

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**[VOLUME 5]**

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE NATIONAL  
ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE  
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

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<b>54<sup>th</sup> Sitting</b>	<b>2.05 p.m.</b>	<b>Monday,</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> May, 1972</b>
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**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Speaker**

Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., J.P., Speaker

**Members of the Government- People's National Congress (35)**

**Prime Minister (1)**

Cde. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,  
Prime Minister

**Deputy Prime Minister (1)**

Cde. P.A. Reid,  
Deputy Prime Minister and  
Minister of Agriculture

**Senior Ministers (9)**

Cde. M. Kasim, A.A.,  
Minister of Communications

**(Absent)**

Cde. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,  
Minister of Finance

Cde. W.G. Carrington,  
Minister of Labour and Social Security **(Absent – on leave)**

Cde. S.M. Field-Ridley,  
Minister of Health

Cde. B. Ramsaroop,  
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction and  
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs  
Leader of the House

Cde. D.A. Singh,  
Minister of Trade **(Absent)**

Cde. O.E. Clark,  
Minister of Home Affairs

Cde. C.V. Mingo,  
Minister of Local Government

Cde. W. Haynes,  
Minister of State for Co-operatives and  
Community Development

#### **Ministers (5)**

Cde. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,  
Attorney General and Minister of State **(Absent – on leave)**

Cde. H. Greene,  
Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply

Cde. H.O. Jack,  
Minister of Mines and Forests **(Absent)**

Cde. E.B. McDavid,  
Minister of information and Culture

Cde. C.L. Baird,  
Minister of Education **(Absent)**

### **Parliamentary Secretaries (5)**

Cde. J.G. Joaquin, J.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Finance

Cde. P. Duncan, J.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. A. Salim,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Agriculture

Cde. J.R. Thomas,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Office of the Prime Minister

Cde. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply

### **Other Members (14)**

Cde. J.N. Aaron

Cde. M.M. Ackman

Cde. K. Bancroft

Cde. N.J. Bissember

**(Absent)**

Cde. J. Budhoo, J.P.

Cde. L.I. Chan-a-Sue

Cde. E.F. Correia

**(Absent- on leave)**

Cde. M. Correia

Cde. E.H.A. Fowler

Cde. R.J. Jordan

Cde. S.M. Safee

Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman

Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P

Cde. L.E. Willems

### **Members of the Opposition (22)**

#### **People's Progressive Party (18)**

### **Leader of the Opposition (1)**

Cde. C.B. Jagan  
Leader of the Opposition (Absent- on leave)

### **Deputy Speaker (1)**

Cde. D. C. Jagan, J.P.  
Deputy Speaker

### **Other Members (16)**

Cde. R. Chandisingh  
Cde. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.  
Cde. E.M.G Wilson  
Cde. A.M. Hamid, J.P. Opposition Chief Whip (Absent)  
Cde. G.H. Lall, J.P. (Absent)  
Cde. M.Y. Ally (Absent)  
Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P. (Absent)  
Cde. E.M. Stoby, J.P.  
Cde. R. Ally  
Cde. E.L. Ambrose  
Cde. L.M. Branco  
Cde. Balchand Persaud  
Cde. Bhola Persaud  
Cde. I.R. Remington, J.P. (Absent)  
Cde. L.A Durant  
Cde. V. Teekah (Absent-on leave)

### **United Force (3)**

Mrs. E. DaSilva  
Mr. M.F. Singh (Absent)  
Mr. J.A. Sutton

### **Independent (1)**

Mr. R.E. Cheeks

### **OFFICERS**

Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. F.A. Narain  
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly- Mr. M.B. Henry

**PRAYERS****ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER****Leave to Members**

**The Speaker:** Leave has been granted to the Hon. Member Mr. Carrington up to the end of June, 1972 and to the Hon. Member Mr. M.F. Singh for today's sitting.

**Death of Mr. F.A. Leubin, Former Official Reporter**

Since our last sitting we have lost a former member of our staff- Mr. Frank Allan Leubin who served as an Official Reporter, and I am sure that the Honorable Members would wish us to place on record our regret at his death and to extend our condolences to his widow.

After serving Government in an acting capacity and with several years experience as a Press Reporter, Mr. Leubin entered the Public Service in 1937 as an Official Reporter at Parliament.

In a scarce field he was one of the few competent high speed writers available. He performed his duties with diligence and fidelity and gave outstanding service at Parliament attending sittings and assisting in the preparation of Hansard. He earned the esteem of Members and was commended also for his work with various commissions and committees.

After giving nearly twenty-two years serviced to Parliament, Mr. Leubin retired from the Public Service in 1959 at the age of 65 years. Though not known by all of us here, nevertheless the name and evidence of the work of Frank Allan Leubin will remain with us.

The Clerk has already on behalf of us all, sent a letter to his widow extending our deepest sympathies to her in her sad bereavement.

### PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) Public Corporations (No.2) Order 1972 (No.43), made under section 2C(4) of the Public Corporations Ordinance 1962 (No.63), on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1972. [*The Prime Minister*]
- (2) Annual Report of the Ministry of Communications for the year 1970. [*The Minister of Communications*]
- (3) (a) Financial Paper No. 1 of 1972- Schedule of Supplementary Provision on Current and Capital Estimates, totalling \$1,423,493. [*The Minister of Finance*]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Your Honour, in accordance with Standing Order No. 68 (1), I bed to name Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1972 as the day for consideration of this Financial Paper in Committee of Supply.

(b) Customs (Amendment of Part II A of the First Schedule) Regulations, 1972 (No. 13) made under section 144 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1972, and published in the Gazette on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1972.

(c) Customs Duties (Carifta Rate) (Amendment) Order 1972 (No.33), made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 1972, and published in the Gazette on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1972.

(d) Customs Duties (Amendment) Order 1972 (No.34), made under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1972, and published in the Gazette on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1972.

(e) Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order 1972 (No. 35), made under section 4 of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 1972.

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National Assembly

2.05- 2.15 p.m.

(f) Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of Trotman Trust Fund for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1970. [*Minister of Finance*]

4. Valuation for Rating Purposes Regulations 1972 (No.9), made under section 41 of the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act 1969, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1972, and published in the Gazette on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1972. [*The Minister of Local Government*]

2.15 p.m.

### QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

#### EXPENSES – P.N.C. CONGRESS

**The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to ask Question No. 28 listed under my name on the Order Paper:

- (i) Will the Prime Minister say whether the taxpayers of Guyana are paying for the passages and accommodation of the foreign delegates, observers and Guyanese diplomats, or any of them, who attended the P.N.C. Congress which commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1972, at Queen's College?
- (ii) If the answer is in the affirmative, will the Prime Minister say what is the cost?

**The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham):** Mr. Speaker, the answer to the Question is as follows:

- (i) The Government of Guyana had paid for the passages and accommodation of Guyanese Diplomats who came to Guyana in April, 1972 for consultation. The accommodation and other expenses of Foreign delegates to the P.N.C. Congress and observers were paid by the People's National Congress.

(ii) The expenses with respect to the Guyanese diplomats were as follows:

(a) Air Fares	- \$9, 780
(b) Hotel Accommodation	- 5,971
(c) Local Transportation	- 1,956
	\$17,707
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#### RESIDENT NURSES – OREALLA

**Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by the Hon. Member Mr. Bhola Persaud to ask Question No. 20 standing in his name on the Order Paper:

- (i) Is the Minister aware that for eight months there has been no resident nurse at Orealla on the Corentyne River?
- (ii) If so, will the Minister say whether it is the intention of the Government to station a nurse at Orealla, and how soon this will be done?

**The Minister of Health (Miss Field-Ridley):** Mr. Speaker, the Answer to the Question is as follows:

- (i) It is untrue to say that Orealla has been without a resident Midwife for the past eight months.
- (ii) There is a nurse stationed at Orealla.

**Mr. Chandisingh:** Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. May I ask the Hon. Minister whether there has been a nurse resident at Orealla during the past eight months, or is it that a nurse has been placed there relatively recently and, if so, when?

**Miss. Field-Ridley:** Mr. Speaker, on the date when this Question was tabled, there was a nurse stationed there, that is, on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1972. There was a period, if I may take the House into my confidence, January and February, when there was not a resident nurse.

**REQUESTS TO LEAVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON  
DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE -  
FLOODING OF THE COASTLAND AREA**

**Dr. Jagan:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to move at the appropriate stage, the Adjournment of the House to permit me to raise a matter which I communicated to you in connection with the flood.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am satisfied that the matter is one which qualifies for the Motion for the Adjournment of the Assembly. It is now necessary for the leave of the House to be given.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Leave granted.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, leave has been granted and the Motion will therefore stand over until 4.30 p.m.

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**MOTIONS**

**CONFIRMATION OF CUSTOMS AND DUTIES (CARIFTA RATE)  
(AMENDMENT) ORDER 1972 (No. 33)**

“Resolved, that this National Assembly in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm Customs Duties (Carifta Rate) (Amendment) Order, 1972 (No. 33), which was made on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1972.”

*[Minister of Finance]*

**The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of the Carifta Agreement, Member States are required to phase out over a period of five years, that is, between the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1968 and 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1973, the protective elements in Customs duties relating to certain agreed items so that at the end of the period, those duties will be eliminated entirely. We have in accordance with our obligations brought a succession of similar Motions to this House to enable us to comply with our obligations under that Agreement.

This Motion is similar to the ones which have already introduced into this House and which have already been approved by the Hon. Members. I therefore commend this Motion to the House and ask that the Order already made be confirmed in accordance with the relevant Act.

*Motion proposed.*

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**CONFIRMATION OF CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT)  
ORDER 1972 (No. 34)**

“Resolved, that this National Assembly in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm Customs Duties (Amendment) Order, 1972 (No. 34), which was made on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1972.” [*The Minister of Finance*]

**The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte):** Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, this Motion seeks to reduce the Customs duties chargeable on raw tobacco imported into this country. Because of the requirement to phase out the protective element on tobacco throughout the Carifta region, manufacturers of cigarettes in Guyana have been placed at a disadvantage because of the differences in the rates levied on tobacco Member States. The purport of this Order is really to reduce the duty on raw manufactured tobacco imported into this country from \$6.70 per pound to \$3.00 per pound, in order to enable the local manufacturers of cigarettes to maintain competitiveness with their counterparts in the Carifta region. This duty lost at the Customs end will be recovered by a consumption tax made by Order under the Consumption Tax Act of 1969.

*Motion proposed.*

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**CONFIRMATION OF THE CONSUMPTION TAX (AMENDMENT)  
ORDER 1972 (No. 35)**

“Resolved, that this National Assembly in terms of section 5 (1) of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969 (No. 13 of 1969), confirm, the Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order 1972 (No. 35), which was made on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1972.” [*The Minister of Finance*]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Consumption Tax Order made under section 4 of the Consumption Tax Act of 1969 seeks to impose a consumption tax on cigarettes whether imported into the country or manufactured in the country and really is the counterpart of the Order which has just been confirmed by the honourable House. The Customs duties on manufactured tobacco imported into the country have been reduced and the consumption tax

**2.25p.m.**

seeks to recover the duty loss by the reduction in the customs duties. It is to be noted that the cheapest brand of cigarettes, which is sold at 14 cents per packet of ten is exempted from this Order so that that cheap and popular brand will not in any way be affected by this Order. Indeed, no brand of cigarettes will be affected by this Order as far as price is concerned. It is merely a shift of duty from customs to consumption so that these Orders cannot and will not result in an increase in the price of cigarettes.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Your Honour, I am sure that the smoker of the very cheap brand of tobacco will be heartened by this Order. But I am sure that the Government, if it wishes to help the poor who really smoke Texas, if that is the brand referred to by the Minister, would see the need for the removal of duties from items of food consumption rather than of tobacco.

In passing, I notice – I do not know if the Hon. Minister will help me here – that in the case of the imported articles the preferential rate and the general rate which is \$3 per pound, that in the case of the consumption tax the latter Order we have just dealt with, from tobacco grown locally and sold at a retail price of not more than 14cents per packet of ten cigarettes will be charged at the rate of \$3.03 per pound. I do not know if that is an anomaly or if it is the considered opinion of the Government. But I thought it needs to be referred to. I think it needs an explanation.

**Mr. Hoyte:** I am not sure what the Hon. Member was referring to. He has been reading from a document, but if he would do me the honour and courtesy to referring to the page perhaps it might help.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** I was reading from the Order. No.35 of 1972. The inset states:

“ 122-02            Cigarettes (other than cigarettes which the Comptroller is satisfied are made wholly from tobacco grown locally and sold at a retail price of not more than 14 cents per packet of ten)  
\$3.03 per pound.”

It is just above the Hon. Minister's name.

**Mr. Hoyte:** Your Honour, Order No.34 of 1972 refers to a change in Customs Duties. In other words, when tobacco comes from abroad it attracts customs duty at a rate of \$3 per pound. When it is manufactured into cigarettes it attracts another tax, a consumption of \$3.03, and that would have a double element of customs duty \$3 and consumption tax \$3.03. Whereas the cigarettes made from locally grown tobacco would have one element, which is \$3.03. That \$3.03 is common to both types of cigarettes.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** As we have finished the business of the House earlier than anticipated we will proceed with the leave granted to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**MOTION FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY TO DISCUSS A  
DEFINITE MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE -  
FLOODING OF COASTLAND AREAS**

**Dr. Jagan:** Sir, our country today is faced with a grave situation. Throughout the breath of Guyana farmers are suffering very seriously as a result of heavy flooding. The consequences of this would be felt not only this year; I have no doubt there will be far reaching effects on the finances of the country in addition to affecting the cost of living for the working people all over the country and more particularly those in the urban areas.

Now, Sir, Government's spokesman in dealing with this matter have more or less taken the line that this flooding is a consequence of heavy rains. Indeed they have gone further to say that and to chastise, if I may say so, the farmers who may have been seeking assistance. The Prime Minister used the word "compensation seekers".

It is my contention that the Government is responsible for the grave situation in Guyana today and consequently if that is so then the people not only need compensation but they need immediate relief in the form of food, of loans and also of seed material. I base my case on two facts. First of all, negligence from the point of view that the Government has not done what should have been done in this country. Historically it has been established from time to time that the problem of water control particularly drainage is the bugbear of Guyana. As long ago as the 1920's in this House statements were made by Mr. Eleazer who kept referring to the fact of farmers losing their crops as a result of poor drainage. The Moyne Commission which came to the West Indies and Guyana during the War in 1938 made a statement which was very descriptive of the situation prevailing in Guyana and which still to some extent affects the people today. They referred to agriculture outside of sugar estates being in a perilous state and to use their exact words "amphibious cattle, sheep and pigs eking out a precarious existence."

**2.35 p.m.**

As a result of this historical emphasis on the problem of drainage and irrigation, the P.P.P. Government recognized its duty to the people of Guyana not only to the farmers, because as we know, Sir, one man placed securely on the farm provides compensatory employment to

five or six other persons. One man satisfactorily placed on a farm produces cheap food for the urban working class. One man properly placed on the farm gets the income to buy the goods and services which are provided in the urban areas especially those produced in factories. This is why the P.P.P. Government placed so much emphasis on this question of drainage and irrigation.

What was done by the present Government? Here is its book, the *Development Programme* of Guyana. On pages 19 and 20, it refers to the fact of how much was allocated by the previous Government. This is what is stated in paragraph 90 of the report.

“Certain features stand out in the period 1954 to 1959, the highest priority was shared by housing and drainage and irrigation. In the period 1960-1954, drainage and irrigation was preeminent. Both pans neglected roads, basic surveys, agricultural training, extension and education.”

I would not tire the House at this stage by refuting these basic lies here about neglecting basic surveys. All the basic surveys, if I may make that statement, which even the present Government is now acting on and continuing some of them, were started under the P.P.P. As regards agricultural extension, training and education, it was the P.P.P. which set up the agricultural school at Mon Repos. As regards the figures here, they said drainage is a good priority especially if coupled with roads. This is what they say in paragraph 21 but what did they do? Their own figures state here, that under 1954-1959 plan, 24 per cent of the total plan was devoted to drainage and irrigation. In the 1960-1964 plan, 30.1 per cent was devoted to drainage and irrigation. Of course, at that time we were told the P.P.P. is concentrating on agriculture to help the “coolie”, P.P.P Government is a “coolie Government”, and so on. What is done now? What has been done by this Government?

In a total plan 1966-1972, of \$300 million, \$40 million was earmarked for drainage and irrigation. What percentage is this? This is 7.5 per cent of the total development plan. *[Interruption]* The Prime Minister likes to interrupt when the facts become too revealing. How they are talking of the importance of agriculture. Today they are emphasizing agriculture, but 0

what emphasis have they put on the basic question regarding agriculture in Guyana? Of the total plan, 7.5 per cent, but how much of this has been spent? Forty million dollars. Where are these allocated? If one looks at the development plan, one will see page XVII, allocations. Total amount of this \$40 million allocated, \$10 1/2 million, for Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary; for the Canje basin, pumps, dams, roads, etc., \$20 million. The basic schemes on which most of the money was allocated, they have done not a thing. What has been done on the East Coast? The report on pages 118 and 119 speak of the importance of this whole question of water control, and on page 116 we read:

“It is now proposed to commence by building an earthen dam from Mahaica to Abary, a distance of approximately 36 miles, to prevent the water from the catchment area of the three rivers, and to provide irrigation water to the underdeveloped lands in the area.”

It goes on on page 117,

“It is proposed to earmark \$10,500,000 and to make further studies of the development possibilities of the area.”

Where is this dam? The Government has admitted that the flooding of the people on the whole East Coast and Western Berbice comes not only from rains in the frontlands but comes from water flowing down from the catchment area. Hutchinson, who came here some years ago, suggested that the East Coast conservancy must be scrapped and the larger Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary scheme must be implemented. That conservancy, as you know, Sir, has relief sluices at Maduni and Lama in the Mahaica River. Every now and then, as soon as the rain falls, because the estates maintain the water at a very high level in this small conservancy, it applied pressure to the pegasse dams and immediately the estates open the sluice gates causing floods to sweep across from Mahaica to Mahaicony, all the way to Abary.

**2.45 p.m.**

The People's Progressive Party built a relief sluice at Land of Canaan; this is following a recommendation by Hutchinson. He also recommended that the Conservancy should be scrapped and the major one should have been built. Where is it? The plans were all finished and ready, a financial feasibility was even worked out. The first scheme was done by Guyanese engineers. The sum of \$10 million has been allocated and no work has been done as yet.

What did the Government tell the first farmers who have suffered continuously every year? In 1969 the Cane Grove people lost heavily as a result of the breach of the dam. The farmers at Mahaicony lost cane; they lost the autumn crop last year; they planted the spring crop this year and now it is gone; no they are threatened with losing another crop. Can the Government therefore claim that this is an act of God as it is saying? [**The Prime Minister:** "Who sends the rain?"] My dear Prime Minister does not seem to understand what I am saying.

Let me make the point for him if he did not understand. Normal rainfall on the front lands cannot cause excessive flooding. It is rain water coming from the catchment area because the land rises, goes to the interior and the water comes rushing down the front lands. In addition to that, the Conservancy is releasing water which they impounded in case there are droughts, and when the heavy rains come they release this impounded water into the River.

I am saying therefore that the Government must accept responsibility, because this problem has been posed and exposed over and over again both from the point of view of solving unemployment problems. We are told how many jobs agriculture will create. Hutchinson told us that long ago, that you need more drained and irrigated lands. It was this that the People's Progressive Party has made its name famous, not only has it made its name famous but it begun implementing the Schemes-Black Bush Polder, Boerasiri and Tapakuma.

After the Tapakuma Scheme was completed, the Pomeroon Extension Project was to be undertaken. What is the situation today in the Pomeroon and indeed Essequibo? Lack of maintenance, outflow channels and outflow creeks are not cleaned, they are silted. The

Pomeroon is flooded and this is one of the breadbaskets of Guyana. Now are told now a lot of people are thinking of giving up farming when the Government is trying to send them all the way to the interior. In the Pomeroon River, I understand, they are telling the people that it is the outflow from the Conservancy. This is not so. The Conservancy water could not get out to the sea because the Oona Creek was blocked up. The kokers were all kept locked; when the water began to rise because the dams were not properly maintained they broke. In addition to this the relief sluices were not working and when they did open them the water could not get out. As a result, it backed up on the people's lands. This is what is happening.

The Pomeroon Extension Project should have been carried out. Not only an area of 6,000 acres would have come under control but the channel, the mouth of the Pomeroon would have been cleared too. This has to do with the whole question of catchment water coming from Cuyuni and Wini, and all over the place. The Government has deliberately changed from drainage and irrigation, to agriculture, to roads and sea defences. Look at the Estimates; even its own Development Plan what it has put, it has not followed. The latest expenditure is \$28 million to complete approaches to Georgetown. [**Mr. Aaron:** "To bring in your goods."] What goods are you talking about? Sir, I suppose this is to help the people who are suffering from the traffic jams. Is the road that has been built to Mackenzie an economic road? [**The Prime Minister:** "You did the survey."]

*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, order, please.

**Dr. Jagan:** These economic dunces need to be taught at some time. They do not understand what an economic road means. The former Minister who they hounded out, Henry Thomas, said that the Mackenzie Road was not an economic road; a modest road would have been built for \$5 million instead of spending \$17. That money could have been used for drainage and irrigation. What about the road that has been built parallel to the seawall? How many

millions have gone down there? [Mr. Hoyte: "Tell us about Del Conte road."] Del Conte was an economic road to help farmers. Why did you not complete it? They want to drive around in their big limousines – the P.N.C. elites. One of them wrote an article in the newspaper the other day. He said, "China is helping Guyana." But China, per head of population has less cars than Guyana. What has caused this? It is the Government's fiscal policies, its trade policies, its monetary policies, its credit policies. Who has control over these? The P.N.C. elites are buying cars, so they build highways and taxpayers have to pay increased prices and get lower services.

*[Interruption]*

My contention is that Government has been responsible for this serious situation affecting the people of Guyana. Thus, I should like to move that the Government vote a sum of money in this House, not to set up a Committee which goes about begging. This is a national disaster and the State must provide funds to meet such a situation.

**2.55 p.m.**

What are we? We have millions for Carifesta. Millions for the non-aligned circus but we have no money to give to the people who are suffering as a result of the negligence and crass indifference, while the member say, produce more, agriculture is going to be the backbone of the country.

Government has a duty. It has to accept responsibility and I hope that on this occasion, Government will live up to its obligations to the people of this country, for if the people in the countryside do not produce the goods, it can have ripples all over the place, in the economy as regards the cost of living and so on. I therefore hope that when the Prime Minister speaks, that he will – *[Interruption]* – or the Minister of Finance, when they speak, they will announce to the country that Government is voting a sum of \$5 million at least in order to give not only

immediate relief but money so that agriculture can be put on a sound and proper footing.  
*[Applause]*

**Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, some time ago I was listening to a programme called "No Big Thing". As I listened to the programme, the question was posed as to whether the Government of the day will succeed in its objectives of feeding the nation, that is, feeding ourselves by the year 1976. In fact, it was by 1976 we are unable to feed ourselves, or if we hope to feed ourselves, then at least we can start by eating one another. In other words, even G.B.S., the Government station, has tremendous reservation as to whether this Government will succeed in this feeding ourselves programmes and if the Government really means that this will be achieved, then I agree with the contributors to the programme that by the year 1976 or probably before, we will have to eat one another in this country.

Let us examine the realities of the situation. The Government speaks about agriculture being the backbone of this country and it is only when agriculture succeeds that the nation as a whole can be prosperous. This has always been the cry of those of us who sit on this side of the House but, Mr. Speaker, the P.N.C. Government has done absolutely nothing to achieve this objective.

When I proposed the Motion for the implementation of the M.M.A. scheme earlier this year, I cited the figure to show this head-headed Government the large number of acres that can be brought under cultivation if that scheme was implemented. But despite my persuasion, the Hon. Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply rejected the Motion by the Government's majority. We are seeking the results of the Government's attitude toward drainage and irrigation and agriculture as a whole.

In the Estimates, under Capital Expenditure, the Government provided \$2.7 million for the purchase and installation of pumps. Every time this country is flooded, the propaganda machinery of the Government goes into operation and all these Ministers and spokesmen of the Government shout that we are going to buy pumps in order to do this and that, but they only say

so when the people are under water. This Government has not acquired any pump to help anybody anywhere.

I drew this attention of the Government to the fact that even if pumps were used in areas like Cane Grove, Virginia, Mahaica, the problem could not be solved. I am not going to rely only on Hutchinson, who the Government might attempt to say is an expatriate, but all our engineers agree, not to mention the man whose name can now be ascribed to the scheme, Comacho, who made it abundantly clear in his report to the Government – we have seen the report – that the M.M.A. Scheme has to be implemented in its entirety. But the Government is influenced by extraneous consideration and not by the realities of the situation.

By the failure of the Government to move towards the establishment of the M.M.A. Scheme, the Government has been thwarting and excluding farmers in that region from making their full contribution to the agricultural sector of the country. As shown by the Government's statement and the Development Programme, many farmers on the West Coast Berbice empoldered their lands at their own expense, bought machinery believing that this scheme would be implemented and they would be assured so far as water control is concerned, but so far these farmers, who had the best of intentions, today have the experience of having their machinery seized. Many of them find it extremely difficult to maintain their families.

The Hon. Prime Minister should be the last person to tell the people of this country that they are professional compensation receivers because what are the facts? When Cane Grove was flooded and I was on the scene, the then Minister of Agriculture came one afternoon in his helicopter, fully dressed while some of us were struggling in the water to see what damage was done, and in typical helicopter style he went out again. The people were promised through the communications media that they would be given this and they would be given that. The Government Officials carried a few parcels of food supplies on one or two occasions and they discriminated in the distribution of that food stuff, and since then, this Government has done nothing else for the people of Cane Grove.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, does this Government expect those people to continue to pour in whatever reserves they may have, this is provided they have? My information is that they are without the financial resources to contribute towards agricultural development.

What is happening at Cane Grove, to take one area? Again, the people are under water. Last year when the Mahaica/Mahaicony areas were flooded the People's Progressive Party had to call upon the Government consistently to visit the area. I remember very clearly going to the Minister of Agriculture with a delegation of farmers and the "Lord" Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture refused to see me with the delegation. I am an elected Member of this House. Any Government that believes in the elementary principle of democracy will concede that here a Parliamentarian has come with a delegation of farmers to talk about floods. *[Interruption by the Hon. Member Mr. Salim.]* An appointment was made. *[Interruption by the Hon. Minister Mr. Hoyte]* Mr. Speaker, I will not bother with the Minister who hits people with ashtrays and threatens people, because he is a nervous wreck. I would not bother with him. I challenge this Government to produce any evidence against me for dishonesty. Not one Member of this Opposition – *[Interruption]* The Government will not succeed in throwing me off with any false allegations; I can stand up and hold my ground. Mr. Speaker, nobody on this side is before the Ombudsman. Mr. Speaker, I want very seriously to ask the Government to rethink its whole programme and attitude towards the farming community and agriculture as a whole. We indulge in crosstalk sometimes, but the time has come for us to give serious consideration to what is happening in this country at the moment. Every single farming area that produces for the people to eat in this country is under water, whether you take Mahaica, Mahaicony, West Coast Berbice, the Canals, the Essequibo Coast or the Pomeroun, all these areas are under water. The Government would have to give consideration not only to the question of implementing effective water control schemes but the Government has to give consideration to giving grants.

If the Prime Minister is not keen on the word compensation, we want to advocate grants as distinct from loans to all these people who have been affected. Because of the East Coast, despite promises by the Government during the past floods, the farmers have not been assisted by the Government. I am afraid that the same situation exists again and the reaction of the Government then is the same today. What the Government did then? The Government decided to establish a fund to collect contributions to help the people who are suffering and as I said earlier and I repeat, on one or two occasions the Government handed out food parcels but since then the Government has done nothing for the farmers in a tangible way.

I recall the Leader of the Opposition writing to the Hon. Minister of Agriculture drawing his attention to the fact that farmers were complaining that they were not receiving fertilizers and seedlings and so on. As far as that is concerned no reply has been received to date. *[Interruption by the Minister of Finance]* Imagine the Minister of Finance is saying that it is stupid for the Lead of the Opposition to ask the Minister of Agriculture to give fertilizers to the farmers. If that is the judgment of the Minister well then I respect his judgment.

Mr. Speaker, in the present crisis in the agricultural sector of the country, the Government must decide, and take a decision very early to have to the Opposition in its confidence in this matter. The Government cannot hope to exclude us from any exercise in order to help to rehabilitate the farmers of this country. People criticise sometimes and say, "Well you oppose only for the sake of opposition but have you made any constructive suggestion whereby you help in what is happening?"

One of our very fundamental proposals is that the Government should stop appointing P.N.C. hacks in these Committees to give people aid and to assess the loss they suffered. The time has come in the particular situation for the Government to give serious consideration to the appointment of a parliamentary committee to examine the entire situation in the country. Those of us on this side of the House will be prepared to serve on such a committee so that farmers, on this occasion, can at least receive justice from the Government. But on the Essequibo Coast some

of the members who are serving on that Committee are persons who are employed in maintenance work for drainage and irrigation. What is very significant for us to note is the fact that the farmers on the Essequibo, before the heavy rains came went with a delegation to the Community Development Officer on the Essequibo and pointed out to him that the trenches and the creeks were blocked and it was necessary for the Drainage Board to set up machinery if these trenches and creeks are to be cleaned.

**3.15 p.m.**

Despite the fact that this recommendation was made, nothing was done. I make this point based on a note by a member of the delegation that went to see that officer.

There was seepage several days before the heavy rainfall and despite the fact that it was drawn to the attention of the proper authorities in that area, no effort was made to remedy the situation in advance. The District Commissioner was given a letter signed by farmers on the Essequibo Coast on this point and in it was stated that the rain started to fall on Wednesday night, 19<sup>th</sup> April. On Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, the workmen did not reach their work spot. They stopped half-way at a sand reef and spent the day there and returned home. In fact, it was after the flood was made known to Georgetown that the workmen went back. At that time, my information is that the situation had already gone bad and it was no longer controllable. It needed greater reinforcement to save the situation.

It is not only a question of negligence on the part of the Government in the carrying out of normal services of cleaning the creeks. I am told that the Oonu Creek, which is about 500 rods, was blocked and this was brought to the attention of the authorities. Nothing was done and so there was the seepage of Cullen and Perserverance, and then there was the heavy rain. What was the result? The result was, there were no outlets for the water which was accumulating.

So far as the Pomeroun area is concerned, which was subsequent, the Government did not dredge the Pomeroun River mouth. It was after representation and agitation that the Government started dredging. However, we have read in the newspaper that there is some report that there is some technical difficulty and the operation has come to be discontinued. What is very significant for the Hon. Members to know is that the Government did not move to assist the people in Essequibo. It had to be pushed and exposed before it did anything. Over a thousand farmers had to picket the District Commissioner's Office. I am told they went into the Office in large numbers demanding that something be done and it was only then that the Government took action.

Mr. Speaker, here you have a situation before you this afternoon. You have the situation where the Government moved very slowly in all these matters not only this year but last year and, even in the Cane Grove issue. You, Mr. Speaker, have some personal knowledge of the yeoman service we did for the people in that area. We did more than the Government for the people in Cane Grove. There was no discrimination. The Government instead of being objective used its authority to prevent Parliament meeting last Monday. What is very noteworthy is the fact that the announcement so far as sabotage us concerned came after the Cabinet Meeting on Tuesday. I would hate to believe that this whole concept of sabotage was conceived there in order to alleviate the Government from its responsibility of negligence.

When the Government spoke of sabotage, the flood was already in its fifth week on the Essequibo. What benefits would the farmers get from sabotaging at that stage when the Government itself recognised the seriousness and was now talking about the serious situation of the flood, and calling for national help? To bring more water on themselves? From our first-hand information, their crops had already been lost. We could not hope at that stage to get anything. What would have been the motivation and the reason for the farmers to attempt sabotage?

There are many areas which we can mention where the Government has been negligent. The Government knew of the situation that was existing at Leguan involving a big

landlord who is associated with the P.N.C. The farmers of Phoenix complained earlier this year. I had to call the Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply, and I must say this is for him that he listened to me and took action, and if I call on any Minister and he is satisfied that something is wrong and he moves, I am prepared to tell the House this. He undertook that he would send up his Parliamentary Secretary, and he went. But that situation has existed for a long time and it has not changed up to now. Private people were able to break State lands in order to drain water out of their estates and pour it into other people's estates. The truth is, the tenants at Leguan are the ones who are suffering and who have lost their crops.

The Government spent nearly \$248,000 or more to put up a koker at Canal head. For over two years, that koker has not functioned because, I am told, it was not properly built. It is supposed to work electrically; some fault is existing, but nothing has been done to correct that.

The Government know of ete leaves and, Sir, if you put ete leaves on a dam to prevent water from passing and you put a piece of wood down as a pile to operate the structure as a makeshift koker; with the result that the water will go into the people's land. Would you call such a situation an act of sabotage? Let the Government consult its technical officers and they will agree with what I am saying. I have already ruled out the allegation of sabotage on the Essequibo Coast as malicious and wicked and an insult to the farmers.

**3.25 p.m.**

If this Government hopes to achieve its goal of feeding the nation by 1976 the Government must apologise and withdraw the statement and reassure the farmers that they would be treated differently in the future.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member you have another two minutes.

**Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Very well, Sir. The Government cannot escape blame in this matter. The Government has been accusing people of indulging in cheap politics but the Government has been indulging in worse than cheap politics in the flood situation of this country. I am told that on the Essequibo Coast fifty-two persons were employed to do certain works to assist in maintenance and they were told that when they are finished working they would be given food for the services they rendered. At the conclusion of one week's work I am told that each person was given 28 pounds of flour, 7 pounds of wheat and 2 pints of cooking oil. What a shame! This is worse than slavery.

Mr. Speaker, as I said the Government had appointed a Committee in so far as the Essequibo/Pomeroon areas are concerned. What is the position with the Canals? What is the position of the farmers on the East Coast and West Coast Berbice? I am told that areas on the Corentyne are affected as well. I am sure that the Government will not reject a suggestion for a national committee as I have suggested to deal with floods as a whole in the entire country, not only restricted to Essequibo, or Pomeroon but Mahaica/Mahaicony and Cane Grove and other areas as well.

Despite our pleas in this Parliament in the past for farmers who have suffered I am compelled to come back to Cane Grove. A few months after the flood those very farmers were summoned and put in Court for rent by this Government. Many of them had to come to Georgetown and sought help to persuade the Government not to take further action on the matter. We know this country and when people are in trouble they find people who can speak on their behalf. There are several factors that can be taken into consideration. The Government must appreciate so far as Pomeroon is concerned where the people have been farming in citrus, coconut, ground provision for a number of years. If my information is correct- and I am sure it is- people have lost citrus trees. I am told that it will take about five years for these trees to grow before the people can reap. It will take a minimum of one year before they can be successful in ground provision.

It is absolutely necessary for the farmers in all of the rice areas to get adequate supplies of fertilisers before the lands give proper yields. In the mean time what happens to the farmers. It means that they will be without money for one year or nearly two years. This situation does not call for food parcels; it calls for much more than that. Each farmer must be investigated, assessment must be carried out in each case, and based upon impartial reports as to the losses and damages suffered by farmers they must be compensated, they must be given grants to once again out this nation on the road to agricultural success.

The history of agriculture during the regime of this Government shows that this Government has been spending large sums of money, millions in experiments: Global/Agri, Matthews Ridge. In fact, the financial resources in agriculture have not been going in the right direction. The time has come for the Government to stop this policy and let the money go to the areas where there can be production. It is necessary in the light of ...

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

**Mr. Hamid:** I beg to move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes.

**Mr. Lall:** *Seconded.*

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, it is not an easy task to talk sense into the P.N.C. Members. In the light of the very grave and serious situation with the threat of shortage of vegetables and foodstuffs as a whole I want to call upon the Government to give immediate consideration to the list of banned items, with the view of allowing some of those items to come back into the country to prevent starvation. I am sure that the Government will eventually have to give serious thought to this point. The Government I know when it makes up its mind to do something, wrongly or rightly, it goes ahead like the National Cultural Centre. All evidence

show that it will not be completed by August and they are now reverting to the use of Queen's College and other areas.

**Mr. Speaker:** How is that relevant?

**Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud:** I merely draw this to show the thinking of the Government.

**3.45 p.m.**

I am advised very reliably that as regards the items which are being distributed on the Essequibo Coast, like flour, oil and wheat – I am sure the Government does not expect the people to live on those three items without money – the flour is filled with worms and the wheat as well. If the Government is going to help people with food parcels, let those items of food be good. I appeal to the Government not to indulge in cheap propaganda charging the farmers with sabotage and the like. Let the Government treat the situation the way it should be treated. We are not accusing the Government of casing rainfall. The Opposition recognises that this year the rainfall has been high, and I am told that the experts predicted that by year end it will reach some 90 inches, each inch bringing one foot of water. The situation can be worse by year end and the Government will have to act now, if not, its hope and its illusions of feeding the nation by 1976 will remain a dream.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am always amazed when we have debates of a serious nature in this National Assembly, and debates of a nature such as this, where the farmers of our country could find much time for laughter and badinage instead of getting on with the job of seeing what should be done and of trying to listen to the points made by the Opposition and trying to put right what was wrong.

We have had heavy rainfall but this does not excuse the Government from its gross negligence in taking care of the drainage and irrigation problem of our country. We know drainage and irrigation is one of the biggest problems facing Guyana. We know that the Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply and his Department have a very difficult task because if it is not too much rain on one side, it is too much sunshine and drought on the other, but at least let them get on and try to solve the problem and do what they can, not come into this House and joke and make fun when the farmers are suffering, when the people are suffering.

Do not let us read in the newspapers that it is sabotage. We of the United Force do not often see eye to eye with the P.P.P., with its politics, but we do not imagine that the members of the P.P.P. could be so foolish as to drown themselves by deliberately sabotaging the sluice gates, the sand-bags, the kokers and so on. What we would like to ask is, what has been happening to the maintenance of these kokers? Of the koker gates are not maintained and looked after, we can so easily have flooding, but we read in the newspapers recently where the koker gates were alleged to have been damaged by saboteurs on the West Coast. Where was the watchman, where was the koker attendant why were they not on their jobs? This should be engaging the attention of the Minister instead of dragging red herrings across the trail and saying that the P.P.P. and the farmers were deliberately doing these things.

What about the local inhabitants? You cannot remove 20 or 50 sand-bags from an area without someone seeing you do it. One man cannot move one big timber log around alone, he has to have assistants. Did the inhabitants not see this? Are they not the P.N.C. supporters, too? They could easily have reported it. This is not a question of party politics, this is a question of national importance because it affects the whole nation. If the flood waters come in every one will suffer. Particularly people of the P.N.C. who are always so watchful and always know about everything why was nobody around to see these acts happening?

We would urge that great care be taken, that more priority be given to the problem of koker gates. Do not wait for them to break before anything is done about them. Recently at

Hope, the koker gate broke, something was done about it, of course, but prior to that, nobody bothered about the loose boards before things got to that stage. This is not the way they ought to establish their priorities and see that the most important things come first. Not like building this lovely road on Kelly Dam that was, very nice if we could afford it, when we do not have a proper road linking Parika with Bartica. It is no good crying over spilt milk, about the Del Conte fiasco, but why not what is existing there already and put down some kind of road to help the people rather than waste money on this new Kelly Dam road which is not of such great importance?

We have the greatest respect for our country, we want to see Guyana progress and our culture being shown around the world, but we do not see the point in wasting all these thousands of dollars on Carifesta, worthy as it is, we have other things that our country needs much more. We must establish our priorities, do what is required first and have other things come after. It does not mean that we do not see the need, realise that Carifesta would be a good thing ...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, we are talking about the flooding.

**Mrs. DaSilva:** I am talking, Sir, about establishing the priorities. We need this money first for drainage and irrigation before we spend it on Kelly Dam and Carifesta. that is the way you establish priorities and there is great relevance, Sir, I may with all respect say so, one towards the other. With those few remarks I would like to place on record our support for the Hon. Member Dr. Jagan's Motion.

**Mr. Van Sluytman:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, on Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1972, heavy rain started to fall and never ceased until Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup>. This flooded the entire Pomeroon and part of the Essequibo Coast.

3.45 p.m.

The Pomeroun in particular, added water from the Tapakuma Scheme has kept the water above the agricultural lands. This Scheme was implemented by the P.P.P. Government. The Government was advised by the engineers of additional outlets were not put to the sea any rainfall would have been a disaster for the Pomeroun. I can remember when making my maiden speech in this Parliament in 1969 I reminded the Hon. Members that immediately after the P.P.P. got in office they withdrew the steamer from the Pomeroun, they said then that we did not even have enough produce for one steamer which was only plying once per fortnight.

When the scheme was implemented Pomeroun was not taken into consideration; therefore, all the excess water from the Tapakuma Scheme is being thrown into the Pomeroun. While we concede it was excessive rainfall, but the number of days that the flood remained should not have been if Tapakuma was taking care of its own water. The entire scheme as I see it is more an irrigation scheme than a drainage scheme. When the rice farmers in that area are getting too much water they release the water on the farmers in the Pomeroun who plant coconut, coffee, citrus, etc. I am glad that the Hon. Member Mr. Persaud reminded this House how long a permanent crop takes to grow. When Tapakuma Scheme was implemented nobody thought that when these things are destroyed the economy of the country would have been destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition in this House, at his press conference and in the Mirror, has been talking a lot about the flood in the Pomeroun. But he has not yet had the courage to do to the Pomeroun to see for himself or speak to the people himself; even supporters would have given him a rough time. He can risk speaking in Georgetown about the flood.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned awhile ago that the Pomeroun Mouth is not dug, the creeks are not being cleaned. Perseverance, Johanna Cecelia, Zorg and all these areas are all *bona fide* lands but most of the proprietors are supporters of the P.P.P. and they have refused to maintain their internal drainage, therefore, the place would flood. I want to ask the Hon. Member Dr. Jagan if he believes a River can be silted overnight. Seven long years they have been in office, have they at any time tried to clean the Pomeroun Mouth? But now,

immediately after the P.N.C. Government got in office, the P.N.C. must dredge the River Mouth, it must clean the private people's trenches.

Mr. Speaker, after the heavy rainfall on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of Information and Culture, the Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply all went into the flooded area. The Prime Minister visited this area on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> and had a meet-the-people-tour from Supenaam right on to Charity, and from St. Monica right on to the Pomeroun Mouth, he saw for himself the flooded areas and he promised to give relief to the farmers. In the first instance, he promised farmers that as soon the water recedes and the farmers are ready to go back on the land, through the Minister of Agriculture, they would have all the necessary planting material. He promised further – and this has already been fulfilled – that he would give the people food so long as the water lasts. When they are ready to go on the land again they will get food to help them work the land.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> May a committee was formed to handle the distribution of rations and to assess the losses. This Committee was comprised of Government officials and I was also included on this Committee. The Pomeroun River was broken up into 13 districts for easy distribution stretching from St. Monica to Liberty. Yesterday evening we were able to conclude our last distribution in the Pomeroun, and by Thursday or Friday this week we are hoping to redistribute food. To date we have distributed food to a total of 1,527 families. May I digress for a moment to tell the Hon. Member Mr. Persaud that the first man on the list was Oscar Obermuller an executive of the P.P.P. The total number of persons who received food is 9,610. Total amount of flour distributed, 63,210 pounds, bulgur 11,973 pounds, rice 7,020 pounds, and vegetable oil 6,360 pounds.

**3.55 p.m.**

When the Prime Minister visited the areas and had talks with the people, he had given them the assurance that none would starve but the point is, no matter what the P.P.P. says, its

supporters are the first to come with their baskets to be sure not to starve. I can give them the assurance that as long as I am on the committee of distribution, P.P.P. supporters will get their food. Weather conditions have really been bad with unusual rain on the land. Some of the diehard members of the P.P.P. are so diehard that they want to blame the Government for this rainfall. They are bent on creating mischief that they are indulging in the work of saboteurs. The Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva said that that sounds strange that members of the P.P.P. would indulge in acts of sabotage at this time, but I doubt if she has full knowledge of them. The Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, just to show how callous these people can be, even this honourable House they use to propagate lies. He said when the announcement came about acts of sabotage...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Hamid, would you permit the Hon. Member to continue speaking.

**Mr. Hamid:** I apologise, Sir.

**Mr. Van Slutyman:** It was five weeks after the flood on the Essequibo Coast. The Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud said that the report of sabotage came after the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday and the flood was already five weeks with the people on the Essequibo Coast. I can assure this House that Perservance, Johanna Cecelia, Cullen, Zorg, and Golden Fleece, those villages were only flooded for a maximum of five days because of a breach, and the water receded after then and never went back on the land. They want to capitalise on this saying that these people were flooded for five weeks.

We conceded that there is need for dredging of the Pomeroon River Mouth but not only now have we come to that conclusion, since the P.P.P. was in office and that party has a Pomeroonian who was parliamentary representative. John Caldeira was not able to tell the P.P.P. anything about the Pomeroon. John was not able to stop the Hon. Member Mr. Wilsom from withdrawing the steamer from the Pomeroon.

We have given to the people who have suffered, particularly from the area which I represent, the assurance that they will never starve and as soon as the weather conditions permit them to go back on the farms, through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministries concerned, the farmers will be given all necessary assistance to see that they rehabilitate their farms. I do not know that this rainfall and damage were caused by the Government that we will have to think of paying people's bills in the shop, whether they were rum bills or what bills they might be, but the Prime Minister of this nation has already given people the undertaking that all necessary assistance that can be given would be given.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, perhaps this is a convenient time to take the suspension for 30 minutes.

*Sitting suspended at 4.00 p.m.*

**4.40 p.m.**

*On resumption*

**Mr. Sutton:** My contribution to this debate on this subject will be very short indeed because this question of drainage and irrigation has been a recurrent feature for years and years, since most of us here were children, therefore, I am just going to touch on the principles involved because I think a lot of red herrings are being drawn across the trail and the basic situation is being lost sight of. The Government tells us about the needs and thrust in agriculture, which is intended to ensure that we feed, house and clothes ourselves by 1976. We will heard the last speaker saying that the trouble in the Pomeroon is a legacy which this Government has inherited from the P.P.P. caused, mainly by the waters thrown back into the Pomeroon by the Tapakuma Scheme.

All those statements are, in the context of the situation today, just red herring across the trail and there is no question whether this matter of drainage and irrigation has been and is most vital to the existence at any level of Guyana. No Government could excuse itself for not giving it

absolute priority by the dozen by local engineers, by foreign engineers by experts, by people not so expert, until if this thing is to be tackled, as it should have been tackled long ago, the question not so much is going to be what we are to do or what we should do, but which one of the dozens of solutions that have been put by various experts we should really adapt in order to get a comprehensive solution for the benefit not of any portion or section of the country, but in the vital interest of the economic future of the country as whole.

We find that we have been wasting time for years talking about basis of compensation, farmers losing crops, are they going to be paid, how much they have lost, and this has been an annually recurrent feature to a greater or lesser degree, but what I find so difficult to accept is the fact that this Government has started that we have to stop our colonial thinking. We have to weed out our colonial approaches to these questions. We may have been able to blame our ex-controllers and say that the problem of drainage and irrigation was not given adequate treatment because they could not care less about the sufferings of the people of Guyana but were only concerned with what money they got out of Guyana for the benefit of people mainly who did not live in Guyana.

We could not make that statement now. We can get nowhere by saying this is caused by such and such a Government doing this, or somebody failing to do what he should have been. What we must know is the policy of the present Government. Let them tell us, in the implementation of such policy, have they not recognised the vital importance of drainage and irrigation in the light of the much vaunted thrust in agriculture to enable us to feed, house, clothe ourselves by 1976? This Government must have realised that it was inviting people to throw away money. It has the statistics, floods are almost a perennial situation. The Government knows that there are certain capital works that will have to be done in the drainage and irrigation sector before the coast could be safe for agriculture.

We do not need experts to tell us that. We have dozens of experts who have advised us on this question and even though these capital works cost several hundred million dollars, we know

that without these works being tackled in some manner, that any thrust we try to make on the coast in agriculture must at best be a gamble. I submit this is not a gamble. This is a question of flying into the face of providence and throwing money away. We have heard that our ex-colonial masters did not put in the capital works for drainage and irrigation which the concentration of farmers and people as whole on the coast required.

**4.45 p.m.**

We were told that the foolish Dutch people who were our predecessors caused us to occupy the Coast when, if they had moved back to twenty-five miles, we would not have had this big problem of drainage and irrigation. There would not have been this and spending hundreds of millions to keep the seat out on the one side and the pumps from overflowing on the other side. We know this. Any reasonable intelligent school boy will tell us that this has all been thrashed out before.

We were told that when we were a colony, when we did not control our own purse strings, when we did not control our own policy, the people who did control our policy did not mind if we had droughts and floods and people died, as long as they got their money out of the country which probably came from sugar, they could not care less how many farmers died and whose place was flooded.

It is alleged that the present Government is saying that the Pomeroun situation is due to the ill-conceived Tapakuma Scheme which is throwing its surplus water into the Pomeroun. Let us say that is so. I am no expert. I can only tell you what is the belief of most people who live in the Pomeroun; they have been there for several years, they must have some general idea of what they are speaking about. The Tapakuma Scheme was completed in the late 1950's and as soon as another Government took office it was told that the mouth of the Pomeroun River is silted up to a great degree and no extra water can come off in time to affect a flood. What would you set out to do if you had the interest of the country as whole at heart? You would immediately set out to

provide ancillary outlets though the Essequibo Coast. In other words, protect what you have before you start to provide Cadillac services for other areas, when one area or several areas cannot afford or even run a model "T" Ford. What do we find? We find that Tom is blaming Peter, Peter is blaming John, and John is blaming Alexander, and we are getting no where.

We are concerned with the principle involved. Agriculture is one of the main basis of this country. The Government tells us that Agriculture on the Coast is very important. It is encouraging people to go back to the land. Certainly, it must have recognised the importance of these capital works for drainage and irrigation. The Members of this Government know what happened at Cane Grove.

Members of the Government get up and blame the previous Government for the Tapakuma Scheme, but what has this Government done about it? Are we going to hear until the next century what the P.P.P. did therefore, the succeeding Government could not put things in order? Why did you say if you put me into power you will get better results because the previous Governments had no conception of what they were doing? Is it not that you would expect that mistakes particularly the big ones which were made would be corrected? Money which has been badly spent you will try to see how you can salvage some of this money by turning some in to proper use.

What this Government is doing is just temporary relief. We want to know if this thing breaks itself into two distinct parts what must be done should have been done and what could be done in order to prevent a recurrence of such a situation.

I feel this Government cannot escape responsibility for this situation. One very bright Member of the Government said the Opposition is blaming the Government for the rainfall. Who can blame anybody for rainfall? But because there has been heavy rainfall for the last 50 years to a greater and lesser degree we do blame the Governemnt, now that we and we alone will have to suffer the results. But we are involved in other things; things are good in themselves but drainage

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and irrigation, I submit, cannot be ignored. The capital works even though you cannot find money for 50 years you should start now by providing 1/50 of it, so that although these capital works would show some sign of taking shape and the future Guyanese would have some assurance that we the Government of this country and the subsequent Governments which would follow, no matter what is the political complexion, the first responsibility is for the people, and the farmers of the country who are suffering. Something will have to be done about it. Nothing constructive has been done to attempt to get this situation under control. While that is so, this, or any Government can put up a constructive plan showing how the coastlands are to be drained and no matter what is the cost of the scheme it will be failing its duty and as a Government it will be a stark failure.

4.55 p.m.

**Mr. Zaheeruddeen:** One could wonder what is the reason the Opposition wants a debate, whether it is an exercise in propaganda or whether it really considers this flood a matter of public importance. We understand there are three causes which led to the flooding in Essequibo. We had a heavy rainfall many people said rain fall at that time had exceeded any rainfall within the past hundred years. We know from 1968 to 1972 we have had a higher amount of rainfall than from 19858 to 1968. This is one of the causes, that for the past four years we had this heavy amount of water playing on the conservancy dam.

On the conservancy dam, we found people using the tractors and trailers brining out wood, owarrs, to transport padi. We found that in the area from Zorg to Cullen, all those lands are privately owned and the proprietors never bothered to clean their drainage and irrigation ditches. They burst those dams in the dry weather to take in water, they never put down any box, they never rebuilt the dam, and in the end we had drainage and irrigation canals on the same level with the dams, so like that, there was no effective bar for this water. One can imagine at the

moment there are no bars across the dams at all. Previously there were bars across the dams preventing heavy machines from coming in and going out, but they have sawed off all bars, they are using the dams to bring out padi, to go in to plough their rice fields and the condition of the dams is getting worse. These are some of the reasons which led to the flood.

I am not going to speak about the Tapakuma Scheme but Opposition Members would recall that since 1961 they were warned: if you put down that project, it would flood the Pomeroun. That is what has been happening. They could say: what has the Government been doing? They were sitting in their comfortable homes, they were never bothered to go and see the flood, and none of them can really say they went to Essequibo to see any flood. They come here and shout their loudest. When it comes to the practical work, they never went and inspected any scene, but immediately after we had the heavy rainfall and a flood was identified, two Ministers of the Government, who spent five days and five nights until he was satisfied that the dam was properly repaired.

They can say that they want compensation. Even that, a few public-spirited people met and they formed a committee to go into the questioning of how we can get some help for the people, and we were told they are P.N.C. hacks. Even Government officers were told they are P.N.C. hacks. That is their way of expressing all the thanks they have to give us. We went and inquired about damages. One man said he lost eight pairs of shoes. Some said they lost furniture. Some said they lost sewing machines. Some said they lost bicycles. One person said three cows were drowned for her one night. We said, show us the dead cows, she could not show us the dead cows. We tried to give them some forms to fill up, to let us have a cross examination of what they really lost. Some said they had a house lot and when we said what did they have on that house lot, they said 40 ochro plants, 32 boulanger plants, 32 tomato plants, but when we went to see the lot, there were no cultivation.

They should be satisfied that the Government sent a team of medical officers to inspect every village in the Pomeroun and Essequibo for any outbreak of disease. They should be

satisfied, irrespective of where people live, whether in Essequibo or Pomeroon, they were given assistance by way of foodstuffs and seedlings. They should be satisfied that the flood waters have receded and conditions are back to normal, and over 80 per cent of the rice farmers had long before reaped their rice. They should be satisfied that although they sat in their homes and never visited the area, the Prime Minister and Ministers of the government visited every area in Essequibo.

**Mr. Balchand Persaud:** Your Honour, the Hon. Member is misleading the House. The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran visited the Essequibo area and so did the Hon. Member Mr. Bholia Persaud.

**Mr. Zaheeruddeen:** I will give you the Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran's reason for going to Essequibo. I am coming to that. The Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security issued a public appeal for help. Other members of the community gave help. They have not given a single cent. What was their interest? You should have seen the placards outside. Their reason for going to the Essequibo was to make a political harvest out of a situation over which the Government had no control. They went there to demand compensation. They went with placards and demonstrated. They had no interest in what the people lost. They went there to spread a vicious lie that the P.N.C. Government brought down goods and foodstuffs, hiding them in bonds and giving them out in the night secretly to P.N.C. supporters. There are some of the things they have been doing. All that they want is political propaganda, something to say that the Government is bad. The little that exists of the R.P.A. should tell the people that it is not cultivating the rice land that is important, it is keeping their drainage and irrigation dams clean. They should tell people that they should try and make boats to bring out their padi. This "bull slide" and tractor cannot work any longer. I regret to say that they are wasting our time. They are wasting their time for propaganda reasons. Nobody is ever listening to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Stoby:** It appears to me that some of us are trying to project the wrong situation in

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**4.55- 5.05 p.m.**

our country. They are probably people who are living in the city who hear about the Pomeroon, hear about the North West, but many of us do not travel enough to go to the interior and know the country. I think this situation in our country is one of a very serious nature because as far as my information is concerned, it will have serious consequences on our economy.

**5.05 p.m.**

It is true that since the P.N.C. Government the weather has been terribly against it. It only goes to show that even nature is against the P.N.C. and it is glaring that the P.N.C. is in Government not with the true wishes of the people.

I should like to clarify some of the allegations which were made about the Tapakuman project which was done by the P.P.P. Government. We must remind the House that the project was incomplete, now the Pomeroon also has branches. You have the Aripico, the Akawini basin which is a very large area of savannah, and the water silt is getting higher and higher every year at the River mouth. Therefore, now when the volume of water comes from the River head it must flood up the Pomeroon area. But it is a propaganda of the P.N.C. to keep telling people that it is the fault of the P.P.P. which has caused all this disaster.

Let us assess the situation; let us visit the people and let us see exactly the conditions of the farms. In days gone by people could have built dams and dug trenches. In the Pomeroon it was done by slave labour; therefore, we had wide canals and big dams. But today on account of the rising cost of living there are very expensive goods in the shops and so on and because of the expense for labour you cannot build proper dams and maintain your trenches. I consider this situation a national disaster. I think that any reasonable Government. A Government that is interest in the people must provide and set aside money rather than go asking people and begging people, and they really want assistance themselves. They will have to give voluntary foodstuff assistance to the Government so as to give the farmers.

There must be money set aside. We have seen in our Estimate and Development Plans where the Government said it was going to spend so many million dollars here and there. For example, we notice that the sum of over \$3,050,000 is allocated for the Matthews Ridge area. But let us take a look at the Kumaka/Quebanna Scheme, I have not seen a cent in the Estimates for this scheme. They are saying that the people who live on the hills have nothing to lose because they are high and dry, it is only those who live on the swamps will suffer. Let the Members go and see, even the farmers on the hills when there is heavy rainfall all the plants wash down in the gullies; the land is heavily moisterised by the heavy rainfall and the people are suffering now from starvation.

It must be considered that the people in these areas are just subsistence farmers and if they had lost a little it is the Government's duty to make an impartial investigation and see that they get a reasonable amount of help. Up to last night, they told us that they are getting flour and oats. Oats is for horses, Sir *[Interruption]* I have seen the oats in the purser's invoice. I am speaking what I know.

Let us deal with this matter seriously. There is the Waini, and the Barima. From recent information received from the people in the Waini are leaving the area because they have to go in boats to the farms. Similarly, at the mouth of the Pomeroon. They said that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and some junior Ministers went to his place. He said to them, "Comrades, I am trying with a pump here. Look you have Comrades across the River, go over there and see what is happening." But they did not. The G.D.F. boat and the hydrographic boats were all there just to project propaganda to the people of the Pomeroon. This Government is fooling itself it is not fooling those people who have a little knowledge and see what is going on, the Government says that there are Acts of God.

I should like to make another point regarding agriculture which is the lifestring, as we know, of this country. You cannot get planting material fertilizer. I know that the agriculture adviser sent back the seedlings to Georgetown because it was sent when it would have been of

no use, he said, "In this rainy season who is going to plant?" For the Moruca area all that was sent from the Ministry of Agriculture was one envelope with a few seeds inside for an area where there are two to four hundred families. These are the facts. I am not trying to mislead the House, I am trying to project the truth.

I should like to join with the Leader of the Opposition in asking that something be done. This must be a demand. This is not a joke. Foodstuffs are not sufficient. But the Government must have a plan whereby people would be satisfied that this would not occur because when people lose thousands of dollars how will they be encouraged to go back to the land and at anytime expect that another rainfall they will lose thousands and thousands of dollars again.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member Mr. Van Sluytman was trying to mislead this House with his wrong information. But I know better; I live in the area.

**5.15 p.m.**

I see. The amount of damage is so great that the Government does not know what to do. It does not know how to handle the situation. It is not even asking for aid from other country.

That flour went to the Land Settlement at Anna Regina, went to Mr. Brassington. That was for self help, now they are claiming it is for flood relief. This disaster will cause a drop in the production of coffee, of coconuts and other crops. As far as the slogan, feeding ourselves, housing ourselves, and clothing ourselves by 1976, is concerned, how in the line of feed especially, can Guyana feed itself when most of the things are damaged or destroyed? We are appealing to the Government on behalf of many people.

I have seen recently in my investigation they are assisting people at Charity who have big business, they have no farms and they are receiving food relief. Mr. Bissoonauth is receiving food relief and there are poor people in the interior who cannot get even one pound of flour. This

is the attitude of the P.N.C. This will cause more unrest. People who live far off, who have lost, they cannot secure work. This is the situation in Moruca. There is no employment. There is an agricultural plot in the Four Miles area and they have knocked off or retrenched all the workers. Where will they get their planting materials. The Agricultural Officer is there, he is receiving a salary, but nobody else. I am asking the Government to consider this matter as serious crisis and try to do something so that the people of this country will be satisfied.

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture (Mr. Salim):** Mr. Speaker, Sir, today it is deplorable and most regrettable to note that the Opposition has used this National Assembly to make an appeal, while farmers are suffering, to release the ban against imported foodstuff, that are unwarranted, in order to assist businessmen to profiteer further. I thought that the Opposition would have made a tangible contribution towards assisting the farmers in their present plight. *[Interruption]* The Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud has said that because of the flood situation, certain banned items should be released otherwise the people will starve. Any member of the public would note that this National Assembly was really used today by the Opposition, instead of representing the farmers, to represent the businessmen to further profiteer.

The Government realises that there is a problem where drainage is concerned and the Government is out to give all necessary assistance and help to the suffering farmers. This is a fact which no one can deny and no one can come in this honorable House and attempt to say that the Hon. Minister of Agriculture is not au fait if the situation, because in the history of this country, of the previous Government, no more visits were made to the fields than those that are being made now.

The Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud said that while farmers were suffering he was attempting to lead a delegation to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Parliamentary Secretary refused to see him. I do not think that the Hon. Member should come here, when a serious situation is gripping the country, to use that type of slogan to define someone or to make himself popular among farmers. The fact that the story is that a set of farmers had applied for an

interview and an appointment was fixed. The leaders of that delegation were named and the Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud's name was not on that list as a leader or a member of the delegation. Suddenly, when the representatives came up to me, it was mentioned that Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud was telling them that he should be allowed to lead the delegation. I made a decision there and then that I would not permit the Hon. Member to make a show while farmers were suffering. I told them if they wanted Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud to see me, then they should wait and let him see me. They said, no, they preferred to see me because they had already selected their leaders, and so I refused to see the Hon. Member because he was no part of the delegation.

**Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Hon. Member has given me the Floor. I want to refute what he is saying and to make it clear to the House that the delegation insisted on him seeing me and he still refused.

*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Salim:** Mr. Speaker, the farmers were here who know the true position. The Hon. Member continued to say that Cane Grove was suffering from successive floods. The People at Cane Grove were given all types of assistance and they are now in a better position as compared with other flooded areas. At Cane Grove there are four additional pumps to assist the main pump. There is no cultivation under water, there are only three farmers who suffered losses.

Regarding the Mahaica and Mahaicony Creeks, because of the excessive rainfall, the conservancy had to be opened at certain times to take off the excess water, otherwise it would have caused more damage to the East Coast and so the sluices on the Mahaica Creek, the Maduni and the Lama, are kept open at times and at times they are kept closed to release water from the Creek. At all times, all the sluices at Land of Canaan are kept open.

We admit that the Government has a responsibility to the farmers but the farmers have a responsibility to themselves. The very farmers do not attempt, despite the sufferings they go through at certain periods, to "smouse" their cultivations or to build a dam in many cases so that on circumstances like these they can establish a pump and pump out water and continue with the cultivation.

**5.25 p.m.**

Farmers allow their cattle to roam all over the place and they damage the dams. The farmers have a responsibility to themselves. They must control their cattle because the cattle are damaging the dams which could cause water to flood them. The farmers should assist in cleaning their internal drainage system. They do not do all these things, they would prefer to sit back and wait on Government, and this is what the Opposition is looking for, the Opposition would not encourage farmers to clean their internal drains in order to give them facilities for better drainage but they join to "catch show" so as to speak; they join to criticise Government.

The Hon. Member said that assistance was not given to farmers as regards fertilizers. He said the Leader of the Opposition wrote the Minister of Agriculture and there was no reply. I am going to cite some of the assistance given to farmers as regards fertilizers and other assistance. The Guyana Rice Corporation has been given the authority to assess the extent of the damage done and recommend to what extent relief should be given to farmers. This would include material including fertilizers etc. and arranging for deferment of any outstanding loans which has been made in 1971. The Ministry of Agriculture is also prepared to make available planting material including those crops which have been destroyed by the flood. This is what is being done at the moment.

In 1971, through the Guyana Rice Marketing Board approximately 771 farmers received 4298,720 worth fertilizers, insecticides, seed padi, etc. Now an Hon. Member comes to this

House to say that when the Leader of the Opposition wrote the Minister of Agriculture for assistance by way of fertilizers there was no reply. That is tangible proof. The farmers got their assistance in 1971; and they are still getting assistance in other areas.

In these areas they have not suffered complete destruction, only a few farmers have suffered and they are being taken care of. If the Opposition really wants to help the farmers to get out of their suffering they should get together and advise the farmers what are the steps to be taken. For example, they should control their cattle, assist in cleaning their internal drainage system, build houses where possible and make use of available pumps in the area. This Government has not been sitting back while the farmers suffer. When the P.P.P. Government was in office it did not ask sugar estates to assist or even if they were able to ask they did not because they wanted farmers to suffer. But today this Government is in a position to almost compel the estate to give assistance when flood and irrigation problems arise.

Mr. Speaker, the government is still committed to help the farmers who are really suffering. The Government has been allocating grants and loans to farmers through the Ministry of Agriculture throughout this country. Even at Port Mourant where the Leader of the Opposition was born this Government has given assistance to the people there for rehabilitation of sluices, for digging of canals to provide better drainage and irrigation facilities. It is also giving assistance to build roads and dams to transport the produce when the farmers harvest their crops. The Leader of the Opposition said a while ago that roads are not an economic venture. Farmers in the strongholds of the P.P.P. are telling us that they have drainage and irrigation facilities but they cannot cultivate their lands because they want roads, they want access for transportation of inputs and produce. This Government is assisting them; no one can deny this. We recognize that farmers are suffering and the Government is prepared to give whatever assistance possible.

**Mr. Ram Karran:** Your Honour, although the urgency of this matter had been established some time ago, it is only today that this Hon. House is meeting to discuss it. Even though we meet today, we are indulging in a sterile debate rather than the Government coming

forward with something... [**An Hon. Member:** “Who moved the Motion?” “Why don’t you move a Motion?”] An Hon. Member suggests that I move a Motion. The Hon. Member knows that the Motions from the Opposition never reach debating stage. [*Interruption*] What is the decision from this Motion? It is a sterile one. But that is all that the Government would adhere to. Sterility is already staring the Government in its face; we can see it. We have heard the speech from the turncoat from the constituency where ballot papers were wrapped in rubber bands, but where are we? One would have thought that during the times that these floods occur the Government would have come to this House at this convenience and say, “We propose to take these measures.” What do we hear? One of them went to meet the people in Essequibo and they nearly took off his pants-I am not going to call his name. All we hear is the P.P.P. Government was in office for seven years. But this Government has been in office for 7 ½ years. Do you mean to say, Sir, for fifteen years this Government has not thought out some solution to what it had heard about Tapakuma Scheme?

**5.35 p.m.**

I was the Minister responsible for that scheme and all this hearsay, that we were advised by the engineers that this scheme would have flooded the Pomeroun area, was never communicated to me. I challenge the Hon. Members to bring the file where that is recorded. It is not. I go further to ask if these engineers who are today serving in the Government are going to change the principle that has been carried out by the Dutch, and the Dutch are the best hydrologists in the world, who have found that drainage through the river is the solution.

The Dutch tried at first to dig their canals to the Atlantic and they found that silting made it so expensive that they had to abandon it. Only the sugar industry, which has an income of about 4300 per acre per year, is able because of the profitability, to continue pumping into the Atlantic and to take care of the silting. The Cummings Canal is a living example. The Dutch have been able to drain all the way from Ogle, all sides including Georgetown, with one single canal because drainage through the river avoids silting.

I wish to advise my friends to check with the engineers rather than to come here and tell airy fairy stories about putting in additional outlets to the Atlantic. It is not going to solve the problem. The Government's solution to the problem is only to help its expatriate friends, to buy \$7 million worth of pumps to put all over the coast to drain Guyana in times of flood.

My colleague and friend, the Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, has pointed out that all the writers before have pointed out, that the Lord Moyne Commission which came here pointed out, that this country suffers, unlike the West Indies, from floods and droughts. If the solution, as these honourable hydrologists and engineers say, is to pump outside, I ask the simple question: what are they going to do when they want to get irrigation water? This is why the answer is as Hutchinson said: make your schemes, put your dams to empolder the water, let it come down by gravity so that the cost to farmers will be negligible.

In 1968, when the breach occurred at Cane Grove, my friend the Hon. Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply, said, "Sabotage!" "Sabotage!" Now that the people are flooded, "Sabotage!" History has been recorded, this year, we are going to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of ... Dmitrov, the great internationalist. The German, the Fascists, had the same habit of shouting sabotage, but Dmitrov put them to shame, and where are they today? Hermann Goering and Hitler and all of them have gone off the face of the earth, and I venture to suggest that these fascists are going to find themselves in the same place in history.

I read in the newspapers that the fish market in New Amsterdam has been closed down. It cannot work and the reason was poor maintenance, that the people concerned did not follow the advice of the consulate and they did not carry out proper maintenance. I venture to suggest that what is happening in our country today is that most of the damage is due to the Government's negligence in not properly maintaining the structures, the dams and the works.

I followed in the footsteps of the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of agriculture to go down to the back. We saw, as my colleague and friend, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition,

pointed out, the weir could have been open because the overseer said it would have flooded the Unu Creek. Part was clean, part was not clean. It is not a question of begging alms. My friends across there have been saying, "Oh, they are giving food, they are giving this and they are giving that." These people are paying for a service. They are paying for drainage and irrigation. Rates are levied. When they do not pay, as in the Black Bush Polder, the Government breaks down the houses. They are entitled to be provided with drainage and irrigation facilities.

Because of the nepotism, one of them who is supposed to go back to maintain the dam, he is a village councilor. The other one's wife is a village councilor. They make decisions. They are close to the P.N.C. when I went back to see, I saw a man, who is supposed to be working in the National Insurance Scheme, standing up on the road abusing the people. The Prime Minister said the other day, without discipline we cannot get ahead. That is the discipline they have. A man, related to someone of them, working in the Essequibo Coast of the N.I.S standing up at the point abusing people!

Maintenance is the deficiency in Essequibo. Maintenance is the deficiency in Corentyne. My friend has pointed out to me that in the Manarabisi area, there was a broken pump since last year. The Government gave instruction, probably did not give the money, so the pump remains unrepaired. At No. 46 Good Hope, for tunnels to be put under the road, the people are there, they have put in work already, but the Government is not ready, and that is the sort of thing. The Government is not prepared to help the people and all these areas including the Mahaica-Mahaicony area are flooded.

My friend from the Corentyne is unashamed to admit in this honourable House that the sugar estates use them, to allow them to open those two monsters, the Laluni and the Maduni, into the Mahaica River to flood the farmers in that area, and in the same breathe blame the P.P.P. for what is happening. When the weather is dry they pump the water from the Mashaica River into the conservancy with the result that the salt water goes far beyond where anybody lives in the Mahaica. The people then have to paddle up the river by night to get water to drink, and the

Government is not prepared to put into effect the M.M.A. scheme, which, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, has been worked out, the papers are all there, the cost is worked out and is lying in the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply. But the Government has not the guts to initiate it. It tells us it is going to buy \$7 million worth of pumps to help its friends from overseas.

**5.45 p.m.**

The same happened in Mahaicony. What has happened there? In the Mahaicony River, at a point called Mora, there is a drainage and irrigation scheme which has been put in by my friends' friends - sugar. Seaforth designed that scheme, one irrigation trench to use as drainage and irrigation - what has happened there? The canals are blocked, and the people are paying \$5.90 per year per acre for drainage: The farmers repair it collectively yet they have to pay \$5.90 per acre to the Drainage and Irrigation Department and the Department of the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply does not know or if they do know, they are offering no help, and the whole area is flooded. What are these people paying for? The law allows them to charge these rates.

I said this Dutch solution that the Hon. Member Mr. Van Sluytman offers is not going to be any solution. To crown it all, Sir, to add insult to injury, our learned and Hon. Prime Minister goes down to the Essequibo and he makes a new definition. I am sure that Your Honour will rule that this House has made no such definition as yet. The definition that the learned and Hon. Prime Minister makes is "compensation is something you pay when you are wronged." Perhaps that is the Government's present policy although this House has not been made aware of it. These farmers have been wronged they are paying irrigation rates, they have been flooded through the negligence of this Government, therefore, they are wronged, therefore they must pay themselves compensation. Says the Prime Minister compensation is something paid when you are wronged. [Mr. Hoyte: "That makes sense."] He goes further, he adds insult to injury. He says, "If you

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come to me with any nonsense about compensation I will tell you where to put that." The sentence stops there. He did not say that they must put it in their backsides or did he not say where they must put it. But the Prime Minister ought to tell the people what he means by stopping the sentence half way. He goes on: "Are they professional compensation receivers?" These people who have been wronged who have paid drainage and irrigation rates, who have suffered because of this negligence on the part of the Government, the Prime Minister in one word has closed all the courts in this country. It would mean that if the people are to take their cases to the courts he is going to tell the courts where to put it. In fact, he has taken upon himself, not only as executive of the Government but he is also head of the Judiciary, so compensations that may arise out of the negligence of the Government have already been barred by our learned and Hon. Prime Minister in Guyana. The Prime Minister probably does not seem to know law. He has reached the stage where – [**Mr. Hoyte:** "He is an eminent lawyer."] Yes, I know he is a foremost lawyer, reached but I think he has reached the stage - he referred to that famous letter to his Mother which has been immortalised by the late Jessie Burnham when he said when he ready for the "coolie" he is going to move on them.

**Dr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, much time has been spent but not really on the subject that was brought before the House and probably our friends who introduced that Motion recognise that there is not really something that they can talk about, and they have admitted that it is a sterile Motion. Thus it has come from somebody who is sterile in ideas, thought and in attitude to do something useful and good for the community in this country.

This is a serious matter in this country - floods and at other times droughts. In this particular instance, everyone agrees, supported by the records, that Guyana, in certain parts in this country, has suffered from unusually heavy rainfall within very short periods. Notwithstanding what is said, this is the main cause of the present situation. To bring others to this real situation, I just want to refer to some of our rainfall statistics over the years. It is well for us just to look at 1971 and 1972 and then probably some of our friends might come to their senses, if they can. Let us take the area Charity near to Pomeroon. That is the worst area, I think,

in this country as far as these floods are concerned. Charity in the month of April, 1971 had 1.97 inches of rain; in 1972 in the month of April, Charity had 24.13 inches of rainfall. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please allow the Hon. Minister to proceed.

**Dr. Reid:** Around Regina in 1971 in the month of April, the rainfall was .6 of an inch. At Anna Regina the rainfall recorded in 1972 was 21.29 inches. We can go down the list in several areas that are affected and will find the situation is the same. Guyana does suffer from unusually heavy rainfall. In Albion, it has been recorded that for the past fifty-two years there was not this type of rainfall that they have experienced this year.

**5.55 p.m.**

Let us not believe for one moment that Guyana is the only place that suffers from conditions of this kind. The Hon. Member mentioned that we know that we suffer from floods and droughts, not like the West Indies, and I was prodding him to say what the West Indies suffer from but he played deaf. The West Indies suffer from hurricanes. They suffer from volcanoes. In some of the temperate countries they suffer from blizzards...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Hamid, I have been speaking to you repeatedly about your behaviour, I will not do so any more.

**Mr. Hamid:** Thank you very much, Sir.

**Dr. Reid:** ... from hail and storms, in some places, from dust storms and things of that kind. These are unusual as circumstances over which in so many cases man has not yet got full control and we in Guyana suffer from severe floods over which control is not easy. But we on this side have got one thing to our record, that we move in to the situation very promptly and

give temporary assistance wherever it is needed. We have heard the record of what has happened in some of the other places in the country and the type of assistance people were given.

I need not say anything on what my friend was trying to make out, that it was Dartmouth people who had all the food assistance. I am certain people will recognise it for what it is. On the Essequibo itself, 500 families were assisted in the affected area and Dartmouth is not in that affected area. This is the Abrams Zuil, Annandale, and surrounding area, where we had the breach on the Essequibo Coast. In the Pomeroon, assistance has been given to over 1,000 families and we have increased that now to some 1,800 families, and Dartmouth people do not live there. This assistance is directed to people who need assistance most. This, I agree, is temporary but it is a kind of relief that must be given that is necessary at this time.

For us on this side, this is a very sad event, that we should suffer from such unusual rains and in our approach to our development and in the thrust in agriculture. This is the last thing we would have liked to see happen, but we know we suffer from floods and work has already been started in several of these areas to meet the situation. This kind of situation is difficult to meet so that even if the work was already done, with this unusually high rainfall, people would have suffered. This has happened in the Pomeroon itself. For three years now, we have been rehabilitating several grants in the Pomeroon River, empoldering them what not, but it was sad to see what happened to that work with feet and feet of water over the empoldered dams, some of the dams breaking, and so the people suffer. It was a sad thing to see their fruit trees being destroyed, especially their pear and orange trees.

In our effort some years ago to meet some of this excess overflow of water from the savannahs, work was started on a sea dam. Notwithstanding what our friends say, it is no use putting down the sluices and you have no sea defence. We will be in a worse position because even though we suffer from floods and we lose our crops, if we have no sea defence, I wonder if anybody can imagine what will be lost then: Not only our crops, not only our animals, but man himself will suffer death because none of us would hope one morning to wake up to find that the

seawall is not there and the cruel sea is rushing in on us. We need the sea dam. We need the roads, and the farmers themselves are calling for roads in the farming areas so that they can have easy ingress and egress to take the inputs in and to bring the products out. All these things are necessary.

Some of them say that we must get them together, consult with them so they will be there to help. How Can we, in a situation where our Opposition tells people in the public that we are bent on destroying the economy of this country and behaves accordingly. Their calling and shouting to have a discussion in the House is not really to help. We do not want the members of the Opposition to bring this to our attention. We have been in this all the time. We have started several tasks to relieve the situation. Some of them have not worked as well as we would have liked.

In the Pomeroon, work was started since last year, because it was recognised a long time that the Pomeroon needed some assistance with the water that flows into the Pomeroon, to get some of that into the sea. This is the reason the Maniburi canal was cleared and deepened last year and work is continuing on that so that some of the water from the overflow can go into the Somerset and Berks sluice into the ocean. The same thing we did with the Cozier canal and work has been going on on that since last year and is continuing now with greater urgency so we could redirect some of the water into the Atlantic Ocean and give hope and relief to the people in the Pomeroon.

They say they have done big drainage and irrigation schemes in this country. True. They have, and they name them. What has happened on them? They talked a while ago about bulldozing houses because people cannot pay their rent. People have been put on a lot of unfinished schemes and work is going on now to complete some of these schemes properly. At Black Bush and Tapakuma, work is going on to ensure that those schemes are properly finished, so that the farmers who occupy plots of land on those schemes would be able to reap the crop that they sow. This is so important if the schemes are to succeed. It is no point trying to build up

a record of just establishing new schemes here, there, and everywhere, and when you come to the reckoning, all these schemes cannot support themselves far less the people who are on the schemes.

Our first job, therefore, as we have been doing in some areas, is rehabilitation, and I am glad that one person mentioned that this work is not confined to any section. This work is widespread, and Port Mourant was mentioned, but for the type of work we have been doing, 6,000 acres of rice lands now under cultivation at Port Mourant Follow-Up Scheme would have been waste land. Because of the work we did last year, notwithstanding the heavy rain, and this is the type of work that must be done to save us when the heavy rains come, Sir, you can go to Port Mourant Follow-Up Scheme and you will see the happy farmers because, if the weather allows them, they are certain they will reap a good crop of rice from 6,000 acres under cultivation.

Many other areas in this country cannot say the same. We carry this type of assistance to all parts of the country but my friends make noise and shout how they are interested in the farmers and things like that, but when the Government mounts a scheme to give temporary relief to the farmers, they find an excuse not to participate. They say this is Government's responsibility and no use begging alms. This is how they hide from doing something that is good and useful.

One of them went through the flooded areas but it did not even strike his heart, that Hon. Member, that he could give some temporary assistance to some of those farmers. Not at all. For him he must come back to Georgetown and find an excuse for not helping somebody who is suffering, who needs help.

**6.05 p.m.**

Other than what has been done at Government level the public is given an opportunity to contribute. In some countries, there are insurance schemes to cover distresses of this kind but in Guyana because of several reasons, such facilities are not introduced. The members of our community welcome the opportunity to assist when there is distress and we have got not only food packets but money to help to buy food. We give not only food that has come in from the United States - wheat and oil - but we have been able to get flour from the flour mill right here. We have been able to get rice from people in this country. Therefore we give to the people rice, wheat, flour, oil and milk. All these are commodities to help relieve the situation so that these farmers will not suffer the maximum.

In our view agriculture preparation is made all along to put the farmer on a better basis. That is why we rehabilitate some farms, that is why the sea dam is being constructed, that is why the canals are being rehabilitated to redirect the water, and that is why there is in process the institution of a bank specially to serve our farmers in this country. I am certain that farmers at large can see no reason to say that this Government is not showing tangible interest in their welfare. Notwithstanding how much the Opposition shouts the farmers in the areas are trying to help themselves, and the Pomeroon farmers stand out because they look forward to the easing of the situation and the recultivation of their lands once some of these works proceed. They can be hopeful, so that unless it is an unusually heavy rainfall like this, or worse than this, under the ordinary circumstance they would not suffer.

Some people divert your attention to all other places but we who have been close to the farmers and have examined the situation very carefully know that those who have suffered in the linesmen need help most, because they cultivate permanent crops. If you are doing a crop on an annual basis then you might just lose one crop, but in the Pomeroon where they depend on permanent fruit trees some of them have lost an entire life's work. For this is a very sad occasion to have farmers endure that type of experience. We could not think that the Opposition was

seeing this more than we do by saying call the House quick and let us discuss this matter. It is not the discussion that really matters, it is what we do outside on the farms to help the farmers along.

This work will continue. The Government has committed all its Ministries to the urgency of this exercise and we do not need the Members of the Opposition to tell us how much to vote and when. If we were waiting to vote special funds certain things that have already been done would not have been done. This is in process already. Help is being given, money is being organised, money is being allocated so that urgent works can be done to help the farmers to do better and save the situation in the future. We hope that this situation would not recur. As I said a while ago this is one of the usual circumstances that ran has not yet been able to control fully.

I want to remind Members that in some countries some of these events destroy sometimes an entire city, an entire township. We must not ourselves too much or think that some curse has fallen upon us best is a flood. We must have more courage and more determination than in life and living. If we are leading people instead of going through the districts to engineer them to destroy themselves the time can be better spent in encouraging them to take care of their own welfare.

I said a while ago that the Opposition has admitted that it is a sterile Motion moved by a sterile leader. For my own part, this time could have been spent better by Im doing the many tasks that have to be done in this country. All some people can think of as politicians is what will give them some votes. But I want to reassure my friends that exercises like this would not give anybody votes anymore. Probably once upon a time that worked well. Today, all people, including our farmers, are looking for deeds, and outside in the fields, in the farms wherever they are rivers and coastland far up the Rivers or hinterland they are experiencing the deeds from the Government headed by the People's National Congress. This will continue. Therefore not withstanding these publicity stunts that the Opposition mounts people have rejected them, and have a sneaking suspicion that that party has been rejected for this generation

29.05.72

National Assembly

6.05- 6.15 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the House.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**“Resolved,** that this Assembly stands adjourned to Wednesday, 31st May, 1972 at 2 p.m.” **[Mr. Ramsaroop]**

*Adjourned accordingly at 6:15 p.m.*

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