

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 7]

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

6th Sitting

2 p.m.

Friday, 10th August, 1973

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

Members of the Government — People's National Congress (49)

Prime Minister (1)

The Honourable L. F. S. Burnham, O.E., S.C.,
Prime Minister

(Absent — on leave)

Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid,
*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and
Agriculture*

Senior Ministers (7)

The Honourable H. D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Works and Communications

*The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice

(Absent)

*The Honourable H. Green,
Minister of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

(Absent)

*The Honourable H. O. Jack,
Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

*The Honourable F. E. Hope,
Minister of Finance

*Non-elected Minister

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*Dr. the Honourable K. F. S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

*The Honourable S. S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Housing

Ministers (5)

The Honourable W. G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour

The Honourable Miss S. M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information and Culture

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop, *(Absent – on leave)*
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House

*The Honourable Miss C. L. Baird,
Minister of Education *(Absent)*

*Dr. the Honourable O. M. R. Harper,
Minister of Health

Ministers of State (9)

The Honourable M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

The Honourable O. E. Clarke,
Minister of State - Regional (East Berbice/ Corentyne)

The Honourable P. Duncan, J.P.,
Minister of State - Regional (Rupununi)

The Honourable C. A. Nascimento,
Minister of State, Office of the Prime Minister

The Honourable M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,
Minister of State - Regional (Essequibo Coast/ West Demerara)

*The Honourable C. V. Mingo,
Minister of State for Home Affairs

*The Honourable W. Haynes,
Minister of State - Regional (Mazaruni/ Potaro) *(Absent)*

*The Honourable A. Salim,
Minister of State - Regional (East Demerara/ West Coast, Berbice)

*The Honourable F. U. A. Carmichael,
Minister of State - Regional (North West)

*Non-elected Minister

Parliamentary Secretaries (8)

Mr. J. R. Thomas,

Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing

Mr. C. E. Wrights, J.P.,

Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Communications

Miss M. M. Ackman,

Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister, and Government Chief Whip

Mr. E. L. Ambrose,

Parliamentary Secretary, (Agriculture), Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. K. B. Bancroft,

Parliamentary Secretary, (Hinterland), Ministry of National Development and Agriculture

Mr. S. Prashad,

Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

Mr. J. P. Chowritmootoo,

Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. R. H. O. Corbin,

Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation

(Absent)

Other Members (18)

Mr. J. N. Aaron

Mrs. L. M. Branco

Mr. M. Corrica

Mr. E. H. A. Fowler

Miss J. Gill

Mr. W. Hussain

Miss S. Jaiserrisingh

Mr. K. M. E. Jonas

Mr. M. Nissar

Dr. L. E. Ramsahoye

Mr. J. G. Ramson

Mrs. P. A. Rayman

Mr. E. M. Stoby, J.P.

Mr. S. H. Sukhu, M.S., J.P.

Mr. C. Sukul, J.P.

Mr. H. A. Taylor

(Absent)

Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman
Mrs. L. E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

Liberator Party (2)

Dr. G. Kumar

(Absent)

Mr. M. F. Singh, *(Deputy Speaker)*

OFFICERS

Clerk of the National Assembly — Mr. F. A. Narain

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly — Mr. M. B. Henry, AMBIM.

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2.05 p.m.

[Prayers]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

BILLS—SECOND READING

Trade (Amendment) Bill 1973

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Trade, Ordinance, 1958.” [The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture.]

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture (Dr. Reid): Mr. Speaker, in moving the Second reading of this Bill I wish to say, at the very outset, that this is really a simple matter in connection with the banning which was introduced in 1971 by Order No. 87 of 1971.

As usual when the Bill was introduced and passed by the House, reference was made to numbers 011-01 or 011-03, and, as is usual, a very limited description was put opposite the numbers in the document which described these commodities. In the practical implementation of this measure it was found, from time to time, that several items, not really intended to be included, were caught up because of this system of numbering, and so we have been coming time and again to have these items deleted from the list of restricted commodities or to have special authority to allow them to be imported.

Many of these items are not substantial food commodities, but these very small items play a very important part in having other things done, especially in the manufacturing industry, and so this Bill is attempting to get the authority of this House for the Minister to have a discretionary power so that the Minister responsible for trade can authorise the importation of any goods that are now prohibited by Order No. 87 of 1971.

I wish to emphasise, very strongly, that this discretionary authority will be used only for such minor items that are vital, probably in the manufacturing industry. This amendment is brought to make it very clear so that there can be no confusion. When this Bill was published, somebody very promptly asked me whether this measure was being brought before the House to allow the potatoes from Madeira to come into this country. I did not think that people would have stretched their imagination so far so quickly. You know when evil is abroad bad news has a way of travelling very fast and it seems as if sometimes our minds are directed towards things that are inimical rather than towards things that are good. I say that so that there can be no misunderstanding because this Bill has nothing whatsoever to do with any attempt to bring goods from countries like Portugal, Rhodesia, South Africa, those countries that we have ostracised, so to speak, as far as trade is concerned.

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little is produced is priced so high as to be out of the reach of many a wage earner despite the Government's efforts to contain prices by control regulations."

And it makes a very strong statement further down. It says:

"It smacks now of a callous disregard for the suffering of the masses when the Prime Minister says that the food ban is here to stay."

Presumably, the Prime Minister had made a previous statement that the food ban was here to stay, and this article was prompted by that statement. And the article went on:

"The Government, it would now appear, is bent on face saving but no one could gain-say that face saving at the expense of the best interest of the people is highly condemnable. Here we are forced to desist from making what we feel is an appropriate observation for the only reason that we would most likely be misinterpreted with accusations hurled at us, so all we would say is that it would be admirable if the Government would rethink the prevailing situation and lift the ban on a few items including salted fish and sardines, for a limited period to afford some degree of relief to the masses."

2.25 p.m.

So says the *Evening Post* of Friday 27th April, 1973. A very interesting article.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Singh, you did not read the article by a former Minister of Trade in today's *Graphic*.

Mr. Singh: Sir, if you will give me a chance I will go consecutively.

And this same newspaper which I say bends backwards usually to out-P.N.C. the P.N.C., what did it say a little later to show the modelling of the Government's trade policy? The newspaper of Wednesday the 1st of August, 1973 states:

"One thousand bags Madeira potatoes here—but held up by customs."

When asked who would stand to lose if the potatoes were not released E.T.B. General Manager, Clifton Low-A-Chee in a terse reply stated that he couldn't say. I would like somebody on the Government benches to tell us because, obviously, there must be loss incurred somewhere.

The *Evening Post* of August the 2nd, 1973 states:

"Madeira potatoes going back."

And so they were sent back. The *Evening Post* of 5th August, 1973, under the caption "Opinion. It makes no sense" stated:

"The disclosure, last week, that one thousand bags of potatoes from Madeira had arrived in this country consigned to the External Trade Bureau, has opened up the question, once again, whether the ban imposed on certain foreign commodities, for one reason or another, is operating efficiently and realistically.

According to an explanation offered by the E.T.B. boss, Mr. Clifton Low-A-Chee, the potatoes which were supplied by the Barbados Central Marketing Corporation (a Government agency) were shipped to Guyana by the agent who was under the impression

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that Madeira was Spanish and not Portuguese, so that the ban imposed by Guyana on all goods from Portugal, did not seem to the agency to apply."

This is really laughable. And the newspaper made the comment:

"To say the least, this is a rather specious excuse for a Government agency to put forward."

But subsequently we read that the Barbados E.T.B. said that they were not aware that Guyana had banned, totally, importation from Portugal. So the local E.T.B. boss is saying one thing and the Barbados E.T.B. boss is saying something else.

But then we had another statement in the *Evening Post* of the 7th August, 1973. It is a comedy of errors. What is the position?

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Singh, I do not want to interrupt you but the comedy of errors from your own statement is not inconsistent with Guyana's stand. They are saying we have banned Madeira potatoes and so we have been saying all the time. The Barbados E.T.B., according to you, said they did not know we had banned potatoes. I do not see how that is relevant to the point that the hon. Member Dr. Reid made that they are banning certain things. He categorised those items which he enumerated. Anyway, please proceed.

Mr. Singh: I was dealing with what was the legal position. The Minister has the legal power to lift the ban on any commodity that is banned at the moment but I was going on to point out not about Madeira potatoes but about Cyprus potatoes.

Cyprus potatoes came in on July 31, 1973. What did the newspaper say? The newspaper said that potatoes were rotting on the wharf while the Guyanese public are suffering because there were no potatoes in the country. The newspaper of August 7, 1973, states:

"The 636 bags (36,736 pounds) of Cyprus potatoes, which arrived here since July 31, consigned to the External Trade Bureau from Guyana's Carifta partner, Barbados, are still lying on John Fernandes' Wharf."

Yesterday's newspaper gave a picture of the potatoes.

The newspaper of August 9, 1973, states that those six hundred and thirty-six bags of Cyprus potatoes which arrived here since July 31, were on John Fernandes' Wharf up to yesterday. However today they were being removed.

The Guyana public, during all that time while these potatoes were lying rotting on the wharf were without potatoes. Why were these potatoes allowed to stay on the wharf for such a long time? And this is why I say it brings the whole question of banning and the efficiency or the inefficiency of the Government into sharp focus. And the *Evening Post* says:

"E.T.B., a dismal failure. From the public's point of view the External Trade Bureau has been, since its inception, a dismal failure. Nothing is nearer the truth, as this trad-

ing organisation, established by the Government, has forced on consumers, all through its period of existence, unnecessary suffering and economic strain."

That is why I say this Bill does not go far enough. It must go further in view of the prevailing situation in the country; in view of the outcry by a national newspaper against what is happening.

The newspaper says:

"In being the sole importers of essential articles the E.T.B. has failed hopelessly to keep the country fully supplied with many basic commodities. This was entirely because it decided to buy from the cheapest source, regardless of either quality or reliability of supply."

And I want to quote the answer because the newspaper goes on to give some very good advice which I would like to give the Government. I think it bears reiterating even though this is a newspaper which one would expect to be read by John Public. I would like to repeat in this honourable House what is said in this newspaper, something that I agree with, which gives a possible solution to the problem. I am quoting from page 6:

"It has been noted that whenever the E.T.B. became the sole importer of an item it moved into the world shortage category, with the inevitable result that our poor people have to pay fantastically high prices.

"In the case of salt and potatoes, recently the E.T.B. had to get supplies of U.K. and Venezuelan salt, along with Cyprus potatoes."

From where?

"From the Barbados Marketing Corporation who had to go out and buy it from the wholesalers in Barbados, giving the Barbadian Commission Agents the profit along with wholesaler's profit in order not to have its inefficiency exposed . . .

"It is strange that while the E.T.B. is continuously claiming that there is a world shortage of most things it handles, other territories in our vicinity are not only getting sufficient for their own needs, but are able to help us out in our desperation.

"Our Government evidently thought that the E.T.B. could replace the efficiency of private enterprise. They are now sadder, but wiser. The fatal mistake was that they failed to ensure that they procured the necessary brains to replace the efficiency of the traders whose very existence depended on their ability to beat their competitors by buying at cheaper prices and having regular supplies."

And I give this solution as suggested by this newspaper:

"The E.T.B. must stand convicted in encouraging black marketing as essential articles are continuously in short supply. What is the remedy? As I see it, they should return the responsibility for keeping the country supplied with essential articles to the former importers, but control their profit margins, with the E.T.B. including its share of the takings. This will kill black marketing . . ."

2.35 p.m.

Then they go on to say that official figures of the cost of living show that Guyana compares very favourably with other West Indian territories, but this is done by using control prices and not the factual prices, which are the blackmarket prices. This must open the eyes of the Government to the dangers, to the hard-

ships, to the realities of the situation. The paper says, as I say, their own people are suffering. All of us are suffering. Why should Guyanese suffer? The Government owes it to the people of this country to do something to alleviate the suffering now being experienced.

Yesterday my wife went into the shops. She visited four shops including three supermarkets. She wrote out what was the position. No salt, no oil, no yellow crystal sugar, no white sugar, no split peas, no black-eye peas, no toilet paper, no onions, no potatoes, no garlic, and she told me that there were queues about a mile long for oil and one had to have a bill showing total purchases before one could get oil. Let the housewives here deny that anything is untrue in this statement. Is it not true that this is a factual situation in the country? The shops are open today. I invite the hon. Members, who may be living in a fairyland world, to go into the shops. The situation is indeed very critical.

I want to go further. I want to ask the Government to appoint a team of auditors to examine the entire working of the E.T.B. The hon. Minister would get a shock when the number of bags of cement paid for is compared with the number of bags sold. I think the Government would get a greater shock when it sees the large quantities that have disappeared into thin air. And it would also surprise the Minister when he is told of the large sums of money which have been paid out for services that were not rendered. I would invite the hon. Minister Dr. Reid, he knows what I am talking about, to appoint this team of auditors to examine the working of the E.T.B. A general inquiry into the working of the E.T.B. from its inception would make the Government think seriously over the advisability of keeping the E.T.B. operating on the same conditions under which it is operating. The E.T.B. has broken many family monopolies, which is good, but was it worth the cost of destroying these monopolies?

The cement shortage for such a long period has brought untold suffering to the workers. They are out of work because of the prolonged shortage of cement. We talk about Caricom. We talk about our Caribbean neighbours. They have got cement. Is this a one-way traffic? These countries Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, they produce cement. Are we not members of Caricom? Why are they not helping us? Why are those countries reluctant to supply us with cement?

I am very glad that the E.T.B. has been made a corporation, because if there is one thing I can say, it is that Dr. King is a competent and a capable Minister, and I would think that maybe there is some hope for the future. If Dr. King puts his mind to it and investigates the E.T.B., if he carries out a thorough investigation into its working, if he devotes some time to it, I am sure there would be a rethinking, maybe a restructuring of the E.T.B. and I am looking forward to this.

I support this measure before the House today but I make it plain that this measure does not go far enough. As I said earlier, it is merely patching something that is too worn to take the strain of even the best patch. Let us have a complete examination and a radical change. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister Dr. Reid.

Dr. Reid (replying): My friend has been speaking very loudly, and has been quoting very freely from the news media. I want to put his mind at rest about two things that he has mentioned. One is, that the food ban is here to stay. The other is, the External Trade Bureau, the Government arm of controlling trade in this country, is also here to stay, because we in Guyana, if we are determined about developing this country, must understand what it takes to develop a country.

It is not surprising that countries that are underdeveloped do not really develop, even though some of them have been getting assistance of all types from outside, including international organisations. Even though this task of assisting countries has been going on for over twenty-five years, no country can lay claim to being developed because of the type of thinking that has been exhibited this afternoon, thinking that wants these countries under these changing times to maintain the *status quo*. I was certain that he would have exposed the fact that he was speaking for commission agents and, probably, the small group of well-to-do people who have no interest whatever in the development of this country, because one of the fundamental strategies for the development of a country is to be able to produce its own food.

2.45 p.m.

And if we in Guyana had not started this programme to feed, clothe and house ourselves we would have been talking not only about not getting cement and potatoes but most foods. In my mind I see no real reason why we should have white potatoes imported into the country but this is the policy. We still have to import white potatoes because there can be no control on prices notwithstanding what my friend, the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, is saying here.

If we were to follow the trend of the increase in prices for imported goods, especially foods, people would be happy to know that there are at least some one hundred food items that we have prohibited from coming into this country. What has happened over the last few months? Prices of wheat, meat and soya beans have been rising and, notwithstanding what the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh has been saying, I think it is admitted that our cost for food is one of the lowest not only in this region but in any part of the world, because we have been trying to produce some of this food ourselves.

The Leader of the Opposition — I hope I am correct, Mr. Speaker — is one of those without vision. I do not know if he dreams dreams but I am certain he has no vision because if we do not promote our own food crops what becomes of our countryside? How is Guyana to make its countryside attractive if we continue the old method of importing all possible food commodities from overseas? And then they will quarrel and say that the people from the countryside are journeying into Georgetown looking for work and finding none because there is no interest in the countryside.

The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh has claimed that he has not said so. I know, because he has not got the vision of the implications of what he was saying or else he would have realised what he was trying to get this House to agree to. Once you start importing food then our eddoes, dasheen and plantains will sell for nothing and will be thrown away and people in the countryside will not make a living. The countryside would become unattractive and life in the country would be mere subsistence.

I am certain our farmers would not like to hear what the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, has said. As a matter of fact in a country like ours where land is not scarce— we have not covered it all over with concrete yet — there is still hope, and the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, instead of talking about hunting around for split peas and black eye peas and so on, should have been in a position to tell this House that as a leader in the community he has been growing some of his food, peas and greens, black eye peas, pigeon peas. He should forget about split peas because split peas are just peas that have been split. The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh thinks that they are a special type of peas growing on a tree that come out split. But people have to split the peas.

I know of people in Georgetown who have grown large sweet potatoes, who have grown their own peas and their beans. There is no need to buy these things. The hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh should have been growing some and if he wants a few seeds he could step over with me when I am going and I will give him a neat little parcel of black eye seeds and red beans so that he can start his garden, because we need men like him to help to show an example in the community.

In the past the professionals returned home and taught the communities around them not to have anything to do with the soil. Their hands must not touch soil. That was in the old days. That was good in the time of British tutelage when it was good training for us not to want to do anything with soil because that was part of the British policy when we were committed to buy their food. They were the farmers. They tended the soil but we were taught not to do so because that was degrading, that was low, that was nasty work. I hope the hon. Member will get his hands soiled a little so that he will begin to grow things and not come here and talk about his wife spending so much time searching for pigeon peas and split peas and bora and things of that kind.

Everybody knows that there is a shortage of cement, not only in Guyana but in many places. Even where there are cement factories there are shortages. In some cases the shortage arises because of the increased demand for cement. This is the reason. There is an upsurge in trying to house people just as how we are trying to house people in this country and probably if we did not have that programme of trying to house ourselves there might not have been this hue and cry about cement.

There was pressure on E.T.B., as would be expected, because certain groups

and certain countries are determined to see that some of these developing countries remain undeveloped and I wish we who belong to Guyana would understand this. For them, at the coming into being of the E.T.B., they saw an institution that was going to make it possible for the ordinary man to get his goods a little cheaper and because of that one fact they were determined to prove that the E.T.B. would not survive. But these are the birth-pains not only of the E.T.B. but of developing an institution that would give better service to the community and, notwithstanding what has been said, had it not been for the E.T.B. some of these prices would probably have been two or three times as high because the commission agents that the hon. Member, Mr. Feilden Singh, talked about have no sympathy for the people. They wanted to get as much as they could, as fast as they could, and they were not concerned about the prices.

We have an organisation that is interested in this. It is interested also in getting the best goods at the cheapest possible price and as a matter of fact this is one of the sins as far as those who manufacture goods are concerned. This is one of the sins of the E.T.B. in trying to get the best quality of goods at the cheapest possible price. But they hate to know this because they fear that the masses will get goods cheaper and the masses will make significant progress.

It seems in my mind that one section of people benefit from having another section poor. And so it is in the developed world and the underdeveloped world. It seems to me that a section of the developed world wants to have a section of the world itself poor and in need.

We in Guyana still contend without apology, that people here do not suffer from famine. The hon. Member talks about shortages. Let him see what is happening in some countries where thousands of people die every minute from starvation. Probably if we had television sets we would have been seeing some of them dying before our very eyes. As a matter of fact it is reported that nearly two-thirds of the world's people are suffering from malnutrition. Why? Because the developing world has not learnt to grow its own food and to feed itself and because of this even when they have the financial resources to purchase the food they get food that is not nutritious enough to sustain the human body properly.

2.55 p.m.

I would recommend to my friend to read a new book that is on the market now, about earth foods. We have been buying in times past, foods that came from thousands of miles away, never fresh. These foods could not be fresh, and so all the vitamins and minerals had disappeared. But we eat such food. It looks good, it even tastes good, but as far as nutrition is concerned, it is poor. The tomato was picked when it was green because it had to travel thousands of miles to get to us, whereas, if we grow the thing in our backyard — and we are blessed with sunshine so that we can grow things all the year around — we would allow that tomato to ripen on the tree so that we can get the benefit of the vitamins and minerals. This is a free lesson to my friend. There is no charge for this type of

information and I recommend to him that he should get that book, *Earth Foods*, and make a study of it and then promote that backyard garden.

Cooking oil is not really banned, but in this country we are trying to produce sufficient cooking oil to meet our needs. It was unfortunate that during this year, according to our estimate and according to some of the advice we have had, we too sold cooking oil. We were able at one stage to export some of our cooking oil because we thought we had enough and to spare, and this has put us into some difficulties. There is sufficient to meet our needs but some people, especially the well-to-do, when they hear there is a little shortage, they don't intend to bear any sacrifice. They go and try to buy up more than they need and create this kind of artificial shortage.

I hope the time is not far distant when people will learn to have some awareness of the welfare of other people and not behave in such selfish ways, so that when there is enough for everybody to get, those who have enough funds, enough and to spare, would not buy all and store up. They do not benefit because when they store up the thing too long, it is described as embalmed food, and you know that kind of thing is not very good. Sometimes you see wealthy people as weak as ever. It is the type of habit they have accustomed themselves to. Because they are wealthy, they buy things, store up for years, and sometimes eat too much. More people die from overeating than from starvation. I am giving these little tips to my friend.

He talks a lot about private enterprise. I have been saying this over and over when we have leaders in the community, it is good for us to forget partisan politics, not to speak for the sake of speaking and be a little objective and analyse situations a little more carefully. All through the years — Government has been in office not a decade yet — private enterprise has had to do with this country. When this country became independent, this country still did not have 100 miles of good roads. Private enterprise was doing everything. You say they are efficient, they have skill, they have expertise, they are the better people to do things. All through these years we were in need of school places, medical services. This successful private sector, what contribution has it made so that the masses of people would benefit? It is no point telling me they would do it and they would be successful, and there is still a need for better hospital facilities and there is a lack of school places.

It is time we begin to realise that unless those people use their skills, their expertise, to benefit the masses of people who need the skill and direction that they alone have, it is no use saying private enterprise can do it. And this is the type of ministry we have had to carry at this time of the development of our country, when private enterprise failed to do a job that had to be done. It is only since the P.N.C.'s socialism is being implemented that we see schools, community centres being built, we see people learning to grow food for themselves, and we on this side of the House have no intention of changing this strategy and this policy. We know there will be some hardship as we initiate these programmes, but what other course can one take if development is our commitment?

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.

THE POUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1973

A Bill intituled:

An Act to amend the Pounds Ordinance. [The Minister of State for Home Affairs.]

The Minister of State for Home Affairs (Mr. Mingo): In moving the Second Reading of this Bill, I wish to point out that this Bill seeks to make some necessary amendments to the Pounds Ordinance, Chapter 82, especially to make it more effective for the development of agriculture in Guyana.

Since the enactment of the Pounds Ordinance, there has not been a revision or an increase in the fees for impounding strays found on private premises, which fees must be paid to the owner of the premises, nor has there been an increase in the poundage to the keeper of the pound, nor has there been any increase in the feeding charges during the period when the animals are impounded. The fees no longer serve as a deterrent to owners of animals from keeping their animals off other people's properties or farms or even from straying along the public roads and other public places.

3.05 p.m.

The whole question of legislation with respect to pounds had been engaging the attention of Government for sometime; and most recently the Guyana Association of Local Authorities, G.A.L.A., in making representations for the amendment of the Pounds Ordinance, has strongly urged that it was a matter of great urgency if positive steps were to be taken to curb the nuisance being caused by strays, if farmers' crops were to be protected, and if there is to be the constant protection of cattle that are left to roam. It has been accordingly decided to bring to Parliament this Bill which aims at providing some general tidying up of the Ordinance.

This Bill seeks, in the first place, to amend sections 4 and 5 subsections 1 and 2 of the Principal Ordinance. It provides for the specific increase in fees for the pounding of various categories or types of strays found on private premises and these fees are payable to the owners of the premises. There will also be increases in poundage money which is payable to the keeper of the pounds. Charges paid for feeding animals are also to be increased.

Under section 4 of the Principal Ordinance, fees payable to the owners of any private premises or land on which any stray is found trespassing are 48 cents for every horse, mare, gelding, pony, mule, bull, cow, ox, heifer or steer; 32 cents for every ass and 24 cents for every calf, sheep or goat. In the new provision that this Bill seeks to introduce, new charges suggested are \$5 for every horse, mare, gelding, pony, mule, bull, cow, ox, heifer or steer; \$3 for every donkey or ass and \$2.50 for every calf, sheep or goat.

In section 5(1) similar increases are to be made on poundage money paid to the keepers of the pounds. Fees will now be increased from 48 cents to \$5; from 32 cents to \$3 and from 24 cents to \$2.50.

It is also sought to increase the charges which must be made by a pound-keeper for feeding each horse, mare, gelding, pony, mule, bull, cow, ox, heifer or steer from 24 cents per day to \$1 per day and to increase the charges made for feeding each calf, sheep or goat from 8 cents per day to 50 cents per day.

In section 15 of the Pounds Ordinance, "every pound-keeper, or someone appointed by him as his deputy shall constantly be at hand between the hours of six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening to receive and deliver all strays."

In 1966 the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance, Chapter 150, was amended to make it possible for strays to be received at all hours in the city of Georgetown. The Police Department which is responsible for the majority of pounds in this country has requested that Section 15 of the Principal Ordinance be similarly amended so as to permit keepers of pounds to receive strays at different hours. So the Bill seeks to amend this change of time for receiving strays.

As a further step of this tidying up exercise, section 23 of the Pounds Ordinance which provided that a person's stray which is unsold after being duly advertised and put up for sale may be destroyed by the pound-keeper, is to be amended to provide for any such unsold stray to be disposed of by the pound-keeper in accordance with the directions of the Minister.

Finally, steps are being taken in this Bill to confer upon the Minister responsible for public order, the duties hitherto exercised under the Ordinance by the Governor-in-Council.

I commend to this House the simple measures of this Bill. These measures are intended to make the Pounds Ordinance more effective in our national development and I hope to receive the support of every Member of this House. With these remarks I propose the Second reading of the Pounds (Amendment) Bill 1973.

Question proposed, 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.

3.15 p.m.

ANTIBIOTICS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1973

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Antibiotics Ordinance.” [The Minister of Health.]

The Minister of Health (Dr. Harper): Your Honour, I beg to move that Bill No 16 of 1973, the Antibiotics (Amendment) Bill 1973, be now read a Second time. This Bill proposes that the administration of the Antibiotics Ordinance, Chapter 143, should be transferred from the Medical Board to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board, so as to ensure stricter compliance with the provisions of the Ordinance. This Bill seeks to make the necessary provision for the transfer of these functions. The Bill also includes provision, vesting certain functions under the Ordinance in the Minister of Health.

This Bill is an attempt to streamline the administration of drugs in the Republic of Guyana. At the time the original Bill was proposed, most of the functions having to do with drugs and poisons, and medicine in general, were under the administration of the Medical Board, but with the increase of national population and of the functions and responsibilities of the Medical Board, I think it would improve the efficient administration of antibiotics if this Bill is passed transferring these functions to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board.

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.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health, may I congratulate you on the admirable way in which you have piloted your first Bill through this House.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [The Minister of Information and Culture.]

Adjourned accordingly at 3.20 p.m.