

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) 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

59TH Sitting

Thursday, 27th June, 2013

Assembly convened at 2.10 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Member

Mr. Speaker: Leave for today's sitting has been granted to the Hon. Member Dr. Ramsaran, the Minister of Health, and he will be on leave until the 4th July.

Welcoming of Members

Mr. Speaker: I also take the opportunity to welcome back Mr. Alli Baksh. Thank you for being here. Welcome. I do not know if Mrs. Hughes and Dr. Persaud are back from the workshop in London, but if they are, we welcome them back as well. I hope that we will get a report soon.

Reports on CD-ROMs

Mr. Speaker: You will notice that there is a CD-ROM at your place. The Minister of Finance wrote to me, last week, seeking leave of the Speaker for documents to be supplied in electronic format. After due and careful consideration and some advice received from the Clerk of the National Assembly, we have decided to allow this novel form of presentation of reports because of the volume. I will continue to encourage Ministers and others who have documents to present to send them electronically to the Parliament Office. The Parliament Office will then, upon request, make copies in printed form, if any Member wishes to have them printed. It is time, as we have said before, that we reduce the use of paper, much of which, admittedly, is not utilised. I would like, therefore, to compliment the Minister for this novel approach. The CD-ROMs are available and I have asked the Minister to supply the documents in PDF format as well, so that they can be put up on to the website and can be scrutinised at will.

Staff Appreciation Day

Mr. Speaker: I would also like to announce that on Monday, 1st July, the staff has organised a staff appreciation day and it is expected and hoped that the Members of Parliament and our friends, the press and others, will come. It will be held at, Thirst Park, Banks DIH, at 10.00 am until 8 in the evening.

Last year it was well attended. There was a lot of fun and we would like to see more Members of Parliament coming out to say thank you to the staff.

School's Outreach Programme

Mr. Speaker: I would also like to announce as well that on the 3rd July there will be a school outreach. Members of Parliament will be visiting Region 8. Three villages, I believe, Paramakatoi, Kato and the town of Mahdia, will be visited. It is a one-day trip.

A visit from pupils of the New Guyana School

Mr. Speaker: I am announcing that this afternoon there are the pupils of the Grade 6 class of the New Guyana School who are with us. Please stand. They have walked with their note books. They anticipate that they will be seeing and hearing much this afternoon. Thank you, please be seated. They will be leaving in about an hour's time.

The presence of the Charge D' Affaires of the British High Commission

Mr. Speaker: With us this afternoon is the Charge D' Affaires of the British High Commission, Mr. Rob Lindsay, who is here holding the fort, so to speak, for a brief period. We welcome you, Sir.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker and permit me also to acknowledge the significance of the occasion of the acceptance, by this House, of electronic tabling of documents. I trust that this is a step that we will all take with greater frequency in the future.

The following Reports were laid:

- (i) The Annual Report of Kwakwani Utilities Inc. for the year ended 31st December, 2010.
- (ii) The Annual Report of Kwakwani Utilities Inc. for the year ended 31st December, 2011.
- (iii) Audited Financial Statements of the Environmental Protection Agency for the years ended 31st December, 1999 to 31st December, 2008.
- (iv) Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana Wildlife Management Authority for the period 1st August, 1998 to 31st December, 1998 and for the years ended 31st December, 1999 to 31st December, 2008.
- (v) Audited Financial Statements of the Environmental Protection Agency/Wildlife Division for the years ended 31st December, 2009 to 31st December, 2011.
- (vi) Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana Energy Agency for the years ended 31st December, 1998 to 31st December, 2009.
- (vii) Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana Office for Investment for the years ended 31st December, 1994 to 31st December, 2011.

- (viii) Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission for the period 1st June, 2001 to 31st December, 2001 and for the years ended 31st December, 2002 to 31st December, 2009.
- (ix) Audited Financial Statements of the Institute of Applied Science and Technology for the years ended 31st December, 1994 to 31st December, 2003.
- (x) Audited Financial Statements of the National Parks Commission for the years ended 31st December, 1989 to 31st December, 2007.
- (xi) Treasury Memorandum pursuant to Resolution No. 48/2012 of the National Assembly dated 17th December, 2012 on the Public Accounts of Guyana for the year 2009.

[Minister of Finance]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

LAND SURVEYORS (PROFESSION) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 16/2013

A BILL intituled:

"AN ACT to make provision for the establishment of a Board of Land Surveyors, the registration and licensing of land surveyors, the regulation of the practice of land surveying and for connected matters." *[Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND READING

HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No.15/2013

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Hydro-Electric Power Act.” [*Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, we have for the second reading the Hydro-Electric Power (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No.15/2013 which was first published on the 2013-06-13.

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Speaker, I beg to defer the second reading of the Hydro-Electric Power (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No.15/2013.

Bill deferred.

MOTIONS

LIMIT ON AMOUNT OUTSTANDING UNDER GUARANTEES GIVEN UNDER THE GUARANTEE OF LOANS (PUBLIC CORPORATIONS AND COMPANIES) ACT

WHEREAS in accordance with Section 3(1) of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, the Government may in such manner and on such terms and subject to such conditions as may be agreed between it and a lending agency –

- (a) Guarantee the discharge by a Corporation of its obligations under any agreement which may be entered into by the Corporation with a lending agency in respect of any borrowing by that Corporation that is authorised by the Government;
- (b) Assume such other obligation as may be agreed between the Government and a lending agency in relation to or pursuant to any such agreement;
- (c) Undertake the repayment to a lending agency of such sums as the lending agency may have advanced to or for the benefit of the Government;

AND WHEREAS it is provided under Section 2(2) of the aforesaid Act that, for the purposes of the Act, a borrowing by a Corporation shall be deemed to include the obligation of the Corporation to make payments to any person arising out of any contract lawfully entered into by the Corporation;

AND WHEREAS it is provided under Section 4(1) of the aforesaid Act that the aggregate amount of the liability of the Government in respect of guarantees given under Section 3 of the Act shall not at any time exceed the sum of one thousand million dollars or such greater sum as may from time to time be specified by the Resolution of the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS it has become necessary to specify in accordance with the said Section 4(1) a greater sum for the purpose of enabling the aggregate amount of the liability of the Government in respect of guarantees to be increased due to the extended activities of those incorporated bodies to which the Act applies in accordance with the country's development programme,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approve that the aggregate amount of the liability of the Government under Section 4(1) of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, in respect of guarantees given under Section 3 of the Act, shall not at any time exceed the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand million dollars.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to ask that this item, that is to say, the consideration of the said motion, be deferred to a future sitting.

Motion deferred.

RATIFICATION OF THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

WHEREAS the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty on the 2nd day of April, 2013;

AND WHEREAS the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has played an integral role in furthering the agenda which led to the adoption of the Treaty;

AND WHEREAS the Arms Trade Treaty seeks to establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of international trade in conventional arms and to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and its diversion;

AND WHEREAS the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty is considered to be of great significance in that it will aid in achieving the purpose of contributing to international and

regional peace, security and stability; reducing human suffering; and promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action by States Parties in the international trade in conventional arms, thereby building confidence among States Parties;

AND WHEREAS the Arms Trade Treaty was signed by the Republic of Guyana at the United Nations, New York on June 3, 2013,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana approves of Guyana’s ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty.” [Minister of Foreign Affairs]

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: I rise to speak to the motion standing in my name in relation to the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. As the motion indicates, on April 2nd, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the first legally binding multilateral treaty to regulate the international trade in conventional arms. One hundred and fifty-four countries voted in favour of the treaty, three against and 23 countries abstained. This means that more than 80% of the countries, which voted, voted for the treaty and we consider this as a remarkable achievement.

The treaty became open for signature on June 3rd, 2013, and now boasts 74 signatories. In addition to Guyana, 10 CARICOM Member States are among the current signatories to the treaty - Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Arms Trade Treaty fills a critical gap, in international law, in the important domain of the transfers of conventional arms. Once effectively implemented, the treaty will make a real and positive difference for millions of people around the world, especially those who live in conflict areas.

The objective and purpose of the treaty, as stipulated in article 1, and included in the motion, are as follows:

- To establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms.

- Prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion.
- For the purpose of contributing to international and regional peace, security and stability.
- Reduce human suffering
- Promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action by state's parties in the international trade in conventional arms, thereby building confidence among states parties.

For the purpose of clarity, let me indicate what is meant by conventional arms. Article 2(1) of the treaty stipulates the following categories: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missile and missile launchers and small arms and light weapons. Mr. Speaker, you will see that we produce none of these.

Article 2(3) states that this treaty shall not apply to the international movement of conventional arms by, or on behalf of a state party for its use, providing that those arms remain under that state party's ownership.

With respect to human life, it is a fact that the vast majority adversely affected by armed conflict and other forms of violence are civilians. The treaty recognises this, in addition to the security, social and economic and humanitarian consequences of the illicit and unregulated trade of conventional arms. It also recognises the challenges that victims face and their need for care, physical rehabilitation and social and economic inclusion.

Concerning illicit small arms and light weapons, the excessive accumulation, an uncontrolled flow of these, poses significant threat to peace, security and the social and economic development of many countries. Our own country and the region are witnesses to the devastating effect of these weapons. I should indicate that small arms and light weapons, that particular issue was a major concern for CARICOM countries and many of our diplomats worked tirelessly to ensure that that category of weapons was included in the Arms Trade Treaty.

First of all, small arms are cheap, light and easy to handle, transport and concealed. A build-up of small arms alone may not create the conflicts in which they are used but their excessive accumulation and wide availability aggravates the tension, according to the United Nations

Office for Disarmament Affairs. Most present day conflicts are fought daily with small arms. As I mentioned before, they are the weapons of choice in civil wars and for terrorism, organised crime and gang warfare. The majority of conflict deaths are caused by small arms. It is a dominant tool of criminal violence. In addition to that, more human rights abuses are committed with small arms than any other weapon. Yet, more is known about the number of nuclear warheads, stock of chemical weapons and transfer of major conventional weapons than about small arms. More than 1,000 companies across the world in about 100 countries are involved in some aspect of production with significant producers in about 30 countries, and about 8 million is produced per year. All of this is from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. I wonder why some countries voted against the treaty.

It is envisaged that this treaty will contribute significantly to international and regional peace, security and stability and the reduction of human suffering. By effectively regulating the international trade in conventional arms making it more responsible and transparent and ensuring accountability, it should help to minimise, if not eradicate, the illicit trade in small arms.

This treaty came after seven years of diplomatic effort at the multilateral level against multiple odds, including the powerful gun lobby. As such processes go the end result would never be perfect, but it is a necessary and important step forward. It represents a balance of interest, in my opinion, from all sides, including from small developing countries, such as ours, which are neither exporters nor producers, to the larger arms manufacturing, exporting and importing countries.

As I mentioned before, for CARICOM countries, we were very concerned about small arms and light weapons and the fact that they are included in this treaty, I think, we should congratulate our diplomats who worked hard in this regard.

I want to particularly point out that the treaty includes the ammunition parts and components and diversions of legal arms in it. It is unfortunate, therefore, and, indeed, paradoxical, that while I come today to ask for this treaty to be ratified - I hope that it will be - that the piece of legislation, which came here before us to ensure that domestically we have the necessary legislation in place, did not receive the support of the Opposition. If it is possible - I believe that anything is possible in politics - we should try to correct this situation because I think that it

would be a major contradiction to what we are saying as a country and what we are actually doing.

Guyana, as a Member of the CARICOM negotiating team, was in the forefront of this negotiating process and we are extremely pleased that such a large number of persons voted in favour of the treaty and signed on that historic day when the treaty was opened for signature. Guyana was one of the countries that signed on that very first day. The signing of the treaty was an important opportunity to reaffirm, before the international community, our strong commitment to the control of conventional arms. By signing, we have pledged to be a responsible party. It is now time for us to solidify this commitment and take the next step of ratifying the treaty. I ask this House to so do.

Thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: I now invite Ms. Africo Selman to join. Before you commence, Ms. Selman, may I just recognise the presence of former Member of Parliament Mrs. Latchmin Punalall who is here with her husband Pastor Punalall and guest Evangelist Jones from Tennessee, USA.

My apologies Ms. Selman, please proceed.

Ms. Selman: I rise on behalf of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) to offer our support to the motion titled, “Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty”, moved by the Hon. Minister Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett. The Arms Trade Treaty is a multilateral treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms. The Arms Trade Treaty is predicated upon a hypothesis that the illicit trade in small arms is a serious challenge which requires global action through the United Nations. The signing of the Arms Trade Treaty is timely. In all parts of the world the readily availability of weapons and ammunitions has led to human suffering, crime and terrorism among civilian populations. Research has shown that those suffering most are civilians trapped in situations of armed violence in situation of both crime and conflict, often in conditions of poverty, deprivation and extreme human inequality where they are, more often than not, on the receiving end of the misuse of arms by state-armed security forces.

As a result of the irresponsible transfers of conventional weapons, we, here in Guyana, witnessed a pattern of unlawful killings of undetermined number of persons, including assassinations,

executions and other forms of criminal violence, during a period of troubles at Agricola, Eccles, Bartica, Buxton, Lusignan and other parts of Guyana. Our experience has taught us that the irresponsible transfer of weapons can destabilise security in our country and create a climate of fear in society. We have been there.

According to studies in peace and conflict resolution, the relative importance of diversion or misuse of officially authorised transfers compared to international illegal black market trafficking has been thoroughly confirmed and the author here goes on to elaborate that for most developing or fragile states a combination of weak domestic authorised firearms possession with theft, lost or corrupt sale tends to be a big source.

The fact that Guyana being among the first set of nations to sign the treaty is a clear indication of our willingness and determination to address the poorly regulated international arms trade. Guyana must be commended for signing the Arms Trade Treaty. It is a step in the right direction, but mere words on a piece of paper is meaningless unless they are implemented. For the treaty to be effective it would require for us to establish national regulations to control the transfer of conventional arms and components to regulate the trade.

While we applaud the existence of the treaty we are concerned about the numerous weaknesses which are contained therein. A closer examination of the treat in its entirety will bear this out. The impact of the treat will depend on how stringently the treaty is implemented once it comes into force. We must continue to show our commitment of arms control by ensuring that we implement the necessary enabling regulations.

The questions, which loom, are: How does Guyana intend to follow up on this? Are we going to set up a national commission on small arms to ensure that arms imported into our country are used responsibly? Are we going to establish and maintain a national control system, including a national control list of weapons and items imported? If we do then we are certainly going to be on the right track. We have to be mindful too that we do not sign and ratify treaties and then honour them in the breach.

Our citizens have been and continue to be the victims of human rights abuses notwithstanding that we are signatories to existing human rights conventions, such as the International Convention on Torture. If a nation cannot maintain democratic law and order it will not be able

to maintain the Arms Trade Treaty. It is time that we demonstrate, by our actions, that we do have the political will to give meaning to treaties to which we are signatories.

I wish, on behalf of A Partnership for National Unity, to applaud the leaders of humanity who would have had the wisdom to put principles before prophets and enable a future in which we can have more peace.

I wish to support the motion in its entirety. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Nagamootoo: I rise on behalf of the Alliance For Change (AFC) to support the signing by the Co-operative Republic of Guyana of the Arms Trade Treaty of June 3rd, 2013.

I believe that the mere signing of treaty brings together a pool and a body of will by a number of countries to make our world safer from those who would want to use guns, whether conventional or unconventional, to terrorise, threaten, maim and kill human beings. However, the goal of controlling arms and the arms race is still, in spite of all the laudatory measures at the United Nations and other international fora, in its initial stages, because today we see that those big powers, which still talk about controlling the arms race, are themselves involved in an escalation of the arms race.

There were treaties dealing with the eradication of nuclear weapons and still we see that not only the big powers, but intermediate powers are also acquiring nuclear warheads and nuclear capabilities. If we were to step back from the precipice we were, some years ago, when there was an escalation of nuclear threat of war, and the preparation thereof, in outer space, when there was a spiral in the arms race into space, we have had a pull back then so that we did not have a nuclear conflagration, so maybe we are reversing the process and starting at the beginning to deal with small arms, because the danger ultimately in the use of force and the use of lethal weapons starts with the very small weapons.

That is why I had said that in supporting this motion we need to address the issue of the political will. Merely signing on is an act of courage and commitment, but doing something to eliminate small arms and other arms is a safer guarantee that we intend to be faithful to our commitments and our international obligations. No more should we condone a situation where there were extrajudicial killings, where we had exposé of people being issued with firearm who had actually

killed someone for a loaf of bread or for the payment for a meal and was issued an elevated calibre of weapon.

2.40 p.m.

No more should we have death squads in Guyana; no more should we have the voluntary admission and, I would say, the condonation of elements linked to the narco-criminal trade, making disclosure that they worked to help protect a government of this country. No more should we, because that is a indictment and a condonation of the use of arms, small or big. And, therefore, our commitment to international law must not simply be nominal, must not simply be an act for a photo opportunity, but it must be meant that we intend to live those acts to which we commit ourselves.

I say this, and I say it out of all of what my good friend, who spoke before, had said about other things that have to be related, in way of governance, to small arms and arms trade in general, that it is a truism that the international transnational criminal enterprise thrives on the basis of guns for *coke* and *coke* for guns. We in Guyana have to see the nexus between the narco-criminal trade and arms trade and we have to be condign in dealing with the proceeds of narco-criminals. The integration we seek between arms trade and the suppression of arms trade, and the drugs trade, has to be seen in our commitment to enforcing the Anti-Money Laundering Act that we had passed. It is not simply the reformation of the Act, but to enforce what is there on the Statute to show that we have a zero tolerance in dealing with the proceeds of arms, of smuggling and narco-enterprise related matters, so that there is an integrated aspect to dealing with it, because if a country contains the excess and the surpluses from the narco-criminal trade, and from money laundering, it is going to be able to limit the possibility of trade in arms across its borders.

I add also the integrated aspect to deal with corruption. If we are not serious on combating corruption in Guyana then we might as well not sign treaties, because when a country deals with corruption that is related to the transgression of international best practices in procurement, then it is condoning the amassing of dirty money that will ultimately be fuelled to protect the empire of dirty money. How does it protect it? It is not by holding the Bible; it holds the gun. That is how we have to look at our society in relation to governance. It is not in symbolic terms, but it is to look at it in real terms as to how do we transform our society and make our governance base

on governance that respect the worth and dignity of human beings. The bigger picture will have to be seen.

The Alliance For Change supports this measure, supports the action taken by our Government and by our Republic. We would wish that someday we could realise the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace and to be respected as a Zone of Peace and that there would not be incursion of super powers, big powers, multi-national powers within our zone to contaminate our region with trafficking of their weapons to protect vested or any other geopolitical interest. We would wish that CARICOM would one day stand firm on the issue on the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, not only as a Zone of Peace, but also as a zone that should be free from the dumping of any nuclear waste or toxic waste which will contaminate the future of countries in the Caribbean as a tourist destination with blue waters and white sands and the healthy atmosphere full of oxygen, and in Guyana our black waters of the rivers.

It is a small measure, but symbolically, and we support this as the way to go. [*Applause*]

Mr. Felix: I rise to present my case for A Partnership for National Unity, in relation to the motion calling for the “Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty” standing in the name of the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. This treaty intends, eventually, to stop the flow of conventional weapons around the world in various areas of armed conflicts. On the 2nd of April, 2013 the General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty regulating the international trade in conventional arms, from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircrafts to warships. This treaty aims to foster peace and security by halting the destabilising arms flow to conflict regions. It will prevent human rights abusers and violators of the law of war from being supplied with arms and it will keep warlords, pirates and gangs from acquiring these deadly tools.

In the international arena, the impact of the absence of regulations and lose control on the arms trade results in suffering visited on civilian populations trapped in situations of armed violence in settings of both crime and conflict, often in conditions of poverty, deprivation and extreme inequality where there are frequently on the receiving end of the misuse of arms by state-armed forces, non-state armed groups and organised criminal groups.

In the preamble of the treaty one of the clear intentions is expressed as follows:

“Underlining the need to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade and conventional arms and to prevent their diversion to the illicit market or for unauthorised end use and end users, including the commission of terrorist acts.”

After years of contemplation, this first international conventional arms control treaty has covered a wide array of pertinent issues, with a secretariat to coordinate the activities of member states and to ensure compliance with the treaty. The treaty places full responsibility on states to provide legislation consistent with the terms of the treaty to prevent illicit and illegal trade from diverting the weapons, subject of the treaty, to unauthorised end-users.

The Arms Trade Treaty, which was signed by Guyana on 3rd June 2013, infers that Guyana agrees with the terms set out in the treaty and would unhesitatingly proceed to take those steps necessary to bring legislation to this House to fulfil the requirements of it. Article 2(1) of the treaty states, or as itemised, conventional weapons to which the treaty applies and they range from battle tanks combat aircrafts, attack helicopters to small arms and light weapons. Article 2(2) of the treaty recognises international trade to comprise export, import, transit, trans-shipment and brokering or transferred but the treaty does not intend to interfere with the international movement of conventional arms by or on behalf of a state party for its use once those arms remain within the state party’s ownership. Some of the requirements set out in the treaty are:

- Each state party is required to establish and maintain a national control system to regulate the export of ammunition, munition fired launch or delivered by conventional arms. This control system is also to be applied to the export of parts and components, but due care is required to ensure that the arms to export is in no form to be reassembled.
- There is the requirement for each state party to establish and maintain a national control system and control list to implement the provisions of this treat. The control list, pursuant to international laws of the state party, must be provided to the secretariat which would be circulated to other state. States parties are also required to take measures to implement the provisions of the treaty and shall designate competent national authorities to regulate one or more national points of contact. The treaty is also dealt extensively with import brokerage and diversion of conventional arms to unauthorised end-users. States parties’

signatories to the treaty are required to maintain national records of its issuance of export authorisation or its actual export of conventional arms.

- There is too a very strong reporting requirement. Each state party is mandated to submit an initial report to the secretariat within the first year of the implementation of the treaty of measures taken to implement this treaty. By 31st May each year a report must be submitted to the secretariat by each state concerning authorised or actual exports and imports. The treaty seeks to foster international cooperation by encouraging states to cooperate by exchanging information and consulting on matters of mutual interest.

To implement this treaty, international assistance is promised. Each state party may seek assistance, including legislative institutional capacity, more importantly for Guyana model legislation and effective practice and implementation.

Having listened to the extent to the conventional arms treaty, one must ask whether this Government, with its record of signing treaties overseas and returning to Guyana and failing to do anything about them,... There was a recent experience, so the point must be questioned whether this Government has the commitment to implement the treaty and its requirements. We must note that Guyana has large uncontrolled borders and illicit arms enter freely. There are airstrips, illegal airstrips discovered now and again all over this country, in which drugs and arms and other illegal activities are facilitated. It is therefore in our interest to cooperate with international community to ensure that we fight against this nefarious and to aid help ourselves to ensure that illicit arm is intercepted before it reaches Guyana.

There were our experiences, unpleasant though they might have been. There was the assassination of the Minister of Government through the use of illicit weapons by criminals. There was the Lusignan experience. There was the Buxton experience. There was the Bartica massacre. There were other unpleasant experiences in which people have been shot in their beds. The Government is hardly able to protect the fishermen from pirates; it is hardly able to protect the miners in the interior. Almost every month there is a robbery in the interior.

Mr. Speaker: The Government depends on the police force to provide that protection.

Mr. Felix: It is without resources, without training that is a serious problem, and with bad political management, worst yet.

This is an important motion which APNU supports, but we must bemoaned Government's attitude in making a step forward and not following through with the correct action. We hope that this Bill receives the full support of Government and that it brings the legislation to this Parliament to give effect to this treaty, which is what is required to make the treaty operable in Guyana. I now say, without any reservation, that A Partnership for National Unity supports the motion, but expects the Government to do its part. All my very good friends over there are to play their respective roles in ensuring that the correct thing is done and that we are able to add our lot to prevent the circulation of illicit arms and ammunition around the world.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (replying): I want to thank the speakers, the Hon. Members Ms. Africo Selman, Mr. Felix and Mr. Nagamootoo for their support for the motion before us. A common thread running in the presentations, by all the speakers, is that of the need to ensure that we have the enabling regulations and legislation to ensure that this treaty has teeth. Indeed, as I mentioned before, it is a travesty that up until now the import, export and diversion..., illegal that is, are still not on our law books as an offence. If we want an example of bad political management I think that that was one, because the Bill was here before us in the National Assembly.

Let me say that the UN register, right now, on conventional arms does not include small arms and light weapons. This treaty will now ensure that that reporting mechanism is put in place. For that, we are very happy. I wish to say that, up until a few minutes ago when I checked, there are 74 countries, as I mentioned before, which had signed the treaty and zero had ratified. If we do this tomorrow we could very well be the first country in the world doing this. I think that in all that is happening, at least as a country, we should be proud of that.

I would not answer the other issues raised. I think that they were not related to the Arms Trade Treaty. I would beg, Mr. Speaker, perhaps, you can play a major role here in having the pieces of legislation, which did not receive the support of this House, receive this support the next time it comes here. I am aware of the parliamentary regulations, but hopefully we would be able to overcome those personality issues that the Opposition may have with some of us on this side.

I thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I thank you. I seem to have recalled that Mr. Ramjattan was saying that he would be bringing it back.

Hon. Members, we have in this short space of time done something very eventful, that is, to lend our unanimous support to a very important treaty that was signed by our representative in New York. The action of the Government and our ambassador of the United Nations must be commended. I therefore am pleased to put the motion that it be approved by this House and Guyana becomes the first country to ratify this treaty by its parliamentary actions. I congratulate you all for this position.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

BILLS – SECOND READING

TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL 2012 – Bill No. 18/2012

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the establishment of the Telecommunications Agency and for a regular, coordinated, open and competitive telecommunications sector and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.”

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2012 – Bill No. 17/2012

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Public Utilities Commission Act.”

[Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we continue with Government’s business. There is a Telecommunications Bill, Bill No. 18/ 2012 to be debated.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, I beg that this Bill, Telecommunications Bill 2012, and the accompanying Public Utilities Commission (Amendment) Bill of 2012 both be deferred as we continue to negotiate with GT&T and Digicel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, at the request of the introducer of the Bills, the Hon. Prime Minister, the Telecommunications Bill 2012 and the Public Utilities Commission (Amendment) Bill 2012 are being deferred to a date to be named. We thank you for the update.

Bills deferred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND READING

THE MARRIED PERSONS (PROPERTY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 9 of 2013

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Married Persons (Property) Act.” [Mrs. Backer]

Mr. Speaker: We now pass to Private Members' Business. Members, we have for second reading the Married Persons (Property) (Amendment) Bill 2013 in which I am told that it will not be proceeded with as Mrs. Backer, the Deputy Speaker, is not with us this afternoon. We will have that deferred

I see the Chief Whip is informing me that that is so.

Bill deferred.

MOTION

HONOURING THE 21ST AUGUST, 2012 AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA AND THE REGIONAL DEMOCRATIC COUNCIL, REGION 10

WHEREAS the people of Linden have from the time of the announcement by the Government that there would be an increase in electricity tariff, consequent to the government's intended

withdrawal of the subsidy, indicated through their pronouncements in the national media, peaceful picketing exercises and other forms of peaceful protest that the community did not have the economic capacity to pay the steep and unconscionable increase in the cost of electricity and therefore saw the decision as an unjust imposition on the people of Linden;

AND WHEREAS the Government continued to take action to impose the increase in the cost of electricity on the people of Linden in total violation of the people's right to be involved in decisions that directly affect them as is explicit in Article 13 of the Constitution which states that, "The principal objective of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organizations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decisions-making that directly affect their well being";

RECOGNISING that the Government was not responsive to the concerns and interests of the people of Linden and therefore left the people of Linden with no alternative, but to continue to protest;

AND WHEREAS the people of Linden were involved in peaceful protest and were subjected to the uncalled for use of excessive and lethal force by the Guyana Police Force resulting in the death of Mr. Allen Lewis, Mr. Ron Sommerest, Mr. Shemroy Bouyea and the injuring of scores of unarmed protestors;

AND WHEREAS the use of lethal force rather than instilling fear that was intended, increased the resolve of the people and escalated the protest forcing the Government to respond to concerns of the people of Linden and enter into negotiations with the people of Region 10, represented by their elected and legitimate representatives;

CONCERNED that even while the negotiations were ongoing the Guyana Police and Guyana Defence Forces were used against the people of Linden, including the indiscriminate shooting and injuring of innocent people in their homes on a quiet Sunday;

NOTING that in the face of such provocation, the Region continued to negotiate with the Government in good faith;

AND WHEREAS these negotiations resulted in the Agreement of 21st August, 2012, between the Government of Guyana and Region 10 Regional Democratic Council signed, on behalf of the Government of Guyana, by the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Samuel Hinds, O.E., M.P., and on behalf of Region 10, Regional Democratic Council, by Mr. Sharma Solomon;

AND WHEREAS the full text of the aforesaid written Agreement, which is attached to this motion, contains the details of the Agreement, inclusive of the deadlines for implementation and the actions required to be undertaken by all parties to the Agreement; (See Appendix)

CONCERNED that six (6) months after the signing of the Agreement many aspects of the Agreement have not been implemented, especially the commitment to return the dish and transmitter to the people of Linden, inter alia;

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to immediately adhere to its commitments and obligations under the written Agreement of 21st August, 2012 thereby ensuring that the benefits which were to accrue to the residents of Region 10 are realized; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Government of Guyana be held solely accountable and responsible for all direct and indirect consequences flowing from its continued unwillingness to adhere to the letter and spirit of the written Agreement of 21st August, 2012.” *[Ms. Kissoon]*

Mr. Speaker: We will then proceed to have the debate on a motion in the name of Hon. Member Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, relating to the “Honouring the 21st August, 2012 agreement between the Government of Guyana and the Regional Democratic Council, Region 10.”

Hon. Members, before we invite Ms. Kissoon we will take a moment to allow the pupils of the Grade Six class of New Guyana School to leave.

Thank you very much for joining us this afternoon.

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members and visitors to this House, I rise, as a representative of region 10 and the mover of this motion, to speak to the August 21st, 2012 agreement signed

between Regional Chairman Mr. Sharma Solomon, on behalf of the people of region 10, and the Hon. Mr. Samuel Hinds, in his capacity as Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government. I pause to make known on this date, June 27th, 2013, that this struggle, from day one, was led by our chairman, who never wavered or flinched in his belief and commitment, struggled that the people of Linden and Region 10 will be treated with respect and dignity. When some said we could not, the Regional Chairman reminded us that yes we can. I understand that some may have lost faith in the young and think that they are disengaged from the political process, but as another young person I assure that the young are not disengaged. We are tired and fed up of the zero-sum discriminatory and vindictive politics. The young desires a new political culture where respect for each other, regardless of our differences, will be maintained and we all will equally share in the resources of this country and making this land a place where we can all live in peace and harmony.

The Regional Chairman has asked that I express his personal gratitude and that of the people for the support received and asked that, in brotherly and sisterly love, they continue to stand with us until justice is restored because this is not only about justice for Region 10, but for all Guyana. In the words of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and I quote: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”.

The August 21st, 2012 agreement was the result of the fearless struggle waged, and continued to be waged by the people, to ensure the respect for their right consistent with article 13 of the Guyana Constitution which expressly states:

“The principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affects their well-being”.

As a teacher, by profession, words are an important tool in understanding the lesson in order to prepare it and impart knowledge. An opportunity is taken to share with this House the meaning of two key words in article 13. They are “principal” and “objective”. According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, the word “principal” means “first in order of importance” and the

word “objective” means “a thing aimed at or sought, a goal”. If this is the law we are all governed by the failure of the Government and anyone to respect this important article in the Constitution is a signal to those who believe in the rule of the law to stand up and demand that the law be respected. The people of Region 10 did exactly that and initially sent messages to the Government that we demand the law be respected and it seek our involvement on the matter that will have direct and great economic impact on our lives. From day one we made it known that ours is a history where we have shouldered our responsibilities and played a major role in the nation’s development and that we desire to continue to do so.

We made it known that the history behind the electricity system in Linden, National Industrial & Commercial Investment Limited (NICIL) relationship with Bosai and our proposed efforts for energy conservation which were ignored by this Government. All of which we desired, we examined and factored in to the management and decision-making process.

We also made it known that we are not disinclined to shoulder any financial responsibility but we can only do so when we have the capability to. We made it known that we are committed to examine all this factors in moving forward. Unfortunately, the Government ignored us and thought in national campaign to demonise us and project us as freeloaders and a burden to society would have allowed it to escape from its responsibility to the people under the law. The people remained steadfast and still. They resolve not to relent until they receive what is justly theirs.

The taxpayers own *Guyana Chronicle*. On July 3rd, 2012, in a poor attempt to divide the people into race camps, hating and distrusting each other, in an editorial titled, “Opposition rampage to sow discord” had this to say:

“Black youths are socialised by Opposition leaders to think that Indians robbed them to get rich so they automatically feel that they have to risk by force, even murder, anything Indians have. Hatred of Indians is engrained in to their psyche. Many Indian persons, who grew up in the arms of black people in the rural communities, have today become fearful any time a black youth gets close to them. But this did not deter us.”

3.10 p.m.

But this did not deter us, instead it reinforced our resolve to stand together as one having learnt the lessons of history, namely the divide and conquer tactic and name calling to deflect attention from the real issue and denying the people what is rightly theirs.

We remember from our history the tactic to keep the races divided to the benefit of a few, the insults hurled at our ancestors who were called ‘Nigga’ ‘Coolie’ ‘Buck’ ‘Putagee’ ‘Chinee’ and so forth. We remember from world history Winnie Mandela, Angela Davis, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X and revered Dr. Martin Luther King were labelled terrorists. Mahatma Ghandi was mocked for his physical stature and his mode of dressing and Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham were called evil by the colonial authority and their allies. We watched this country’s political history to play the races against each other and decided we want no part of it.

As students of history, we learnt these lessons well, developed immunity and drew strength and will continue to draw strength from these stalwarts because the success of their struggles came largely in part because they refuse to relent in spite of the challenges that confronted them, and so we persevered; we held dozens of meetings, rallies and marches throughout the town and were given the support of colleagues outside the town who understood the just nature of our struggle. We regret we did not see Members from the opposite side of the House joining us, but we know that would have been standing up and admitting to an injustice perpetrated by their colleagues and that you may not have yet mustered such courage is understood. We think some of you, while not publically with us may have wept silently for us.

Mr. Speaker, our national poet, Martin Carter, reminded us, “The mouth is muzzled by the food it eats to live.” This hero was speaking to a frailty of human behaviour but this said hero also reminded us in the struggle of politics and community that, “All are involved and all are consumed.” And I say to the Members of the other side of the House that this is what we altogether must be fighting for. On 9th January, 2009 and 21st November, 2012, the People’s Progressive Party/Civic led protests in front of the United States Embassy in Kingston calling for the rights of the Palestinians to be respected. These are good moments for the people of Guyana being in solidarity with our fellow human beings fighting for their rights and I would like to think that when the Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House and President Ramotar were involved in these protests, they were not doing them because the majority of PPP supporters had a similar ethnicity with the people of Palestine. But because they recognised, like

Martin Carter, that in the scheme of human relations, we are all involved and will all be consumed... I said all of that to say this: we cannot fight to represent the rights of persons in a different land when at home we cannot have ours respected and have to take to the streets with blood being shed and lives lost to ensure justice. As President Ramotar recently told the United States...to put their house in order before they look at us when the United States was reaching out to us in a similar fashion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, be cautioned that the President's name may not be used in a debate on a motion for or against. Go ahead. That one will stand but let us not invoke the President's name in favour of your argument, one way or the other. Thank you.

Ms. Kissoon: ...out of us in similar fashion as the PPP did to the Palestinians. I say to the Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House to please be advised that Guyana has to first put our house in order before we can tell the Israelis and Palestinians what to do. The refusal of the Government to heed our various petitions caused us to plan a five-day protest from 18th July to 22nd July, 2012 with police permission. On 18th July, unarmed residents and supporters gathered for a legal and peaceful protest and were subjected to barbaric treatment by the Guyana Police Force, resulting in the deaths of our heroes, Mr. Allan Lewis and the youthful martyr Ron Somerset and Shemroy Bouyea, and injuries to scores including children and women. There was a Commission of Inquiry; the findings are public and ours is the expectation that the Executive would implement the recommendations for police reform for our blood must not be in vain and borrowing the expression from former President, Bharrat Jagdeo, "it is on your hands".

It is most fortunate and a stain on this nation that it had to take the deaths and injuries of our loved ones before the Government could consider respecting our right to be treated as equals, a right guaranteed to us under the law and the right we will fight to maintain if it takes our last breath or last drop of blood. The people of Region 10 are in this for the long haul and while some use their dead for political prop to sow seeds of discord, the people of Linden and Region 10 will use theirs to fight for a better society for all and live up to the country's creed of one people, one nation, one destiny.

The 21st August, 2012 agreement seeks to install a regional land selection committee, an economic committee to develop a regional economic plan, and a technical committee to

comprehensively examine power generation in the Region and the return of the television dish and channel that belong to the Linden community. It is unfortunate that the committees which were established no longer function and the other one remains an unfruitful dream. This National Assembly must, therefore, resolve that the Government of Guyana immediately adheres to the commitments and obligations under the written agreement of 21st August, 2012, thereby ensuring that the benefits which were to accrue to the residents of Region 10 are realised and that the Government of Guyana be held solely accountable and responsible for all direct and indirect consequences flowing from its continued unwillingness to adhere to the letter and spirit of the written agreement of 21st August, 2012 parties.

This motion is brought today to present this House an opportunity to demonstrate to the people of Guyana that when called upon we can together obey the laws of the land, respect the rights of the people and honour agreements we made on behalf of the people. This would be our opportunity to demonstrate to the people the advice the Government gave to the USA, that is, we can get our house in order before we tell others like Palestine and Israel how to fix theirs.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are about to start a debate on a vex issue, a very troubling and emotional issue. We have had, last year, a motion of no confidence moved against a minister. Much of what transpired on the 18th July, the days just prior and the days just after have been ventilated in this House already. The point I want to make is that we do not want a debate that takes us back into that time. The motion before us is for a resolution for the agreement of the 21st August to be implemented and that if it is not, we will hold Government responsible. So I will be looking to ensure that we do not find ourselves plunged into a rehash. I know that the Prime Minister may be saying that some of it is unavoidable. I accept that but let us not find ourselves at that point again. Go ahead, Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to interject. I am asking to intervene here. I would have liked, hearing what you just said, that maybe this motion would have been withdrawn and the presentation there made a lot of insinuations against this Government. It is very difficult for us to sit here and take them without responding fully and completely. I would, therefore, ask whether the Hon. Member would consider withdrawing the motion.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think the Member will withdraw the motion. Let us proceed with the debate.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to, on behalf of the Government of Guyana and the people of Region 10, in particular those of Linden and Wismar, know that we are prepared and have always been prepared to move past the recent incident and work with reasonable elected officials in Region 10 to find the path, proper path.

I am very disappointed in some of the comments made by MP Kissoon. I believe that the objective of the motion should be to find a way to move forward, but if you want to go down the road of calling people's names, we will have to defend ourselves and we will have to, at some point, make references to the past. We have no choice in this matter. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that your pronouncement would have been done prior to Ms. Kissoon making her statements. Ms. Kissoon could not have been serious when she used every opportunity to insult this Government like the cussing exercise she led that was directed towards the Hon. Prime Minister at the Linden Town Day opening. She cannot be serious when she, as a Member of Parliament, led a cussing exercise against the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are starting... Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba, I am aware that there was an incident at the launching of May Day. I do not know whether curse words were used.

Mr. Lumumba: Plenty were used.

Mr. Speaker: As long as you can verify what is said, but I am aware that there was an incident indeed.

Mr. Lumumba: I am willing to move past all of those incidents. Secondly, Ms. Kissoon has used this House to articulate and to mention racial terms over a dozen times during her presentation.

In addition, MP Kissoon cannot really believe that the predominantly afro- Guyanese committee in Region 10 must be exempted from equal participation with the electricity rates in this country. We can argue about the process. We can argue about the path towards that equality, but certainly no one should argue that it should not happen and it must not happen.

Everybody can fight and Ms. Kissoon needs to understand that. I do not think people on this side cannot fight. We are not made of straw. Everybody can fight and everybody can protest and misbehave, but that is not the end game. Mr. Speaker, we cannot be seriously talking about this Government as if this Government is some row government and does not have any concerned for Region 10.

Mr. Speaker, I know you do not want to go down in past, but let me briefly touch on a few issues. I have to.

Mr. Speaker: We are dealing with 21st July, 2012 agreement – Linden.

Mr. Lumumba: Yes, I am. I am and Mr. Speaker, you should have reminded her of that. Mr. Speaker, when we came into power, there were no house lot distributions for the people of Region 10. Mr. Speaker, when we came into power, we had no record of destroying baker shops and banning flour in Region 10. Mr. Speaker, when we came into power we had no record of violent anti-union activities in Region 10. Mr. Speaker, when we came into power, we had no record of mass layoff in the bauxite industry. Mr. Speaker, when we came into power, we met with dilapidated infrastructure, roads and drainage in Region 10. Mr. Speaker, what did we do?

This Government subsidised the Bauxite Company with millions of US dollars annually to ensure that the people of Linden would get a decent standard of living. This Government improved the potable water system in Region 10 and is continuing to do that. This Government improved the roads, every road, every street corner, in Region 10. This Government stabilised the bauxite industry in Region 10. This Government proceeded on a massive housing drive in Region 10, in particular Amelia's Ward. This Government put an end to rigged elections in Region 10.

Let us talk about the process of discussion of Region 10 with the committee that we had. Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you of all the meetings we had in the Office of the President. MP Kissoon has not spoken twice. She enters the meetings; she bows her head on the table and Mr. Sharma passes a note to their leader, Mr. Aubrey Norton. The meetings are led by Mr. Norton. There is no input. We can bring the records. This Hon. Member of Parliament has not participated physically other than bowing and going to a meeting in a chair and put her chin on the table. This is the level of representation she has given to Region 10. Mr. Speaker, Mr.

Solomon is not interested in the resolution of this matter. He is interested in squatting, sending people to squat, sending people to illegally occupy land.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Solomon is not here and so I am going to caution you about saying anything. The man is not here. Ms. Kissoon referenced him by saying he asked that she expresses his gratitude. Please be cautious about what is said about him in his absence.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, this motion deals with the region and the delegation. I am saying to you that the leader of the delegation has been involved or once involved in squatting and pronounced on squatting. He is the leader of the delegation. He has also been a non-active member of the delegation. His role in the delegation is to pass notes to his leader and his leader is not the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Granger; his leader is Mr. Aubrey Norton. Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Granger, was the leader of APNU and the person whose name was on the list and who was responsible for the victory of the elections in Region 10, not Mr. Norton or Mr. Solomon. I believe we are negotiating with the wrong persons!

Mr. Speaker: Whose fault is that? If you are negotiating with the wrong person, whose fault is that? Let us stick to the resolutions at hand.

Mr. Lumumba: I am speaking to the resolutions. The resolution has a problem; it is faulty! The resolution should be amended to call on Mr. Granger to take over the negotiations.

I am not here to badger anybody. All I am here to say is that we are prepared, at all times, to have serious negotiations. I do not believe you can have serious negotiations with those who sit across the table. That is not the case. The resolution, to me, has erred and those who have prepared the resolution... I think the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has no choice but to show that he has some level of cooperation with the team from Region 10. But I know deep in his heart he recognises that they are inept and they are incapable of representing his political party. That is all I want to say, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Roopnarine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without rehashing, as you have cautioned us not to do, the actual events of the Linden protest of 2012, I think it would be useful, nevertheless, to remind ourselves of the sequence of events surrounding the signing of the 21st August

agreement. At the signing ceremony that was actually scheduled for the 20th, the Chairman of the region declined to actually sign the agreement because the work on the Commission of Inquiry that was actually being pursued elsewhere had not been completed so that notwithstanding the assembled persons - the media, Members of the Government, members of the political parties, members of the region – we, in fact, had to defer the signing until the following day and on the 21st, in the morning of that day, the parties sat together and completed the Terms of Reference for the Commission of Inquiry, removing the clause that, in fact, caused concern among the opposition parties. We then, in fact, had this ceremonial signing and, at that signing, the Chairman of Region 10 had expressed the wish which he communicated in writing to us that the leaders of the Opposition parties in Parliament should bring the agreement for the endorsement of the National Assembly. He did write such a letter to us on the 21st August. It has finally reached us today, some ten months later, appended to the motion in the name of my Colleague Member of Parliament, Ms. Kissoon, so that we get a sense of the ebb and flow of events.

The agreement, as I said, was scheduled for signing the day before and notwithstanding all the preparations and the assembled gathering, the Chairman, as I said, had great concerns that the Commission of Inquiry did not arrive at the conclusion so we dispersed. So it was on the 21st August that we actually sat together again. By this time, the problems in the Commission of Inquiry Terms of Reference had been resolved and it had been resolved because the Government withdrew its insistence on the inclusion of the clause that had, in effect, caused problems for us here in the Opposition.

We have to ask ourselves: what is the value of this debate on the agreement now, almost one year after it was signed? I think there is a value. First, I think it permits us, now removed from the heat, turmoil and violence of those days, days that were marked by the wounding of scores of citizens and the shooting to death of citizens, to carefully examine the sequence of events that led up to the tragedy of 18th July and to draw the necessary lessons if we are to avoid such excesses in the future.

Secondly, it provides us with yet another opportunity to gauge the value of a agreements in general and to understand the true reasons for the implementation deficit since, I think, we can all agree that the history of implementation of agreements forged over the years, usually at moments of national crisis, has not been stellar. Since our parties are currently engaged in

discussions in and out of select and standing committees on a number of crucially important issues such as the Local Government legislation, the Anti-Money Laundering legislation, the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, the GPL among them, it is more necessary than ever, if these engagements are to be fruitful, that we commit ourselves to the strict and timely honouring of agreements we reach. This touches on an issue on which Members of the Government most recently and plaintively my friend, the Hon. Prime Minister, already to 'ceremonise' at great length on the issue of trust.

How do we build trust? And, perhaps more importantly, how do we overcome the legacy of mistrust now half a century old and counting? The PPP argues that trust is a precondition for the establishment of institutions of shared governance and national reconciliation. I do not think this distorts their position. I must confess that I have always found this a somewhat tawdry evasion and an alibi for inaction. Coming from a party that once vaunted its adherence to the principles of dialectical materialism, it is, to my mind, a woefully undialectical view of process and we ask ourselves: did the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland trust one another before entering into the arrangements of the Good Friday Agreement? Did the clerk in Mandela trust one another before entering in the shared government arrangements of the transitional government of national unity that closed the chapter on Apartheid? Did the Arabs and Africans in Zanzibar establish a government of national unity because they trusted one another? In the drive for negotiated solutions in the Palestine/Israel conflict in the Syrian catastrophe - they mentioned only the most advanced current crises - are they doomed to defeat because of the lack of trust between the parties of conflict?

Thirdly, the Linden upsurge of 2012 has lessons for the forms of struggle available in a parliamentary or, as the Attorney General, who is not here, would insist, a constitutional democracy. Why do people take to the streets even when and where elected governments exist? I would not cite the example that some commentators like to cite, namely the Arab Spring, because most of these revolts were against tyranny and unelected despots, but, more recently, the protests in Turkey and Brazil, I think, teach us important lessons, important lessons partly to tell us why people felt the need, for these elected government situations, to take to the streets and, importantly, to note the difference in approach of the Governments of Turkey and Brazil.

I wrote recently and this is what I had to say on the Linden crisis: Dangerously for the ruling party, the Linden rebellion 2012 was a victory for people's power in the teeth of an unrelenting propaganda offensive and State-owned radio, television and printed media reinforced by the use of police and military power.

Fourthly, as we prepare ourselves for the long awaited Local Government Elections and anticipate the arrival in this House of the legislation with a new design for a reformed local government system, we must draw on the lesson of Linden. I said before that I believe that in the months and years ahead, the Linden rebellion of 2012 will come to be seen as the most significant blow struck for the self determination of regional and local government bodies against the imposition of authority and control by the central Government since the imposition of the centralising 1980 Constitution that vested supreme executive authority in a President. It was, to my mind, the most robust assertion of the primacy of the declaratory Article 13 of the 1919 revisions of the 1980 Constitution.

3.40 p.m.

My Friend the Hon. Ms. Kissoon has already alluded to the significance of Article 13 and draws the lesson there, too, that what took place in Linden was, in effect, an assertion of the rights embodied in Article 13.

The motion today presents us with the opportunity to do a number of things. I think we need to examine carefully the implementation deficit and consider ways to overcome it. We have heard that the technical and the economic committees are, in fact, in abeyance. There have been struggles over the issue of who would cheer the committee and so on, but the net result is that after all these months and after the intense struggles to establish these committees and reach agreement, that the committees have so far yielded nothing.

The Economic Committee is of great importance not only because it was designed to set out a plan for the economic development of Linden, but it was put there to answer the position taken by the citizens of Linden, that it was not because they did not want to pay the tariff, but because they were unable to do so and we felt that an economic committee should be established to, in effect, determine what were the true economic conditions facing the people of the community.

The Technical Committee that was, in effect, going to examine the entire history of the electricity situation in Linden, that we believe was very important because we had to take into account how Linden had reached the position it had reached in relation to the electricity subsidy, so that too has not yielded anything.

The Land Selection Committee was designed to put an end to what it was felt was the arbitrary giving away of lands to people and it was felt that the region wanted to have an input into how land was going to be distributed, so that too, although it has apparently now been established, I think it is yet to produce the kind of work that it was intended to. In the agreement, as you will see, we had, in effect, anticipated difficulties of implementation and for that reason we had imposed strict timelines on the work of the committees that they were, in effect, meant to come back and report to the plenary after, I believe, two weeks and they were to present the report after a fixed number of days and so on. I want to say that all of that in the agreement has not been honoured. I am not seeking to sit here and say well the reason it has not been honoured is because some set of people did not want to honour them. The fact of the matter is that we fell into, what I can call, a kind of paralysis within the committees and I would urge that one of the things we do today is to recommit ourselves to the terms of the agreement and ensure that these committees are put in place at the earliest opportunity and begin to do the work, not only of doing what it is they were designed for, but also in reporting back to the plenary on the progress that is being made, so that if problems arise within the work of the committees, we are in a position to actually correct them.

The second important thing is that I think we need to identify the lessons we have learnt and to take steps to ensure that there will be no recurrence of this kind of development and that we will be guided in the resolution of these matters not only by our own experience, but by the experience of others. This, to my mind, is the value of the motion today and I, for one, would regret if the motion before us were used, really, as a way of rehashing old arguments and getting back into a situation where we end up by throwing dead dogs over the fence at each other. I think the important thing is to recognise that we have had a problem, not in arriving at the agreement; I remember being present at many of the meetings that actually forged the agreement. I think people on both sides worked very, very diligently to arrive at the agreement we arrived at and it is, to my mind, a shame that after all this time so much of the agreement remains

unimplemented. I think if we look carefully at all of this, Mr. Speaker, and try to examine honestly why this has happened and to see what kind of remedies can be found, then the motion today would have served a very useful purpose.

Thank you, very much. *[Applause]*

Sitting suspended at 3.45 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.19 p.m.

Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the presentations on the motion entitled “Honouring the 21st August, 2012 Agreement between the Government of Guyana and the Regional Democratic Council, Region #10”. In making a response and with some due consideration to the way the motion is written and the way the presentations have gone so far, I think I need to be pretty specific on some of the issues raised and the history on certain issues so that we would have a clear perspective on what occurred and so that we should not be brought into a position, from my viewpoint, of perhaps misleading people or some people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to state again that there was no desire, no interest nor intent to have any situation at Linden degenerate to a point where people were killed - and I refer to the highly unfortunate and regrettable deaths of Lewis, Somerset and Bouyea - and that there was no intent by any person to go out there and to have people killed or injured. And the insinuations in the motion and the way the presentations were made suggest, somehow, that the Government, that the Ministers, and that President Ramotar, are implicit in some arrangement, some undertaking, to have such an event happen. I would like to point out that a couple hours after the incident did happen, President Ramotar had his senior advisors called in. In fact, his senior advisors along with his Ministers came to him and undertook there and then to have a Commission of Inquiry established and that the Leader of the Opposition and other leading Opposition elements also met on the same evening with the President where he informed of his decision to have a Commission of Inquiry established and to investigate fully the circumstances leading up to the unfortunate incidents.

The way the motion is couched, given the nature and the circumstances of the events and also to what has happened with respect to the establishment of the committees and the inability to have these committees functioning and the reasons why the committees have not, in one instance...established at all properly and, secondly, has been unable to continue, as in the case of the Electricity Committee. I find that this motion is cynical; it is cynical because the delays related to the proper and full establishment of the committees, the delays in relation to even when the one committee was on the way, the vacillations, the unending, irresolute discourse, the ‘no shows’ with respect to members of the committee from the other side of Region 10...there were always postponements and delays, ‘no shows’ and, as the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, said, “Even when some members were present, they were not even present.” And so I find this to be cynical.

The question of power in Linden is the overarching problem with respect to its sustainability and its continued economic development. And I am not talking about political power because I thought that the question of political power was already established. That there is a party in power and they have the region, they have the council and they have the dominance in the political activities and the leadership in the region. So the question of political power is one that has been resolved already. The question of power related to the motion and all these events as is being pointed out was the question of electrical power and what do we pay for it - energy. This has been an overriding question in Linden and in Region 10 for a long time. It was said here, in the WHEREAS clause that there was an intended withdrawal of the subsidy – true.

It was said in the First AND WHEREAS clause:

“AND WHEREAS the Government continued to take action to impose the increase in the cost of electricity on the people of Linden in total violation of the people’s right to be involved in decisions...”

I am of the view that the party in power in Linden did have discussions and did have some undertakings with the Hon. Prime Minister with respect to the increases of electricity rates in Linden and that the increase in electricity rates in Linden was clearly pointed out to be a ramped increase staged over a number of years and that the increases in electricity in Linden was related to the continued question of GPL and the question otherwise as to whether there would have

been an imposition, an increase in electricity rates for the Coast, where people were paying \$65 or more dollars per kilowatt/hour for electricity, when Linden was paying between \$5 and \$15 at most for commercial rates for electricity.

The Prime Minister knows all the details and the Prime Minister has been a very nice man on this issue. The Prime Minister continued and I have been very critical, I would apologise and also say to the House, to the Prime Minister on the question of power in Linden over all of these years. Part of the reason for me - maybe it is personal and, again, I do not want to go into the personal thing... When I went to Linden - and I worked there for ten years - the Hon. Prime Minister worked for 25 years. I came and worked for ten years and, for me, those were wonderful, exhilarating years at the professional level but the overriding question of power and cost of power in Linden is what brought us down. Because when, towards the end, we were only generating ten megawatts of power in Linden and when our largest stripping machine, the No. 7 dragline, needed seven megawatts of power to peak out on load and when it was needed, when we went into what were called extended dragline bench operations, which I had a large part in introducing, to improve our stripping capacity because the dragline would work for four or five months and then sit down for the rest of the year, waiting for the stripping to advance... When we could only generate ten megawatts, at best, of power and the dragline needed seven megawatts of power at peak load...If it sat by itself, it only needed four megawatts of power. If it dug and it swung under load, it needed seven megawatts. From the beginning, from Friday afternoon until Monday morning, there was no power for the dragline to dig. The dragline sat even when we had the technical reason and we had the opportunity to optimise the use of the major stripping equipment in the mine and it was because people were wasting the power down the line. We were afraid to load-shed; we were afraid to raise the cost of power; we were unable politically; we, perhaps, did not have the political will to say, even though it was known throughout the company and we said it throughout the community, we needed to have seven megawatts of power for that dragline to work. So stripping fell behind and after a while there was nothing to do. It did not matter. The plant had to come down. There was no ore to ship to the plant. There was nothing to do. We had to yield the position in Linden. And in spite of all of that, this Government said, and I supported and I fought amongst the hardest, even when the previous administration said that they were going to close down the Linden bauxite operations and even when it was also said that we will close down the operations at Araima, I was the hardest

fighting there to make sure that we continue the operations. The Prime Minister and others are aware of this issue and of the torrid fights we have over this issue and the enormous risks we thought we were going to face because of this problem. [Ms. Baveghems: That is history. We want to hear about what is happening now.] It is history and it is the history which has us standing here dealing with this issue and this matter.

It is true to say that not paying for the power, not paying a sustainable rate, a responsible rate, has meant that the power has always been wasted in Linden. It was not available for the operations of the mine. It was not available even at the end for the community when things got very bad. We yielded the position. We went into Omai and got them to come in and we argued and we fought and we got it continued and power came again because the sets came over from Linden from Omai. We made that happen. Even when we yielded the position, we did not close the operations and it is upsetting when people say sometimes, and couch it in ethnic language, that the Government and people wanted to close down the operations and close off the people at Linden and Region 10. It is greatly upsetting! What about the rest of people? Is it not more appropriate that the energy is conserved by paying a little more for it, that you pay attention, that you do not leave on the lights all day, that we do not be fêting and making noise from Friday afternoon until Monday morning and nothing else happens, the plant closes down? Is that not the more responsible position? Is it not better that we give the people arrangements which will allow them to encourage economic activities - young people - so they would move on to new situations and to develop economic activities which will employ people in Linden? Is that not a better use for the power?

In this motion here, there was talk about a peaceful protest and the mover of the motion was indeed one of the prime leaders of the protest action in Linden and the person for whom she brought greetings, assurances and so on, with respect to this issue, the Regional Chairman of Linden, was also a prime mover of the protest action. We are being told here, in what I say again, I believe is a cynical attempt, that this was a peaceful protest. But I would like to go and, perhaps, read into the record what the Commission of Inquiry, to which we all agreed and we got imminent duress from the Caribbean to be the Commissioners of this Report of the Linden Commission of Inquiry, the Hon. Justice Lensley Wolf, O.J, retired Chief Justice of Jamaica, Chairman; the Hon. Justice Cecil Kennard, O.R, C.C.H, former Chancellor of the Judiciary,

Guyana Commissioner; Hon. Justice Claudette Singh, C.C.H, former Justice of Appeal, Guyana Commissioner; Senator K.D Knight, Q.C, Jamaica Commissioner; Ms. Dana Seetahal, S.C, Trinidad and Tobago Commissioner...

On the question of whether this protest was peaceful, paragraph 166 in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, page 54:

“The Lindeners applied to the appropriate Regional Police Authority for permission and received same with conditions attached to ensure that the rights of the citizens were balanced. The evidence revealed that the conditions were breached and therein was the birth of the ensuing problems. The evidence clearly established that the bridge was blocked at several points both by persons and foreign material e.g. logs. Persons going about their lawful business were unlawfully denied access to the bridge and some were set upon and beaten.”

Paragraph 167:

“The police in those circumstances had the obligation imposed by law to prevent that unlawful action from taking place and/or continuing. It is noteworthy that a Member of Parliament who was at the scene on the 18th day of July when much of this was taking place or had already taken place stubbornly refused to accept that the protesters had resorted to unlawful means to carry out what would otherwise have been a lawful endeavour. To him the police ought not to have intervened because the protest was for a just cause. The justice of a cause seldom if ever justifies a breach of the Constitution and certainly in this situation we are of the view that, whilst we empathize with the citizens, resorting to unlawful means could not have been condoned by the police. What is of utmost importance is a consideration of whether the police acted appropriately in dealing with the situation. ”

This is what the report states; this is the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. [**Mr. B. Williams:** What does it state about the behaviour of the police?] Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Members on the other side also have the Report of this Commission of Inquiry and they are free to quote from whatever section they want to quote from. I am quoting from the sections which speak to the question as to whether the protest was peaceful, as is suggested in this motion here

brought by the Hon. Member, Vanessa Kissoon. I suggest that this question of a peaceful protest has been settled in the Report and that the protest...certainly there were a few persons that were there and were willing to protest peacefully, but certainly the prime movers, one of whom said that they were there at the bridge when the shooting occurred, encouraged the blocking of the bridge, that they encouraged the unlawful behaviour, that the reasons for the ensuing problems resulted from the leadership there and also that the actions undertaken were as a result of a peaceful protest being hijacked by irresponsible leaders and by a violent fringe element - a violent fringe element! And in the days following, the people of Linden suffered and Guyana suffered for months for a situation which should not have happened and which resulted because of irresponsible, reckless leadership from the prime movers and leaders of the protest.

I do not believe that we should have in this motion here references to a peaceful protest, but that, maybe, we should only talk about protest, giving the findings of this Commission of Inquiry or otherwise we should say that the Commission found... This was a lawful Commission. We paid a lot of money for this. There is a lot of hurt in relation to this matter. We should say that the events degenerated to a point where because of violent action by some persons the protest resorted into unlawful activity.

I would like to again point out that the Government side has always been willing, ready and facilitatory with respect to the meetings, with respect to the buildings and with respect to the staff. We have a building, Colgrain House, which has always been prepared for the meetings to take place; it has not happened.

5.44 p.m.

The question which needs to be asked is in whose interest is it that this matter be delayed? Having misled, I believe, the people of Linden to believe that any increase in the electricity of tariff is wrong and is a bad thing for Linden – which I do not agree with – whose interest is it to delay having a report in 60 days on these critical matters for Linden? “*We tell the people we ain’t paying*” was said in this House. It was said in this House before all these events occurred. It was said in this House while the Prime Minister was willing, able and already engaging leaders on the other side with respect to this matter. The Prime Minister thought he had their support. The Prime Minister is a nice man, but then the protest was hijacked by others and things took their

course. The Colgrain House is still there, the staff is still there, the computers are getting dust; we are ready, able and willing to facilitate, we want this to happen. Having told the people out there - maybe from the other side that it is a good thing - we are not going to pay, no paying is taking place. The power continues to be wasted; there is no conservation of power going on there.

We have been waiting there all the time. We have held meetings, waited for people to show up for the meetings and they either show up late or not at all and when they are they are there is no useful result of the meetings. Then there have been no meetings for months because it went abeyance. We want this to happen; we want to have a clear dispassionate review of the situation which does not involve ignoring the history of what went on up there. We want an early resolution of this matter. We want the committees to come into play; we want to have a result. We want the people of Linden to have the opportunity to choose and be led in a responsible manner with respect to this issue with input from both sides of this House.

The Hon. Member Roopnarine talked about lessons in the form of struggle. Of course, there are lessons to be learnt there. Arising out of the situation in Linden, we have had what I think is a tragedy with respect to the issue of Minister Rohee and his leadership because there was the position that Rohee had given instructions to people on the ground to exercise lethal force. The Commission of Inquiry has pointed out that there is no evidence, nothing to show that did occur. So the Opposition went out on a long limb high up in the air suggesting that Minister Rohee did this. Having climbed out on the limb, it is difficult to back track. In spite of all the evidence, it is difficult for them to say that we were mistaken, let us move ahead. All the Bills and all the things which relate to Minister Rohee and his Ministry arising out of this issue have come here and have been shot down. It is unfortunate, it is wrong and it hurts the people of Guyana. I want to point out again that the issues of the Bills which recently came here, all of which arose out of that situation, have nothing to do with Minister Rohee. If Minister Rohee is here tomorrow or not here, (those Bills) still have to be acted upon. In the meantime, we suffer in the absence of those Bills.

It is my belief that this motion, the way it is couched, the way it is presented, needs redrafting. This motion is only intended to present some damsel in shining armour with respect to the incidence in Linden; the prime movers of the protest in shining white armour. This motion

continues to engender in Lindenians and the people in Region 10, a continued sense of victimhood; the sense and the paralysis of victimhood. So you continue to do things in ways which does not help the community, which does not help people at the individual level and which does not help the country. We all want Linden to succeed and that is why we have always voted for Linden; that is why we have always put money into supporting Linden; that is why we have always gone out at great risk to ensure that the prime economic activity in the Region was supported. That is why we established Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP) and Linden Economic Network (LEN) and all those initiatives. We want Linden to succeed; I want Linden to succeed. I have 10 years of my professional life sunk in Linden; Linden succeeding will validate my experience of working in Linden. It will validate the experiences of all the workers I have worked with in the mines over all those years; hard work so we can continue to have an industry. I say again we want this activity to resume; we want it to resume quickly. We want to have the discussions in earnest, but we do not want to continue to engage in exercises never ending. The Prime Minister had the first time something called 'wither bauxite'. The Prime Minister took a severe *licking* over two or three days with respect to the issue of bauxite. The same issues were there. I want to say that it is not in our interest to sabotage this matter. We have not been vacillating; we have always been ready and willing to have this activity continued. We want the Opposition and their representatives to engage with us in an earnest endeavour to get this done. We do not want to continue to engage exercises which continue to mislead the people of Linden, to let them sink down in a culture, in a sense, in a dependency of victimhood.

I thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. T. Williams: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my contribution to this motion in the name of the Hon. Member Ms. Vanessa Kissoon which specifically deals with honouring the 21st August, 2012 agreement between the Government of Guyana and the Regional Democratic Council, Region 10.

I promise to be very brief. I must say the fact that we have an agreement of this nature between the Government and the Region is an indication that both parties have come to the point or place of seeing the need of moving forward, hence documenting and making public their intention to work for the development and continuity of the people of Region 10. I must add also for the people of Guyana as a whole.

I hoped we would have gone past the past in dealing with an issue which, from time to time, can be very contentious and vision sour disagreements across this floor. We in the Alliance For Change (AFC) of course express at all times our regret and remorse. We would like to say never again should any community in this country, whether from the Corentyne to Eteringbang, or Moruca to Lethem, never again should any confrontation between the arm of the State and our citizens result in the boiling over of tensions to the effect of loss of life and damage of property. I believe those of us who will speak to this motion must also speak very responsibly and ensure that we too lead by example in this National Assembly.

The speaker before me did indicate that Guyana has suffered as well as the people of Region 10. This Agreement seeks to point to specific issues identified that can bring the kind of development, change, and I guess strengthen the relationship between the people of Region 10 and this current Government. I might say something quite unusual and strange but I stand by what I say. I believe no community in this country, none, belongs to any political party. I believe when there is a government, it is the government of all of Guyana, hence the government has responsibility for all of Guyana. I speak from the notion that we are one people, one nation and we still have one destiny.

I am not fully aware of all the intricacies of the commissions and why they have not been set up, and today I am hearing of the number of meetings that were not attended. I am not here to point fingers but to appeal that the Government of Guyana and the people of Region 10 sit together and give some teeth, some life, to this Agreement which will result in the well-being of our citizens and our country. Linden is at the heart of Guyana. The last time I checked it is the region that probably touches the most regions. It is like the centre of this country. Linden has strong people, resilient people, and an economic history that this country itself can be proud of, and like many other communities the people of Linden have gone through much; plenty.

We in this National Assembly have a responsibility. By mentioning Region 10 proper, because of the motion, I am by no means ignoring the difficulties, the struggles and sufferings, endured by any other community in this dear land of ours. However, like this motion says, I would like to call on both parties to get the ball rolling, to get their act together, and that Region 10 be not left behind.

It is not right for after almost one year after all this money was spent and all the mines brought together, that we must come back today at the expense of the tax payers and appeal to something which was agreed on when heads and hearts came together for the development of this country. I think if this situation continues, and we continue to fight and ramble over this matter, it is all but a mockery. It is time we demonstrate the political will to put the past behind us in this country, and work and move forward where there will be healing.

This Agreement speaks, as I said earlier, to pointed issues, but I am also concerned about reconciliation in this country. We know we are where we are today because of things we have done as leaders and as political parties. Every leader, every politician in Guyana, should be able to visit every community and serve the people there. I say again that like the rest of Guyana Region 10, the people of Linden, are the people of Guyana, they belong to us. We have gone through enough tragedies, we carry enough remorse; enough is enough. We should go past the past and work together for the development and unity of this country.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Ms. Shadick: Thank you Mr. Speaker. When my name was put on this list to speak on this motion I understood that I would be standing here just to address the matter in the Agreement that has been numbered “3) Television in Region 10”; and that would have been a very short presentation. But I have listened to the mover of the motion denigrate, infer, and make all kinds of assumptions that Government’s support for certain things have to do with ethnicity rather than principle. Sir, I did not write down the actual words said but one thing that got me very, very upset was the suggestion that Guyana supports Palestine’s right to statehood and supports the Palestinians because they look like us. I said I did not write the words down.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, one second Ms. Shadick. I can assure you that before the night is out I will have the copy of the transcript and it was in error, I will call on the Hon. Member to withdraw. We will clarify it before the end of this sitting. Thank you.

Ms. Shadick: Thank you. I do not want to address the ethnicity matter I want to address the fact that Guyana has always supported the right of Palestine to statehood, it will continue to support the right of the Palestinians to a land of their own and we make no excuses for that.

Mr. Speaker: When you say Guyana do you mean Guyana Government? From the time we have been an independent nation...

Ms. Shadick: We speak for Guyana. I have always understood that those who were elected to government have to speak for the whole of the country, not for part. When this Government speaks it speaks for Guyana. Guyana, as long as this People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/Civic) Government remains in office, will speak with a voice that shows support for Palestinians, on a matter of principle, not any other thing. I do not wish to address the other racist comments.

I will move to No. 3 in the Agreement. The motion has a problem. I am looking at the Agreement which is the subject of this motion. According to this Agreement I am informed by the mover of this motion that it was signed by the Regional Chairman Mr. Solomon and by the Prime Minister and caters for certain things. It caters for three committees. One, a Technical Team, and the Agreement list names that were proposed for the technical team. Two, an Economic Committee for which the number of the membership was named in this Agreement but no names were mentioned. However, it gives days, within 90 days to name persons, to meet as a priority, to give reports and so on. Finally, there was mentioned a Regional Land Selection Committee. Those are the three committees.

I have heard the Hon. Minister Robeson Benn talk about Colgrain House being set up with computers waiting for people to meet. I have no knowledge of those things. I have no knowledge of those committees. I wish to address No. 3, Television in Region 10; a very small part:

“a) the Government and Region 10 agree as follows:

- i) That the dish and transmitter that was given to the Linden Community will be given to Region 10 Regional Democratic Council. The dish and transmitter should be transferred to the region within 14 days of the signing of this Agreement.”

I am informed that these things have been transferred but it might not have been within 14 days.

These are not by any means the size of a plate and a cup. They have been transferred to the Regional Democratic Council (RDC), but they have to go somewhere. I do not know if they can

fit in the RDC compound. That document having been signed, the transfer is now up to the Region 10 people to decide where they are going to put it, and what they are going to do with it. This Agreement does not talk about where it has to be transferred. I am addressing the letter of this Agreement because it seems as if that is what we have been asked to do. I am much more interested in Roman (ii) of this document which says:

“That it was agreed that Region 10 will apply for a broadcasting licence and the government will facilitate the granting of that licence in keeping with the law.

This Agreement was signed on 21st August 2012. On the 28th August, 2012 the Minister responsible for information by proclamation issued an order bringing the Broadcasting Act of 2011 into force. The governing Board of the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA) was named and appointed on 4th September. I have the dubious honour of being the Chairman of that Board. That Board has worked long and hard. I have personally contacted by telephone, by letter, and by third persons whom I think have any form of charm, that could help or facilitate. The Act says that a licence shall be issued to a Company incorporated or continued under the Companies Act, or to a Trust. This Act does not give the governing Board the authority... (it is being set up; it has not been set up as yet so the governing Board is doing all of this) ... or it cannot issue a licence to Region 10 because it is not a Company nor is it a Trust. I have asked on more than one occasion, orally or in writing, that such a body be set up and that the names of the board of directors or the trustees when registered be sent so we can examine to see it follows the provisions of the act; over 51% are Guyanese nationals and so on.

According to the Act a licence has to be applied for by the Company or Trust. To this date, at 4.30 p.m. before the secretary of the GNBA left, I called to find out if we have received an application from a Company or Trust on behalf of Region 10. The answer is no. The Agreement says the Government will facilitate the granting of that licence. Well, the Government has facilitated, the Government has set up the governing Board of the GNBA. The Government has that board working; rules and so on have been gazetted; people have been sent letters, approvals have been granted for licences; people are going to be issued licences; we still have not received an application from Region 10.

Mr. Speaker: This application when it comes does it have to go through the rigours of a regular application or will it be approved as per Agreement?

Ms. Shadick: Mr. Speaker, I am on record as having said publicly that we know about this Agreement and that the board agreed unanimously that when a proper application comes from Region 10 it will be processed as a priority, even if we have to hold a special Board meeting to do it. We are still waiting.

I do not know how the onus could be on the Government alone to honour this Agreement. There is an agreement between two people, two sides. One side is ready, willing and able; the other side is not doing anything. I am going to follow what my honourable colleague said, the people of Linden are suffering because they are the ones who want television, but here I have to say, television is not a cheap thing. Running a television station is an expensive exercise. It takes investment. When people submit applications they have to submit a plan of what areas they are going to broadcast to, what kinds of programmes and so on. Those are documents that have to be submitted. Before a licence is issued they have to pay fees for the use of the spectrum they will be allocated. They have to pay a licence fee, which at this point the minimum is \$2.5 million. There is no unequal treatment of anybody in the broadcast area right now. Region 10 is not going to be treated unequally. We are going to treat everybody equally. That is my promise. I am saying that publicly for the Hansard, for the press, and I have said it before and I will say it again if it needs to be said. We cannot think that the TV will follow the way of electricity.

There was an interesting matter that came to my attention last Wednesday. The new Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana was visiting the installations where Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) has centres. The people who go to the IDCE classes pay a small fee for whatever they are doing. IDCE is a drain on the University's coffers; it really does not make any money. The Vice Chancellor was appalled, and I was aghast at hearing, that the IDCE centre at Linden collects less fees for those classes from the Lindeners because they cannot afford to pay. So they cannot afford to pay for electricity, they cannot afford to pay for IDCE classes which is helping them to get an education after they may not have gotten a proper one in secondary school. I am hoping they will have businessmen in Linden who will pay enough for advertisements so Lindeners can also get television in their homes for free.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker that is my contribution to this debate. *[Applause]*

6.14 p.m.

Mr. Morian: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to stand and support the motion. The fact that we are here today simply means that the agreement or agreements were not honoured. I am always worried when agreements between governments and communities are made, especially when it was at a time when tensions were very high and things escalated to a point where three of our citizens were murdered and up to now...

Mr. Speaker: Proceed please.

Mr. Morian: Yes, Sir. The people of Region 10 placed a lot of confidence in the Government when they moved to have this agreement established and as I said earlier I am very disturbed because history is replete with incidents that follow when agreements are made between people and their governments. I remember... I could take you back to the Munich agreement in 1938 when Hitler made agreement with the allies and broke it in 1939 which followed with World War II and about 60,000,000 people died.

I remember in British Columbia in 2000 when the government moved to compensate workers after the government broke an agreement... after the government passed the 2002 contract breaking legislation known as “Bill 29” to break the agreement they had with their own people. The government recognised that as a government while both sides – government and people – have responsibilities the government, through the leader of the day, should set the stage, the ground work, the foundation for change. Hence, they compensated the workers with the sum of lots of millions of dollars because the government recognised, as government, the onus is on you to lead a country and to find every conceivable means to bring peace.

I listened to the Hon. Member, Minister Benn, and he spoke of evidence. Those of us who might be lawyers who have had the opportunity of going through Law 101 will tell you that a lot of times cases are closed and all the evidence is in; that is why there are cold cases, but this evidence that I am going to present here was not presented. The people of Region 10, recognising that costs are escalating, did present to the Hon. Prime Minister a counter proposal as it relates to what is happening in Region 10 and this did not come out as part of the evidence.

The Government of Guyana gave to Region 10 a donation of energy saving bulbs that came from Cuba. When these bulbs were tested and tried we recognised that if the entire Region 10 was exposed to these very same bulbs, and we worked it out, there would have been huge savings. We moved to present another side or another view to the Hon. Prime Minister that one could give import license either to Linden Electricity Incorporated (LEI) or to the Linden Co-op Society to bring in these bulbs and we identified, we adumbrate the kind of savings that would have been made. We never got a response on that proposal. That proposal is still available to be put on the table.

I do not find it so difficult in dealing with this matter. The people of Region 10 continue to search for change. Our expectations of any government or the government of the day would seek at all times to engage the people. I heard the Hon. Member speak of the Linden Economic Network, but I need to bring to this House that the Linden Economic Network is without funding, is without a board. The staff members there are renting the offices to pay themselves salaries. I did not hear that in this presentation.

We need to understand what would push a community to levels where they will take all kinds of actions to highlight their position. I would not want to go back to all of the economic issues but pertinent to the minds of Lindeners is the fact that Linden boasted a steam power plant that was sold without consultation with the people of Region 10, hence, every time the matter of electricity comes up these matters come up. I like the presentation by the Hon. Member who said that there needs to be reconciliation. These things need to come to the table and be discussed because our power station was sold to a company overseas without any consultation with the people. It collapsed and this very Government went to arbitration in the States. These things were not discussed. These things were not brought to this House. It seems like we just woke up one day and felt that we do not want to pay but Lindeners are aggrieved to the point when we recognised that we had something working and the Government took it from us without even having the courtesy to come and talk to us and these matters are still outstanding. That is why I said that cases are closed and one has to have cold cases because all of the evidence are never involved in the case at the time.

The call for an independent television station is because the people in Region 10 are fed up with Government propaganda and waste of time that comes through the television. I submit to you

that the programme seems like a deliberate attempt to under develop Region 10 and the best way to do it is through information, disinformation, misinformation and all kinds of crazy information. What is happening in Region 10 and why is there this call to have this agreement back on board? It is that the common citizen now finds themselves buying DVDs because we definitely are avoiding the channels that are coming through. We want to develop our culture. We want to hear from our leaders. We are hearing from all kinds of nefarious characters coming through to Region 10 and we are saying that it is time for us to go on a path of self determination that relates to what we are hearing. I do not feel that we have gone beyond. I would sincerely like to see a reconvening of the whole process but we need to note that the Hon. Minister Benn spoke like this agreement happened before the demonstration. The agreement was the sum total of what took place; hence, one cannot go back to what happened before the agreement. The agreement is the sum total that evolved based on what took place; hence, the agreement is the vehicle to move forward so I want to say that my call is for a reconvening and all of the semantics I am listing here – I live in Region 10 – all of what is coming through... I heard one of the Hon. Members say ‘once your application is correct’, all of a sudden there are all kinds of things that will happen to your application but I like the question that you posed, ‘How soon will all of this be done?’ I am calling again, Sir, to have this agreement executed. As I said I have seen, I have lived long enough to see, Governments renege on agreements and what happens? I do not think, and I am speaking from a perspective of Region 10... I do not feel that, as one Member said, while we are here this will continue to be protracted. At some point it will stop but I am hoping that it stops, not in the way the Munich Agreement was dissolved. I hope that it could stop in a very peaceful way and we all could see the development of Region 10. Thank you. *[Applause]*

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had hoped when I looked at this motion that there would have been discussion on the agreement and what has or has not been done and that we would be dealing here with accountability in that the actual Be It Resolved clause talks about accountability.

Regrettably in this House Ms. Kissoon is the only Member of the Region 10 team that was meeting with the Government post 21st August, 2012, agreement. The other representatives of Region 10, Mr. Aubrey Norton and Mr. Sharma Solomon, are not Members of this House and I

believe that Ms. Kissoon, having been the scribe for her side as I was the scribe for my side, would have come well prepared for the meeting.

Mr. Speaker: One second, Ms. Teixeira. It is customary and accepted that scribes take notes. Earlier the Member was castigated for being silent so I am now hearing, for the first time, that she is the scribe for this team which would give an explanation as to why she is quiet. You may proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Well I did not know that scribes do not speak because I am very much a scribe for my party and I speak very much in meetings.

Mr. Speaker: I see.

Ms. Teixeira: Let me say for the PPP, I do not know about any other party, the scribes of the PPP have not been known to be clerks or secretaries. I am sorry. We are political leaders and so the scribes that we have, Dr. Luncheon and myself, tend to be the more notable scribes on the PPP side, are not known for being quiet. I do not believe that the Member being quiet has anything to do with being a scribe but anyway let us not get into that.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain this as you were not a Member and many Members were not here. Regrettably what happened on 18th July and all that happened afterwards and the discussions began with the President, the Leader of the Opposition, the AFC, et cetera and at a certain point the President was advised, in no uncertain terms, that he must negotiate with the Region 10 team; not with A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) nor AFC so prior to the agreement being signed meetings took place with Mr. Solomon, with the Hon. MP, with Mr. Norton and with Dr. Roopnarine and Mr. Nigel Hughes who said they were there as, I guess, observers. The Government's team, pre-agreement was headed by no less a person than the President, Prime Minister, Minister Benn, Mr. Odinga Lumumba, myself and, from time to time, Minister Ashni Singh; post-agreement. This motion has several paragraphs dealing with pre-agreement and five paragraphs dealing with post - and for those who are listening and for those on the other side, the agreement that has been tabled in this House is certainly a draft of the agreement - but it is not and does not convey because it does not have the Prime Minister's signature and all the other signatures on it but that is just a minute detail.

This motion was tabled and published on 3rd March, 2013, in the midst of discussions between the Government and Region 10; in the midst of it and this is, I believe, is a sign of bad faith because in fact, ironically, it was in February/March that some progress was made on a number of issues so the timing of this motion being tabled in the midst of discussions seem to be saying quietly to the Region 10 people “*Don’t worry coming to the negotiations anymore*”. I will say why I suspect that.

The motion says “The Government must be held solely accountable and responsible for all direct and indirect consequences following from its continued unwillingness to adhere to the letter and spirit of the written August 21st Agreement.” Anybody reading the agreement would have noticed a couple of things.

There are eight basic areas of agreement.

The first has to do with the tariff not being increased and being held at the pre-July, 2012, level and will not be changed, it will await the findings and recommendations of the technical team. That is the number one issue in the agreement and that has been upheld. There has been no increase in the tariffs for Region 10 pre-July, 2012, as of today. Furthermore, the subsidy for Region 10’s electricity was maintained in 2012 and maintained in the 2013 budget so the number one item, which was the Government’s responsibility has been adhered to.

The number two item: The establishment of the technical team. The agreement names people who are part of the technical team and actually names the person who will be Chairperson. We agreed to this at the time we signed on 21st April but the Chairman resigned due to a number of issues, one of which was health I believe, and it was from that time, around September-October of last year, that there were attempts to find a person and agree to the Chairperson between the two sides who would head the technical team.

The staff of the technical team and the staff of the economic team were being paid. The office, as Minister Benn spoke about, is at Colgrain House. Even Mr. Norton, on several occasions wanted to ensure that the staff who were being paid were being paid despite there were no teams functioning and he was assured of that.

The outstanding issue is the technical team Chairperson. The rub in the whole thing is... The linkage between the findings of the technical team and any increase or no increase for the tariff so if the technical team cannot find the Chairperson that we agreed to then the technical team cannot be sent up. Therefore, *ipso facto* there can be no change or no recommendation or no finding in relation to the issue of tariff increases in Linden and in relation to electricity. Right? I will come back to the Minutes and prove what I say. I told you all that I am a scribe and I hold to that job with my life. That is an issue outstanding.

The third area of agreement, the economic programme and the Economic Committee: The members were appointed in September, 2012. The Chairperson was appointed in March, 2013, and the irony of this whole thing is that when we were naming people for the economic services the name of a young lady was put forward, the Government put forward its names and our names were rejected and then more names came forward and the Opposition had one name that they proposed and eventually, at a subsequent meeting, we said 'Okay, we will go with your name.' Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that led to another month's delay to figure out why the Government was suddenly supporting the Opposition's name? Subsequently the person was... We then had to wait one whole month for them to come back and say 'We accept the fact that you like the name we gave and we are not agreeing to the fact that you like the name we gave you.' Hence, the person was appointed. The Economic Committee is functioning and in the Economic Committee's terms of agreement are the issue of LEN and LEAP. They are in the agreement at sub-clause (b) on page 2. That was a joint responsibility.

There were two areas of joint work. One was done. One is not done - the name of the Chairperson – not done; Economic – Committee named, functioning, etcetera.

The fourth area of the agreement, NDIA, West Watuka: This was the Government's responsibility and in the Minutes of the meetings... I must say that the minutes of all the meetings, the Government notes of these meetings, were shared with the Leader of the Opposition. Dr. Luncheon, whether I took notes or whether he took notes, once the notes were finalised for our side... We shared our notes. There did not have to be anybody agreeing whether our notes were right or not but they were shared with the Leader of the Opposition with respect to him in terms of the position he holds and fact that his party was part of the negotiation. In the

Minutes, Mr. Sharma Solomon accepts that the agreement of West Watooka and National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) was concluded as of December last year.

The fifth area was a Region 10 responsibility to submit projects for consideration. It is on page 3 of the agreement, the second paragraph on the bottom. It was agreed that the region will identify and submit other projects. This is after the drainage and irrigation of West Watooka for consideration that will bring the “fastest benefit to the people of Linden and Region 10”. This was not done. Region 10 has not provided that. What Mr. Norton walked with was his own developmental plan for Region 10 which are macro things that would cost... not projects that could bring the fastest... The agreement says “the fastest benefit to the people in Region 10” because the Economic Committee was to look at long term, medium and short term development of Region 10; not just Linden. Region 10 did not have that done.

Land Selection Committee: That was a Region 10 responsibility according to the agreement that is attached to this motion. In subsequent meetings it was raised all of the time ‘What is happening with this?’ because Region 10 is to set up the Regional Land Selection Committee. The terms of reference were only agreed to in April, 2013, and I believe that now it is starting as Dr. Rupert Roopnarine said; it is now starting to work. That is a Region 10 responsibility.

The sixth area of responsibility, Region 10. This is to do with a dish and transmitter and the license. This document (Member held up a document) was also shared with the Region 10 team and, I believe, the Leader of the Opposition. These are notes with regard to the television station in Linden goes back to the 1980s. “1985, management of GuyMine made a decision to purchase television station for the Linden community to assist to improve the quality of life which is at a lower level and migration of workers was high due to low salaries.” Please note that this was 1985. “The RC justification and the purchase is attached.” These are the quotations. “Cost of the project was \$655,000 [1985]”. “Green Overseas Corporation, an American company that was engaged in contract stripping for GuyMine advanced the payment for the station and was subsequently reimbursed by GuyMine.”

Hence this view that is going around confusing Linden People that the Green Corporation made a gift is not true; GuyMine bought it. “The items purchased were a television 25-foot dish, 110-foot tower, a 10 W transmitter, monitor, satellite receivers, etcetera. The TV station was operated

by GuyMine Public Relations Department. Around 1993 with MinProc in charge of the bauxite operations in Linden unbundling of non-bauxite activity started and the operation of the TV station was transferred to Bidco Auxiliary Services. Bidco Auxiliary Services subsequently bought a second dish, a 20-foot 1100 W coning transmitter, satellite receiver, et cetera. In 1996 the TV station was transferred. In 2006 there was a fire and all items were destroyed except the two dishes and the tower. After the fire the components were replaced by National Communications Network (NCN) and they started back TV broadcast in Linden, operating out of a 40-foot container loaned by LinMine Secretariat. The 20-foot dish was subsequently relocated to Watooka and the tower was relocated outside the region to Annai for radio stations for that region. The first 25-foot dish bought through the Green Arrangement still remains at the original Richmond Hill Site.” The agreement calls for the handing over of the transmitter and dish. The minutes of meetings show that the transmitter and dish have been handed over.” The interpretation of what ‘handing over’ means: The dish and transmitter, or what is left of it... The dish is alright, the transmitter... The handover of something that is tonnes in weight...” Hence the region acknowledges that the dish and transformer are theirs. The problem that came up in the discussion was the land. Since December, 2012, they wanted to have the land surrounding the dish and transmitter and they were told ‘come to us with the proposals because the land is much bigger and had other things on it other than the transmitter.’ Whilst it was not part of the agreement, we were willing to talk.

As of December, 2012, they have not come with the measurements or any proposal to do with the land but the transmitter and dish are no longer the property of what was the LinMine, that is bauxite, and the Government.

The broadcasting licensing issue has been discussed by Ms. Shadick but to add to that in the last meeting of 22nd March Region 10 agreed to submit the outstanding documentation that the process required, to Head of the Presidential Secretariat (HPS) for onward transmission to the governing board of the GNBA. A two-week time frame was proposed on 22nd March. To date you have heard Ms. Shadick speak; I have nothing further to say on that.

The eighth area of the agreement, to develop modalities: This was a Region 10 commitment to develop modalities of improving and working with Government in relation to the interest of people of Linden, etcetera. This was a Region 10 commitment that it would, in the last paragraph

of the agreement, “develop modalities to work closely with the relevant Ministries and communities in Linden to ensure there is better communication, knowledge and involvement with regard to investments and land developments in Region 10.”

6.44 p.m.

Whilst Region 10 may not have done this because they have not indicated whether they have or not or what modalities they wish to implement or to suggest, I am aware that Ministers have been collaborating with the region and the communities and Community Development Officers (CDOs) to work on a number of initiatives in Region 10.

It is not I who opened the door with this motion, but once the door is opened I will give the following information. No meetings were held between August 22nd, 2012 and November 1st, 2012. There were many email exchanges with regards to nominations for both sides, for the two chairpersons, which I have already spoken about for economic and technical teams. I have the copies of all the emails. I do not trust electronic storage totally nor do I trust hard copy storage always.

Between October 17th, 2012 and March 22nd, 2013, there were 17 occasions where the Region 10 representatives were either unavailable for meetings or the meetings were either postponed or cancelled. On three occasions, the Government sought new dates or requested postponement to a different date. Between August 22nd, 2012 and March 22nd, 2013, there were seven meetings held between the Government of Guyana and the Region 10 representatives.

I have all the minutes here. There are seven minutes and I can go through each one of them. I can give you from October 17th, the amount of times, dates set, meetings postponed before the people arrived or meetings postponed while you were sitting waiting there.

They had the Prime Minister of this country sitting and waiting. The Prime Minister is not an ordinary man or woman like me; the Prime Minister is a king pin in Guyana and must be so and they had him sitting like a little boy, waiting for Mr. Sharma, Mr. Norton and Ms. Kissoon to arrive. [**Mr. Ali:** Why did we allow this disrespect?] Well that is a different issue that history will have to decide whether we were right or not.

The minutes show a different story. In the minutes, not only did we stick to the agreement, there were ancillary issues raised. Whilst some meetings were hard in October, November and December, by February/March we were getting somewhere and in the midst, “*boop*”, here comes this motion in bad faith saying you are not implementing.

Maybe that is why Mr. Lumumba made the comment he made.

The issues of Drainage and Irrigation (D&I), despite the West Watooka, the minutes say and show, that Mr. Solomon accepts in December. I know because I have worked with Mr. Solomon at the Ministry of Agriculture and NDIA to get those West Watooka contracts, which he wanted to have done. Mr. Solomon admits that those works were concluded and being a politician that he is, he looks for new things and I can live with that, but that was not part of the agreement.

We also looked at the Linden/Soesdyke Highway, issues were raised there. We even had a very interesting sociological discussion at the last meeting [An Hon. Member: Was it taekwondo?] Well sociology and complex human behaviour, in relation to what was going on in the school system in Linden and violence. It did not become an issue that Government should do this and the region should do that, it was, ‘let me sit and realise how complex this situation was’. You felt as if you were getting somewhere, way beyond. So when persons here philosophised about trust and building trust - what harmed the trust that was working in those discussions that was embryonic, that started this, this motion before this House? Ironically, the talks stopped after that.

Mr. Solomon broke contact with us; he was not in contact with us until two weeks ago. Dr. Luncheon was trying to reach him, suddenly to find out he has a new address, new this and new that, that none of us knew about.

I do not want to get into no “prove story” business. When you bring a motion to this House, bring it with the facts. If you are going to say, “The Government” because this is what this says, I did not write it, you did, Ms. Kissoon, when the actual agreement does not give the Government full responsibility for all the areas. Region 10 had its responsibility too. I can forgive Mr. Granger for not being totally informed, maybe even Dr. Roopnarine, maybe Rev. Morian because what is clear or experienced during the July/August, 2012 period, was that the left hand and right hand were not communicating.

Here we were sitting in meetings, the President, Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Public Works and Communication and the two Advisors to the President. We were discussing and it looked as if we were getting somewhere and then we see in the newspapers, the report of what the people were told. The people were not being told what was going on in the meetings with us. It seems to me that this is a perpetuation, further than the people of Linden, but even within the ranks of the leading Opposition party. We did not even seem to know what was going on in the talks.

I am going to make it very clear and I am saying it very clearly. In fact, I was not going to say this, but I have been sorely tempted. I was asked to provide the minutes for the young lady because she lost her minutes; the Hon. Member who is tabling the motion. I advised her to please go to the Leader of the Opposition, who has the minutes and that she could tell him that she lost the minutes. I would not like to tell my President that I lost my minutes to tell the truth.

[Interruption]

I am not going to philosophise about trust and about national unity and Government of national unity. I have been around too long and a part of too many discussions on that to use this forum to philosophise. Maybe at another forum we can talk about it; about trust building and the embryonic ways. Trust and confidence building is about small baby steps, one at a time, sometimes two steps forward and three backwards to be able to build trust. Once that trust is ruptured or cracked it is very hard to start all over again.

Therefore, I have been wondering, what was the intention behind this motion? Was it merely to politically say to the people of Linden and the people of Region 10, “*We got the motion in Parliament, it shows them they ain’t accountable.*”? And the people do not know what a part of it was.

There is also the other issue of what the motion was about, that this was just another whipping boy; another opportunity to have “one-up-man-ship” and to talk. People talk about what is being said in the media that is wrong and that they have been under attack and so on, but Mr. Speaker, I am not attacking anyone. I have the minutes, the emails, the records and the signatures. You can come and tell me otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, I am disturbed and you said you will look at it, about the issue of comments that were made. Just for the edification of the younger Members of this Parliament, on both sides. Since 1976, the Government of Guyana right through to 2013 - various Governments, successive Governments - has sat on the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people; thirty seven years. It has nothing to do with today my friend. It has to do with a political consciousness of Guyana, whether under the People's National Congress (PNC) or the PPP, to stand up politically and internationally on certain issues. Let me name some of them: against the Vietnam War, for the Palestinians; against apartheid, just to name three. There were many others. [Mr. B. Williams: *[Inaudible]*] I did not raise the Palestinian issue my dear Mr. Williams, your side did. [Ms. Shadick: The Hon. Member.] Hon. Member, Mr. Williams.

Considering all the factors, the history and the experiences we had of the eight areas of agreement, one, two, three, four areas have been done. Of the three areas by the Region, one area has been done. Of the one, two, three areas of the Government, three areas have been done. Of the two areas that were joined, one area has been done. The one area with GNBA, you heard the head talk about the work that is going on.

I therefore call on the Opposition, it would be best and wise, it may not be best for you, but it will be wise for all, to withdraw this motion. No hard feelings, no problems, but it would be wise to withdraw this motion. As I said, if there was a political agenda out there it is probably not best to withdraw the motion. Therefore, we will judge from the results at the end of the debate.

This motion is flawed; it did not represent to this House what were the issues in the agreement, yet it called for the agreement to be implemented and put the onus on one partner alone, as it said "solely responsible and accountable".

Therefore, on these ground, the Government side cannot support this motion. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Speaker, thank you. If it pleases you, I rise to support this motion standing in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kissoon.

I have heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba say they invested billions in Linden. The Hon. Member, Mr. Benn said, “We want Linden to succeed”. But, the fact of the matter is, Linden is a depress community. In fact, I am not going to be stranded in the past, but from 1992, Linden has been marginalised. Right now it has the highest rate of unemployment for any community in this country.

I know Linden and I knew Linden was a place I loved to go, as a boy. A beautiful community, well appointed and owned and controlled by the people of Guyana, and managed by Guyanese people - a wonderful community. I also knew it after it was taken over and headed really under the charge of the Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar. To compare the modern day Linden to what I knew of Linden in the past is depressing. When you travel to Linden it is dilapidated, you can see the buildings - the whole place.

It appears that a couple of years ago, the Government, after intense pressure, after a constant publicising of the fact that they neglected Linden as a community, decided that if they have to do something in it they will also try politically acquire it. Well that was a forlorn hope. But do not want to be stranded in the past as I said. I would like to deal with, bearing in mind what you said about the motion that we had earlier in this Parliament, deal with the post-protest, which would cover the Commission of Inquiry and the period of the agreement.

Mr. Speaker: And if you could respond to some of what Ms. Teixeira said about the minutes and what has been agreed to and what is happening as well. It would be good if you could rebut some of that. Thank you.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I am sure you heard names listed and read out, participants...

Mr. Speaker: Actually, it is in the name of APNU; it is an APNU motion and you do not bat without... I know that you will handle yourself.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, I am advised. Our founder leader used to like to say, “If huri comes from the bottom of the pond and I tell you boy down there cold.” You have to believe them. I am instructed by my Hon. Member, my sister, Ms. Kissoon that the picture, which was painted by the Hon. Member, Teixeira is nothing that lends itself to accuracy. *[Interruption]*

It is important that the Hansard reflects what happened to the town and the people of Linden. The Government celebrates Enmore Martyrs Day every year; a grand charge every year. One would have hardly have expected that they would have perpetuated similar acts in Linden. So do not worry with all the obfuscations, the meat of the matter is, three persons were murdered, while peacefully protesting. It must never happen again in this country, in no community and we must not lose sight of that.

I am saying that peaceful protest – they were peacefully protesting for most of the day. The Guyana Police Force had the opportunity to prevent what happened that night from happening. If, as the Commission’s report shows, relying on evidence from no less a person than the former head of the Tactical Squad Unit (TSU), Superintendent Alves, who confessed that the police should have cleared the bridge when they were there at midday, one o’clock, that day. They should have cleared the bridge then. Because of that confession, Superintendent Alves has been harassed and removed from his job. I know him, he is a principled person. That is another shame, a shame on this Government. That a man who spoke the truth at the Commission of Inquiry...

Mr. Speaker: Did this confession come under your cross-examination or some other?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I see.

Mr. B. Williams: There were a lot of confessions that day, by no less a person than the Hon. Member, Clement Rohee. I see he is not here, but I know that he is looking at the monitor inside the room. The records show that the Minister in charge of the Police Force in Guyana and the security in the wider context of this country was totally unaware of everything that he needed to be aware of. Totally unaware and it was a sad day. It was a complete abdication of his responsibility to the people of Guyana, which resulted in the killing and mass wounding of the people of Linden.

The protest was peaceful and the Government must answer for why instructions were not given to clear the people off the bridge at high, bright, midday, but then attempted to do so at night, under the cover of darkness, which was accompanied by a coordinated blackout of the

community. So under the cover of darkness, the heinous acts were committed and we do not want to lose sight of that.

The Commission of Inquiry Report was pellucidly clear on who was to be blamed for such acts and they fingered the policemen at the scene.

I was saying that for you to just go to a crowd, unarmed and just shoot them down like common dogs, must not be repeated. We are saying this; it must not be repeated again in this country. That Commission of Inquiry had to have been the highest paid Commission of Inquiry ever conducted in this region. They made certain awards; I think people would see in today's newspapers that the awards were collected, albeit under protest.

Mr. Speaker, if I might respectfully refer you to the WHEREAS clause in the motion:

”CONCERNED that even while the negotiations were ongoing the Guyana Police and Guyana Defence Force were used against the people of Linden, including the indiscriminate shooting and injuring of innocent persons in their homes on a quite Sunday.

What is wrong? What did the people of Linden do to deserve that kind of treatment? It was like Palestine, when they were invaded by the Israeli forces. Indiscriminate shooting; a lot of persons were injured, maimed and disfigured. We asked, even before the Commission was about to embark properly on its work, that they be included also. The Hon. Member and Leader of the Opposition, Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger wrote the President, asking him to include that also within the remit of this Commission of Inquiry, that we were spending so much taxpayers' money on and he refused.

One of the things that we would like at the present time, since we want to move forward... I really cannot see how we can have proper moving forward if you have scores of persons walking around the community of Linden, with pellets in them, scars of the scourge of war that was perpetuated on them. I am respectfully submitting that these persons that were injured, after the 18th of July, on that weekend, must be compensated also. We do not need a Commission of Inquiry for that. We will provide the list of persons, with their medical evidence and we expect the Government to show their bona fide-ness and their goodwill...

Mr. Speaker: Is it a Point of Order.

Ms. Teixeira: On a point of Order, Dr. Rupert Roopnarine spoke earlier about the attempt to conclude the Terms of Reference and the postponement for a day for the signing. One of the issues in all the discussions is the Terms of Reference, including that particular phrase, which the Government had included in the original Terms of Reference, to include post July 18th. It was removed based on an agreement with the APNU and the AFC. Therefore, the Terms of References which were finally agreed to, did not include the phrase. It would have included August 12th and August 8th and those days, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: We will allow that as a point of clarification. The point being made was that the post 18th July injuries sustained should have been included...

Mr. B. Williams: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: It was not post 18th ...

Mr. Speaker: In other words, Mr. Williams, that was removed from the Terms of Reference.

Mr. B. Williams: I did not know that. Sir, as you just said, notwithstanding whatever happened there, an application was made. A letter was sent for its reconsideration even if that happened. To know ... [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: I take that point that notwithstanding what may have in or out...

Mr. B. Williams: It was overtaken by the letter from the Leader of the Opposition to the President of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Proceed, Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: We believe that the Government of Guyana can show its bona fide-ness, its commitment to the people of Linden; it could corroborate the Hon. Benn's statement that we want Linden to succeed by compensating these people of Linden, who were injured subsequent to the 18th of July.

The agreements I heard, for in particular, the television item in the agreement. I heard the Hon. Member Ms. Bibi Shadick speaking to that issue and have actually said to this Honourable

House that for the television to get off the ground in Linden, they would be required to pay \$2.5 million license fee. I am not sure that the Hon. Member is serious.

When this agreement was signed we assumed that it would have been signed in good faith, bona fide-ness on both sides. I am sure that it would not have been within the contemplation of either party that what they agreed on, they would have to pay \$2.5 million, to put into operation. I am saying...

Mr. Speaker: In fact, had it been contemplated, there would have been a clause for its waiver.

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

Mr. Speaker: In other words, it could never have been contemplated.

Mr. B. Williams: It could never and it cannot.

Mr. Speaker: Why were you not there, though, Mr. Williams?

7.14 p.m.

Mr. B. Williams: I cannot say that I know, Sir. I am not important enough, Sir. Sir, as you know when you were with me, I have always been a worker. I am a worker. I am a worker for the People's National Congress Reform (PNCR) and I am a worker for the people of Guyana. I hope the Hon. Members, on the other side, are taking me seriously. I am saying that for them to now say to the people of Linden that they must pay \$2.5 million to start up their television, it cannot sell. It cannot. It would be an imposition on the people of Linden; it would be something that is *in terrorem* in terror of the people of Linden because it is an impoverished community.

I do not understand what is going on. Why is the Hon. Member Mr. Ganga Persaud so bloodthirsty? Why does he want the people to be trampled on? I am urging the Members on that side that they cannot, at this late stage - Sir, this is basic contraction principles - unilaterally vary the contents of the agreement. They cannot, now, subsequent to the signing of the agreement, unilaterally impose other terms, and then onerous terms as that. Their blood will be upon their heads.

The agreements made by Government... My Hon Friend, the Hon. Member, the Reverend Morian was alluding to other practices in other countries but right here, in Guyana, I can assure him, there are a lot of examples of dishonouring agreements. Agreements must be observed by Governments when they make them. *Pacta sunt servanda* - you must observe your contracts. When the Hon. Member from Linden asked to bring this motion to this National Assembly, alleging foot dragging, alleging dilatoriness, alleging all of this delay, Sir, it was something that we would believe without more because we know about agreement signed in 2001. We know about communiqué signed. In all those agreements signed by the Government there were agreements about equitable access to the media - you know about all of these things, Mr. Speaker - but have it observed any items in those agreements it had signed? It has not, so it has a track record of dishonouring agreements when it signs them. With particular reference to agreements coming on the heels of conflict, it is clear that its modus... is to sign the agreements to let the conflict abate and then when the conflict subsides it then refuses to implement agreements signed. That is its modus... It wants to do that again in Linden. All I could say to you, Hon. Members, on the other side, as my Saint Lucian friends would say, the mood I see in Linden, "*the people ain't eating nice*". That is what I would say to you as, my Saint Lucian friends would say, "*they ain't eating nice*". I would suggest to Government that it honours the agreements.

It is appalling and disgusting that, again, having signed another agreement, the persons come and they are lamenting again. I mean, it is the same old thing. There are committees which cannot be formed; when the committees are formed they cannot work. What is going on? It is the same old story again. What is going on? A Government must have some pride in its self; the people must respect a Government. If the Government is signing on to agreements it must accept its responsibilities and its obligations. Now, nothing has moved. I am instructed that nothing has moved pursuant to the agreement and what I am hearing here now it means that satisfaction of the agreement is light years away. I was hoping to hear from the Government side a recommitment to performing the obligations under that agreement that it had signed for the benefit of the people of Linden but not to come here...

Okay, the Government has problems to this point; I am urging it to start a new. We will expect that within a month we would see progress on every item, in that agreement. We want a commitment like that from it. Let bygones be bygones and let us start anew. Let us move ahead

because it is only a couple of people here, but the masses of the people of Linden are suffering and we call upon the Government to honour its obligations under the agreement that it has signed.

Thanks Mr. Speaker. Goodnight Members on that side. [*Applause*]

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, we have had a long debate and much has been said on each side. I have a concern with whether what had been said had been taken seriously. Certainly, it is when the last speaker, Hon. Member Basil Williams maintained, as he did, that the agreement has not been honoured by this Government and when, just before, our Chief Whip Hon. Member Teixeira has pointed out where the Government has been endeavouring to meet and has met important parts of the agreement which it can meet by itself. The Government has been endeavouring to reach agreement with the Members of the other side, so that we can proceed in those areas where we need to proceed together. The Government rejects any insinuation, any allegation, that it has not been endeavouring to honour the agreement entered into with the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) of Region 10 on August 21st, 2012.

This motion, like much of what has been said and written on this matter, is full of inaccuracies and imprecision, which some may want to dismiss as of little substance, but which taken together accumulatively create the emotions that led to the sad event of July 18th, last year; and that is, this constant feeding of people in Linden that the People's Progressive Party (PPP) Government - even way back in the period of 1957-1964, and this People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) Government since 1992 - is intent and bent only on marginalising and discriminating people of Linden and people who are not its supporters. This, in my view, is the main cause of those sad events which took place in Linden on July 18th, and a number of the other problems which have been facing the people of Linden.

Let me get back to the issue of the agreement and it is just to state it again, in my listing. I know Ms. Teixeira listed about seven or eight things, but I have the agreement here too and depending on how it is separated, I listed six points. The most important one and the first one is that, "the situation of electricity tariffs in Linden will remain at the pre-July 1st 2012 rates and the implementation of a future tariff regime in Linden will await due consideration of the findings and recommendations of the technical team". That has been observed and observed at rates of

\$2.5 or \$2.6 billion a year. It is over G\$200 million per month. In the process of doing things, I sign off on it every month end and pass it on to Minister Ashni Singh and say that I approve or endorse this payment.

This is something that the Government could do all by itself and the Government has been doing that. Even, as of this year, we have seen growing pressures in the provision of electricity, even in Georgetown. We proposed to open the door towards tariff increases in Georgetown at a time when we have been maintaining tariffs in Linden.

When we consider the question of reaching agreement, specifically here, it is for the technical team... There have also been discussions about the economic committee or the economic programme. When an agreement is not reached, one question that one would ask is: Who benefits from not reaching agreement? The Government does not benefit in a sense that the Government hands have been tied and the Government has been keeping its hands tied on the matter of electricity tariffs in Linden. It is not to the Government's benefit to be, particularly, difficult at any of its considerations for not accepting proposals that would have been made from the other side, that would have certainly taken account of the fact that it wants to move forward for a numbers of reasons.

We want to move forward with the reform of electricity in Linden. The issues of the technical team not getting going... In fact, the technical team was established. I want to say again that it was established and I, myself, too looked around for places where the committees could meet and eventually a secretariat was set up in the Colgrain House there. As far as I know, it may still be on pay, because we kept it going, so that it would not be a constraint: to let it go and then to start it back again, which would have caused a delay.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, can you average what is the monthly cost to keep this office going, with no meetings being held, with staff and all of that? What is it costing the taxpayers?

Mr. Hinds: I do not know, Sir. I did not get into it. It was something that has to be done...

Mr. Speaker: It has to be a sizeable amount of money to just have an office with no work...

Mr. Hinds: It could be provided, but I did not go to it because it was something that had to be done.

On those first three things, which I have listed, one is being done at considerable cost and the other two we would want to have them completed.

The fourth one, which I have listed here, is drainage and irrigation of West Watooka and we were told that much has been done in that direction. I guess, all across our country, people are never satisfied with drainage and irrigation. There is always more to be done, but I think we have it accepted that much has been done in improving drainage and irrigation of West Watooka, and no doubt, more would be done from time to time.

Television in Region 10: The agreement called for dish and transmitter, which were given to the Linden community, will be given to the Region 10 Regional Democratic Council. There were certain presumptions in this position which we lived with. The question that they were given to the community is a common interpretation but they were paid for by the bauxite company. We have accepted it. The trouble is that since 1985 they have been five or six generations of equipment in this area of receiving signals from satellites and transmitting. As my colleague, the Chief Whip, had pointed out that the equipment is there. The old big dishes are there and they have been superseded many times. These small dishes do just as well, these days, and the original modules, which had to do with taking the signal and amplifying it and transmitting it, those had been burnt in incidents after a past elections, maybe the elections of 2001. The dish and transmitter are there.

We have had discussions on Region 10 applying for a broadcasting licence and the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA) is waiting for its application. The issue of payments for any other... I do not know but it will be about 30 or so licence holders. That is an issue. Some of the things that I have seen and I wonder about is that at times people are encouraged to say all sorts of things, take positions and then afterwards there is a question about the delivery of it.

When the school was burnt, during those events, in Linden, there was much talk that “We are going to repair the school and build back our own school”, and so on, but when the time came to deliver, it was another story. It was included in our budget for this year. As far as I know, things are being initiated by the Government. The Government accepts it as its responsibility. My concern has been the leaders of the people in Linden. In addition to feeding the story that the PPP and the PPP/C discriminate and marginalise them, they encourage them almost to talk about

these fantasies: “We are going to build our school ourselves”. This Government, when it is time to deliver hard money and hard work and hard things, it does it.

I want to acknowledge the presentation of my colleague Minister Benn, which I think came straight from the heart. There are many of us who can speak, such as the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams who talked about going up to Linden and seeing this beautiful place. I asked him to tell me the date when he went to Linden. I want to know the date when he went to Linden and saw that. I was there; I worked there from the year 1967 to year 1992. The four years before nationalisation and the many years after nationalisation. I do not know about the good days. I have here, and I showed it before, that in 1976 when the Prime Minister of the day, Mr. Burnham, went to Linden and spoke about electricity in Linden being joined with the Guyana Electricity Corporation (GEC) of the day. He spoke about that. One can say that in 1976 things were already tight. He also said something. He said this, because the crowd was getting critical and agitated, “Remember that I, Mr. Burnham, am the Prime Minister of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and not for the Republic of Linden and Region 10.” Comrades, it is something painful for us, particularly, like myself and Minister Benn, to participate in a debate such as this when, maybe, because of the adversarial nature of such a debate things have to be said, on both sides but. We could have seen that in 1976 there were strains, already, between the founder leader, as the Hon. Member said, and the people of Linden on the issue of electricity.

Let me say, too, that the Hon. Member talked about the glorious days. By the year 1983 there was the major retrenchment of about some 1,800 of 6,500 people. Let us not get there Hon. Member Mr. B. Williams. Those are days that people, such as us, lived through and worked through because of our commitment to Guyana and the people of Linden and Region 10. We lived through, stayed and suffered through those days. It is very painful to sit and hear many of the things being said on the other side. [**Mr. B. Williams:** Was it in 1976?] In 1976, that was not the time when the tear gas was thrown into the cell. Was it that year?

I think that recognising the call for us to avoid rehashing...Let me just say that I would not worry to go down the road that I had written up on my speech. If one goes through these WHEREAS clauses, one is almost compelled to respond to them and in that response there would certainly be a lot of rehashing. I do not really want to go in that direction.

As to the question of the Government's attitude, we were always prepared to speak to persons who would have been recognised as leaders of the people of Linden and Region 10. I cannot avoid saying, again, that there was an agreement reached between the Government and the leader of the APNU. We wrote it up and I got a preview by the Hon. Gentleman across from me. If we were guilty at that time...

Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]: It is a Point of Order. Did the Hon. Prime Minister say that we signed an agreement?

Mr. Hinds: I did not say that.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: What did you say?

Mr. Hinds: I did not say that. I said we reached an agreement.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: You made a statement Prime Minister. We did not reach an agreement. You made a statement and both Dr. Roopnarine and I queried your statement.

Mr. Hinds: I accept. I would not quarrel. I read a statement. If we want to get down that road, I read a statement which came out of a meeting we had during the budget talks. I did present it. Some modifications were made in which I read the statement with those modifications. I still have it with those modifications, but the issue is, maybe, not that detailed, that with this talk we are not respectful of article 13. We spoke with people that we recognised and expected to be leaders of Linden and Region 10. I think also that it is rather a stretch to make proposals for the electricity reform in Linden a violation of people rights under article 13. I rather believe that it is a big stretch to say that the Government putting a proposal for the reform of the electricity sector in Linden is a violation of article 13. It is on two counts.

One, is the fact... Secondly, we did speak with people who, hitherto, at least, on to that time one would have expected to be the leaders and the people to speak to things for Linden and Region 10.

That is my position there. It is not that we were not looking for an opportunity to talk to the people who were leading the protests. I think we can remember that there was an article by a columnist, one Mr. Freddie Kissoon, in one of the newspapers of July 4th, two weeks before July

18th, and he related there that they mounted a picketing exercise outside my office and I went to speak with them. I did not rush out and speak with them right away because I did not know if it might develop... One of the things one learns is that one has to make a judgement when one goes to interact with people - Is it going to make the situation worse? Is it going to make the situation better? They had spoken with Mr. Dindyal, who was leaving, and it looked as if it would not have gotten out of hand and so I did go and speak with them.

7.44 p.m.

Hear what he said, “yesterday morning Dr. David Hinds of APNU, Mr. Gerhard Ramsaroop and Michael Carrington of AFC participated with me and Mark Benschop in a picketing exercise outside of the Office of the Prime Minister, in Kingston, over the already implemented electricity hike for *Lindeniers*.” There is no question of it already being implemented, in any case. He said that I was going for lunch. It was not that. I came out to meet with them.

Mr. Speaker: One second Prime Minister. Mr. Neendkumar, you made a statement, just now, that the maker of that statement probably, Mr. Kissoon, is as crazy as the mover of this motion. When earlier Ms. Kissoon made a reference to a Member, I had her withdrawn it. I am asking you to withdraw it. It is not on the record. It is wrong please.

Anyhow, he said, as I read, “Let me start with what was discussed by revealing that twice I told the Prime Minister that I appreciated that he stopped and spoke to us.” I had gone out. It was not that I was on my way to lunch, as he said. We were always prepared to looking for opportunity to speak with persons to resolve this matter in a way that there should not have been the events of the 18th of July.

This motion, in the WHEREAS clauses, talks a lot about peaceful protest, and so on. My other colleagues have already spoken to it. They pointed to the findings or the report of the Commission of Inquiry, and somewhere in my speech, I have placed to make a reference to it. Essentially we know, it states that some of the leaders also carry responsibility. It is not only the Government; it is not only the police, but some of the leaders of the protests also carry responsibility for the out-turn of events in Linden in July. I hope we will all take it to mind.

Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams, just now, speaking about our Minister of Home Affairs, again, repeated this situation, as it is known, the saying, “damn if you do, damn if you do not”. The situation, in which it was alleged, was that our Minister was calling the shots blow by blow of what was happening in Linden.

Mr. B. Williams: On a Point of Order Mr. Speaker. I should have dealt with it in my presentation. I made a note, but as you know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes you let things slide. The Point of Order is that the APNU never contended that the Minister was directing daily activities outside the bridge that afternoon.

That was never our case. Our case was that they conspired.

Mr. Speaker: You are saying that it was never the APNU’s position that the Minister was personally responsible...

Mr. B. Williams: No.

Mr. Speaker: ... and was issuing instructions to the ranks.

Mr. B. Williams: ... that he outside, on the bridge, was issuing instructions over the phone.

Mr. Speaker: Do you mean that he was not physically on the ground.

Mr. B. Williams: That he was telephoning and giving instruction was never our case. How could we prove that? We were contended that they conspired to break up the march, the seven-day protest.

Mr. Hinds: We could go to the motion, but let me say that a lot of to-do was made of the phone records and getting the phone records of the Minister. Well, we could go to some of the past motions, and so, I do not have them in my head but a lot of to-do was made about the phone records of the Minister and when the phone records were obtained and there were no calls between the Minister and the people of the ground. People were, in my view, let down, disappointed. It was not what they think. Then there was a switch around as we had just now that the Minister kept himself apart and distant from what was happening, and so on. Comrades, we cannot get very far in this manner.

I am not sure if I should speak anymore on this subject, except let me say again that it is not true that Linden is the most depressed community in our country. I would invite all Guyanese, maybe, to make a visit to Linden and compare it with other regions of Guyana. It is to go and see how Amelias Ward has been developed and how development has taken place throughout Linden. Maybe, one should try to get back to the records of the number of vehicles that were in Linden in 1992 and the number of vehicles that are in Linden at this time.

The Government has been doing much. I would always want us today to do more and to achieve more in all that we do, but we have been doing much. We have been holding up our end of the bargain. We have been doing the things that are really demanding. I think that this motion was ill-advised. Maybe, it was understandable how this motion was brought forward, but it was ill-advised, particularly coming after the Commission of Inquiry report and its opinion. It was ill-advised and I would like to recommend that it be withdrawn.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Kissoon (replying): Let me start by setting the records straight. First, that at no time, and I repeat, at no time, have I ever, as was reported, cursed the Hon. Prime Minister.

Secondly, again for the records, I wish it be known that meetings between the representatives of the Government and the representatives of the people of Region 10 were postponed on several occasions by the Government side also. Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I would have missed one or two meetings and I asked for copies of the Minutes for clarity sake.

Thirdly, Ms. Shadick reference to then licence application is fraud. Since the agreement was signed and came into force a new set of draconian conditions imposed by the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority, which Ms. Shadick heads, have constrained the regional representatives from completing its side of arrangement in a timely fashion.

Fourthly, I would like to recommend that Members on the Government benches must find the time to listen to what we, on this side of the House, have to say on important matters. If they had they would have understood that there was no racial intent in the following statement. I quote:

“...and I would like to think that when the Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House and President Ramotar were involved in those protests they were not doing them

because of the majority, they were not doing them because the majority of PPP/C supporters have a similar ethnicity with the people of Palestine but because they recognised, like Martin Carter, that in the scheme of human relations that we are all involved and all will be consumed.”

Tonight, let it be known that I shall not be sidetracked or distracted by the antics of those who are steeped in the old and divisive politics, for this is not what the people of Linden and Region 10 sent me here to participate in. The issue before this House is a motion that speaks to four items:

- the installing a regional land selection committee;
- an Economic Committee to develop regional economic plan;
- a technical committee to comprehensively examine our generation in the region; and
- the return of the television dish and channel that belong to the Linden community.

Let it also be known that it was the person who was nominated, or brought forward, by the Government side, Mr. Narvon Persaud, who resigned from the technical committee because he realised that he could not have been opened in those discussions.

The first resolve clause states:

“That this National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to immediately adhere to its commitments and obligations under the written agreement of 21st August, 2012 thereby ensuring that the benefits which were to accrue to the residents of Region 10 are realized;”

We all recognise the rights of the executive and the representatives of the people of Region 10 to negotiate a resolution to the crisis. The constitutional rights of the citizens of Region 10 must be honoured to the letter both groups have assented to. Tonight, this House is asked to join us in taking it forward in the form of its adoption and participate in activities to ensure that this agreement is implemented.

The citizens of this country, more than 50 % are under 35 years of age, have been calling for the old destructive thinking and behaviours to give way to new progressive thinking and constructive behaviours grounded in rights and the rule of law. This motion is not one that sets out to divide this House. It is one that has been agreed upon but sets out to give an opportunity, to this House, for its involvement in making sure that every element is honoured and, more so, can be replicated in other parts of this society. This act is about governance by the people for the people and on behalf of the people which our Constitution speaks to. Let me reiterate article 13:

“The principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being.”

Tonight, let history records that we, the representatives of the people, are together in upholding the constitution and respecting the rights of every citizen. I would like to again posit the words of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. I would be failing in my duty if I fail to reiterate that... [Mr. Neendkumar: *Inaudible*] Neil, you are a result of automatic promotion.

Mr. Speaker: It is the Hon. Member Neendkumar. It is not Neil.

Ms. Kissoon: Hon. Member Neendkumar, you are a result of automatic promotion, no child left behind.

I would be failing my duty if I fail to reiterate that it was no less of a person than the man who is today the Head of State on January 9th, 2009 led the PPP/C protest in front of the United States of America Embassy, in Kingston, calling for the rights of the Palestinians to be respected. That is why it is important that the party, which leads the Government of Guyana, respects the rights of the citizens of Region 10 and upholds the agreement that was reached between the Government of Guyana and the people of Region 10.

In closing, I would like to call on this honourable House to support, in its entirety, this motion which stands in my name. I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have come to the end of the debate on this motion. I will put the question for its adoption or rejection, but before doing so it is just to make a few points. The first being that throughout the course of this debate what came through was that there was a failing that had occurred universally and some degree, whether a high degree or a low degree, malaise setting and there were several calls for recommitment for revitalisation and for a resurgence of the spirit that led to this agreement in August of 2012. I had expected that there would have been an attempt to amend the motion to reflect what came through on both sides. Even the Hon. Member Ms. Kissoon, in her closing argument, spoke about this motion not being intended to be divisive or to lay blame, but, as it is, it makes a certain point. There is no amendment and so it will be presented as is.

There is the other issue of the words stated about the Palestinians cause and ethnicity. We do have copies of the transcript, the Clerk and I and, I believe, Mr. Irfaan Ali who raised the issue. I would like again to read those words. Ms. Kissoon, speaking about the People's Progressive Party-led protest in front of the United States of America Embassy, in Kingston, calling for the rights of the Palestinians, said, and I quote:

“These are good moments of the people of Guyana being in solidarity with our fellow human beings fighting for their rights and I would think that when the Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House and President Ramotar were involved in these protests they were not doing them because of the majority of PPP supporters have a similar ethnicity with the people of Palestine but because the recognised, like Martin Carter, that in the scheme of human relations that we were all involved all will be consumed.”

Hon. Members, on the phrase of it these words in and of themselves do not suggest that the spectre of race or racism was introduced. However, when taken in the context of what is being said, and it was being juxtaposed against the fact that there were protests in Linden where the members were primarily were of African descent,... The point is that if the people appeared to be of similar persuasion, ethnicity wise, the majority of the supporter of the PPP, then it would appear to be okay. In my view, in view of the fact that the words in and of themselves, which are stated, do not seem to raise the issue. When taken in the wider context, however, they do come over as making that suggestion that race enters into the discussion and the decision making about protest and what is protested about.

In any event, I would invite the Member to just withdraw the reference to ethnicity and Palestinians because the very introduction of ethnicities... When you support the rights of the Palestinians there was nothing wrong but the time that you said that the majority people of Palestine have appeared to have the same ethnicity as the people here, obviously it introduced the race element *vis-à-vis* Guyana. If there was a reference to the nationality and not ethnicity it would have been okay. I would ask that the words to the ethnic makeup of Palestinians as well as the fact that the President of Guyana was protesting, which our Standing Orders prohibit, in terms of the President being invoked in aid of any debate, be removed. Hon. Member, I am saying it is okay to say that, when it was, you supported the Palestinians, but because of the ethnicity it does raise that issue and to the extent that some Members are uncomfortable, I am inviting you to just remove the reference to ethnicity.

Ms. Kisson: Mr. Speaker, I am advised and, as you wish, I will withdraw. I do withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, it is the necessary. Thank you.

Hon. Members, as I said, this debate brought out much. At the end of the day the people of Linden are depending on us to do something for them. I asked the Prime Minister about what it costs this nation to keep an office, which is not functioning, going. All of us should be disappointed and embarrassed about that fact because the people expected better of us and from us. I hope that in the weeks ahead that we can all recommit, who are the leaders and the negotiators, the scribes, or whoever, to delivering a better package for the people of Linden. I hope so. With that said, I would like to put the motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: As I said, let us recommit, all of us, to giving the people of Linden and all Guyanese what they deserve. That brings us to the end of our business. I invite the Hon. Prime Minister to move the necessary motion.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned to the 18th of July.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we go, it is just to express on behalf of the National Assembly, for what it is worth, happy CARICOM Day greetings. There is CARICOM Day to be celebrated. I hope that a debate on CARICOM itself will come one day in this House as to where we are heading, withered CARICOM. We heard about withered bauxite a few moments ago. I wish to extend happy CARICOM greetings on behalf of the Assembly/Parliament Office to Members of the House and to our CARICOM brothers and sisters and members States. Hopefully, many of you, as possible, will be able to make it to the staff appreciation day as well, on the 1st.

Ms. Shadick: Since we are meeting until the 18th of July, and I am a Muslim, and I am very proud of it, I would like to say that Muslims in this country should begin the month of Ramadan on the 10th of July. I would like to wish all those who are Muslims here, and who are Muslims in Guyana, a very peaceful month of Ramadan. I hope that the animosity in this House will not extend to the 18th of July, which is the anniversary of events at Linden.

Mr. Speaker: I join with you in extending Ramadan greetings. Have a good night.

Adjourned accordingly at 8.07 p.m.