

# Official Report

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2014) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN*

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70<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Thursday, 27<sup>TH</sup> February, 2014

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*The Assembly convened at 2.10 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

### **Death of Mr. Kayman Sankar, former Member of Parliament**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are several announcements. The first is that I was informed, as all of you would have been, or would have heard of, that former Member of this House Mr. Kayman Sankar, who held the Golden Arrow of Achievement, died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014 at his residence at Hampton Court, Essequibo Coast, after a prolonged period of illness. Mr. Sankar was 87 years of age and entered the House in 1986 in the Fifth Parliament as a Member of the People's National Congress, for the first time, filling the vacancy of Mrs. Bissoondai Benny Prashad Raymond. Mr. Sankar continued in the Fifth Parliament as an ordinary Member until the Parliament was dissolved on the 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1992. As a mark of respect for his service and the life and contribution he made, not only to this House, but to the nation in general, I ask that we stand and observe a minute of silence. Thank you.

*Silence observed.*

Members of the press, a minute of silence is a minute of silence. If on any other occasion any member of the press seeks to lift a camera to take photograph or to move, I will ask that that person be removed immediately. A minute silence is a minute silence.

### **Writ of summons from Guyana Cricket Board**

**Mr. Speaker:** This morning I received this voluminous document which appears to be a writ of summons, number 29 on a motion of 2014, filed on behalf of the Guyana Cricket Board and 10 other plaintiffs, an action brought against the Hon. Attorney General of Guyana, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport and the Speaker of the National Assembly seeking declarations and orders by the court regarding the House's ability to pass the much touted cricket legislation.

I have not had a chance to read this document and I hold a view that the court cannot injunct this House from proceeding with the debate on the Bill. For my own part, I would like a chance, however, to read what is being stated here. It looks as if it is about 300 or more pages or at least a ream of paper. I do not know whether we will need legal counsel or whether or not the matter really is of no moment. Nevertheless, I do believe that some time should be taken. I did confer with Members of both Government and Opposition on the matter and it is believed that we could adjourn or defer today's reading, of course, subjected to the wish of the Members. I certainly being named as a respondent unfortunately, once again, have not had a chance to go through these 300 plus pages that were served on me this morning. I have urged the Members to consider a deferral of the second reading of this Bill so that we all could be advised, but that is not to say, and I am reiterating and restating, that this motion is in anyway a bar on this House and its ability to proceed. I take it that there is consensus that we will defer this second reading of this Bill.

### **New furnishing for the Chamber**

**Mr. Speaker:** I wish as well to announce, as Members would have observed, that the Clerk and I, after conferring with the Parliamentary Management Committee, have sought to make the Chamber more comfortable for Members by having new chairs put in. I know that there were some discomfort for some and I hope that we would appreciate the effort made by the Parliament Office. Hopefully, the desks will also be refurbished to make the Chamber appears more stately, in terms of the furnishing. The chairs are provided, we know there are some concerns and some complains, but we will address them. The overall intent, as I said, is to lift the standard and we hope at some time to improve the seating for members of the public and press. Even though they offend the rules, from time to time, we will be making sure that they are properly seated.

### **Speaker's Ruling**

**Mr. Speaker:** My third announcement, which I will make now, is that on or about the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December I did receive, at the hand of the Clerk, a motion filed by Mr. Carl Greenidge regarding the Hon. Minister of Finance. The Clerk and I have been conferring and also I sought advice of a senior counsel. My ruling is in fact ready and will be circulated, but suffice it to say, for now, I have found that for one part I will refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges and for another part I will not. My ruling, I am told, is currently being reproduced and will be made available for Members to peruse. Those are my announcements.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Report was laid:

Minutes of Proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2014. [*Speaker of the National Assembly - Chairman of the Committee of Selection*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I also take the opportunity to remind Members, at the break, that we will be having a meeting of the Committee of Selection to elect a Chairman of the Clerk of the National Assembly Special Select Committee. That will take place at 4.00 p.m.

## ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr. Speaker:** Earlier today the Hon. Member Mr. Winston Felix did speak to me about presenting some oral questions and he sent those questions to the Parliament Office at the expected time, that is, on or about 10.00 a.m. However, Mr. Felix, the request just asks for the right to ask questions and the specific question that you wish to pose. In fact, we were delaying our sitting waiting for you to come this afternoon because the Clerk spoke to me about it. We just have your request to ask the questions, but the actual questions, I really would have liked to sit with you, the Clerk and I, to see the specific question. What I could, after confirming with the Clerk, Mr. Felix, is to invite you to ask the question and then we will determine whether we would allow it to go ahead because you did give the notice indeed. I do have some idea, but in terms of the specific question, the practice is to set it out so that we would know whether or not it qualifies. I would allow you to ask the question, but it is depending on the nature of the specific question I would say whether or not you will go ahead.

**Mr. Felix:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, and I apology for my late arrival. I rise to ask one question of the Hon. Prime Minister, which was divided into three parts, concerning reports in *Stabroek News* newspaper issues on Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014 concerning an accident which occurred about 9.00 p.m. on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, 2014 involving hire car HB 7194 which was driven by Jageshwar Shivcharran and PMM 3860 which was driven...

**Mr. Speaker:** I know what Mr. Isaacs is coming to me with, without me reading. Any question or any issue regarding any Member of the House can only be brought up on a specific motion. I am sure that is what the Clerk is bringing to my attention. He is also referring to me the Standing Order on "Contents of question."

“(k) A question shall not be asked as to whether statements in the media or a private individual or bodies are accurate.”

**Mr. Felix:** Well then, Mr. Speaker, I may proceed with the question apart from the preamble.

**Mr. Speaker:** Let us hear it, but as I am saying that it is on two grounds. One, the conduct of no Member may be enquired into by this House unless it is under a specific motion to that effect. That is a specific Standing Order. There is a second Standing Order, which pertains to the “Contents of question”, that the private conduct of a Member may not be subject of a question, but if you may put your question in a general term...

**Mr. Felix:** Mr. Speaker, having regard to your remarks and to the apparent breaches of the law by the Hon. Minister, apart from the accident, it behoves me to ask the Hon. Prime Minister whether Members of Parliament on the Government side of this House are exempted from the law?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, it is on a Point of Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** I need to confer with the Clerk who gives advice on these matters. The Clerk advises, in his opinion, and I share it, that in the general term there is nothing wrong with the question but I will hear the Point of Order that is being raised.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Questions without notice are expected in the Order Paper and the questions are defined. This question is not urgent nor is it relevant to today’s business. Secondly Sir, it is so general that it has no purport in this House. This is a general comment and I believe that we are stretching the practices of this House into realms of unacceptability. I do not agree that under his first question...

The second issue is that if we are to follow the Standing Orders and if it is supposed to be the mantra that we cover in this House, first of all, it is supposed to be approved by you. If you are now starting a practice in this House, Sir, that anybody can come up with a question without notice on the floor and raise it, then, I think, we need to go back to the Standing Order Committee and start rewriting these Standing Orders because we cannot be holding them as our guideline and letting a Member, who should be cleared with you,... We, on this side of the House, have to inform you that a Minister is making a statement in this House and to advise you, one, that the Minister is doing so and, two, what is the subject nature. Under the former Speaker we had to actually give him the content of the speech of the Minister. You have been more gracious, but the point is the Standing Order states that the Minister must inform the Speaker. We cannot have a

situation where a Member of Parliament can get up under “Oral questions without notice” and ask anything.

**Mr. Speaker:** Ms. Teixeira, I think you have made your point on the Point of Order. I have heard the question and I did say that we would hear the question before determining whether or not it should be answered. The question has been asked and I do not believe that it should be answered. In any event questions are privileges fall within the remit of the Speaker, yours truly, and the Clerk, in terms of what privileges are enjoyed, if I can put it that way, by Members of the House, but the question must be considered urgent or be relevant to the day’s proceedings. Having heard, I would rule that there is no reason for an answer to be provided.

## **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HYDROPOWER PROJECT IN THE MAZARUNI**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]:** I rise to inform the House on the progress of discussions between the Governments of the Republic of Guyana and the Federative Republic of Brazil on the development of key infrastructure projects in Guyana under the rubric of Guyana-Brazil Cooperation.

On December 5, 2012 the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Infrastructure Development, with the aim of stimulating projects in the area of hydropower, road development and the construction of a deep water port. That Memorandum of Understanding established a Guyana-Brazil technical Working Group with a mandate

"to produce proposals for concrete actions, as well as timetables for the implementation of the following projects, to be presented to the Presidents of both States in the first semester of 2013:

- The construction of hydroelectric plants;
- Construction of transmission lines needed to distribute any energy

that will be generated eventually;

- Improvement of the Guyana-Brazil road link; and
- The construction of a deep water port".

After four meetings of the Joint Technical Working Group - three in Georgetown and one in Boa Vista - the Group submitted its report in July, 2013 to Their Excellencies Presidents Donald Ramotar and Dima Rousseff.

The Guyana-Brazil Joint Working Group recommended in that report the following:

- In terms of the Linden-Lethem road, to complement the work already done, an engineering design study of the road or an engineering designed of the road must be completed in order to advance the project.
- With respect to hydropower development, they recommended that pre-feasibility and feasibility studies be carried out at two sites in the Middle and Upper Mazaruni in order to make a final determination on the way forward.
- Concerning the development of a deep water port; it was recognised that the road and the port are separate projects but they are interrelated because the port will depend in part on goods coming out of Brazil, mainly the city of Manaus. It is estimated that this route will reduce costs associated with exports from the north of Brazil. The group felt that if there is positive movement with the road and hydropower development, there will be automatic interest in the port by the private sector.

Upon receiving the report of the Joint Working Group with the aforementioned recommendations, the two Presidents endorsed the report and approved the establishment of a Joint Commission for the Development of Infrastructure Projects in Guyana which would monitor the progress of the projects agreed upon. The Commission is chaired on the Guyana side by Ambassador Elisabeth Harper.

With regard to the development of hydropower, most Members in the National Assembly will know that efforts at joint collaboration between Guyana and Brazil are not new, they commenced soon after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1968. Several Memoranda of Understanding have been signed by successive Governments.

I now wish to inform the National Assembly that the Government of Guyana and the Government of Brazil have agreed to move forward with the studies that are required and as such Government of Guyana will commence briefings in the next few weeks with the parties represented in the National Assembly and other stakeholders, including the communities in the Middle and Upper Mazaruni, regarding the pre-feasibility and feasibility studies that are required to be undertaken. We will also be briefing the media. Needless to say, these are pre-feasibility and feasibility studies and no decisions will be taken until these studies are completed.

The House will be briefed on all further developments.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

**Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]:** Mr. Speaker, before we proceed, these are weighty matters. Is the Hon. Minister going to circulate some...?

**Mr. Speaker:** My understanding is that when a Minister makes a statement that statement is circulated and will be done before we rise today.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **BILLS – SECOND READINGS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we have several Bills for second reading but before I invite the subject Minister to introduce them I wish to just recognise in our presence, this afternoon, Mr. David Patterson, former Member of this Assembly and Mr. Calistro, known as the Mighty Chief, also former Member of this House who have join us and grace us with their presence. Welcome gentlemen, thank you.

**MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 2014 – Bill No. 4/2014**

A BILL intituled:

AN ACT to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act. [*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** I rise to seek Your Honour leave to defer the second reading of this Bill.

*Bill deferred.*

**CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (FREE ENTRY OF SKILLED NATIONALS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2014 – Bill No. 5/2014**

A Bill intituled:

AN ACT to amend the Caribbean Community (Free Entry of Skilled Nationals) Act. [*Minister of Foreign Affairs*]

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** This amendment to the Caribbean Community Free (Entry of Skilled Nationals) Act is yet another step being taken by the Government of Guyana to comply with its obligations under the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and in particular our commitment to the CARICOM Single Market by facilitating the free movement of persons.

As I have said before, the issue of free movement evokes different reactions by different groupings. In some instances, persons of certain nationalities complained of not being treated equitably across the region. Indeed several Guyanese have expressed disappointment with the treatment meted out to them when travelling to various CARICOM territories. The Government continues to highlight such instances at different fora and to provide the necessary representation for our nationals. I must indicate, however, that we have seen some improvements in certain places.

The recent landmark Shanique Myrie's ruling reminds us of the sacred duty to protect and safeguard the travelling public from unnecessary victimisation at the hands of those who manage our borders. Indeed that ruling has other implications for the community and these are being examined even as we speak. While insularity does exist in some quarters we must not cease to work towards ensuring that the integration movement benefits all of our people. Mr. Speaker, permit me though to use this occasion, for once, to reiterate that free movement within the Caribbean Community is not absolute. There are finite numbers of categories of skill persons who are permitted to travel across the region without requiring a work permit. As such, a work permit is still required from the respective countries if a CARICOM national does not fit into any of the approved categories.

Notwithstanding the challenges we encounter, from time to time, the Government remains committed to the ideals of regionalism and its fundamental principles and so Guyana continues to strive ahead in relation to meeting its regional commitments to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). What the amendments, before us, are all about?

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the House passed in 1996 the Caribbean Community Free Entry of Skilled Nationals Act, Chapter 93:02. That Act was amended in 2011 to allow for nine categories of skilled nationals. These being media workers, musicians, artistes, sport persons, teachers, registered nurses, persons holding associate degrees, artisans possessing a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) or an approved National Vocational Qualification and domestics who have obtained a CVQ. This is in addition to persons with degrees. Today we are seeking to further amend our Caribbean Community (Free Entry of Skilled Nationals) Act to allow for an even better and greater sense of belonging by CARICOM nationals by allowing the spouse and dependent family members of the principle beneficiary to be accorded similar rights as those granted to the principle beneficiary (who is the holder of what we call the Caribbean Skilled Certificate).

What are these rights I am speaking about? Clause 3 of the amendment provides for a skilled national to apply to the Minister to have his certificate verified. Now once that

certificate is verified and meets the requirements, the holder of the certificate can apply to the Chief Immigration Officer to remain in Guyana for a period of indefinite duration.

*2.40 p.m.*

It also sets out the parameters for the Minister to disregard a certificate, notwithstanding its verification, if the holder is found to have been convicted of certain offences.

Clause 4: the verification process can take up to six months and this is the time given in law. In addition, a Caribbean Community (CARICOM) national is given six months of stay at the time of entering Guyana. However, there is no provision in law to allow for the CARICOM skilled national to work while his certificate is being verified. So, if the certificate takes three or four months to be verified, because this verification would be taking place with other territories, then that person, unless he or she gets a work permit which is discretionary, would not be able to work. This amendment will allow him or her to work while the certificate is being verified within that six-month period.

Secondly, there is no provision in law to allow for the spouse of a skilled national to work once verification is completed and indefinite stay is granted for the principal beneficiary. If a skilled national from Belize comes to Guyana, in this case a pilot, and brings his spouse, his spouse can only work if she gets a work permit from the Government of Guyana and, as I said, that is discretionary. The amendment at clause 4 allows the spouse the right to work without having to apply for a work permit but that can only happen once his certificate is verified and once the principal beneficiary applies and gets indefinite stay.

In addition, with the passage of the amendments in clause 4, no restrictions would be placed on the spouse and dependents of the principal beneficiary in relation to their freedom of movement and freedom to leave and re-enter Guyana without further permission. In other words, when they leave, they do not have to come back and get a stamp with six months. It would now be automatic.

Mr. Speaker, as Guyana continues to grow, we will be attracting more and more skilled CARICOM nationals. In fact, I believe we will need them and we will need others. Already we have in the aviation sector, pilots and engineers from Barbados, Jamaica, and Belize and there

are more in other sectors. Guyana is a friendly country and we welcome our brothers and sisters from the Caribbean with open arms. So, today we are putting in these additional legal mechanisms to ensure that their stay in our country will be worthwhile.

It will be remiss of me if I do not mention that I am also aware, like all of us in this National Assembly, that we have our Guyanese men and women contributing meaningfully in other CARICOM states in which they live and work. There are judges, land surveyors, teachers, nurses, lawyers – I think your own sibling, Mr. Speaker – security sector workers, to name some of them. Unfortunately, it is the few bad mangoes that make the news at times, but we make a huge contribution to the region in many fields. I hope that our sister CARICOM states will also put these legislative mechanisms in place so that the dependents of Guyanese skilled nationals in those countries will be legally protected as well. In fact, all CARICOM member states that are party to the CARICOM Single Market (CSM) are required to do this.

I would conclude by saying that I fully believe that the steps being taken by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government is evidence of its commitment to ensuring that its legal obligations are achieved. Guyana has a proud history of ensuring full compliance with our regional obligation and today we are no different.

We have been checking to see whether these amendments have been made in other jurisdictions and we have not been able to confirm that they have been made into law as yet. So, Guyana could very well be the first country to be putting the law in place. I hope, as has been the trend in this National Assembly to support the regional integration amendments, that these amendments will be fully supported.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Ms. Selman:** I rise on behalf of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) to offer our support to the Bill – Caribbean Community (Free Entry of Skilled Nationals) (Amendment) Bill which stands in the name of the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett.

The only rock that stays steady, the only institution that works is the family. We know that strong families are the building blocks of strong communities and strong communities are the building blocks of strong nations. How can we be successful at our jobs without having a closer

bond with our families? The support of the APNU is premised on the understanding that free movement of whole families is a pre-condition to a common market. It is vital to the fostering of any integration movement.

The weakness in the Caribbean Community (Free Entry of Skilled Nationals) Act 1996 is that it created disconnect with families by omitting to include spouses and dependents in the Act. This Bill seeks to correct that deficiency.

This amendment is forward-reaching in that it seeks to make the society stronger by ensuring that the family stays together. This is facilitated by amending section 2 of the principal Act to include a dependent person and that includes any unmarried child of that person under the age of 18 years, under the age of 25 years attending school or university fulltime, or over the age of 18 years who, due to disabilities, is wholly dependent on that person, whether born in or out of wedlock, and includes a step child, a child adopted by law or a child of the family.

Clause 4 amends section 10 of the principal Act to give the spouse of a person who holds a Schedule 2 certificate, which was issued by a qualifying state and verified by the Minister, the right to engage in gainful employment or other occupation. It further provides for a person who holds a certificate issued by a qualifying state and who is granted permission under section 4 of the principal Act to enter and remain in Guyana for six months the right to engage in gainful employment or other occupation for the duration of that permission.

Even as we welcome this movement, the questions which loom are: how many CARICOM nationals and their families come here seeking employment annually? Is the Minister in a position to provide this answer? Are we creating the conditions that attract nationals from our Caribbean sister countries?

Though it is important that we pass the enabling legislations, side by side with that must be the conditions that would attract skilled nationals and their families to come and remain in Guyana. I wish, therefore, once again, to offer our support to the Bill.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mrs. Hughes:** On behalf of the Alliance For Change (AFC), it is my pleasure to say that we are more than happy to endorse the amendments to Bill No. 5 of 2014 – the Caribbean Community (Free Entry of Skilled Nationals) (Amendment) Bill 2014.

Guyana is honoured to have the seat of CARICOM within our shores. We feel that the amendments to this Bill and the promotion of the provisions of this Bill go very far to ensure that we build and develop our Caribbean Community.

Quite often, we in Guyana face the challenge of a brain drain and we see that on this occasion we could most possibly transfer and convert a brain drain to a brain gain. As we know, we have several individuals within the CARICOM region who are quite often migrating to other locations – in most cases in the developed world – that can offer more attractive salaries and terms of conditions. We are excited that on this occasion we are going to promote the Caribbean Community and encourage the people who have skills within the Caribbean to stay within this region.

We, therefore, are happy to highlight the benefits of a Caribbean and West Indian cricket team and we continue to see this as a means of promoting our skills within the region and keeping them at home. With those brief words, we are happy to support the amendments to this Bill.  
*[Applause]*

**Minister of Labour [Dr. Gopaul]:** I, also, stand in support of my Colleague, Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the presentation of this Bill to strengthen our legislation which has been on the statute books since 1996. It is a clear indication that while we amended that statute in 2011, we continued to see the need to improve areas where we can make life comfortable for our CARICOM brothers and sisters who are seeking to play a part in the development process of our country and to work here.

I am indeed pleased with the atmosphere in this House and especially with the presentation of our young parliamentary Colleague from the Opposition in her analysis of the Bill and in her presentation and support.

I am particularly pleased, also, that the other parliamentary party – the Alliance For Change – is supporting this legislation and I hope that we can find in our hearts the same type of

commonality in addressing other pieces of important legislation, which hinge on our relation with CARICOM, so that we can move and make progress in this country.

I, therefore, want to indicate clearly that while we are making provisions in our law to welcome our brothers and sisters from other CARICOM countries, we equally expect reciprocal arrangements in those countries so that our colleagues who are moving from Guyana and are interested in working within the CARICOM region can equally find access unhindered in their quest for employment opportunities.

The CARICOM Community cannot be developed or cannot improve unless our skilled persons are allowed easy access to work and to share their knowledge within the region. The more our skills move around, the more we are able to assess best practices, to understand each other's mode and method of production so we will be able to benefit from a learning process in which each of us teach each other on our way of doing things.

This is yet another piece of legislation by the PPP/C Government to ensure that we are acting consistent with the requirements of the CARICOM Community. We continue to do so. While I hear that we may very well be the first to pass this piece of legislation, we have also taken the lead in the ratification of Convention 189 on Domestic Workers within CARICOM and equally taken the lead in the presentation in CARICOM of the Order on HIV/AIDS which was done here at the last Sitting.

I support my Colleague and I thank the Members of the Opposition who supported this important piece of legislation. [*Applause*]

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Replying):** I would just like to express my gratitude to all those who have spoken on all sides of the House – Members of Parliament (MPs) Africo Selman, Catherine Hughes and Dr. Nanda Gopaul.

Ms. Selman asked whether we have the number of skilled nationals from CARICOM who came to Guyana to seek employment. What I can say is that we have had in the last few years 35 such persons requesting the issuance of certificate. A national from another CSM territory can also apply for the certificate. I can provide her with the verification at another time.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude and I think this sends a very clear signal to not only our population but the populations of CARICOM countries that Guyana continues to maintain the lead and set the trend for others to follow as far as it relates to our commitment to the integration movement.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read a second time.*

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee.*

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly resumed*

*Bill reported without amendment, read the third time and passed as printed.*

## **GUYANA CRICKET ADMINISTRATION BILL 2012 – BILL NO. 31 of 2012**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to make provisions for the incorporation of autonomous national cricket administrative organizations in Guyana and to provide for other matters connected therewith.” [*Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport*]

*Bill deferred.*

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**

### **BILLS**

## **MARRIED PERSONS (PROPERTY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – BILL NO. 9 of 2013**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Married Persons (Property) Act.” [*Deputy Speaker*]

*Bill deferred.*

## **MOTIONS**

**Mr. Speaker:** We come to a motion in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. Trevor Williams. I had caused to be circulated rulings as to the introduction of these motions.

Mr. Williams, are you in a position to proceed?

**Mr. T. Williams:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please do so.

## **REINTRODUCTION OF THE BERBICE RIVER FERRY SERVICE FROM NEW AMSTERDAM TO KWAKWANI**

WHEREAS the Berbice River Ferry previously served a number of Communities from New Amsterdam to Kwakwani, providing critical and affordable transportation to hundreds of Guyanese families and their goods to and from the Berbice Coast;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana with no explanation unilaterally removed this critical service which linked the hinterland with the Coast;

AND WHEREAS individuals, families, organizations and institutions from Communities of the Berbice River benefitted from this service in the past and now have to severely alter their way of life to the extent of relocating and abandoning their primary economic activity;

AND WHEREAS many of these communities have now become abandoned and deserted due to lack of significant economic activities;

AND WHEREAS many young people can no longer embrace a future in Agricultural activities to further develop themselves;

AND WHEREAS this Ferry service remains a critical component to the development of the Berbice Riverain Communities;

AND WHEREAS other far flung areas in Guyana which remain accessible by river mainly Northwest, Bartica and Essequibo Coast have had the ferry services maintained, thereby providing critical support to residents and facilitating the transport of large scale commodities,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly immediately calls on the Government of Guyana to restore this service thereby reviving those communities and giving hope and stability to the many Guyanese who wish to venture into Agricultural entrepreneurship.” *[Mr. T. Williams]*

**Mr. T. Williams:** I rise on behalf of the AFC and the thousands of Guyana whose lives this motion is intended to better to present before this honourable House the motion – the Reintroduction of the Berbice River Ferry Service from New Amsterdam to Kwakwani.

The clauses of this motion clearly outline certain important facts about the situation that is affecting these residents and many others in this very important part of Guyana. This country is called the Land of Many Waters and that is a title we embrace. It, therefore, is clear that thousands of Guyanese, by way of residence and industry, would have settled and made their livelihood along our waterways. Therefore, I believe, it is important that our Government takes note of the importance of providing not just critical infrastructure but transportation and other important services so that people can settle and enjoy their lives wherever they choose to in this our beautiful country.

We know that this route was once plied by more than one vessels which took persons from New Amsterdam all the way up to Ituni, positively impacting their way and standard of living where residents were able to produce, deliver and make a comfortable and reasonable living from occupying and developing their farmlands.

When this ferry was removed for whatever reasons, thousands were affected. Many had to leave their homes and choose to settle in another part of Guyana, unwillingly so, because they could not afford to stay and carry on their lives.

Ironically, we have seen over the years that our Government, and rightly so, continues to make certain kinds of investments in the region like schools, health centres, building regional centres, encouraging people to remain and settle there and, at the same time, it is not providing them with the means of transporting themselves, families and produce.

We were there on a number of occasions and we did extensive consultations with the people of the Berbice River. Our consultations were real and people participated. We took this matter as a very serious discourse and we promised that we would raise this issue in the National Assembly.

I have with me two important photographs and I would like to show Members of this House what is happening in the Berbice River. As of 2013, this is what the boat looked like on which the residents were travelling. The photograph can be copied and circulated.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Standing Orders do say that one may not use pictorial...which I do not agree with because I think in this day and age we should have charts and graphs and be able to have flip boards. Once it is not anything obscene, because the staff will not reproduce any such material, you may ask the staff to reproduce and share so that Members may follow what it is you are saying.

**Mr. T. Williams:** I do ask.

When this ferry was removed, the route was taken over by private individuals and this was one of the boats that ran the river until late last year. People now have to travel with lumber and sometimes cattle and fuel in very discomfoting situations for as much as 20 hours. Women with babies sometimes have to lie and sleep next to wood and fuel. Last year, a child fell through the top of this boat and nearly died. We have a very important motion requesting that this matter be looked into seriously by the Government to be able to restore the livelihood of people in this part of the region.

Youths are affected. It is no secret to this nation – and I regret to say this but it is a fact – that over the years the Berbice River has been one of the places where the production of marijuana has increased. We were there...

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you speaking on behalf of the residents of the Berbice River? Be careful.

**Mr. T. Williams:** I am stating a fact that is known.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Minister of Home Affairs is out of the Chamber. Maybe that is a good thing.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Regrettably so, the residents would acknowledge that these things come about because people have no work. They have nothing to do. Let me mention clearly that the Alliance

For Change is totally against the production, consumption and circulation of marijuana in this country. [Mr. Ali: What is that?] The *Hansard* will validate me.

I have yet another photograph and this is one of a collapsing wharf. This is at Wikki Calcuni, a very prominent location on the Berbice River. It is an Amerindian settlement. Things have fallen apart because people cannot utilise the services and infrastructure which are offered. How do you encourage people to settle, work their lands and stay home and develop themselves when you do not provide transportation at reasonable cost?

A ferry is run from Parika to Bartica because there is a great need for heavy cargo to travel. A ferry is run from Parika to Leguan. A ferry is run from Parika to Wakenaam; two ferries are run to Supenaam; a ferry is run to the North West region; a ferry was once run from Vreed-en-Hoop to Stabroek. The route from New Amsterdam to Ituni is no less important.

We have seen a total regress and retardation in these communities where people are literally forced to move out and disappear. When we interact with the residents there, they are sad to know that the thing they long to do – farm and work their lands – they can do no longer. The Berbice River was known for producing livestock, cattle, food, dairy, forestry and further up there was even the bauxite companies operating and running their ships and barges.

This motion is appealing to this House and, at least, the Government can see it fit to undertake an interest and a study of this route and decide on re-implementing the Berbice River ferry. Thousands of persons are affected and we believe that it is a cause that is more than worthy. It will send a serious message that our Government and National Assembly are very serious about countrywide development.

When the Clerk was reading the prayers today, for some reason, I listened a little more attentively. There is one such word in our prayers which says we should deal justly with certain causes that come before us. This is a great cause and I ask this House, the Government of Guyana and the Minister of transport, Hon. Mr. Robeson Benn, to revisit this issue so that this House can pass, after debate, this motion and send a serious signal to the people of the Berbice River that Guyana will develop and we are with them.

I thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]:** I want to thank the Hon. Member for his enduring interest in this matter.

*3.10 p.m.*

I would like to recall that, I believe, I did give, a couple years ago, a statement with respect to our position on this matter. I would also like to state that the PPP/C campaigned on this issue at the last Elections, on the upper Berbice River, where we said that we will restore viable ferry services to the communities up river.

Mr. Speaker, I recall also saying what would be the deployment of our older maritime assets, those which go to the Northwest district, when we put in place a new ferry vessel for the Northwest District. At that time, I recall saying particularly that when the new ferry vessel comes in place for the Northwest District... I believe I said that the MV Lady Northcote will be retired. The MV Barima will be used as a trading vessel and the Kimbia would return to the Berbice River to ply that route to respond to the development that is again unfolding in the area.

We have, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approached the Government of India with designs and proposed specifications for a new ferry vessel for the Northwest District. We anticipate at current arrangements and designs that we would hopefully have. I do not want to be specific or emphatic about it. At the end of this year, this matter should be resolved. I do not want to be specific because the designs have to be completed, accepted and the vessel built. I repeat, the Kimbia, which was specifically designed for the Berbice River ferry service, will return to the Berbice River at that time.

Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, I would like to point out that the degradation in services, directly from the Government, with respect to the river ferry service on the Berbice River, happened a long time ago. The MV Kimbia was not removed because there was production. It was removed because the efforts - some of us would say those efforts were heroic - to produce cotton, black-eyed peas, red beans and other things at Kimbia failed. The economy on the upper Berbice River went down. The bauxite itself was impacted and gradually people moved out of the communities. All the old estates and farms were going back into the bush.

Fairly recently and even now, the fact is that we have been able to restore the overland transport into the Upper Berbice River to Kwakwani, Aroaima, and to Mapletown. That alternative is there as we speak. Through the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the efforts of other Ministries, boats have been provided to the communities to deal with their transportation arrangements, the logistics to the points at which they could access overland transport.

Now that we are having, indeed, a response in terms of revival of agriculture and revival of forestry in the area, particularly forestry too, I think, in terms of heavy transport and bulk cargo, it is now, as we anticipated, the time when this service would be put in place.

Our approach to this matter, as I have said, has been proactive. The solutions are at hand. I again want to congratulate the Hon. Member on his interest, and the interest of his party too, in the matter with accords with our interest and the activities that we are undertaking to resolve this problem, to respond to the growth in the area and to respond to the increase in population in the area, because that is actually what is happening. There is a healthier population in the area. There is a population that is going into more agriculture activities, not only farming, but forestry related activities. The overland recourse is not necessarily the most efficient one at this time in terms of distance to places for overland transport, but we are dealing with this matter.

I would like to point out that there was no unilateral removal of the critical service from the area. There was no unilateral removal of the service. There is a suggestion that the removal of the service in itself created the abandonment and the desertion, in the fourth Whereas clause, of significant economic activities.

I recently went to Mabaruma to raise our national flag on our Republic anniversary and one of the discussions I was having with the persons up there, the Regional Chairman and others we met with was the question of having cargos to come out on the boats. Even now in the Northwest District, we have a difficulty where there is a weekly service into the area, either at Kumaka for Mabaruma and at Port Kaituma for Mathews Ridge and Arakaka and the surrounding areas. There is insufficient cargo coming out from the areas. We have to have and to revitalise, as we are trying to do, agricultural work in the area so that we return to the days when the boat came back filled, rather than the boat going up filled but coming back empty because of the question of

labour cost, the question of moving into the gold fields or doing work in the heart-of-palm and other activities.

The fact of the matter is that the ferry service declined on the Berbice River. At that time, the Kimbia was removed, not in the period of this PPP/C being in Government, but at the time of the previous Government, previous to the PPP/C, because there was nothing to bring out on the boats.

The resolution clause calls on us to restore the service, revive the communities and give hope and stability to the many Guyanese who wish to venture into agricultural entrepreneurship. We agree with this resolution clause and we state emphatically that this is the activity we have been working on and which we are about. So, we really have no difficulty with going along in accordance, perhaps, with what we are already doing here. We will go along with what we are already doing. We are advising again that we are already pursuing this activity on the ground with respect to reintroducing a viable Berbice River ferry service.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [**Mr. Hamilton:** Tell us why the boat was removed.] You will hear shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion moved by my Colleague, Mr. Trevor Williams, requesting that the House, by resolution, call on the Government of Guyana to restore the ferry service along the Berbice River.

I heard the Hon. Minister give what I would consider to be an open-ended commitment that the ferry service will be reintroduced some time shortly. I would wish to remind the Hon. Minister that this matter came before this very House in 2007 on a question by the People's National Congress Reform (PNCR) Member of Parliament (MP), Dr. John Austin, who queried whether the Government was going to reintroduce the ferry service to ease the transportation woes of Berbice River residents. The answer which I believe was given, and I see Minister Benn has been credited with a statement on the matter, is:

“...while the service was intended to be a catalyst for both community and economic development within the area, the response was not what was anticipated. He said that on

many occasions the vessel would depart New Amsterdam/Stanleytown with a full load of passengers and cargo. However, on the return journey mostly agricultural produce, including wallaba poles and staves were transported as cargo. The service was eventually terminated in 1995...

The service was eventually terminated in 1995, Mr. Benn, not under the PNC. The service was eventually terminated in 1995.

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarification, I did not say that the service was terminated under the PNC. I said that the large vessel, Kimbia, which is an extremely large vessel designed for the Berbice River ferry service, was removed from the river service in the time before the PPP/C came into the Government. I would further clarify that a much smaller vessel called the MV Lukanani was the vessel which was being subsequently used, which service was converted into a private operation in 1995. That is just for clarification.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mr. Speaker, the statement I made for my Hon. Friend there was about the termination of the service. Now we hear why it was terminated and when. The service was eventually terminated in 1995 and the MV Lukanani was sold to a private citizen who continued to operate the service until he too encountered economic difficulties. That is the first part.

Secondly, I referred to an article carried in the *Kaieteur News* on the 8<sup>th</sup> May. In fact, let me start before that. An article carried in the *Stabroek News* dated 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2008 states, "New Amsterdam to Kwakwani Ferry before year end". The Minister of Transport and Hydraulics, Robeson Benn, quoted that:

"...prior to the resumption of the service of the area inspection of the wharfs along the river will be done to determine what repairs are needed."

Then, on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2009, there was a statement in an edition of the *Kaieteur News*, under the caption "New Amsterdam to Kwakwani ferry service to return". The General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department at that time, Mr. Kevin Trim, reported that the New Amsterdam to Kwakwani ferry service which was terminated nearly two decades ago will be reintroduced shortly. He further echoed that the Lady Northcote assigned to the Transport and

Harbours Department was recently taken off the Parika to Bartica route and is to be reassigned to this service at the end of the stint of dry docks for repairs. That was in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, you would understand why I take very little comfort from the assurance given by the Hon. Minister that some time by the end of this year or some time shortly thereafter, we are going to have the reintroduction of the Berbice ferry.

The Berbice River has not just been a place where agricultural produce, the farm produce and so on, are taken to the market. We have people who are living there. Along that route and on to Kwakwani are at least over 2,500 to 3,000 persons who live there. So, while we can say that a route might not be economic for some reason, we have to understand that we have a responsibility to the people of this country to provide a service which inures to the benefit of their economic life.

When one removes such an important life blood from a community, one can understand the type of behaviour that my Friend, Trevor Williams, was talking about earlier. We can understand that. When people are forced to eke out a living, it is a different situation.

Mr. Speaker, in the earlier days when the ferry was in operation, there were large swathes of the Berbice River basin and the intermediate savannahs devoted to the effort of crops, including peas, nuts, corns, bananas, plantains, ground provision, pumpkin and cattle. There were large swathes dedicated to that. With the removal of the Berbice Ferry and the subsequent inability of farmers to transport their produce to markets, the economies of these communities such as DeVeldt, Ebini, Kimbia, Sand Hills, Maria Henrietta, Calcuni, Coomacka, Ituni and Kwakwani, were decimated. The experience of seeing huge amounts of their produce of corn, provisions, pumpkin, *et cetera*, rot as they try to source transportation to a market broke their spirit.  
**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I need to hear Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, please.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** It broke the spirit of the farmers and forced them to seek other means of supporting their families. As recent as this morning, I spoke to a resident of Kwakwani, Mrs. Kay Ford, a community worker. She has been living in Kwakwani all of her life. What she said was that since the Berbice ferry was stopped, the major means of transportation from Kwakwani

to Linden and to Georgetown was the road, which the Hon. Minister spoke about. There are perils on that road.

Recently, the number of trucks that traverse that road that are involved in international logging has increased. There are in the vicinity of about 30 to 40 trucks traversing that road on a daily basis. These small vehicles that have to traverse the road, competing with those large trucks, present a hazard for those persons who have to come to Linden and to Georgetown. Mr. Speaker, I need not remind you of the several strikes which had to be called due to the condition of that road. There are several minibuses which had to actually stop working to ensure that the road was fixed and put in a certain condition for them to traverse from Kwakwani to Linden. These are matters of recent vintage. So, we need not go back into the history of this matter.

We understand that there is some work that was done on the ferry crossing. The ferry crossing again is another issue because, as I said, they have to compete with the same large trucks. So, there is a serious problem there of getting out of those communities.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully urge that the Government considers, very seriously, this motion by the Hon. Member, Mr. Trevor Williams, and certainly act on the Resolved Clause of it, that is that this National Assembly immediately calls on the Government of Guyana to restore this service.

The Government has a responsibility. When, because of the action of the state, it puts the lives of residents of a particular community in danger, it goes right back to the days of Walter Rodney's writing. I wish to refer to a passage in Walter Rodney's book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, page 223. This is what Dr. Rodney said:

“Within any social system, the oppressed find some room to maneuver through their own initiative.”

This is what has been happening to the people up there. They are finding room to manoeuvre. This is what the Hon. Member, Trevor Williams, spoke about - finding ways. You know what it is. You are the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development; you know what goes on in there. The book continues:

“For instance, under the slave regime of America and the West Indies, Africans found ways and means of gaining small advantages. They would flatter and “con” the slavemasters, who were so arrogant and bigoted that they were readily fooled. Similarly, under colonialism many Africans played the game to secure what they could. Africans in positions like interpreters, police and court officials often had their way over the ruling Europeans. However, that should not be mistaken for power or political participation or the exercise of individual freedom. Under slavery, power lay in the hands of the slavemasters: under colonialism, power lay in the hands of the colonialists. The loss of power for the various African states meant a reduction in the freedom of every individual.”

Mr. Speaker, where a government, in my respectful submission, by its own state policy has placed the people at a disadvantage, as in the case here of Kwakwani, Ituni and all those communities along the Berbice River where a state, by its policy, and that is to say by the removal of that ferry, by the various empty promises which were made over the years - 2007, 2008, 2009 and now we are coming to 2014 - which were not kept. We must demand that the Government acts now. In this regard, I commend the motion moved by Member of Parliament Mr. Trevor Williams for the House’s consideration.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Morian:** Mr. Speaker, as a resident of Region 10, it would be remiss of me if I do not lend my support to this motion by the Hon. Trevor Williams, and also the support of my Colleague, Hon. Vanessa Kissoon in supporting this motion. We are well aware of the work of the ferry in the Berbice River. We are well aware of the hardships that the people have suffered because of the removal of this ferry. Moreover, we benefited from the work that went on in the Berbice River, by way of the produce that came out of that community. Hence, I rise to lend support on behalf of myself and the residents of Region 10 to the motion and the resolved clause asking this honourable House to encourage the Government to replace this ferry, especially in the view that it will support Indigenous people’s development in Region 10.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Whittaker]:**

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Every year, through our annual budget, we allocate substantial amounts of resources aimed, *inter alia*, at developing and improving infrastructure throughout the 83,000 square miles of this country. I emphasise this to emphasise the point that we do not discriminate or we do not limit the extent of our intervention to particular areas or particular regions; it is across the 83,000 square miles of this country. Scarce resources and competing needs and uses for these resources determine that we have to make decisions premised on the opportunity cost of the decisions that we make.

So, it is often necessary... Indeed it is always necessary that we, in allocating how we use these resources, look at the alternatives. We must ask ourselves, is there an alternative to spending x dollars now in a particular way as against spending it tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker, my enquiry has led me to understand and appreciate, in the first instance, that the decision to discontinue the ferry service, that decision in 1995, was premised on the financial strain behind its operation.

*3.40 p.m.*

That strain was affecting the delivery of other services. What we see is private-public partnership going as far back as then. It was the expectation of the PPP/C Government that the transportation service that was being provided would continue. It did continue until an unfortunate accident, which caused a tug to crash into the Lukanani that was, at that time, providing the service, forced a discontinuation of the service. The motion suggests that we unilaterally removed the service when, in fact, that is not true. As I pointed out, the service was sold and it was being continued until there was the unfortunate accident.

It is suggested further that many of these communities were abandoned and deserted and that individuals, families, organisations and institutions from communities of the Berbice River benefitted from this service in the past and now have to severely alter their way of living.

My enquiry reveals that the prime users of the service were students going from Region 5 to Region 6 to attend secondary schools at a time when there were few secondary schools in that

region. I am happy to note that the number of secondary schools has now moved from four to nine so that there is no need to have that movement of students going to New Amsterdam for their secondary education. Add to that the Berbice Bridge Crossing, a cheap, reliable form of transportation. I do not know how the removal of the service affects and continues to affect as the motion suggests that category of users – the students.

The motion also suggests that our farmers had to relocate and some of them altered their way of living, but the information I have suggests differently. I am not aware that farmers have been abandoning their farms, as the motion suggests. To the contrary, I am aware that a substantial number of these farmers are using the river crossing which exists and a substantial number of these farmers are using the private services which exist. More than this, Government, through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and the Ministry of Finance, has ensured that in most of the communities along that route – and incidentally the ferry seldom went to Kwakwani, most of the time it stopped at Wikki Calcuni for your information, gentlemen and ladies... That is where it stopped most of the time. It did not go to Kwakwani. Through these Ministries, we have been able to make available to most of those communities - and I will name them - outboard engines and boats which they can use and have been using to transport people and commodities. These include Sand Hills, Kimbia, Wiruni, Hururu and Wikki Calcuni. In each of these communities, we have at least one... in two of them there are two boats and engines that are used to move people and farm produce from the community to the market. It is not as if we have abandoned the people and left them to their own whims and whatever they can manage to do.

In addition to that, through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and under the Secure Livelihood Programme, a number of these communities have been assisted with economic projects, including farming, so I find it difficult to accept that, as implied in the motion, we have abandoned the people who relied on the ferry service. In fact, that is not so.

I said earlier on that we need to prioritise. We need to examine what obtains in all 10 regions. In Region 1, for example, where the population which uses that service is much larger, where the alternative means of transportation is not as in Region 6, one can now move from Kwakwani to Linden and to Georgetown by road. One can still use the river transportation that is available. But when one talks about going to Region 1, one is talking about travelling for some 20 or more

hours as distinct from travelling five or six hours. These are considerations that are very important.

I do not think that the Hon. Members are aware that the Office of the President has provided significant funding and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has been engaging the communities of Sand Hills and Wiruni and funds have been made available for the construction of a 60-foot boat that will provide passenger and freight services. In fact, the engine to be used on that boat has already been acquired and is in the possession of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. This boat is in the final stages of construction and, upon completion, it will be used to transport passengers, farm produce and school children to New Amsterdam and *vice versa*.

Today, the steamer service and the demand for the service as a relatively cheap and effective form of transportation have been declining with the emergence of small and faster vessels that ply our rivers daily. This is an acceptable fact and I do not know how many of you, who speak on that side, have been traversing the Berbice River area. Smaller vessels, because of the comfort, time, *et cetera*, have been the order of the day. However, in some areas, more so over long distances and especially where alternative modes of transportation are nonexistent or too costly, the steamer service has continued to play an important role.

Mr. Speaker, while I would join my Colleagues in supporting the need for us to reintroduce the service and the fact that we intend to, again I say that it is not as if we abandoned the residents; it is not as if we abandoned the users of the service. We have, in the interim, put in place measures which would allow people within that area to move from their homes to their destinations and *vice versa*.

I wish to conclude, Sir, by saying that we appreciate river transport as an important aspect of development in terms of being able to move goods and services from one point to another. But I also wish to add that this need exists across all 10 regions, some more than others. In taking a decision as to which we do first and second, we must be conscious of that.

I join with my Colleagues on this side and the other side in supporting this motion to restore the service, but I say to you that whilst we would like to see this happen, the people of Region 1 who travel for 20 or more hours per day, who do not have the luxury of the alternatives that those farmers and others have, would wish to be given that priority.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. T. Williams (replying):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank all the Members who spoke in support of this motion.

Firstly, I thank the Hon. Minister Robeson Benn for broadly acknowledging the importance of this issue and the very many needs which exist in these communities and for also giving us some sort of a snapshot into what he described as the Government's plan for this region, with ongoing works, consultations, *et cetera*. I also wish to acknowledge the Minister's acknowledgement that the ferry service discussed is used across a number of areas, for example the carrying of heavy cargo and contributing to infrastructural development, so this vessel, as requested, really speaks to a number of areas across the region. I was hoping that the information the Hon. Minister gave us would have been shared with Minister Whittaker because he was indirectly refuting the subject Minister's position on the issue.

I also wish to commend the Hon. Member Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon for citing and recalling a very important discussion on this issue that for a number of years, it has been in the public domain, via the media, and reminding our Hon. Minister himself about comments made previously which, of course, tells us that the issue is very much alive and interesting.

I thank Hon. Member Mr. Morian for recognising the direct link of the people of Region 10. Again, this proves that this ferry has been understood widely as a necessity and a vibrant piece of support of the livelihoods of the people all across the region. The river distance we are talking about is well over 100 miles.

I come to Hon. Minister Whittaker because he mentioned that the communities were given boats and engines in substitution to make this journey. Hon. Minister, I do not know if you know of any place in this country where people travel by speed boat, except the Northwest and the interior, for probably over 100 miles and the kind of cost. [*Interruption*] Let me repeat. Do not get excited. Over 100 miles of travelling with speed boat in Guyana is a significant cost. We are talking about almost \$10,000, \$15, 000, \$20,000 and more dollars. Where do people get those moneys to fund speed boat travel? I also wish to point out to the Hon. Minister that there is no speed boat running on the Berbice River from New Amsterdam to Ituni or Kwakwani and I hope

the Hon. Minister is not mixing up inter-community travel as against taking the entire journey from New Amsterdam to Ituni.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the ferry does not go to Kwakwani but stops primarily at Ituni or Wikki Calcuni, but people continue from their in their smaller vessels. This notion that the Government of Guyana has given substitute mechanisms for this journey is not a reality of what the people experience in the River. I know there are school boats that fetch students from place to place, but there is no boat which runs from New Amsterdam to Wikki Calcuni or Ituni, fetching passengers. There is a launch. I have to distinguish the difference between a ferry and a launch. The picture I gave you...

**Mr. Speaker:** There is a picture of you that came up.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Is it a picture of myself?

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes. Is that a wrong one?

**Mr. T. Williams:** No. There is one of a boat.

**Mr. Speaker:** I see.

**Mr. T. Williams:** That is a launch. That is not a boat that is given by the Government to this country or to any community. That does not hold outboard engines either. It is a collapsing launch that was run by a private individual with intent to substitute and provide what the ferry used to do.

The clauses in the motion remain very accurate and intact and so is the intent. We have traversed the communities and interacted with the residents who have furnished us with this information that there is absolute and urgent need...

**Mr. Speaker:** I think there is a point of order, Mr. T. Williams. Please yield.

**Mr. Whittaker:** This is a point of clarification. There is a boat service between Wikki Calcuni and New Amsterdam that goes and comes twice per week. I can make available to you a text from a former Toshao who lives at Hururu, who has confirmed this. Also, the villages, as I said,

all have boats. Some have two boats and engines and they choose when they want to travel. That goes regularly.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think the thrust of the motion is that the Government's service be reintroduced because the private contractors were proving to be oppressive to the residents in the Region. That was my understanding of the motion, that the cost is oppressive, inadequate or insufficient. I think that is what Mr. T. Williams is addressing us about. Go ahead, Mr. T. Williams.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring this issue to a close but let me say this - and I wish to not go back and forth on this. The reason I brought the photograph is that the launch - that rotten vessel - that runs from Wikki Calcuni and Ituni to New Amsterdam which takes 20 hours, which I did say in my presentation initially, is not a speed boat. It is a private contractor and I described the kind of service he was providing to the residents. The Hon. Minister, in his comments, talked about the Government providing speed boats and engines. I said none runs the distance. They are for inter-community travel for school, health, police, *et cetera*, but the issue of having a ferry covering the river journey from New Amsterdam to Ituni is what the motion seeks to address.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank those who have supported and understood in its context what this motion seeks to address and I anticipate the National Assembly's full support. Thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** This is an appropriate time for us to take the suspension for one hour and we will do so at this time. I wish to remind Members of the Committee of Selection that there is a meeting in the Speaker's Chambers immediately after we rise. Thank you.

*Sitting suspended at 3.59 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 5.04 p.m.*

## **RESTORATION OF THE ANNUAL SUBVENTION/GRANT TO THE CRITCHLOW LABOUR COLLEGE**

WHEREAS the Critchlow Labour College through its three Campuses in Georgetown, Linden and Berbice served to educate thousands of Guyanese, both adult and youth, for decades and giving many a second chance at educating themselves;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana, both PNC and PPP/C, through the Ministry of Finance, provided a subvention to the Critchlow Labour College thereby subsidising the cost of education to thousands of Guyanese from all walks of life;

AND WHEREAS through the benefit of this subvention the Critchlow Labour College successfully entered into partnerships for developing education within Guyana and abroad with reputable institutions;

AND WHEREAS through its offering of academic courses hundreds of young Guyanese entered and re-entered the job market and rose through the ranks to become highly skilled and successful professionals;

AND WHEREAS parents and guardians alike were able to access affordable education at a convenient time, thereby developing themselves and making their families more stable;

AND WHEREAS after the withdrawal of this subvention the institution eventually collapsed thereby bringing to ruin the hopes and aspirations of thousands of young Guyanese from all walks of life;

AND WHEREAS the Critchlow Labour College now offers a significantly reduced curriculum thereby limiting the options of those desiring higher education,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to restore the full subvention thereby allowing the Critchlow Labour College to be re-opened to its full capacity.” *[Mr. T. Williams]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we have a second motion to be debated this evening and that is the motion calling for the Restoration of the Annual Subvention/Grant to the Critchlow Labour College. This motion too was covered in a ruling that was issued some weeks ago. It is also in

the name of Hon. Member Mr. T. Williams. Mr. T. Williams, I invite you to commence the debate on the motion.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I choose to invoke that clause from the prayer which states:

“so that we may deal justly, with the several causes that come before us,”

I truly mean it.

This motion, standing in my name, seeks to do as it says which is to encourage the Government of Guyana to restore this subvention that was removed or taken, thus resulting in the reduction of the College’s capacity to offer the level of education it offered across Guyana at its three campuses.

In 2002, I was introduced, in the compound of this Public Buildings, to lay a wreath at the feet of Mr. Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, an event continued by many of our political leaders and trade unionists today, I believe for good reasons and cause. When I understand the depth of his involvement and struggle for better living, working conditions for the working class, I believe that any Government’s continued support for an institution like the Critchlow Labour College sends the very strong signal to the nation that the Government is very serious about the development of our young people.

We have no doubt about the role that the Critchlow Labour College played in moulding the minds of Guyanese of all ages, races, ethnicities and moral suasion. The motion notes that two successive administrations in this country, to a point, allowed and made budgetary allocations for subsidising the cost of education offered by this institution.

Other clauses outline specifically the effect of this subvention on the lives of the young people. Over the years, the Critchlow Labour College has trained thousands of Guyanese across a very wide spectrum of academic qualifications to better themselves, their families and their country. The effect of this spending is undoubtedly very visible and effective in this country.

I understand that there are quite a few persons here, even up to the portfolio of Minister, who have passed through the College and I think that speaks well for the programme itself. As one

who has benefitted from this programme and has seen thousands of Guyanese benefit from this, I have the courage to stand in this National Assembly to ask of the Opposition and Government to do just cause to this situation. I believe that there are experts on labour and education sitting in this Parliament today and who will probably take this debate to the next level and open it to realms we may all appreciate.

I wish to point out just a few of the courses that the Critchlow Labour College offers: Certificate in Industrial and Social Studies, Communication and Effective Speaking, Advanced Diploma in Project Management, Further Access to Education, Care for the Elderly, Advanced Mental Health I and II, Sewing, Project Management and Occupational Safety and Health. Over the many years that have gone by, thousands of students have written their Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) examinations and done well for themselves.

I have in my hand a first draft of the National Youth Policy and we all know that this document has been coming slowly for many years. I see specific reference is given to the development of young people and the role that education plays in their lives. Very often education is not the problem; affording it is the problem. The Critchlow Labour College made it possible for thousands of Guyanese and what we call second-chance students who would have failed in their first bid or stumbled in their attempt via various issues and experiences, whether it be parenting, finances, social and moral challenges, but the College opened its door and welcomed back those second-chance, attempting students. I believe - and I can be corrected on this - it was the only place where young pregnant mothers or teenage mothers were afforded the opportunity to re-sit with their colleagues and age groups to take their CSEC and other examinations, hence their lives were not pointed into any form of abandonment and disarray.

I come back to the National Youth Policy first draft and I see specific mention is given to mothers and school dropouts. I see projects for community development and I am saying that we embrace this. We embrace any initiative from this Government that is quite reasonable, balanced and pointed in the right direction to bring benefit and improvement to the lives of all Guyanese. So I do not see why the Critchlow Labour College should be excluded from that discussion and the subvention be continually withheld.

It is no secret that it has been an issue of some contention of many details I do not have. I have heard it being said that the College has misused the money. I say this loudly: we have something in our country called the Audit Office with an Auditor General and if anybody misuses public money, the Auditor General could deal with them. The Public Accounts Committee will deal with them. I will be there. But the misuse of funds is not enough reason. There are mechanisms in place that can be put – watchdogs and security measures – to ensure that money is spent how it is supposed to be spent. Hence, it is unreasonable to me to have thousands of young people refused and denied an opportunity because we probably have, at a next level, some financial and other relationships that cannot be reconciled. That, in my opinion, is not just. It is not right and it is not fair.

*5.14 p.m.*

So this motion, apart from outlining the benefits which are known of education and more so, the College's work in this country, calls on the House and the Government to revisit this issue and come up with systems that can see the moneys being put back, given back, for the opportunity that young Guyanese deserve. The College ran three campuses in my time across Linden, New Amsterdam and Georgetown. The College ran evening and morning school courses. One could work during the day, make a living, and then come back at night and get a change at education. People who fell out of the high school system, who dropped out, found their way to the University of Guyana and further afield because Critchlow Labour College (CLC) made the opportunity possible.

It is a fact. So there shall be no debate and doubt about the benefits of the taxpayers money spent on this institution and the students it produced. I am saying as a sponsor and presenter of this motion, I would agree with the Government of Guyana to put and encourage financial reform from a College administration perspective so that the moneys can be spent, if it is not satisfactorily spent and invested, but so that it can happen, that we can together better the lives of thousands of young people who today are turning to crime, turning to drugs and all sorts of delinquent behaviour because there is no opportunity for them to continue schooling.

The situation in Guyana today requires such an institution to come back functioning vibrant, not just in Linden, New Amsterdam and Georgetown, but further afield. The pilot projects can look

to extend the Critchlow Labour College model and concept so that it can sweep in and harness a large bunch of young Guyanese, many of whom today are desperate and remain idle, by not being meaningfully involved. So this motion really speaks to a number of issues. If we want to see results in this country, and the young people come off the streets as we often say and turn to education, we must make it possible. We must spend in the right direction; and we must have discourse at the highest level of Government and Opposition to see how issues like these can be rectified. Today is the start of one such discussion, a motion from the Alliance For Chance (AFC) encouraging and challenging the Government to please, I plead with you, open the discourse for Critchlow Labour College to continue. The Be It resolved clause says:

“That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to restore the full subvention, thereby allowing the Critchlow Labour College to be reopened to its full capacity.”

In my brief comments, I highlighted the fact, the results, that this college has never failed Guyanese. The institution in delivering quality education, affordable education to the widest possible base of students, has never failed those who attended, and has helped us in this country to produce better young men and women and even adults who seek to make a very valuable contribution to themselves, families and the Guyanese economy.

I believe I will close by saying again I come back to the clause in the Prayer, this is one more just cause. And I ask the House after debate this evening let us step in the right direction and pass this motion to restore the subvention to Critchlow Labour College and give our young Guyanese brothers and sister a chance again.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

*Motion proposed.*

**Dr. Gopaul:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. The motion, first of all, I would say has no utilitarian value. Its purpose perhaps is to highlight an issue and perhaps bring to fore and the public some concerns. Before dealing with some of the issues raised in the motion and the points raised by the Hon. Member I would first of all like to give a brief history, a background on the Critchlow Labour College.

This College was incorporated as a business entity, as a limited liability company on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1968. It received its incorporation under the Companies Ordinance at that time on the 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1968. At the same time, in the years 1969 and 1970, the Members of the Board of Governors of the College then, or the Board of Management, secured two loans, one for \$60,000 in 1968 and one for \$40,000 in 1969 from the Guyana Credit Corporation. With that \$100,000 on two mortgages along with contributions from the affiliated unions and workers the College was built. In the Article of Association, article 5 indicated under the heading Board of Management, and I am quoting from the article:

“That the Board of Management shall be deemed, for all purposes to be the governing body of the company and shall consist of thirteen members, eight of such members shall be representative of the Guyana Trades Union Council, two of such members shall be representatives of the Government of Guyana, one such member shall be representative of the University of Guyana, and one such member shall be representative of the public while the other such member shall be a person selected from an organisation to be determined by the Board of Management and appointed for a term of only one year and may be eligible for re-election.”

In its incorporation two members of the labour movement, to wit Joseph Pollydore and Anson Sancho, signed on the document along with two Government representatives, the two Permanent Secretaries then, and a University of Guyana person. The whole intention of that was to make the College a body representative of Government, labour and academia. That continued in all the years thereafter; returns have been filed under the Companies Act; changes have been made to the Board consistent with the Articles; and there has been accountability up to a certain time. Even when the trade union movement was divided, the split took place in 1988, and there was a return of relations and then there was a breakaway again in 1990.

The trade union movement did not lose sight of the fact that the College belonged to workers and that the Board must comprise of genuine representatives of the workers. Even in the year 1998 when they were submitting the returns of the College and changes to the Directorate of the Board, Gordon Todd from the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union (CCWU) was the Chairman of the College with Joseph Pollydore as Secretary of the College. At that time in 1998

the Board comprised of among other persons Lincoln Lewis, Patrick Yard and other leaders spread across the labour movement, with others from academia and those in public life.

I will read some of the names at the time of the incorporation of the College so that Members will understand the purpose of the College and what significance the movement wanted it to have. Mr. Richard Alexander Ishmael was a member, T. Anson Sancho, Dr. Harold Lutchman, Joseph Pollydore, Winslow Carrington, Horace Felix, Neville Griffith, Cecil Cambridge, Ovid Orderson, Dr. Claude Denbow, J. Shotow Douglas and F.G. Taharally, the latter two being Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, respectively.

By the time we would have turned to the year 2000, there had been no filing of returns under the Companies Act in the Registry as is a requirement. There would have been no audited statement submitted, there would have been no known information as to who comprised the Board and, therefore, Government as an agency giving subvention to this College was being kept in the dark, and no representative from the Government was sitting on the Board. In other words, the tenets of the rules when the College was formed were broken and were being violated.

Article 28 of the Article of Association under the heading Accounts, reads as follows:

“True accounts shall be kept of the sums of money received, expended by the company and the manner in respect of which such receipts and expenditure takes place and of the property credits and liability of the company and subject to any restrictions as to the time and manner of inspecting the same that may be imposed in accordance with the regulations of the company for the time being in force shall be open to the inspection of members. Once at least in every year the accounts of the company shall be open to the inspection of members. Once at least in every year the accounts of the company shall be examined and the correctness of the balance sheet ascertained by one or more properly qualified auditor or auditors.”

There has been no accountability, public or otherwise, to members of this institution for at least a decade. The onus is not on the Government, as the Hon. Member suggested, to put mechanism in place and to ensure accountability, but it is the recipient’s responsibility, once public funds are given, to ensure accountability. We have been talking about good governance and accountability and I, on the side of the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), will support the notion of

good governance and accountability, but we have not seen it in that body. We have to recognise that the problems of the College have to do with the problems of the labour movement and that problem is acute. We cannot attract the type of programmes, and we cannot attract persons into the College as we once attracted if that rift, that cohesion, and the nomination coming from the labour movement does not comprise the core from the labour movement and leaders that can attract the respectability from members of the public and the Guyanese population at large.

Sir, it has to do also with what has happened at the governance level of the Trade Union Congress (TUC). And what has happened there will sicken the minds of decent people when they examine the modus operandi and the rules governing elections for officers at the council level; that will influence the election of Board members of the College. For large unions, first of all, there is the issue of proportionality as has been clamoured for by these major unions. The Guyana Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU) being in the TUC since 1975 has never had the privilege of serving at the presidency of that body despite having the largest block of delegates. NAACIE has never been given the opportunity to serve. Even when we work out elections in a mutual way, discussing with others, we have never been able to get and or to secure critical positions of the labour movement despite these unions being credible. The manipulation is worse than that, four unions with less than 1,000 members were allocated and have been allocated under the rules of the TUC...

**Mr. Speaker:** One thousand each or one thousand combined?

**Dr. Gopaul:** One thousand in all, in totality, have been allocated more delegates than a large union like CCWU with 3,000 members then, and a large union like GAWU with 15,000 members. The AMM once in a legal document to the courts in seeking to have its seat in the TUC pleaded that it had 28 members, and with that 28 members were given three delegates as against a union like NACCIE with 1,700 members then and given six delegates. So the AMM and the Sawmill and Forest Workers Union that did not have membership or recognition anywhere, Papers and the Public Employers Union - paper unions created with no trade union recognition - were given delegate status at the TUC and were outvoted and out manoeuvred; respected, decent, principled and trade unions which have been operating for years in the country.

Following those manipulations of the election results, the labour movement became a divided movement and union leaders have emerged in the TUC that can be considered leaders who do not inspire anyone. As a result of that, we have the state of non-accountability at the CLC level and, even as I said earlier, Government representatives, University of Guyana representatives have been excluded on the Board.

There were attempts to correct this situation. Our patriot Hon. Dr. Rupert Roopnarine when he became the Principal tried. He consulted with me and I was not the Minister of Labour then. He consulted with National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NAACIE) and he consulted with GAWU, and we were making some headway. He wanted to see reformation and wanted to bring these unions... He said if you cannot get back as a cohesive body together in the labour movement at least for workers education let us work together. He was making headway. NAACIE had agreed; GAWU was considering it but by then GAWU had gone to establish its own workers college. It could not wait. So we have the GAWU Workers College, the Public Service Union Workers College with their training programmes. Both have had accredited programmes national and international. In the case of GAWU, they run a University of the West Indies (UWI) accredited programme, and the Public Service Union (PSU) a University of Guyana accredited programme and an accredited programme for public servants and the public service. We have had these positions where these other Colleges were established and functioning.

Hon. Dr. Roopnarine, as Principal, tried and was making progress as I said, but shortly thereafter, vacated the office, unfortunately, and to the surprise of many. So the situation continued thereafter. There was no board based on the mix we envisaged. There was no board established consistent with the rules of the College, there was no board and accountability of sums of money given consistent with the Articles of Association and consistent with the request by the Government.

While we are in sympathy with the presentation of the Hon. Member Mr. Williams I want to say it is true that the College produced quality students, and it is true that many benefited from the College, and it has a role to play like all the other colleges. All three labour colleges that I mentioned can play a role in national development and in the development of education, and Government is in sympathy with that. Government will want to ensure that some form of funding

be given to these institutions alike, consistent with the programmes, consistent with what we believe would can be worthwhile causes, but there must be accountability. There has not been accountability.

I know of late, because I have been engaging the labour movement - I have been talking with all sides - and I believe it is my responsibility to work with all sides to ensure fairness, to ensure the dispensation which is necessary, that everyone feels satisfied and secure, and the treatment meted out to everyone is equal. So in those discussions I am happy to say I believe steps are being taken by the representatives of the TUC to have a board in place and the type of accountability in place; that commitment was given to me. Until such time there can be no consideration; once we believe there is accountability and there is some recordkeeping and these things in place we cannot support funding to be given. Therefore the onus is on the Labour College to put its House in order and let us move on. At that time Government will then have to examine the issue because other, as I said, labour institutions have been established and we will have to look at the issue in a holistic manner.

What is happening at the central labour movement, at the TUC level if only we pause for a moment and engage in dialogue with each other we can perhaps see a united movement. But persons will have to give. That seems not to be forthcoming. I want to call a spade a spade in as much as some of the leaders are my brothers and we struggle together. However, a movement that has at its helm a General Secretary and a President coming from the same union, a union that has recognition perhaps at one location with less than 200 members cannot inspire other workers and cannot inspire the movement. That is what we have today, the General Secretary coming from the Guyana Bauxite Supervisors and General Workers Union and the President coming from that same body. When we have a union like the Guyana Teachers Union affiliated, a larger union than any other public union, outside of the Guyana Public Service Union being still unaffiliated with TUC and that Union cannot find a place of prominence on the labour body.

I believe there has to be an objective. And this is not to knock my brothers in the movement but to appeal to them to see that these types of compositions can create enormous difficulties for the movement. When we move back to the TUC in the days of FITUG/TUC in the 1990s it was as a result of consensus and dialogue, and it was a time when there was an agreement to make the representative of FITUG the President of the TUC, that good will was shown, the consensus

existed; and the consensus type of voting and management of the trade union movement is not new to the trade union movement, it happens at the Caribbean Congress of Labour, it happens at other international bodies where these things are worked out long before the elections, so people have a sense of belonging and play their part in these organisations and the organisations continue to move forward. At this level that did not happen and it is not happening. Unless we can reach a stage where we can dialogue, where we can bring the leaders together and where the leaders from the respective union movement give leadership to the national body we would not be able to bring the College up to standard or put the College right.

Mr. Speaker, Government is not happy, we are not penalising a college. We would like to give some form of subvention to workers education but we would like to see labour put its house in order. So while I am in sympathy with some of the points raised by the Hon. Member I want to say I know of a current judge who is a product of the Critchlow Labour College; I myself attended the Critchlow Labour College and had my early upbringing in the labour movement from that College. A number of us would like to move to resolve this issue but it has to be resolved with initiative coming from the trade union movement itself.

Thank you very much, Sir. [*Applause*]

**Dr. Roopnarine:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to contribute to the debate on this motion. I hope to be able to engage some of the arguments made by my brother and Hon. Member Dr. Gopaul in the course of my presentation.

Looking at the WHEREAS clauses of the motion the first talks about the Labour College through its three campuses in Linden, Georgetown and Berbice educating thousands of Guyanese adults and youths for decades. Allow me to say that the three campuses - Linden and Corriverton campuses had to be closed in 2012 - were in fact quite flourishing campuses during their time of existence. At Corriverton, they only offered CXC and I remember on a visit I made there, I was very struck by how orderly and in good spirits students and staff were. Linden on the other hand offered not only CXC, but the Critchlow flagship course, the ISS.

*5.44 p.m.*

I noted the observation made by my friend, the Hon. Trevor Williams, that should we get Critchlow in order, the prospect of extending it throughout the country into other areas, is a very attractive proposition to me, but for that to happen there is much that needs to be done.

I am glad that my friend Dr. Gopaul, the Hon. Member, spoke about the context and the history of what took place at the Critchlow Labour College. The fact is that the subvention has had a particular history itself. The subvention was first withdrawn, I believe, in 2004. I believe at the time it may also have had to do with accountability. With some argument and pressure from the TUC, it was restored in January of 2005.

I think that we need to pay attention to the sequence of events that flowed from the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU)/Federal Union of Government Employees (FUGE) strike of 1999. In many ways the tragedy of Critchlow Labour College really flowed from the convulsions of that period.

There was a decision by the TUC at the time. I believe that the TUC called a three day strike in support, which was supposed to start on 20<sup>th</sup> May - and I think that both the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) and NAACIE were present at the TUC when that decision was made.

We have to look at the tragic events of 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1999, when the police opened fire on picketers. It was in effect this convulsion that led to the withdrawal of the GAWU from the TUC and the formation of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITUG) in 2000.

I am very sympathetic to the line of argument that says the Critchlow Labour College, rather than being a victim of the divisions of the Labour Movement, really ought to be the vehicle of its unification. That has always been my belief; that if we cannot unite the Labour Movement on the issue of education, I do not know what we can unite it on. It has always been my conviction and it had been my conviction when I served, and was pleased to serve, as Principal of the College at the time. My Hon. Friend remembers the conversations we had at the time and it was my strong belief even then, that the places on the board that were reserved for the trade unionists, should really have been open to trade unionists from across the division. To my mind, that would have been one of the ways in which we could have begun the work. It seems, frankly, the divisions, as outlined by my Friend the Hon. Dr. Gopaul, that the divisions that he described to us and which have been persisting for so long, and for which, frankly, no resolution seems to be in sight - that

there is no imminent resolution to which we can look forward; the fact of the matter is, the Critchlow Labour College remains there as a potential vehicle to work towards this reunification and I think it ought to be treated as such.

The motion spends a great deal of time on what I call the non-labour aspects of the Critchlow Labour College. These non-labour aspects - the providing of second opportunity to students who would otherwise be deprived of an education - was a very valuable service that the Critchlow Labour College had been performing for the use of the country. All of that is un-doubtable.

As a former student himself, the Hon. Trevor Williams spoke with feeling about what having the Critchlow Labour College available to young people like himself meant to his generation. I know there are people in this House, including, as he told us, the Hon. Dr. Nanda Gopaul, I notice my friend the Hon. Robert Persaud is not here, but I believe that he also was among the Members of this House who benefited enormously from having the Critchlow Labour College at their disposal.

I have to say - and this for me was the real sadness of the matter - that the withdrawal of the subvention really came at a point when the Critchlow Labour College was really expanding its programmes and increasing its capacity. We had established relations with the Cipriani Labour College in Trinidad. For instance, I have here a memorandum that was written to the Board by Mr. Phillips, making arrangements for the ABE Degree Programme, which we were going to mount in association with Leeds Metropolitan University in England. The memorandum outlines in great detail what the contents of such a programme could be and even went so far as to describe how we might be advertising for students and so on.

We were really at a point, I believe, of expanding the capacity of the College when the blow came. My own feeling at the time and my feeling remains the same today, is that the Critchlow Labour College essentially became a victim of the struggles within the Labour Movement and it was classic case of the grass dying while the elephants were fighting.

It has always seemed to me that the tragedy of the Critchlow Labour College was that these students, who so badly need the institution for their second opportunity, were in fact the victims of a convulsion that had nothing to do with them. They did not provoke it; they did not

participate in it; this was a convulsion above their heads; and as a result of that convulsion, they were, in fact, being deprived.

If we look at the original mandate of the College and I am quoting here from the division statement that was put out by the CLC, which I have here, that it was established - we have some little contradictions on dates, but they are not important - that it was established in 1865, as “an integral part of the Trades Union Council of Guyana”. In the preamble of the bylaw, the Critchlow Labour College of 1967 – the incorporation took place in 1967, that development was intended, “to expand the scope and activities of the Institute.”

What is evident is that the CLC from its inception had been an institution, the growth and development of which had always been responsive to the needs of its stakeholders in the wider community. Let me quote from the bylaws of the College. The bylaws explicitly spell out the aims and objectives:

“The need for a labour college arises out of the expanded role and responsibility of trade unions in Guyana. Leaders who are deeply aware of the problems and opportunities of the Trades Union Movement and who can make a significant contribution to the social and economic growth are a continuing requirement. A labour college providing basic studies in the humanities and the social sciences, as well as specialised instructions in the theory and practice of trade unionism would do much to meet this need.”

And it goes on:

“The activities of the Critchlow Labour College are designed:

- (1) To provide trade unions training and workers’ education at all level of union responsibility;
- (2) To conduct courses, seminars and other such activity in field of industrial relations;
- (3) To undertake research in problems affecting the Labour Movement and industrial relations.”

If we look at what CLC was doing at the time, already, in September 2007, the CLC was preparing to offer Associate Degrees in Labour Studies, Occupational Safety and Health and

Human Resources Management. These were all courses that had been designed, were on the books and were to be offered in 2007.

I want to draw your attention to the declarations made at an event I believe my trade union brothers in the Chamber here would remember. At the special Georgetown conference in 2006 to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the visionary Conference of 1926, the leadership launched the Caribbean Association for Labour Education (CALE). This was, in effect, what the trade unionists of the region were saying: that workers' education was to be in forefront of the initiatives for renewal.

Writing on this matter in an essay that I published in *The Sky's wild Noise* on page 122, I said then:

“The intention of the October, 2006 gathering in Georgetown was to reconnect the division and energy of the illustrious founders of 1926, education was to be the means of reconnection.”

The Georgetown communiqué was adopted unanimously by the Conference and has set out a plan of actions derived from the presentations and floor discussions that committed the trade union and labour movements to a menu of measures to:

“Expand the intensified and co-ordinate progressive programmes of labour education aim at further developing a cadre of conscious labour activists and leaders equipped to meet the ever new challenges of a rapidly changing environment.”

One of the things that we did at this time at CLC was to launch the Pollydore Institute. Recognising that, in fact, we needed to go beyond what it is we were doing and intensify the work in the area of trade union education, we established the Pollydore Institute. Article 3 of the rules of the Pollydore Institute Foundation sets out a number of objectives:

- (a) “To promote solidarity among organisations and institutions of civil society so as to work together towards the realisation of a democratic and ecologically viable world society based on the principles of justice, liberty and the rule of law;
- (b) To combat all forms of exploitation and oppression;

- (c) To promote all measures of a nature to extend the decision making powers of populations concerning the different aspects of their economic, social and political life;
- (d) To promote respect for democratic rights, especially freedom of association and expression and the right not to be oppressed by anyone or group;
- (e) To support populations in their struggle to achieve or to preserve their rights to self-determination and the free expression of their national culture;
- (f) To promote equality of men and women in employment and occupation and in society and to combat all forms of discrimination on grounds of racial, ethnic, sexual, religious or cultural affiliations; and
- (g) To support all efforts toward the establishment of lasting peace based on freedom for all.”

This is a very ambitious outline of objectives of the Pollydore Institute. When we established it, the idea was essentially to have it complement, in all the ways that we saw it working, the work that was going on within the CLC.

It was a time when I felt myself that the CLC was lacking in the area of labour education. We were doing our work in relation to the second opportunity students; that was quite true and we were doing it well. But my own feeling was that the original conception of the labour college, as a school for trade unionism, that aspect of our work had, in fact, declined.

There was, in fact, a comment made by Kenneth Joseph and this was published in 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2008. Then the General Secretary of FITUG, Mr. Kenneth Joseph, told *Stabroek News* that FITUG was not happy with what was taking place with the CLC, including the membership of the Board and the College’s shift from that of a workers’ college to becoming a business venture and being used as a stepping-stone for entry to the University of Guyana. “We are looking to see how we can try to bring it back to being a workers’ college, focusing on workers’ education for labour.”

I want to say that, in fact, what we were attempting to do was very much in line with attempting to answer this deficit. The deficit had to do with labour education. What we did was we established for instance labour workshops. We set up the Critchlow Labour Seminars and these were inaugurated in May week of 2006. The Critchlow Labour Seminars, which were monthly lectures and workshops, were being held. The first one was a lecture given by Mr. George DePeana on “Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow and the Movement of 1926”. This was followed by Mr. Christopher Ram on “The case for reform of the National Insurance Scheme (NIS).” In July, we had Dr. Alissa Trotz speak on “What do we mean by Labour – A feminist discussion of why connections matter”. In August we had Dr. David Hinds lecturing on “Organised Labour and Democratic Resistance in Post-Colonial Guyana”. We had further lectures that were planned by Mr. Stanley Greaves, Dr. Terry Roopnaraine, Dr. Clarence Ellis, Dr. Vibert Cambridge on topics ranging from the photography of labour to the history of E.R. Burrows Working Peoples’ Art Class, music and the working people in Guyana. In early July, Sir Roy Trotman, chairman of the Workers’ Group and vice-chairman of the governing body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), came and lectured at the Critchlow Labour Seminar. He lectured on labour standards, rights and obligations.

I have to say, regretfully, that the response of the unions themselves to this activity at the Critchlow Labour College, that had everything to do with raising the levels of labour education, was rather lukewarm. Very few of their members actually attended the workshops. I felt that this was sad because the workshops were really designed for the unions. It was designed for trade unionists, shop stewards and that shop-floor activists. The fact that the trade unions did not buy into what the Critchlow Labour College was attempting to do at the Critchlow Labour Seminars could hardly be blamed on the College.

It was also a time when we were mounting, in the auditorium of the Critchlow, Art Exhibitions. It was my view, while I was there, that it was not enough to bring these children in and essentially to give them only the second opportunity to pass exams, but to, in fact, expose them to the wider world of culture. We had concerts in the auditorium; we had the National Dance Company who came; we mounted art exhibitions in the auditorium, all with a view to expanding the horizons of these students who had taken advantage of the second opportunity.

This is where we were in 2007 when the subvention was withdrawn. At the time of the withdrawal of the subvention, issues were raised about financial accountability. This remains a fact. There were requests for work plans. I remember the work plan because I did a lot of work on it myself. The work plan for 2007 and audited reports for 2004, 2005 and 2006 were submitted. Copies were sent to the Ministries of Labour, Education and the Office of the President. Mr. Garnett, who was at the time the Chairman of the Board and the President of the TUC, had in fact dispatched these documents and there was never any reply to them. That too remains a fact.

Then we came to my friend, Mr. Baksh, who made a fairly astonishing comment, which was reported in 18<sup>th</sup> February of 2006, when he said that the Critchlow Labour College subvention was tied to trade union unity. I am quoting from 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2008, an article from the *Stabroek News*.

“Minister of Education Shaik Baksh says the fractured trade union movement has to resolve its issues as a precondition for further subventions to the Guyana Trades Union Congress and the Critchlow Labour College. The Government stopped its monthly subvention to the College in August last year. Responding to a question by Mrs. Shelia Holder of the Alliance For Change during Thursday’s sitting of the National Assembly, Mr. Baksh said, subventions were not a right to be enjoyed. He said that even though the subventions were approved by Parliament, agencies that get them still have to fulfil certain conditions.

According to the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Andrew Garnett, the Government had asked for a work plan for 2007, as well as audited reports for 2004, 2005 and 2006. He said that all of these had been submitted and he had written to the Ministers of Finance and Education and sent copies to the Office of the President.”

I think that to ask for the Trade Union Movement, especially after we have heard about the depths of its division, why this division existed, what are the obstacles to the unification of the movement and so on, to ask that this should happen before we can issue the subvention is really to misunderstand process. I wish to say - and I see my friend Mr. Nadir is snorting - but I wish to say that we should see the Critchlow Labour College, not as a beneficiary of the unification of

the movement that is very far off, but we should see it, as we try to argue, as a vehicle to bring about the unification. This is how it can happen. [Mr. Nadir: That was what Mr. Shaik Baksh said.] That is not what he said.

I hope the Hon. Mr. Nadir would credit me with being able to read what I read.

There was another proposal coming from FITUG and this came from Mr. Duncan. Mr. Duncan who says honourably that “FITUG cannot allow the CLC to go extinct” – that is what he said. “We need to find the solution - which will give the Government the comfort they need to restore the subvention, adding that it was because of the manner in which the subvention was used that the Government withdrew it.” When pressed, Duncan cited “poor accountability”. Even though the CLC would have submitted audited reports, he said that, “If they do not understand the purpose of the subvention, then they could not fulfil its objectives.” He went on to say that he believed that if we were to establish a situation where FITUG, the TUC and the Government, that this troika, would be able in effect to bring the Critchlow Labour College back to where it should be.

Mr. Speaker, as it was pointed out, the Board of the College, if it is properly constituted, does have representatives from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and University of Guyana. I thank my Friend, the Hon. Dr. Nanda Gopaul, for listing how in fact the Board is composed.

My problem is that if we fail to grapple with this and work towards the restoration of the subvention, ensuring that at the level of the Critchlow Labour College, arrangements are made that would, in fact, give the comfort that is required. I believe the people at the Critchlow Labour College are disposed towards providing those comfort levels - were they to do that since the objection is about accountability and so on - if guarantees of accountability could be provided locally at Critchlow, if we could look at the composition of the Board so that it could be, in fact, inclusive of the whole labour movement, then I cannot see what can possibly stand in the way of the restoring of the subvention.

I wish to commend my Friend, the Hon. Trevor Williams for bringing this motion to the National Assembly. I believe that it cannot be beyond us to see why it is the restoration of the subvention and the revitalisation of the Critchlow Labour College should not be an ambition of this

Assembly. The fact is that the withdrawal of the subvention in the end only penalises the children of poor and it contributes to the impoverishment of the entire Trade Union Movement. We believe that shop stewards today and union representatives are in need of trade union education and can benefit from it. When we penalise the Critchlow Labour College and withhold the subvention we are penalising not only the children of the poor, but we are, in fact, pauperising the entire Trades Union Movement and keeping the levels of trade unionism at an unacceptably low level. I thank you Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Nadir:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I want to start where the last speaker ended, when he said the possibilities if we can have a Board which is representative of the Labour Movement. I would make bold to say without consulting with our Members of Parliament on this side of the House, if he is prepared now to amend this motion to ensure that the eight members who come from Labour will comprise four nominees from FITUG and four nominees from the TUC, I am sure we are on the road to whatever this motion is covering – right now. Amend it... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, we have to go back to these bylaws and go back...

**Mr. Speaker:** One second Mr. Nadir. Mr. T. Williams, you have enviable position of speaking last on the motion so if there is anything that you need to clarify, to add or to amend, you can do so because you have all the time in the world after all the speaker have spoken and made their presentations to reply. Go ahead Mr. Nadir.

**Mr. T. Williams:** Thank you.

**Mr. Nadir:** So Mr. Speaker this is not about upmanship or brinkmanship. The leadership of the Guyana Trades Union Congress is the one that ended the subvention. The GTUC leadership ended the subvention and there was no want of trying from the government. I agree with the honourable last speaker, that all the plans that which he had in place – glorious plans – all the potentials that the Critchlow Labour College had to restore itself as a primary labour institution in the country and also a primary institution to ensure that second chancers can get an academic access to the University of Guyana – all of that could have been restored. I was waiting for the last speaker, the Honourable Member, to say why he left. Not about the glorious plans and not about citing this ... *[Interruption]* Not about citing this in the Guyana Public Service Union's

(GPSU) strikes of 1999 and what happened at the John Fernandes Co. Ltd., let him deal with what he was part of – living history.

Do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? The last speaker resigned himself. At a particular interview he gave to one media house, he said, “I left because the place was being *run like a cake shop*.”

**Mr. Speaker:** Dr. Roopnarine, now is the right time to object or to clarify if that statement is not so.

**Mr. Nadir:** Yes.

**Ms. Teixeira:** It was never corrected.

**Mr. Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, it was *being run like a cake shop*, but that was not the real story about the departure of that...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, is that a direct quote or are you paraphrasing?

**Mr. Nadir:** It is a direct quote.

**Mr. Speaker:** I see.

6.14 p.m.

**Mr. Nadir:** “*Cake shop*” was used. That was not the real story. There was one particular executive on the Board who left Trinidad and Tobago and flew over here to fire him. Yes, to fire him. We want to commend the Hon. Member, Dr. Roopnarine, for all of the efforts he put in to try to get consensus among Government, the two warring factions of labour and also academia because, in credit to him, all those back audited statements he is talking about he did.

**Mr. Speaker:** ‘Hon. Member’, not ‘he’, ‘The Hon. Doctor’.

**Mr. Nadir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Dr. Roopnarine, the Hon. Member, spent a lot of time and he always has at heart what is best for Guyana always! He is on a particular side now and he is ‘straight-jacketed’ because he is constrained to really talk the full truth. He is constrained right now to really speak the full truth. [Ms. Ally: Why is he constrained?]

Because you are ‘straight-jacketing’ him; the Hon. Member Ms. Ally is ‘straight-jacketing’ him. He cannot speak freely. The Hon. Member put a lot of effort into bringing... He wrote to the Office of the President and the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education, which is the agency under which the subvention comes. I was asked by the Office of the President to intervene since there were two opposing positions. ‘Let us have Labour intervene.’

By then the Hon. Member had resigned but, Sir... We have notes here signed off that I can provide to the House. The General Secretary of the TUC, Mr. Lincoln Lewis, wrote to the Ethnic Relations Commission and asked the Ethnic Relations Commission to also intervene and so on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, we had a meeting that was chaired by the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) and the Minister of Labour was asked by the ERC to attend. Who were present at that meeting? Manzoor Nadir, Minister of Labour, Mohamed Akeel, Chief Labour Officer. This happened at 9.10 a.m. on the 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2009. [**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Nadir, you were not a good Labour Minister.] It does not matter. Whether I was good or bad this is history speaking to us. The people will judge who was good or bad and if my relative on the other side, the Hon. Member, says that I was bad I would bow to her. ...Bishop Juan Edghill, Chairman of the ERC, Ms. Cheryl Sampson – a Former Member of the People’s National Congress in this House – Ms. Christine King, Mr. Mr. Carville Duncan, Colonel Godwin McPherson, Mr. Ian Andrews, Vice President of the Guyana Trade Union Congress, Ms. Gillian Burton, President of the Guyana Trade Union Congress, and Mr. Clifford Hackett representing the unpaid lecturers of the two collages – Crichtlow Labour Collage, Georgetown, and the Linden Branch.

Look at that representation, at the highest level of the Guyana Trade Union Congress. The President and Vice President of the GTUC, the Chief Labour Officer and the Minister of Labour, the Chairman of the Ethnic Relations Commission and Members of the ERC sitting down to try to find a way forward; exactly what the Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine just said, representative of the Labour Movement because the Hon. Minister Dr. Nanda Gopaul said that we have to have members on the board representative of labour, not dominated by one of the smaller Unions in labour, but representative of labour and this was the crux of the matter and we know that there is one strong-person in the GTUC and if that person does not have that persons’ way it is the highway for everyone else. The subvention issue... I want to say to the Hon. Member, Mr. Trevor Williams, that we understand the politics that the AFC is playing with this matter; we understand

it. This, for the AFC, in my view, is not about accessing opportunities for young people because today those opportunities abound many times fold. The Critchlow Labour College in its heyday, providing this academic training when we took over all of the schools and we wanted to control the minds of people, especially our young people. We wanted to channel them and programme them and so when the Critchlow Labour Collage...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, stand. Did you at any time benefit or where you in any school that was nationalised, if you want to call it that? Was your mind controlled?

**Mr. Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, there is no secret...

**Mr. Speaker:** My mind was never controlled by anyone I came through I went... I hope that it did not happen to you.

**Mr. Nadir:** I have read some of the criticisms then of the programmes officered at Critchlow Labour Collage and one of the concerns was that it was a backdoor way of people who could not qualify by getting the requisite General Certificate of Education (GCE), at that time, not CXC but the General Certificate of Education, to get into the University of Guyana. I throw that behind because...

**Mr. Speaker:** I am saying that cannot be valid and I would not allow it because there are Members of this House... Dr. Gopaul who said that he was a product, Mr. Williams, the Hon. Robert Montgomery Persaud, MBA... That could not be true and to pursue it would mean that you would impugn the character of Members of this House and I cannot allow that.

**Mr. Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, I have heard your rulings many times when persons said 'they have learnt' and they 'understood this to have been said' and that is the language I am using and I said that it was said at that time and it was said at that time... [**Mr. Trotman:** Where is the quotation?] Do you want Dr. Roopnarine's quotation? I will give it to you. I said that I was about to throw that away because even if it served one person to get a good education it would have served its purpose and we know the glorious past of the Critchlow Labour Collage that the Hon. Member, Mr. Trevor Williams, spoke about is undeniable. It is undeniable. The tragedy is that that had been destroyed by the stubbornness of some people and the undemocratic nature of appointing the board of directors of the Critchlow Labour Collage.

We always said when we looked at this issue – I am speaking from inside the Government – that the issue here is governance; governance. Mr. Speaker, the list of persons who obtained salaries from the Critchlow Labour Collage had nothing to do with imparting education to the people. They were phantom people on the payroll. When we convened under the chairmanship of the ERC in March, 2009, the Ministry of Labour had received from the lecturers, at two campuses, salaries owing to the staff – the Georgetown campus-\$3.8 million and the Linden campus-\$2 million, a total of \$5.8 million being owed. For the third campus – this is very instructive – the Berbice campus, no salary was owed. Do you know why?

The Berbice campus controlled its own chequebook and it was able to pay all of the staff, on time, from the fees which it collected from the students, but the Linden campus and the Georgetown campus went into a special account controlled by a few persons. When Mr. Godwin McPherson raised the issue and started making the concerns known and said ‘let us move forward towards resolving these issues’ a padlock was placed on his office door and he said to the ERC and us that he never resigned as principal. When we went to the registrar of companies the Collage is still yet to submit all of the requirements based on its incorporation and also based on its bylaws.

Names when the then President of the GTUC and the Vice President made some concessions in terms of trying to resolve the issue of the representativeness of labour, we were sent a memo from the then General Secretary of the TUC saying that we have appointed four new directors; not addressing the concerns of representing labour but they sent saying that they have appointed Professor Clive Thomas as Chairman, Mr. Christopher Ram – this was received on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 – Dr. Aubrey Armstrong and Dr. Michael Scott as the fourth persons. That was the reform which the CLC brought to the table. That was what the General Secretary of the GTUC said and the Chairman of the GTUC sitting there and the Vice Chairman did not know anything about that letter. They were sitting there at the meeting and this was news to them. This is the issue of governance.

I mentioned the Berbice campus because for all of the machinations that we have seen GAWU went ahead and decided that they have to ensure the same issue that the Hon. Member Roopnarine mentioned just now, refocusing on labour education. GAWU went ahead, went ahead out of its own money – not a cent from the Government – and spent \$110 million and built

its own labour collage; not a cent from Government. In the last four years over 1,100 persons have passed through labour training programmes at GAWU Labour Collage; over 1,100 persons with not a cent from the Government of Guyana. Just like the Berbice campus of the Critchlow Labour Collage...

Why can the Guyana Trade Union Congress, which claims to be the umbrella body for all labour, not double what GAWU could do, build a \$200 million campus by itself and train 2,000 persons in 5 years? There is much more in this mortar than the pestle, much more. It is not this easy. We would like to see as many opportunities opening up for all of the people of this country and while Critchlow offered another opportunity for persons to get into the University of Guyana and do well the Government said that we should not cut that out. That is why today one can write an exam and get into the University of Guyana. I have known hundreds of persons who do not have the requisite CXC or GCE who are writing those exams and getting into the University of Guyana. It is not the only opportunity, Sir.

There are many other opportunities to enhance your academics to get into the University of Guyana. The University of Guyana has accredited programmes through Institute of Private Enterprise Development (IPED). There are programmes through IPED that, once you pass, you can qualify to get into the university of Guyana and, of course, Mr. Speaker, one has the Institute of Distant and Continuing Education (IDCE). In addition to what is given by subvention by this Parliament, the University of Guyana also contributed \$60 million towards that programme of the IDCE all across the country. I do not have a problem with it being replicated and duplicated and multiplied among many institutions, but the institutions not only have to have the accountability, but they also have to represent the wide cross section of stakeholders that they claim to be representing. They have to do that.

Opportunities and second chances for young people: We all know that less than five per cent of our people want to advance to tertiary education and many of them want to continue beyond secondary into skills training. I was just reading recently that it was March, 1949, in the Legislative Council when Dr. Jagan said that instead of us spending money to do some esoteric thing, which the Government at that time and the colony wanted to do, we should spend that money to establish the Guyana School of Agriculture and by 1953 Dr. Jagan was fighting for the establishment of a technical institute which was launched in 1963.

What we did, Mr. Speaker, which the PPP/C Government has done, is expand the opportunities that one does not only have GTI and the New Amsterdam and the Linden Technical Institute, one has the Upper Corentyne, one has Lenora, one has Essequibo and one also has Mahaicony. Not only that, the Hon. Minister of Labour through the Board of Industrial Training said to us during the last budget that doubling of his budget will see over 3,000 young people getting an opportunity for a second chance. Outside of that we have young persons who are working and through their own industriousness are working to get themselves qualified so that they can go on to higher and higher education.

This is not just about restoring the subvention. The landscape has changed tremendously and opportunities abound everywhere, far and wide – Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) teaching in Annai, teaching all over the country. The opportunities for our young people here today abound. There is no young person who wants an opportunity at training that cannot access it through one of the many programmes which the Government has undertaken. I agree with the Hon. Dr. Roopnarine that we need to have labour education again being primary among workers. I was heartened when I saw the current principal of the Critchlow Labour Collage talking about the new programmes of the CLC.

I do not know how many persons know that the current principal is the Former Member of Parliament Aubrey Norton. Yes, a good gentleman is the current principal. I think he has taken a leaf out of the book of the Hon. Dr. Rupert Roopnarine because he has just launched a programme. I think that he had about 60 persons signing up but do you know what the cost is? \$60,000 to get into the University... That is a good start. A better initiative would be ensuring that the governance of the Critchlow Labour Collage not only be accountable for whatever is given by anybody, state or donor, but also that the board of directors is expanded to ensure that persons representative of labour serve on that board.

It is very hard for me to stand here, knowing all of the history and knowing the changes that have happened, and support a motion that does not give the full story and to listen to what I find to be purely politics playing in the House and it is not getting to where we ought to be in terms of representing the national interest properly.

We propose and we are urging an amendment. We are saying that if you are serious about the first start – we know that we are serious – let us amend this motion and, in particular, get those who are in control of the Critchlow Labour Collage today to ensure that there are four persons representing the one umbrella body and four representing the other umbrella body and let us get back Critchlow along the action plan that Dr. Rupert Roopnarine has outlined here. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to speak to this motion because I thought it was a rather straightforward and noncontroversial motion but after I heard the last speaker... [**Mr. Ali:** You went into labour.] Yes, indeed, literally, I went almost into labour trying to produce some sense from the non... excuse me, from what the Hon. Member has said because I could not, for one moment, imagine that someone who has come from the bowels of anti-labour could in fact espouse any type of sentiment favourable towards labour or in sympathy with the children of labour.

Our Constitution, both the 1980 Constitution and the reform to the Constitution that was introduced in 2003, had, I believe quite rightly so, a very equitable architecture towards the children of our country and it enshrines in the Constitution that the welfare of the child shall be the foremost consideration of our people, bound by the Constitution to think that way and, in particular, it defines a role for labour in the Constitution; that labour is the originator and producer of the wealth of the nation. Therefore, when we speak to anything that has to do labour we must speak with respect and solemnity because the struggle of this country, the struggle for the real liberation of Guyana, had been ignited by labour, by barefooted people.

I say this, young Mr. Trevor Williams, the Hon. Member, and Leader of the Youth For Change, would not have been cognisant of the antecedence that had led to the division of Guyana into polarised ethnic and political camps. He would not have been even born when labour went into travail and produced a division into what has now become the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC). He would not have known that at some stage the education of children of labour would have been held hostage to that division. But he spoke from his heart that there is an opportunity, and he would have read the Constitution that says that education for all is a primary duty of the nation, not only in formal but non-formal institutions.

The Critchlow Labour Collage is one of those non-formal institutions and under the Constitution, therefore, the Government is bound by equitable consideration as the father, as the mother of the nation, to treat with entreaties and pleas for assistance from a non-institutionalised or non-formal institution. I am in complete sympathy with the argument advanced by the Hon. Minister Dr. Nanda Kishore Gopaul and I am sure, if my honourable Friend and colleague, the Hon. Mr. Komal Chand were to speak to this motion, he would have also given a history of the lamentation of why labour suffered a setback in Guyana and he would have also said that the efforts for the unification of labour is an unfulfilled task. It is necessary for Guyana.

I have read where critics of the Obama Administration in the United States of America, though they worked in the Labour Movement and the feminist and gender organisations and the black and Hispanic communities and coloured communities assiduously for the election of Barack Obama as the President of the United States of America, it is also with deep regret that I have read repeatedly that some of the spokesmen of the very sponsors of Obama said that labour went into pause at the election of President Obama. The struggles of the working class had been blunted because of sympathies for the leader they thought would have prosecuted the agenda of the working people but we have that criticism that also could be laid justly in Guyana.

Those on the other side – and I was on that other side – had their genesis in labour and struggled, not to allow an anti-labour advocate to speak on behalf of labour. We have struggled for the empowerment of genuine representative of the working people.

*6.44 p.m.*

We saw the damage that has been done to this country when the working class struggle went into pause and that we could not advance the agenda of the working people so much so that what we have today in this country, the endemic corruption and runaway mismanagement, could have only been held in check if we had a unified and strong labour movement. I am in sympathy that there was the withdrawal of subvention for the Critchlow Labour College and it was because there was, in 2007... [**Mr. Neendkumar:** You voted for it.] I did not have the privilege of being in those seats so I can tell you that I heard the argument and I was in sympathy with the argument, that so long as the Critchlow Labour College does not have genuine representative from all sections of the working people, from the labour movement, then it was untenable that the

Government could have given the subvention without having that insurance that it was done in a way that will promote the best interest of the entire labour movement.

I am in sympathy with the argument that the labour movement could not survive, as it claims to survive, without the participation of the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU) representing the single largest block of union members in Guyana. I could not have ever understood what impetus drove those who claim to represent labour to exclude GAWU from the leadership of the Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC). I could have never countenanced that. I also know that when the Public Service Ministry, Government, if I may say so, was taken to court by the Public Service Union, the court had ruled - correct me if I am wrong Minister - that the Critchlow Labour College ought to have been given an opportunity to correct some of its accountability problems as soon as it could and that the Public Service Ministry ought to have insisted - as we heard just now that some reports were submitted - that the order of the court had been carried out in order to ensure that the subvention would be restored or floated back to the Critchlow Labour College.

We cannot penalise the students of the Critchlow Labour College for administrative faults. We could not make them the victim of our own inertia to act even upon a motion. I knew at one time that, (as much as we did not understand and could not countenance a division of labour) we felt that the Critchlow Labour College was in fact an institution that could be reformed to educate children of the working people in working class subjects to do precisely what we have been taught, in some other schools, that we must “struggle to learn” and we must “learn to struggle”.

Struggle is not a virtue that is attributed to us from birth. It is a Leninist, my good friend has said - “a Leninist exhortation.” [Dr. Ramsaran: Why do you not say so?] I did not come from the school of Moscow, my friend. I have never gone there. I read widely so I can tell you only of the quote. We all learn from the same school of thought and from others that politics is the concentrate of economics. It is the economic struggle that is waged by trade unions that should become sharper if we want to move our struggle and our society forward.

Therefore, labour must be incubated in an educated way. Our own Constitution speaks to the role of labour. The Constitution of this Republic provides avenues, not for what my learned friend has been talking about, the back room entry into the University of Guyana. We know that several

persons had back room entry into the University of Guyana. Many of them could not have even written their own papers and had to depend on others to write their academic papers. We know that there were many people who hungered for university education and going to the Critchlow Labour College they could have gone on their own if they were adults 26 years and older to the University of Guyana without academic qualifications, that we had to struggle to get, O' levels and A' levels, in order to get into the doors of the university. Others got through the back door because of age and others through the back door of others institutions. Critchlow Labour College could have been one of those, but that may not have been the primary objective, it had been abused – the curriculum – to allow only opportunistic entry into the university.

We have to ensure that measures are put in place to reverse that, and that it must become an institution of labour. It is not to condemn it to death, not to hang it by strangulation that takes away financial oxygen. Even if, as I said, there might have been sympathy when that subvention was withheld, the Minister of Education then, the Hon. Sheik Baksh, I believe, had taken an approach that said that once it had rectified its accountability issues then there would have been a restoration of the subvention. I remember the Hon. Member, then, Dr. Henry Jeffery, was a very strong advocate for the restoration of the subsidies because he knew that the political division in the labour movement can be dealt with in a different way without having to allow a collateral damage, which is the right of student to a labour education.

For example, my friend was saying that I had taken some position, which I am not aware of, but assuming, not accepting that what he said is true, I am prepared to reverse any position I had taken with regard to the Critchlow Labour College and to say that the subvention should be restored. It is the right thing to do. It is the enlightened thing to do. Take most of us here, the genesis of our own political enlightenment came from institutions such as Accabre College, and from the Cuffy Ideological Institute, perhaps Kuru Kuru Cooperative College as well, apart from those who had gone elsewhere. I am saying that so important had been the imperative for labour education that the institution, which I had gone to, the Accra Bay College, had as courses collective bargaining and history of the trade union movement. Those are courses that we need to inculcate in our young people if we want to create a nexus between us, who we are today, and our own history of struggle and the gains that came out of the labour struggle.

I am, irreversibly so, a labour advocate and I have gained my spur in the trenches of labour undeniably so and I ask this evening that we set aside the petty politics of trying to strangle an institution because we felt that we must wait until there is unification of the labour movement.

I want to say this; that, “yes” the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) should reunite in the interest of the Guyanese people. It should reunite at a time when great challenges face the working people of Guyana. That is an imperative that is foisted on the TUC and the FITUG, that they have to work towards that. While they work towards their unity they would ensure, as well, that the TUC, once reunited, should have equitable representation in keeping with the number of members in each trade union movement. That is a democratic right, a doctrine of proportionality.

That is a right and if they came together and they were able to put equal numbers on the board of the Critchlow Labour College, as is requested by the Hon. Member who last spoke, if that is done then we can see that the syllabus of Critchlow Labour College could be changed to include genuine labour subjects, genuine issues that will concern the working people and to incubate our future fighters and future leaders in a genuine school of labour. We can see all of that happen, but if the institution dies prematurely or if it dies... It is now almost gasping for its last breath. If it is not allowed to live then none of this will happen.

I ask this Government, I ask those who have the last remnants of labour conscientiousness in their soul, I plead with the General Secretary of the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) in particular, that they should allow this motion to be supported with a proviso that we are prepared to amend and that is that there should be equitable participation in a future board but if that were the content of the motion that we would ask that the Government not only support the motion but that it should restore the subvention.

I say finally that it is not a matter of the quantum of the money. I am told it is \$32 million for an entire year that Critchlow Labour College is asking for. [Mr. Jaffarally: That is a lot of money.] My good friend, at the back, from Berbice, is saying that that is a lot of money. Yes, it is a lot of money, that is what a former President will get in pension and benefits when monetised for a year! That is what we are asking for. What the former President will get for one year we are asking for less than that to be given to an institution to be able to spread labour

education, labour knowledge and labour consciousness and so long as we are here on this side we would ask that you do not look at this in monetary terms. Look at what it would mean for the promotion of labour consciousness and the true labour leaders of this country in the future.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much Mr. Nagamootoo. Hon. Members, it is five minutes to seven o' clock but I propose that we go through and finish this motion and so I invite Mr. Basil Williams to continue the debate.

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]:** Oh Lord.

**Deputy Speaker [Mr. B. Williams]:** Why do these Members always say "Oh Lord" when I am about to speak? Mr. Speaker, it is becoming disconcerted. Whenever I rise to speak there is always the words "Oh God" over there. On the last occasion it was the Hon. Attorney General and now it is the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water. What is happening? I do not wish to challenge God on earth. Thank you very much.

We are dealing with a matter that is very dear and close to my heart. We need to recognise that lost in all of this is that Critchlow Labour College really is the brainchild of the national hero of Guyana. That man was made a national hero right here in this hallowed House, by all sides, Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow. It is important that we look to the genesis of this college.

Critchlow fought for the education, not only of himself, but for his protégées. His life work, the core running through his life's work, was education - education for the people, education for the trade union workers. He first introduced this concept of workers' education. He initiated a trade union education when he arranged correspondence courses with Ruskin College in Oxford England. People in the likes of Mr. Ashton Chase studied at that college because of Critchlow's work.

Critchlow established firm links which are in existence today for local trade unionist to obtain training in industrial relations and related topics. Critchlow was insatiable widening his education and knowledge about trade unionism and he also bestowed that on other persons around him in that movement.

We must recognise that this trade union movement of Guyana was a movement which was tantamount to living history because this movement evolved since it was Critchlow being the one who organised the first trade union in the entire commonwealth. When we read the history of the commonwealth movement and the way the politicians entered the movement, where Critchlow was and all of the ideals of him, we would have found to be adopted by a lot of our politicians.

As Critchlow strove for betterment of the workers in Guyana it went hand in hand with his quest that they be educated. He was untiring in his efforts to establish education in all of the territories too and, even though during those strife with his union, he never lost sight of the need to have education placed on a firm footing in this country. [Mr. Benn: Who wrote it for you?] Do you wish to have the source? [Mr. Benn: Yes.] Ask me nicely.

This relationship that he had in the Guyana trades union movement with the leaders of the trades union movement eventuated with a very close relationship with him and Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. It was because of Burnham and his party many of the ideas of Critchlow saw the day of light. The aspirations of Critchlow and ideas he fought for eventuated. It was Burnham's administration which, upon assuming the range of coalition government in 1964, established the Critchlow Labour Institute as a trade union educational institution on the 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1967.

This issue of equitable sharing on the board of management of Critchlow Labour College is not the *sine qua non* of the struggle but we are going into the genesis. He named it after Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow and it was then situated at South Road and New Garden Street. In 1968 the Critchlow Labour Institute was shifted to its permanent location on Woolford Avenue and was renamed Critchlow Labour College and was official opened in 1969 by the then Prime Minister L.F.S. Burnham himself. The first principal of that college was one Max Swerdlow. Is that known, Dr. Gopaul? [Hon. Member (Government)]: You are now reading it.] I am now reading it. He was a Canadian born International Labour Organisation adviser on labour education. [Mr. Benn: Now you are discovering that.] You want to know my source. Might I respectfully refer the Hon. Member to the *Hansard* of Wednesday, November 2005. Let me see who the presenter was. The presenter was Mr. Basil Williams.

The long-term objective of the Critchlow Labour College was to upgrade it to a community college. This noise that some of the speakers on the other side are making... The Critchlow

Labour College now offers courses which provide its students with necessary skills to proceed for vocational and tertiary level training. That is what this withdrawal affects. [Mr. Neendkumar: We know all of that.] You knew that. [Mr. Neendkumar: We know all of that.] Did you go there? [Mr. Neendkumar: *Inaudible*] You should have gone there. Even as a second string you could not have made it. These courses include a one-year programme in industrial relations and social studies, short courses in industrial relations and labour economics, communication and effective speaking, clerical office practice and supervisory training, business management and accounts, to name a few, but it is just to show you how this college was oriented. It is obvious to note the hundreds of graduates from the University of Guyana who had pre-qualified for entry thereto by graduating from the Critchlow Labour College.

At every public meeting he held, Critchlow promoted technical and vocational training. In tribute to Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow the Guyana Industrial Training Centre was also built. Did you know that? It was administered by the Guyana Trades Union Congress with financial aid from the American Institute for Free Labour Development.

In 1978, Mr. Winslow Carrington, the director of Critchlow Labour College and coordinator of the workers education, announced that the workers coordinating centre and secretariat would have held classes specifically for trade unionist. All of this was under the aegis of the People's National Congress Reform (PNCR).

As it was said earlier, the Constitution gives recognition to the status and role of trade unions in Guyana and in the 1980 Constitution it is by article 149. That is where we are in relation to the antecedent of the Critchlow Labour College. [Mr. Neendkumar: Antecedent?] You do not know that word.

We come now to what really is a *sine qua non*, another *causa causans* of this problem. This problem has nothing to do with accountability and how many numbers and equal numbers should be on the board of management. It has to do with something my brother talks about all of the time - *control freakism*. One wonders why the venerable trade unionist in this House is not speaking tonight. He is none other than the Hon. Member Mr. Komal Chand.

I recall vividly, as I said, that the trade union movement is something that one could have reached out and touched. A lot of the actors are still around. I recall in the 1980s the trade union movement was fought out on the floor of that Critchlow Labour College auditorium. In 1983, as a young attorney-at-law, I was introduced in that arena and what a stellar cast it was. There was the entire politburo of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) on that floor - both Presidents Jagans, the current President, even the former President or the most recent former President, the Hon. Member Mr. Komal Chand. There were some stalwarts in the movement such as Gordon Todd, Samuel Walker, T. Anson Sancho and K. W. E. Denny. There was a mixture. There was Elvin Mc David; there was Robert Williams. That was the flow because all of the politicians were in GAWU and that is where we were. There was the association of masters and mistresses. What was one of my first exercises? It was to understand, to a T, the Constitutions of all of those unions affiliated to the Guyana Trades Union Congress. I can tell what the struggle was.

There was GAWU there, yes, the largest union, but there were unions such as Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU). There were large unions such as the Guyana Teachers' Union and there were many smaller unions, but the delegate representation was all there written in law. It was the law and so what played out was that GAWU was struggling to get the control of the Guyana Trades Union Congress executive. I remembered this vividly. [**Mr. Benn:** You were there.] I was there. I had just come in fresh as a rose, observing. There were always frustrated by the fact that GAWU could have not gained control of the Guyana Trades Union Congress.

I recall, also, at the second elections, which I witnessed, the Hon. Member Mr. Komal Chand had a discussion with me and I suggested to him that getting the presidency, perhaps the GAWU could have started as an executive committee (EXCO) member. He would remember that he agreed but he had to, of course, go back to his superiors. I did not have to go back to my superiors because my superiors gave me the reins to negotiate. The Hon. Member Komal Chand will tell you that as a result of our agreement GAWU got, I think it was, the position of Assistant Secretary that year. It got a position and not just an EXCO position, but it got an officer position.

It never was satisfied and shortly after that there was the split in the movement. This issue about accountability and all of that... Let me show why it is a burning issue until now by quoting none other than Dr. Nanda Gopaul. The Hon. Member in his presentation tonight said that the governance of the Guyana Trades Union Congress, and he was saying the rules governing

elections,... That is what he spoke about tonight and he lamented about the lack of proportionality since 1975. Those are his words and that is an issue which has been a burning one since 1975.

GAWU, with the largest number of members, could not have got the presidency. That was his lament here tonight. I do not know why the Government Members are telling me about equal numbers on the board. Then the Hon. Member brought in his own union, National Association of Clerical, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NACCIE) and neither NACCIE could have got a position, and a control position the EXCO.

*7.14 p.m.*

We would never able to get control of critical positions in the Guyana Trades Union Congress. Those are the real reasons for punishing the children of Critchlow Labour College. It was not this issue about accountability. The Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine told us that all the reports were submitted under his watch. Why is Dr. Gopaul telling us tonight, for decade, that there was no accountability? Dr. Roopnarine set the record straight.

The Hon. Member continued, in regaling this House, in his lamentations, that four unions with less numbers have all being allocated more delegates. It is crying; it is paining; it is burning, but they ought to have fought that battle out there in the GTUC and tried to get the rules reformed. I will tell the Member something else, when we come down to the president, about what he is talking about that it is a simple matter of getting four here and four there.

We come to the situation where there was another spilt. Dr. Roopnarine spoke about that split coming in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What happened during the last decade? The last decade had seen the decimation of the Guyana Trades Union Congress. There has been an unrelenting attack on the trade union movement. A slew of legislation came through this House emasculating the Guyana Trades Union Congress and virtually perpetrating the split in the movement. [**An Hon. Member (Government):** *[Inaudible]*]. There was always workers participation in management but then there was the Trades Union Recognition Board, a certification board. Its representation always has the Guyana Trades Union Congress on it. It was the classic standard bearer for an umbrella organisation for trade unions and the legislation was

passed to exclude it. Legislation was passed in this House to exclude the Guyana Trades Union Congress from being consulted on matters of trade union interest.

When one hears that the people, right now, in Guyana Trades Union Congress try to protect their turf one has to understand because a lot of legislation has been passed to weaken and cripple them. [Ms. Teixeira: Give one.] I just give you one. It just cannot be a simple thing of putting four there and four here. There is still FITUG. We have been always calling for a unification of the movement. What happened? At the annual representation in Geneva, ILO Conference, the representatives are normally from the Guyana Trades Union Congress. What was found happening 2004/2005 and onwards to now? FITUG has being substituted in the place of the Guyana Trades Union Congress. In other words, efforts have been made to sidetrack the Guyana Trades Union Congress and to assert the FITUG organisation. All these factors have to be known when we talk about... When one understands all of this one understands that to the People's Progressive Party the students of the Critchlow Labour College are mere collateral damage.

Let me say this: We are now in the situation where we are faced with Minister... - I happen to be in this House - Mr. Henry Jeffery, Dr. Bisnauth and the Hon. Member Manzoor Nadir. The last Member, Sir, we would require the entire session to deal with his tenure and I was surprised that he got up to speak because he was the only Minister of Labour that any motion of no confidence has moved against. It is under his watch that a foreign company actually had a manager lifting a spade to beat our worker so that they could get on with the job. It is under his watch that a foreign company be purported to derecognise the union that it was certificated for recognition with that workplace. I do not know how the Hon. Member Mr. Manzoor Nadir could have got up here and talked about any trade union matter.

Let me tell the Member that I believe personally that the Hon. Member Dr. Gopaul is a true blood trade unionist. If not only for the fact that when the honourable founder leader of this country, L.F.S. Burnham, was driving by he was one man... I have seen him... [Mr. Nandlall: Has found this country?]. That is another discussion but I would not be sidetracked. I want you to know that the Hon. Member Dr. Gopaul I saw when Mr. Forbes Burnham stopped him with his retinue - his full retinue - this Member here and he waited for him to run to the car and to go and sit inside with him. It is this same Hon. Member Dr. Gopaul.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dr. Gopaul, this would be the appropriate time to get up to clarify...

**Mr. B. Williams:** In my mind, if the Hon. Prime Minister and President could have stopped to collect Dr. Gopaul to ride with him, nothing could be wrong with Dr. Gopaul. That is my view. I am telling the Members that when he went into the Office of the President something had happened to him, but I am happy he is out of there now. Since he is here I know he is struggling because in his heart he knew that some terrible blows had been inflicted under the watch of the Hon. Member Manzoor Nadir against his movement and that is why we have seen some striving voices are now merely muted as they are working with him to try to reassert the movement. We believe that he would genuinely be interested in reunifying this movement, but we know who his masters are. We urge him to continue pressing but he has a lot things to do. He has to resolve the RUSAL matter. We are not going to bring a notice of no confidence within a month but we expect that he would get on with it so we would not have to do it in another two months or three months.

Where we are now with the restoration of the subvention? As I said, one Minister would say we have to wait for trade union unity, another one would say accountability and we knew that they are not being serious. What was seen next? GAWU had its own school. The Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) had to follow suit, but we are saying Critchlow Labour College is not any ordinary institution. It is a truly indigenous institution, an institution which is really a product of struggle through colonial times, struggle through the hardships of which this country endured and we really should put it in a special place. If it comes to that, I am prepared to move an amendment to resolve that a Special Select Committee of this honourable House be established to examine the issue surrounding the restoration of the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College.

Right in this House, let us set up a Special Select Committee and let us bring in the parties, and let us see who is genuine from who is not. This is a challenge; I am challenging the Members. If the Hon. Member, my namesake, Mr. Trevor Williams, is in agreement we would put this forward because it is then we will see...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Basil Williams, why should your amendment not look at the gamut of where trade unionism is today rather than just the issue of...?

**Mr. B. Williams:** I am guided.

**Mr. Speaker** If you are having a Special Select Committee we really need to examine where the unions are or...

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with you.

**Mr. Speaker:** You may chair it.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I am dealing with it in this context but the trade union movement needs to be inquired into and examined.

We are saying all that the speakers before me have spoken to the real persons who are being injured in this struggle between the giants. The struggle between FITUG and GTUC, the struggle on the part of the PPP/C to control the trade union movement because of nightmares it has of the movement from the 1960s and even those issues were disputed but it has this fear. We have to recognise that this is a real fear and that is why we need to sit and talk. We need to have all sides sit and list it here at this level. I am inviting Members to come with the memorandum and make presentations and let us find a way out of this. The Critchlow Labour College is too important to us to fail. We guarantee the Members, on this side of the House, that we would do our best to foster any unity movement, any restoration of the unity of trade union movement, and the subvention to Critchlow Labour College.

I support the motion moved by the Hon. Member Trevor Williams and to say that the APNU stands firmly behind this movement and the quest for the restoration of the subvention for the Critchlow Labour College.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Trevor, I know that attempts were made by Members of the House to forge a consensus amendment. If you are ready we can move to the amendment now or we can take the suspension for a half of an hour to have it... What is your wish as it is your motion?

**Mr. T. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, we prefer to have the suspension.

*Sitting suspended at 7.27 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 7.55 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, just before we took a half an hour suspension Mr. Trevor Williams intimated that he wished to have the House consider an amendment. I have since seen a draft amendment but I believe even that draft has to be refined somewhat. Mr. Trevor Williams, I invite you to reply and just before I put the vote I will put the amendment, as I understand it, first and then if that passes we put it the motion as amended.

**Mr. T. Williams (replying):** I thank, first of all, to all the Members on both sides who spoke on this motion, and for sure the level of debate, which exists on this topic, is very interesting. I wish the nation, as a whole, could have benefited from this much earlier and to some extent we could have found a compromise on resolution to this issue long before the number of years that have passed.

Indeed, the AFC considers itself a party with vision for a better country, so while my colleague the Hon. Member Mr. Nadir did take a swipe at me, indicating that we are playing politics with this issue, I am glad we could have reached an agreement, a consensus, on an amendment. But it is also a bit disturbing to know that this motion was sitting on the floor of this Parliament for a number of weeks and interesting parties did not show the kind of interest to suggest the amendment and a way forward on the document, but nevertheless it is not too late and we are here today. I am glad that we have come to this point.

Mr. Speaker, adjust in the amendment, I wish to add a few words to the last paragraph which states, “that as a precondition to the provision to the subvention.” Instead of the words “Board of Directors of the Critchlow Labour College” it is that “the labour component” - I would like to have the words inserted there - “of the Board of Directors of the Critchlow Labour College be comprised four representatives of FITUG and four of the TUC.” That is what we would like to see.

I am asked by my colleague to read the entire amendment.

“AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to restore the subvention for the Critchlow Labour College.

That as a precondition to the provision of the subvention that the labour component of the Board of Directors of the Critchlow Labour College be comprised of four representatives of FITUG and four of the TUC.”

Moved by yours truly and seconded by Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo.

**Dr. Gopaul:** Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to refer to article 39 (2) of the Standing Orders...

**Mr. Speaker:** Do you mean of this House?

**Dr. Gopaul:** Yes Sir... and to request that I be given the opportunity to conclude the debate on this issue.

**Mr. Speaker:** It states that it is if the motion is a negative one, but let us hear you. The Government Minister does have the right to reply to any motion and that is so, but it is couched in the context of a motion that is injurious to the Government but if you have an amendment that is consensual I am at pains to understand what it is that leads you to want to respond, but go ahead. In the sense that the motion is one that is negative...

**Dr. Gopaul:** It is not intended to be long, Sir. It is intended to clarify certain issues which arose...

**Mr. Speaker:** One second, before you go, Dr. Gopaul, Mr. Nadir indicated a desire. If you are going to have the last right I would ask that if you be prepared to yield to Mr. Nadir.

**Mr. Nadir:** It is just for tidiness. I want to make a comment on the original motion and the amendment because it states, if we go as is, “Be it resolved”, and there is that line under the first resolve. “And be it further resolved,” basically it is the same line.

**Mr. Speaker:** My sense is that the “Be it resolved” that we have now will be replaced. It is to delete it completely. I will address that at the appropriate time. It is all cosmetic right now.

**Dr. Gopaul:** I am indeed happy that the discussion obviously generated some interest and concerns for worker movement and a worker educational institution. It has never been the Government's position to take up positions which are considered anti-worker, anti-working class or positions which are intended to damage any section of the labour movement. The core issue has been and remains with us today, is the issue of a governance of an institution. No one could say and expect from the National Treasury money to be poured into an organisation without any degree of accountability.

Even it is, I have not seen those reports. The reports should have been filed in the proper place. They are not in the Deeds Registry where the companies ought to submit their reports. In fact the last report at the Deeds Registry is for 1998. If indeed, I am not denying the Hon. Member, that audited statements have come out up to 2005 or 2007 but what I do know is that the public and members of the constituent organisations have not been afforded of the privilege consistent with the article of association to see the accounts of the Critchlow Labour College at any point in time over the last five years. Therefore I am happy that we are reaching a stage where avenues will be given for genuine representatives of labour to have a say in the expenditures and into the running of the affairs of the labour movement.

Critchlow Labour College, even without Government subvention, should have been able to run workers education. My colleague, from this side of the House, the Hon. Member Manzoor Nadir, indicated to us, a short while ago, that the GAWU, without Government funding, has run programmes over the last five years. When I was going to Critchlow Labour College we were not getting a Government subvention. The unions were contributing to the programmes; good leaders were flowing. We were sending our trade union leaders to overseas colleges and bringing them back as lecturers. The trade unions were collectively organising the programmes, supporting the programmes financially and many good shop stewards and leaders were emanating from the labour movement and the Critchlow Labour College, during the period of the 1970s.

I just want to correct a misconception and some of the points made by Hon. Member Basil Williams. We have been close colleagues despite disagreements on fundamental issues of the college. Tonight, again, he wanted us to believe that the hurt has to do with NAACIE or GAWU not being able to gain the presidency of the TUC or key positions. The purpose of saying that we

have never got it is because of the manipulation and that manipulation caused the division of the labour movement.

**Mr. Speaker:** Do you all not have an amendment on the floor? We are about to shatter that hope.

**Dr. Gopaul:** To correct two impressions he created, that the “Comrade Leader” opened his door to give me a drop, Nanda Gopaul could have never ever been compromised. In fact, it was yours truly, Sir, as the General Secretary of NAACIE, who had my members challenging an Act of Parliament which was passed here in this House in 1984.

**Mr. Speaker:** The House wants to know, did you or did you not get a ride...?

**Dr. Gopaul:** I did not get a ride from the Prime Minister’s car, Sir, or the President nor was I available for consultations with the ruling People’s National Congress at any point in time. I have been one of the strongest advocates for the defence of the workers’ rights in this country.

Comrade Basil Williams would want us to believe that it was all nice and rosy at the delegate conference but the fact is that genuine workers representatives were denied the right to be delegates and employees of Ministry of National Mobilisation and Development were substituted as delegates for trade unions. That is the type of manipulation that resulted in genuine workers leaders not being given positions. I merely want to correct that Sir. If our colleagues would want to have a good read at it, Cheddi Jagan’s *West On Trial* and Nanda Gopaul’s *Resistance and Change* reflect what transpired at the GTUC.

Having corrected that position, Comrade Basil Williams and I continued as friends despite our disagreements at the trade union level and many of our colleagues at the trade union level who would have had serious disagreements have always stood or sat in discussions in the interest of the working class. I believe that has been absent over the last few years. If we were to go back to the position of leaders talking with each other, very soon, I believe, we would be able to find some compromise in the labour movement and arrangement where workers’ interest will be paramount.

I say I like the way the debate went and having correcting those areas for my friend Brother Basil Williams, I want to say that we will support the amendment which will see the inclusion of

genuine workers union as a balance on the eight representatives of the labour component of the Board with the others continuing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I would like to put the motion but I will, first, put the amendment which I will read for the record and then put it for your consideration. The amendment, in essence, remove the existing “be it resolved” clause and replaces it with the following:

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to restore the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That as a precondition to the provision of the sum of the subvention that the labour component of the Board of Directors of the Critchlow Labour College be comprised of four representatives of FITUG and four of the TUC”.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Amendment carried.*

*Motion put.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Division.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is a division being sought? Any Member, who calls for a division, will need to stand and indicate with his or her microphone that a division is being sought.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a division.

*8.11 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Members are asked to use their microphones when they are indicating their votes. This is for the benefit of the *Hansard* record and the electronic recording.

*Division bell rang.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I need you to be still so that the Clerk can hear the vote.

*Division*

*Assembly divided as follows: Ayes 61, Noes 0*

**Ayes**

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Williams

Mr. Morian

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bond

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Mr. Bulkan

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Mr. Jafarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Ms. Webster

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

*Amendment carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, by arrangement and agreement between the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, the Deputy Speaker will take you into the last part of the evening. I believe it is an opportune time for him to do so.

The Deputy Speaker is not listed to speak on the next motion and the rules do provide for him to vote if needed and the Clerk will so advise. After his last presentation this evening, I believe this will be a fitting way for him to cap it off. I would be within the precincts of the Assembly but I believe we should welcome Mr. Williams, our Deputy Speaker. I ask you to be as kind to him as you have been to me. I am particularly speaking to Mr. Irfaan Ali, the Hon. Minister, who I know has the ability to unnerve Members. I do not think the Deputy Speaker has anything to worry about.

*[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]*

*[The Deputy Speaker entered the Chair.]*

## **BERBICE RIVER BRIDGE**

WHEREAS the Berbice Bridge was built with significant investment by the Government of Guyana on behalf of the People of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS the Berbice Bridge is owned and operated by the Berbice Bridge Company Inc (BBCI), a company incorporated under the provisions of the Companies Act No. 29 of 1991 of the Laws of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana through National Industrial & Commercial Investments Ltd (NICIL) is a preferential shareholder and a member of the Board of Directors of the Berbice Bridge Company Inc.;

AND WHEREAS since it's commissioning in December, 2008 the Berbice Bridge has facilitated crossing of over 650,000 vehicles (of the Berbice River) resulting in an annual revenue of over \$1,500,000,000 (one billion five hundred million dollars) for the Berbice Bridge Company Inc.;

AND WHEREAS the toll for vehicles crossing the Berbice Bridge presently is:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Present Rates</b>
Motor Cars	\$2200
Mini Buses	\$2200
Motor Cycles	\$200
Four-wheel drive/ SUVs/Pick-ups	\$4000
SUVs and pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	\$4000
Four-wheel drives, SUVs and pick-ups pulling horse buggies	\$4000
Four-wheel drives/ SUVs / pick-ups transporting BBQ Grills, coolers	\$4000
50-seater bus	\$12,800
30-seater bus	\$7,200
Large Trucks	\$13,600

AND WHEREAS the toll for crossing the Berbice River is exceedingly high when compared to a similar crossing of the Demerara River by the Demerara Harbour Bridge and represents a significant devolution of wealth from the people of Berbice in particular to the benefit of a private company;

AND WHEREAS in recognition that the toll was too high the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. for a specific period over August 1, 2013 to August 12, 2013 reduced the toll for the crossing of the Berbice Bridge to the following rates:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Current toll charges/freight charges</b>	<b>Reduced toll charges for the month of August/no freight charge</b>
Four-wheel drive/SUVs/Pick-ups	G\$4000	G\$3000
SUVs/Pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	G\$4000	G\$3000 and no freight charge for tourism and pleasure activity
Four-wheel drive/SUVs/Pick-ups pulling horse buggies	G\$4000	G\$3000 and no freight charge
Four-wheel drive/SUVs/Pick-ups transporting BBQ grills, coolers	G\$4000	G\$3000 and no freight charge for tourism and pleasure activity
50-seater buses	G\$12,800	G\$9,000
30-seater buses	G\$7,200	G\$6,000
Large trucks	G\$13,600	G\$10,000

AND WHEREAS section 3 and section 4 of the Berbice River Bridge Act 2006 - No. 3 of 2006 provides for the Minister responsible for public works to make “Toll Orders”,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to instruct its representative on the Board of Directors of the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. to demand an immediate reduction in tolls charged by the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. for crossing the Berbice River; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls upon the Minister responsible for Public Works to make the following Toll Order:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Present Rates</b>	<b>Proposed Rates</b>
Motor Cars	\$2,200	\$1,000
Mini Buses	\$2,200	\$1,000
Motor Cycles	\$200	Free
Four-wheel drive/ SUVs/Pick-ups	\$4,000	\$3,000
SUVs and pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	\$4,000	\$3,000
Four-wheel drives, SUVs and pick-ups pulling horse buggies	\$4,000	\$3,000
Four-wheel drives/ SUVs / pick-ups transporting BBQ Grills, coolers	\$4,000	\$3,000
50-seater bus	\$12,800	\$9,000
30-seater bus	\$7,200	\$6,000
Large Trucks	\$13,600	\$10,000

*[Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We now move to the motion on the Berbice River Bridge. Are we proceeding with that motion tonight?

**Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in deference to your first order of business in the Chair, I respectfully wish to defer the consideration of this matter.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That seems to be a good augury, Hon. Member.

*Motion deferred.*

**THE BROADCASTING (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – BILL NO. 19 OF 2013**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly, in accordance with Standing Order No. 52(1), grant leave for the introduction and first reading of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No. 19 of 2013.

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act.” [*Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon*]

**Lt. Col (Ret’d) Harmon:** I rise to move the first reading of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2013, Bill No. 19 of 2013.

The resolution is:

“That this National Assembly, in accordance with Standing Order No. 52(1), grant leave for the introduction and first reading of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No. 19 of 2013.

A Bill intituled:

An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act.”

I wish to give a very brief explanatory statement on this matter. The proposed amendments are informed by the provisions of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, article 146 (1), which guarantees the freedom of expression and freedom to receive and disseminate information.

Secondly, the amendments also give effect to the Report of the 2001 Hoyte/Jagdeo Bi-Partisan Committee on broadcast and state media, the recommendations of which were ignored in some sections of the Act.

Thirdly, the amendment further seeks to reduce the overarching influence of the Minister responsible for broadcast in the appointment and functioning of the Guyana National Broadcast Authority.

Those are the brief explanatory notes. As I said, I will be very brief on this matter.

In December, 2001, a joint committee was established to investigate and make recommendations on radio monopoly, non-partisan boards and broadcasting legislation. The co-chairs of that committee, appointed by His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo and the Leader of the Opposition, the late Mr. Desmond Hoyte, were the Hon. Madam Gail Teixeira and the late Mr. Derek Bernard of the then People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R).

That joint committee from which the Bill and Act eventually arose had several consultations with stakeholders in the telecommunications sector. The committee consulted from 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2001 to July, 2001. The committee's final meeting was on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2001. They had wide consultations. They consulted with Mr. Valmikki Singh, Chief Executive Office (Ag.) of the National Frequency Management Unit, as he was at that time; Mr. Hugh Cholmondeley and Mr. Kit Nascimento, media consultants; Mr. Martin Goolsarran and David De Groot, managers of Guyana Television (GTV) and Guyana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) respectively; Mr. Omar Farouk, owner and operator of HGB Channel 16/67; Mr. Ali of ABC Berbice; Mr. J. Yassin (Jr), owner of Channel 102; Mr. Sanichara, owner SRTV 4; representatives of Channel 6; Mr. and Mrs. McKay of WRHM Channel 7; G. Waldron, E. Blackman and P. Jackson of NBTv Channel 9; Anand Persaud, owner of Channel 69; and A. Khan of Channel 13. The consultations were wide and they were varied.

In my respectful view, the major recommendations represented in these amendments which were ignored are represented in sections 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 24, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 44 and 48 of the principal Act.

A brief idea of what I am talking about is that in the report itself, the approach which the committee took in dealing with this matter spoke about an integrated approach. It basically states that for the broadcast legislation, which we are seeking to amend here tonight, such a framework must be based on the fundamental requirement that any new legislation, organisational changes, or institutional reforms must be aimed at serving the national good and the best public interest.

The committee agreed, at the outset, on certain basic things and, as I said, some of them were not reflected in the Act which eventually came out. The committee agreed that underpinning this framework should be the understanding that a free and unfettered mass media is indispensable to

democratisation and development and its recommendations must be consistent with the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, international conventions and best practices.

Another feature of the report was that the Government broadcasting system will be administered by an independent and autonomous authority, empowered by the relevant legislation to issue public, commercial and community radio and television licences, enforce regulations, monitor compliance, and increase public awareness, among other functions.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, do you have much longer? I understand that your statement is supposed to be brief.

**Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon:** It is very brief.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** There will be a second reading of the Bill.

**Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon:** I understand Mr. Deputy Speaker but I believe this point needs to be made from the outset.

Under the National Broadcasting Authority – and this is the important part – the National Broadcasting Authority must be independent and autonomous within the framework of the Constitution, true to the spirit and letter of its establishing legislation, answerable only to the National Assembly and must serve the public interest and national good. I wanted to emphasise that point. I want to emphasise that it should be answerable to the National Assembly; the mode of the appointment of members of the board must be a process which is initiated in the National Assembly, and all of those important provisions were overridden and thrown through the window when the Act became law. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira. You understand, also, that it is a brief statement.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am the opponent of the motion.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I know.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I do not necessarily have to be brief because I am opposing the motion.

The premise of the Bill, as pointed out by the Hon. Member, is that it is based on the Bi-Partisan Joint Committee's Report. One of the most pleasurable times of having alliance talks was in this committee with the late Mr. Derek Bernard and the Members on both sides because of all the committees that were created in that period, including one which I think you were on, Sir, we were the only committee that produced something.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was co-chairman of the Border National Security Committee with the Hon. Ralph Ramkarran. We produced a report.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not seen that report but I stand corrected.

This was a Report to the two gentlemen – then Leader of the Opposition the late Desmond Hoyte and President Jagdeo. In all of it, the late Mr. Bernard and I, from the two sides of the Committee, recognised that what we were putting forward were recommendations. To say it was put in stone is not the correct thing to do.

Secondly, there were follow-up meetings with Mr. Sherwood Lowe and us in 2001 to go through the draft Bill that was publicised and there was a next round of discussions which was the sequel to that.

The Committee looked at the Mordecai Report as well as the Report from Mr. Hugh Cholmondeley, Mr. Vieira and Mr. Kit Nascimento which also made recommendations in relation to the composition of the board. There are also other documents and notes between the late Mr. Derek Bernard and I, which were looked at during the period July to December, in trying to come up with options we felt would be something the President and then Leader of the Opposition... In fact, the covering letter in the Report passes to them from us the view that their guidance would be given on the issues, including those we could not reach agreement on.

The point is: although Mr. Harmon referred to things that were in the Report, what, in fact, this Bill seeks to do is to remove sections of the recommendations of the Report. We are talking through two sides of our mouth, basically.

Three fundamental issues that were fought over in the Committee, which actually were with the media people and not with the committee members of the two parties, were the issues of the functions and the role of the media in terms of their behaviour.

When one looks at Mr. Harmon's clause 12 of the Bill which deals with section 32 of the Act, it is removing four critical areas in the broadcasting policy to do with the broadcasters having certain norms of behaviour. I cannot understand how he can say that there are things that were in the Report that were not implemented and then some of the most powerful things in the Report which were included are being knocked out.

Regarding section 32 (i), (j), (k), (m) to do with the behaviour of the media, to bring lawful behaviour into the media and to have fairness and transparency in all media – government, private and community – I cannot comprehend why that is being proposed in this Bill to be removed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I trust you are wrapping up now.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, fundamental to this Bill and what the Government would have tremendous problems in supporting is the issue of removing the role of the Executive and replacing it with the National Assembly. This is a fundamental issue that has taken place throughout the last two years of this Parliament and I assume it will continue until there is another election.

The Government is made up of three branches. What is happening in this case – I would not go into the other cases – is that the role of the Executive is being removed and handed to the Legislative. This is an issue that is going to cause problems.

When there is a statutory body, not a constitutional commission, which gets funds from the Government through the budget and the National Assembly appointing and everything else, who is answerable for the statutory body and the work it does?

In the case of normal statutory bodies that receive government funding, it is the Minister who has to answer. It is the Permanent Secretary (PS) who has to answer to the Audit Office of Guyana. When it is this amorphous Parliament, who answers for the statutory body? This is a constitutional problem and dilemma that is being proposed in this Bill.

I would like to offer to Mr. Harmon that I am more than prepared to sit with him, as one of the surviving members of the Bi-Partisan Committee with stacks of files, letters on the history of what really happened, look at his amendments and show him what the Government's problems with them are.

As the mover, you may not accept these but I believe it would be unjust to not have him have a full purport of the reason why the Bill, as is, came to the House. It was not stagnant. It went in 2003 and 2006. On the last occasion, when Mr. Ramjattan brought his Broadcasting Bill, which was an earlier version of the Government's 2010 Bill, there were slight differences between Mr. Ramjattan's Bill and the Government's Bill which was passed in 2011. Therefore, I believe that we may be going on an exercise which would cause more difficulties than it would resolve. Thank you.

**Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your leave, I wish to say that the graciousness displayed by the Hon. Mdm. Gail Teixeira, unusual as it is in these times, I really wish to accept her offer that we meet and go through these amendments.

As you do know, there are several other matters which the Speaker has mandated that we meet to have sorted out. I accept the offer to meet.

*Bill read a first time.*

**APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE THE TORTURE OF PERSONS BY THE GUYANA POLICE FORCE BETWEEN 2006 AND 2013**

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana prescribes, at Article 141, that "No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other treatment;"

AND WHEREAS it has been widely reported that persons were tortured by members of the Guyana Police Force between the years 2006 and 2013, inclusive;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with the Commission of Inquiry Act, Chapter 19:03, "The President may issue a commission appointing one or more commissioners and authorising such

commissioner or commissioners to inquire into any matter in which an inquiry would, in the opinion of the President, be for the public welfare;”

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly expresses its sympathy with the victims of torture; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls upon the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, in accordance with the Commission of Inquiry Act, Chapter 19:03, to appoint a commission of inquiry to inquire into the torture of persons by members of the Guyana Police Force and to make recommendations to prevent a recurrence of such torture. *[Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** As you are aware, Sir, the matter of torture was ventilated in this honourable House several years ago. At that time, people sought to speak of roughing up and setting torture in a context and we were looking forward to the debate this evening.

We have been prevailed upon by the Executive to seek a deferment. In the spirit of graciousness tonight, I would ask that the debate on this important motion be deferred to give the Executive an opportunity to prepare.

*Motion deferred.*

**APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE THE SHOOTING OF CITIZENS BY THE GUYANA POLICE FORCE ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2011 IN GEORGETOWN**

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana prescribes, at Article 141, that “No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other treatment;”

AND WHEREAS it has been widely reported that several persons were shot with pellets by members of the Guyana Police Force at about 10.55 hrs. on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2011 in or near Hadfield Street in the city of Georgetown;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with the Commission of Inquiry Act, Chapter 19:03, “The President may issue a commission appointing one or more commissioners and authorising such commissioner or commissioners to inquire into any matter in which an inquiry would, in the opinion of the President, be for the public welfare;”

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly expresses its sympathy with the victims of the shooting which occurred on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2011; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls upon the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, in accordance with the Commission of Inquiry Act, Chapter 19:03, to appoint a commission of inquiry to inquire into injury of persons by shooting and to make recommendations to prevent a recurrence of such shooting. *[Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** Similarly, this is a very important motion by the Opposition, as has been mentioned before by no less a person than yourself. We have had instances in the past where striking civil servants were shot at by the police outside John Fernandes in 1999 and there are several other instances. Again, the Opposition was looking forward to a debate on this matter so that we can bring this outrage to an end. But again, I wish to ask that the motion be deferred so that the Executive can participate fully because we feel that the outcome would be of interest to both sides. Thank you.

*Motion deferred.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** This concludes our business for today.

**Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]:** Speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, I would like to move that the House stands adjourned to Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Assembly now stands adjourned to Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

*Adjourned accordingly at 8.41 p.m.*