

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

115TH Sitting

Friday, 19TH February, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.15 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2010 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2010.

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2010 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2010-02-08;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2010, of a total sum of one hundred and twenty-five billion, five and sixty-eight million, five hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars (\$125,568,573,000), excluding seventeen billion, two hundred and seven million, and twenty-six thousand dollars (\$17,207,026,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under mentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Carberry: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my contribution to the debate of the 2010 National Budget. But before I do so, please allow me to welcome our two recently sworn in MPs: Mr. Lloyd J. Pereira and Mrs. Dawn Hastings. They have entered this National Assembly in the most intense and testing period in our annual calendar. I hope that they are not daunted by this exposure. I wish them both all the best and a productive sojourn in this National Assembly.

Also allow me to congratulate the Hon. Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh for his timely contribution to the growth of the Guyana population. I am sure that the smile he has been wearing throughout the debate is as a result of his proud fatherhood.

It is apposite, having read this Budget and enduring the lame excuses and bravado of the contributions from the Government benches, for me to resort to an appropriate Guyanese proverb: “full belly man nah know wha hungry belly man ah suffa.”

This 2010 Budget is better themed: *Illusions of the Smoke and Mirror type and Improvisations*. However, it is possible that the intention is that we should emphasise the “con” in consolidate and hope that the efforts, which we in the Opposition have been making to solicit the vision of the P.P.P./C. Administration, will eventually succeed in transforming their thought processes. We know that “they head hard.” So even if we succeed with the transformation, the challenge would be: How do we sustain that transformation?

My colleague, the Hon. Mr. Winston Murray, in his accustomed erudite and scholarly analysis of the Budget stated:

“The P.N.C.R.-1G.’s encapsulating observation would be the signal failure of the Government to cast this Budget and indeed previous Budgets within a clear overarching strategy with clearly identifiable medium and long term objectives. For example, what are the targets for job creation over the next five years and what of that number will be created in 2010? What are the projected levels of investment over the same period and in what sectors? What if any tax reforms are to be implemented to create a more competitive and welcoming business environment for investors? What in the medium term is the rate of economic growth that we are striving for if Guyana is to attain its true, full potential and prosperity is to be realised?”

The Opposition has been conducting a seminar for the benefit of the Government benches. Following the Hon. Winston Murray, we have heard about the happenings in Region 1 from the Hon. Mr. Desmond Fernandes; in Region 10, from the Hon. Ms. Vanessa Kissoon; in Region 6, from the Hon. Dr. John Austin; from Region 4, the Hon. Mr. Ernest Elliot who dealt with Local Government and Regional Development; and Region 7, the Hon. Mrs. Judith David-Blair whose recollections caused excitement on the Government benches as she dealt with the plight of the small scale gold miners. Today, we will complete with Region 3, by the Hon. Mervyn Williams who will cover the Agriculture Sector, and Region 5 by the Hon. Jennifer Wade who will cover the Rice Sector.

The Hon. Ms. Africo Selman dealt with Youth and Sports; Dr. George Norton has painted the dismal picture of the state of the Health Sector, while the Hon. Mr. Keith Scott conducted an unfavourable visit to the Housing and Water Sectors. The Hon. Ms. Amna Ally pointed out the failures and inadequacies of the National Education System. The Hon. Mr. Basil Williams presented the worrisome and deteriorated developments in Industrial Relations, particularly the infringements of the principles and practices of collective bargaining, as well as the evident reluctance of the Minister of Labour to protect the rights and welfare of the Guyanese workers at the Bauxite Corporation of Guyana Inc. (B.C.G.I.) - popularly referred to as RUSAL. The Hon. Mr. Dave Danny drew attention to the neglect of consumer protection and challenged some of the claims for the Tourism Sector. Evidently, every Guyanese who passes through the Timehri Airport is a tourist.

The Hon. Mrs. Deborah Backer was kind enough to correct some memory lapses which were jogged by the revelations from the Simmel’s trial and the joint Opposition Dossier. The Hon. Mr. Aubrey Norton dealt forensically with the fundamental principles of Foreign Policy and challenged the logic of the arguments for the redundant Government fibre optic cable and the flawed premises for a state, or is it a ‘stage’ managed Information and Communication Technology (I.C.T.) programme? The Hon. Ms.

Cheryl Sampson, substituting for the Hon. Ms. Volda Lawrence, exposed the shortcomings in the area of Human Services and Social Security.

All of the presentations, from the Opposition benches, have exposed the emptiness and lack of imagination portrayed by this Budget. Permit me to continue the seminar in the hope that the Government benches have ears to hear and eyes to see.

I have pointed out on previous occasions that it is in the forests of Guyana we find the richness of our considerable natural resources' endowment - the national natural resources patrimony of all of the Guyanese people. It is within these forests that we find our precious and non-precious minerals, our hydro power resources, our wild life resources, the timber and non-timber resources, recreational spaces and the room for future population growth and habitation. Therefore, any plans for the future development of Guyana must take full and sensitive cognisance of this reality.

It is the above reality which has to inform any commitment for the preservation of our forests. It is because of this that in the negotiations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and, as reflected in Agenda 21, that rainforest rich countries insisted on the terminology of the sustainable utilisation of forest resources, and placed emphasis on conservation rather than the preservation of these resources.

Is it possible to undertake the mining of our minerals' endowment or the extraction of commercially marketable timber resources or the construction of hydropower facilities or the expansion of human habitation without disturbing the forests?

Let us all be very clear about the Government's conversion on the road to attracting resources from the yet to be established REDD+ Financial Mechanisms to the so-called Low Carbon Development Strategy.

I have noted the sensitivity on the Government benches to any reference to His Excellency the President. Therefore, I am seeking your permission to quote from the forward of the second draft of the document entitled: *A Low Carbon Development Strategy- Transforming Guyana's Economy While Combating Climate Change*. And if you do not object Sir, I will quote from that document. In paragraph 4, on page 5 of the document, the President declares:

“The people of Guyana are willing to act as a country where almost 80% of our territory is rainforest. We are working to break the false debate which suggests that the nation must choose between national development and combating climate change. This draft strategy sets out how we are creating a replicable working example of what it takes to forge a low carbon climate resistant

economy. It also sets out the conditions under which we might be prepared to place our entire forest under long term protection through establishing a voluntary cap on our forest based emissions.”

It is in this context that we must interpret the following statement in paragraph 6, on page 7 of the executive summary in the same document:

“If a properly designed and a resourced Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) Mechanism is agreed by the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Guyana will be able to decide whether to place its forests under long term protection by establishing a voluntary cap on forest based greenhouse gas based emissions.”

What the Government has been marketing to the Guyanese public and the world, under the cloak of a Low Carbon Development Strategy, is really an offer to make available, for rental by the major emitters of carbon, that is the “Polluter Pays Principle”, into the global atmosphere, is the biomass stock in the Guyana forest as a carbon sink. That is what it is.

“This would be the contribution of Guyana to the global effort to mitigate the adverse impact of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide or monoxide which are major contributors to global warming and the consequential climate change.”

It is clear that the Government of Guyana must determine, by verifiable methodology, the amount of absorbing biomass which will be available for rental. It is my understanding that firm estimates of the base level of deforestation will not be available before October 2010. It is because of this that, in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), it is stated:

“As a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (U.N.F.C.C.C.) compliance grade capability for monitoring, reporting and verifying emissions is established in Guyana, these results will be measured objectively in accordance with the rules and policies of the U.N.F.C.C.C. Until these rules and policies are in place, attainment of initial REDD standards will enable financial support. The level of financial support will be based on interim arrangements to estimate and verify results - limited greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and degradation.”

I want to make it clear, for the benefit of the professional and congenial peddlers of distortion, that the People’s National Congress Reform is fully supportive of the principle that the people of Guyana should be compensated for the provision of the benefits to the world of this service. Unfortunately, there is as yet no discernable or clearly articulated publicly available programme, by the Administration, to show how

we will sustainably lower carbon emissions in Guyana. The focus is still on the very commendable approach for lowering the impact, through mitigation, of global carbon emissions. We, in the P.N.C.R.-1G., would like to see a publicly articulated Low Carbon Development Strategy for Guyana. The Administration has not so far articulated and presented the people of Guyana with a National Low Carbon Development Strategy which will enable us to understand their vision for the future development of Guyana along a path which is considered to be low carbon.

In paragraph one of the Executive Summary on page 7, the second draft, it is stated:-

“As this first generation of reforms and infrastructural development nears completion, the Government is embarking on a new wave of reform coupled with further expansion of the country’s strategic economic infrastructure. These aim to further stimulate investment, economic growth and job creation, as well as to improve security in social services, protect vulnerable sections of society, and deal with increased climate change induced flooding. Harnessing the nation’s assets to continue to develop the economy and fund these and other social and economic needs must be the Government’s top priority.”

Is this the articulation of the vision for the National Low Carbon Development Strategy? My colleagues and I, on this side of the Assembly, would like to have answers to the “how” and “when” questions.

My colleague, the Hon. Mr. Winston Murray, has already drawn attention to the absence of clear answers. It is possible that those on the Government benches are so accustomed to improvisations that they are convinced that that is their development strategy. This is all the smoke and mirrors of the illusionists, bolstered by glib political marketing, to convince the world that the Administration has a Low Carbon Development Strategy. Where is it?

The Bauxite Industry: I now turn my attention to the grievous bodily harm inflicted on the Bauxite industry in Guyana by the deeply flawed policies by the P.P.P./C. Administration.

The nationally owned bauxite industry in Guyana carried the responsibility for the welfare of the communities in which they operated, by the provision of potable water and other utilities, health and other community services as well as the granting of scholarships, and the operation of trade schools. These contributions, for the welfare of the communities, were transferred to the state in preparation for the privatisation of the bauxite operations in Berbice and at Linden, both located in Region 10.

Apart from that, the reality was that the state-owned companies control the Bauxite reserves in the areas in which they operated. But when you move from a state-owned model to a privately owned model, you

have to change the arrangements. There is no country in the world, including the Australians and the others who are more private sector than anybody else, where any single company will be granted control of all of the reserves in a particular area. Those resources represent the national patrimony and they represent an inducement to encourage investment. Therefore, for you to vest all of those resources in a single company, especially a company that has not been delivering on its promises, it means that what you are doing is stultifying the development of the industry and that is precisely what has happened both at Berbice and Linden. There is absolutely no justification for the Government to grant to RUSAL or BOSAI all of the reserves in those areas.

Let me explain something to those of you who may not understand the bauxite industry. The operations of Berbice have always traditionally been the producer and supplier of standard metallurgical and chemical grade bauxite. The fact is that the mineralogy of our bauxite has been an attractive proposition and has allowed Guyana to earn a premium, even in a world where prices are depressed. That premium is based on the reality that the cost of processing this bauxite is such that it reduces your overall cost of producing alumina. That is really the attraction. In the case of Linden, because of the depth at which the bauxite occurs, and because of the mineralogy of that bauxite, the emphasis has been on the production of the refractory grade bauxite. However, refractory grade bauxite is not mass market bauxite. It is bauxite that is aimed at certain niches in the refractories industries in the world and that is the reality.

Let me tell you what has happened. With the advent of RUSAL; like any other international company, RUSAL has made a number of promises: to increase bauxite production; to construct a conveyer bridge across the Berice River to transfer mined bauxite from the East Bank to the drying plant on the West Bank; to build an aluminium refinery; an aluminium smelter; and to develop hydropower. None of these things have happened since RUSAL took over. That is, from 2006 to now. And what has happened, as a reward for them not delivering on their promises, they have been granted more reserves. That is really what is happening.

One of the interesting things is the lack of transparency. I do not know whether this House has ever been informed about the price that has been paid for the Berbice resources; when it has been paid; and so on. I believe the same applies for the Linden resources. There has been no submission to this National Assembly telling us what has happened to our natural resources. This is the patrimony of the people of Guyana. It does not belong to a single party. But there have been no submission to this National Assembly.

If you look at the profile of RUSAL in every arena that they are operating in, they have problems and those problems are created because of the lack of fulfilment of their promises. So what is the justification

for this Government sounding so optimistic that RUSAL would be the saviour of the bauxite industry? RUSAL, as an international company, is interested in transferring this bauxite at the least cost in its operations. RUSAL knows that the Guyana bauxite is very useful for the plants in the Soviet Union and otherwise because of the nature of this bauxite. RUSAL has absolutely no interest in increasing the price of that bauxite.

In the case of BOSAI, what we have is a situation where they have been granted an international monopoly on refractory grade bauxite. BOSAI was our major competitor and now they have, in fact, been granted an international monopoly. The sad thing about that is that not only... **[Mr. Neendkumar: It is not refractory grade.]** Boy, if you stop braying I will help you. Listen to what I am saying.

The sad thing is that BOSAI is a refractories company and the Government has allowed the transfer of one of the largest trihydrate bauxite deposits, in Block 37, to be granted to this company. That block is capable of generating the production of one million tonnes per annum for forty years of alumina. BOSAI has never been an aluminium or alumina company. So what is the justification for BOSAI being in control of those resources? I do not know and I hope that the Government can explain that.

The result of all of this is that BOSAI is now using its muscle to beef up prices in the world. But the prices that they are charging are such that what they have done is impacted on the sale of bauxite from Linden and, therefore, the Linden operations are in a state of disorientation and low production. Currently, there is no serious mining activity in Linden. All that is taking place is the quarrying of tailings - I am sorry the Prime Minister is not here because he would understand what tailings mean - from the washer pond for the processing and sale of what they call a special chemical grade bauxite, the only good product that they have developed. The two RASC kilns continue to be smokeless except for sporadic start ups when there are visits expected from Government officials or delegations from international organisations, etc. That is the state that the policies of this Government have put the bauxite industry in.

The Energy Sector: I just want to make a point about hydropower. A country has to make up its mind about how it is going to use its resources for development. When the P.N.C.R.-IG. decided to proceed with the Upper Mazaruni Development Project, it was a project that was intended to forwardly integrate the bauxite industry to ensure that it was not just confined to the sale of dried or refractory bauxite. It would have been able to convert that bauxite into alumina and aluminium metal, and the fabrication of aluminium products could be possible. But apart from that the availability of cheap and reliable power - this is one of the examples where supply creates its own demand. In other words, if you have cheap and reliable power available, there are industries that are possible that would not otherwise be possible if you did not have it. In our case, what we studied was a complex of projects; one of them being, apart from the

question of fabrication of aluminium, the electrolysis of water to create the necessary ingredients to produce ammonium fertilisers.

2:45 p.m.

So we would have been self-sufficient in fertilisers, as well as other products that stem from that. The other thing of course, is the production of silicon metal – and remember that Guyana has one of the purest silica sands available – requires as much energy as aluminium and, therefore, that was one of the projects that was in the pipeline. The reality is that although, for those who are faint hearted, the first phase of the Upper Mazaruni project seemed to be a large amount of power. The reality in the world, if you look at the history of hydropower, is that there is no hydropower scheme in the world that has been built where, within five years, they do not have a deficit in terms of the supply of energy. And that is, as I said, where supply creates its own demand. Therefore, it is sad that we missed the opportunity for the transformation of this country on the path to industrialisation.

The Government is now talking about hydropower. That is fine. I am happy to know that they are, but I hope they understand that the future for hydropower development in this country is on a river basin development basis which has already been studied. The Guri Project is not a single dam. The Guri Project is a cascading set of dams that optimise the availability of water for hydropower. Puerto Ordaz in Venezuela was developed not on hydrocarbons, but on the availability of cheap energy. I believe that the Government has to understand this.

We hear talk about Amalia. Of course there is no reference to the fact that Amelia will require a reservoir. A reservoir that will require something like...

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker I move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes in which to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Carberry: ... about 30 square kilometers and a catchment area of 650 square kilometers. Now that is an impact on the forest and we have to understand that. Hydropower is not without impact on the forest. In terms of river basin development, Amalia should be seen as part of the Potaro River Basin. In that context, that river basin can, in fact, generate 500 megawatts of power. The Mazaruni Basin, on the other hand, could generate 3,000 megawatts of power and the Cuyuni Basin, 1,000 megawatts of power. In

other words, we have the basis for the development of industries using and requiring access to cheap electricity.

The Hope/Dochfour High Level Canal Project: I do not know how many people really understand what we are talking about here. This is a canal that would be eight to nine feet above the ground level in the area. It would require a bridge across the East Coast Demerara Highway to get over that canal. All of the studies and discussions that I have undertaken myself with experienced engineers have told me that it is totally unnecessary to build that canal. The reason for it is very simple. The canal, in the present configuration, will not do the job that it is supposed to do. Even the Government's appointed engineers have pointed out that if you are going to put in a relief canal you should put it in at Flagstaff and release the waters into the Mahaica River. Therefore, what we have is a situation where the relief should be into the Mahaica River. The truth is that the Mahaica River is silted up to places like Belmont and therefore, there is a need even with the Hope Canal or the Flagstaff Canal to dredge the Mahaica River.

It is also necessary to clear the passage to the four sluices that are located within the East Demerara Water Conservancy (E.D.W.C.) as well as the Lama, Maduni, Koti and Cunha on the Demerara River and the spill ware at Land of Canaan. Now, if all of that is done, there is absolutely no need for a relief canal.

In any case, that relief canal poses a serious danger to the communities around there. If there is a collapse, that canal can, in fact, create some havoc in the communities at Dochfour, Two Friends, Hope Low Lands and Ann's Grove to mention a few. Apart from that, part of the canal is very near to a school. I will just read what the consultant said:

“The client instructed the consultant to continue to design the relief canal based upon the deep foreshore option and maintaining the width of the relief. Concerns are however expressed on excavating an outfall channel 2.5 kilometers in length and maintaining it at an invert of 1,400...”

And then they go on. They say:

“A much shorter relief route is possible between Flagstaff and the Mahaica River and it is possible that drainage in the Mahaica could be improved in the lower return events. The Mahaica option would also need maintenance, but that requirement may not be any greater than the maintenance required for the Hope/Dochfour options. The capital cost of the Flagstaff-Mahaica Relief route will be significantly lower than that of Hope/Dochfour Relief.”

And what we are talking about, Sir, at the moment the estimated costs are in excess of \$4 billion for this excursion into something that is not necessary. Thank you very much. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member.

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. R. Persaud]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. As I rise to make my contribution to this year's Budget, allow me also to join in expressing congratulations to our two new colleagues. I am quite sure that they will find their stay and service in the National Assembly quite rewarding. I also wish to commend and once again congratulate the excellent work done by the Minister of Finance and his team. Anyone reviewing and studying the details of this Budget would in fact conclude that it was a stellar performance on the part of the Minister and his team. They certainly deserve much commendation.

The 2010 Budget is presented at a time when the world is going through some extraordinary challenges. In fact, when we received the 2009 Budget we were at the height of the global financial crisis just following the fuel and the food crises. The World Bank has concluded that global contraction of Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.) – that is for 2009 – was in the vicinity of 2.2%, but if we look in terms of the contraction of the G.D.P. for developing countries, that would have been in the vicinity of 3.3%. We also saw that the average growth of developing countries was somewhere in the region of 1.2%.

Although we are seeing some signs of recovery coming primarily from the Brazil Russia India China Group (B.R.I.C), we are still in a period where if we turn on our television or we follow what is taking place on the internet or even if we talk to our relatives overseas, we will hear about the growing unemployment, about businesses closing down and certainly, we will also here in Guyana, know about the experience where there is sluggish demand for global commodities.

2009 also had some impact in terms of a global perspective on the agricultural sector as we saw a steep drop in commodity prices, sometimes ranging as much as 30%, but the global average was in the vicinity of 14%.

These problems and challenges would have been aggravated by the effects of climate change as we saw in 2009, in different parts of the world, experiencing extreme weather situations, moving from intense monsoon to the *El Niño* phenomenon of drought that we are experiencing currently in Guyana. As a result of that, global agricultural output in 2009 declined and an example of that would have been the sugar industry where today there is a deficit in terms of sugar on the global market by as much as 10,000,000 tonnes and this itself has helped, in our situation as a country that exports more than 70% of what we produce, but it tells and reminds us that globally we have seen that decline in agricultural output.

All of these developments and challenges have put in jeopardy one of the Millennium Development Goals. That is, reducing the number of people suffering from malnutrition or undernourishment with the

target of just about 420 million. These developments and challenges have put that goal in serious jeopardy. As 2009 came to an end and as we started 2010, we saw globally more than 1 billion people went to bed every night without proper nutrition. In fact, some of the latest Food and Agriculture Organisation (F.A.O.) estimates indicate that this figure may rise. We all know that globally, and as is the case in Guyana, agriculture has a critical role to play in reducing poverty and improving the wellbeing of people, particularly communities in rural areas. That is why an important plank of this Budget is agriculture, because if we are going to consolidate our gains, intensify the transformation of our economy, transform our conditions of living and if we are going to sustain these, agriculture is very important. A glance and review of the Budget will certainly confirm that outlook and perspective by our Government.

The Minister of Finance has eloquently elaborated on the particular growth within the sector and unlike what we saw taking place globally, where there is a global decline in terms of agricultural output. We saw that in Guyana there was growth in agriculture as we did across our economy. This is certainly due to the expansion, not only in production, but more so by an increase in productivity.

I would not bore the National Assembly by repeating these statistics. I will not bore them by talking about the 33% increase that we saw in terms of non-traditional exports. I will not bore the National Assembly by talking about the increase if we go to the traditional and non-traditional crops whereby we saw over the last decade alone a 400% increase. I can enumerate the crops as they are available and the statistics. I will not bore the National Assembly and the Hon. Member, Mr. Murray, had asked what about the four Ps... **[Mrs. Backer: No it is three Ps.]** The three Ps are the P.P.P. the four Ps are in agriculture. **[Mrs. Backer: No you said three Ps.]** And the four Ps have also experienced the type of growth that would have contributed. So I would not enumerate and list them because they are available and they have been published in the national newspaper, but they will certainly confirm the depth and the scope of growth within the sector.

Also this performance has been due to the ongoing modernisation that has been taking place within the sector be it in terms of farming techniques. We already have a number of farms. Many of them have been established recently in terms of utilising the latest technology to deal with some of the historical constraints. The modern processing and packaging facilities that have been put in place, the enhanced and expanded training that we have been given to all stakeholders and even the introduction of new seed varieties that will allow us to get the type of performance that we need for the agricultural sector and the gem in 2009, in terms of agricultural production, has been in the area of rice. I want for us to commend and applaud the rice farmers of this country for their performance in 2009. When we started in 2009, we were dealing with a flood condition and many persons thought that we would have seen a fallout in the

initial projection of rice by as much as 30% in terms of production. Instead, we ended the year with one of the highest level of production that has been recorded in our country.

For the 20,000 new acres of land which would have been brought under cultivation over the past months, we have seen the amount of growing enthusiasm and interest within the sector. You can go to the Guyana Office for Investment and the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission and they will talk about the growing and increasing amount of applications that they have been receiving, even proposals for activities within agriculture, not only farming, but also processing a range of value-added products. These confirm the great interest and the expansion which has been taking place and which certainly flows from the effectiveness of the Grow-More Food Campaign which was launched in 2008.

2009 for the Minister of Finance and certainly for those of us, who have been following what was taking place, would have been a landmark year in terms of water management. The expansions and investments that we have made in the area of water management to deal with the effects of climate change and also to cater for this increased demand to satisfy the enthusiasm and the need of our people for better services and infrastructure were seen. We can go to Victoria and Golden Grove and see the amount of Drainage and Irrigation investments that were made and are to be done this year. If we go to Parika Backdam, Den Amstel, Canal Polder and many other areas where we have been able to put in place infrastructure that has brought new areas under cultivation, this came about because of the focus that the Administration has put in the area of water management. I must say that although we have made a lot of progress in 2009, much more remains to be done for us to develop the type of infrastructure that is needed to take the sector forward.

Sugar, in 2009, is an industry that is undergoing some anticipated difficulties. As we know in October last year, we felt the full blow of the 36% price cuts which will see the industry losing in excess of \$10 billion in revenue. We also saw challenges and the Government confronted these challenges head on by bringing to an end the Booker-Tate Contract and putting in place a Guyanese team to manage the industry and restructure the whole organisation. We also saw from a positive note, the commissioning of the new Skeldon Sugar Factory which we are currently ensuring gets up to the right capacity and working towards ensuring, as is planned, adequate supply in terms of cane. We have also looked in terms of working closely with the private cane farmers and I know the Hon. Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan raised that issue. He is not here, but certainly the enhanced support for the private cane farmers, we saw that materialising in 2009 will certainly continue.

I must say just recently a team from GuySuCo and I met with the Economic Services Committee and we made a detailed presentation, a very frank and full disclosure as to what is taking place in the industry. I

am quite sure that both Members; the Hon. Members, Mr. Winston Murray and Mr. Ramjattan, who are Members of the Economic Services Committee, would have been privy to the plans, the direction and certainly to the state of the industry.

Mr. Speaker, if we listen to some of the presentations made by Members of the Opposition, you would recognise that there is a deliberate attempt to deny the progress taking place. There is a deliberate attempt even to misrepresent the achievements made and certainly an attempt here to create the impression that development or the wheels of development are not moving or, if moving, the wheels are not turning as fast as we all anticipate. What is the overall framework that would allow the wheels of development to move faster or the wheels, as it were, to take us along the path of transformation? That framework is the Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

It is a visionary strategy that is intended to transform this country. To ensure that the traditional economic activities receive the type of support and that they are competitive, that they are viable, and also to create a new generation of economic activity. Sometimes gleaning from the presentation, one gets the sense that persons are myopic in terms of how they review or look at the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. They are not seeing the long-term benefits or the vision of this strategy in terms of transforming the country and that is why we get the ill-informed remarks being made such as the strategy is like *putting all our eggs in one basket*, certainly that is out of place.

I wish to point out that the Low-Carbon Development Strategy, first and foremost, is not a forest conservation plan. The Low-Carbon Development Strategy is a development plan that is intended to transform our national economy. If we study the strategy and look at it without blinkers and if we scan the entire document, we will have a firm appreciation that it is a holistic development strategy. This strategy is not a fly-by-night document. The Hon. Member, Mr. Carberry, just now talked about the Government going through some illusion, but he is confusing illusion. It is not illusion, it is innovation and that is what the Low-Carbon Development Strategy represents.

I wish to refer to the Development Policy Review document, Volume 27, No.6, 20th November 2009, prepared by the Overseas Development Institute. In this document there is clear reference in terms of supporting development through the mobilisation of resources as is represented in the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. So this is not a “hairy-fairy” solution. This is not you. **[Member: Quote the document.]** I can quote the document, but I know that one has time constraints and I am trying to be disciplined. You want me to quote? I will quote it for you. I have a lot of quotes here. I will give you them all. Since you want a quote I will quote.

Let me turn to the New York Times feature on *Guyana Climate Change Model*, 9th December 2009. This is what it said: “Elements of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy are unique...”

And that: “Guyana offers a model that will ensure that its development is sustained along a low-carbon path.”

Then I can go on and refer to what the Australian Prime Minister had said. He describes the LCDS as an intelligent model that is in consonance with Australia’s efforts to combat the effects of climate change. I can then come home, because if you say that people are doing it overseas because they want us to conserve or to engage in something for their benefit, let me then refer to local stakeholders. The private sector and the Guyana Manufacturers and Services Association have also voiced their support – that is the private sector – for the strategy to be made clear it is essential and for the future advancement of our national economy. If you do not want to hear from the private sector, I will then quote. This is taken from the Low-Carbon Development website which is provided here from Mr. Elvis Williams, the Vice Toshao from Riverview. There are some people who may know that. This is what he says... **[Interruption]** ...well laugh. You can laugh at the representatives of the Amerindian People. It is funny to you, but they are serious people.

Mr. Speaker: Order please, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Persaud: Please show them some respect. Yes Mr. Speaker, the Vice Toshao from the Riverview community said:

“I think that it is very good that the Government took the LCDS into consideration whereby the communities are being involved to the extent that they can benefit”

And he goes on. Then I can refer to Mr. Vincent George, the Toshao of Batavia:

“The strategy that I have seen in it is something that is good and I will try to explain it to my people to see how best they can become involved.”

And then if we look at Ms. Maylene Pollard, a Toshao, and if we look at Isseneru from Little Mazaruni, and that Toshao’s name is Mr. Danis Larzan, this is what he says: “This strategy undertaken by the Government is a very bold one.”

And I can go on if you want me to quote. I have given you what the international community has said. I have given you what the stakeholders have said because the young people, the private sector, the labourers, the women, the Non-Governmental Organisations (N.G.O.s), the environmental communities

and the various sectoral groups have all voiced support for the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. It seems that it is only the P.N.C.R-1G. and its cohorts in the Opposition who have a difficulty with the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. There was the impression that was created that Guyana's pursuance of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy is without the type of international support. I am speaking with reference to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and I am speaking particularly about what took place in Copenhagen.

3.15 p.m.

I wish to advise the Hon. Members, who are asking this question, that according to Newsweek of 11th January, 2010 with the headline: *Forest Saved the Day*. This is what it says:

"The Copenhagen talks may have been a flop, but there was one piece of good news- a plan for rich states to pay poor ones to stop destroying tropical forests because deforestation represents about 15% of annual greenhouse gas emissions."

Then it goes on to say in this article: "The only tangible or significant outcome..."

...because as we know and those of us who are familiar will know that in the Kyoto Protocol there is no recognition of the value of standing forests. There is no reward mechanism. However, because of the work of Guyana and the leadership of our President, also the support of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy, the United Nations Framework Convention will now reflect the forest. That is what came out of Copenhagen if you wanted to know.

This type... **[Interjection]** ...you are stuck in 1992 Cde., that was Rio, that was a long time. A lot of things have happened since Rio, the world has moved on. This type of attitude is not new because this type of criticism was first voiced and if we go back to earlier P.P.P Governments, when the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan envisioned and developed a plan to open up the new agricultural projects in Tapakuma, looking at the Black Bush Polder Scheme and other major agricultural schemes, he was criticised and told that that was a waste of time, that the Government had bias - it was unworkable and was wasting money. Then in the 1970s, when Dr. Jagan - I am not necessarily saying Members of the Opposition - took a strong position that multilateral debt relief should be fought for and sought, many thought it was a pipe dream and a waste of time, but it was not. **[Member: Find out about Carl Greenidge]** Go back and read: *The Vicious Cycle of Death* and you will see.

Then also in the 1990s, When Dr. Jagan adumbrated the New Global Human Order, those in the Opposition looked at it and tried to decry it and say it is unworkable. Today, we are seeing that were it

not for these agriculture projects and investments, we could not be speaking about the developments that we are describing here today. Today, we have multilateral debt relief. Today, as we look at what Dr. Jagan called for in the New Global Human Order, a restructuring of the multilateral financial institutions, the need for a Tobin tax and a regulation of financial transactions, we are seeing that these things are on the agenda of the G-7, G-8, G-20 and all the international agencies. This type of attitude by the Opposition is not new. We are confident because of the solid technical work that has been done in coming up with a Low-Carbon Development Strategy.

What is the Low-Carbon Development Strategy seeking to do? Why would the Opposition or anyone want to stop a programme that is designed for attracting resources to adapt our infrastructure to deal with the effects of climate change, flooding and sea defence rise? In fact, one of the studies done for Regions 4 and 5 indicated that you need US\$500 million alone to adopt that infrastructure. Why would anyone want to criticise or condemn a plan that is seeking to develop hydroelectric power? The Hon. Member, Mr. Carberry, just made a convincing argument for hydroelectricity. Why would one want to stop a plan that seeks to do that? Why would anyone seek to criticise a plan to attract resources to open up another 400,000 acres of farm land so that we can create new and additional agriculture activities such as agro-energy or bio-fuel? Why would anyone want to disturb or interrupt a plan that would seek to create a vibrant value-added or agro-processing sector in the country? Why would anyone seek to obstruct or criticise a plan to create new activities such as I.T.C. and aquaculture?

It is sometimes amusing to listen to the criticisms that are levelled. I am quite sure that the people of Guyana see the efficacy, the people of Guyana see the content, the people of Guyana see that their lives can and will be transformed through the Low-Carbon Development Strategy and they are in support of that. But it is not only an attempt to criticise, but also a deliberate attempt to misrepresent the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. Why is that done?

There are two examples:

1. To engage in a campaign of scare mongering.
2. To create the impression that the Low-Carbon Development Strategy means a reduction in forest activities, or it means a reduction in mining activities.

In fact Mr. Speaker, the Low-Carbon Development Strategy speaks to continued and enhanced forestry and mining activities along a sustainable path. But in its effort to misrepresent the strategy, there is this attempt at scaremongering.

I want to talk about another element of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his erudite presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Persaud: Thank you very much. There is much talk about the Government's investment in Information and Communication Technology (I.C.T). In fact, one Member of the Opposition, Mr. Norton, I think it was, described it as a waste. I wish to refer the Hon. House first to the I.C.T.-4D Guyana National Development Strategy of 2006. Within the Strategy, the overall objective is to promote the development of the I.C.T. services and business, to increase job opportunities and generally to improve the economic and social well-being of Guyanese. There are a number of other activities. The point I am making is that the investments we are making in the I.C.T. sector is in response to the Strategy. As a direct comment to the absurd suggestion of this being a waste, I want to refer the Hon. Member to a study conducted by Accenture and this was done free. For the Hon. Member's information, Accenture is a global economic management firm for information and communication technology. There was a suggestion I think by the Hon. Member, Mr. Murray, that there was no feasibility study done in determining this investment. But this Accenture study concluded that:

“The cost and reliability of telecommunications in Guyana have impacted negatively on the industry competitiveness in recent years”.

Then it goes on to say:

"...investment in fast-track programmes is needed to sustain the industry's growth with a potential to contribute close to 10,000 new jobs".

This is what Accenture said, and this is also the rationale. Why would anyone want to condemn or describe an investment that creates 10,000 new jobs as a waste? Why would anyone want to do that? Are you telling the young graduates from the University of Guyana ... **[Mrs. Backer: They all gone away!]** ...who are looking for new opportunities that creating a new sector and creating 10,000 new jobs is a waste? It speaks as it were, to lack of commitment to the development of our country.

I also want to refer to some issues raised by the Hon. Member, Mr. Carberry. In his presentation he talked about RUSAL and the investments in the bauxite industry. But the Hon. Member would recall that it was part of the P.N.C.'s plan, as it were, to close down the bauxite industry. It was this Government that saved the bauxite industry. And I say once again, here we have an example. We have two foreign

investors who are investing in the bauxite industry and the Hon. Member here instead of encouraging them - because they are investing at a time when globally we have seen that bauxite sector is contracting - we see them criticising and condemning the industry. Is that how you believe in foreign investment?

The Hon. Member also ignores the investment that the Government has been making, not only in bringing foreign investment to save the industry, but also the investment to keep those communities going and looking at additional economic activities. If you look at Linden and Linden Economic Advancement Programme (L.E.A.P.) and the work that has been done in other areas, you will see and know about those investments.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Aubrey Norton, why are you quarrelling so much?

Mr. Norton: Because he was quarrelling when I was talking?

Mr. Speaker: Revenge is not a good policy.

Mr. Norton: It is not revenge, Sir, I was only reciprocating.

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, another point raised by Mr. Carberry is also linked to this discussion on the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. He talked about the P.N.C.'s Upper Mazaruni Hydroelectric Project, which I guess he was a part of. One thing that he omitted to mention was that the project never materialised. He also forgot to mention that it was the P.N.C. Government that told the people of Guyana - the public servants and the sugar workers - to decide whether they wanted \$14 increase or hydropower. And what did the Guyanese get? Hydro seed! So when we relate history...

Mr. Murray: Is that parliamentary language? Is that allowable here, Sir?

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I will retract the word "hydro seed."

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member please let us keep the standards high. You have been doing well so far. Let us keep it up.

Mr. Persaud: What they got was a big zero!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, let us have a less noise level please. It is a bit too loud.

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, the agriculture sector is an important component of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy if we look at that. Because of the investments that are planned in terms of agricultural diversification and if we look at what we are going to be doing in the creation of a modern

regime that is in the Livestock Development Authority, what we are doing in terms of value-added and in the rice industry.

The Low-Carbon Development Strategy is intended to take the agriculture sector to next level. But in so doing, we need to recognise that in addition to the constraints of unpredictable and uncertain international market situation, a major bugbear to the agriculture sector is the issue of climate change. The Low-Carbon Development Strategy seeks to mobilise resources. Even as we are moving toward implementation of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy, this year's Budget gives priority to investments that would make the agriculture sector climate resilient. What do I mean by that? One of the major projects that will be embarked upon and work has started on it, will be the Northern Relief of the East Demerara Water Conservancy, commonly referred to as the Hope Doch/ four Canal. The Hon. Member, Mr. Carberry, misrepresented the technical work that has been done.

I wish to recall to the National Assembly that before a decision was taken to construct or to proceed with the construction of this canal, the Government procured the services of a consortium of international and national consultancies to look at the feasibility of that project. After six months of work from that international consortium, they came back with a recommendation that the utilisation of the Northern Relief of the Hope Doch/four Canal was the most technically viable option. What the Hon. Member had misrepresented was that there were two options provided at the same location which depends on where you are situated, the relief outlet and in terms of how high or where it is used. They offered two recommendations, but I wish to advise the National Assembly that when the report was concluded, the Government took a decision that the report would be made available to the public. And in fact, the Guyana Association of Professional Engineers (G.A.P.E.) were invited to review the document. I wish to report that in the main, all the feedback we got, including from G.A.P.E., have confirmed the technical options as recommended by the consultants. Based on the investments in this Budget, we will have then...

Mr. Carberry: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The G.A.P.E. report stated very clearly that the Flagstaff option was the preferred option. Let him show me differently.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. Hon. Member, Mr. Persaud, you can proceed.

Mr. Persaud: I want to assure the people of Mahaica and the farmers of the East Coast of Demerara that we have now received the design and sound technical advice. So the work on the Hope Doch/four Canal will commence within six weeks. I want the Hon. Member to go and tell the farmers in Mahaica,

Mahaicony and other areas that they must continue to go through a state of flooding from one rainy season to the next in that regard.

There are many plans, programmes and projects that the Budget contains which would improve the performance of the agriculture sector and our national economy. I want to say that in moving forward and in the implementation of this Budget, our farmers and people who operate within the agriculture sector can be assured of continued development and support.

If we look in terms of the Budget as it relates to what is taking place internationally, many of the better of countries would have implemented Budget freeze. We saw in the United States where President Barack Obama himself had indicated a freeze in terms of education. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition on a television programme with Mr. Christopher Ram pointed out recently that this year's Budget has one of the highest deficits. I wish to advise the Hon. Member and Leader of the Opposition that in fact this year would have one of the lowest deficits in the range of 3.2%. However, if we look at our Budget and the programmes that we have, and the commitment that we have and which shows our commitment and sound economic management when compared to what is taking place across the region and even beyond...

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up on Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be granted another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Ten minutes.

Mr. Hinds: Ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Mr. Persaud: I was making the point that our Budget comes at a very challenging time when countries with similar economies were not able to make this type of allocation.

It is the largest Budget ever and we are proud to say so. **[Member: The largest deficit too!]** No, it is not the largest deficit and the facts will confirm that. Unlike other countries, there are no new taxes. In fact, we were all appalled last night to hear a suggestion or an inference made by the Hon. Member of the A.F.C., Mr. David Patterson, saying that perhaps the Government should conduct wide scale evaluation and reassessment of properties so that they can increase rates and taxes. Contrary to what the Opposition wants, our Government would not be encouraging any new taxes.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, nowhere in my presentation did I make mention of increase in taxes. What I said was capturing the larger picture.

Mr. Persaud: The Members of the Opposition have failed to identify any significant weakness or deficiency in this Budget. What we had to ensure over the past days was the regular diet of accusations of corruption, poor governance, lack of transparency, and lack of consultation. I say to the Members of the Opposition, and Mr. Speaker I say to you, so far, what we have heard from the Opposition is nothing new. They have not been able to identify or even offer in any substantial way, positive inputs that would take our country forward. I want to tell the National Assembly that we the P.P.P./C. are about the future. Our developmental agenda is inclusive. We believe and we practice partnership. And certainly, this Budget as it will do to the ordinary people in the villages, towns, and the hinterland region and in all parts of Guyana, offers the opportunity for people to come together, for people to hold hands and to focus on the task of building our country. I want to appeal in saying and in commending this Budget that it will contribute greatly to building a peaceful, progressive and prosperous Guyana. I want to invite the Opposition to work with us and make this country realise its full potential so that we can consolidate our gains, transform Guyana and sustain development. I thank you very much Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

Mr. M. Williams: Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 was described by no less than the Hon. Prime Minister, as exciting. From the bit that I have come to learn about this Hon. Gentleman, strange things excite him. I am therefore not at all surprised by his description of this uninspiring Budget. I suppose if the average citizen was earning half of a million dollars per month or above, this Budget would have been exciting for them too. But with a Government, which through its budgeting, seeks to make citizens dependent on the state, excitement may only be found in substance abuse. The institutional entrenchment of the school feeding and uniform distribution programme, whose parents cannot find jobs to put food on their children's table, establishes this. The single parents register and its attendant \$1,000 daycare voucher, inadequate as it is, and such other measures as substitutes for economic empowerment of the working class of this country, suggests that the Government hopes to control the citizenry through Government by handouts instead of sound economic measures to guarantee a quality of life satisfactory to all Guyanese. My presentation will deal with agriculture and matters with respect to Region 3.

I shall first address agriculture. A lot has been said about rice and sugar by the Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj. Precious little has been said by the Hon. Minister. Much has been made of the so-called *El Niño* conditions and its effects on the rice industry in particular, and agriculture generally. What is not said is that our irrigation water woes have been occasioned by an ill advised ministerial decision.

The heavy rains which lasted for a few days in 2009 caused what was called “an accumulation of water” on the land. This caused the Minister of Agriculture to ignore the hydrometeorological office projection.

3.45 p.m.

In October last, the Minister ordered that water be released from the East Demerara Water Conservancy, the West Demerara Water Conservancy, Black-Bush polder, Tapakuma and Mahaica, Mahaicony and Abary (M.M.A.). He had determined that the rainfall would have been greater than the hydrometeorological office predictions.

As I speak, rice farmers are contemplating the economic situation. In less than twenty days, rice will begin to flower. Water is now more critical than at any other time of the crop, but the fields are dry. Some farmers have given up. Some are already grazing cattle in their fields knowing that if the cattle do not get to the plant, they will lose rice and husk. The net result of this unscientific ill-advised decision is that as a nation, we now have to spend more than \$3 million per day to mitigate the damage done by the Minister who is charged with the responsibility for agriculture.

It is the same poor farmers which the Government pretends to care for who must now pay for the cleaning up of the Minister’s mess. In any other country in the world such a Minister would have been fired.

It does not end there. The soil type used for the construction of the Conservancy dams will now pose serious risks when the rains come. The walls of the now almost dry Conservancies are likely to become porous and brittle, containing large volumes of water which they are designed to hold and with such defects, spells disaster waiting to happen.

It is fair to say that rice is not as adversely affected by *El Niño* as it is by *El hombre de lambada*, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. The Hon. Minister blames the rain for the floods and the sun for reduction in the irrigation water. The truth is, improperly maintained drains are to be blamed for floods and mismanagement of irrigation water is responsible for irrigation water woes. The blame therefore must be placed where it belongs- at the feet of the Minister of Agriculture.

The frustrated farmer who concluded that the MBA appended to the Hon. Minister's name means: “Master of Bad Administration”, believes that he is right. The Guyana Rice Producers Association (G.R.P.A.) action committee on the 21st November, 2009 issued a press release which said:

“ President Bharrat Jagdeo told the nation that he had secured a deal with the Venezuelan president to purchase 50,000 tonnes of cargo rice and that farmers will get at least \$3,000 per bag from the potential contract which leaves more than 310,000 tonnes of rice on the market to be

sold. No other buyers have so far come forward. Farmers in Berbice feel highly discriminated against by the Minister of Agriculture and the Guyana Rice Development Board for allowing some farmers to be treated differently.”

It goes on to say:

“Before this rice harvesting began, a US owned company is reported to have signed contracts for about 20,000 kilogrammes of rice with a few local millers and exporters who are not acquainted with the rules of international market, but agree to sell rice at US\$355 for 1,000 kilogrammes cargo. Thus, basically setting the price of paddy at \$2,000 per bag and sealed the fate of rice farmers. ”

In that release, Dr. Twain Durga is quoted as saying:

“The rice industry is in complete chaos and disarray due to the absolute failure of the Minister of Agriculture and the Guyana Rice Development Board to negotiate reasonable prices for farmer’s Paddy.”

The rice farmers have some recommendations which they have asked me to bring to this Hon. House in hopes that this Government would find a way to incorporate it in this Budget. I so do now:

- They are asking for the establishment of an intervention fund to protect and secure the livelihood of all rice farmers.
- The re-installment of the export facility in Georgetown which they say that the Government sold to private owners associated with the prominent contractor. They say that rice exports have been deprived of an important facility which is used to ship more than 300,000 tonnes of rice.
- The immediate re-establishment of GUYBANK with rice professionals sitting on the Board of Directors so that farmers can access loans at the nearly 0% rate and not at the current commercial rate of 12% to 20%.
- Duty concessions equal to the treatment given to the timber and bauxite companies.
- The radical reorganisation of the Guyana Rice Development Board to include independently minded professional experts on rice, with elected rice farmers, millers and exporters and consumer organisations.
- The urgent replacement of the current Minister of Agriculture due to his lack of evident knowledge of the rice industry and agriculture in general.

This is what they are saying.

Plantains and Bananas: Almost two years ago I raised the issue of the threat posed to plantain farmers in Region 3 by the disease Black Sigatoka. Since then, my investigations have revealed that this crisis situation affects the entire plantain and banana industry in Guyana. The threat became evident to the Ministry since 2005. Hon. Minister Robert Persaud finally admitted, while on a visit to farms on the East Bank Essequibo, that there existed such a problem. I thought that was an indication of some measure of hope that a solution was on the horizon.

The Minister is quoted by Kaieteur News of Saturday 26th September, 2009 as saying: “the situation only exists in the Tuschen area”, that is a departure from the truth. Why else will the Minister report: “a consultant was in the country for two weeks to analyse the situation”, yet this consultant from India retained by Government to conduct investigations into the extent of the Sigatoka infection, did not visit Tuschen. Rather, visits were made to Hogg Island, Parika Backdam, Canals Polder, farming communities on the East Bank of Demerara and in Region 5 and other areas to analyse the situation.

Hardest hit are the areas such as the entire West Demerara, all of East Bank Essequibo and all of the Essequibo Islands, the entire Region 1 and farming communities in Regions 4 and 5. There is a strong case for serious consideration in favour of plantain and banana farmers for measures or interventions on their behalf to mitigate major losses which farmers will suffer and are suffering. After all, it was the Hon. Minister whose speaking about Black Sigatoka makes it clear. I quote from the same news paper’s report where he said: “Really, there is only one way you can deal with that problem and that is to destroy.”

Destruction of thousands of acres of banana and plantain fields across Guyana surely warrants an intervention. Instead of dealing with issues which I raised in a letter to the press in 1st October 2009 and 19th January 2010 on this subject, the Ministry preceded to regale the nation with distractions and distortions. However, in a letter to the editor of Kaieteur News and Stabroek News, the Technical Manager of the Plant Health Service, Ministry of Agriculture, admitted that what I have been saying was in fact accurate. He however stopped short of saying how farmers would be compensated for their losses.

The Government boasts of the \$400 million intervention on behalf of rice farmers and a further \$400 million on behalf of cattle farmers. Both of these categories of farmers would be happy with these interventions if they are properly managed and equitably disbursed. Maybe the wrong people are in the business of cultivating bananas and plantains. Here is what the Technical Manager of the Plant Health Service, Ministry of Agriculture, said in his letter to the press, Stabroek News 22nd January 2010:-

“A few years ago officers and farmers in Region 1 reported that they were experiencing a significant reduction in plantain and banana productions due to disease. A team comprising

officials from the Plant Health Service Division and the National Agricultural Research Institute (N.A.R.I.) were dispatched to the region to investigate this issue. The team concluded that it was a fungal disease and recommended the use of a number of fungicides. By 2008 however, farmers in Region 3 complained of a similar problem with their plantains and bananas. Officials from the Ministry and N.A.R.I. visited the farms. The control of the disease in Region 3 was limited because firstly, plantain and banana cultivation were more intense and the disease developed resistance to the drugs. By mid-2009 N.A.R.I. had arrived at the conclusion that the disease may be Black Sigatoka. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (F.A.O.) sent a highly accredited plant pathologist from India to investigate the disease problem and she also arrived at the conclusion that the disease was Black Sigatoka.”

Mr. Speaker, all of this happened and yet the Ministry of Agriculture insisted on covering down this major threat for four years. They even denied its existence up to my letter dated 1st October 2009. Since I stirred up the red ants nests about Sigatoka on 23rd January last, the Ministry of Agriculture dispatched its entire staff to Region 3 where they conducted twenty-one poorly attended meetings with farmers. The main focus of these meetings was to convince the farmers that there was nothing to worry about. “Williams is a troublemaker”, but they even got the meeting date wrong. They chose Saturday. On that day, farmers were in the backdams of the region preparing for market day at Parika on Sunday.

They have now embarked on chemical application to affected crops. In one area where there are more than nine plantain and banana fields, two were sprayed. Continuity of application of treatment is yet to be addressed. Even if by some miracle, they already tried and failed, chemicals proved effective, were applied. How on earth can the disease be contained when at least seven other country untreated fields are in close proximity? Remember, the disease is highly contagious and people as well as birds and animals traverse from one field to the next.

It could only be a case where either the experts at the Minister's disposal are misleading him or he is not listening to them. The Minister must urgently tell this nation the full extent of the threat which faces the plantain and banana industry in Guyana since the Budget totally ignores the issue.

Plantains have equally historical and cultural importance to rice and should be treated accordingly. In fact, if one were to look at the comparative economic value of plantains to rice in terms of earnings to farmers, one would find that plantains provide farmers with better returns at this particular point in time. At an average yield of 50 bags of rice at \$3,000 per bag of Paddy, and the estimated net surplus per crop for five acres will be approximately \$514,000 which translates to \$151,333 per month in income. On the other hand, with an average of 680 roots of plantain per acre, or 3,400 plants per plot per five acre plot at

an average price of \$30 per pound over fifteen months, will yield an estimated net surplus of \$3.6 million or a quarter of a million dollars per month.

I turn my attention to the four Ps to which the Minister had alluded to.

Pepper: The Poor Rural Communities Support Services Project (P.R.C.S.S.P.) utilise a very large Budget in 2007 promoting Bull Nose peppers. That was a disaster, but the Government somehow managed to get farmers who will say so excluded from the evaluation meeting. The money was already spent. The truth is that seeds were provided. Guaranteed markets for all peppers produced were said to be secured. The New Guyana Marketing Corporation (G.M.C.) would pay \$100 per pound. Farmers went to work. One group of farmers produced 40,000 pounds of Bull Nose peppers and were whooping with excitement. Then came the bombshell, one after another.

Firstly, peppers now had to be graded. A maximum of five peppers per pound will do. Of the 40,000 pounds only 8,000 made the belated set target for grades. That is 20% of total production. Then comes pay day. The new G.M.C. could only offer between \$20 and \$40 per pound.

One farmer told me: “Peppa been a lick dag. Me leff me one a farm...”

Mr. Persaud: Mr. Speaker could I rise on a point of correction?

Mr. Speaker: You are only allowed a point of order Hon. Member.

Mr. Persaud: Well Mr. Speaker, just permit me. I have sat here and listened to a slew of misrepresentation. Can I use the other word, “of lies?” I need some protection because I cannot...

Mr. Speaker: You are allowed if the Hon. Member agrees to have a very brief moment to elucidate and explain. That is all you are permitted.

Mr. Williams: I do not agree to that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I will give it to you at the end of the Hon. Member’s presentation. I will give you one minute to correct anything which you think...

Mr. Corbin: You Honour, with due recognition of the House’s desire to maintain certain standards, I thought that I had heard some unparliamentarily language which I would hope would be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that. I am told that the Minister used the “L” word.

Mr. Corbin: Yes Sir. In view of these standards which are being insisted upon, I hope that it will be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister knows that is not permitted.

Mr. Persaud: I wish to withdraw that and just say that there were some “untruths.”

Mr. Speaker: That is still not permitted Hon. Member.

Mr. Persaud: Or, they were “misrepresentations of the reality.”

Mr. Speaker: You wish to say that there were “exaggerations.” Hon. Member you can proceed.

Mr. Williams: Thank you Sir. A re-examination of the issue will reveal that poor seeds were provided. Soils samples were taken at pre-cultivation, but have not yet been lab tested or reported on. The same officer who took the samples wrote in the daily newspaper that he sent plantain samples to be lab tested overseas in 2009 four years after the Sigatoka disease had been determined to be a threat to the plantain and banana industries in Guyana. The New G.M.C. connection disconnected before the end of the project arrived. Farmers’ confidence in the Ministry sadly dipped to rock bottom.

Pumpkins: The cost of harvesting and transporting pumpkins to the marketplace currently exceeds the realisable price of the product. Pumpkins are now sold not by the pound, but rather by the “heap” as we say, locally. Vendors could now say how much they are willing to pay for an entire heap of pumpkins. These days it is as low as \$5,000.

Pineapples: Of the four P’s, only pineapple seem to be holding its own. A group of farmers in a conversation with me joked that: “the three P’s done dead already and one left to go”. I tried to reassure him by suggesting that it was really a case where one was up and running and three needed to catch up. I had to withdraw however, when they asked me to show where in the Budget such an assurance could be found.

The Budget speech, pages 19 and 20 speaks of the swine multiplication programme with 3,240 units distributed. It is true that the Ministry worked on improving the swine breed in Guyana and that these units were in fact imported from Suriname. This was in the hope of them mating with our local sows that there will be an improvement in the breed. As it turns out, by the time the boars attained sexual maturity, they became too heavy for the sows with which they must mate. They thereafter became liabilities to the farmers. That is even before they begin to serve their purpose. This is yet another example of the wanton waste of resources due to the improper planning and the refusal to accept sound advice.

Mr. Speaker, Farmers Field schools are essentially a good idea. However, like the Water Users Association which is equally full of good ideas are evidently reserved for management by political operatives by the P.P.P. Farmers who are not expressly aligned to the P.P.P. Government are not benefiting from Farmer Field Schools. In the case of Water Users Association, they do not have a place in the decision making process. This has always been the case in every instance where huge sums of money are being spent in this country. I recommend that the Government insurers and the politics be immediately removed from the Farmer Field Schools idea and the Water Users Association.

Sugar: The P.N.C.R.-1G. has long placed its concern with respect to the Skeldon Sugar Factory and the future of the sugar industry on public record. After billions of dollars was being spent and years of promises by the P.P.P. Administration, does Guyana now have a prosperous sugar industry? No we do not, but the Government continues to grope in the dark while behaving as though it is in fact the sole fountain of wisdom and provider of solutions. Yet the hype about working together is being pumped by the P.P.P. officials in the public domain.

The Kaieteur News article in today's issue captions: *Dry spell could hit Agri-sector for over \$3.5 billion.* This tells us of the extent of the adverse effect of the ministerial decision to release water from the Conservancies across the country on the agriculture sector. It enumerates the spending which became necessary as a result of the poorest decision in the Agriculture Ministry in the history of country. Yet the Hon. Minister will be allowed and has been allowed to address this Hon. House as Minister of Agriculture.

To date has the Government succeeded in securing the other 60% of canes required for the Skeldon Sugar Factory to function economically? Has GuySuCo been able to produce or procure 8,000 plus tonnes of cane per day, seven days per week required to move the Skeldon white elephant? The Hon. Minister of Finance in the three paragraphs dedicated to sugar in his Budget does not say so. I was hoping that the Hon. Minister of Agriculture would have done so when he spoke. Has GuySuCo been able to bring production cost down to the globally competitive level of US12 cents per pound? No, they have not. We are not told that either. Before this debate is over, this National Assembly should be provided with the official statistics with respect to the cost of production per pound of sugar by a state, together with justification for the continued mismanagement of sugar and accompanying jeopardy to sugar workers.

Has the Skeldon estate co-produce even 1 kilowatt of energy since its construction? We are yet to be told. We know that we are using heavy fuel to power their generating sets. What a waste of resources! The exorbitant super salaries paid to the big ones, the dumping of 25 tonnes of juice at one time by the management of the Uitvlugt estate in the name of maintenance and the burning of 126 tonnes of firewood

without boiling a single pint of cane juice at the same estate, are but examples of waste occasions by mismanagement.

Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (G.A.W.U.) have field representatives there, but they will never go public with matters such as these. After all, G.A.W.U. and the P.P.P. are represented in this Hon. House by the one and same gentleman.

Has the labour cost as a percentage of total expense been reduced from the unacceptably high level of in excess of 60%? The Minister did not tell us. Guyana continues to draw down from the European Union funded multiannual sugar programme. There is an available €\$670 million for eighteen African Caribbean Pacific (A.C.P.) sugar producing countries. Of which €\$90 million or G\$27 billion dollars has been allocated to Guyana to be disbursed over five years. This is essential compensation for the loss of subsidies. The loss of subsidies affected private cane farmers as much or greater than it affected GuySuCo. The P.N.C.R.-1G. is on record as suggesting that the private cane farmers are entitled to at least 10% of these funds. Why then does the Government continue to hang on to these funds and not pass on the 10% entitlement unto the private cane farmers?

There have been admissions by persons who matter that GuySuCo is in dire straits among such persons is the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.) who is quoted in the Kaieteur News article 5th November 2009 as saying:

“It is the bankers and creditors that we are worried about. What must they be saying? We have a turnaround plan, dismal production and now the strike. What signals are we sending the bankers?”

The article also goes on to say:

“During an interview with Kaieteur News yesterday on the status of the industry Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Errol Hanoman, said that the current situation is placing even more pressure on the corporation, especially with banks and creditors paying a close eye. In a few days, one of the bankers of GuySuCo, ING Bank is expected to be in the country to discuss among other things, the status of the corporation. Meetings are also expected with the local banks and creditors to arrive at a possible solution.”

This Assembly and the people of this country urgently need explanations. We need guaranteed solutions, not propaganda as the late President Desmond Hoyte used to call them, “cast-iron guarantees.” I turn to Region 3.

Mr. Speaker: You have 5 minutes more to deal with Region 3.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes to conclude.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Williams: I will simply offer a few recommendations in this area Sir:

1. Stop constructing three-phase roads:

Contracts are awarded for the construction of roads over three years. In the first year, contracts are awarded for the construction of roads with loam surfaces. This involves excavation, building of road shoulders and sand and loam filling. Then in the next year another set of contracts are awarded for the construction of the same roads. This time they are built with crusher-run surfaces. These contracts involve the same proprietary works including excavation of the materials placed there the previous year and replacing some of it.

Crusher-run is then added as in the case of Hague Backdam. That was four truck loads to 1 ¼ of a mile road. In the same three years, the same roads are revisited. The works done in the two preceding years are replicated, as is the cost. The roads are then finally blessed with a ¼ inch bituminous surface. The cost of the road is therefore greater than three times what it ought to be, but it guarantee jobs for the boys.

2. Extend life expectancy of roads:

Construct roads to which will be added at least four years and three months useful life. That will guarantee roads with a life expectancy of at least five years. Remove road constructions from the functions of the Ministry of Housing. It has long since been established that the Housing Ministry lacks engineering competence, supervisory capacity and maintenance capacity as far as roads are concerned. In terms of accountability as well, all roads should come under the purview of one Ministry.

3. Stop the neglect of public properties:

Many such neglected properties are allowed to run to ruins. They are then disposed of in hazy transactions. The Leonora Senior Staff Compound and Leonora Park are examples. It is alleged that these two rundown properties were sold at giveaway prices. The Minister of Agriculture may wish to tell us at some point whether these properties of GuySuCo were in fact sold, and if so, where were the advertisements placed and how many bids were received and at what price they were sold?

Mr. Speaker in concluding, I would say that the most compelling thing about this Budget is the increased burden it places around the necks of the people of this country, especially among the growing population of impoverished persons. The evidence is everywhere, at the traffic lights in the city, car parks, marketplaces, in squatting communities, at the stelling; even at the short one, and at the main international airport. This heavy Budget is heavy around the necks of the poor as it seeks to consolidate poverty, transform the not so poor into its state of abject poverty and sustain a system which deepens the dependency by citizens on the State. It cannot therefore receive my support. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Ramson, S.C.]: Cde. Speaker, I had hoped to commence my presentation proper because in any debate, one needs to sail very closely to the winds of truth, especially when it is of a national character.

4.15 p.m.

It gives me great pleasure to participate in this Budget debate. In the light of the fact that the previous speaker made certain representations or rather misrepresentations to this House that whatever may be the value of Hansard, he treated it with the scant respect as though he is completely oblivious that the benefit of Hansard is for posterity.

His contribution in my respectful view was characterised by a slew of inaccurate data and was knowingly economical with the truth. I will give you an example. He made mention of something about Skeldon and although this is not my area of expertise, I am advised that contrary to what he said to this Honourable House, the Skeldon Plant has produced 81,738 megawatts of power and the value of which is \$800 million. If that is not a contribution to the National Grid, tell us what is.

When viewed through the prism of reality, in both a global and regional context, it is my respectful view that this 2010 Budget represents a calligraphy of the reconstructive efforts of this Administration of which I am a part. For the year 2009 and with preeminent clarity, it composes a virtual configuration of the hope and aspirations for the fiscal and economic infrastructure of our beloved Guyana – our *bharat mata*- for the year 2010. It is a virtual calligraphy of the reconstructive process on which this Administration has set out. I dare the Opposition to challenge and compare the progress from when they were in power and since the P.P.P./C. Administration has taken office. I used those words very calculatedly. Power and office do not necessarily coincide.

It is not without some providential significance that the Hon. Dr Ashni Singh, M.P. and my colleague, a man of some immense gubernatorial potential, has been chosen to underwrite the economic and fiscal policies enunciated by our illustrious President, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo at the opening of the 9th Parliament in 2006, whose directions are primarily responsible for the macroeconomic stability that we are currently experiencing. I dare anyone to say that when you look at what is currently on record in the Western Hemisphere that we are not experiencing some macroeconomic stability.

In fact, on my way to Parliament today, the newscast was broadcasting the findings of the Inter-American Development Bank (I.D.B.) about our macroeconomic stability and the efforts to improve the conditions of the ordinary, working-class members of our society, only two days ago at the Georgetown Club.

I am speaking for myself without consultation with the Hon. Finance Minister. As I understand it and lay no claim to any special skills in this area apart from my practical experience, I wish to posit that the stress test to which the economies of our sister CARICOM countries collectively, and Guyana on the other hand, have been subjected to following the global meltdown since 2008, have produced diametrically opposing results. It is my personal view and I may be corrected if I am wrong that it is the very forceful and more often than not, popular measures undertaken by this Administration in preventing the infusion of toxic assets into the formula for stable development that has been responsible for our exemption from the economic woes admittedly being experienced by other countries. And I say to you, Cde. Minister, I believe that in your presentation you were brutally frank, but mercifully perceptive, and you should be congratulated for your effort.

One does not have to possess rocket science qualifications to recognise that financial stability, which I practise in my own personal home environment, is closely tied to economic development and employment. I keep myself busy and I work hard and so should the Opposition. They should encourage the people of this country to work hard rather than to make the country ungovernable. That is what they should do and then the results would improve. That financial stability as I said is closely tied to economic development and employment. The diversity of our investments in our resource-based economy provided Guyana with that cover of protection that distinguishes us from other countries now reeling under the yoke of uncertainty in their economic affairs.

Some of our brothers and sisters outside of this country - some political juggernauts - went so far as to refer to us, in a most condescending way, as mendicants. Who are the mendicants today? Certainly not Guyana - that is not what I am experiencing. Those harbingers of doom and daily criticism of the P.P.P./C. Government, now in its fourth successive term in office, owe this nation an unreserved apology and ought to forthwith bow out of public life or retreat into oblivion in the interest of public and popular

weal. Democracy demands nothing less. This is the very term which is their watchword in an effort to derail the progress that this country has seen in the last seventeen years. There is a particular correspondent in the newspaper - he has borrowed from Fareed Zakaria...

Mr. Speaker: An essayist, not a correspondent.

Mr. Ramson: Yes, an essayist. I think that is a more apt description because an essayist is a person who tries, but he does not complete the effort. He uses a concept developed, I understand, by a gentleman who is seen on the television these days – Fareed Zakaria with this term “elected dictatorship”. If we are an elected dictatorship, I wonder what the People’s National Congress P.N.C. was during their term of office. This is the same man who joined with the Working People’s Alliance (W.P.A.), according to him. Every party that he votes for seems to be a party that loses the election. I could not find a better term for them. It is clear that their patent counterfeit patriotism has been exposed for what it is worth, nothing but a patina of loyalty masking their outrageous and rank undemocratic pre-pense malefaction. All that means is that they premeditated to do the wrong things from the outset, whether you are right or wrong-democratic posears, if ever there were any.

I regret that I have to introduce my main presentation which is on the law and justice in this country by making reference to these other collateral humbugs and irritants. Day after day, I cannot switch on my television, for which I have been paying, to not be confronted with these irritants. [Member: You are usually at Everest every day.] Everest has television too, I brought it. Cde. Ashni Singh can tell me if I am wrong here. That it is clear that this Administration as the responsible repository of our country’s resources, and wealth creation capability, must be given credit for establishing a regime of saving rather than indiscriminate spending. I see that my colleague approves and he has never seen what I have written here.

Tight controls and frugal spending, but an unrelenting commitment for the infrastructural development of our country, are all hallmarks of this episode of success. All the textbooks available to me on fiscal sustainability are replete in their embrace of this approach. I say these things because it is clear and I see my good friend, Cde. Murray, is looking at me very pensively, I do not think he wishes to challenge what I am saying. I see that the Hon. Mr. Williams is absent. I wanted him to hear about the embrace.

The Opposition in this country seems to be allergic to socio-economic progress and that is why as soon as the elections became free and fair, they were booted out of office and they seem not to want to get back in.

In this context, permit me a brief excursion into some specifics...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member this is suspension time. However, I will suspend anytime before 4.45 p.m. I will give you the opportunity to end at a moment that is suitable to you.

Mr. Ramson: I can stop now because I am on to something specific.

Assembly suspended accordingly at 4.33 p.m.

Assembly resumed accordingly at 5.44 p.m.

Mr. Ramson: Thank you, once again, Cde. Speaker. When we had that break such a long time ago - more than an hour - I know we need to have some refreshments, I was about to embark upon an area that is a little closer to my remit and I shall so proceed.

As we lawyers know it, we invite the judges to give us the last sentence that was recorded before we proceed whenever there is a hiatus and I intend to adopt that procedure. So you will forgive me for referring to the last sentence that I would have made without referring to the Opposition, of course.

Tight controls and frugal spending, but an unrelenting commitment for the infrastructural development of our country, are all hallmarks of this episode of success. In this context, if I may proceed Cde. Speaker, permit me a brief excursion into some specifics.

One such programme was the Low-Carbon Development Strategy familiarly known as the LCDS and surprisingly, it finds its root in our Constitution, Articles 14 – 16 and Article 36. You will permit me to read those Articles. I know that my good friend, Cde. Murray, would be aware of Article 14 because he has constantly been reminding us of Article 13 which speaks of the objectives of the political system. I want to now apprise him of the goal of economic development and I quote:

“The goal of economic development includes the objective of creating, promoting and encouraging an economic system capable of achieving and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage in the context of a global competitive environment...”

Those words must have been used *ad nauseam* in our run-up to the programme, the meeting in Copenhagen, post meeting in Copenhagen and our own debates over here. I rely particularly on:

“...maintaining sustainable competitive advantage in the context of a global competitiveness environment, by fostering entrepreneurship, individual and group initiative and creativity and strategic alliances with domestic and global business partners...”

Those words embody, if I may say so myself, the entire conceptual framework of the LCDS. I go further to Article 15:

“The goal of economic development includes the objective of laying the material basis for the greatest possible satisfaction of the people’s growing material, cultural and intellectual requirements...”

Does it not sound as though it has something to do with the Forestry and Mining sectors? At least it touches a nerve when I read these articles. I hear the arguments to and fro and I am sure Cde. Robeson Benn, the Hon. Minister of Public Works, who sits to my right, would be surprised to know that he is on firmer ground than when he is dealing with those people on the reserves.

“...as well as the dynamically stable development of their personality, creativity and entrepreneurial skills and cooperative relations in a plural society...”

When you have various sectors, as I will go on to speak in this debate, there are competing interests in the pursuit of development of the country. In the light of the creation of this programme – the LCDS – we must now interweave our constitutional responsibilities, goals and objectives required by the Constitution. If the Opposition can rely on Article 13, I am taking the liberty of saying that the Government is entitled to rely on Articles 14, 15, 16 and 36. Article 36 tells me if this is not something everyone should embrace on all sides of the House, we have the Government side, we have the Opposition side and we have the side that is wishing to take over and they cannot do a proper court case. Every court case that they file is lacking in regularity and procedural validity.

The Marginal note is “Land and Environment”:

“The well-being for the nation depends upon preserving clean air, fertile soils, pure water and the rich diversity of plants, animals and eco-systems.”

So much for the Constitution! I just wanted my colleagues and the learned Members of the Opposition to know that whatever might have been the motives and expectations of those responsible for the LCDS that they are on sure footing as far as our Constitution is concerned.

This remarkable and universally acclaimed programme has attracted unjustified and egregiously uninformed criticism, mostly malicious, tendentious and vexatious in content from some maverick columnist and correspondents who have unlimited access to certain media houses. I will say to you, I hope and pray that one day they will come face to face with reality. It may not be unkind then to classify them as a colony of crapauds sheltering under their jingoistic jumbie umbrellas. I use those words. They

are not unparliamentary. There is not a word there that is not in the English Dictionary that is descriptive of... [Mr. Speaker: Most of the unparliamentary words are in the English Dictionary.]... but have been expressly excluded from parliamentary environment, but this is not. What is wrong with being a crapaud? We all know what a crapaud is. We all know what a jumbie umbrella is. It is a mushroom.

Mr. Speaker: Yes Hon. Member, but to describe other Members of the House...

Mr. Ramson: I did not say the other Members. I said the maverick correspondents. I would not sink to that depth to address my colleagues in such a manner. No, I have never done it and I have been here for a long time. I might have been on voluntary leave for some time, but I have not forgotten what I am supposed to do. If I meet them at certain other places, I will feel free to express myself and in much more colourful language.

Mr. Speaker: I see you are looking at the Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams.

Mr. Ramson: Mr. Williams is a Christian. I would not dare. I say that they are sheltering under their jumbie umbrellas because these fungi are known to spring up overnight and have no permanent culture.

5.56 p.m.

I would let it be known that it is now common knowledge Guyana has been elevated to the world stage by no less an internationalist than the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. In the early days when I was growing up as a child, although I had the benefit of the P.N.C. umbrella, when one heard the word 'ban' one had to... It reminds me of the joke when the then Kabaka had announced to the public that he was going to 'Bangkok' and some of his lady members were very worried. Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement (W.R.S.M.) was up in arms. He had to remind them that he was going on one of his travels to a place called Thailand. I think it is Thailand. I still remember my geography. But that aside, this gentleman had seen it fit to name our distinguished and illustrious President to the Advisory Board following the Copenhagen Summit. I am advised that at a minimum - US\$30million will be available per annum from Norway. I see it is reflected in the budget too. Should the commitments of the developed world materialise, mainly from the United States of America and the European Union, US\$100 billion, Guyana would not have workers, the Public Servants would not have to complain about anything. We will make one big almshouse and put them inside. That will be accessible in the near future. One cannot keep on begging for things; one has to work.

It is my considered view Cde. Speaker, that the consequence of this schematic discourse is the realisation – this is very serious, I have not heard anybody say this - of value-added benefits without the unregulated

harvesting of the primary biodiversity resources. Translated into ordinary language is that whatever the imperialists world used to be creaming off of this economy - the primary resources - and then taking them overseas and translating them to value-added products, and then dumping them back on us, as Cde. Cheddi Jagan would have said. He was one of those who, I must record, alerted me to the fact that economic stagnation was specially designed by a hegemonic approach by the metropolitan countries.

Further, it is not without some significance that Mr. Hu Jintao, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China – I trust I have the right pronunciation - as far back as early 2009, during the Seventeenth National Congress, called for the building of “An ecological civilisation”. China, a country which is much maligned in the Western media for its purported human rights violations, has been acknowledged by universal approbation to be a major economic power soon, and is expected to overtake Japan in the very near future. This is a country which they say everyone... In recent times there is a refrain that communism is bad, that socialism is bad. But this country has suddenly become a major economic juggernaut, and I do not know whether it knows about capitalism. I know that it is strictly controlled. It is like the Cde. Finance Minister, the way he controls the economy - firmly.

Mr. Hu Jintao declared that as part of the plans to engineer a prosperous society - do you hear the words that he was using? It is a “prosperous society”, not that banana republic that the Hon. Member Mervyn Williams was talking about. Ninety per cent of his speech was about banana, plantain and sucker, like if he belongs to a banana republic. I am sorry he is not here. I do not know who he shadows... Is he a shadow Minister too? Well he must be a shadow of a Minister, because he certainly cannot shadow the current Minister of Agriculture. He is a shadow of a Minister. One needs to strike a balance between humanity and nature which are both subserved by economic development in the use of natural resources and the pursuit of environmental protection.

Do not those words ring true in respect of this *brouhaha* which was unravelled by the President, His Excellency at the Convention Centre? Sounds very much like if he had read this gentleman’s speech. His contention was that this philosophy governs relations between mankind and nature, mankind and mankind, and mankind and society. To achieve this balance Mr. Hu Jintao said, “Ecological civilisation is about protecting global, ecological security and sustaining human culture.” Is that not what the Copenhagen Conference was about? Global Warming...

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: I move that the Hon. Member be granted another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramson: (Some of them have forgotten that I have returned to the highest rank. They have yet to climb the ladder of success.) This reflects, I submit, the same vision adumbrated in Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), and given the recent turbulences in the global weather patterns with no relief in sight, there is ample evidence that any neglect of these warnings will be to the detriment of mankind. I must say that I must return to some of the wiser sayings of a gentleman who was the President of this country, and whose picture adorns this House. He told me once, and in colloquial language it is, "*hint ah Quasheba mek Quamina tek notice*". In this context we are reminded about the recent snafu generated by the calculated tactics of some of the rapacious bourgeois elements in the mining sector to create a confrontation between the small and medium-scale operatives in the gold industry, and this Administration. Be that as it may, the law is quite clear, I have done the research on it, and needs no further expiation in this Hon. House.

The forestry sector is no less a valuable element in the developmental component of the economy and I am convinced that the respective Ministers, if I know them well enough, will be astute in ascertaining the requisite synergy to ensure maximum benefits for all concerned. That includes, those people outside of the two sectors, which would mean people like me. These confidence building measures augur well for the future of peace, governance and stability of Guyana. With the gracious concurrence of my colleague which I obtained before writing this speech, Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, this effectively gives expression to the thematic underpinnings of the Budget 2010 - *Consolidate, Transform, Sustain*. I am reminded of this axiom of one, Mr. James Allen, and we may do well to listen very carefully:

“The law of harvest is to reap more than you can sow,

Sow an act and you reap a habit,

Sow a habit and you reap a character,

Sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

Do members remember a book called, *A Destiny to Mould*? Do some members want to have shared governance? Before they can share the governance they have to have the power, they cannot give away what they do not have.

In pursuance of the theme of these underpinnings I would venture to emphasise at the Attorney's General Chambers and Ministry of Legal Affairs, we have adopted a policy of circadian vigilance - a theme to which I referred in my presentation on the Legal Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2009, some months ago, but seems not to have been taken seriously by some of the sectors to which I had occasion to mention.

Circadian vigilance means that one must be on the alert 24/7, micromanage if one can, with a human face. With this in mind, greater focus is given to the enhancement of capacity, coordination of the various departments and the rationalisation of the work ethics so necessary to provide a service- friendly delivery system. In doing so it is anticipated that the bureaucratic and administrative overburden or backlog would commensurably decrease and provide a climate of acceptability. This is our goal. It would also encourage the kind of participation of service-friendly provision in the regular body politic as opposed to the dependence on perceived endemic corruption to which a person is alleged to be exposed at these offices.

We have had complaint after complaint about bribery and corruption, but nobody is willing to come forward and say let us stop it. So we are now moving in a direction to make a service- friendly atmosphere in the regular body politic. Hopefully, we will succeed with or without the help of the Opposition.

Cde. Speaker, the Ministry of Legal Affairs with the aid of the Inter-American & Development Bank (I.D.B), and I must take this opportunity to compliment the current representatives for the interest they have demonstrated in this area, has crafted an integrated system by means of Information Technology (I.T.) mechanisms which are intended to link the Deeds Registry, Guyana Office For Investment (GO-INVEST), National Insurance Scheme (N.I.S.) and the Guyana Revenue Authority (G.R.A.), thereby reducing the time for activities peculiar to these agencies. I will give some specifics in a moment which might make one's blood boil, in the right direction. It may be worth recording, here too, that among the legislative work done with the support of the I.D.B., were enactments providing for plea bargaining, paper committals, and audio/visual link ups in our Court. I understand that Cde. Ramjattan made some passing reference to these various areas of legislative activity.

One cannot blame the Ministry of Legal Affairs. It is just one of several components of a sector. The judiciary jealously guards, quite rightfully so, its area of activity, and any interference by the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General, especially if it comes to the public light... The current Attorney General has experience where he was made the subject of an enquiry in this very House. I had to defend myself in an attempt to censure me so that I would be removed from office. The man who did that has been removed by the then Opposition Leader. He is now the leader of a Party and he cannot even file a proper Court case. He misled the then Cde. Opposition Leader into filing a motion in here, and I say so proudly, that I had defended myself, and enraptured those who had not had a close familiarity with the law at the time. They said that I was indulging in unconstitutional activity. How dare they? Did they ever read the Constitution?

Anyhow it may be worth recording here that among the legislative work done with the support of the I.D.B. were these enactments, and the justice sector will in time be improved by more ready access to the Court - nothing is done over-night - a reduction in the time-consuming process of trial and pre-trial detention in the case of remands, another sore issue. This is another example of the service-friendly approach with these developments in mind.

Since 2008, this Administration has been providing budgetary support to the Guyana Legal Aid Centre which is constituted to ensure that legal aid is given to the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable persons. In the recent past these services have been extended to four additional Regions in our country; but they are still fighting among themselves - apart from Georgetown - which one wants to have hegemony, and which wants to have separate identity. I do not know why they have to do that, this country is too small.

Specifically with respect to children, that is persons below the age of eighteen years, this Centre was engaged in the Government of Guyana and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)'s Children Legal Aid Project, for the provision of free Legal Aid services directly to children.

It is also intended to increase the capacity of legal representation to accused persons under the provisions of the Court of Appeal (Amendment) Bill - Bill No. 12 of 2008 which is nearing completion in the Special Select Committee of this Hon. House. This piece of legislation is long overdue. Have you heard? The Bill is 2008, we are into 2010 now. But the dogged resistance of the Opposition M.P. is responsible for its delay. I am committed to the completion of the report before presenting it to the House. In fact, I have a drafted copy of the report which is lying on my desk. I am bringing it to this House for the Third Reading and passage of the Bill. Come hell or high water!

With the express consent of Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, my colleague, I wish to adopt and rely on the following insightful passage in his Budget Speech. I quote verbatim:

“Even so, I would admonish that it be less of an occasion for celebration and more of a reason for vigilance on our part. For, while the evidence of progress is plenty, the risk of reversal is never distant, and the remainder of the work is certainly not complete.”

Rather prosaic.

“We must, as a nation, never be complacent about the gains we have made. Instead, we must be unwavering in our resolve, unapologetic in our steadfastness, and united in our efforts to secure and build upon these gains.”

I wish to place on record my gratitude to my colleague for allowing me the opportunity to hitch my wagon to his train.

Let me give a few more specifics that may titillate memories for some time to come. As you know the Deeds Registry and the Sub- Registries at New Amsterdam and Suddie have benefited immensely from the Government of Guyana spending and project input. Through the Guyana and Threshold Country Plan Implementation Project a number of things were achieved. I do not hear anybody, mostly the lawyers who have been attacking us, saying how well he or she is served by my Ministry. An electronic searchable database of companies and business names... The officers no longer have to spend hundreds of years searching in cobwebbed cupboards and the lawyers do not have to go and pass a 'little thing' under the concrete, because the counter is all sealed off. [Mr. B. Williams: We should be able to access it from our office chambers]. Well I am given to a lot of mercy and some charity, but I refuse to support downright laziness.

Secondly, the Memorandum of Understanding, which I have referred to earlier between the G.R.A., GO-INVEST, and N.I.S. to link up all these agencies. They say there is no progress. What more progress? If it stopped there they should give me big applauses, they should all stand up. [Mr. Carberry: For what? For you to do your work]. Cde. Carberry, you are right. I am obliged to do my work. But do you notice that I am not running up and down with a placard every day - I want more pay! I want more pay!

Development of a standardised business registration form, and a web portal, fully computerised, computerising the company and business registration. Time to research a business name was reduced from seven days in 2007 to fifteen seconds by the end of November 2009. Thank God that Mr. Ramson came back. A significantly more streamlined and user-friendly registration process and a business handling unit were established with training being done now. All of this is with a view to having some more user-friendly and friendly-service arrangement being put in place.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: I move that the Hon. Minister be granted 10 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Ramson: Thank you Cde. Speaker. On this vexed issue about transports, they are now being generated from the computers, whereas, they had to be printed, and one was at the mercy of those people at the lithographic place, or whatever place they call themselves, and sealed with a red ribbon, an

embossed seal, with effect from 4th of May, 2009. Seems very conspicuous that since I have returned all of these things are being done. This system has subsequently been introduced at all the Sub-Registries, and business names certificates are also being generated from the computers at all three Registries. We do not need a typewriter now – a typewriter slavishly has all these ladies with their long fingernails punching the wrong keys and slowing up the progress. We just press one button. I can do it myself. I press one button and everything comes out.

Our Law library has been functioning on a daily basis. I do not know how the system used to work before I had gotten there, but we had to have it completely revamped with the aid of the Court of Appeal's competent Librarian, Mr. Maughn. During his vacation period I gave him a special consultancy to put my place in order so that I could readily access the books - and the Lawyers, Magistrates and Judges can go.

Another vexed issue is the question of inquests. All those deaths that were recorded in some dossier, I do not know whether it has any legitimacy - this dossier. I wonder who the compilers were. The compilers of that I do not know what legitimacy they have. We may have to put them through the polygraph test to see whether they have not been inserting things that were not there before. Some discernible progress has been made with those inquests, seventeen have been disposed of countrywide, fourteen are in progress and one hundred and sixty-three are ready for hearing.

There is a recommendation that I will make to the appropriate or - as a certain television personality, if they call him that, said that you have to get to the competent authority - the competent authority so that the magistrates who are seised with this kind of activity will be given an incentive to improve their productivity and production. A scheme will have to be developed either within the working hours or after hours. It is very tedious to hear that matters which touch and concern human lives are not given the priority that they ought to be given. But one cannot say that the Attorney General must go and do them. The law says the Magistrates must do them. I have known Magistrates in the past, in my thirty-eight years of services in this area of the law, and I can tell you I have not been unfamiliar with what is required of Magistrates. I remember Magistrates used to sit in the afternoons, not after hours, when they have finished their conventional chores in the morning - whatever you call it - because there is no big law in the Magistrates' Court.

I refused to practise in the country Court because it would never have any law spoken there. I will tell you a tale. There was a Magistrate at Sparendam; he is no longer on the Bench. There was a man who was smelling foul in the dock which was immediately behind the Bar table. It was on one of those very rare occasions, I went to Sparendam. The Magistrate was tending to all these people who came out of the lock-ups. By the time he was finished explaining to the Magistrate that he was pleading guilty, and he

gave his explanation, he said he wanted to go home and get the \$100 to pay the fine. The Magistrate said, “No, do not give me that, you are trying to smart me. You have to leave one side of your shoes.” and the man promptly took out an old yachting that did not have a front... Well the man did what he was supposed to do. That is the kind of activity that goes on in the Magistrates’ Court.

I am saying to this Hon. House that there are many Magistrates who have been recently appointed. I confess I cannot understand why it is that they cannot make a special effort in the afternoons to do all these inquests. An inquest does not take long. Sometimes there is not even a lawyer. There is no cross examination. There is a rip-rap thing, and a run through.

6.26 p.m.

I remember there was an inquest about the death of a famous politician, and there was a man called Bonny Limpy, he was the foreman of the jury. Well do you know what happened to that enquiry? It found that the man had died of natural causes. This time the man was blown up!

Do permit me merely to say that there is a lot in the pipeline, because the Cde. Finance Minister has allotted \$1.7 billion to improve the quality, and efficiency, and effectiveness of the service delivery. The emphasis is on service delivery. I will be finished in one and a half minute, Sir. There is going to be a mediation process. We are in the process of doing the legislation for that. There would be a reduction of about five thousand of the excessive number of cases that have been filed and the backlog by the end of 2010, hopefully. Mr. Speaker, you know of the Family Court, and we are establishing a new Court at Lethem because of the possible increase in business activity, and our expanding that Court, making it a little more conventional Magistrate’s Court.

Mr. Speaker: You have 2 minutes more Hon. Member.

Mr. Ramson: You would have appreciated it, Sir, that we have done a lot of reconstruction and construction of new Court in various parts of the country. But there are two that need our immediate attention, and both are in the process of being rehabilitated – that is the one at Charity, and the one at Leonora. The High Court will soon have some maintenance work. With that, I think I would have exhausted not only my time but whatever I had wanted to say. I thank you for the opportunity for so saying. [Applause]

Ms. Wade: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the debate of Budget 2010. The Finance Minister has come up with an impressive list of promises to be fulfilled in 2010 and beyond, but has totally ignored the fact that most of these promises are repeated broken promises and failed

implementations from the past budgets. I stand here as a guardian of my people's rights in the constituency of Region 5. It is said, "that those who do not learn from mistakes of history are condemned to repeat them." I recall that during the 2009 Budget Debate, I spoke of some critical problems which were affecting the people of my Region, generally. These were matters which required urgent attention, so that the people of my Region could enjoy quality life. To date, nothing has been done.

In Region 5, agriculture is our business, and we are looking forward to achieve an appropriate level of food security through sustainable approach in addressing the key obstacles faced by farmers and stakeholders. The limited resources must be used effectively and efficiently. Region 5 believes that priority must be given to development and maintenance of access roads; storage and packeting facilities for farmers; adequate marketing system for meat and poultry which is lacking, hence, causes farmers to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars daily.

If I should quote from page 17, paragraph 4.12, which boasts: "...of achieving our second highest annual highest production of all time,"

And,

"...the rice sector also recorded its second highest yields ever, measured at 70 bags per hectare in 2009, as a result of introducing new varieties."

The new varieties are always limited, in a shortage, Hon. Minister, in Region 5. Two, while farmers' education programme in the form of Farmer's Field School, some farmers have never heard of this programme in Region 5. The Field Officers or those in authority need to get to all the farmers, and not a chosen few.

The Minister went on to say that after the Government examined the issues related to trading of paddy, it successfully proposed amendment to the Rice Factory Act to improve the functioning of the market for paddy, and minimise difficulties which arise from the late payments by millers to farmers. The Government is confronted with the dilemma of having to ensure that rice farmers are promptly paid for paddy sold to rice millers, and is moving to improve measures which can lead to a miller or a group of farmers/millers deciding to wait out of a crop, thus threatening the ability of the farmer to receive compensation for over three months of economic and physical sacrifice.

My family has been in rice for several generations, and I have lived the issues from a farmer's perspective. I can state, that despite claims of higher paddy prices, and increased production and productivity, the rice industry has never been in such a shaky ground before.

I wish to remind this House of the panic experienced by farmers on the Essequibo Coast at the start of 2009 second crop, when they were offered paddy prices that barely allowed them to break-even the cost of production. The Rice Factory (Amendment) Bill introduced a measure that will result in millers, buyers by extension to be sanctioned if farmers are paid for their paddy in a prescribed time. Is this the solution? What happens if a miller/exporter decides to wait until out of crop? Would the Government take control of the mill? Would the Government take the paddy and mill it? Is the Government geared to undertake in an efficient manner the purchasing, drying, storing, milling and exporting according to this specific quality of hundreds of thousands of bags of paddy or the tens of thousands metric tons of rice?

Rice farmers understand what is happening in the industry. They are aware that the measures which are being introduced are of little consolation to the fact that they have heeded Government's call to produce, increase productivity, invest in machinery and other equipment. They are very vulnerable in terms of receiving an adequate return on the investment. The Hon. Minister must tell the farmers why an Agricultural Development Bank is not provided for, even though several requests were made, especially by small farmers. The grass-root farmers need machinery such as combines and tractors. These farmers are challenged by lack of timely and affordable and preparation services. Tell the farmers why the Government cannot reduce the costs of agricultural inputs such as chemicals, fertilisers, bags and fuel.

Is it that the Government is spinning its hopes on improving the situation on an injection of G\$400 million only? It was not by accident that during the P.N.C.'s regime, there was a Guyana Rice Export Board that successfully marketed rice abroad. This agency successfully positioned Guyana's rice, a product that was much sorted after, at prices that allowed farmers to live comfortable on an income derived from paddy sold directly to millers or by milling their paddy and selling their products and by-products. I wish to remind this Government that the rice industry belongs to us. "*Is we own*". I call upon the Government to prepare a comprehensive programme to move the rice industry forward, not one that is reactive to challenge that may arise from crop to crop, but one that recognises the commitment of stakeholders and the need to preserve their well-being.

The P.N.C.R.1-G. M.P.s took time off to talk to farmers and stakeholders to hear from them what their concerns were and for the way forward. Many of these farmers and groups advised that they have already spoken and expressed their concerns to Ministers of the Government, but to no avail. Government boasts of a series of consultations throughout the country. Yes, but what are the end results? The farmers' view as to what they would to see done for their community was ignored. One farmer reminded me that he had attended a meeting in June 2008 with the Hon. Minister of Agriculture to settle land disputes, and to plan a way forward. To date, he has heard nothing. The farmer was quite right. The Hon. Minister gave orders

that a Land Selection Review Committee be set up. I was a member of that Committee which had six months to deliberate; six consultations were held in various areas in the Region. We were on target. Farmers were happy because their concerns were heard. Compilation of the proposals made was sent to the Minister. Farmers are still awaiting answer from the deliberation of that Committee.

What happens instead is that farmers' names appear in the **Stabroek News of February 10th and 11th*, and are still appearing 2010, of moneys they owed to Mahaica Mahaicony Abary Project (M.M.A). The fact is, farmers have serious drainage and irrigation problems, especially those in the south of the main canal. Farmers have to pump water into their rice fields, day in and day out, and that is a costly exercise. They continued to lose millions of dollars. The Burma/Mahaica and Mahaicony areas have serious salt water problem. Despite all these struggles, farmers battled with real courage and determination to survive, because agriculture is their only means of survival.

Hon. Minister, names appearing in the press will not solve the problem in Region 5; mere talks will not solve the problem. The Hon. Minister in his presentation said that the budget is for people of Region 5, the small man and in the agriculture sector. I hope that this will be the area.

Energy Supply: The only main bridge without light is the Abary Bridge. On page 29, paragraph 4.53, the Minister alludes that adequate, and affordable and reliable power has long to be the concern of the Government. The Government has a chance to show its concern by ensuring that Abary Bridge receives same as a priority to eradicate the dangers as results of not having this service. The Government has a chance to show its concern to the homes and businesses awaiting a simple meter. The Government has a chance to show its concern to thirty-five residents who have never received power in Ithaca because their lands are not transported lands, hence no source documents to take to the Guyana Power and Light (G.P.L.); yet there are squatters in a neighbouring village who have electricity. The Government has the chance to show its concern to the residents of Number 30, Number 29, Number 8, Number 9, Calcutta South, Cross Streets who are still without electricity. There is no mention of these villages in the 2010 electrification programme.

A very disturbing area is the G.P.L.'s cost per person to receive power supply in these cross streets in my Region. The cost is always in the vicinity of hundreds of thousands dollars. This is torture for the grass roots. The Government needs to show its concern by brining relief to these people. What about the continuation of street lights along the public road. I think this is needed more than ever with the many ills which are facing our society in Region 5. Mr. Speaker, during the Ministers' Cabinet's outreach programme all sorts of promises were made, but to no avail, and so the people of Region 5 are very disappointed because it is a long time now.

Streets and Bridges: With regards the rehabilitation of streets Lovely Lass and Golden Grove First and Second Streets north of the public road, and bridges connecting these streets need urgent attention. Cross Streets in Number 28, Number 8, Number 9 and connecting bridges to the streets are in deplorable of the state. The bridge next to the health centre of Number 29 is very unsafe and the schoolchildren use that on a daily basis. The Cococabana Street in Belladrum area is badly damage as a result of contractors who were working on the sea defence in that area. This street needs urgent attention also.

Vulnerable Groups: The budget speaks of the Government's commitment to protect vulnerable members of society and that it remains strong. In Region No. 5, there are single parents women who have to go through life without any support or job. A few women who are completing courses and giving a little token or grants to start businesses, is just like joining the already established business that had to close their doors before because of no business. We have parents who cannot afford to send their children to school on a daily basis - the bus fare, the books, the snacks and the bridge fare are just to mention a few. Persons with disabilities continued to queue up for public assistance and sometimes to no avail. The workload is heavy on the Probation and Social Services Officers in Region 5, especially in the Subregion 2 of Region 5 - West Coast Berbice, with the increase of child abuse, domestic violence and rape cases. There is a great need for more Officers to be placed in this area. However despite the challenges, I say hats off to the two Officers in the Region. They are doing a good job in Subregions 1 and 2.

Youth, Sports and Culture: The budget declares that all things are bright and beautiful in the youth, sports and culture sector. Billions are spending, but I am saying that billions of problems are still remaining. The unresponsiveness in which issues are handled in cases that Government is not ready to work constructively for the good of the Guyanese people. Guyana needs a business competitive environment to create jobs for the jobless youths. Our nation's future is in a state of depression. The interest of young people should be the priority of a Government. Recreational facilities need to be addressed in Region 5.

School dropouts: they have nothing to do and whole day to do it; hence the increase in alcohol, drugs and gangs are the order of the day. The few Youth Choice Initiative buildings' doors continued to be closed. We have youths who have graduated from schools and other learning institutions, but have no jobs. We have youths who have come back from other countries as a result of offences they have committed, minor, yet they are labelled in the same category of the seasoned criminals. Some are highly qualified. One young man said to me that he had applied to the Ministry of Health for the position of Mental Health Specialist one year ago, and to date he has heard nothing. I am saying that some of these youths want a life. Urgent attention is needed in this area. Care is given not spoken.

The Hon. Minister Dr. Anthony spoke about parenting. I need to set the record straight when it comes to parenting. What he said, did not give honour to the Mothers' Union Parenting Programme which is a worldwide parenting programme. I know that the Minister responsible for the Ministry of Human Services knows this, as that Ministry is working along with the Mothers' Union of Guyana. The Mothers' Union is an Anglican women's organisation attached to the diocese. Mrs. Sharon Harper, the wife of the cricketer, is the worldwide parenting programme personnel. There are 10 such Regions in this country where the parenting programme is taking place. I am happy to say that I am a facilitator, since I am a member of the Mother's Union. We are doing well in Region No. 5. I have three other colleagues and we are taking the programme along. [Mr. Benn: Are men members of the Mothers' Union?]. Men could join too, so you could come along and join the programme next year and you will be that perfect dad.

Health: Why is it that the Fort Wellington Hospital is being sidelined, although it is an important institution in Subregion 2 of Region 5? No ambulance is at that hospital; there are poor lighting system, in adequate nursing and auxiliary staff; one doctor is housed at the hostel. The living condition is not conducive to him. He does not have a telephone in that house and he is housed there because the health houses are occupied by the Police Officers. I spoke about the houses in the Police compound in my last presentation, and to date they can all fall at anything. Nothing has been done. Mahaicony Hospital has a beautiful kitchen with all the facilities, yet meals for patients are being purchased on a daily basis.

Sea Defence: \$3.1 billion has been budgeted for sea defence in seven Regions, including Region 5 - 24 million for mangrove management project. The sea defence in Region 5 is frightening - I am living there - especially in the high tide season, particularly Profit to Number 29. Yes! Mangrove planting is important for Guyana. But I am wondering why only now the Government sees the needs for mangrove planting. This should have been done a long time, because the seawater is actually coming into the backyards of Region 5. The coastland of Region 5, I say, is presently unsafe.

Conclusion: The budget is saying to us that Government remains committed to the task of nation building and it will not be distracted from fulfilling its promises to better the lives of the people of Guyana. I say the people of Region 5 await the promises. We will hold the Government to the task by reminding it, from the words taken from the *Book of Proverbs Chapter 3, verse 27*, and it says, listen carefully,

“ Withhold not the good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of their hand to do it”.

I say thank you very much. [Applause]

Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Ms. Manickchand]: Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity. I have to say, before I begin addressing anything substantive, a warmest congratulation to you on becoming a granddad again with your first granddaughter, Sir, and to Minister Ashni Singh who has just become a daddy for the second time.

I wish to also add my own words of welcome to the new Members of Parliament Ms. Dawn Hastings and Mr. Joyston Pereira. I ask that they remind themselves, as I often do of mine, of the oath that they took, and to remember that it was not a P.N.C.'s oath or a P.P.P.'s oath, but an oath to serve Guyana and all of her people equally as to the best of their ability, without any fear or favour. I ask that every month they remind themselves of that, because it can easily be forgotten when we come here and we have rabble-rousing. [Mr. Corbin: Do you remind yourself?]. To answer Mr. Corbin, I often remind myself, I am forced to remind myself, because I am not inspired or challenged by the presentations of the Opposition, particularly in this budget. So, I have to keep reminding myself why I am here and what my own duties are. I am not relying on inspiration.

I, too, am a Regional M.P. for Region 5. I have to say that I listened carefully to the presentation by Ms. Jennifer Wade, Hon. Member of this House. While I heard in her hopes for Region 5, I also heard very startling revelations which I intent to answer now. One of which was that rice was doing so good under the P.N.C.'s administration. Sir, I was old enough, under that era, when my father was a rice farmer and I am traumatised to this day for the pain that rice farmers suffered under that administration. That was the administration which closed Guyana Agricultural Industrial Bank (GAIBANK). Under that administration, we had 90,000 tons of rice being produced in 1991. Now we have 359,000 tons of rice. The loans for the commercial sector, in rice, are one of the largest ever in banking sector right now.

Under the P.N.C.'s administration, we had 25% of the Mahaica/Mahaicony Abary (M.M.A) Project area cultivated. Now we have an excess of 80% cultivated. It was under that administration, I could recall lining up in front of Burma, as a little girl, for bag. When one had gotten bag, it did not have bag twine. When one had gotten bag twine one would still have to bribe somebody to get payment for the rice one sold to Burma. I remembered that, Sir. I am not suggesting at all that there are not improvements which can be made in the rice sector now, but for anyone to stand here and say that rice was doing better then than it is doing now, or for anyone to stand here and say that rice is not doing as well now, is someone who is not in touch with reality - realities of that time or the reality of now. I wish to specifically say that rice under the present administration, while there are efforts being made to improve the sector and improve the life of the farmers, and efforts are being made to improve the way they produce and their

produce is sold, and their families are benefiting from that, it has come a far way from where it was and it is proud of those achievements. Rice farmers know that too.

We heard of some of the problems Region 5 might have had. We heard nothing really good. For all the areas which do not have light, I would be first to say to Hon. Prime Minister, to Minister Robson Benn, to the Regional Administrators, let us do all that we can to light up those areas. But there are some areas that never had gotten electricity and never thought that they would, like Mahaicony, that did in the last two years. Into Mahaicony there are people, who never thought that they could have owned a television, just got electricity in the last year. When one is working with nothing, and one adds, and adds, and adds, it would take years before everybody can get. It is true that the Government would like to do all at the same time, but it has a limit, a budgetary constraint within which it could work.

Last year, in 2009, it was a good year for Region 5. In the Mahaicony dormitory, there was construction done to the tune of \$8 million that help to rebuild the dormitory. Prior to this construction, eighteen boys could have slept or resided in that dormitory. Now sixty persons can reside there. That means sixty of our students who are living deep downriver, sixty of our students from Moraikobe can now come and get an education in Region 5, at the Mahaicony Secondary School. There are also twenty-four girls who stay there, but with this improvement, it is going to increase the capacity to thirty-nine. The Government is providing for young girl children, those who, prior to these kinds of investments in our people, would not have gone to school, or would have gotten out of school early and got married, and done other domesticated chores or other chores that seem to be domesticated.

\$44 million was also spent at the Number 8 Secondary School to rebuild that school. The school has two floors which allow for a capacity of 600 children. In 2010, the Government will be completing the construction of that school - a wooden and chain-linked fence - and it will be providing furniture for an expected intake of students in September, 2010. Karamat Nursery School - this is the school way up the Mahaicony River at Mora Point - has been completely rebuilt. Prior to now, before it was rebuilt, it was a bottom house school at the bottom of the primary and secondary schools. It is now a separate nursery school that has been rebuilt away from the primary school. It is not affected by heavy rainfalls.

6.56 p.m.

There is also the St. Francis Primary School that will be extended to house a larger number of students. This is, if one knows his or her geography, way up the Mahaicony River - Moraikobe - that allows more of our Amerindian children to be more comfortable in our schools.

I do not know about any sidelining of the Fort Wellington Hospital or the Mahaicony Hospital. In fact, two new physiotherapy buildings were constructed at Fort Wellington as well as the Mahaicony hospital. It is known that the Mahaicony Hospital, which is brand new, also has now built-in enclosure to allow for persons to be dispensed with pharmaceuticals more easily. Three new pharmacy assistants are there; so that the line-up is a lot less than it used to be, and as Dr. Ramsarran had said earlier, there are eight new doctors.

Roads were constructed in this Region. [Mr. Benn: Yes?] Yes, roads Minister Benn. Thirteen roads were rehabilitated at \$41,500,000, twenty were maintained at \$50,200,000, and thirty roads were done by Public Works, Minister Benn's Ministry, at \$43,000,000. There were an additional twenty-one roads maintained at \$20,000,000, which amounts to \$154.7 million in Region No. 5. The Government also constructed the Blairmont Bridge which was a rotting wooden bridge. It is now a fifty-two feet long, and a twenty-six feet wide concrete bridge, and includes a four feet pedestrian walkway. This bridge facilitates transport of sugar from Blairmont, and it bridges Ithaca and Blairmont to the other communities. These were just some of the highlights of what had happened in Region 5 No. last year.

In addition to that, Region 5 benefited from the national programmes such as Single Parent Training. Fifty-two single parents trained in Region 5. What that training does? It gives people skills so that they can make their own lives. There were 165 young persons. We heard from Ms. Wade about single parents who are not given anything, or dropouts. The 165 children who were trained were mostly dropouts in our National Training Project for Youth Empowerment (N.P.T.Y.E.) programme; trained in a skill at the expense of the Government, because it understands that investment in our people means investment in our country.

Region 5 is going to continue to benefit this year from all of the national programmes: public assistance, pensions, training of single parents, building of roads and hospitals, improved medical care, agricultural inputs from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Government remains committed to ensuring that the rice sector and any other agricultural sector is protected and that it does so , in the circumstances given worldwide conditions, such as climate change, and what it can to make sure farmers and the welfare of their families are safeguarded.

The budget this year, presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, so very eloquently, provided for me, while I was listening to it, hope and excitement and it allowed me to feel as though we can continue with our programmes which started progress. I felt buoyant all afternoon. I listened to it, and then I started hearing comments from Members of the Opposition, Hon. Members of this House, and I truly wondered if we were talking about the same budget. The Government started to hear budget has no vision; it did not

consult on the budget; it did not talk to people; it just came here and presented a budget; it has nothing for anyone. I heard particularly senior Members of the Opposition making these kinds of statements. I wonder if something is wrong with me or something is wrong with them. I know why that so. Our vision, the vision of the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government, is contained in our *Manifesto*. It is contained in a document that in 2006 we went to the people of Guyana with, outlining the things we want to do and said to them, for example in the area of the Ministry of Human Services, these are the things listed on page 23 that we want to do. Give us your vote and we will do this over five years. The people of Guyana said here are our votes. Go, get cracking and do this over your five years. And consistently from 2007, 2008, 2009 and now 2010, we have a budget that has been consistent with implementing these policies and programmes that we have in our *Manifesto*. Here is our vision! This is what it is! This is what we are realising in Budget 2010.

I outlined a page – page 23 – that speaks of Human Services. All these ills we heard of yesterday - pensions, public assistance, single parents and domestic violence. Give me some more. We heard about all of those yesterday and we spoke to them all in this *Manifesto*. So I started looking at theirs because we are almost finished implementing everything we have to do. I started looking at the *Manifesto* of the P.N.C.R.-1G., and this is the *Manifesto* – very colourful, very glossy – and I am reading page after page looking for where it says something about domestic violence; where it says something about single parents; where it says something about public assistance and pensions. It did not say anything in its *Manifesto*, and... **[Interjection]** ...you got what you deserve, you are sitting in the Opposition benches. Does that mean there was no vision for the people who fall under the services that the Ministry of Human Services provides? Or does that mean they just did not care? So these people, the people who receive pensions and public assistance, mean nothing to the P.N.C.R-1G. And its crying on television, about wanting more, is really just crocodile tears. People know that we have a plan, a programme and vision, and they know that this budget is implementing that vision.

Mr. Speaker, speaking specifically to old-age pension: I heard Mr. Corbin, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, and Mr. Murray, the two very high ranking Members of the Opposition, both gentlemen I have a lot of respect for, speaking about old-age pension. I was a little surprised because there are other Members of their Party who usually speak on those issues so I was wondering why these two gentlemen spoke on this issue and said that old-age pension was not enough and it needed to be increased. Old-age pension has been increased consistently, consistently from 1992 to 2010! There are now 44,000 persons benefiting from old-age pension. The Government could easily give each pensioner \$12,000, double what he or she is getting if it were to cut in half the number of pensioners getting old-age pension. In other

words, if it were to give the number of persons the P.N.C.'s administration was giving, this administration can immediately double what they are getting.

Somebody said yesterday that I had said last year that pension was not supposed to be a sole grant. I said it. It is not a sole income – it does not expect that this would be the only income one gets before one gets it. One can own one's businesses. One can have children who support him or her. Under the P.N.C.'s administration, pension was means-tested, so that people like Mr. Scott and Mr. Nokta would not have gotten it; well Mr. Scott belongs to the P.N.C.R. One had to overcome all sorts of hurdles before one could have gotten pension. Some of which were very, very partisan. The P.P.P./Civic Government said that it was going to give money to every single person over sixty-five years, and this was going to be done across the board without any means test. For those persons who want to say this is a different time – because I heard the Hon. Member Norton was saying that - it is a different era; it was different in 1992. The position obtained that 20,000 people got pensions, and they had to be means-tested. As soon as Dr. Jagan took Office in 1992, by 1993 he had abandoned the means test and said that everybody should get pension. So it could have been done then. It just did not do it.

At that time too, if one looks at the entire budget for the Ministry of Human Services, in 1992 it got \$1 million, and its deals with vulnerable groups - old people, children and women. In 1992 the Ministry got \$125 million from the administration of the P.N.C.R-1G; the same people who come now and say that the Government does not give enough – \$125 million. Within a year, the Government had changed and Dr. Jagan's Government immediately, in 1993, raised that to \$465 million. It could have been done in that time. In 2010, the Government has a budget that is over \$5 billion for this Ministry, and that is care for people; that is service to people.

Old-age pension is really one intervention... because in addition to old-age pensions of which we are very, very proud, we will continue to give it to all of our old people, and we will as often as we can, as far as we can, increase the old-age pension because we love our senior citizens.

We heard from Ms. Sampson that the water waiver was being implemented in an ad hoc manner and it is being done in a haphazard way because not everybody was getting. The policy is simple. It is clear. It was written and said in English. If one owns his or her own meter as an old-age pensioner one will be entitled to the water waiver. All 44,000 persons do not own their own meter. All 44,000 pensioners do not own their own property. What they do is some of them live with relatives. We, as the Government, have not decided to pay for the water consumption of relatives of old-age pensioners. We say it is a benefit to the old age pensioners for their use and enjoyment, and so 17,000 persons benefit from that through the Ministry of Housing every year and we will continue that this year.

We also heard about the mistakes in the pension book printing. That is something I would unreservedly apologise for. Books are printed by someone whose tender is accepted. The Ministry invites tenders for printing of pension books and the bid at the lowest price is awarded through the Tender Board process. The Ministry understands from the printers that there was a problem with ink and one of the months had a slightly lighter colour. The post office, without consulting with the Ministry, just decided not to pay. That was most unfortunate. It was not necessary. The Ministry apologises for it. I believe the printer also should apologise for that also. As I said, it was not something that needed to happen.

We also heard from the Hon. Member that Guyana Post Office Corporation (G.P.O.C.) does not have money to pay pensioners. That was true as far as I know. A few years ago the Ministry met with the Post Office Corporation and spoke to it repeatedly and that, as far as I know now, has changed. If however, the Hon. Member has information about a particular post office where this happens then she should let the Ministry know by picking up the phone and calling it. [Mrs. Backer: How will she find you?]

The same way any other Member in the Opposition who needs something finds me. If it is discovered that there is any particular post office not paying pensioners, it will address it swiftly. Additionally, the Ministry will meet with two banks - the Guyana Bank For Trade and Industry (G.B.T.I.) and the Republic Bank - to expand its services and have them explore whether they can cash the old-age pension and public assistance vouchers. Those Banks are presently considering and taking this to their Boards. As soon as it is known whether it will be a new service, the Ministry will make that announcement. I would not be surprised though when we come here next year to say that Banks are on board – the Ministry met these Banks a few weeks ago - that we hear this is a suggestion from somewhere else. But it would not matter once the service is in place.

There has been a call for overseas persons who are of pensionable age to be paid an old-age pension. It is a decision Guyana will have to take. Other countries do not pay their old-age pensioners pension when they live in another country. If Guyana were to take that decision, then as a country Guyana will have to find in excess of \$4 billion more to accommodate these overseas pensioners. It has been decided if as a country Guyana can afford it or if it should be said to them “you are receiving a benefit already from the country in which you reside and so Guyana cannot help you here.” While pensions may be \$6,300 a month, with 44,000 persons on the roll, every month our country, Guyana with our budget and budgetary constraints, pays in excess of \$300 million in old-age pension - every single month.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard from the Hon. Member Ms. Sampson about public assistance. She quoted liberally from my presentation last year. Last year I said to you, Sir, perhaps I did not for the last three years including last year, articulate well enough the position about public assistance. Public assistance is

governed by law. I undertake not to ever tell you this again because if I cannot be clear now, then I do not believe there is hope for anybody else who is listening to me. But I wish to direct everyone to Chapter 36:02, the Poor Law Relief Act. Public assistance is governed by laws. We do not make them. These are laws that we inherited as a Government. They are laws I have inherited as a Minister. Public assistance Act says that “the Minister shall appoint Local Boards of Guardians” and these Boards are across the country. If somebody wants public assistance, then that person must apply to the Local Board and it must then decide whether or not that person is eligible. The Local Board considers the person’s economic circumstances, medical circumstances, and his or her family environment, and determines whether or not that person is entitled to public assistance. Section 25 of the same Act of which I spoke and it is in this House - and it is also online on the Government Information Agency (G.I.N.A.) website under Laws of Guyana, and I implore persons to read it so they can have a better understanding of what they speak when they get up to speak on these issues - says that every January and July there will be a review of public assistance. That clearly explains that this is not a grant for life. This grant is going to expire either in January or in July. That means when one gets it in August, in January it will expire because it will be reviewed. That means it is done; it finished. It is going to finish then automatically.

So to say that the Ministry is practising high-handed policies to remove persons from the register is totally inaccurate. Nobody is removed from the register; one automatically comes off at the end of the six-month period and this is said in the laws of Guyana. Did I say that clearly? I am not sure anymore. Irrespective of what qualified a person for public assistance, it expires in either January or July. Nobody is removed from the list and there is no high-handedness going on. When that is reviewed the person may well be replaced on the list or the person may now be placed on the new list.

There was an allegation too, that had me almost rising, although I do not like to interrupt persons when they are speaking, which said the Ministry sends a different list when the Board sends to it its list. The Ministry does not have jurisdiction to do that. The persons who determine who is going to get public assistance are the Local Boards of Guardians and when they send that to us... [Mrs. David-

Blair: Who is Mr. Mickle?] Mr. Mickle is a Social Services Officer that you should have some respect for. He is presently the Acting Chief Social Services Officer. He is also the *ex officio* member of the Board. If you read the Act you would understand that. The Ministry has no jurisdiction to remove anyone from the public assistance list. Those people could only be removed by the Board of Guardians on the recommendation of the *ex officio* officer who is usually the Social Worker. So that was wholly untrue.

There was also a call by the...

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: I move that the Hon. Member be granted another 15 minutes to continue her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Manickchand: The Hon. Member said that there was no representation by the Opposition on these Boards. That is wholly untrue. Hon. Member Jennifer Wade sits on the Board of Region 5. Hon. Member Jennifer Wade sits on the Opposition seat of this Hon. House. She does not sit as a Hon. Member; she sits as a Member of Region 5, and she is an Opposition Member in this House. On every Board across the country there is an Opposition person.

Mr. Speaker: Stop shouting Hon. Members. Let us proceed with some order.

Ms. Manickchand: The way this came about as the Act says, which I said we have inherited, the Minister appoints. When Dr. Jagan came into Office he had an agreement with the Opposition – something he broached as far as I understand - and he had said on all these Boards there was going to be some representation by the Opposition. The Government has not departed from this agreement. I have not departed from that decision and so the last Board that was appointed late last year. Every Board has an Opposition Member. If that is not true bring it to the Ministry's attention which Board does not. If a Party has expelled a Member and he or she is no longer part of that Party and the Ministry is informed then it will appoint someone who is still in that Party.

Last year we also saw an incredible child protection movement. The Ministry is deeply involved in protecting children. The Hon. Member Ms. Sampson started her presentation by calling for the Rights of the Child Commission to be appointed. I come back to making ourselves aware of what is going on and who is duty bound to do what. The Ministry of Human Services has no jurisdiction to hold any meetings for the Rights of the Child Commission. That is a Commission appointed by this National Assembly. I may venture to say that it might very well be this National Assembly that should call that meeting. It is not the Ministry of Human Services. But when we stand up and we say wild statements like that, who do we serve? Who was served yesterday by that five minute presentation about the Ministry of Human Services calling this meeting simply because it wanted to say something about a member of the Commission? Who has been served yesterday? Nobody has been served yesterday. It cannot call a meeting, that is not its business and the research can be done about whose business is it actually?

Last year, in July though, the Ministry launched the Childcare and Protection Agency. It removed in excess of 100 children from harmful environments. It integrated in excess of 100 children with their biological families and it fostered forty children. This year the Childcare and Protection Agency will move into its own building which will be more spacious and far more child-friendly. This, I believe, can

actually be a model facility for our Caribbean counterparts. In fact, Guyana has already been visited by its neighbour Suriname, and was called by other Caribbean countries like Antigua for it to be able to tell them how it was doing this; the snags it had, and how it has gotten to where it is. So they are using Guyana as a model. I do not care where you sit in this House; that is something you should cheer.

Legislations passed in this Hon. House: the Childcare and Protection Agency Bill, the Protection of Children Bill, the Status of Children Bill, the Adoption of Children Bill. This year the Custody, Contact, Guardianship and Maintenance Bill, and the Childcare and Development Services Bill which will be complementing the minimum standards and regulations will be published. Within the course of this year, regulations under all of the legislations that have passed will be published.

Additionally, there is the Family Court that is being constructed. Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan, the Alliance For Change (A.F.C.) and of this House, stood in this National Assembly and said that the Government has been talking about this for ten years and it could not get it done. This is a building under active construction in the High Court compound where Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan visits everyday because he is a busy lawyer. Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan can stand in his office and see the construction of this building and still comes to this National Assembly and says the Government is not doing anything about it. Who was served yesterday, when the Hon. Member stood and said that? No service is done to the people he has sworn to serve. That is why I remind myself daily of the oath I have taken. That must have been to mislead the persons who would hear that. But my question always is: when someone hears that and then passes and sees this building, what does the Hon. Member think he or she will think of him and everything else he says? Are the Members not ever concerned about that and the duty they have in this House to tell the truth? When that Family Court comes on stream, every effort will be made to use legislations which have been passed here, including the amendments to the Evidence Act and the Criminal Law Offences Act which allow for the use of audio/vision links, to conduct business in that Court.

7.26 p.m.

Last year, the Government also provided assistance for school uniforms to an excess of 36,000 students with \$55 million. That means 36,000 of our children, boys and girls, have gotten help to go to school and in that time, from then to now. It has been said in the National Budget which was read by Hon. Member Dr. Ashni Singh, that the Government is going to be giving every Guyanese schoolchild a uniform voucher. How could one stand here and question the good will of that? That is something one should have been shouting at the top of his or her lungs, from the rooftop, telling everybody to get onboard with this programme. The Government is providing for every schoolchild a uniform.

Mr. Speaker, there was also an indication by the Hon. Member that the Chairperson of the Commission of the Elderly said it was news to him that he was the Chairperson of that Commission. I do not believe that he said that because of two things: one, this gentleman, Justice Donald Trotman, spoke to me more than once about his commitment to the Commission of the Elderly. I have two documents, one from 2005, and one from 2008, appointing this gentleman – two documents – as Chairperson of the Commission of the Elderly. I am prepared to lay these over in the National Assembly. So I do not believe that he said that he did not know about it, as was represented to this House. [Mrs. Backer: That is what he said.

Are you saying that he is lying?] I do not believe it. I believe he knew and I do not believe that he said anything differently.

There was a question about what it is the Ministry is going to do for women this year. I am happy to say this is, perhaps in my tenure, going to be the year that most is done for women. This will be the year where women's development is going to take the front burner of the Ministry's agenda. This year, within the next two months, the Ministry is going to see a trade fair which it has started planning since last year, and in which local women are extremely excited about. Women could bring their produce out and expose to Guyana what it is that they sell, what it is that they make, what it is that they are good at in their own communities. The Ministry is going to be speaking to them the day after the trade fair to learn what some of their problems are in marketing their products. This will be done within the next two months.

The Sex Offences legislation will be passed shortly. It is presently before a Select Committee and is being considered by that Committee for report in the National Assembly.

We will continue to train our single parents who are mostly women, some of them are men, and continue with the empowerment programme for women. Again, I wish to point out that earlier there were statements that the Government was giving handouts to our single parents and that it must not give our children computers, it must empower their parents to buy them. That is what the Hon. Member said. He said the Government must empower our parents to buy the computers and the Hon. Member Mervyn Williams said that the Government must empower the single parents to help themselves and I agree. I agree that our Administration must empower people as much as it can. In every country, even the wealthiest country on earth, there are pockets of poor people, and if it fails to address those pockets and the lives of those people then it fails as a country. One fails as a human being.

So that, while the Government will continue on its development trend to develop the majority of Guyana, for all the people who cannot help themselves out of poverty, we, as a Government, are committed and we will continue to help them come out of that. We do not consider public assistance a handout. We do not consider pension a handout. We do not consider single parent grant a handout. We do not. I spoke

earlier of this very small budget which was given to the Ministry of Human Services. Perhaps that points to the Oppositions ideology on poor people: “Leave them alone in a corner. Let’s get on with the people who are visible.” We do not do that on this side of the House, and we will continue to help our people - single parents, old people, women, and children.

There also was an accusation that the Ministry is driven by power rather than kindness or service. I do not provide service so it could not have been me that the Hon. Member was speaking about. I do not provide day to day service. There are officers who provide that. If it is true that their delivery of service is not attended to by kindness, then I am prepared to deal with it. But when one says that officers are unkind, what one is speaking about is the whole Ministry and the Public Servants who work very hard there. If one cannot back that up then do not say it for the sake of saying something that is just absolutely rhetoric. If one can back it up that any officer has been unkind or has treated someone as though he or she is doing him or her a favour, bring it to the Ministry’s attention and that officer will have to show the cause why he or she should not be disciplined... [Mrs. Backer: Will that be including the Minister?] ...including the Minister.

I know my time is completely running out but there is one last matter I wish to address. That is the Supplementary Estimates. Everybody is coming here... not everybody, Members of the Opposition... Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan called it a quarter budget or a three-quarter budget. His colleague, an A.F.C. Member, parroted that and said something about Supplementary Estimates. Article 220 of our Constitution addressed this matter and it says that the Minister responsible for finance may make advances from the Contingency Fund through a Supplementary Paper. That is in the Constitution. The Fiscal Management and Accountability Act goes on further, and Article 41 says that the Minister can come back to the National Assembly by way of Supplementary Estimates for matters which have not been appropriated for, or where there is not enough money, and where the deferral would cause injury to people. The Constitution provides for it. The Fiscal Management and Accountability Act provides for it. I wonder, and the Opposition, P.N.C.R.-IG. is always going on about this, if I had to operate in an environment where something should come up in March, after the budget was passed, for example as has happened a year ago: Legal Aid is going to close its doors, and 2, 000 people cannot get service. I go to Dr. Ashni Singh or President Jagdeo, or to the Cabinet and say that this is going to happen, and either one of them says “Well you have to wait till next year Budget.” I would think that they are all mad. I would think that they are crazy people, because no Government that cares for its people could operate in that environment. It would be expected, as the law provides, that the Government can come back to the National Assembly by way of Supplementary Estimates, so there is nothing wrong with it. I do not understand what is this clarion call bellowing all the time about it.

I went back into the Library, downstairs; because I was truly wondering how it was that the P.N.C.'s administration functioned. I saw in 1990 the P.N.C. on the 7th November, Financial Paper No. 1/1990, Supplementary Provision; on the 23rd October, 1989, Financial Paper No. 2/1989, Supplementary Provision, it came for \$53 million; on the 28th December, 1990, it came, by Financial Paper No. 3 of 1990, Supplementary Provision for \$169 million. That is 1990. In 1991, it came on the 3rd December for Supplementary Provision of \$69 million and more. Financial Paper No. 2 of 1991, Supplementary Provision, it came for \$14 million. It had kept coming to the National Assembly for Supplementary Paper to approve funds. There is nothing wrong with that, because a Government cannot be stymied and not be allowed to provide service to the people to whom it has sworn to provide service.

Mr. Speaker: Time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: I move that the Hon. Minister be granted a further 10 minutes to conclude her presentation.

[Interruption] Do you want more?

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Ramjattan called it a half budget. I just want to point out that the Government budgeted for \$128.8 billion last year, and it did not spend that, so that it is not as though it added what it came to with that figure. All that Member came here to do is to vire and to say “the Government is not spending. This is where the need is.” What was the need? What was the urgent business Government came to do? To give people house lots. Yes, to house the nation. That is important. It is easy to chuckle when one has a home to go to tonight. It is easy to chuckle. That is what the Government came for, to give people houses. What did the Government come for? It came to give people roads. It came in Supplementary Papers to be allowed to employ more persons. That is what it came to the House for. I would respectfully submit that there is nothing wrong with it. The Government will continue to do what it has to do to serve the people of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007, the Government passed a national policy on domestic violence and it said that it was a five-year policy which had a term for implementation. There are many matters in that policy that have been implemented. Some of which I will name now:

- One, the Government has extended legal aid services, so any person across Guyana can access legal aid.
- The Government has funded Help and Shelter solely, so it now provides shelter for any woman who needs shelter.
- The Ministry has gazetted all of our Social Workers who can now appear in Court.
- The Ministry has trained all of our Social Workers who can now represent people with the Act.

The other matter that I wish to raise, the Ministry is also in the process of employing someone specifically to implement the policy and that is going to be done by the 1st of March.

Further, we heard yesterday about the three young girls who were molested and their matter was published in the *Kaieteur News*, and this was a horrible story. It was horrific. It is something that we must all in this House come together to stamp out. What is the difference now with these stories? These stories were happening for a while. They do not make them any better now nor then nor any time. What is the difference? Open it. You are showing me the newspaper. Open it and I will tell you what the difference is now from three years ago. The difference now is that one can find a Social Services Officer from the Ministry of Human Services involved in that matter from the moment it was published in the newspaper. The Ministry has something that it can be proud of. Every country has child abuse and domestic violence. How it deals with it will determine what kind of people we are. If we are prepared to come here and fight over how we are going to deal with something like that then we are not worthy of the seats we sit in. We will continue our struggle, I hope as an entire House, as a people, against this domestic violence court and against abuse of children.

The other thing we heard, just before I take my seat, was that the budget has nothing for anyone. Nobody in this House, nobody in the country could get anything in the budget. When money is allocated, \$13 billion and something, to the health sector to bring in medicine, and to pay doctors, and to build hospitals - that is something for our people! When money is allocated for roads to be built - that is something for our people! When money is allocated to the housing sector so that people can own their own homes - that is something for our people! When money is allocated to pay old-age pension - that is something for our people! When money is allocated to look after our women and children - that is something for our people! How could this budget have nothing for anyone?

The last issue I wish to... [**Interruption**] ...I am prepared to stop.

Thank you very much. I commend this budget to the Hon. House. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I would like to remind you that this Hon. Member is a new Member, recently sworn in and is speaking for the first time. Proceed Hon. Member.

Mrs. Hastings: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members of this House, it is a distinct pleasure for me to make my first presentation to this National Assembly. I consider it an honour, not only for myself, but for all the people of the Upper Mazaruni, including villages of Arau, Kaikan, Philippi, Chinowieng, Imbaimadai, Jawalla, Krubanang, Kako, Paruima, Waramadong, Kamarang, all of whom experience severe developmental problems due to their geographical locations. The mountains, dense forests and high

waterfall make it impossible to access these areas by boat. To this date there is no means of getting there by land. It, therefore, means that the only way of getting in and out of the area is by the mode of an aircraft, which many of the people cannot afford to pay for when there is a need for them to travel to the city. I hope, however, to take this opportunity granted to me by the P.N.C.R.-1G., as a Member of the National Assembly, to vigorously represent their interests and concerns. I equally look forward to the development of these areas as outlined in the Budget 2010. The Government states that it is interested in improving the quality of life of the people. I, therefore, hope that it will be responsive to the suggestions and the recommendations that I am about to make, so that indeed the lives of the people could be improved.

Allow me to refer to page 42 of the Budget Speech made by the Hon. Minister of Finance, which states that:

“...vocational training to the young continues to be a high priority, and especially for out of school youth...”

I also read the *Estimates of Public Sector Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2010, Volume 2*, page 234, which clearly states its objectives as: “To ensure equal access to quality education for all...”

And I repeat,

“...equal access to quality education for all children and young people of the region.”

This however has not been a reality for the past ten years and more.

Permit me to explain why I am saying this. There are eleven primary schools in my Subregion, nine of which consist of primary tops or what we may call secondary departments in a primary school; all of which are required to write the National Third Form Examinations just like the students at the general secondary schools. Sad to say, these classrooms do not have the necessary equipment, suitable furniture, text books, etc., and added to this most of the teachers are not qualified to teach at these levels. Yet the students are expected to perform efficiently and effectively. Most students, when they reach the third form, become frustrated and eventually drop out.

Is this how a caring Government ensures that all children and young people of the Region acquire quality education? I know the question will be asked, “What is happening at the secondary school which was established in Waramadong under the present Government?” I must acknowledge that the lone secondary school is striving for excellence under difficult conditions and situations. With a present enrolment of 500

students, there is the problem of overcrowded classes; teacher-student ratio is as high as 1 teacher to 120 students; overcrowded dormitories; inadequate water supply and sometimes none at all. Most times there is no electricity. There is a “solar power” that was installed in 1999 and to this date it is non-functional.

I can clearly remember sometime in the 1990s that a male student lost his life as a result of drowning. This was because there was no water supply at the complex. The children went to the river to have a bath, to wash and to drink, and when he plunged to have a bath that was the end of his life. In September 2008 there was another disaster, and a great loss to the people of the Upper Mazaruni, where three aspiring students lost their lives as a result of a fire. Mr. Speaker, you may want to know exactly what the nature of the fire was. I can only repeat what the Hon. Minister of Transport said yesterday, or some time in his presentation, that maybe, it was a celestial fire; a celestial fire which emerged as a result of an assumption that a student lit a candle to prevent darkness in the absence of electricity.

Can the Hon. Minister of Education, through Mr. Speaker say why is it, that after seventeen years of governance by the P.P.P./C., this situation continues to plague this school? The school does not have a science laboratory and a Home Economics Department, although this is seen by the residents as a priority.

The young people in Region 7, Upper Mazaruni, are clamouring for employment opportunity - for there are none. This budget has failed to address this very important aspect, especially for residents in the Hinterland communities. After pursuing studies on the Coast, when the youths return to their villages they cannot find suitable jobs and they migrate across the border.

I will now touch on health. With the \$13.3 billion allocated for this sector in the Budget 2010, I hope that the substandard works done at the Kamarang District Hospital will be rectified. I also hope that inadequate supply of drugs for malaria, diarrhoea and other common diseases, that occur year after year, will be corrected.

Recently young persons who are trained as dentex, dental therapist, and nurses, return to the area expecting to deliver quality health service to the people in the Upper Mazaruni. Excited by the arrival of dental chairs shortly after their assumption of the duty, they were eager to begin working, however, their excitement and motivation was dampened when they were told that the chairs had to be installed by a technician. The technician was believed to be transported on a *turtle's back* since it took him a whole year to reach Kamarang. Again, I am tempted to ask the question: is this how a committed Government intends to provide equitable access to the high quality health services to the people in the Hinterland?

On a recent visit to the district hospital it was reported to me that there were two mothers who delivered their babies during the night with no source of electrical light. The nurses and the midwives had to use

flash light which can pose a health risk to both the patient and the medical persons. It was further stated that one of the mothers was heard asking, “What is happening nurse? Are we still living in the primitive age?”

Against all that I have said, in concluding, permit me to make my recommendations:

- One, the Hon. Minister of Education, should either equip the primary top classes with relevant resources and qualified teachers so that the students can remain at their villages to study.
- Or, I recommend that a well furnished and equipped trade school be built in this part of the Region to accommodate students who, for some reason or the other, leave school at an early age.
- I also wish to recommend that the present secondary school at Waramadong be furnished with a science laboratory and a Home Economics Department, a resident nurse for the dormitory, and a School Welfare Officer who will be based at the Department of Education.
- I recommend that moneys be made available so that proper health care is rendered to the people of the Hinterland.

There is a saying that states: “One that is trusted with less can be trusted with much.”

Why must we, the people of Guyana, be made to believe that the Government which could not properly manage the little for 2009 Budget should be so happy and proud to tell the people that this year’s budget of \$142.8 billion will be managed to improve the quality of the life of the people? Hon. Members, do not quote me as saying the Government has not done anything in these areas, but whatever was done, was not done to the value of the moneys spent. Hon. Members, I must thank you once again, but there is much left to be desired. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member, and may I compliment you on your maiden speech.

Hon. Members, we are five minutes early, but I think it is time that we can take our suspension and we resume five minutes early.

Assembly suspended accordingly at 7.56 p.m.

Assembly resumed accordingly at 8.32 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, Hon. Members, I would like to apologise for the circulation of some offensive material by a member of our staff. There is a strict rule that the only material that is supposed to be circulated to Members of Parliament without my permission is material emanating from the Parliament Office. While sitting here this afternoon, permission was sought from me to circulate

material, which I granted. The offensive material was given to a member of staff who is not up to scratch on the rules, a fairly new member of staff, and the material was circulated without my permission, or my permission was not sought. I, therefore, want to apologise for the circulation of that material. I instructed the staff to collect and destroy the material which has been circulated. I hope that has been done. The material was circulated to Members of the Opposition.

Minister of Education [Mr. Baksh]: Thank you Mr. Speaker. As I listened to the debates over the last four days - this is the fifth day - I was struck by the fact that I cannot recall hearing any speaker from the Opposition benches who was talking about marginalisation. This was a term used in many, many budget debates - marginalisation. So it struck me that the Government has been delivering, and it means that many, many communities across this country, if not all communities, are benefiting from better services – infrastructure, education, health, housing and so on. That is the only conclusion I can draw, because that was the bogey term used in many, many debates in this Hon. House. So things are improving. The Government is not saying that things are perfect. This should be clear. But things are improving.

Of course, we have heard about corruption, and one of the Members from this side spoke. There is no doubt that there is some level of corruption like in all societies. There is some level of corruption in any society. But it is the perception of corruption which is gaining currency from these international reports, biased as some of them are, and so one is hearing corruption and so on. The budget that has been presented over the years for infrastructure development, for the social sector, has been making an impact. In the context of the Budget 2010, clearly the Government has done. It has done well in stabilising the situation.

In the context of the global financial crisis, where the developed countries... We know what is happening there - the downturn, the decline in trades and production, bankruptcies. Nearer home, in the Caribbean, where there has been a contraction in the Caribbean's economy. This must not miss our attention - 2.2% contraction as against a 3% growth in 2008. These are very important statistics. Whereas Guyana has achieved a growth of 2.1%, which means that it has not suffered in the same way as our CARICOM neighbours - in the tourism sector, in bauxite and aluminium there were problems; in the airline industry in Jamaica and so on. The Hon. Member Mr. Murray has sought to make a comparison between the growth rates of China - 8.7%, and India - 5.6%, to say Guyana has not achieved that kind of growth rate. But these are more developing countries, so to speak, with a stronger industrial base. We are not comparing like with like. In terms of the lower developing countries the Government recognises that over time – this is its vision. The vision is to grow this economy and to achieve 7 and 8% growth rate. This is the vision!

Look at the indicators in terms of the prudent management of the economy. The fiscal deficit reduced by 31.6% to US\$219.7 million – a very good indicator. Secondly, there is a balance of payments surplus of \$234.4 million as against the \$5.6 million in 2008 - again, a very good indicator. The external reserves have increased from US\$356 million in 2008 to US\$628 million, the highest level ever. These are indicators which the Government must emphasise more and more - the stable exchange rate; controlled inflation rate of 3.6%. And despite all of this the Government has been able to come here with the Budget 2010, and put up a very large budget to place emphasis on the physical infrastructure throughout this country - roads, drainage and irrigation, and these will create jobs. People have been asking where are the jobs? The Government has not been laying off workers in this country. All of these massive infrastructural work which will form the base of the industrialisation of this country will create jobs. [Mrs Backer: Where are the people for the job?]. I am coming to that. That is where the education sector will play a very key role.

Apart from the infrastructure development the Government has also been placing much importance on the social sectors. This continues in the Budget 2010 with an increase also in the education budget overall. With the education budget being increased it shows the continued commitment of the Government towards education in this country. And that cannot be denied. I am not going to quote the statistics. It is here in the budget - what percentage of the budget is for education, and what percentage of Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.). I have said this over and over - one of the highest rates among developing countries, which demonstrates a commitment, a strong commitment, of the role of the Government considers education must play in the transformation of this country.

Again, in this budget debate, I have not heard much criticism of the education sector, I must say. In terms of... I am coming to that very elusive contribution. When I talk about the 'elusive contribution', I looked at a dictionary for the word 'elusive'. As you know what 'elusive' means. It sounds nice, but it is all false information. I will come to that just now. But nobody attacked the policies, the programmes in education, which I was looking forward to. So it makes my task a bit easier here tonight. But when I recall the P.N.C.'s Education Minister, qualitatively, that is the late former Minister Deryck Bernard, in his contribution here, and I have listened to several contributions - as it is known, I have been in this National Assembly since 1992 - with constructive criticisms and proposals. It is a credit to him I must say. This is woefully lacking in the contributions... woefully lacking.

The Hon. Member Ms. Amna Ally was so bold to say that "there is no vision, no focus", I am quoting her words, "in the education sector." But for twenty years, to be exact, for twenty-five years under the P.N.C.'s administration - I do not like to go back, but I have to as a matter of comparison - there was no

Strategic Plan. Where was the focus? There was no Strategic Plan for the education sector. It is only the late Minister, who in 1990, brought forward and developed a Strategic Plan, and the Ministry has built on that. To his credit, the Ministry has taken that 1990 Strategic Plan, and every five to six years, it has developed and revised this Strategic Plan - 1995, 2000, and then again in 2008. The Ministry has a Strategic Plan. That Plan tells one about the vision and the focus.

The Hon. Member is in the education sector, and she should have read that Plan, because that Plan was circulated to all the schools - widely circulated. It is a good Plan, because that Plan enabled Guyana when it was presented to donors in Paris to receive US\$20.5 million to assist in the implementation of it, especially for Hinterland education. I will talk about that. I want to quote here. I have the final report from an Inter-American Development Bank (I.D.B.) Consultancy that came here only in December 2009, and - it is good to have external evaluation - this is what it had to say on the Plan: "The Strategic Plan, 2008 to 2013, is comprehensive and aggressive."

Not only "comprehensive" but "aggressive."

"It provides a well articulated overview of Guyana's system of education, its accomplishments and challenges..."

And I want to tell the Assembly that there are challenges. The Government is not coming here to tell the Assembly that there are no challenges. There are challenges. I will talk about that later on how the Members on the Opposition can play a role. "It clearly articulates..." That is the Strategic Plan.

"...the vision, mission, core values and mandates of the Ministry."

So, there is the Education Strategic Plan. That Plan clearly sets out strong indicators. It tells where the Ministry is and where it is expected to be in five years time. [Mr. Murray: Put it to the Parliament]. But you did not have anything to present here. I want to tell you some of the things in the Strategic Plan. I do not want you to leave the National Assembly tonight and say that the Minister has painted a rosy picture alone.

There are challenges. The Government has very comprehensive innovation and strategic interventions for the improvement of the education sector. [Mr. Murray: The people want result]. We are coming with the results just now. For example, the Ministry of Education wants in terms of Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (C.S.E.C.) subjects, Grade I to III passes, to move from 56% to 70%. That is what it has set itself, that kind of targets. There are targets for Mathematics and English. For English, the Ministry wants to move from 40% to 50%. I must state that already in 2009 Guyana

achieved 52% passes in English. [Mrs. Backer: What are the Grades?]. They are Grades I to III. You can phone the Superintendent of Examinations tomorrow morning and you will get the information. I am hoping that the Ministry can sustain that. I am being frank here tonight. In Mathematics, yes, Guyana had 25%, but this is a phenomenon across the Caribbean. One can get the statistics. But Guyana has interventions already in place and it wants to move the 25% to 40%. I am hoping that by the end of this period, it can get 50%, and it can go on and on.

For example, for the computerisation of schools, by the end of the period the Ministry wants all secondary schools to have computer laboratories, that is, by 2013. For the primary schools, 50% to have computer laboratories. These are the kind of targets: very strong indicators of the Plan. But they will call for a strong partnership. I must tell Members that. The Government has the plans, it has the policies, it has the programmes, but it needs a partnership of parents, and of the Opposition. This is what the Government wants. [Mr. Corbin: We have been working on literacy long before you]. I know you are making some contribution in Sophia. I am aware of that. The Ministry is supporting that. It is supporting the Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.O.s) like the Adult Education Association. (A.E.A.) - all of those. There are 15 N.G.O.s across this country on board, right now, in its literacy campaign, under the Fast-Track Initiative (F.T.I.) literacy campaign. It brought them on board - 'Wings On Words', or 'Words on Wings'. [Mr. Corbin: We will support you. But why you have not appointed the Chief Education Officer?]. I am coming to that just now. I have dealt with that before. The Ministry is moving with its Strategic Plan. So there is a vision and the mission. I have nullified that point about "no vision and mission".

The second point I want to deal with that the Hon. Member spoke about, is - and she glanced over it, this is not doing justice - "secondary level of education in serious trouble". I want to repeat, the Hon. Member said "secondary level of education in serious trouble." Without any data, how can the Member say that? It is an injustice to come here and make such a statement without giving any data to support it. Let me give the Members something about secondary education now. I want to compare, I must compare; a little comparison is necessary. The highest number of candidates which is showing the expanded access to education, the highest number of candidates to take the C.S.E.C. examination in 2009 was 10,200. It is three times more than under the P.N.C.'s administration. I know it had resource problems. In 1985, there were 3,500 students who had access to education and took C.S.E.C. In 1990 there were 3,800 students. Members must give credit, do not say we are not doing anything. This is what the Government has done, provided access to students at Philippi, Waramadong, Annai, Aishalton, North West Secondary - Hinterland, rural and urban. It is widespread. The Government has done a lot. It is

moving. [Mr. Murray: You cannot call an absolute figure, you must give comparable facts.]. I am comparing this with the statistics for the years 1985 and 1990.

In terms of overall performance in the Caribbean, I have some data here which shows clearly five and more subjects including English and Mathematics... How has Guyana fared compared to the other Caribbean countries like Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago? It is at number two: Jamaica is 19%; Barbados is 11%; Trinidad and Tobago 27% and Guyana 21%, achieved in the year 2009. This is the matriculation. Guyana is moving. There are challenges. It recognises that. These will give one entry into the University, for further education, jobs and so on. I want to give Members one or two more statistics even against private schools which have been making sterling contributions. But at the secondary level the public secondary schools have been outperforming the private secondary schools in this country. I am not talking about the primary level at this point in time. I can go on and on.

Look at the other statistics: five and more subjects. Guyana is way ahead of the other Caribbean countries - Barbados 13.2%, Trinidad and Tobago, 24.7%, Jamaica 16.7% and Guyana 33.9%. That is the information from all those countries. So it is moving ahead. There are challenges in the system. [Mrs. Backer: That cannot be true.] You can go and get the data from the Superintendent of Examinations. In secondary education, what have been done to improve? Because of certain weaknesses at the primary level, the Government has from the 1st September abolished all the Community High Schools and converted them into discrete secondary schools. The Ministry has a six-year programme in place. So it is expected over the next three or four years these figures will improve significantly, because it is concentrating on literacy and numeracy – 75% of the curriculum. This is as a direct result of the weaknesses at the primary level which the Ministry is rectifying as I speak. These are the figures, and if one needs further clarifications, the Ministry can provide one with those clarifications. They look incredible, but they are true. Those are the improvements at the secondary level.

There are challenges with the teachers. There is a high migration of teachers at the secondary level. Notwithstanding, that the Government has been training more teachers, and there are more graduates out of the University of Guyana through the release programmes that the Ministry has.

The next, what I call concoction, is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Development arm of the Ministry (M.E.R.D.) to be discontinued with effect from 1st May. The M.E.R.D. is functioning, headed by the Deputy Chief Education Officer - Development, who is going to the Regions to ensure more effective supervision of the school system. The M.E.R.D. is there. Workshops are being undertaken in all the Regions. M.E.R.D. will be part of the education legislation. M.E.R.D. is the Advisory Body to the Minister. M.E.R.D. is doing work at a regional level. [Ms. Ally: So what is the inspectorate?] The

inspectorate was a part of the wider M.E.R.D. as created. The Ministry still has an inspectorate. The inspectorate, and the Government has considered it, as in many other countries, Jamaica is doing the same now, has now been placed outside of the Ministry of Education. There is nothing wrong with that. In the United Kingdom it was done. It was done in Jamaica. This is the trend. The M.E.R.D. is there. Do not come here and say in this House that the M.E.R.D. was abolished or discontinued. It is an illusion to say the least.

I come now to the revision of the curriculum guides: not a part of the Ministry's programme. All our curriculum guides... Look! The secondary curriculum guides are here and have been sent to all the secondary schools. [Ms. Ally: I said it is not in the school system]. It is in the school system. It is on the website. Look, all of these are curriculum guides here! All the curriculum guides which we have in the Ministry of Education are based the year 2000. The Hon. Member should know as an educator that the Ministry does not revise curriculum guides every year or every two years - every 5, 10, 15 years, Jamaica is 15 years - unless the need arises. But the Ministry does have them, because how can the teachers develop a scheme of work in the schools. It comes from the curriculum. Again, an independent valuation was carried out by the Consultants. Hear what they had to say. I quote from the consultancy report. "Our work confirms..."

I want the Hon. Member to listen. "Our work confirms that the curriculum has been modernised..."

Listen to it! This is December 2009. [Interruption] They have done a survey. They came here and spent three months.

"Our work confirms that the curriculum has been modernised, and that substantial teacher training has occurred. Internal reports on the results of a survey of teachers indicate that the teachers are using the new methodologies. Teacher in-service training has been institutionalised, and a new teacher preparation, programme will streamline teacher training is being planned. The Ministry of Education has utilised technology to enhance the learning experience."

This is the way the Ministry is going. The Ministry is in the process of reforming teacher education with a US\$3 million envelope from the World Bank. It has made changes at the Cyril Potter College of Education (C.P.C.E.); changes to the Board where it has more members from the School of Education and the Board of C.P.C.E. It is going to reduce the time which is taken to get a degree in education. It is introducing.... The Ministry has some consultancies in place now to design curriculum. It is going to discontinue the trained teacher certificate and introduce in its place an associate degree at the Cyril Potter

College of Education. The Government is modernising education and keeping it in tandem with what is taking place in CARICOM. This is the way all the other CARICOM countries have gone - an associate degree and then two years thereafter one can go and have a degree at the University of Guyana. There is need to have more institutional strengthening. The Government grants that, and the Ministry is doing that.

[**Mr. Murray:** Yes, do not worry about quantity, you have to get quality.]. Yes, quality assurance systems will be in place; we will ensure that those are in place. I agree with the Hon. Member, quality assurance systems must be put in place, and the Ministry will strive to do that when it designs these programmes.

The Strategic Plan says within five years the percentage of trained teachers will increase to 70% – 70% from 60% now and, therefore, the Ministry has had to double up.

Last year 500 trained teachers came out of the system. The Ministry is increasing enrolment...

[**Mrs. Backer:** What do you mean “came out of the system? Do you mean migrated?]. They have graduated from the system with trained teacher’s certificate. The Hon. Member was condemning our crash programme - the crash programme to upgrade unqualified teachers who were in the system way back in the 1980s. What does the Member want us to do with them? Terminate their services? The Ministry has been working with them through the distant mode of education; the printed mode. All of these people in the Hinterland areas also. The Hon. Member should have spoken about the efforts the Government is making. The Hon. Member Hastings should know that the Government is making efforts to upgrade its teachers in the Hinterland because of the shortages. The Government accepts and acknowledges there is a shortage.

9.02 p.m.

So the Ministry is on the move, it has to train over this five-year period nearly 2,000 additional teachers. That has already started. It will have quality assurance systems in place. Like at the University of Guyana right now there is a co-ordinated approach between U.G. and U.W.I. on quality assurance systems. I share your views and your concerns, and the Ministry is taking measures to ensure that standards are maintained. There is the Caribbean Education and Training Accreditation Council which it has to sign off. Guyana must sign off to that so that it can have them come in and look at what it is doing. We want it that way, this year.

Now, I want to come to the question of the rationalisation programme. We had to rationalise...

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Baksh: The rationalisation programme does not mean that there will not be some under-staffing and over-staffing at some given points in time. It occurs especially in our Hinterland communities where it is difficult to recruit people. The Member is right, we have had challenges. We formed a teacher's volunteer programme. We have attracted some people. This year we are hoping to increase it to about 50 or 100. We have the rationalisation programme ongoing. As a matter of fact, sometimes we err to the over-staffing, because we recognise that teachers are released to go to the University of Guyana. We, the Professional Officers of the Ministry have done their job. You have stated that there is no professionalism. The professional officers of the ministry have done their job in rationalising the staffing in the system.

We do have shortages at the secondary level. We have shortages of teachers in science and in mathematics. We recognise that and we are working on that. To counter that, we have a special certificates programme monitored by N.C.E.R.T. (National Council for Education Research and Training).

Two other matters; I will not deal with all of the statements made by the Hon. Member. I think she is genuine, but I feel that the person from whom she is getting the information is misleading her. I really believe so, because if she can come here and say that 2 million out of 60 million, 58 million was set back for the S.C.C.P. programme. If she can say that and only 2 million was utilised then I do not know where she is getting that information from.

The figure is this; \$38,123,800 for procurement of tools and equipment was spent. 11,827,000 were spent on training and consumables for the technical education programme in our schools. The remainder of 27,281 was committed and not spent. This is the fact of it all. I do not know where you are getting your information from.

Budget 2010 provides for 940 million for T.V.E.D. (Technical Vocational Education Development). Two technical institutes will be built, one at Park Mahaicony and the other at Leonora. We are expanding technical education. The Hon. Member last year, Miss Sampson did make a good contribution. I took it back, and we created a special unit. I took her comments back to the Ministry, some of which I found very useful and it was implemented by setting up a T.V.E.D. (Technical Vocational Education

Development) unit staffed by some experience people, and expanding the T.V.E.D. system into the schools. This is the kind of contribution that I need as Minister from the Opposition.

We are expanding Technical Education and we are preparing youths for the world of work. It is now embedded as an alternative pathway in the secondary school system, and we will be introducing a Certificate at the Grade Nine (9) which is Form Three in the secondary schools. If a child drops out, he/she can leave with a Certificate in Vocational and Skills Training. This is a competency-based system that we have introduced. In the years ahead we will see some strong diligence. For the Hon. Member Ms Hastings, I want to tell you that the S.C.C.P. will be introduced at Waramadong for the next school year.

The Hon. Member talked about the need for more cluster advisers, but she is out of sync, because, the Cluster Advisers and the Master Trainers under the B.E.A.M.S. Project (Basic Education Access and Management Support) was discontinued. From the 1st September 2009 we established a literacy unit within the Ministry. We have regionalised it. The Hon. Member very devotedly attended about four sessions which I had here in Georgetown; at N.C.E.R.T. and at the North Ruimveldt School. Apparently it did not get through to her, my presentation did not penetrate. She sat down and she assimilated, because we do things in a participative way, consulting the Heads of the Schools across the Country and here in Georgetown.

The fast track initiative for which additional funds is in the Budget is moving apace. 9,000 children have benefited in schools, for one hour after school. That is strong remediation in the primary level of education in this country. The out of school youths, we also have programmes for them and adult literacy. There are a lot of challenges for the adult literacy programme, but it is moving ahead. We got the institute of Distant and Continuing Education from U.G. to help. They are all helping, and more and more it is happening. The Hon. Member is out of touch of what is happening in the Education Sector.

She then mentioned again that the part-time Lecturers at C.P.C.E. should also get the same increases as the G.T.I. (Guyana Technical Institute) lecturers. I want to tell her that all the technical institutes and C.P.C.E. will benefit from that increase. These are some of the things we are doing, and we have five main planks for 2010;

- The Teacher Education and Training Programme
- The T.V.E.D. programme which has been rolled off. We have to cover 70 schools by 2013. 70 of which as I said Waramadong will be one, St Ignatius will be another, schools in the Hinterland will benefit from this programme.
- We have the Literacy Initiative in place.

- The I.C.T. [Information and Communication Technology] programme as I mentioned before; all secondary schools and 50% of the primary schools, because we believe that the technology must be used to support teaching and learning in the schools. We have learnt from the success maker, where we had 14 schools, we now have 60 schools which will be in the programme this year, because an evaluation has shown that it is doing well.

I now come to one last matter: value for money. 80% of our Education Budget goes to the payment of teachers salaries. When we talk about value for money in Guyana compared to Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica, because of the state of our economy, as we grow we will put more money into it. We have other sectoral priorities. We are not spending as much per capita on secondary or primary education as the other Caribbean countries. But, we have been supplying free books, education is free, other learning resources are being given, school uniforms, we are creating child friendly schools and even the curriculum guides. Where is the value for money? The value for money will have to come, not from the Minister; it has to come from the operators in the education system, like the Head Teachers and the Teachers. There are many of them who are performing well. Thousands of them are on board with us, thousands, but still an unacceptable number. We have trained over 700 school managers: that are Principals and Head Teachers, over the last three years. So we are moving. Therefore we are now looking at penalties, the accountability for performance and stewardship of Head Teachers.

When the Hon. Member speaks about value for money, look at Redeemer School. This school has benefited and is fully upgraded. Only last week I passed and saw the spanking new sign. The head is onboard, she raised funds. The Government money was spent, but she helped through the P.T.A. (Parent Teacher Association). The Government gave money and we refurbished the whole of Redeemer. The grounds are looking spanking. I give credit to the P.T.A. and your work. These things have been happening. There is no teacher shortage at Redeemer. Redeemer also has all the curriculum guides. Let us look at the performance at the Grade 6 Assessment.

In 2007 at Redeemer 42% was the average score of the students for all four subjects at the C.S.E.C., below the 50%. In 2008, it was 41%, it dropped by 1%. But in 2009 it dropped to 32%. That is where the value for money must come in. The growth index dropped from 5.62 positive to minus 21.93 in 2009. That is what I am talking about. That is the reason why we must hold the Heads and the Principles accountable. This is what is happening.

Mr. Speaker: If I can get a word in Hon. Member, your time is up.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker I propose that the Hon Minister be granted another 10 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Baksh: Thank you very much. I now come to the Hon. Member Mrs. Hastings. I know she is new. She has made a good contribution, but being involved in the Education Administration of the Region she should have known and pointed out to this Assembly some of the challenges of recruiting teachers in those remote areas, like the Upper Mazaruni area. We are building teacher houses and so on. We recognise whilst we are moving towards universal secondary education through the establishment of discreet secondary schools and the provision of more places in those schools. We do have in the Hinterland areas the primary tops, they are weak. We recognise that, we are working towards improving it by the provision of more books. But, teachers are posing a problem. We have now decided since the last school year to give 30,000 as a housing allowance to attract people to go in there. We are giving the remote area incentives. We are building teacher's houses under the fast track initiative programme. We are providing transportation in and out. There is still a challenge. We are training teachers through the distance mode in the Hinterland areas; Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. We have the teacher volunteer programme, but yet there are problems. So when you talk about a science laboratory, this will be contingent. Whilst we would like to do it, I would work towards that, I want to promise her that, but we will have to work to attract the teachers. The S.C.C.P. programme, which is the T.V.E.D. programme from September, we will start that programme.

The Science; we will work on that, but it depends on the teachers. There are challenges. The Hon. Member should have told us about the tremendous problems. She would have been a part of the recruitment process in the Regions in the Upper Mazaruni, trying to get people to go into those schools. That was part of her job. She would have known the problems. What I am saying is that she should have given a little more balance to the presentation.

Home Economics, we also tried to start the home economics programme in September. We will try to get the school Welfare Officer there. We have them in the region. We are getting larger numbers. There is a difficulty. Not in the Upper Mazaruni, we have that in Region 7.

Mr. Speaker, we want all of you on the education train. The education train is moving fast, it is becoming a bullet train now. I want all of you to jump onboard. We have a song, "The Education Train", bring all the parents onboard, the Communities, the Opposition, Government leaders, everyone, the Education Train is moving.

Remain quiet if you want to hear this, or the time will run out. I think I have two more minutes. So if there is any heckling you will not hear it. I have stated on more than one occasion that the responsibility...I have said it, and you recognise the constitutional provisions. Do you want me to go and breach the Constitution of the Country? You have always said that we must uphold the Constitution. I am not responsible for the appointment of C.E.O. (Chief Education Officer) in this Country, nor the Permanent Secretaries, nor the Deputy Chief Education Officer or the Assistant Chief Education Officer. I am not, so I am saying that I cannot, that is the Public Service Commission. No request has been made, and this pernicious statement by the Hon. Member is the one I took annoyance of, about the politicization of appointments. What politicizations, you look at the top managers of the education sector and see, good professional people. You made one point, and I will get that clear, I will send you a note to that effect. That is a mischievous statement, pernicious, that the Minister told the acting C.E.O. that he did not want her. I will get a statement to counter that, because I have never ever said that. We will get the lie detector on you. Thank you Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

Mr. Lumumba: Thank you. Let there be peace. Mr. Speaker it is a privilege to be asked to stand before this Hon. National Assembly on Friday Feb 19th to present the proposed Budget as presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr Ashni Singh. This year's Budget is very special. It is special because it is the aftermath of the world recession which devastated several countries both, small and large, developed, under-developed and undeveloped. However, if it was not for the skills and sound management of the P.P.P./C. Government in 2009 this Budget would have represented a bailout package. That is important. If it was not for sound financial management by this Government in 2009, this Budget that has been presented would have been a bailout budget, but it is not. It is just a regular budget, and we want to thank the Minister for proposing such a good Budget.

This year it is not my intention to respond to the gloom and doom pronouncement of the Opposition. On the contrary, I want to emphasize that our proposed budget is based on this country's reality and represents the essence of the Nation's economic growth and political stability.

Even the deaf, the blind and the most unpatriotic persons in Guyana must agree that this little country was able to withstand the pressures of the relentless world economy. Punches were levelled at every citizen throughout the world in 2008 and 2009 yet our ability to survive, grow and work with our 2009 budget was based on prudent management, common sense and logical belt tightening measures. We did all of that and we still stayed close to the masses or our people.

Guyana was also affected by the high increase of oil prices. Guyana was affected by a reduction in remissions. At the same time, while most major companies were affected by the unstable economic order

our housing sector improved, our education sector grew, our infrastructure network grew, our health sector improved and our quality of life improved. At the same time, our commitment to the employment and support and productivity and encouragement to our indigenous people grew. In addition, while tightening our belts we still had money left over to give our brothers in Haiti 200 million Guyana dollars.

Our development and growth was not based on *Obeah*, luck or sacrifices to the oceans; it was the strength and wisdom of the government led by the able President H.E. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo.

I recognise in this Hon. House many of our brothers and sisters on the other side sometimes appear of the support to neologism. I want to explain that; they can only account what is right from the ideological masters. This Government does not get credit from the Opposition for anything, not even one out of a thousand. Therefore I find it interesting that often it is a European or American that has to voice or pronounce on an issue in Guyana before it is accepted by the Opposition.

Let me talk about the Millennium Project which is a good activity and can be used as a yardstick. I make this point, because often we go into projects and we go into activities and we do not get credit from the other side. But I am saying to the other side, we have got Europeans, we have got the *Massa* if you want to call it that, to say good things about this project. For example, Brother Malik Chaka, Afro American, U.S. Director of the Millennium Programme said,

“MCC also stresses country ownership and I think that this programme, the Guyana threshold programme is a sterling example of a country ownership. This was a programme that from day one was owned by the Government and people of Guyana. They provided the focus, they provided the participation of Government and they also provided a lot of the human resources that made this programme a success.”

It is very important that the Opposition understand that this is a gentleman that works for the American Government that said that this programme was successful. He is not a cane farmer, nor a painter, nor a doctor that came from Cuba. This is someone who works with Hilary Clinton who said this programme is successful. Let me go on for a few minutes. He said, “...let me look forward the success of this programme now...” What does that mean? Does that mean we can now go have a party? Does that mean we can celebrate? I would say yes, but only for a relatively short time. The reform process is just getting started. The reforms that have been implemented, in fact on the Agenda addition reforms must come and we agree.

That was an Afro American; I want to go now to a White American. The head contractor of the Minimum project in Guyana said,

“I think this project is significant for a variety of reason: one is the accomplishment, the second reason; it is significant because of its nurtured partnership, and the third reason; it’s strengthen momentum for reform.”

The Opposition has been saying throughout this Country that we are not interested in reform, we do not want reform. The people they have been complaining to, the Europeans and the Americans are now saying we are working with them for reform and we are willing to reform the system. He also said, "*I think the accomplishment is rather significant. The first is strengthening the budget process*" and this is coming from a previous Finance Ministry Official. So I gave that advertising up front. But the budget is the most important instrument of a Government policy, because our Government tests itself in the belief to govern by collecting revenue and ensuring those revenues are spent to fill the needs of the people.

I was able to stumble on a book produced by the I.D.B (International Development Bank). I make this point because the Opposition is very relentless when it comes to criticising this Government's performance. It does not matter if we show economic growth, it does not matter if we show roads, water, hospital, health centre, they still are critical. I want to briefly touch on this, a brief look at development in Guyana and I know the Leader of the Opposition likes to know source – Guyana and the I.D.B.: *Partners for Progress.* A summary overview of Guyana’s development phases – 1979 to 1990 – Negative Average G.D.P. growth of 2.8%.

9.32 p.m.

I am not going to say who was in power then, I refuse to go down that road, Mr. Speaker; 1980 – 80% of the economy owned by the State; 1982 – Guyana defaults on external debt; 1988 –economic recovery policy approved. Phase 3 – 1991-1997; 1992 – Elections signal a return to democracy, People’s Progressive Party wins majority after 28 years in Opposition. One of the authors of this document said:

“After achieving Independence from Britain in 1966, the young nation of Guyana faced significant economic challenges along its path to development. The country’s dependence on a few commodities, not only made it vulnerable to global shocks, but also led to certain political, social and macro-economic realities, even contributing to the deterioration of the debt profile in the 1970s and 80s.”

The Minister of Finance focused more on these issues but I want to comment on a few things, which I thought were improper and incorrect. One of the Opposition Member of Parliament said that the Government had the Amerindian people living in a primitive land. I found that, very distasteful because only a political vegetable would state that the People’ Progressive Party Civic (P.P.P./C.) has placed the

Amerindian in a primitive status. On the contrary, empirical evidence will show that the People's National Congress Reform (P.N.C.R.) had placed the whole of Guyana under primitive and inhumane condition. Empirical evidence – no roads, no potable water, no schools, no medicines, hospital and health centres, army without ammunition, lack of flour and baker shops, rigged election, no roti, no dhal. Now, tell me what is more primitive than the things I just mentioned.

Let me quickly mention what we have done for our Amerindian brothers and sisters. First of all, I want to begin by stating that the person who is in charge of our foreign policy in this country is an Amerindian.

I will quickly point out a few items as it relates to what our achievements were in 2009 and are these are not the kinds of things you do for someone who is primitive.

The allocation of \$488 million to finance both the current and capital programmes for the Ministry in 2009. Hosting of village elections in 139 Communities was successful and disbursement of over \$205 million to 159 Amerindian Communities for projects. I have a few more items, education in 2008; at least 14 structures, in health – at least 6, in 2009 education - 11, health- 8. So, I do not understand why this person would state that we have put our brothers and sisters in a primitive condition.

Much has been said by the Opposition about the funding by the Government for the installation of the fibre optic cable. The Hon. Opposition Leader, Mr. Robert Corbin, the rumoured future Presidential candidate, Mr. Winston Murray, the creature of the P.N.C., Mr. Aubrey Norton and the Alliance for Change (A.F.C.) car dealer, seem to believe that it is a crime to provide access of high speed internet to our schools, for the poor and the working-class people to get access to technology. These noble men have decided to compromise the education and economic development of the Guyanese people for political and economic relationships with Guyana Telephone & Telegraph (GT&T.) This nation recognises that the P.N.C. made an error when they sold GT&T for \$15 million and in the process forgot about the \$1 million in receivables and the millions in bank account which caused GT&T to run on the road, change the G\$ to US\$ to drive the value of the money up to \$190 – US\$1.

It is important that I show this linkage because the PNC did not make an economic decision. The P.N.C. was not about humanity. They were not about humanity then and they are not about humanity now. This issue of the fibre optic cable is about US\$100, 000 in a brown bag that was given to a certain P.N.C. leader but ended up at the home of the Prime Minister by mistake! We must show the linkage. The P.N.C. once again proves that they are anti-poor since they are against the Government decision to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. This issue of this cable is about bridging the gap between the rich and the poor.

Could it be right for only the children of Queen's College, Bishops and private schools to have access to internet because of its cost to parents - \$10,000 per month D.S.L. That is the GT&T fee. So when the Members of the P.N.C. decide that they are against a cable from the Government, which will provide a free service, they are saying clearly that they are on the side of the rich and not on the side of the poor.

Is it improper for the Amerindian child in Lethem to have access to this technology? Is it wrong for the Indian child in Corentyne to have access to this technology? Is it wrong for the Afro-Guyanese in Buxton, Belfield, Litchfield and Agricola not to have access to this technology? How can it be? Why does the P.N.C. want the majority of our people to remain backwards? Is it so that they can enlarge their bicycle gang? Is it so that they can forget the past that they are trying to disassociate themselves from? It is time they disassociate themselves from GT&T.

Call centres are presently employing over 2000 persons and it is our projection that this cable will create 20,000 new jobs. The Opposition must come clean on this matter. They must! Mr. Murray is a good friend of mine, a noble friend, who is dear to my heart but my friend Winston must come clean. He must clearly say that he is not a lobbyist for GT&T and he must argue on economic theory as to why something that could be free should be discarded and people must pay for it. He must argue economics on this. He must make a fundamental decision on this position or he will look tainted. I do not want my brother to look tainted, he is a good man.

It seems that – [**Mr. Ramjattan:** You are already tainted with the gold mining concession.] It was legal; I did not sell any vehicles illegally. You should be jailed. You are a thief.

Let us deal with employment and public works. The P.N.C. seems to have this backward economic notion that public works projects do not create employment. I am really disappointed. Let us to look at President Obama from the United States. One of the first things that he did to deal with the economic problems in America, he said: "...we must access public works funds..."

There is a relationship between public work funds and employment. He has put over US\$174 billion in public works for light rails, for roads, for harbours, internet etc. Why? To create jobs quick and easy. This Government did not have to wait on President Obama to tell us, we have been doing that for the last ten years.

My colleague, Mr. Carberry, had the nerve to speak in a critical manner of the bauxite industry and the role of this Government. Mr. Carberry, as the head of International Marketing and Sales for Linden Mining Enterprise (L.I.N.M.I.N.E.) and Bauxite Industry Development Company Limited (B.I.D.C.O.), was fired by Mr. Hoyte because of his incompetence. He knows he was fired from that position or if he

does not want to use that word, he was removed. [Mr. NeendKumar: Was it for AC?] I do not know why, but he was not doing his work.

Political dishonesty is the worst social disease in the world. The Hon. Member had a responsibility to inform this House about his status at that point and time in the bauxite industry. Mr. Carberry knows better. We worked together as Members of the Board of B.I.D.C.O. and he knew about the bauxite industry. He knew that the industry was losing money and he also knew that under the P.N.C., an agreement was signed by the P.N.C., the World Bank and the European Union (E.U.) that if the bauxite industry did not make money, they must close it down. This is an International agreement. When the .P.P. got in power, we said that we are not going to close it down because we are not going to punish the people of Linden. Mr. Carberry also knew that on two occasions there were attempts to privatise L.I.N.M.I.N.E. and both collapsed. Then we turned to O.M.A.I. The reason they turned to O.M.A.I., is because they were already involved in the industry in terms of mining, earth removal and the removing of burden. They gave them the contract and they came to an agreement, they did not mind and also because they had the necessary equipment.

Mr. Carberry also knew that at Kwakwani, the Reynolds took over from Aqua and they sold the company for US \$1 with the understanding that for one year, we could not do anything; we could not get rid of the equipment. He knew all those things. He also knew that they attempted to privatise the Bauxite Industry in that area and it collapsed. That is how RUSAL came into the deal. What is more important, is that when the P.N.C. had agreed to sell out the people of Linden, send them home and starve them, the P.P.P. came and said “no!”. We spent millions of US dollars per year to subsidise the industry and that is on record. That is the kind of information they must ask the Accounting General for.

People are very critical of this Country, our Government and our ability to manage. I want to make this point, throughout all the problems in the World; we have done better than many of our Caribbean friends and brothers. Unlike Antigua, we never wanted anybody to find money to pay our Government salaries for a month or two months. I want to read an article from the Barbados Advocate titled: The impact of economic and financial crises in 2009.

“Yesterday, the Central Bank of Barbados issued its report for the economy for 2009 and it showed that the local economy declined by 5.3 percent. It said that tourism receipts, remittances and private capital inflows into Barbados all declined. It further said that the crisis is estimated to have cost Barbados almost 10% points in economic growth over two years. It further said that the crises related loss of foreign exchange from tourism was approximately \$117 million.”

Let me quickly refer to an article in the Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance. It is interesting, I went through this magazine and after I heard all of the things that were spoken about this Government by the P.N.C., I got this magazine because I thought I would have found something negative in this magazine about Guyana. Listen to this:

“Two Trinidad and Tobago Banks, Republic and First cut lending rates... the Jamaican Central Bank has admitted that its support to the Golding Administration has reached 23 billion...A rise in unemployment is to be expected in Trinidad during 2010, the rate having risen to 5.8%...Two Indian based energy companies, oil and natural gas has pulled out of exploration in Trinidad... The Government of the Central Bank of Barbados reported that the net international reserves were projected to decline in 2010.”

I keep looking and I cannot find anything about Guyana. The only thing I can find about Guyana is when the P.N.C. criticised the government and it ends up in a local newspaper. Nowhere in the world does anybody refer to them because persons know that this Country is moving.

In closing, I want to state that I believe the time has come that if the P.N.C., as the Opposition, wants the country and their supporters to take them seriously, they should come here with an alternative Budget. Get an alternative budget, pass it around the country and let us have open debates instead of just waiting to pounce on every piece of meat. It means you are not doing your work. They are mis-quoting and giving wrong information. We will help you; we will open the Government ministries so that you will have all the information that you need. I promise you that. It is empowerment; they have to give you the information. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, this Budget Debate follows the pattern of many before. The Opposition comes to this House with the usual, anecdotes, rhetoric, catchphrases, speculations and aspersions, devoid of analysis or alternatives. The few that have been made are minutiae. In fact, statements in the media made by members of the Opposition show that they appear to be unfamiliar with what a Budget is. Some, in fact, are rather amusing. Statements that have been published in the press, such as, the ‘Budget lacks vision’, ‘Budget is not exciting’ and the ‘Budget is lackluster,’ illustrates two things. Firstly, they clearly do not know what the purpose of the budget is and secondly, the Opposition seems to be starved for excitement and they seem to be looking for it in the wrong place.

Budgets, in fact, are tools like an annual work plan facilitating the implementation of the developmental agenda, founded on the strategies, policies and programmes of the Government. Budgets are a reflection of a yearly incremental plan for the National Development Strategy, recognising that many developmental

agendas take several years to show or illustrate impact. The A.F.C. statement where they talked about having a plan, they are talking about one generation before you see the results. One generation is calculated between 20-30 years, so were they to get into Government, we have a long wait before we see the results!

The budget is the monetary reflection of the Government's policy, so you would not find a vision in the Budget. This 2010 Budget continues to reflect the building, layer by layer and year by year, of the national development agenda grounded in the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Development Strategy and now the revised Low-Carbon Development Strategy supported by a myriad of sectoral policies, programmes, legislative reform and a slew of reforms at other levels. Reforms on an economic base for the productive financial, public, parliamentary and justice sector, the expansion and provision of social safety nets. And, the purpose of the whole thing is to improve the quality of life of the Guyanese people. Hence the title of the Budget – Consolidate: meaning consolidate the gains that we have made as a country, as a people, as a government; Transform: that is to continue the transformation of the society, we have come from a poor developing country and we are moving forward; thirdly, we are sustaining the development to prevent anything from reversing what we have been able to do.

I wish to point out, that the Low-Carbon Development Strategy is the new updated version of the previous National Development Strategy. In that it reflects the global challenges that a developing country – that is Guyana – has to confront in a modern context in order to be relevant, viable and sustainable in the future. This is where the vision is, not in the Budget. The vision of an expanded and diversified economy to improve our competitive advantage, supported by an expanding energy sector which colleagues of mine have spoken about before – Hydro power, solar, etcetera. The expansion of the physical infrastructure, which my colleague Minister Benn, and others spoke about, to enhance communication and transportation and an expanded telecommunications sector are all to do with connecting and integrating Guyana. What my wise colleague, Mr. Lumumba just said, is absolutely correct. The integration and the interconnection of this country are about equality, about equalising. So, my friends on the other side missed the boat on this one.

Anyway, we have to be realistic. We have to facilitate local and foreign investments in our country. Does the Opposition have a problem with this direction of Guyana? Do you have a problem with the principles of where we are going as a country? What is it that you find flawed? Do not come to tell us about the appointment of a C.E.O., we are talking about the national development strategy of our country. What are you talking about; what is the problem with it?

The Opposition says that they oppose the Budget. Well, I warn you, my dear colleagues on the other side, that this will come back to haunt you because the Guyanese people will want to know how you are opposed to all the things that have improved their quality of life and would continue to help to improve the quality of their lives.

In fact, I have done a little diagnosis of what seems to be a political disease that the Opposition seems to be suffering from. I have concluded, after much consultation with the experts, that there is a political disease called “*NO-ITIS*”. You are the parties of “NO”, as President Obama also said about the Republican Party that he was dealing with in the Congress.

This 2010 Budget therefore continues to facilitate the building of the reform process and it gives additionality. Who are the primary beneficiaries of the reforms and all these programmes? The answer is: *The People*. Let us look a little bit closer at what it means to the people. Mr. Murray, in his presentation, talked about quantitative measurements, so let us try and see if we can answer his concerns. In 1999, the World Bank reported that 67% of the Guyanese people lived below the poverty line, which is approximately 450,000 people. The middle class had literally disappeared and the working-class was severely impoverished. Malnutrition stood at 54% of all children under the age of 5. Only 70% of the children of primary school age were attending school, 45% of secondary school age children were attending school, only 50% of the population had access to potable water, now by the way, it is 85%.

Do we not remember the carts being pulled by little children in the villages and in Georgetown looking for water and not going to school? Do we forget as Guyanese women in this House about the sheer drudgery of our lives of fetching water, collecting water, storing water and always wondering where the water is going to come from and if we are going to get any? Have we forgotten the hours and hours of women’s lives spent on this in this country? Every day that they were absorbed with just getting water to cook, bathe and wash? Anaemia among pregnant women was 75% infant mortality, according to P.A.H.O., was tagged at 57 per thousand children, poverty amongst Amerindians was disgraceful with the highest mortality rates for infant child and maternal deaths as well as Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Let us look at where we are now because my friend here talked about quantitative measurements, he talked about value for money. Well, let us look. We have to say that we have been able to reduce poverty by 35%; therefore, approximately 200,000 people who were below the poverty line have been able to rise above it and hence break the vicious sociological and economic cycle of poverty. Anaemia, malnutrition and infant mortality have been cut. Enrolment of nursery and primary school aged children is approximately 100%, completion rate at primary level is about 98%, secondary school enrolment has reached approximately 75%.

Guyana will most likely, it is projected, reach many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. When we talk about the Budget - \$142 Billion – it is about the investment, year by year, building layer upon layer to move this country forward and to be able to improve the lives of our people. For every person who comes out of poverty, every adult male or female who comes out of poverty and can get a house lot and be able to send their children to school, is the breaking of a cycle. It is not only their achievement but it is also the entire family that does better.

We also have to talk about one of the issues that have not been raised here. We are the only country in this hemisphere that has given absolute land titles forever to the Amerindian Communities of our country, representing 14% of Guyana's land mass. The P.N.C. talked about the thrust for development, but we must remember... I remember the days of "hydro or \$14 per day". Some of you on that side are too young to know about that. Choose hydro or \$14 and now they are coming to us, today, to second guess the whole issue of hydro power but they are looking now as if they are pontificating? But, they put to the Guyanese people in the National Park – choose what you want, "hydro or \$14 per day" – and they got neither, you fetched basket with a hole.

Our track record has been able to show that we have made tremendous gains and these have been accomplished through massive investments in health, education, water, housing and poverty reduction programmes, consistently...

Mr. Speaker: One moment, Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose that we suspend Standing Order 10 (1) so that we could conclude on the listed speakers for tonight.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, as a Government we had choices. In choosing to not have cost recovery in health and education - which was being advocated by the international financial institutions to the then Dr. Jagan in the 1994 period, as it was part of the economic recovery programme to have cost recovery - and this Government refused to agree to that and continued to have free public health and education sectors.

10.02 p.m.

Today 25% of the annual Budget is now air marked for these two sectors alone. This has resulted in the rights to access to education and health care as provided for under the Constitution. All this has been supported by a steady management, a prudent fiscal policy and practices. This is how we have been able

to reduce some of the level of dependency in a sense on foreign money whilst we still continue to look for concessional funding. We are able more and more as a country to finance many of these areas as a result of our own revenue generation.

The issues now are not the provision of the services as they are here now. The issues we addressed include, continuing the expansion of the economic base in what is an uncertain global financial environment and expanding the availability and distribution of goods and services and improving the efficiency and the effectiveness of the delivery of services and goods. Ironically, Opposition Members have come to this House dealing with anecdotes, blowing up what are some individual cases as if they are the norm when in fact they may represent a small percentage of whose cases need to be addressed.

No one is saying there is not room for improvement; no one is saying that. What we are saying though is let us get the big picture right. We are on a path which we believe that you in some of your statements also grudgingly play around. But you do not come to this Budget and say, we agree with this as a policy, as a programme to move forward, you very grudgingly make any statements that are helpful.

If we take one sector as an example:- Housing, which my Minister has spoken about, that one of the thing is that if 15,000 people got house lots between the years 2001-2005 this has benefited approximately 75,000 people. And what do we mean? You talked about quantitative measurements; unfortunately the economist has not been able to measure self esteem, pride and dignity when someone owns their own home. But they have been able to get security, they hold titles, they can now get collateral, they can have access to credit at concessional loans which the Government have been able to negotiate. It has contributed to a construction boom which the Minister refers to in his speech and has moved us from some of the traditional sectors into the newer sectors that will help to build this country. It provides employment for people both in construction as well as in manufacturing. We can now produce here zinc, PVC, wooden doors and a whole range of things.

Having listened to the Opposition I am now convinced that the media of Guyana seems to be the primary source of information for the Opposition M.P.s due to their own references in this Parliament. For the public that is fine but for M.P.s I believe we have a higher standard. Their reluctance to examine Government reports brought to this House, policy documents posted on websites, surveys and studies done by reputable international bodies are all available. Their reluctance to do so makes me wonder, is this a reflection of laziness, expediency, opportunism or something more sinister, who knows? In fact it appears as if the line taken by the Opposition has been lifted directly out of articles written by certain authors in various newspapers. One wonders if certain media houses are in fact the official opposition of Guyana and the Parliamentary Opposition here is a mere reflection of their agenda.

Not one presentation has been analytical, not one has enlightened this House or the public on their individual parties' National Development Agendas. What do they have alternatively to offer the Guyanese people? You see my dear friends on the other side, the danger of the politics of *NO*, is that it leaves one very little room; because you have made everything black and white you have given yourself no grey area to negotiate, to mediate. You have difficulties then being creative, exploring options and proposing recommendations on how to improve how the goods and services are distributed or what else we need to do.

My colleagues have spoken about the fibre optics and I have looked at the A.F.C.'s press statement and of course it is all gain saying, as they say. They want this, but, they want this, but. But anyway we will leave them to their own devices. Let us give an example of where the grudgingness and the politics of *NO* have become so dangerous. In the Memorandum with the Kingdom of Norway, something that could benefit this country, the people came here and met with everyone, all the political parties and the Opposition. All of them focused as if we were a banana republic, this white people's image of Guyana and all of us in Latin America, being a banana republic; full of corruption. And that's how you sold our country? As if we were just a bunch of little banana republics. This is the level of which your politics of *No* gets you into, Anti-National positions, where you cannot see the forest for the trees.

This case shows that there is a second political disease the Opposition is suffering from and I call it Political Myopia, with no personal thing being cast on anybody. It refused to even consider a look at Guyana's performance with the Millennium Challenge Threshold Account where our Minister Irfaan Ali referred to, on the corruption index which shows we made tremendous strides and where all the indicators in governance for Guyana is recognised Internationally, but not in this House by the Opposition.

I remember, the days when the P.N.C. was on this side and I use to sit in the gallery as a young P.P.P. Member and I remember listening to very hot debates. But where Dr. Jagan promoted critical support in the midst of rigged elections, proposed the National Patriotic Front Government with the P.N.C., also after a rigged elections. I also remember the raucous laughter that derisively responded to such alternatives to build trust and inclusion and move Guyana forward. What has changed? Has that changed since? Are you willing to deal with things from a national point of view, a patriotic point of view?

The P.P.P./C.'s track record illustrates that it has always sough even in the worst of times to find solutions on a national basis. This Budget reflects the willingness of the Government to compromise with the request of the Opposition during the debate. Unlike the experience in Regions 4, 7, and 8 with regard to the 2006 elections. I negotiated with your Chief Whip and your scrutineer Mr. Murray. It was suppose to be a one on one and we had a threesome. Unlike the experience after the 2006 elections with Region 4, 7

and 8 where agreements with the P.N.C. were broken by them before the ink was even dried. After 7 years, the bi-partisan Local Government Task Force became moribund. If we had to leave it to continue as it was going on, then there would never be Local Government Elections on the horizons. This is a classic example of when consultation and consultation leads to non action and when consultation becomes it just for that sake. We were put here to govern by the people and after 7 years we decided that those Bills had to come into the House. At least elections look as if they are on the horizon; they look closer than they have been for the last umpteen years.

In order for this country to make the quantum leaps required for it to move forward at a faster pace, will require a collective approach, more partners at all levels from communities, civil society, N.G.O.s, private sector, religious bodies, women, youth and Amerindian organisations. The Constitution in Article 13 provides for this and thus Guyana's model of inclusive Governance is unique. But this model is only 6 years old and it is evolving based on our own experience and political will. Our model of inclusive Governance as a people does not have a template that we are borrowing from any other country that we can superimpose on it, it is ours, it is Guyana's and we must take ownership of it and help it to grow. And move from being tentative into a trust building model for the future.

The policy of inclusion reflects itself in every policy issue of national importance. The levels of outreaches, Ministers meetings, sectoral meetings, the discussions on the PRSP, LCDS have occupied thousands of meetings with thousands of people. The National Stakeholders Forums which involved Members of this House included 13 such meetings in a matter of 20 months on major issues of national importance. We have talked about the lack of consultation in the Budget, but how can it be when all the N.D.C.s , elected officials, all the municipals and the mayor and city councillors, the regional democratic councils, the cabinet, sectoral ministries, state agencies, boards are part of the budget preparation process. Do they not represent the Guyanese population? Because there are decision makers in a variety of places, elected by the people in most cases.

I just want to deviate a little bit but it is very important that as Guyanese I believe that we are on the move. This country is on the move, it is an exciting time. I wish I was younger - that I did not have to between my youth and my energy at 24 years old have to be dealing with what I dealt with under another regime, and rigged elections! I wish I was that young age again to be able to give all my energy and intellect to development. But this country is on the move. Are you going to get on the band wagon or are you going to sit on the side and suck your thumbs?

Let us just pause for a minute again because I am talking about Nationalism and Pride and what is our humanitarian responsibility as people in this world. Let me just thank on behalf of the Government, on

behalf of all the members of the Haiti Relief Committee, Minister Manickchand who headed up that, thank all the Guyanese people, who with the generosity of their hearts and souls responded to the Haitian people. And it is a long road the Haitian people have to go and we will be called on all the time to find ways to extend help to the Haitian people. And let me thank the Parliamentary parties because they also participated generously.

Mr. Speaker one of the Members of this House made a reference to number 376 and I believe it is my duty to say something, because it has gone on records. You may not realise it, there are two versions of the 'Dossier'. The original 'Dossier' that was given to the press which did not include number 376 Sash Sawh, and included people who are still alive, who are supposed to be dead and torture, or tortured and dead, or extra-judicially killed. Then after my speech in this House the document was cleaned up and suddenly number 376 appears. So the old rigging machinery is still at work.

Since I have been called on to apologise, I will not apologise, I will not retract my statement but I also call on my dear Mr. Corbin, the Opposition Members, let us talk about the apology to the Guyanese people, about putting the Guyana flag on the coffin of a criminal called 'Blackie' and making him a hero. Then you wonder why the youth of this country are getting into violent activities? You set the model for them; you told them what a hero was.

I think my time is running short and therefore I would like to say in concluding Sir that the level of inequality in Guyana is lower than most other Latin American countries and you should look at the World Bank's poverty documents to be able to assess that. We are at number 7 of 22 countries in Latin America with lower inequality. This is the ratio between the rich and the poor, and we lower than Jamaica, Brazil, Haiti and a number of other countries because we are 7th in ranking out of 22. Therefore, there must be something right we are doing, where you do not have this terrible disparity between the very rich and the very poor. Anyone who have visited Latin America and visited the slums in New York will know exactly what I am talking about.

In conclusion the Government remains steadfast and resolute in providing for the people of the country, on building this country and moving it forward to be a model of development in our region. We are resolute in our commitment to inclusive Governance and participation. We shall continue to engage our people at every available opportunity and every available level. We will continue to govern for all Guyanese and make decisions on what is in the best interest of this Nation. We will continue to be judged by our track record and we believe that the people of this country can trust us with their destiny. Thank you. [Applause]

Mr. Chand: Cde. Speaker, I rise to support this 2010 Budget, the 18th Budget of the P.P.P./C. Administration, since its historic victory at the polls on October 5th, 1992, following the restoration of free, fair and transparent general and regional elections in our dear land. The Budget which is presented under the theme: - “Consolidate, Transform, Sustain” reaffirms the administration’s overarching objectives of safeguarding our economy and our country. Assuring continued economic growth, social development and further improvement in the lives of all Guyanese by implementing changes that would allow our country to be transformed into a truly modern and prosperous nation for which all Guyanese aspire. It is on these bases that the 2010 Budget was crafted. Since taking the reins of Government in 1992, the P.P.P./C. Government has been unwavering in its pursuit of developing this nation and enhancing citizens’ standard of living. Numerous projects and programmes have been executed over the past eighteen (18) years and today we can proudly say that our Nation enjoys a vast improvement in their quality of life as compared to two (2) decades ago. Indeed, the Government continues to be guided by the P.P.P./C. election manifestos of 1992, 1997, 2001 and 2006 to fulfil those manifestos’ commitments to ensure progress in our country.

We are not a Nation which can be considered anywhere close to the developed countries or even to rival some developing countries which are well endowed with many usable resources. In the case of our petroleum resources which are said to be located just off the Corentyne Coast, the Government ought to hasten the process to determine the commercial potential of this valuable and important resource and based on the findings then its exploitation should commence without delay.

So far, with careful and sensible use of our resources we have moved forward as a Nation. The fact is, unlike many other countries and despite the negative consequences of the Global Economic situation, the economy of our country is steadily improving, confirming that the decisions taken and implemented by the P.P.P./C. Administration are not only bearing fruits, but are in the best interest of our citizens across the country.

Since the P.P.P./C. took office in 1992, the annual expenditure of our Budget has been constantly increasing. The current budgeted expenditure of \$142.8 billion represents an increase of 10.7% over the last year’s budget which will bring much more needed financial resources to many vital sectors of our country’s economy. This expenditure will contribute to the further modernization of Guyana and ultimately redound in the enhancement of our citizens’ welfare.

The growth in the economy last year provides a yardstick by which we can measure our gains and successes. Last year, despite the global economic turmoil, our economy grew by 2.3% while the economies in many Caribbean countries and further afield were stagnated or recorded negative growth. I

have pointed out in previous budget debates, that a low single digit is not enough. Ideally our country ought to grow close to, or at double digits, bearing in mind the legacy of the poor state of the economy twenty years ago. With the gains, from an even better functioning economy reaching the people at the bottom, we would be able to improve the livelihoods of the ordinary working people and reduce poverty which is regarded to be still high at 36% in spite of the drastic reduction from 75% recorded in the 1989 Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

Social Sectors: This year's budget theme "Consolidate, Transform, Sustain" is appropriately chosen. The Budget will undoubtedly contribute to further strengthen and transform the economy. All stakeholders should not fail to make their contributions. All Guyanese for the good of themselves and for the betterment of the younger and future generations have a responsibility to work together with the Government of the day in order to improve our own gains and transform our country's economy for the benefit of all Guyanese, now and in the future.

One way to determine the impact of the Budget of the ordinary people is to look at the budgetary allocations to the social sectors of the economy. I now wish to reflect on this year's Budget commitment in the areas of Education, Health, Water and Housing, and poverty alleviation. This year Health is allocated G\$13.388 billion, Education G\$20.825 billion, Water and Housing G\$5.833 billion and Poverty Alleviation G\$14.246 billion all told consuming G\$54.148 or a remarkable 37.918% of this year's G\$142.8 billion budget. Never in the history of our land has such a large proportion of the Budget been dedicated to the social services. Come on Opposition give the Government kudos for its people oriented commitment. Such expenditures are far higher than the insignificant and miserable allocations in the years of the past regime and are significant indicators of the Government's commitment to the people. This expenditure serves to consolidate the people-oriented policies of the P.P.P./C. Government. Indeed they reflect our resolve to better the lives and the general well being of our people.

Billions of dollars have been spent in the housing sector between 1993 and 2009, thus allowing for thousands of Guyanese to become home owners. I wish to repeat some important facts I alluded to in a previous budget debate. With reference to the 2002 Census Report which observed and I quote: "the capability to construct homes is an indicator of a rise in living standard".

Further, the Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: 2008-2012 states and I quote:

"Guyana continues to make substantial progress in owner-occupied houses especially within the category of the poor..."

it goes on to say, I quote again,

“...more than three-quarters of the poor had their own dwellings in 2006 with adequate rooms for occupants and bathrooms.”

The Paper posits, that “the development of accelerated housing schemes with infrastructure subsidized by the Government and lower and affordable interest rates from New Building Society and other financial institution may have contributed to this outcome.”

The 2002 Census Report also stated that between 1998 to September 2002, up to 29,175 households or 16% of the total households in the country completed their dwellings, an achievement greater than any other similar period in the history of our country. Since the commencement of the P.P.P./Civic innovative Housing Drive in 1993 about 83,000 house lots have been allotted to our people who are now proud owners of their own homes. The housing policy of this Government undoubtedly seems to have fulfilled or perhaps surpassed the expectations of a past dream – the dream to feed, house and clothe the nation.

Education: It is said that education improves people’s ability to shape their lives – strengthening their functioning in society and contributing to their welfare directly. Investing in education is, therefore, crucial for economic growth and poverty reduction. It is on this basis, that G\$20.825 billion has been allocated toward this sector. The massive investment in this sector has allowed for a number of schools to be built and rehabilitated while considerable resources have been directed towards the provision of textbooks and teacher training. As a result, the 2002 Census Report stated that the attainment of over 90% enrolment in the primary and secondary school population realises the Millennium Development Goal Number II: Universal Primary Education.

Water: Water provision has also commanded significant attention since the P.P.P./C. Administration came into office in October, 1992 with significant resources being directed towards modernising and rehabilitating the sector over the last 18 years. This year, G\$2.7billion has been allocated in the budget in order to ensure greater access to safe drinking water. In a previous debate I made reference to the Guyana Poverty Reduction Paper: 2008-2012 which said: I quote:

“...the large investments in the water sector over the last 5 years have contributed to the provision of safe water throughout the 10 Regions of Guyana.”

In this regard, allow me to emphasise the words of the *Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2008-2012* which states, “...the significant progress made especially in hinterland and rural coastal communities has resulted in about 63% of the poor having access to potable water”.

Cde. Speaker, these investments in water have undoubtedly redounded to the benefit of our people with 75% of households in Guyana having access to safe drinking water as against 50% in 1991 according to the 2002 Census Report. Further, the Census Report states, “the decline in access to water through public stand pipes has declined percentage wise from 10.6% in 1991 to 3.3% in 2002 and in absolute terms from 16,321 households in 1991 to 5,949 in 2002.” The reports, the facts and the figures speak for themselves and point to the massive improvement in people’s welfare. Though the progress made in the last 18 years is remarkable, we readily concede, there is much more to be done.

Although there is still more to be done, it is rather remarkable that in 18 years, the P.P.P./C. Administration has taken 39% of our population out of poverty. The programmes in this 2010 Budget would further serve to reduce the level of poverty in our country. A country like ours, with an abundance of resources must ensure that poverty is eradicated or brought down to an insignificant proportion by the end of this decade. This is the vision of the P.P.P./C. Administration.

Sugar Industry: Our more than three hundred and fifty-two (352) years old Sugar Industry remains the cornerstone of our country. It remains the lynchpin of our economy and is appropriately highlighted in this year’s Budget. The history of the sugar industry reflects the history of our country and is making no small contribution in shaping the sociological, technological, economic and political life of our society. It was this Industry that caused thousands of slaves and indentured labourers to be brought to our country and their descendants becoming its economic lifeline. It is our patrimony.

To this day, the Industry is the largest employer in Guyana with just over 18,000 workers. Additionally, there are some 1,500 cane farmers who produce approximately 8% of the country’s sugar production. All told it has been estimated that the industry directly impacts on about 125,000 persons, whether as GuySuCo’s employees, private cane growers, suppliers or service providers, as well as their respective dependents. In short about 17% of our population depends directly on this vital industry for their survival. This underlines the central importance and significance of the sugar industry to the economy and society of Guyana as a whole.

10.30 p.m.

The industry’s performance since the great flood in 2005 has not been encouraging. The poor production over the last two years has certainly been disappointing.

In 2008 and 2009 the Industry produced only 226,267 tons and 233,735 tons of sugar respectively in comparison to an average of 319,000 tons between 2002 and 2004. However, the industry’s weak performance in recent years cannot and should not have been separate from Booker-Tate’s investment in

the sugar industry, in the later years of their contract. Booker-Tate which made more credit for improving the industry's production from 129,920 tons in 1990 to 335,317 tons in 2004, in the same manner, is equally accountable to the decline of the industry over the last few years. Booker-Tate, during these earlier years was better equipped to manage the industry as could have been seen by the quality of the work from the experts in requisite areas in the fields and factory operations. However coinciding with the change of ownership from the British to a South African entity a few years ago, the capability of the experts seems to be wanting.

Last year we sought the full implementation with the 36% price cut of sugar, exporting to the European Union with effect from 1st October, 2009. As a result the average export price of sugar declined by 13% according to the Hon. Minister of Finance in his budget presentation. Undoubtedly, the 13% decline as against the expected decline is attributable to the appreciation of Euro against the US dollars. On the 1st October last year, the 34 years old sugar protocol which provided preferential access for sugar into the E.U. ceased to exist. Although the protocol ceased to exist, the E.U. regime enters the transitional phase until October 2015, at which time the arrangement made under the Respected Economic Partnership Agreement will govern the trading of sugar.

Notwithstanding the challenges which confront the industry, our industry unlike those in the Caribbean has a bright future and excellent prospects. According to GuySuCo's turnaround plan submitted last year, the industry is expected to produce approximately 420,000 tons by 2013 and between 440,000 to 450,000 tons by 2018. By February next year, the Enmore packaging plant will be commissioned. It will eventually produce 40,000 tons of package sugar and ramping up to 60,000 tons by 2013 and 80,000 tons by 2018. Additionally, cultivation has had as much as 849 hectares expansion and there will be a commensurate expansion of that Estate's factory capability to produce the additional cane.

By the end of next year with the current mobilization of adequate field machinery, both the estate and farmers land expansion will be completed. In other words by 2012 the new factory can demand of 1.2 million tons will be satisfied therefore allowing for the production of 110,000 tons of sugar at Skeldon. The Hon. Member Mr. Murray, made some unfortunate and I believe inaccurate comments with respect to the sugar industry, he alluded that the Government has taken over significant debt from GuySuCo. Hon. Member is that so. I see, you were misguided, will the Hon. Member, since he made reference to it he must provide the evidence. He stated that the industry is being significantly subsidized by Guyanese tax payers. Is there any truth in this wild assertion? Or is it just wild? Could the Hon. Member provide the House with figures to substantiate the size of the subsidy if there is any? Surely he could not be referring to the 1 billion subsidy provided by GuySuCo to the local consumers of sugar. Approximately 24000 tons

of sugar consumed annually in Guyana and \$68,828 per ton this is 47,000 below the present E.U. price of \$115,822 per ton. In other words as a result of the lower local price, GuySuCo suffers a loss of \$1.128 billion in revenue annually.

Cde. Murray pointed that the current cost of producing a pound of sugar is 28 cents; he explained that this number was produced by the Minister of Agriculture. I am sure that the Hon. Member is quite aware that the recent cost of production is based on an extremely poor performance of the industry. If the industry were to produce sugar at 28 cent per pound perpetually, when it is only receiving 22 cents per pound from the E.U. for its quota of 190,000 tons the industry will be forced at this very moment to close its entire operation. In fact, since the crop commenced week ending February the 5th 2010, the industry has produced up to this morning at six o'clock, 23,768 tons of sugar as at today using an average of 10.5 tons of cane per ton, such a positive ratio would indicate a far lower cost of production than 28 cents per pound. The true cost of production can only be sensibly determined by taking the production and cost incurred in production when the industry is once again able to produce according to its current capacity.

At the end of this year when the industry will surely produced not less than 280,000 tons of sugar it will be shown that the cost of production will be much more than 28 cents per pound. Cde. Murray, in his address stated "the GuySuCo turned around planned makes it very clear that the future viability of the sugar industry is dependent upon the accelerating mechanization, and the plan called for 44% mechanization by 2014. In consequence the number of estate labours to be employed is expected to decrease from 18,528 to around 12,600 by 2015. In 2010 the number is expected to be reduced by 4000 as compared to 2008". There is no way on earth the cooperation will be able to continue business as usual in the sugar industry with 4000 less workers by the 31st of December this year, much less with the production of over 400,000 tons of sugar by 2013. The corporation I believe is addressing this concern about greater labour shortage in the future, at the moment the labour force is gradually contracting as a result of attrition. As at today the L.B.I. estate requires 3,000workers, this is indeed a challenge to the industry noting that widespread mechanise cane harvesting has severe limitations as can be seen from the experiments in the 1980s. Our coast being below sea level, the structure of the soil and the heavy cost of mechanisation will post severe challenges in attaining 44% mechanisation especially in the area of cane harvesting. The maintenance of reasonable wage levels in the industry, in order to be competitive with other employers must also be uppermost of in mind of cooperation. The sugar industry hopes to increase its production to above 40,000 tons annually.

Cde. Speaker, I wish to emphasise that the sugar industry ought not to be seen only from a bottom line dollar opposition but from a comprehensive, macro and holistic position or what it contributes to our

nation. Just imagine if the industry is to be done away what will be its replacement of all these social consequences that will certainly attend disclosure. The sugar industry remains an intrinsic complement of the economy. Many developed and developing countries continue to maintain their vital agricultural industries through appropriate intervention and support. These interventions are not premise solely on narrow financial factors but also taken into accounts economics generally and social and National relevance of the industry. The wider Guyanese nation must also take note that sugar is still pivotal to the national economy and the social wellbeing of our country.

Region 3: I now wish to turn briefly to Region 3, for which I am one of the Regional Geographical Representatives and Member of Parliament for the Region. I am pleased to see the steady progress over the past years. The significant improvement such as the lives and welfare of the approximate population of 103,000 persons, several roads, schools, bridges, health centres were either built or rehabilitated with several housing schemes have been established and ongoing. Last year, regional expenditure amounted to 214.5 billion of 98.6% of its 217.6 capital budget and 1.9 billion of 94.7% of its 2.1 current allocation. Worthy of notice in the education sector last year was the extension of the Endeavour and Common's Primary School of Canal No. 2. The rehabilitation of the Wales Community High School, Fort Island Primary School and the Clemwood Primary School in the Demerara River. Further certain works were done at Canal No. 1 Nursery School, Vreed-en-Hoop Community High School, Leonora Primary School and Blake Primary School, East Bank Essequibo while access routes were improved at Goed Fortuin Primary School, Two Brothers Primary School at Canal No. 1 Polar and Blankenburg School. In the Health sector it must be noted that there was the construction of three health posts at Fort Island, Saxakalli and upper Bonasika as well as the rehabilitation of the Leguan Hospital, the La Grange Health Post and the Den Amstel Health Centre. Additionally, the regional healthcare capacity was enhanced with the purchase of an extra processor, Electro Surgical Scalpel etc.

Drainage and irrigation was not neglected with a koker being constructed at North Hog Island and reinvestment in construction at Tuschen while quantities of drainage are also acquired. Additional roads and streets were built at Vergenoegen, East Bank Essequibo, Noitgedacht, Wakenaam, Stanleytown, West Bank Demerara, Fellowship and De Wittes to Henrietta, Leguan. Indeed, the list of improvements in the general welfare standards of the Region's population is long and I want to assure this House that this trend will continue year after year as in the case of other parts of our country.

What has become the promise reform in the income tax regime? In the 2003 Budget presentation on March 20th, 2003 the then Minister of Finance said "Mr. Speaker, while the Government was able to significantly increase revenue over the past 10 years a glowing anomaly and small contribution made by

the self employed. We are cognizant of the efforts made by the Guyana Revenue Authority including moral intrusion that these have met with little success therefore I wish to announce that this year the government will strengthen the income tax laws to enable to enforce presumed assessment on professionals and other category of self-employed persons”.

Seven years having past and we have not yet seen this reform. It is unfair and discriminatory to have thousands of self-employed many of whom earn millions of dollars each year and many of them may be sitting in this Parliament paying a pittance and income tax based on grossly understated earnings while payee employees are subjected to high level of taxation which is compulsory deducted each week, fortnight or month. It is unfortunate too that the income tax threshold remains at GY \$35,000 per month. The working-class had expected a greater threshold noting the severity of the various taxes which confront them. We look forward at last to the reform of the income tax threshold which we hoped will be equitable. By way of conclusion, I wish to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh and the dedicated hard-working staff of the Ministry for the excellent work in the formulation and presentation of this year budget. I am sure they will be continuing with the able management of the Ministry of Finance which will ensure our country’s greater success in the future. I wish therefore wish to commend this 2010 Budget and urge all Members of the House to support it so that we can get on with the task of Consolidating, Transforming and Sustaining our gains while safeguarding our economy and country with all-around goal and development for all Guyanese, thank you.[Applause]

Mr. Speaker: There is another speaker, Prime Minister.

Mr. Pereira: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I take this opportunity in thanking the Hon. Members for the warm words of welcome to this Hon. House. Indeed, it is a privilege and distinct honour. I rise to offer my support and to congratulate the Hon. Minister Dr. Ashni Singh and team for crafting the 2010 Budget. A budget which I feel targets the improvement of the lives of all Guyanese. I believe the theme: “Consolidated, Transform and Sustain” is so appropriate.

Permit me to highlight some developments covering the nine Amerindian villages; Bethany, Mashabo, Capoey, Mainstay/Waiaka, Tapakuma, St. Monica/Karawab, Kabakaburi/Akawini, Wakapau, all communities of Region 2. I take this opportunity to invite our Hon. Members of Parliament especially the Hon. Member Mrs. Punalall to address the concept of the word “primitive”. When she mentioned this word, my memories went back years under the P.N.C. regime when our people in health especially had to line up and when they felt sick they were all given aspirin. This has now changed and in all these communities that I mentioned you can either find a health hut or a health centre, where we can all have our basic medicines.

Through the President's grant all of our villages had the opportunity to decide and prioritise our projects done with the approval of other residents. These projects have certainly impacted the lives of our villagers. I must make it clear to this Hon. House that the spending of the grants given was not dictated by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs but was rather done under supervision and guidance.

I am proud to mention, that only two weeks ago I was able to purchase fourteen 6.5 gasoline engines that will boost the cassava bread and casareep production. This development will ease the burden and the tedious work for our women. As much as 500 pounds of cassava will be processed in less than half an hour. Our education system keeps improving, for it is evident in the Grade six assessment and the Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (C.S.E.C.) exams result. Again I am proud to mention, that in Wakapau our three schools are headed by persons born in Wakapau. Each school has at least three or four trained teachers. Capoey and Mashabo possess the opportunity for tourism. Mashabo is where the hot and cold lake is located. Presently, each household in these villages is powered by solar panels. And I am happy to say that the village of Tapakuma is included. Mainstay/Waiaka accounts for a beautiful resort and the pineapple processing facility. One can enjoy the tranquillity while visiting the heritage Park. Tapakuma, where the garlic flavoured cassava biscuit are produced encouraging farmers to venture into new cassava farms.

I am pleased to report that each of our nine villages now seek to venture into new projects that would enhance a better life for villagers. I must mention that importantly all of our villages in Region 2 have prepared our 2010 estimates. We are privileged, that on a quarterly basis our Toashaos meet at a hinterland affairs Committee of the Regional Democratic Council (R.D.C.) where issues affecting our communities are discussed. Village Governance is an area that needs strengthening; this area however is recognised by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Mr. Speaker in conclusion, I must boldly say that if we are to transform our communities and villages, hope must give way to faith and commitment. Our solitary goal must be to prepare the way for our future generation. I thank you. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you for a very effective and confident presentation, Hon. Member. This brings us to the end of our business for today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the House be adjourned until next Monday the 22nd at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly now stands adjourned until Monday, 22nd.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.52 p.m.