fools rushed in where injured feared to tread. He had his statistics; he had his data, and he had the passion, but I must say that the Government side did well to seek and find Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh to come to stand against Mr. Murray.

His style of debate and approach to politics, in my view, should be a lesson for students and debaters to see. Unfortunately, there is not a student from any school invited to these debates this afternoon. I do hope that his colleagues and those who claim to be his colleagues – because many of them do but they are not his colleagues – will be true to his memory and true to the friendships that they shared with him by ensuring that among the initiatives which are going to be introduced

will be both a lecture series and a school's debating competition which, I believe, will aptly honour his memory.

I wish to return to that eulogy given by President Obama, to the president that never was, in the United States, yesterday. I quote, again, words which I believe President Obama unwittingly and, perhaps, prophetically uttered for Mr. Winston Murray of Guyana.

“What we can do is to live out our lives as best as we can with purpose and with love, and with joy. We can use each day to show those who are closest to us how much we care about them, and treat others with the kindness and respect that we wish for ourselves. We can learn from our mistakes and grow from our failures, and we can strive at all costs to make a better world so that some day if we are blessed with the chance to look back on our time here, we know that we spent it well; that we made a difference; that our fleeting presence made a lasting impact on the lives of others.”

That, I believe, is what I would like to remember of Winston Murray. He was filled with love and patriotism. It was not often that I saw him angry. In fact, I can only remember about two occasions. I am sure that he was angry on many more, but it took quite a lot to aggravate or upset him and he always tried to see the good in everyone else. He always sought the compromising way rather than the confrontational or contentious way.

It would be remiss of me, before I close, not to mention a matter that I raise every year. That is the absence of national awards and the investiture ceremonies in this country. While Mr. Murray earned the respect of his peers and was awarded a national award, many moons ago, still there are perhaps hundreds like him who are deserving of awards and for whom no recognition is given in this country. It is a national shame and abomination that for the last eight years or more – I may be corrected. It may be the last decade - we have not had an investiture ceremony in this country, though from time to time others have, and quite rightly so, been awarded national honours - Shivnarine Chanderpaul, recently President Lula DaSilva of Brazil, Dr. Bourne, formerly of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and others. As I have pointed out, Mr. Speaker, and I will do so again, with the greatest of respect to you, there used to be a time when the Speaker of the House enjoyed that privilege of the Order of Roraima unless, of course, he

served in a matter not favourable to those who grant that Order. From where I sit, I could see no reason why you would not be entitled to that or even a higher honour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr. Trotman: That is a matter for your colleagues to work out. I am sounding warning that I will be introducing a motion sometime soon calling on this House to demand the re-establishment of the investiture ceremonies and the system of national awards. A country needs awards because the people need to see that their peers are achieving and being recognised.

With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak directly to the Minister of Education, who now believes in something called “no child left behind”, that an entire cycle of students have gone through primary school and written Common Entrance hearing about an Order of Roraima (OR) and a Cacique Crown of Honour (CCH) and have never seen one being bestowed. They read about them only in books as if they are history books. It is a shame. I think he should put aside – if I could advise him – the “no child left behind” and allow children to see what an Arrow of Achievement is and who gets it - the farmer from Leguan, the fireman from Sophia or the policewoman who may have helped to intercept 21 kilograms of cocaine on the West Coast. These are the people, not necessarily those of us up here, who deserve these awards and should be getting them.

I come again to a sub-theme of that and that is the absence of the portraits of two former presidents of this country, in Mr. Desmond Hoyte and Mrs. Jagan. I made bold to say, if it is that the respective parties do not see it fit to honour their leaders, then, perhaps, the Parliament Office should put aside something from its budget and establish these portraits. Both former presidents have been dead for too long not to have been honoured in this House. Whenever I ask I am told that it is for the parties to bring the portraits and the Parliament Office will put them up. But I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that it is perhaps a matter that you may wish to intervene and take into your own hands and make that bold and brave step. I will stand with you.

To close, I wish, as I began, to say that we firstly wish to place on record our own shock and our own profound grief at the great loss to the Parliament and people of Guyana suffered by the tragic death of Mr. Winston Shripal Murray, holder of the Cacique Crown of Honour, and Member of Parliament, Attorney-at-law, an economist in his own right, who died on the 22nd

November, 2010. We further wish to pay tribute to the committed and distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to this Parliament.

Lastly, we ask, as our colleagues have asked before and will ask after I sit, that this National Assembly, as a collective, directs such an expression of our heartfelt sympathy to his sorrowing widow, children and relatives.

“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, but love leaves a memory that no one can steal.” With those words, we offer our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Murray, Mr. Murray’s colleagues and his relatives.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Norton: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members of this August Assembly, I rise to extend sympathy to Mrs. Marva Murray, Mr. Shawn and Mr. Mark Murray, sons of Winston Murray, and Makeiba Murray, daughter and granddaughter of Mr. Murray. Her brilliance as a child is edged in my mind as she brought a special happiness to Mr. Murray, at least on two occasions when we travelled while I was a Foreign Service Officer. To all the relatives and friends of our late colleague, I extend my sincerest sympathy on behalf of the People’s National Congress Reform – 1 Guyana and, may I say, this entire National Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to thank all those who expressed goodwill and gave support during his time of hospitalisation. To the President and Government of Guyana, I say thank you for agreeing to expend taxpayers’ money to give this illustrious son of this soil every chance, however small was the window of opportunity and the chance. It was clearly a time when, from both sides of this House, we cooperated to promote a common good. I wish to posit that it will be to Mr. Murray’s joy to see that cooperation and consensus approach take on new meaning and be manifested in our everyday politics based on the principles of respect for each other, fairness and transparency in our approach to governance, responsiveness to the views and interests of all, and to develop a Guyana that is based in the principle of inter-ethnic equity, principles he espoused throughout his public and private life.

Today, we celebrate the life of a man who did glorious things without seeking glory. We celebrate the life of a man whose knowledge and the positions he held, in and out of

Government, made him powerful, yet loved and humble. We celebrate the life of a man who was respected well beyond our shores but chose to serve our people within our shores. We celebrate the life of a man who was tenacious when it came to principles. Let us resolve to be guided by his own life as we live our lives.

Death is inevitable and it signals the end of each man's earthly dwelling. It is therefore incumbent on us to identify, promote and protect the legacy of all our falling heroes including Winston Shripal Murray. It is in this context I wish to urge the youth of Guyana, in particular, and Guyanese, in general, to note that Winston Murray has been a rarity in Guyanese politics. As he makes his way to the great beyond, he has left us a legacy of public service at the highest level, distinguished by the absence of the political and social scourge, namely corruption. He was honest and could not be corrupted. His life was testimony that you can hold high office and be of dignified mean. It is Winston Shripal Murray's life I urge the youth to emulate as we seek to develop a new political culture in Guyana. Winston Murray's politics has been a lesson in modesty, respect, firmness while exercising flexibility, fairness, and one of the best manifestations that public life should and must be one of service.

As a politician, truth was his marshal weapon; brotherhood was his armour plate; Guyanese, the breed he cherished as he scorned paths of racial hate. Winston Shripal Murray was PNC and Guyanese to the core. He lived a life as outlined in our party battle song.

Mr. Winston Shripal Murray was adamant that one thing that will contribute to the attenuation of ethnic conflict in Guyana was the development of a strong economy that was growing at a fast rate. He felt that to get the economy going and growing we need to have a strategy to bring investments to Guyana. He was sanguine that we need to move away from the present situation where concessions and incentives to investors are based on caprice. Mr. Winston Murray believed that we need a regime of incentives and concessions that is governed by well set out rules and regulations with objective criteria for qualification. He believed that once that was done and an independent body be established to implement the regime, rules and regulations, thus providing for impartiality and transparency in the application, that such a system will redound to the benefit of all Guyana. Mr. Speaker, the best tribute that could be paid to our fallen friend and colleague is for us to work to bring to fruition this idea that is both relevant and urgent.

When, in this Hon. Assembly, we heard the last words from the mouth of Mr. Winston Murray, he told us and I will quote:

“Prime Minister, let us, before the end of next week, hear the details of the fund. Tell us in which account it is, how much money there is and what are procedures for accessing it and then we will believe you.”

Mr. Speaker, he believed in accountability more than anything else. He questioned all Ministers thoroughly as he sought to make all and sundry accountable for his or her stewardship. He would miss no detail and had a special skill of making his opponents comfortable even though he was placing them over the proverbial coals. This Assembly will do well to honour his memory by ensuring all and sundry in this House is accountable.

Mr. Murray believed that the basis of all actions must be facts. He believed in sincerity. Those who knew him would attest to the fact that he had special body language that tells you when he did not trust the word of someone. This was one of his frailties and inability to disguise his displeasure with insincerity, lies, deceit and incompetence. It is for this reason he regularly said that if ever he was to lead a government he would recruit based on competence and a commitment to Guyana, rather than political affiliation. He believed in a meritocracy. His belief in truth and competence is one of his legacies that we must interweave into the fabric of the Guyanese society as we seek to develop an efficient and effective social, political and economic system. Let us work assiduously to realise his dream.

Mr. Murray was an ardent proponent of John Stuart Mill’s view in his book, *On Liberty*, and I quote:

“We can never be sure that the opinion they are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it will be an evil still.”

Such evil he eschewed. He never stifled an idea. He believed in a free exchange of ideas and was a leader that enjoyed a good intellectual debate. He was a man that feared no debate. This is a noble principle that should be embraced by those who offer themselves to lead the people of Guyana, not to stifle people’s ideas. Tolerance must become the hallmark of our politics.

He brought immense skills to a meeting when he chaired it. I had the privilege and good fortune that while I served as General Secretary of the People's National Congress he was Chairman of our party. He brought to the chairmanship psychological tact, a remarkable ability to listen and to extrapolate the positive arguments of all discussants as he synthesised and made all feel they have contributed significantly. He would then give leadership to ensure the relevant decisions are made and the basis for their implementation established.

As we pay our respect to one of the best chairpersons of the dying breed, I urge the youth of Guyana to understand the importance of good chairmanship in public life and seek to develop the skills that Winston Shripal Murray so ably displayed. Good chairmanship is critical to public life. It can ensure the best ideas are accepted and implemented, and contribute to the development of society as against poor chairmanship that causes the loss of ideas and eventuate in a dislike for meetings. We need to replenish the stock of men of such calibre. I urge the Guyanese youth to warm to the task so that he can look down and say his good work on earth is ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, forgive me if I appear to be targeting the youth of Guyana. It is intentional. Those who worked closely with Mr. Murray, as he unravelled his vision for Guyana, would know that he made it clear that he intended to reinvigorate and re-energise the youths and ensure they enjoyed a very prominent place in any Government that he would have formed, and be part of the decision making process. As for himself, he made it clear that he was going to seek the presidency with the aim of organising the Government and hand it over to a new young generation that was committed to good governance and the rule of law. Death has robbed him of this special privilege.

It will be remiss of me if I do not bring to the attention of this Hon. House that the man who I have worked intensely with, during the last year and months, was a good manager and resolver of conflict. The ability to manage and resolve conflict is a *sine qua non* for the development of political parties and countries. In dealing with conflict, he ensured he accumulate the facts, understood the conflicts, the actors and their respective interests, the consequences, both negatives and positives, of the various options, and with the scalpel of a social surgeon he chose the time, place and venue to address the conflict and did it successfully. It is a necessary skill that those who aspire to leadership must emulate if they are to impact positively on the body politics in Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, on Winston Shripal Murray's approach, you could not miss the cricketing gate that is characteristic of an opening batsman. My friend would say he walked with a chip. My friend and colleague of years and I, Mr. Ronald Austin, always wondered whenever we attended a cricket match why Mr. Murray was always the first to arrive at Bourda Ground. We talked cricket with him. In his usual modesty, he never once mentioned his cricketing prowess. It was only on a recent visit to Leguan, when we were with his friends of years standing, that we learnt that he was a prolific batsman and held his own well with the cricket ball. He was a well rounded person and a shining example to our youth who must, of necessity, learn from Winston Murray that academic excellence and sport go hand in hand if properly managed.

It is in the context of the foregoing that I wish to state that we may be able to place a person in his seat, but we cannot replace him. We acknowledge that the inevitable has occurred at a time when he was steaming with potential as a president of Guyana. We bemoan the fact that his life came to an end at a time when he was uniquely placed to impact positively on ethnic relations in Guyana and was propitiously disposed to doing so. One may be tempted to ask what kind of world it is that when light is being seen on the horizon darkness is allowed to intervene, envelope us and dash our hopes and dreams. This, I say, is the real world - a world characterised by disappointment. As Winston Shripal Murray would have himself said, that is a given, that his mathematical mind would say we cannot change. What we can do is to analyse the extent of the situation and charter the way forward in which the ideas of our friend and colleague will be the centrepiece of the new and better society. We owe it to him to develop in Guyana. Our best tribute to him will be to change this society into a better society in which all take part.

It will be difficult for me not to refer to something that Mr. Trotman did say. I urge Mr. Trotman, my friend, to have no fear. We come from a stock that, historically, honours those who contributed and contributed significantly to Guyana. We do it for Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. We do it for Desmond Hoyte. We do it for Ptolemy Reid. We do it for other party leaders. Have no doubt, we will do it for Winston Shripal Murray. He deserves it and he will get it.

As I support this motion and record our shock and profound grief at the great loss to the Parliament and people of Guyana caused by the death of this patriot, I wish to pay tribute to the committed and distinguished service he rendered his family, this Parliament and the people of

Guyana as I urge the National Assembly to implement the resolved clause and convey our heartfelt sympathy to his sorrowing widow, children and relatives. As Winston Shripal Murray rests in peace, his ideas will be ever present in this National Assembly and roam this country until they become reality in a prosperous, democratic and reconciled Guyana in which ethnic group feels that it has an equal stake in the national cake.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Nadir: I rise on behalf of the United Force, my family and I, to support the motion that is proposed by the Hon. Member Mrs. Clarissa Riehl. I share a lot of the sentiments that have been expressed thus far in this presentation on the life of our late colleague, Mr. Winston Murray.

I, somehow, have had the good fortune of having to cross paths with him a little while ago. I think it was in 1988 at the **Latok** hotel - Mr. Austin may remember that – when Mr. Murray was part of Mr. Hoyte’s delegation to the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting in St. Lucia. Though the exchange of words was brief, I had noticed that he, at that particular meeting, sat very close to then President Hoyte. That was my first short impressionable experience with the late Winston Murray.

In 1992, we entered the House as elected Members, and for eighteen years I have had the opportunity to speak after Mr. Murray, especially where the budget is concerned, on those occasions. Even when it was not a budget debate, when I spoke after him, I would always start by saying, “I listened carefully to the Hon. Member, Winston Murray.” I listened carefully because what he had to say would have been sound and provided much food for thoughts, and while I might not always have agreed with his conclusions, one had to have great respect for his presentations.

3.42 p.m.

The Hon. Member Mrs. Riehl mentioned his depth of research and thoroughness of analysis and having served with him on several Special Select Committees. I also want to echo those sentiments, because while we were treated to very good presentations in the National Assembly by Mr. Murray, to me, his true strength, his abilities and capabilities, we saw in the Special Select Committees, because there was the opportunity to see a person who was dedicated to the

task at hand. There was not a Special Select Committee that Mr. Winston Murray would not show up, thoroughly prepared, be it, and in my case, the Special Select Committee on the Consumer Affairs Bill, the Special Select Committee on the Competition and Fair Trading Bill, the Special Select Committee on the Value Added Tax. Mrs. Reihl mentioned the Parliamentary Committee on the Manuals. Mr. Speaker, you and I have seen this in the Parliamentary Management Committee when we met. So, I can attest to the thoroughness and the seriousness with which he undertook his task of serving the people of Guyana. For that, he earned great respect from me.

I remember, and I just mentioned to his wife when I came in, I first saw the proudness of being a grandfather by Mr. Murray. His young granddaughter and my little daughter danced, or learnt to dance, at the Indian Cultural Centre. In the early 90s I had the opportunity to exchange social pleasantries with Mr. Murray as we waited for, in that case, his granddaughter and, in my case, my daughter to emerge from dancing lessons. A proud grandfather! You saw a loving person in Mr. Winston Murray.

I am really honoured today to have to say these few words in his honour, and on behalf of those I represent and my family, to his grieving relatives, our sincerest condolences.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

Mr. Franklin: I rise on behalf of the Guyana Action Party, to support this motion in its entirety. To the family of Mr. Winston Murray I would like to, on my own behalf and on the behalf of my party, express sincerest sympathy and condolences.

When I first visited Mr. Murray at the hospital, the day after he fell ill, lots of thoughts ran through my mind. One being that life is so fragile, and that powerful man, that little giant who graced the National Assembly the evening before, giving a very impassioned delivery, laid stricken a mere few hours after. That prompted me to think that out of this situation we have to, as people who are working in the interest of our people, do everything we can, and as I said at the funeral service, as fast as we can, and as best as we can, in the shortest possible time, because we know not when the hour comes.

Mr. Murray was very, very humble, even for dilettantes, like me, who just came into the National Assembly, not knowing procedures. He was the person that you felt you could have approached without any kind of apprehension. The schoolteacher in him made his explanations very clear and you never felt a sense that he was ever speaking down to you. Some people do not have that ability, no matter how bright they are. His deliberation was always clear, very concise and deliberate. In the Parliamentary Management Committee, as some others have said, the Hon. Manzoor Nadir alluded to that just a short while ago, Mr. Murray was the gentleman who sought compromise, but held his position. You hold your position, you explain why you have your position, but would always be ready to find a way forward. He was a forward thinking individual and not dogmatic in anyway.

As we have heard, he was a teacher, an economist, lawyer and politician, but to me, most of all, Mr. Murray was a decent human being. That quality, sometimes, we do not ascribe enough importance to it, because being a decent human being will certainly make you an excellent politician. It will curb you as a lawyer (sorry lawyer friends), you would understand and have compassion for the ordinary persons as it relates to the economy, and that, I think, was and would always be one of his most positive attributes - the humility and that humbleness. That humbleness is what I remember most in him.

We have had a number of discussions, especially in the last six months, and Mr. Murray was clearly the type of person who one could imagine featuring prominently in a government of national unity; one of the things he spoke about, something he looked forward to sometime down the road. That is what I remember him for. Sadly, he will not be in person featuring in such an eventuality, but his spirit will certainly be with all who believe that this is the salvation for Guyana.

Of course, he was not satisfied just to be a teacher; he went on to study law. I think that is a hallmark of a progressive and an ambitious individual. To better oneself is something that we all should try to do. I have no idea why he would want to study law; some people posited that it may have been to enhance his ability to earn. Mr. Murray has never discussed that with me and I do not know anyone with whom he had discussed that with, but I am sure he did what he had to do because he thought it would improve him to better deliver the service to the people whom he represented. Sometimes we forget that excellence is something that we should constantly seek,

and not settle for the mediocrity that we often see being displayed for something, do say great people strive to perfect themselves in as many areas as possible. That is the mark of a forward looking individual who is interested in educating himself. I think if he had more time he would have tried to improve himself in some other area, and that could have been commendable.

I would like to say, on behalf of the Guyana Action Party, to place on record, our salutation to this little giant, even amidst this sadness being experienced by his family, colleagues and friends. Always approachable, humble, friendly, but with equal passion for the things he knew he could change to attain a better Guyana, a better Parliament and a better party. Mr. Murray reminds us all that we must do what we can when we have the life to do it and not put it off for some other time. He did not take it easy and was never laid back. Most of us would do well to emulate him in his quest to make a real difference in this country, in the lives of the people of Guyana whom he definitely had loved.

On behalf of the Guyana Action Party and on my own behalf, I would to throw my full support and the party's full support behind this motion. For the family - his wife, children, grandchildren and colleagues - our deepest sympathy, but the little giant will remain a giant in our memories.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mrs. Lawrence: As we come to the conclusion of this motion before this Hon. House, the words of R.C.G Potter come to mind.

"Green land of Guyana, our heroes of yore,
Both bondsmen and free, laid their bones on your shore.
This soil so they hallowed, and from them are we,
All sons of one mother, Guyana the free.

Great land of Guyana, diverse though our strains,
We are born of sacrifice, heirs of their pains.
And ours is the glory their eyes did not see,
One land of six peoples, united and free."

Mr. Winston Murray has been over the past two weeks, and today, described in various ways. Many saluted him as a teacher, diplomat, economist, parliamentarian, member of the People's

National Congress/Reform, public and political servant, attorney-at-law, president Guyana never had, father, companion and confidant. But, Sir, to the common man he was their former party chairman and their comrade. For me, Sir, your humble servant, I will remember Mr. Murray not for the many positions he held, but for the quiet and strong friendship we shared, for the many common positions we shared on good governance, accountability, competence and integrity in the financial management of the country's affairs. Adherence to the Constitution of Guyana, the financial regulations, stores regulations and Tender Board process, to name a few.

His commitment to these pillars on which our country's financial institutions stand came across strongly, sometimes in frustration, at the blatant disregard for rules and regulations, procedures and lack, thereof, of competence and commitment. All this was heard in his questions and comments in this National Assembly and more so in the Public Accounts Committee - a Committee which I now chair, having sat as a member and trainee under his chairmanship, I consider a privilege.

His advice and many conversations will surely be missed by us all. Like others, I was truly impressed with his capacity for hard work, his incisive mind and his propensity for research. In my estimation he was a brilliant son of Guyana's soil.

The little giant in Mr. Murray exuded a passion - a passion for the poor in our society, the fatherless, motherless, young and old, rich and poor, businessperson and student that was felt inside and out of this Hon. House. I remember in 2005, when the Value Added Tax Bill was placed on the Order Paper, Mr. Murray expressed his feelings which were deep at every meeting of our party. He felt that he must do something; he must do everything possible within his power and that of the party to ensure that our people were protected from a Value Added Tax regime, which he felt would make them poorer for the wanting. He spoke with passion on the party's position for the reduction of the sixteen per cent imposed VAT. He marched, spoke in this National Assembly and wrote several articles on this flesh eating gruesome sixteen per cent VAT, requesting, begging and demanding a reduction to eight per cent or ten per cent.

His passion for open tendering by the Ministry of Health, the deposit of moneys from the Guyana Lotto Company and the proceeds of sale of public assets into the Consolidated Fund, and the Ministerial Control Committees is written into the *Hansard* of this Assembly.

His fight is o'er now. His battle, here, in this National Assembly he has won. Now it is our turn.

Mr. Winston Murray must also be remembered for his humility, his passion, his compassion, his concern for people, his unfailing good manners and his dignity and grace. Academic excellence and material endowments, though admirable, do not reflect the true character of men. For it is the way they respond to and treat their fellow men that is the hallmark of true character.

Mr. Murray, Cde. Murray, former Chairman, was a member of the People's National Congress/Reform. There he stood and there he stayed, never giving up on his party. He served his comrades and they served him. Let us not get confused. Mr. Winston Murray was a PNC man. He walked our halls, gave service, advice, and spoke to comrades with respect and dignity. Though hurt by some, as, many of us sometimes are in our parties, his strength and courage are an example to all of us, regardless of which party we belong, and more so to the members and comrades of the People's National Congress/Reform. That, in adversity, you must find strength, you must set the standards and ideas a little higher, to motivate not only yourself, but also your fellow comrades. Motivate he did, Sir. To all of us it was a privilege to serve with him in this National Assembly.

For today, the late Hon. Winston Murray in the departure lounge would have called on Guyanese at home and abroad to arise, and in Ms. Valerie Rodway words he would have said to us:

“Arise! Guyana's sons, Arise!
May you steeled by action wise,
Guard well our sacred heritage
That it may strive from age to age.
Guyana, blessed Guyana,
Be proud of your glorious destiny.”

For proud he was of Guyana.

So this afternoon I, therefore, join with the mover of this motion, the Hon. Member Mrs. Clarissa Riehl, to request that this National Assembly directs an expression of heartfelt sympathy to the sorrowing widow, children and relatives of our humble, belated servant, teacher and friend, Mr. Winston Shirpaul Murray.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mrs. Riehl (relying): I wish to thank all of the Hon. Members of this House who spoke to this motion. It is true that Mr. Murray, though small in stature, has left a huge pair of shoes that we cannot fill, at least not in the foreseeable future. Mr. Murray had many gifts. He was blessed with intellect and capacity. He gave long service to this country and unstinting service to the party he supported. As Mr. Rohee said earlier, on many occasions he would accept correction, and I have seen him, myself, even whilst on his feet, he would accept correction when it is proffered and would apologise for his prior mistaken views, all in the same breath.

He was gifted, as I said, with many talents and we were blessed to have him in this Assembly and to have known him with all the talents he had, which he gave unstintingly to all who sought his advice. His ability to resolve conflicts, though he was not a trained mediator... I am told that he had this remarkable ability to bring people together and to ease tension. The best tribute we can pay to him is to ensure that his views on Guyana - his views where the youths are concerned in Guyana and his views for peace and race relations - be continued in his name in this country. He was born and bred in an inter-racial community and his life itself bespoke of the Ointer-racial nature of his being.

We know in this National Assembly that we would miss him and he is irreplaceable, but we need to go on, we must go on. All the tributes that were paid to him this afternoon are acknowledged by each and every one of us in this House. As I said, the best legacy that we can give to Mr. Murray is to carry out some of those things that he stood for: honesty and integrity. We should seek, in this society, to bring together and to compromise, and to live together in peace, and share the cake of our resources in a more equitable manner.

With these few words, I wish to commend to this Hon. House and to ask that the National Assembly direct our expression of heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Murray, to his children and other relatives who are here with us this afternoon.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to invite Mrs. Murray to receive a copy of Resolution No. 142 which has been passed today in the National Assembly.

Mrs. Murray received a copy of Resolution No. 142. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is time for the suspension. I would like that we suspend for the usual period.

Sitting suspended 4.12 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 4.42 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

LOCAL AUTHORITIES (ELECTIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2010 – BILL NO. 21/2010

A Bill intituled:

AN ACT to amend the Local Authorities (Elections) Act to provide for the postponement of elections of councillors of local democratic organs.

[Minister of Local Government and Regional Development]

Mr. Lall: I wish to beg that the Bill standing in my name be read a second time and, in doing so, I wish to state that, first of all, I would not take up much of the House's time in presenting this Bill. That, I believe, given the exigency of the situation, we would not have any problem in passing this amendment to the Local Authorities Elections Act. I think that we have gone through this exercise on many occasions, in the past, during my tenure as Minister, and other Ministers, because of various reasons. We are coming on, as I was made to understand, to general and regional elections next year and that is another reason why we have to postpone these elections for another time.

I wish to restate our position, however, that in spite of the fact that we have had to, for various reasons as I said, postpone Local Government Elections, I believe the entire House would like to see these elections held and would to see these elections held as soon as possible, because we all are aware of the implications of not having the Local Government Elections for a number of years - as a matter of fact, for a decade and a half. I, as Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, can tell the House, first-hand, that it is difficult to keep the system going as it is. As it is known we have had to resort to the law to bringing civil servants to be part of the Local Government system where that is advisable, and to create Interim Management Committees (IMCs), not only at the National Democratic Council (NDC) level, but also in the case of Linden where that Town Council is concerned.

In many cases where the lists have not been exhausted there are comrades from the various political parties who are still running the system, but they are tired – this is not a job for which they are paid, it is voluntary – and as a result they do attract the wrath of their various communities because they are not as active as they should be. So there is a definite need for renewal at the level of various the communities across the country.

I do not want to go in to the reasons why these elections have been postponed for a number of years. I want to put on record, however, that in the recent past we have made some progress in the sense that the Local Government Task Force. Having laboured for about eight years, I think, and brought forth nothing much, we have had to bring that process to a halt and come to the National Assembly. At the level of the National Assembly, we decided to send the pieces of legislations which were drafted to a Special Select Committee. There also I must say that, in spite of our disagreements, we have had some success in the sense that we have brought a few pieces of legislations to this House and they have already passed and assented to by His Excellency.

I was made to understand however, by my colleagues, that there has been a forum, an Extras Parliamentary Forum, where these matters have been discussed further and some concerns were raised as to some of the Bills which were passed and some Bills which are before the Special Select Committee. I was further made to understand that the administration has graciously acceded to their request for some of these concerns to be placed on the table for further discussions, including concerns related to the Bills which were passed by the House and assented

to by the President. I do not think that I will be wrong if I were to say that as of today those concerns have not yet been put in writing to the agreed upon address. I may be wrong, but I think that is the situation as it is. But I believe that the various parties, especially the opposition political parties, are very much engrossed in other matters of national interest and that perhaps must have delayed their consideration of this matter.

Hopefully, if, in fact, we are going to have national and regional elections in 2011, we have some time within which we can deliberate on those matters including the concerns that the Opposition has on the Bills which have already been passed and try as much as possible for us to have the next Local Government Elections under reform situation, or on the reform legislation at least, especially where the elections for councillors are concerned. I think we have passed that Bill. I am not quite clear if that also is a matter of concern to the Opposition, but we will await its written presentation on these matters. I think that we all agreed and we are still committed to have Local Government Elections under a new electoral system and under reform condition. [**A Hon. Member:** When?] Mr. Speaker, I think today is a very solemn day and I would not want to break the trend - the post lunch or post tea session - so I will urge my colleagues, from the other side of the House, to let us keep it there, that way. Despite of that fact that this might be controversial to an extent, I think we can still be discrete in dealing with this matter, given the day as it is. I think Mrs. Riehl, as the presenter of the motion, will agree with me.

Briefly, I want to say that the House is called upon, once again, for various reasons, to postpone the Local Government Elections. I want to repeat, on behalf not only this side of the House but also on the entire House, that this is something very unfortunate. It is not something that we wish for but the exigency of the situation calls for it. I call upon all the Members of the House to let us agree with this and work towards the process of having Local Government Elections early as possible under reform conditions.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. B. Williams: We are here, again, on this annual pilgrimage, seeking to postpone elections. Now we could say the same thing every year but, I think, I should begin by referring to your admonition to this Hon. House in 2007 in the *Hansard* of Friday 14th of December...

Mr. Speaker: Whose observation?

Mr. B. Williams: Yours Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Mine?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I am not a Member.

Mr. B. Williams: It is on page 28, Sir,

Mr. Speaker: Do not embarrass me, Mr. Williams.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, I would never attempt to do that. The Honour Speaker said:

“Hon. Members, why we do not postpone the debate for an hour and bring the tape recording of this similar debate last year and just play it and then have a vote, because the same thing we are saying every year?”

I have been saying virtually the same thing every year when I spoke. So I was happy when you, Mr. Speaker, told the Hon. Member, Mr. Scott, because he spoke that day. It was a welcome relief for me.

Let me see if I can stick within your *imprimatur*. In the past, it was acceptable to postpone Local Government Elections for the following reasons: One, to implement the constitutional reforms to the Local Government system prior to the holding of these elections - the Hon. Minister has said that this Government is still committed to that – and secondly, the production of a clean voter’s list prior to the holding of Local Government Elections.

These constitutional reforms, I had addressed them in the *Hansard* of the 29th of December, 2008, as I said, I am trying to keep it down low, and I will like to refer to this Hon. House to pages 50 and 51 of that which speak to the reforms which were to give greater autonomy to Local Government organs, that is, more or less, not to have the Minister riding roughshod over them as it happens presently; two, to ensure that there were objective criteria for the allocation of resources from Central Government to Local Government organs; three, to ensure that there was a new electoral system and the question of broadening the revenue base in terms of garnering

resources for Local Government organs, and fourth, most importantly, the establishment of the Local Government Commission. We have done all these things before.

As time went by it became unacceptable to postpone Local Government Elections not because of the prior reasons just stated, but because of the dilatoriness and the dithering on the part of the representatives of the Government. This, they did, by protracting the works of the Joint Task Force on Local Government and then purported to terminate it after eight years, failing to indicate that half of those years they sat out of that Task Force. Then, not only purported to terminate it, but unilaterally and arbitrarily the Minister Collymore, at the time, as he then was, purported to give those jurisdiction to Cabinet to complete the reforms. Then Cabinet, through his Excellency the President, gives jurisdiction to the National Assembly to complete it and it established the Special Select Committee. But even in that Special Select Committee, Honour Speaker, roadblocks were erected by the Government representatives forcing a withdrawal of the PNCR representatives from that Special Select Committee. So where are we now? I will give the acceptable ones. These are the unacceptable ones.

What we have is that on the present Order Paper there are three Bills which were supposed to have gone as a package and come to this House as a package languishing on it - the Local Government (Amendment) Bill, the Municipal and District Council (Amendment) Bill and, of course, the Fiscal Transfer Bill. So the current position is that we are no closer to have the Local Government Elections once we are saying there must be a precondition of the reforms to be implemented. What we have also, too, is the looming elections – national, general and regional elections due next year, and which must be held next year notwithstanding the scepticism indicated just now by the Hon. Minister. But the principle is when the national elections and the Local Government Elections are in conflict the latter yields and the national elections take precedence. In other words, it is more or less a *fait accompli*, because 2011 the year is the next national and regional elections are due that the PNC would appear to be unreasonable to be insisted at this time that Local Government Elections be held, but that notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker. Of course, when we win the elections next year that would not be an issue, and if for any reason... [Ms. Teixeira: Because you are the presidential candidate] That is something that you are scared of bad. If for any reason that there is a postponement of elections then we will continue to insist that every effort be made to implement the Local Government reforms before

the Local Government Elections is held. So in the light of the acknowledged fact that this is a *fait accompli* I would say that the People's National Congress Reform really is constrained to support the proposed amendment.

Towards the postponement, just two other observations though. I see there is, still being brought in this Bill, the election for Mayor and Deputy Mayor and the Minister could get involve in that process. I do not know if the Minister could indicate to this Hon. House how many such elections he would be able to get using this same provision? I am looking for the answer from him in his reply.

So we will have to accede to the postponement but, as I said, I hope the Government takes into account the observation that I have made.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Ali: We must admitted that the Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams tried with very little success to dance his way out of a situation, because his own ability to win support for his presidential bid can be questioned because he was part of this process, from the inception, that stymied the Government, that put a lot of blocks, and stumbling blocks, in front of the Government in getting this Local Government Elections off.

As we all know in this House this administration is committed to proper governance, ensuring that Government mechanisms are adhered to. We must also admit that history will show that we are the party, and the Government, which reintroduced Local Government Elections and we always believe that we should empower our leaders at all levels of Government. That is why I must agree with Minister Lall that the Local Government Election is a critical component of empowering our leaders at the various levels of Government and we stand committed to ensure that Local Government Elections are held as early and quickly as possible. Notwithstanding the fact that was recognised by the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams that we are faced with a national elections in 2011 and that must be placed in the equation as was rightfully pointed out that if the Local Government Elections and the national and regional elections fall in the same year, the national and regional elections would take precedence. So that is an important factor in the equation that we must keep with us.

But it is not fair to say that the Government stalled the process. For a matter of fact, having gone through all that Mr. Williams spoke of, the matter came to the National Assembly and was placed before a Special Select Committee. When that matter was placed before that Special Select Committee, the Opposition, the PNC and the AFC, who always cried in their argument that they wanted to be represented, walked out of the work of the Committee. They walked away from the work of the Committee, and, of course, the AFC joined in that process. So, we have to represent the fact correctly.

The other issue is the whole issue of the five Bills coming back to the House simultaneously. We have to examine whether that is a reasonable position and if we are all committed towards having the Local Government Elections in a timely manner, in an efficient manner, then we have to really examine whether the position of having the five Bills coming to the House simultaneously is in the best position in the interest of time and efficiency.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would not want to add much more but I would like to say that the responsibility of Local Government Elections now rests squarely in the hands of all of us here in this National Assembly. It does not reside in the hands of the Government; it resides in the hands of all of us here in the National Assembly, because the Special Select Committee has been put in place by this National Assembly. So I would like to urge the Members of that Special Select Committee, especially those on the Opposition, to be committed to the process and to ensure that they work with us in the Government in having this Local Government Elections be ready in due time.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Patterson: Yes, the postponement of the Local Government Elections is almost akin to the budget debate. We know for sure that those two debates would come up annually. But I would not detain this House for much longer. However, it is just a few points I want to place on the record.

Unlike the comments of the previous speaker, we, in the AFC, place the delay of hosting the Local Government Elections squarely on the doorsteps of the Government. Last year, under the pretext of the urgency, it rushed two Bills to the National Assembly claiming that the Guyana

Elections Commission (GECOM) required them to continue its work and the Bills were assented to and there they languished.

I heard the Hon. Minister mentioned that there were some success in the Special Select Committee, and I am a Member of that Special Select Committee, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to tell this House that Special Select Committee have not met...The last time that Special Select Committee met was on the 24th of November, 2009 – a whole year. No effort has been made to move the reform process further. Now we are hearing that there is an Extra Parliamentary Forum. They spent eight years in the Task Force that came to nought. A Special Select Committee was set up, eighteen months, nothing. Now we are on to the Extra Parliamentary Forum. Maybe when the Minister gets up he will tell us if there is a timetable to the Extra Parliamentary Forum - who are the Members of this Extra Parliamentary Forum? Obviously, I am speaking for myself and GAP/ROAR. This is the first time we are hearing of the Extra Parliamentary Forum. [**Mr Ramjattan:** Who are Brazilians ...?] Oh, Brazilians are in the Forum. I am now enlightened to the membership of this Forum.

The Minister said that we are all aware of the implications of not having an election for a number of years. Very pitifully he is saying the difficulty he has in installing IMCs and those things like that. However, the solution is very simple: we have agreed to reforms. Sit in the Special Select Committee meaningfully, go over the reforms, discuss them, agree to them and we can proceed. [**Mr. Neendkumar:** You do not come to meeting. You are always late.] Did somebody belch?

I notice that the previous speaker said that elections will be brought in a timely manner. Fifteen years is a timely manner to bring Local Government Elections. Sixteen years, I have been corrected. Of course, as we know, the previous speaker said that next year being the year with the national and regional elections it should be continuing. I would just like to briefly, once again, state the Alliance For Change's position, in that, we will participate in any process that would move the holding of Local Government Elections because we consider the non-holding of Local Government Elections to be unconstitutional. We are committed to attending all the Parliamentary Special Select Committees - meaning we were at the Parliamentary Special Select Committees meeting and even the Extra Parliamentary Forum. Send us an agenda and we will attend the Extra Parliamentary Forum, wherever the Minister keeps it, any part of Georgetown - Charlestown, Lazytown. We will be attending.

So Mr. Speaker, with those few words I will take my seat until next year when we would have started again on this same merry-go-around – same time next year.

Mr. Franklin: Mr. Speaker, I decline to take part in this charade. Thank you very much.

Mr. Lall (replying): I am sorry I have created a mystery surrounded this Extra Parliamentary Forum. In fact, it was at the meeting between His Excellency the President and Mr. Corbin, the Leader of the Opposition. So there is no mystery here. Mr. Patterson, I do not believe is at that level to be included in that forum.

I agreed with the Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams said. We did these things before. We blamed each other for not holding the elections. I think that would not make headlines tomorrow so we will not deal with that matter.

I want to deal with the issue of the presidential candidacy of which Mr. Basil Williams spoke. I have been listening very keenly to the various speakers before we took the break and I was made to understand, or I got this feeling, that the expectation of the Opposition was laid to rest a few days ago, as far as the presidency is concerned. So I do not know what Mr. Basil Williams is talking about that when the Opposition takes over the presidency next year... I do not know who is going to propel it there, unless Mr. Basil Williams believes that he will be able to do that. Anyhow, I want to thank the Hon. Mr. Williams for his support on behalf of the Opposition, on behalf of all the opposition parties, including him, for us to postpone the next election. Because of the situation, I need not to reiterate them.

Mr. Williams ask me to say a few words on clause 3 – the election of Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen. I do not know exactly how many took the opportunity to hold those elections. I, on my own as Minister, did not instruct anyone of them to hold the elections.

6.12 p.m.

What happened however, during the course of the year - since the law has been amended - most, if not all of the Councils, NDCs and Municipalities met and discussed this matter and decided not to hold elections and said that they are in favour of the Officers remaining. So the law allows for that. There were a few elections that saw some changes. That is the situation. I don't have the

numbers with me at the moment. But as Minister I received the minutes of all the meetings of the 6 municipalities and the 65 councils. They all indicated that they don't need to have elections because they were comfortable with the Officers that were there previously.

So Mr. Speaker, with those few words I once again wish to thank all those who spoke and supported the amendment for the postponement of the elections. I ask that the Bill be read a second time.

Bill read a second time

Assembly in Committee

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed

Bill reported without amendments read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that the House stands adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly at 6.15 p.m.