PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

..OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 1]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIRST PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA.

12th Sitting

Tuesday, 25th October, 1966

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Present:

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. A. P. Alleyne

Members of the Government

of State

Ministers

The Honourable L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C. - Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid - Minister of Home Affairs The Honourable P. S. d'Aguiar The Honourable N. J. Bissember - Minister of Finance - Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House) - Minister of Local Government The Honourable R. E. Cheeks The Honourable E. F. Correia - Minister of Communications The Honourable Mrs. W. Gaskin - Minister of Education and Race Relations The Honourable L. John - Minister of Agriculture The Honourable R. J. Jordan - Minister of Forests, Lands and Mires The Honourable M. Kasim - Minister of Works and Hydraulics The Honourable W. O. R. Kendall, C.B.E. - Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation The Honourable C. A. Merriman - Minister of Labour The Honourable J. H. Thomas - Minister of Economic Development The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C. - Attorney-General and Minister Parliamentary Secretaries Mr. D. B. deGroot - Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Winister's Office Mr. G. Bownan - Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour Mr. O. E. Clarke - Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Race Relations Mr. J. G. Joaquin, O.B.E., J.P. - Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics Mr. C. V. Too-Chung - Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance Other Wembers Dr. J. K. M. Richmond Mr. T. A. Sancho Mr. W. A. Blair Mr. J. Budhoo Mr. R. Tello, Deputy Speake Mr. W. G. Carrington Mr. R. G. B. Field-Ridley Rev. A. B. Trotman Mr. H. M. S. Wharton, J.P. Mr. H. Prashad **Members** of the Opposition

Dr. C. B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition Mr. J. R. S. Luck Mr. A. Chase Mr. H. Lall Mr. Ram Karran Mr. Y. Ally Mr. R. Chandisingh Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard Mr. L. Linde Mr. R. D. Persaud Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr. Dr. S. A. Ramjohn Mr. C. V. Nunes Mr. E. M. G. Wilson Mr. M. Hamid, Mr. E. M. Stoby Mr. S. M. Saffee Mr. M. Bhagwan

Clerk of the National Assembly - Mr. F. A. Narain Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly (Acting) - Mr. M. B. Henry.

Absent:

The Honourable D. Mahraj, Minister of Health - on leave Mr. P. Duncan, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government

Mr. B. H. Benn Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye

Mr. D. C. Jagan

Mr. M. Khan, J.P.

Mr. M. Poonai

840

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

VENEZUELA-GUYANA BORDER ISSUE

Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): I rise on a point of order at this stage. I have been in communication with the Prime Minister concerning a Motion of "No Confidence in the Venezuela-Guyana Border Issue". I also raised with you, sir, at one previous sitting, the question of an Adjournment debate on a matter of urgency that dealt with the rice issue. This morning and this afternoon we again approached you in connection with an Adjournment Motion on the question --

Leader of the House (Mr. Bissember): Mr. Speaker, to a point of order. This is not --[Interruption.]

2.10 p.m.

Dr. Jagan rose - -

Mr. Bissember: I submit that the hon. Leader of the Opposition cannot speak on such matters at this stage under the head of "Presentation of Petitions".

Mr. Speaker: Objection upheld.

Dr. Jagan: The Prime Minister refuses to debate a Motion of No Confidence; the Speaker refuses to permit me to speak on a very urgent matter in this House - if we go on in this manner we will be making this Assembly into a farce.

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat.

Dr. Jagan: If we are to have this House run as a House -

Mr. Speaker: This is not the way to go about it. The way you are following is not the correct way, and it will do nothing but lead us into a muddle. I have indicated to you this morning in my Chambers what steps you should take.

Dr. Jagan: On the question of what steps should be taken, take the question of Venezuela. The Prime Minister proposes to make a statement regarding Venezuela. Why is it that an Adjournment Motion is out of order?

Mr. Speaker: I did not tell the House anything at all.

Dr. Jagan: Will the Prime Minister tell the House why Motions cannot be debated? If this is the way the House is to be run, then it is of no use our remaining here. What skeletons do the members of the Government have in their cupboards to hide that they do not want to debate this issue? The National Assembly in Venezuela has debated this matter.

Mr. Speaker: I told you this morning that it is not opportune, at this stage, to permit a debate on the matter. I stand by what I have said this morning. I believe it is not opportune.

Dr. Jagan: Our presence in this House will serve no purpose. [DR. JAGAN]

841

This is a waste of time, and we will not remain here.

Mr. Speaker: If you leave with noise, I will proceed against you.

At this stage the members of the Opposition with the exception of Mr. Bhagwan walked out of the Chamber.

Mr. Saffee took his seat.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

ANKOKO ISLAND

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the 14th October, 1966, in the absence of a sitting of this Honourable National Assembly I issued a broadcast statement on behalf of the Government of Guyana dealing with the recent violation of Guyanese sovereignty over the eastern half of Ankoko Island by Venezuelan military and civilian personnel.

I owe it to this Assembly to inform honourable Members of the Ankoko Affair, its background and history and the most recent events and developments.

As honourable Members are aware, consequent upon the Treaty of Washington of 1897 and the Arbitral Award of October 3, 1899, the boundary between what was then British Guiana and Venezuela was settled and a Boundary Commission appointed comprising two British Commissioners, Messrs. H.I. Perkins and C. Wilgres Anderson, representing

the British Government and two Venezuelan Commissioners, Senores Abraham Tereado and Elias Toro, representing the Venezuelan Government.

The task of the Commission was to demarcate on the ground the line of the boundary established by the Arbitral Award and to state it with clarity on an agreed map. Pursuant to their terms of reference they travelled from the Akarabisi River to Roraima Mountain and made "Astronomical, Geodesical and Topographical observations at all the most important points along the boundary line as laid down by the Arbitral Award given in Paris on October 3, 1899" (Extract from the Agreement between the British and Venezuelan Boundary Commissioners with regard to the Map of the Boundary - published as Sessional Paper No. 266 of the Combined Court Annual Session, 1905).

The resulting boundary line which was surveyed by the Commissioners between November 1900 and June 1904 was set out on a map. an extract from which has been circulated to honourable Members and signed by the said Commissioners at Georgetown, British Guiana, on 7th January, 1905. On 9th January, 1905, a report was submitted by Mr. Perkins, the senior British Boundary Commissioner, to his principals and published in the official records of British Guiana for that year. At paragraph 9 of that report there appears the following detailed account of the manner in

which the boundary line was demarcated across Ankoko Island:-

Statement on

"At the Wenamu mouth we verified our astronomical work of the previous May, and fixed the course of the boundary line from a point on a large island called Ankoko opposite the midstream of the Wenamu, to a point on the other side of the same island, and from thence to a point on the mainland on the left bank of the Cuyuni where the Colony's boundary continues on to Akarabisi, etc. We marked the points by driving posts of bullet tree some 6 feet in length into the ground, and surrounding each with a pyramid of stone collected from the river bed, and carefully packed around them. These should last for many years if not for ever. A line had previously been cut and surveyed across the island by me during our work on the Cuyuni earlier in the year, and this was made use of to determine the positions of the boundary marks".

It should be noted as a matter of significant detail that two identical maps were drawn and jointly signed "one for the Government of His Britannic Majesty and the other for that of Venezuela containing all the enumerated details relating to the . . . demarcation with a clear specification of the boundary line according with the Arbitral Award of Paris".

On the 10th January, 1905, the British and Venezuela Com-

missioners signed a formal agreement at Georgetown referring to the map previously signed by them and endorsing its accuracy and authenticity. A copy of this Agreement is also circulated for the information of honourable Members.

Ever since the completion of the work of the Boundary Commissioners the eastern part of Ankoko has been recognised both juridically and administratively as part of British Guiana (now the independent State of Guyana) and within its possession. Never previously to now has Guyana's sovereignty over the eastern half of Ankoko Island or the accuracy of the map of 1905 in definitively demarcating the boundary across the island been challenged by the Government of Venezuela.

In 1962 at the United Nations the Venezuelan representative put forward a claim that the Arbitral Award of 1899 was null and void. The outcome of that claim, its rejection by the British and British Guiana (Guyana) Governments and the signing of the Geneva Agreement on February 17, 1966, are known to this House and were the subject matter of the debate leading to the Resolution No. LXXVI:-

"That this House of Assembly approve of the action taken by the Government of British Guiana in relation to the Agreement entered into at Geneva on 17th February, 1966, between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern

[MR. BURNHAM]

Ireland, in consultation with the Government of British Guiana, and the Government of Venezuela"

passed on 28th April, 1966.

Statement on

The Venezuelan claim which eventually led to the signing of the Geneva Agreement of 17th February, 1966, never involved a challenge of the accuracy of the boundary line based on the Arbitral Award of 1899. It took the form of an allegation that the Award itself was invalid because of an alleged political deal between Britain and Russia. It will be recalled that the President of the 1899 Arbitration Tribunal chosen by agreement between Venezuela and Britain was an eminent Russian jurist and writer on international law, M. de Martens.

Earlier this month (October 1966) the Government of Guyana received a report from unofficial sources that a number of Venezuelans had crossed unto the Guvanese or eastern side of Ankoko in September and had been carrying out certain works on Guyanese territory. The accuracy of this report was confirmed by an official inspection party on Wednesday 12th October, 1966. The Cabinet met on the morning of Thursday 13th October, 1966, and on Friday 14th a protest was sent by telegram to the proper Minister (the Foreign Minister) of the Venezuelan Government, requesting at the same time that immediate steps be taken by the latter to ensure the immediate withdrawal

of Venezuelan personnel and the removal of structures erected by them from Guyanese territory on Ankoko. In its protest the Government of Guyana carefully refrained from assuming that the incursion had been authorised by the Venezuelan Government.

A reply in the form of a telegram was received from the Venezuela Foreign Minister, Dr. Ignacio Iribarren Borges, on the evening of Tuesday 18th October, 1966, in which the Venezuelan accepted responsibility for the incursion and advanced the claim that the whole of Ankoko was Venezuelan territory. In addition, the Foreign Minister proposed that if Guyana wanted to claim any part of Ankoko, such claim should be referred to the Mixed Commission appointed under the terms of the Geneva Agreement. Dr. Iribarren's opinion, and that of his Government no doubt, was that such a reference was provided for and contemplated by Article 5 paragraph 2 of the said Agreement which reads:-

> "No acts or activities taking place while this Agreement is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in the territories of Venezuela or British Guiana or create any rights of sovereignty in those territories, except inso far as such acts or activities result from any agreement reached by the Mixed Commission and accepted in writing by the Government of

847

Guyana and the Government of Venezuela. No new claim, or enlargement of an existing claim, to territorial sovereignty in those territories shall be asserted while this Agreement is in force, nor shall any claim whatsoever be asserted otherwise than in the Mixed Commission while that Commission is in being".

25TH OCTOBER, 1966

The Government of Guyana is satisfied and convinced that the present Venezuelan contention and clain are absolutely without substance and not among the natters that come under the purview of the Mixed Commission. This was communicated by telegram to the Government of Venezuela through its Foreign Minister. In addition, contained in the said telegram was an offer by this Government to take part immediately in bilateral talks with the Venezuelan Government, such talks to be based on an examination of the Official Map of 1905 prepared and signed by the British and Venezuelan Commissioners in that year.

This course is considered at this stage to be preferable to an immediate reference to the United Nations Organisation, with the Secretary General of which a copy of the Geneva Agreement has been lodged several months ago.

Meanwhile, last week a detachment of security forces was despatched to the area - the south bank of the Cuyuni River and the Commander of those forces has been instructed to take me action likely to provoke an incident.

The Government is convinced that justice is on our side and that our case can stand the most thorough scrutiny from any quarter. As a peace loving nation and a member of the United Nations, we are prepared to exert every effort to have a peaceful resolution of the Ankoko Affair and the justification of our contention around the Conference Table or in any mutually acceptable forum.

In the meantime, we await the reply to the latest communication to the Venezuelan Government by the Guyana Government.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

CONFIRMATION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENUMENT) (No. 6) ORDER 1966 (No. 13)

The Minister of Finance (Mr. d'Aguiar): I beg to move:

> "That this National Assembly in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm Customs Duties (Amendment) (No. 6) Order, 1966 (No. 13) which was made on the 14th of September, 1966, and published in the Gazette on the 24th of September, 1966."

This Order has been made, in accordance with the recommendation of the United Nations expert on mining, to increase the export duty on precious stones other than cut and polished Precious [MR. D'AGUIAR]

stones. The increase is also intended to protect the local industry in respect of the cutting and polishing of diamonds produced locally.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 9 (1)

"Be it resolved that Standing Order No. 9 (1) be suspended to enable the National Assembly to sit on Monday, the 31st day of October, 1966 at 8.45 o'clock in the forenoon, on the occasion of the departure from Guyana of Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Lady Luyt." [Leader of the House.]

Leader of the House (Mr. Bissember): This Motion seeks to get the approval of hon. Members to enable this Assembly to sit on Monday, 31st October, 1966 at 8.45 o'clock in the forenoon on the occasion of the departure from Guyana of Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Lady Luyt. It is a simple Motion. I therefore seek the approval of this Assembly.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

2.30 p.m.

BILL - SECOND READING

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN GUYANA (INCORPORATION) BILL

Mr. Joaquin: I should like to move the Second Reading of a Bill intituled:

"An Act to incorporate the Church of the Nazarene in Guyana."

This Bill seeks to incorporate in Guyana certain persons as the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene in Guyana, and to vest in the Board all property in Guyana held by or vested in the Church of the Nazarene or in any other person for the use or benefit of the Church. The Bill also contains provisions whereby the Board may acquire and dispose of property.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second times

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bissember: In accordance with the Resolution just passed, I move that the House do stand adjourned until Monday, 31st of October, 1966 at 8.45 a.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 2.35 p.m.

Answers

APPENDIX

ANSWERS T0 WRITTEN QUESTIONS

QUESTION NO. 26.

Written

CONSTRUCTION OF ATKINSON - MACKENZIE ROAD AND ATKINSON AIRPORT

QUESTION by Mr. Ram Warran and REPLY by the Minister of Works and Hydraulics:

Ouestion:

- (i) Will the Minister of Works and Hydraulics state what were the procedures used for the award of the contract for the construction of the Atkinson-Mackenzie Road and the Atkinson Airport?
- Will the Minister state whether the Tender Board did call for Tenders? If so, how many were received, from whom, and the value of each Tender?
- (iii) Will the Minister make public the terms and conditions of the Atkinson-Mackenzie Road contract and the Firm or Firms to whom the contract was awarded?

Answer:

The procedure used for the award of the contract for the construction of the Atkinson-Mackenzie Road and the Atkinson Airport was as follows:

> An Evaluation Board comprising officers of the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics selected from among competing firms the Engineering Consultants, De Leuw Cather International Incorporated, to undertake the consulting and supervisory services on behalf of the Government in relation to the Atkinson-Mackenzie Road Project. This selection was made on the basis of suitability as established by a review of the information submitted in response to questionnaires sent to these firms, regard being also paid to their bona fides.

> The Engineering Consulting firm for the Atkinson Airport Improvement Project, Thomas B. Bourne Associates, Incorporated was chosen by the United States Agency for International Development.

853

The abovernmed consultants were responsible for advertising the projects and inviting from interested contractors information on a questionnaire form sent them for the purpose of determining those who were suitable to undertake the jobs. Following upon this, a pre-qualifying list of contractors was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics and the consultants. Thereafter Tenders were invited only from the contractors on the pre-qualifying list. Separate and combined tenders were invited for

the two projects. Five tenders were received, three of which and about the by one firm.

Answers

The Bids were as sollows:

_		Atkinson Airport Improvement	Mackenzie Road	Combination Tender
1.	Constructora Emka S.A. Oman Constructing Co. & Wright Contracting Company	\$ 3,928,616.00	\$19,308,	36,854.98
2.	B.B. Mc Cormick and Sons Incorporated	\$5,730,058.00		
3.	B.B. Mc Cormick and Sons Incorporated	_	\$14,062,869.32	
4.	B.B. Mc Cormick and Sons Incorporated	\$ 3,802,882.50	\$13,780,095.55	\$17,002,979. 05
5.	Ballenger Paving Co. Incorporated	\$4,296,840.00	\$17,044,020.00	\$21,742,070.00

Messrs. Mc Cormick and Sons Incorporated, being the lowest bidder, was awarded the contracts for both projects.

Written

I should mention that a similar procedure was followed for pre-qualifying local sub-contractors, except that pre-qualification of the local sub-contractors was done solely by the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.

- (ii) The answer to part (ii) of the question has already been incorporated in my reply to part (i) thereof.
- The Atkinson-Mackenzie Road contract is a public document, a copy of which is available for inspection at the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics by anyone so interested. As previously mentioned, the Firm to whom the contract was awarded is B.B. Mc Cormick and Sons Incorporated.

QUESTION NO. 27

DISTRIBUTION OF LAND TO FARMERS

QUESTION by Mr. Benn and REPLY by the Minister of Forests, Lands and Mines:

Question:

- (i) How many acres of land have been distributed to farmers since 1st January, 1965?
- (ii) How many farmers have been allocated this land?
- (iii) In respect of what areas has land been distributed?
- (iv) Will the Minister state how much Crown and Government land has been distributed to farmers and settlers since January, 1965, and the areas in which the distributed land is situate?

Answer:

- During the period 1st January, 1965 to 15th August, 1966, a total of 146,746 acres of Crown Land were distributed.
- (ii) 2,987 farmers.
- The coastal and riverain areas from the Northwest District to the Corentyne River, Essequibo Islands and the Rupununi District.

The information furnished in the above replies is not in respect of land in Land Development Schemes.

(iv) The Member is referred to the replies already furnished.

QUESTION NO. 28

857

SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY TO BATH SETTLEMENT

QUESTION by Mr. Hubbard and REPLY by the Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation:

- Question: (a) Is the Minister aware that the Guyana Electricity
 Corporation proposes to supply electricity to the
 residents of Bath Settlement, an area which was
 previously supplied with electricity by owners of
 small plants?
 - (b) Will the Minister state whether it is proposed to integrate the small plants with the Corporation's system?

If not, will the Minister say whether the Corporation proposes to purchase the small plants, or pay compensation to the owners who have provided a beneficial community service?

Answer:

- (a) Yes, Sir.
- (b) No, Sir.

The Corporation does not propose to purchase small plants. Persons applying for licences to supply electricity for public or private purposes are informed that licences will not be issued, but while there will be no objection to installation of generating equipment, it must be clearly understood that the applicant would be doing so at his own risk and therefore neither the Government nor the Guyana Electricity Corporation would be liable for compensation for any plant and installation which may become redundant when the Rural Electrification Scheme is implemented. This policy was adopted by the previous Government and it has not been changed.

QUESTION NO. 29

- (i) EMPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES ON ATKINSON-MACKENZIE ROAD
- (ii) ACCOMMODATION FOR CLERK IN MORUKA DISTRICT

QUESTION by Mr. Ram Karran and REPLY by the Minister of Works and Hydraulics:

Question:

- (i) (a) Is it true that not more than 300 persons will be employed in the \$14½ Million Atkinson-Mackenzie Road? Will the Minister state how many of the number to be employed will be persons who are already employed by the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics?
 - (b) Will the Minister say how employment possibilities on the Atkinson-Mackenzie Road compare with the numbers employed in the Black Bush Polder and Tapakuma Drainage and Irrigation Schemes?
- (ii) Is the Minister aware that the Clerk to the Assistant District Commissioner of the Moruka District has been living with his family in a room in the Rest House for over a year? Will the Minister state how soon a house will be provided for this Officer?

Answer:

- (i) (a) It has been estimated that 730 persons will find employment on the Atkinson-Mackenzie Road. Of this number the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics will supply 36 of whom approximately 10 (laboratory staff) will be from the existing staff; the rest will be employed specifically for the project.
 - (b) The number of persons employed on the Black Bush Polder Scheme varied from 1,300 during the peak period to approximately 350 towards its closing stages. With regard to the Tapakuma Drainage and Irrigation Scheme the number of employees ranged from 650 to 136 over the period of operations.

The Minister is aware that the Clerk to the Assistant District Commissioner of the Moruka District has been living with his family in a room in the Rest House for over a year. It is understood that the Clerk has since been replaced by an unmarried officer. A request was made of this Ministry for the provision of two quarters for Government Officers in the Moruka District viz. quarters for the District Field Officer and quarters for the Clerk to the Assistant District Commissioner in that order of priority. This request for quarters to be provided the Clerk to the Assistant District Commissioner at Moruka was considered along with others, but in establishing overall priorities, it was not rated as one of as high priority as the others to warrant its construction this year. It is however intended to give early consideration to providing the Clerk stationed in the Moruka District with such accommodation.

QUESTION NO. 30

COMMUNITY **DEVELOPMENT** OFFICERS

QUESTION by Mr. Khan and REPLY by the Prime Minister:

- Question: (i) Will the Prime Minister state the names of and areas where each Community Development Officer works?
 - (ii) Will the Prime Minister state what machinery and criteria were used for the recruitment of Community Development Officers?
- Answer: (i) The names of the District Community Development Officers and the areas where they work are as follows:

Name of Officer

863

Area

Essequibo

Pomeroon River both banks from mouth to 1. D.A. Gouveia Pickersgill including Akawin River and Eastwards along the Coast to and including Evergreen.

Demerara

Miss P. Beramsingh Vreed-en-Hoop to Itaka, right bank, Essequibo River.

3. Mr. J. Palmer Pouderoyen to Kamuni.

Ruimveldt, East Bank to Wismar-Mackenzie. Mr. O. Mentore

Liliendaal, Kitty, Campbellville, Lodge, Mrs. Pollard Newtown, East and West Ruimveldt.

Mr. W. Felix Industry to Abary.

Mr. A. Bulkan Abary to Zuigwyck.

Berbice

Miss S. Patterson Right bank Berbice River to New Amsterdam municipal boundary north of Providence to Borlam.

9. Mr. Parasram Singh Bloomfield to Crabwood Creek.

> (ii) The appointment of District Community Development Officers is the responsibility of the Public Service Commission. Vacancies are advertised in the Official Gazette and newspapers and applications are invited from the general public.