

BRITISH GUIANA

FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

1961 - 1962

MINUTES of the Proceedings of the 12th Sitting of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of British Guiana under the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961, held in the Chamber of the Legislature at the Public Buildings, Georgetown, Demerara,

AT 2.00 P.M.

on

THURSDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 1962.

PRESENT:

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. R.B. Gajraj.

(a) Members of the Government

People's Progressive Party

(i) Ministers

Dr. the Honourable C.B. Jagan,
Premier and Minister of Development and Planning.
The Honourable B.H. Benn,
Minister of Natural Resources.
The Honourable Ram Karran,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics.
The Honourable B.S. Rai,
Minister of Home Affairs.
The Honourable R. Chandisingh,
Minister of Labour, Health and Housing.
Dr. the Honourable Charles Jacob, Jr.,
Minister of Finance.
Dr. the Honourable F.H.W. Ramsahoye,
Attorney-General.
The Honourable E.M.G. Wilson,
Minister of Communications.

(ii) Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. G. Bowman, Parliamentary Secretary to the
Ministry of Natural Resources.
Mr. L.E.M. Mann, Parliamentary Secretary to the
Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.

(iii) Other Members

Mr. S.M. Saffee
Mr. G.L. Robertson
Mr. J.B. Caldeira
Mr. V. Downer
Mr. M. Hamid
Mr. D.C. Jagan
Mr. H. Lall
Mr. M. Shakoor

(b) Members Constituting the Minority

(i) People's National Congress

Mr. L.F.S. Burnham, Q.C.
Mr. W.O.R. Kendall
Mr. J. Carter
Mr. E.F. Correia

Mr. N.J. Bissember
 Mr. W.A. Blair
 Mr. R.S.S. Hugh
 Mr. J.G. Joaquim
 Mr. R.J. Jordan
 Mr. C.A. Merriman
 Mr. H.M.S. Wharton

(ii) United Force

Mr. P. d'Aguiar
 Mr. S. Campbell
 Mr. R.E. Cheeks

Clerk of the Legislature - Mr. I. Crum Ewing.
 Assistant Clerk of the Legislature - Mr. E.V. Viapree.

Absent:

Mr. M. Bhagwan - on leave.
 Mr. E.E. Melville - on leave.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

(a) Leave.

His Honour the Speaker announced that leave had been granted to Mr. Bhagwan from the 8th January to the 15th February, 1962.

(b) Loyal Address to His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh.

His Honour the Speaker informed Members that he had prepared a Loyal Address for presentation to His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on the occasion of his visit to the Legislature on Wednesday, the 7th of February, and in order to have it placed on record, he proposed to move a motion at a later stage for that purpose.

He added that copies of the Address would be circulated to Members for their private and confidential information and requested that they be returned after the tea interval.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Question No. 6.

Mr. d'Aguiar asked the Minister of Works and Hydraulics the following question:

QUESTION: Will the Honourable Minister make available to me the documents concerning the Grupo Del Conte which he intimated to this House at its sitting on 19th October would be made available if required?

Will the Honourable Minister also make available to me the contracts entered into with Grupo Del Conte?

The Minister of Works and Hydraulics gave the following reply:

ANSWER: The documents will be made available to the Honourable Member on a private and confidential basis only, if he will call at the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics at any convenient time.

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Supplementary questions were asked by Mr. d'Aguiar and Mr. Burnham.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

(a) Premier's visit abroad.

The Premier and Minister of Development and Planning stated that he hoped soon to inform Members in detail of his recent visit to Tanganyika, Israel and the United Nations.

(b) Chemical Food Poisoning on the Essequibo Coast.

The Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, Mr. Chandisingh, reported to the Assembly on the recent epidemic of chemical food poisoning that occurred on the Essequibo Coast.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS - Second and Third Readings.

Item 1. - GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL (AMENDMENT NO. 2) BILL, 1961 - L.A. Bill No. 6/1961.

His Honour the Speaker informed Members that Mr. Merriman had to attend another meeting from which he hoped to return shortly and requested that consideration of the BILL intituled AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL ORDINANCE be deferred for a short while.

Accordingly, consideration of the Bill was deferred.

Item 2 - DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION (DECLARATION OF AREA) (NO. 2) BILL, 1962 - L.A. Bill No. 1/1962.

With Members' consent and on a motion by the Minister of Works and Hydraulics the BILL intituled AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE MERGING OF THE NORTHERN KLIEN POUDEROYEN DRAINAGE AREA AND THE NORTH KLIEN POUDEROYEN (EXTENSION) DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION AREA was read a second time and was thereafter taken through its remaining stages and passed with the following amendment in Committee:-

Clause 1 - Short Title - Deleted: "(No. 2)".

Item 3 - GENEVA CONVENTIONS (SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS) BILL, 1962 - L.A. Bill No. 2/1962.

On a motion by the Attorney-General the relevant Standing Order was suspended to enable him to proceed with the BILL intituled AN ORDINANCE TO SUPPLEMENT THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT, 1957, OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AS EXTENDED TO BRITISH GUIANA BY THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT (COLONIAL TERRITORIES) ORDER IN COUNCIL, 1959, SO AS TO ENABLE FULL EFFECT TO BE GIVEN IN RELATION TO BRITISH GUIANA TO CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS DONE AT GENEVA ON THE TWELFTH DAY OF AUGUST, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE.

On a motion by the Attorney-General the Bill was read a second time and was thereafter taken through its remaining stages and passed as printed.

Item 4 - LEGISLATURE (REMUNERATION OF MEMBERS) BILL, 1962 -
L.A. Bill No. 3/1962.

On a motion by the Minister of Finance the relevant Standing Order was suspended to enable him to proceed with the BILL intituled AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE PROVISION FOR THE PAYMENT OF REMUNERATION, TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES TO MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE, THE SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

In terms of Standing Order 21 the Governor's recommendation, signified by the Minister, was laid over.

Thereafter, on a motion by the Minister of Finance, the Bill was read a second time.

Assembly was then resolved into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

In Committee:

Clauses 1 to 5 were passed as printed.

Clause 6 - Mr. Burnham moved the following amendment:

(i) Insertion of the words "published in the Gazette" after the word "order" in the last line;

(ii) Substitution of the word "by" for the word "of" in the last line.

After discussion, the amendment was put and negatived.

Clause 6 was then passed as printed.

Clauses 7 to 9 were passed as printed.

Schedule was passed as printed.

Assembly resumed.

On a motion by the Minister of Finance, the Bill was read the third time and passed as printed.

Item 1 - GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL (AMENDMENT NO. 2) BILL,
1961 - L.A. Bill No. 6/1961.

On a motion by the Minister of Home Affairs, the BILL intituled AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE GEORGETOWN TOWN COUNCIL ORDINANCE was read a second time and was thereafter taken through its remaining stages and passed with the following amendment in Committee:-

Clause 1 - Short Title - Deleted: "No. 2"

Substituted: "1962" for
"1961".

MOTIONSItem 5 - MOTION TO CONFIRM CUSTOMS ORDER NO. 1 OF 1962.

On a motion by the Minister of Finance, the Assembly adopted the following Resolution:-

RESOLVED, That the Legislature in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirms Order No. 1 which was made on the 3rd day of January, 1962 and published in the Gazette on the 13th of January, 1962.

Item 6 - MOTION RE COMPENSATION AWARDS TO MR. D.M. HEDGES, C.B.E. AND MR. A.M.I. AUSTIN, Q.C.

On a motion by the Minister of Finance, the Assembly adopted the following Resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Minister of Finance be authorised to make an advance payment of Forty thousand dollars towards the compensation awards to Mr. D.M. Hedges, C.B.E. and Mr. A.M.I. Austin, Q.C., consequent on the abolition of the offices which they held in the Public Service on the enactment of the British Guiana Constitutional Instruments, 1961.

In terms of Standing Order 21, the Governor's recommendation, signified by the Minister, was laid over.

Item 7 - MOTION AUTHORISING THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO BORROW FROM THE BANKS TO MEET CURRENT REQUIREMENTS.

On a motion by the Minister of Finance, the Assembly adopted the following Resolution:

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Assembly, in terms of section 16 of the Financial Administration and Audit Ordinance, 1961 (No. 39), authorises the Minister of Finance to borrow an amount not exceeding Five million dollars by means of advances from the Banks to meet current requirements.

In terms of Standing Order 21, the Governor's recommendation, signified by the Minister, was laid over.

Item 8 - MR. JOAQUIM'S MOTION CONCERNING AMENDMENT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORDINANCE.

Mr. Joaquim moved the following motion:-

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Legislative Assembly recommends to Government that subsection 4(b) of section 117 of the Local Government Ordinance, Chapter 150, be amended so as to provide for the removal of the five per cent. per annum levy on arrears of rates in villages.

Mr. Wharton seconded the motion but reserved his right to speak at a later stage.

Mr. Rai spoke to the motion.

At this stage further discussion was deferred.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 4.00 p.m. the Sitting was suspended for tea.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 4.40 p.m. the Sitting was resumed.

LOYAL ADDRESS TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

His Honour the Speaker moved that the following be the Loyal Address to be presented to His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, on the occasion of his visit to the Legislature:

"To: His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip,
Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., P.C., K.T., G.M.B.E., F.R.S.

May It Please Your Royal Highness:

On behalf of the Legislature and the people of British Guiana, it is my privilege and honour to welcome Your Royal Highness most warmly and affectionately in our midst, and to express our great happiness at Your Royal Highness's visit to us at this time.

The people of our country have always maintained a warm and devoted attachment to the Throne, and in particular we cherish an enduring loyalty to Her Gracious Majesty the Queen. Your Royal Highness's acceptance of our invitation to visit us before beginning your tour of other South American countries is yet another manifestation of the strong and abiding interest which The Royal Family have shown, and we recall with pride the visits paid this country within recent years by Her Royal Highness The Princess Margaret, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Her Royal Highness The Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone.

We would have wished, and indeed it would have given us considerable joy and happiness, if it had been possible for Her Majesty to come on this Royal Visit; but we are not dismayed for, with the shrinking of distances by the development of speedier means of travel, we look forward to the pleasure and honour of welcoming Her Majesty in this English-speaking South American country in the not too distant future.

We are pleased to welcome Your Royal Highness so shortly after your visit to Africa in connection with the Independence celebrations in Tanganyika. We trust that by Her Majesty's Gracious Command it may be possible for British Guiana to be similarly honoured when we too celebrate our own Independence.

The Guianese people respect the fine traditions of many British Institutions and admire the fine qualities of the British people which have been handed down in the course of many struggles to obtain and maintain their freedoms. We cherish these same freedoms and are similarly determined to protect and preserve them.

We are conscious of the exacting nature of the duties of the tour which lie ahead, and would sincerely wish that health and strength remain with you in abundant measure, not only for your immediate tasks, but throughout your life, which we trust will be long, fruitful and happy.

And finally Your Royal Highness, we express the hope that, short though your stay with us perforce will be, you will enjoy every moment of it, and carry back to Her Majesty The Queen good tidings of our country and our people. We are confident that your Visit will strengthen the ties of friendship between our peoples."

Question put and agreed to.

Item 8 - MR. JOAQUIM'S MOTION CONCERNING ~~THE~~ AMENDMENT TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORDINANCE.

Assembly resumed consideration of the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this Legislative Assembly recommends to Government that subsection 4(b) of section 117 of the Local Government Ordinance, Chapter 150, be amended so as to provide for the removal of the five per cent. per annum levy on arrears of rates in villages.

After discussion, the motion was put and negatived on the following division:

<u>FOR</u>	<u>AGAINST</u>
Mr. Cheeks	Mr. Shakoor
Mr. Campbell	Mr. Lall
Mr. Wharton	Mr. Jagan
Mr. Merriman	Mr. Hamid
Mr. Jordan	Mr. Downer
Mr. Joaquim	Mr. Caldeira
Mr. Blair	Mr. Robertson
Mr. Bissember	Mr. Saffee
Mr. Correia	Mr. Mann
Mr. Carter	Mr. Bowman
Mr. Benlali	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Burnham	Dr. Ramsahoye
	Dr. Jacob
	Mr. Chandisingh
	Mr. Rai
	Mr. Ramkarran
	Mr. Benn

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Item 9 - MR. SAFFEE'S MOTION CONCERNING A FLAG, COAT OF ARMS, NATIONAL ANTHEM, ETC., FOR AN INDEPENDENT BRITISH GUIANA.

The relevant Standing Order was suspended to enable Mr. Saffee to move and Mr. Hamid to second the following motion which was put and carried:

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Assembly authorises the appointment of a special Select Committee of this Assembly charged with the responsibility for -

- (a) Designing a national flag and a coat of arms;
- (b) composing a national anthem; and
- (c) recommending an appropriate name for a politically free and independent British Guiana.

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THE WRITING OF A
CONSTITUTION FOR AN INDEPENDENT GUIANA.

The Minister of Natural Resources, The Honourable B.H. Benn, stated that the Government had given notice of a motion recommending the appointment of a Select Committee to consider the writing of a Constitution for an Independent Guiana.

The Minister added that copies of the motion would be circulated to Members the following day for consideration on Friday, 9th February.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5.28 p.m., on a motion by Mr. Benn, the Assembly was adjourned to 2.00 p.m. on Friday, 9th February, 1962.



Speaker.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
Georgetown.

9th February, 1962.