

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**

5th Sitting

2 p.m.

Tuesday, 1st June, 1971

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Narain, J.P.

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

The Hon. L.F.S Burnham, S.C.,
Prime Minister

Dr. The Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of Communications

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Finance

The Hon. W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour and Social Security

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Education

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister Trade (Leader of the House)

The Hon. D.A. Singh,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Hon. O.E. Clarke,
Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Local Government

Appointed Ministers

The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State **(Absent)**

The Hon. H. Green,
Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply **(Absent)**

The Hon. H.O. Jack,
Minister of Mines and Forests

Dr. the Hon. Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

Mr. W. Haynes,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss. M.M. Ackman, Government Whip
Mr. K. Bancroft (Absent)
Mr. N.J. Bissember (Absent – on leave)
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.
Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue
Mr. E.F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica,
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Mr. R. J. Jordan
Mr. S.M. Saffee
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Mr. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr.C.B. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.
Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P.,
Deputy Speaker
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson
Mr. A.H. Hamid, J.P.
Opposition Whip
Mr. G.H. Lall, J.P.
Mr. M.Y. Ally
Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.
Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P. (Absent)
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.

Mrs. R.P. Sahoye
Mr. V. Teekah

(Absent – on leave)

United Force

Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. M.F. Singh
Mr. J.A. Sutton

(Absent)
(Absent – on leave)

Independent

Mr. R.E. Cheeks

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. F.A. Narain, A.A.

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly – Mr. M.B. Henry

The National Assembly met at 2.p.m.

[Mr. Speaker *in the Chair.*]

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**Leave To Member**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the hon. Member Mr. Sutton for four days from today.

DEATH OF PRESIDENT OF YUGOSLAV FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker: On the death of the President of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly I have sent a cable to the Assembly expressing the condolences of the Guyana National Assembly and myself. I have received in reply a cable from the Acting President of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly the text of which I will now read:

“May I thank you sincerely on behalf of the Federal Assembly and in my own name for your condolences on the occasion of the untimely death of the President of the Federal Assembly, Mr. Milentije Popovic.”

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following Bill was introduced and read a First time:

Food and Drugs Bill, 1971 – [**The Minister of Health**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS**MOTIONS****GUARANTEE OF LOAN TO THE GUYANA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Article 80(2) of the Constitution of Guyana I signify that Cabinet has recommended the following Motion for consideration by the honourable House:

“Whereas in accordance with Section 20(1) of the Public Corporations Ordinance, 1962 (N0. 23), with the approval of the National Assembly, the Cabinet may guarantee in such manner and on such conditions as they may think fit, the payment of the principal and of the interest on any authorised borrowing of a corporation;

And whereas in accordance with Section 2 of the said Ordinance, corporation means public corporation established under the said Ordinance;

And whereas the Guyana Development Corporation was established under the Guyana Industrial Development Corporation Order, 1963, as amended by the Guyana Industrial Development Corporation (Amendment) Order, 1966;

And whereas the Guyana Development Corporation needs the sum of four million U.S. dollars for a period of twelve months in relation to the take-over of the Demerara Bauxite Company Ltd;

And whereas the Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A. is willing to provide this sum for the purpose on the basis of a guarantee by the Government of Guyana:

And be it resolved that this National Assembly

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Hoyte: Your Honour, hon. Member, it will be recalled that this honourable House considered and passed the Bauxite Nationalisation Act on the 1st of March this year, and on the 4th of March His Excellency the President assented that imported Act. Under the Act it is proposed that as soon as certain preliminary matters have been settled, the assets of the company would be vested in the Government and people of Guyana.

In a very short time vesting day will be announced. But, as is to be expected, the orders for the inputs which are necessary for the continuation of the industry cannot come to a sudden halt. It is vital that orders continue to be placed so that the smooth operations of the bauxite company at Linden can continue. Not unnaturally, the present owners of that industry, namely DEMBA and ALCAN, would be unwilling to continue placing orders in respect of which they would become liable when the operations at Linden are no longer theirs legally. The Guyana, DEMBA, and ALCAN have come to an arrangement whereby ALCAN would continue to place orders for inputs required at DEMBA and naturally the Government has given certain assurances about the re-imburement of ALCAN.

Simply put, a line of credit in the amount of \$4 million (US) will be established by Chase Manhattan Bank in favour of ALCAN; and ALCAN, as it places order on behalf of the local operations will be able to re-imburse itself. Of course, strictly, the legal entity in Guyana which is concerned with the operations is the Guyana Development Corporation. It will be recalled that under the Bauxite Nationalisation Act the Guyana Development Corporation was named as the legal entity in which the assets of DEMBA may vest pending final arrangements as to the structure of the new company.

It is to be noted that local funds will not be used. That is of importance to Guyana from a

purely fiscal point of view of this arrangement. The funds used by Chase Manhattan Bank will be foreign funds. This prevents this country from running down its foreign reserves to finance the inputs necessary for the continuation of the bauxite industry. It is a very simply Motion, it is a very necessary, and it is in accordance with ordinary business practices. I commend the Motion to this honourable House.

Motion proposed.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Ram Karran: Mr. Speaker, we have no desire to query the preamble of this Motion or any section of this Motion, but we wish to observe that there has been many of omissions in so far as the Minister's contribution is concerned. We would like to have a few things cleared up. One is the interest rate. It seems to be a very bald Motion put forward by the hon. Minister who talks about the sum of \$4 million without even mentioning the interest rate. He has indicated what it is going to be used for and that is not the end of the matter in so far as the acquisition of the assets and the running of the service are concerned. We would like to know, and this is a suitable time, what is the total sum required by this Government for the running of this concern and also, whether all this money is going to be raised from overseas. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Minister is answering from his seat, sir.

I understood him to say that the sum of \$4 million is in respect of the ordering of equipment and things, through the Chase Manhattan Bank, by ALCAN, but I am talking of the operation of the concern in due course. I should like to know whether any of this money is going to be raised in this country and, specifically, whether the taxpayers of this country are going to be asked to contribute. I say so, and I regard these questions as questions relevant, because of our experience with this Government in respect of the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation and in respect of the Guyana Electricity Corporation.

Our concern is to see this operation successfully through. The members of any party have been unanimous in support of this Government's decision to nationalize DEMBA. The hon. Minister used the term "not unnaturally" with respect to the sections of the present owners of the concern and we regard this move by the Government to go to Chase Manhattan as a not unnatural act on the part of the Government. The American Government, with which Chase Manhattan has great influence, is strongly opposed to nationalization in any form and I think it is very, very strange for that Bank to help the Guyana Government in the nationalization of North American property.

The American Government has gone so far as to undertake to compensate American concerns which are nationalized in foreign countries, particularly in Latin American countries, and one looks very closely to see where is the deal in this siding of the Government of Guyana by Chase Manhattan. It seems strange that the Sullen Voice of America, which croaks day and night about the nationalization of the concerns in Chile, should say not a single word about the nationalization of partly-owned American property in Guyana. We do not complain. We are glad there is no opposition to this, but it is worth while noting that the Americans bellow about what is happening in Chile, in Cuba and in the Middle East, and there is not a single word about what is happening in Guyana. Could it be that this is a deal that the Americans were offering no resistance to the takeover of the Canadian assets in Guyana because the American assets represented by Reynolds are allowed to go free? Maybe in due course, when the big mouths of the Americans are opened, we will find out.

Last Saturday, when our honoured Prime Minister was declaring open the Naccie Conference, he was very critical of the trade unionists who go to the United Kingdom, to the United States of America, and he described these countries as capitalistically committed. He may have forgotten his own jaunt to bury Churchill and his trip to Texas to ride with Uncle Lyndon. The whole truth is that our country is itself capitalists and despite the shoutings from the house-tops about co-operativism, and about self-help, our whole economy is capitalistic and the hon. Minister of Finance in moving his Motion was certainly not betraying anything.

Having questioned Government's sincerity, I should like to acquaint our friends on the Government side with whom they are dealing. *[Interruption.]* I am very glad that the hon. Minister of Finance is up to date. All these pious attacks on J.G. Campbell and on the ALCAN are only part of the deal; they do not mean anything. Who are these people, sir? I should like to quote from page 421 of the West on Trial by Cheddi Jagan. *[Interruption.]*

2.35 p.m.

I start from page 3 on page 421 and I shall read to page 423 in order to give the hon. Prime Minister a chance to be quoted. I quote:

“In a report to President Kennedy in February, 1963, Wall Street asked for a ‘get-tough’ Latin American policy. This report was signed by David Rockefeller, President of the Chase National Bank, Emilio G. Gollada, Vice, President of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, and Walter B. Wriston, Executive Vice-President of the First National City Bank.”

David Rockefeller is a brother of Nelson Rockefeller the Governor of New York and the biggest shareholder of the Chase Manhattan Bank. This is what the report said:

“The Alliance for Progress can succeed it – and only if – it places far greater emphasis on the encouragement of private initiative and investment, both local and foreign.

The first requirement is that governments – and, as far as possible, the people of Latin America know that the U.S. has changed its policy so as to put primary stress on improvement in the general business climate as a prerequisite for social development and reform.

A second requirement concerns a change in the criteria for granting aid. The U.S. shall concentrate its economic aid program in countries that show the greatest inclination to adopt measures to improve the investment climate and withhold aid from others until satisfactory performance has been demonstrated.”

That has not been demonstrated here. I continue:

“Other influential people, including Senators Kenneth Keating and William A. Dodd began repeating this theme. On Thursday, August 21, 1961, Senator Smathers asked that an editorial advertisement penned by A.N. Spanel, Chairman of International Latex Corporation, be presented in the Congressional Record. This spelled out for Latin America a plan for the creation of a favourable investment climate.

The Plan called for Latin America to become one huge market with completely free trade and unrestricted movement of both profits and capital from one country to another. It also called for a drop in profits tax on companies, except oil and minerals, to not more than 10 per cent. And Puerto Rico, with its give-away tax holidays, was cited as the model which the other countries should follow.

Washington has made it clear what kind of economic development it will permit and foster. The Clay Committee on foreign aid said in 1963;

“We believe the U.S. should not aid a foreign government in projects establishing government-owned industrial and commercial enterprises which compete with existing private endeavours.”

I hope that the Government is listening carefully. Let me read on;

“Previous U.S. policy makers had emphasised this point on keeping poor countries non-industrialised. On March 30, 1950, former Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Point 4 Program put it this way:

I think there is a pretty widely held idea that we are going to build large mills, mines and factories for these underdeveloped peoples. That is not true.

‘It is not the policy of my Government’ said Mr. Albert J. Powers, a Commerce Department Trade Consultant, as head of delegation to the 1955 International Industrial Exposition in Bogota, ‘to intervene in the financing of activities which should properly be promoted by private enterprise. It is up to you people to create business and

industrial opportunities which will attract investment capital from the United States. Remember, too, that you must offer the possibility of greater profits than can be obtained at home. This is a time of exceptional inducements in my country for domestic financial venture.”

Where is the explanation to all that is taking place today? Chase Manhattan Bank offers a loan of \$4 million to the Guyana Government for the nationalization of North American capital. Let me read on merely to give the Prime Minister a chance to be quoted;

“L.F.S. Burnham before his break from us in 1955, was fully aware of these realities. In Thunder of October 10, 1954, sounding a warning on British offers of substantial aid to the Interim government, he wrote:

Since the war there has been a great deal of talk by America and Britain of their desire to help underdeveloped and backward countries and also those nations whose economics have been affected by the war

In British Guiana we can recognise this form of political-economic pressure without wandering as far afield as Italy, Greece, Turkey and Pakistan, in which countries the United States is expanding her influence by loans and assistance. Because the official policy of the P.P.P. was pro-Guianese” –

It was at that time and it still is –

“and unequivocally in favour of self-determination, because the P.P.P. was not prepared to be agent of Britain in perpetrating the oppressive imperialist system, Her Majesty’s government was angered ...”

This is the record and, as said just now, we on this side would like to know where is the deal between the Chase Manhattan Bank and the Guyana Government.

Another incident catches my attention at this moment. We are contributing the sum of \$50,000 to the Freedom Fighters in Africa whose oppressors are drawn mainly from Portugal, South African and Rhodesia. We on this side of the House have supported the measure and have

even asked the Government to extend that assistance to other freedom fighters in Asia. We have banned trade with these countries – South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia – but our very clever Minister of Trade allows us to eat Portuguese potatoes and Portuguese onions imported via United States of America at higher prices to the consumer.

The relevance of this is that the Chase Manhattan Bank, which is lending us money, is the main supporter of these fascist regimes in Southern Africa and elsewhere, but particularly in South Africa. My friend the hon. Minister of Finance says that he has already read the Mirror. It is a pity that he did not refer to it in his speech before this House because it is most relevant.

I should like to quote from the Mirror of Sunday, May 31st 1971. Mr. M.P. Naicker, an important person who is the Publicity and Information Director of the African National Congress said in an article:

“The major private institution involved in the post-Sharpeville crisis was Chase Manhattan Bank, which loaned £2.5 million to the South African Government, followed by First National City Bank with £1.5 million.”

We recall that the Prime Minister often beats his breast when he talks about Sharpeville. It is significant that the Chase Manhattan Bank has contributed immensely to the rehabilitation of the fascist state in South Africa which itself is engaged in shooting down defenceless workers who are fighting for their freedom in that country.

2.45 p.m.

And as I am on this perhaps it would be the right time to nail the lie which was uttered by the Prime Minister – I beg your pardon, sir – to correct what the Prime Minister said in an earlier debate when we appealed for some token assistance to be given to Freedom Fighters in Vietnam. He said in this House – and it must be recorded in Hansard – that the Russians were making no contribution to the Freedom Fighters in Africa, that he Russians were aiding only the

Vietnamese. I should like to quote Mr. Noeber in the same article. This is the Publicity Director of the African National Congress; Mr. Eusi Kwayana will know him. This is what he said:

“And the socialist countries especially the Soviet Union support the cause of freedom in South Africa in the United Nations and at all international gatherings. The aid the Liberation Movement gets from the Socialist countries is immeasurable.’

It nails the lie and it puts the Prime Minister in his place.

The most I can say on this measure before the House is to ask the Government to let us in on this deal – [**The Prime Minister:** “No.”] – deal which is undoubtedly a deal between the Chase Manhattan Bank, the United States Government and the Government of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Mrs. DaSilva.

Mrs. Dasilva: Mr. Speaker, just a few brief words on this Motion by the hon. Minister of Finance. It is well-known and I do not wish to reiterate it and to go into a long drawn-out story – the United Force is not in favour of the nationalisation of bauxite. We do not feel it is in the best interests of our country, but that now is almost history. We have stated our case quite clearly and it is well-known to everyone. But we have also said that whilst we are not in favour of the nationalisation of the bauxite industry – as we said when Guyana became a Republic we do not think it is right just yet, but we will do everything possible in our power to see that things run smoothly, we will do nothing to hinder or harm it, we will act as loyal citizens of Guyana.

Yesterday a letter was received by members of our party and perhaps other members of this House have received copies of this letter. We feel very strongly that it is the sort of letter that ought not to be allowed to circulate in the country as it can do nothing but harm. I refer to a letter headed “Seventh Day Adventist Association” of 189 Barr Street, Kitty. It is signed by somebody called James Pieters. I understand everybody has received a copy which is all more reason why this sort of tripe should not be allowed to be circulated. I hope that the hon.

Minister of Home Affairs is going into the matter because we feel that it is not in the interest of the country that a person, or persons, should be allowed to stir up strife, agitation and confusion.

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): Sir, my colleague raised the point about this strange coincidence of the Government of Guyana nationalizing an imperialist enterprise and getting assistance from an imperialist enterprise to run it. The hon. Prime Minister from his seat makes the point that this is business. But we know that big businessmen like the Rockefeller interest who own the Chase Manhattan Bank put politics before business. In fact, politics is business. Therefore it is strange to hear from the hon. Prime Minister – [**Interruption by the hon. Prime Minister.**] He knows that the industrial, the financial and the military are all intertwined and interlinked. Even President Eisenhower at one time criticized the Rockefellers who have helped to overthrow governments which have dared to nationalize, to move in the direction of socialism. It is difficult to understand how these people would be coming to the assistance of this Government when the Government says that it is moving towards socialism.

Mr. Nelson Rockefeller in 1953 was appointed by then President, Dwight Eisenhower, to make a tour of Latin America. More recently when he was given a welcome in Guyana, he came not only to Guyana but to Latin America, as the representative of the next President of the same party, the Republican Party of President Nixon. What did Mr. Rockefeller say? He said the United States must give help to the dictators, to the fascists, including Papa Doc Duvalier and all the others in Latin America who have destroyed democracy, who are selling out the national interest of these countries, like Brazil where partly-owned state enterprises are now being denationalized. This is the kind of influence which is coming through people like Mr. Nelson Rockefeller. My colleague referred to the brother in the quotation which he read – Mr. David Rockefeller who is the President of the Chase Manhattan Bank. He and other representing Big Business made it quite clear that they will do everything to sabotage so far as aid is concerned, so far as loans are concerned and even investments, to Governments which are moving towards socialism.

We have said during the debate on the nationalization that it was rather strange that the Government was not moving against Reynolds Metals Company. We saw the time that a powerful figure in U.S politics, a one-time Secretary of Labour, a one-time U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, came here but representing Reynolds Metals Company. Can it be, as we had said, that what we are seeing in the nationalisation of DEMBA is the move against small imperialist in the interest of big imperialism in the United States of America?

2.55 p.m.

The Prime Minister only a few days ago gave me a copy of a book my Miss Carrie Levitt. The name of the book: **Silent Surrender**. Now, the Prime Minister has read what I have been talking about in this House for several years. I told him about the book, **The Choice for Canada** written by Walter Gordon, a former Finance Minister. The same point was made about U.S. take-over of Canadian industry, and we said that in time it is likely that ALCAN will become a fully-owned Canadian enterprise and not an American subsidiary operating in Canada. Are we merely nationalizing an American subsidiary because we are in cahoots with American imperialism which is afraid that ALCAN may become Canadian property, with its resources like DEMBA which it controls abroad? Are we by nationalization, ensuring that the United States will continue to manipulate and to get the bauxite resources from Guyana?

Those were some of the doubts we expressed since Reynolds was not being nationalized, especially since the big representative of Reynolds came here to talk silently. Was this the "silent surrender"? Maybe we are over-suspicious, but if we are, we are over suspicious in the national interest. Are we over-suspicious when we see Chase Manhattan coming to the rescue of a Government which says it is moving against its very philosophy, against all the things that it believes in, against a background where it has moved to overthrow Governments like Mossadegh's Government which nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1953? The same Rockefeller said that they were able through the CIA not only to overthrow Mossadegh's Government but to muscle in and get 40 per cent of the oil in Iran, what was formerly a wholly-

owned British preserve. This is why we now ask: What about Reynolds? What about these negotiations?

We were told negotiations would start immediately after. Why is it we have not seen any negotiations starting with Reynolds, or is it that what we are surmising is really true, that all this deal – especially considered in the context of Guyana's foreign affairs, its trade policies, etc. – is done with the blessing of the United States of America, while the Government poses and makes its supporters believe that it is proceeding in an anti-imperialist direction, that it is virtually carrying out what the PPP is advocating? It has cast doubts and we would like the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to tell us how soon the discussions with Reynolds will start. We want to know this. The public wants to know so that it can be assured there will be no underhand deal to sell out the national interests of this country to United States imperialism.

Mr. Hoyte (replying): your Honour, let me explain the system quite simply because it is quite obvious that the hon. Members who spoke on the other side are befuddled. It is necessary that they be continuity in ordering of inputs for DEMBA. Many of these inputs have a lead time of as long as six months. It follows, therefore, that if we are going to ensure this continuity, orders have to be placed now in respect of inputs which will be received six months hence.

At present, the assets have not yet been vested in the Government; therefore, the legal entity which owns DEMBA is still ALCAN. ALCAN has agreed to place orders for these inputs; but the moment the assets vest in the Government and people of Guyana, ALCAN ceases to have interest in the DEMBA operations but would naturally still be liable to the suppliers of the inputs under their contract. Naturally, they sought to have guarantees: they sought to have assurances that they would be reimbursed in respect of any money they have expended, and they would be guaranteed against any liabilities incurred.

I said when introducing the Motion, I repeat for the benefit of the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, that all the money will be foreign money and that was the attractiveness of the arrangement with Chase Manhattan. I indicated that it would relieve us of having to run down our foreign reserves over this short period between vesting and getting the operations going, and the company receiving revenues.

3.05 p.m.

The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran again asked what was the interest on the loan. That question indicates a certain lack of understanding of these financial arrangements. No bank which is going to lend you money in the future is going to fix a rate of interest at 7 per cent, 8 per cent or 9 per cent now. What has happened here is that Chase Manhattan and the Government have agreed on a rate of interest at 2½ per cent over and above the prime rate in New York at the rate when the Agreement has been finalized, with a minimum of 7½ per cent.

I do not think that there is anything further which warrants any reply, apart from the excursion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition into realms of fantasy. We are told that Chase Manhattan is a bad bank, an agent of imperialist America and so we are to imply that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is a great nationalist who would like to see us avoid these foreign imperialist agents and depend as much as possible on national institutions.

May I ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition why is it, since he postures as this great nationalist, he has refused to bank with the national bank, the Guyana National Co-operative Bank? Why is it that Gimpex banks with Barclays Bank? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order in the House!

Mr. Hoyte: May I ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition why is it that Freedom House banks with the Royal Bank of Canada, when the members of the People's Progressive Party

come here and go to the street corners and abuse the Canadians as being fascists and racialists? Did not the dear Joey Jagan, son of the Leader of the Opposition, meet with certain little difficulties at a place called Sir George William University? Perhaps, while we are on this subject, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will tell the public of Guyana why it is that he has chosen to send his boy back to this very place where, according to him, non-white people are being discriminated against. [**Dr. Jagan:** “You have a medical school here?”] What a wide and unbridgeable gulf between words and postures on the one hand and acts on the other hand!

They bank, sir, with Barclays Bank and everybody knows that Sir Fredrick Seebohm Chairman of the Barclays Bank Group is also the Chairman of the South Africa lobby in England. These are facts which are notorious and yet they sit there and dare to criticize the Government for entering into a straight business transaction which is necessary for the continuation of the bauxite industry. It is futile to continue in this way. [*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members, order in the House!

Mr. Hoyte: I was saying that nothing of substance has come from the intervention by the hon. Members of the Opposition. I therefore commend this Motion to the House.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

CUSTOMS DUTIES (AMENDMENT) ORDER 1971 (No. 24)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly, in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm Customs Duties (Amendment) Order, 1971 (No. 24), which was made on the 30th of April, 1971 and published in the Gazette on the 1st of May, 1971.” [**The Minister of Finance.**]

Mr. Hoyte: your Honour, under the Caribbean Free Trade Association Agreement it is contemplated that the time will come when all tariffs within the region will be removed so that in respect of inter-regional trade there will be no customs duties.

It is provided in Annex B and Annex D to the Agreement that there would be a progressively phased reduction of the import duty on certain groups of commodities. In accordance with Guyana's obligations under the Agreement, there has already been two phasings down in terms of the Agreement, and now the Order which has been made fulfils Guyana's obligations in respect of the third phasing.

The items which are affected will be the following: fruits preserved and fruits preparations; tobacco, paints, varnished, enamels, lacquer, detergents, freight in wooden containers, radio and television sets, furniture, mattresses, shirts, and fabrics, shoes and footwear, wholly or mainly leather.

Under Annexure B it is provided that the third phasing should come into effect from the 1st May, 1971. It will reduce to 40 per cent the duty placed on that group of items. By way of rounding off this point, I may point out that on the 1st May, 1972, this will be reduced to 20 per cent and on the 1st May, 1973, it will be reduced to zero. On the 1st May 1973, therefore, the customs duties will be removed entirely.

The second group of items contains the following commodities: beer, stout and ale, gin, vodka, whisky, petroleum products and rum. The phasing for the reduction of duties on those commodities is the same, except that the rate at which the import duties will be reduced to zero. Therefore, in accordance with Guyana's obligations under the Caribbean Free Trade Association Agreement, I commend the Order to this honourable House.

3.15 p.m.

Question proposed, put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

TOWN OF CHRISTIANBURG/WISMAR/MACKENZIE (CHANGE OF NAME) BILL

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to effect a change in the name of the Town of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie and in the Town Council of the Town.” [The Minister of Local Government.]

The Minister of Local Government (Mr. Mingo): Your Honour, I beg to move that the town of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie (Change of Name) Bill be now read a Second time.

Section 33, subsection (3) of the Municipal and Districts Council Act requires that in respect of the establishment of a town there shall be a Constitutional Order which should prescribe the name of the town as well as the name of the Council for the town. Order No. 29 of 1970 established the town of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie, the Village Council of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie because the town of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie and the Council became the Mayor and Town Council of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie. You will agree this is a very long-winded name, and so the councillors immediately sought to find a name which is less cumbersome.

A Committee was appointed to receive suggestions as to a new name for the town. On the 5th March, 1971, the Council approved of recommendations of the Committee and they applied to the Ministry of Local Government for approval of this new name. Clause 2 of the Bill seeks to have the town of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie redesignated to the town of Linden. Since the 6th March, 1971, there have been many transactions which have been executed in the name of Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie, and also there have been transactions in the name of Linden. This Bill now seeks to make these transactions valid.

We will all agree that the name Linden is a beautiful name. This is a simple measure aimed really at substitution of the lovely name Linden for the rather cumbersome one Wismar/Christianburg/Mackenzie. I commend the Bill to the House and I hope that the hon. Member s will support this very simple measure.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: The hon. Member who just spoke has been a school teacher all his life and surely he must remember the famous opening lines of the poem by Thomas Campbell:

“Oh Linden, When the sun was low,
All bloodless lay th’ un-trodden snow.”

I am sure my hon. Friend remembers those lines which seem to have some great significance with respect to the area we are now going to re-baptise.

There are two things about Linden: one is, if you sit anywhere in the vicinity formerly Machenzie, Bokara and Markenburg, you are bound to see the sand outside and the first impression you get is that you are in Europe as you see what appears to be undisturbed snow lying all around. That is the impression you get even though the sun is hot. Many Europeans have thought that they were in Europe. The second significance this has is that this area has been the scene of a great deal of blood-letting. While old Gaspar, in the lines of the poet, was unable to explain the reason why they fought, the Guyanese people, particularly those in the Upper Demerara River, will certainly know the reason why the blood-letting took place. But they will wonder, if not in this generation, in the next, if all this blood-letting had been merely to immortalize one man, who from all appearance and from all that is happening today, has let them down immensely.

One has no quarrel with the Prime Minister whose parents have given him the name Linden. One has no quarrel with anyone who might wish to change his name like the husband of the hon. Minister of Education who was just heckling. As you attain the age of 21 you have every right to change your name if you so wish. I remember the gentleman who lived in one of the West African countries. He was sired by a German, and was very glad when he got an opportunity to change his name by deed poll. He was talking all around in the shop where he worked about the great opportunity he had to change his name. His name was Ishmael Shidtt. And everyone was so glad that he was going to change his name. A couple of weeks after he went and told his friends that he had changed his name from Ishmeal Shidtt to Isreal Shidtt. He was glad but his friends were dismayed. We have no quarrel with anyone who wishes to change his or her name or who may wish to retain the names which his parents have given him. But we object very strongly in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber when one man gets too big, and when you go all over the country you see streets named Burnham Street, Burnham Avenue, Burnham Court, Burnham this and Burnham that. There is another place called Roxanne Burnham Gardens – a charming young lady, I saw her photograph in the newspapers. But that is the limit I think. He dominates this Chamber. I understood that another Commission is to be given for him to be painted in a shirtjac. It is said that the suit he is wearing is irrelevant.

3.25 p.m.

In Vienna, a country that is known for its statues, there is a beautiful place called Stadt Park. A friend and I used to visit that place and he used to say to me, “These people in their lifetime, they obstructed the people. Now they are dead, they obstruct traffic” ; motorists see these names stuck up on the streets and there is more fear, more accidents. It is time that we call a halt to this. We do not need statues on our roadway. The name alone is enough to double and perhaps treble the carnage on the road each year.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington) says we ought to change the name of Georgetown; it was named for the mad King George III. We are not changing that.

Para our manes must not be outlandish. They must fit in with our history. It will be recalled that my good friend, the hon. Member Mr. Joaquin, in Kitty, and his councilors in Kitty stuck up their manes all over the place but there was strong objection on the part of the villagers and they were changed. It was an unwritten law that you do not your position to name places after yourself. There is good reason for this.

One does not know what will be and the end of the person whose name we are going to use at Linden. Perhaps he might end up as a lunatic like George III. Perhaps he might go to prison. I am not saying that Belfield house has anything to do with it. I am not saying that the back of the Botanical Gardens has anything to do with it, but it would be more acceptable if Belfield House were named Burnham House, or if the back of the Botanical Gardens, taken away from the taxpayers of this country, were named Linden Gardens we would not object so strenuously, but for the Government to name the town at Mackenzie, Linden, is a bit uncalled for.

You will recall, sir, that I took the ex-Minister of Communications, Mr. Correia, to task when he tried to use the Chamber to regularise, as he said, but in fact to change the beautiful Amerindian name, Aundabaru, to Veldgrad, in honour of some of his mid-European friends who were trading in that area. The hon. Gentleman whose name is going to be used has undoubtedly had a great deal done for him. As you know, sir, he was educated overseas at the expense of the taxpayers of this country. He has been living, as we say, easy, since by rigging, with the British and the Americans, he was able to head the Government. Even his pots and pans are bought by the taxpayers. It is too much to have him immortalized when, indeed, he has not lived up to the expectations of the people.

If the Government cannot find suitable names, perhaps we can go through the pages of the present negotiations at DEMBA. If the name of the hon. Prime Minister or the name of any member of the Government must be utilized, it can best be represented by the name RILA but with the letters fitted in such a way as to bring out the true quality of the Government – LIAR.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Speaker, sir, when the history of our country is written, and in the years to come when our descendants look down on this period in the life of our country, they are going to find it very confusing indeed; they are going to say how much time we wasted in this House discussing a matter that need not have appeared here at all if we had stuck to the name Mackenzie that it had before.

We are all trying to get our Guyanese culture. This is right and this is proper. All the six races of Guyana making up the country must have their Guyanese culture but it seems to me that we are trying all so fast, and whenever the opportunity arises, no matter how flippant, we do away with what is part of our heritage, whether we like it or not, whether it is good or bad. I think this is the fourth name that this town is going to have. I hope they will not change it again and I support the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran that it is not customary to honour people in their lifetime by putting their names on streets. For example, in Kitty, when Mr. Joaquin and his comrades changed the street names, the next morning they had to go and take them off.

An example to be followed is that of South Ruimveldt Gardens. Men who have given great service to Guyana have been honoured. That is a new area and we have the Aubrey Barker Street, the David Rose Street. When we have new areas, as we hope to have created all the time, then we can have a Linden Town, but we should not go around just changing names for the sake of changing names, thus depriving Guyana, its citizens and our descendants, of their heritage.

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: I should just like to emphasise the fact that the name “Linden” is really outlandish. I agree that as this is a new town there is a necessity for us to find a name for it. I agree that to combine the names of the three districts – Mackenzie, Christianburg and Wismar – into Markenburg is not quite suitable.

The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran has indicated that “Linden” is a place in Europe. I would have thought that the members of this Government, who speak so much about decolonization, would have tried to get away from the imperialist trend. There is a need for us to carry out a conscious effort to change the names of places like Georgetown and the name of streets and districts like Regent Street, Carmichael Street, Smyth Street and Bourda.

I think that a special committee should be set up to consider this matter of giving names that have some connection with local people. I would have expected the Prime Minister to change his own names – Linden, Forbes, Sampson; all these are names that have imperialist connections – by deed poll to one in keeping with what has happened as a result of ASCRIA’s efforts inasmuch as he is a member of ASCRIA. I know that all the Ministers are members of ASCRIA. [*Laughter.*] One would have expected the Prime Minister to change his name either to Kenyatta, Mobotu or something like that, something having contact with Africa and that, after having done that, he would have had Markenburg named after him. I am not so much opposed to the town being named after him as he is the Prime Minister, but I am really against this sort of thing. It is really the limit.

I think that a serious effort should be made. This name is really not suitable. I agree that a new name is needed but a name that is indigenous, perhaps a name connected with the Amerindian language. The name “Linden” is outlandish.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Mr. Mingo (replying): Mr. Speaker, quite a lot has been said about a very simple measure. I wish to go once more over the procedure which the Council adopted before it arrived at a decision to ask the Minister to approve the name Linden.

The name “Markenburg” was suggested and then there was a suggestion of the name Boroka. The Council itself did not accept these names and appointed a committee. Of the 150

entrants, 25 persons suggested the name of “Linden”. The Committee thought that this was an excellent name and recommended it to the Council. The Council decided that this was the best name. On the 6th March the Council wrote to the Ministry asking that this name be approved. This, Mr. Speaker, was the procedure. In other words, the name was selected by the people of the area.

There was quite a lot said that a place should not be named after a person during this lifetime. This is nonsense because Georgetown was named after King George during his lifetime. I refer to this, because the hon. Member who made that remark was the person who was concerned about the removal of the statue of Queen Victoria. I may also mention the case of the hon. Member on the other side who was a councillor at Kitty and had a street named after him. The people rejected it. When I go around the country I see “Jagan Street” all about and this is during his lifetime, at Enterprise there is a “Jagan Street”, so this is nonsense about not naming a place after a person during his lifetime.

This name “Linden” I must repeat, has been selected by the people of the area. There was also a suggestion that we should have retained the name Mackenzie. This is a large area including the former Wismar, Christiansburg and Mackenzie. It would not be fair to the people of Wismar and the people of Christianburg to name that place Mackenzie after one part of the area. Mr. Speaker, the people have made a very excellent choice we all agree. I therefore ask this honourable House to accept this new name so that he people can have very beautiful mane “Linden” to use. [Applause.]

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Clause 1 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2.

Mrs. DaSilva: Mr. Speaker, just a short remark. I hope, now that this Bill has passed its Second Reading in this House, that we will be consistent and that the names of all the places that link us with our past, colonial or otherwise, will be changed. We shall then have one mass of confusion in the country because nobody will know the name of the street he lives on.

Mr. Mingo: May I say that if the people of the areas make the request, certainly we will have Bills brought to Parliament to have the names of places changed. It is a question of the people deciding to have the names of their districts changed.

Clause 2 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

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

3.45 p.m.

VALUATION FOR RATING PURPOSES (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, 1969.” [**The Minister of Local Government.**]

Mr. Mingo: Your Honour, I beg to move that the Valuation for Rating Purposes (Amendment) Bill, 1971 be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the House is a very simple measure seeking to amend Sections 3 and 46 of the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, 1969. Clause 2 seeks simply to amend section 3 of the Principal Ordinance to make statutory provision for the redesignation as from the 1st January, 1970 of the post of Valuation Officer and to create the post of Deputy Chief Valuation Officer as from 1st January, 1970. It is also to allow the transactions done by the Chief Valuation Officer to be valid so that any reference to the Valuation Officer on or before the 1st January, 1970 be construed as a reference to the Chief Valuation Officer.

Clause 3 seeks to amend section 46(1) and section 46(3) of the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, 1969. It is provided in this Act that the Chief Valuation Officer of the Ministry of Local Government shall prepare a valuation list of property for rating purposes of all the local authorities of Guyana. Such a list cannot be prepared unless the Chief Valuation Officer receives an Order from the Minister of Local Government. To date, in only one area has such an order been issued and that is, in the City of Georgetown. Now the work is in progress in preparing this valuation list for the City of Georgetown.

Valuation of property in respect of all the rural areas was formally regulated by provisions of sections 96 to 104 of the Local Government Ordinance Chapter 150. However, these sections have been repealed by Section 45 of the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act No. 11 of 1969. There are certain transitional provisions permitting the limited use of the repealed sections 96 to 104, made in respect of country districts and village districts. Section 326 of the Municipal and District Councils Act deals with the situation in district councils.

Section 46(1) of the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act states that:

“Notwithstanding the repeal of sections 96 to 104, (both sections inclusive) of the Local Government Ordinance, a local authority may, until a valuation list in relation to the area administered by such local authority prepared pursuant to this Act comes into operation, continue to appraise new buildings or re-appraise old buildings in that area as if the Act had not been enacted, ...”

The words “continue to appraise new buildings or re-appraise old buildings” are the words which cause the trouble as my hon. Friend here had said. We have been told that this only applies to those local authorities in existence prior to the enactment of Act No. 11 of 1969 and it does not really apply to new Local Authorities or to those portions of old local authorities which have been extended. The impact of this interpretation is that in those local authorities whose boundaries have been extended, or in those new local authorities important exercises like valuation or appraisal cannot go on. This Bill before the House seeks to put the situation in the country districts and village districts in order.

As I said before, the situation with regard to the City of Georgetown in which the valuation list is being prepared, is regular. Section 326 of the Municipal Districts Councils Act will take care of the situation in district councils. The situation in New Amsterdam is not quite regular, and so Clause 3 seeks to put this in order. This Bill is necessary in order to have the whole situation with regard to re-appraisal or assessment valid. Without proper assessment or appraisal we cannot proceed to the next stage of rating. This is the reason this Bill has been brought to this House, firstly, to be able to regularise the situation as far as the Third Valuation Officer and the Deputy Chief Valuation Officer are concerned; and secondly, to ensure that there is adequate provision in the new law to make valuation or appraisal in all types of local authorities in Guyana go on as smoothly as possible.

3.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Question is proposed that the Bill be read a Second time.

Mr. Ram Karran: I propose to be very brief having regard to the likelihood that the ex-Minister of Local Government will guide us on this measure far better than the verbosity of the last speaker. I think we are all more confused about this measure now that the Minister has spoken. The Bill itself is clear but the hon. Minister seems to have created more confusion by his description. Why is this Bill necessary? The Minister has not told us. Is it because of

section so and so? The hon. Minister was a school teacher. If he had adopted the principle of a school teacher, we would have been able to follow him.

Is it amended because the country districts and the village districts have to have certain things done in order to allow the Chief Valuation Officer assisted by the Assistant Valuation Officer to do something or the other? I think the Minister of Agriculture is just as confused as I am. As I understand it, it is retrospective to a certain date. Something has been done before. Was it illegal? Tell us. Why? Then we will give authority to the Government to deal with those illegalities.

The country has been crying out, particularly the new areas, for some action on the part of the Government to do something with respect to the roads, the water supply, the cleaning up of garbage and so on, but the Government fiddles and from what we have heard this afternoon, we can well understand what is going on. It has been pointed out that previous administrations in normal times offered grants and loans to local authorities to prepare the place for the people to live in a decent way.

Prior to the elections, the hon. Prime Minister very boastfully said that those people who returned councillors not of the PNC cannot expect any grant, any aid, from the central government. All the local authorities have returned PNC majorities, some of them unanimously but there are no grants and now those P.N.C. majorities are creating difficulties for the Government. The hon. Minister has just said that Sony Ramphal will amend the recall Motion. They had to amend it for themselves because many of the councillors in the local authorities, according to the hon. Minister, are not behaving like PNC members. I would disagree with the hon. Minister. They are behaving like PNC members because they want pay. One of them went to the PPP councillor in New Amsterdam and said, "Why don't you move a Motion so that we can get pay?" These scoundrels that the PNC has all over the place as councillors want pay. That is why we have all this rubbish coming up before the House.

I shall give notice of a Motion, very shortly, that the central government should provide grants so that these people can rehabilitate their places that have been deteriorating through the incompetence of the central government and the Minister of Local Government all these years. In the suburbs of Georgetown near the Bel Air platform, just near the railway line, garbage is dumped and one sees dogs festering with sores.

Mr. Speaker: is it the wish of the House that we continue until we have completed the business?

Mr. Ram Karran: I do not have much to say. [**Hon. Members:** "Yes."] I would suggest that the hon. Minister, instead of wasting time bringing retroactive Bills before this House, Bills he himself does not understand, should bring some measure whereby the people in local authorities could get some help. Let the Government put up \$½ million to provide decent roads, drainage, and water supply. The burning question with Bookers, that Cummins Canal, remains the same. The canal is overgrown with weeds and the hon. Minister probably does not know that the water from the eastern areas cannot get to the river. They do not give you opportunity in this House to raise these matters. The Government limits its activities in this House to Government business. With all the time the Minister has, he ought to have studied this Bill before coming to this House and confusing everybody.

Mr. Cheeks: Your Honour, I wish to make two comments on this Bill. One refers to the designation of Chief Valuation Officer and the other refers to a point which was dealt with at length by the Minister concerned.

In regard to the first point, the re-designation of Valuation Officer to Chief Valuation Officer is long overdue, but I would like to know from the Minister what he has in mind when the Chief Valuation Officer in the Ministry of Local Government is placed under the F9 rate of salary while other chief officers in the technical branch are placed at various other levels. The position of Chief Valuation Officer in the Ministry of Local Government can be held only by

someone who has the necessary degrees and/or diploma which take quite a few years of training to acquire. I had a look at the estimates and I noted that under the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, three chief engineers are placed under the F8 rate of salary, which is higher than the rate of the Chief Valuation Officer.

4.05 p.m.

These are all technical men whose qualifications to be attained requires just about the same length of time, though, perhaps, they do not have the same amount of experience as the Valuation Officer. There is the Deputy Chief Valuation Officer under F11, the Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Education Officer and Chief Medical Officer under F3a, a super scale, and there are six Chief Officers in the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply under F8, which is higher than the scale for the Chief Valuation Officer in the Ministry of Local Government.

I should say that the promotion of this Valuation Officer to the higher post of Chief Valuation Officer is quite in order, but what is not in order is the variation in the salary scales of the various Chief Officers. These variations seem to have no direct reference to qualifications and experience except perhaps in the case of the Chief Officers in the Ministries of Education and Health. The Chief Labour Officer is under F7, which scale is even higher than the scale for a similar post in the Ministry of Interior Development and the Ministry of Information. It is higher than the scale for the Chief Valuation Officer and the scales for all the various Chief Officers who require years of training in the Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply in order to be suitable qualified. These are the mysteries in the workings of Government. Perhaps the members of the Government have some reason to give this House for this difference.

The second comment I wish to make is in regard not only to the fact that this Bill is requiring a local authority to go back to the old system – I suppose for the time being – but the Bill has made precise provision to enable the local authority to go back to it. I have very strong feelings on this matter.

I have had occasion to visit a local authority on the East Bank, Craig. The system in operation there was one whereby a Chairman, or some other influential councillor who may have quite a lot of power, selects a carpenter or some friend of his to carry out the exercise of valuation. I remember being shown an old two-room building valued at \$800. It was situated about 200 yards in from the road. In front of it was a concrete house, with a shop below, valued at less than a quarter of that small, old, two-room building. These are injustices which are allowed by this system and these injustices are enshrined in the Bill which is now before the House.

There is a worse case which I may cite. At Batchelor's Adventure the valuation placed on a few properties along the middle walk were brought to my attention. The plots were about the same size. The corner lot was valued at \$700. This faced the railway line. The one next to it, going south, was valued at \$500 and it was the same size as the one at the corner. Let us say, the corner site would be more valuable. But the third lot inside was valued at \$150. When I inquired who owned that lot it turned out, perhaps by chance, that that third lot belonged to the Chairman of the Village Council.

If there is to be a change from the old system of dishonesty and dis-crimination, then there must be qualified valuers, valuers who have something at stake when they are doing this work. If one looks at the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, 19679, one will see that there is not a definition of "value" under section 2, Interpretation. Section 3 states that –

"There shall be a Valuation Officer and such number of valuers as may be requisite for the purposes of this Act"

but there is no definition of the word "valuer". This means that anybody can value, whether it is a carpenter, a porter or anyone at all – perhaps even a friend of the Chairman, as in the cases which I have noted.

I would like to support this Bill and, therefore, I should like the Minister to tell this House

what Government intends in these circumstances.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. R.D. Persaud.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I share some of the views expressed by the hon. Member Mr. Cheeks because the hon. Minister did not point out to this House what will be the new position in a manner clear enough for us to understand, for the country as a whole to understand and for those who are going to be called upon to pay rates and taxes to understand.

The intention of this Ordinance, when it was passed in the House, was to have a list prepared beforehand, examined, scrutinized and approved so that those who are going to be chosen – let us assume that they will be chosen – will be qualified and will be guided by certain yardsticks and principles.

The new situation the Minister is asking us to approve this afternoon allows the individual appointed as valuer to come at his whims and fancies to say how much he values a particular property for and what will be the taxes to be paid on that property.

I asked the hon. Minister to explain in detail the implications of this particular Bill because it will not only affect person who are already paying taxes, persons who are within the City of Georgetown or who were within local authorities in the past, it will affect a large number of new people who have never paid taxes in their lives.

Let me, for instance, cite Houston which is included in Greater Georgetown. The Minister of Local Government said a list is being prepared for Georgetown. Now the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund was set up to provide certain facilities for sugar workers in extra-nuclear and nuclear areas, based on the principle that as a result of their work and contribution to the sugar industry these workers were entitled to good roads, recreational facilities, community

centres, water supply and many other facilities including drainage.

I understand, quite reliably, that the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund stands at the moment at a sum of \$7 million and, of this amount, the sum of \$5 million has been borrowed by the government and utilized by it in some one of its financial reservoirs. I do not want to say that the money cannot be accounted for but it means that only the sum of \$2 million remains in the Fund to provide all these facilities for a large number of areas throughout this country and as we move into the operation of "Marshallisation" and bring into effect the various Acts that were passed relating to local government and valuation, people in the rural areas are going to be severely affected.

I speak so strongly because the people who are living in many of these areas are pensioners who receive small weekly sums. That will be their position? Will they be called upon to pay taxes at the same rate as other people living in the areas when they do not have the financial resources to make the payment?

4.15 p.m.

Since one can reasonable assume that they will not have the financial resources to pay the taxes that will be fixed by these valuation officers without even the list and the yardstick and the principles laid out subsequently, these people will have to have their homes sold at public auction by these local authorities or municipalities as the case may be. One can see the deep implications of this bill which, on the surface, appears at first sight to be non-controversial. Surely after sharing this afternoon in the experience of a former Minister of Local Government, (Mr. Cheeks) one is convinced that the Government is guilty of negligence. And I am being very, not honest, but generous to the hon. Minister when I say this. The Minister deals with local government alone and he cannot get the whole operation of local government streamlined to conform with the provisions of Acts that we have passed in this House so many months ago. And I am not attacking the individual as such, I am attacking the Ministry. Is it that one Minister

is not competent to deal with a Ministry of Local government and he needs a Parliamentary Secretary? Or is it that he is qualified for another field and he is not suitable for this particular field? These might be some of the reasons and once the public are going to be called upon to make payments that they can ill-afford to pay, we as Members of this House, must ensure that the people are protected and this is where we take issue with the Government this afternoon.

I would say that the hon. Minister has not supplied this honourable House with adequate information dealing with this particular Bill before the House. This particular Amendment to the original Act leaves room for corruption, partiality, dishonesty, for discrimination and we must with every strength at our command oppose very strongly this measure and call upon the Government to revert to the original Act and to gear the machinery in order that the lists can be prepared for all the areas so that the people could know what yardstick will be used for the purpose of taxation.

I also called upon the Government this afternoon to look at the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. Before other nuclear and extra-nuclear areas are brought under the control of local authorities, let them feel that the money is spent on the building of roads, community centres and other facilities to which the people are entitled. There are many areas in the country which I can cite – Seafield Leonora. I can cite Houston right here.

The hon. Minister of Housing will also support me if I cite Cummings Lodge the roads are in a deplorable condition. We met the hon. Minister and he was quite right when he told us that this is not really his baby. This is true. This is really the responsibility of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee. The people are entitled to these facilities and the Government must not utilize any longer the fund of the sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee for other purposes. Let the money be used for the development of nuclear and extra-nuclear areas throughout the country. Let the Minister in his reply tell us what yardstick will be used for valuation under this Amendment or whether he, having heard a former Minister of Local Government and other observations, cares to withdraw the Bill to move to put into operation the

Act as was previously passed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, this Bill that is before the House demonstrates once again that this Government is more concerned with form than with substance. The Government is preoccupied and is preoccupying itself with machinery to collect rates. I would ask the hon. Minister whether he is as careful to scrutinise how the money collected in the villages is being spend, whether it is being spent in the interest of its people and whether there is not a lot of corruption going on. Reports are rife that the P.N.C. councillors – they are all P.N.C. all over the place – are fattening themselves at the expense of the people. The councillors in some districts if they go at the back o the village to inspect a trench being cleaned or if go into a village to inspect some bridge under construction, or a bridge being repaired, charge subsistence and they charge very fabulous sums. Week after week for paysheets are burdened with large sums of money to pay the councillors subsistence and the like.

The Minister should really look into this aspect of his job. Corruption is rife with regard to the spending of the money collected and the Minister should not be so much concerned about raising money; it is good to have money- rates – but how is it spent? In many of the districts the pattern is the same as happened in TUCville where the councillors, chairmen, mayors and the like are squandering the people's money even to the extent where it can be described as dishonesty. Yet month after month at the various meetings of the Unions of Local Authorities we hear the District Commissioner, and sometimes the Minister, castigating the people for not paying their rates. There is always a complaint about rates not being paid.

This brings me to the other point I should like to make and that is t he lack of creativeness on the part of the local authorities. The Local Government Act which prescribes the functions and the duties of the local authorities has a long list of functions which can be carried out by local authorities which can assist them to raise money, but yet they do not do this. They

still stick to roads, bridges, dams and the like.

4.25 p.m.

There is no creativeness on the part of local authorities to bring about measures that would assist in providing funds for their improvement. All the local authorities depend on rates, burdening the people more and more. The cost of living is going up, salaries have to be raised, yet only rates have to provide the wherewithal to run the villages.

I should like to remind the Government and the Minister of Local Government, that there is such a thing as equalisation grants to local authorities, and the Prime Minister did say that if the people returned P.N.C. councils they would benefit from grants. What is happening with the grants? Is there only machinery for increasing rates and burdening the people? Let us hear what schemes the Government has for providing grants to local authorities. Let us hear the local authorities put forward measures for raising funds other than by means of levying rates – industries, housing, or some such thing.

I wish to make a point about discrimination. The assessment which is being carried on in the villages is done purely on a subjective basis, coloured to a great extent by political considerations. If a property belongs to a P.P.P. resident, the assessment is high. If it is a P.N.C. resident, the assessment is low. We call upon the hon. Minister to put an end to this sort of thing and treat everyone alike. This underlines what the hon. Member Reepu Daman Persaud said that there should be some sort of objective principle on which assessments are made.

Mr. Remington: I look at this Bill before the House today as a measure that will create some hardship on these local authorities. The boundaries of these new local authorities have been extended without giving some consideration as to where finance should come from. The Government's slogan is to make the small man a real man but in creating these new local authorities, the slogan when put into practice is to make the small man a smaller man.

These people are burdened with more taxes. I feel in the interest of these small people, the Government should give more assistance. They are not accustomed to paying taxes. They have never been given a chance to say anything since the Government has not told the new areas, “We are going to help you by giving you grants.”

Mr. Speaker, with these assessments coming up, there will be more taxation, more burdens. From my experience I agree with the hon. Member when he says that if you put the wrong person to assess your property, it will end in discrimination. It means that some of the people will pay higher taxes than others. It is true that we need local government reform but whether we are going slowly, as Dr. Marshall recommended is another matter.

Is the Government not thinking, since the people are saddled with these burdens, that we are going too fast? The hon. Minister knows that all these local authorities are in confusion. There is trouble in these new local authorities because first of all, the people were not educated. The Government never sent its representatives into these new areas to educate the people, to let them know what would be the benefits, what the Government intended doing to improve their lot. Only their boundaries were extended. What about drainage and irrigation? What about roads? They need some amenities. They need something tangible.

I am appealing to the Government to give these people loans and to let them understand what is their true position. I hope that the hon. Minister will get trained personnel to undertake this job. I appeal to him to get the men to do it. Whether we have got the men or not, I do not know because when you do this exercise, it takes a lot of care and ability. I do not know whether the Government is in a position to carry out such an exercise. If it is not, I ask the Minister to postpone this measure to a later date. I am appealing because I know what this exercise means to local authorities; it is creating more hardship and until such time as the Government can tell the people that it proposes to give us grants, I see that the small man is becoming smaller.

Mr. Mingo (replying): From what I have heard said by the several speakers it would appear that they are absolutely against local government. I wonder if they have quite understood the measure before us, or whether it is a deliberate attempt to mislead people. The Bill before us seeks merely to make sure that valuation could take place in all types of local authorities. We have in this country a situation where there are three valuers attached to the Valuation Division of the Ministry of Local Government. These three valuers are engaged in the exercise of valuation in Georgetown which had been estimated to take about two and a half years. It was started a year and a half ago, which means it has about another year before it may be completed.

4.35 p.m.

There were three valuers as from the 1st January but at the commencement of the valuation exercise there had been only two. It is impossible for these men to do the work in Georgetown and in all the other areas in this country at the same time but local government must go on.

We found that the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act did make provision for transitional arrangements. In other words, while the assessment of Georgetown is going on the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act does make provision for arrangements for appraisal to go on in the other areas – in New Amsterdam, in the villages and in the districts.

We have discovered that there is a loop-hole in the law which does not help is in our work to appraise new areas, areas that have just been brought in and areas which have been extended and if we are going to have local government in these areas and if our work is to go on in these areas, then this Bill is necessary. This Bill is necessary so that we may have local government throughout the whole of Guyana. That is why I said a little earlier that it does appear that our friends on the other side are not in favour of local government.

The hon. Member Mr. Cheeks spoke about the question of salaries. I wish to inform him that these people have made representations and the whole question of salaries is being looked

into. Another point I wish to make is this: This Valuation for Rating Purposes Act was drafted when Mr. Cheeks was Minister of Local Government. I am wondering if he is responsible for the loop-holes in the Act which have caused us to bring this Bill that is now before the House.

On the question of transitional arrangements; it is true that we are going use the ordinary appraisers; it is true that these men in some cases do not give a fair deal; it is true that in the past there were many practices which were not fair. We have, however, mounted courses for these appraisers because we realise that we will need these men in the interim. These men were brought up to date with some of the practices of proper valuers. We have already had reports; the whole system of appraisements has been improved because of the courses that these persons have had to attend

The hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud made reference to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. This is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and I can tell the hon. Member that right now the whole question is being looked into so that we can have a solution to the problem relating to the future of the Sugar Industry Welfare Fund.

The hon. Member Mr. Wilson referred to councillors fattening themselves. He spoke about subsistences being paid to councillors for examining work on the back dams. I think the hon. Member Mr. Wilson should be acquainted with the Local Government Ordinance, Chapter 150, which states definitely that subsistence can only be paid when councillors are going on business outside of the area. A councillor does not get subsistence for doing business within his council area. The same think applies to district councils. Subsistence is only paid with the approval of the Minister and it is paid to councillors who do business outside of their area.

There was a suggestion, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill will create hardship to the people. If we are to have local government throughout the country which will bring development then we need to have the whole exercise carried out properly. This Bill seeks to ensure that there is proper appraisalment in all the areas of this country. It is not a question of bringing hardship to

the people. This Bill does not seek to do that.

I hope that hon. Members will now have a better understanding of the measure before the House and I do hope that they will see fit to give it their support.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade (Leader of the House) (Mr. Ramsaroop): I wish to move the adjournment of this House to Tuesday the 8th June at the hour of 2 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before the sitting is adjourned I wish to remind hon. Member of the meeting of the Guyana Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which has been fixed to take place after the sitting of the Assembly.

I propose that we have our meeting before we proceed to tea. The C.P.A. meeting will, therefore, commence after the adjournment of the sitting and on my return to the Chamber.

1.6.71

National Assembly

4.35 – 4.45 p.m.

The sitting of the National Assembly is now adjourned to Tuesday, 8th June, 1971.

Adjourned accordingly at 4.45 p.m.
