



Hon. Priya Manickchand: Mde. Speaker, the interpretation is grossly...
[*Interruption*]

The Speaker: Madame Minister, I have ruled, but I have entertained you only because you have proffered something which crossed my attention that this ruling perhaps will not be the final ruling on this particular Standing Order. If you find any evidence in the future that you can bring to have a different ruling, I will be sure and happy to accommodate you, but, at this time, I am disallowing any right to reply. I have ruled and I am putting the question which is... This is the name of the Motion: the Construction of a Bridge Across the Berbice River.

Question put and negatived.

Motion not carried.

Announcements by the Speaker

11th Sitting dated January 31, 2007

RULING ON STANDING ORDER NO. 39 TO THE EFFECT OF A MOTION BROUGHT BY HON. JAMES MCALLISTER “CONSTRUCTION OF A BRIDGE ACROSS THE BERBICE RIVER”

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (Mrs. Clarissa Riehl): At the last Sitting of this National Assembly on Tuesday, 23rd January during the debate on a Motion brought by the Hon. Member, Mr. James McAllister, in the matter of the “Construction of a Bridge across the Berbice River”, I made a ruling on Standing Order No. 39 to the effect that the Motion brought by the Hon. Member did not qualify for the exceptions stated in paragraph 2 of the Standing Order No. 39.

Standing Order No. 39 states:

1. The mover of a motion may reply after all the other Members present have had an opportunity of addressing the Assembly and before the question is put and after such reply no other Member may speak except as provided in paragraph 2 of the Standing Order.



2. A Minister may conclude a debate on any motion which is critical of the Government or reflects adversely on or is calculated to bring discredit upon the Government or a Government Officer.

The motion in question contained five WHEREAS Clauses and three Resolved Clauses, none of which were in any way condemnatory or critical of the Government.

The Resolved Clauses merely ask this National Assembly to call upon the Government:

1. To review its decision to build a steel floating bridge across the Berbice River between D'Edward and Crab Island;
2. For the matter to be investigated by the Economic Services Committee and a report made to the National Assembly within three months; and
3. For the Minister of Public Works and Communications to instruct the Berbice River Bridge Co. Inc. to suspend all works pending the report from the Economic Services Committee - the Mover of the motion and two other Opposition members spoke to the motion, also four Government Members spoke on the motion.

At the close of the debate by the Mover of the Motion, the Leader of the Government's business, the Hon. Prime Minister, sought to invoke the Right to Reply in paragraph 2 of Standing Order No. 39.

My ruling was premised on the reasoning that in accordance with the ordinary rules of English Language construction, the qualifying phrases in paragraph 2 that trigger a Minister's right to reply go to the Motion itself and not to the debate. And since nothing in the text of the Motion was critical or adverse to the Government or to a specific Minister, that Right to Reply was not allowed. It was said in the press release that Standing Order No. 39 was discussed in the context of the visit of 2 visiting British MPs. I was not present but I am informed and verify that those gentlemen were asked about the usage of paragraph 2 and not an interpretation of the language of paragraph.

I have found no precedent that puts different interpretation on paragraph 2 of Standing Order No. 39. And until such time, I stand by my ruling.

Hon. Members, my ruling should have been the end of the matter, but it was not.



On Tuesday, 25th January, a press release emanating from the PPP and headed “PPP condemns the violation of the Right to Reply in Parliament” was sent to the media houses in Georgetown.

On the 19th January when the Government sought to suspend Standing Order No...to have the Value-Added Tax (Amendment) Bill go through all its stages without the requisite notice, I did not permit. That very night, two Members of this honourable House and a third person were on NCN Channel 11 discussing the Bill with the anchor of the programme calling into question my impartiality in the presence of these Hon. Members.

These instances represent a flagrant disregard of the norms of this Assembly and if they are meant to intimidate, let it be known that I shall not be intimidated. And if a decision is given that does not find favour with any side of this National Assembly, let it be also known that the characteristics attached to the Office of the Speaker in this Assembly are authority and impartiality and any reflections upon the character or actions of the Speaker may be punished as contempt. His or her actions cannot be criticised incidentally in debate or upon any form of proceeding except a substantive motion. In that same way, reflections on the character of the Speaker or accusations of partiality in the discharge of his duties...have attracted the penal powers of the Commission.

Request for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the Assembly on Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance

20th Sitting dated February 20, 2007

UNREASONABLE AND UNCONSCIONABLE DISLOCATION OF VENDORS IN THE STABROEK MARKET AREA

Preamble

A request by Mr. Robert Corbin to move the adjournment of the Assembly to discuss the unreasonable and unconscionable dislocation of vendors in the Stabroek Market area was negatived by way of a division even though the Speaker was satisfied that the matter qualified as one which may be properly raised on a Motion for the adjournment of the Assembly.